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FACEWORK

If you have ever given a presentation and you forgot what you were going to say, dropped your notes, or stumbled as you began to move across the room, you know what it means to lose "face." You were embarrassed because you were not performing as a competent public speaker. This is a common scenario that comes to mind when people think about losing face. However, consider occasions when you might have dressed inappropriately for an event, lost your temper or cried in public, said something rude and hurtful to a friend, asked someone out on a date but were rejected, or even cheated on a romantic partner who trusted you. In these instances as well, you lost face. This entry defines the concept of face and discusses the ways people maintain or restore face through facework.

The realization that a person's competent and moral "self" is to some degree a social construction dates back to ancient Chinese philosophers. However, Erving Goffman was the first contemporary writer to present a coherent theory of face and facework during the 1950s and 1960s. Goffman considered *face* to be the public image we present to others during interaction. We construct this image based on our understanding of the social norms for expected and appropriate behavior. For example, in some situations, we may emphasize that we are witty or funny, in other situations that we are intelligent, and in other situations when a friend is distressed that we are compassionate and supportive. *Facework* includes the range of communicative strategies we use to maintain face. This is a two-directional process. That is, the process involves the efforts we expend to construct and maintain our own face as well as the efforts we expend to maintain the face of others and that we expect others to expend toward maintaining our face as well. If people did not cooperate to maintain their own and others' face, interaction would become chaotic; the norms that guide interactions are predicated on the assumption that people respect their own and others' face. In fact, Goffman used the term *shameless* to refer to people who consistently act inappropriately in public and seem to feel no embarrassment. He used the term *heartless* to refer to people who can watch others lose face and feel no compassion.

Goffman illustrated concepts of face and facework with a theatrical metaphor. Much as actors have a backstage where they prepare for performance on a front stage, ordinary people have a backstage (e.g., their home or office) where they prepare for their performance in public. While on front stage, we are expected to perform appropriately by successfully managing our props, lines, and costumes—that is, not spilling our coffee, not tripping on the sidewalk, not referring to people by the wrong name, not wearing our gym clothes out to dinner. We are expected to display positive emotions (even when sometimes not genuinely felt) and to moderate displays of negative emotions (control our anger toward others). In Goffman's sense, the people with whom we interact serve as the audience for our performance when we are on front

stage. Indeed, even though we generally consider our home to be the backstage, we also realize that it is necessary on occasion to leave the stress of the day outside and construct a more relaxed face as we enter. We can certainly be more informal at home and social settings with friends, but many of the expectations for constructing an appropriate face or image still apply.

The facework that people do to support their own performance or the performances of others is typically uneventful and routine. However, sometimes people become more conscious of face loss and more actively engage in facework. The two general types of facework are preventive and corrective.

Preventive facework is performed when we anticipate that we might threaten our own or someone else's face. For example, the use of disclaimers such as "I may be wrong, but," "this might be a stupid idea, but," or "I know this might upset you, but" tell a listener that we recognize our comments may reflect on our competence or our sensitivity to the needs of others. Even the dreaded question, "does this make me look fat?" forces us to find a gracious way to soften the potential criticism (threat to other's face) by saying something such as, "Well, I think the other outfit is more flattering."

Corrective facework is performed after face has been threatened or lost. If the incident is relatively minor, then simple expressions such as "Excuse me" or "I'm sorry" will suffice. However, when the incident is more serious, a sequence of four interaction "moves" known as the remedial interchange may be necessary to restore face. First, a *challenge* is made that calls attention to the face-threatening act. The challenge may be implied or explicit. For example, if you are supposed to meet a friend for dinner at a local restaurant at 6:30, but you do not arrive until almost 7:00, your friend may look you with the expression, "You better have a good excuse" or may be more direct by saying, "You're late; what happened?" Both of these actions function as a challenge. Second, as the offending person, you make an *offering* that shows you are aware of and sorry about being late. Offerings typically include apologies, excuses (explaining extenuating circumstances), and justifications (attempts to minimize the severity of the action). So you might first apologize and make an excuse ("Sorry. I got held up at work and had to stop by the bank to get some money."). Or, you might apologize and offer a

justification ("Sorry. I know I'm a little late, but it's Friday and we can take our time."). Assuming that the offering is acceptable, the offended person gives an *acceptance* and the offending person closes the exchange with an *appreciation or thanks*. In our example, your friend might say, "No problem, I've been reading the menu and watching that interesting couple over there" and you would reply, "Thanks, I'm starved."

Research subsequent to Goffman's early writing has identified additional types of remedial actions that people do to restore face. This research indicates that in addition to apologies, excuses, and justifications, people sometimes use *remediation,* which physically corrects the situation (e.g., cleaning up a spilled soft drink or picking up dropped items). Other people often do this for the person who has lost face. In addition, people who have lost face or observed others lose face employ *humor* to alleviate the tension (e.g., "I'm such a klutz" or "Way to go, Grace"). Finally, two different strategies include *avoidance* (e.g., ignoring a behavior or action so as not to draw attention to it) or *aggressive actions* (e.g., insult, criticism, or retaliation). Aggression is not generally a useful strategy but is sometimes used to get back at a person who has intentionally damaged another's face, to assert power, or to teach someone a lesson so the incident doesn't happen again.

In sum, facework is a routine aspect of daily life. We tend to take it for granted until we feel the sting of embarrassment and realize that we have lost face. Fortunately, the cooperative efforts of others usually help us restore face and continue the interaction.

Sandra Metts

See also Accounts; Apologies; Embarrassment

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FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Facial expressions are one channel of nonverbal communication. Facial expressions can function as paralinguistic signals—such as when one raises one or both eyebrows to signal a question—but most frequently have been studied as a means to express emotions. Emotional facial expressions are an important source of information that frequently dominates information derived from other nonverbal channels such as posture or tone of voice. In relationships, facial expressions often play an important role. For example, smiling is an important signal for affiliation, and the absence of smiles in marital conflict can escalate conflict.

The study of facial expression has been characterized by a number of controversies. This entry provides a brief summary of the current state of the literature and outlines the important roles facial expressions play in human interaction.

The first person to systematically study and describe facial expressions and their possible meaning was Charles Darwin in his book *On the Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals,* published in 1872. He considered facial expressions to be both directly useful for the organism (e.g., the eyes are wide open in fear to facilitate information uptake), and an important source of information for others by alerting them to the intentions of the expresser (e.g., bared teeth in an angry dog signal an intention to fight).

Darwin considered facial expressions as evolved, and he necessarily assumed clear parallels and antecedents to human emotions in the emotions of animals and presumed human emotion expressions to be universal. Research in the early 20th century, however, failed to find a systematic link between emotional states and facial expressions. The contradictory research findings led Jerome Bruner and Renato Tagiuri to conclude in 1954 that there was little clear evidence for the recognizability of emotional expressions. This view remained basically unchanged until 1972 when Paul Ekman, Wallace Friesen, and Phoebe Ellsworth wrote a book to explicitly vindicate Darwin. They revisited the early literature and noted methodological problems with most failures to support Darwin's contentions. Based on this and some of their own findings, they concluded that emotional expressions are indeed universal and directly associated with underlying emotional states. In the following decades, the notion that at least so-called basic emotions are universally expressed and recognized was largely accepted. However, the question of what emotional facial expressions actually express and whether they do so universally is still strongly disputed.

What Do Facial Expressions Express?

Three main theories have been proposed: Facial expressions express emotion, facial expressions express intentions, and facial expressions express the outcome of appraisals. The principal support for the notion that facial expression express emotions stems from the fact that emotional facial expressions are generally well recognized. That is, when shown posed facial expressions—at least those corresponding to the so-called basic emotions of happiness, anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, and possibly contempt—individuals are able to identify the corresponding emotional state at high rates of agreement and accuracy. The assumption here is that people recognize these expressions because they have associated events where people feel these emotions with these expressions.

However, when individuals are in a situation where they either report experiencing a certain emotion or that is highly likely to evoke a specific emotion, these same expressions have not systematically been observed. The fact that individuals who experience a specific emotion often do not show the prototypical facial expression that is usually recognized as signaling this emotion but, rather, a variety of—often quite weak and ambiguous—expressions, has been explained as an outcome of social norms. These "display rules" can override the innate expressions (Ekman's Neurocultural Theory) by attenuating them or replacing them with socially demanded ones.

A contrasting view regarding the source of facial expressions maintains that facial displays do not express emotions but, rather, social motives, such as a desire to affiliate or to withdraw (Alan Fridlund's Behavioral Ecology Theory). Evidence for this notion was provided in form of experiments showing that facial expressivity varies as a

function of social context. For example, smile intensity varies as a function of the presence of others, which in turn influences the expressers' motivation to share their amusement, a motive that is presumed to be stronger in a more sociable context. Later research showed that these functions are not necessarily mutually exclusive and that facial expressions vary as a function of both emotional state and social motives.

One conceptual challenge, however, posed by Fridlund's critique remained unresolved. He argued that given the rapidity of facial expressions, an emotion program that started in response to an emotion elicitor could not be successfully interrupted by a social norm, which replaces the emotion expression output of the program with a socially demanded expression. This issue is potentially amenable to resolution by recourse to appraisal theories of emotion. These theories predict that facial expressions are not first produced by an emotion-eliciting process and then filtered or modified by a social-rule-driven process. Rather, the social norms and motives—to the degree that they are endorsed by the individual—are an inherent part of the emotion elicitation process. Thus, using an appraisal framework, one can reconcile both the signal and symptom functions of emotions. That is, appraisal theories consider emotions as inherently determined by the organisms' motivational state and, hence, their intentions; therefore emotion expression by its very nature should express intentions because these are part of emotions in a fundamental way.

More specifically, some appraisal theorists have proposed that emotional facial expressions do not express emotions as a unitary state, but instead are directly related to individual appraisals. For example, the drawing together of the eyebrows in a frown is an output of an appraisal of goal obstruction. As appraisals proceed, a full-blown facial expression emerges as the sum output of the appraisals.

Are Emotional Facial Expressions Universally Recognized?

Since first posed by Darwin, this question has consistently been an important but divisive focus of the work on facial expressions. On one hand, a considerable body of research supports the conclusion that the expression of emotion is largely universal, for example, through the mutual recognition of emotional signals across many cultures and across species boundaries. Thus, chimpanzees and dogs can recognize human emotion displays, and humans can recognize chimpanzee and dog emotion displays. Yet, the research on cross-cultural recognition has been heavily criticized on methodological grounds. This view also contrasts with perspectives that consider emotional behavior as determined completely by verbally transmitted cultural norms and rules. Thus, social constructivist approaches to emotion emphasize differences in emotion vocabularies across cultures and dispute universality of expression or recognition on these grounds.

Most contemporary psychologists now favor an interactionist perspective in which both innate and cultural factors play some role. More recently, strong meta-analytical evidence for this intermediate view has emerged and led to the formulation of Hillary Elfenbein and Nalini Ambady's Dialect Theory. They argue that the universal language of emotion expression has local dialects that differ subtly from each other. Consistent with an appraisal approach to emotional expressions, dialects could be explained by postulating subtle differences in appraisal patterns resulting from differences in cultural constraints, values, and norms that reflect themselves as differences in facial expression.

Social Context and Facial Expression

Facial expressions are usually shown in the context of social interactions, and hence, it should not be surprising that they depend to some degree on the relationship between interaction partners. Facial expressions tend, for example, to be more intense when shown in the presence of friends than strangers. The relative status of the interactants also affects facial displays. For example, higher-status individuals show clearer, more easily decodable expressions. One hypothesis is that high status individuals are less bound by social rules and norms and, hence, have more leeway to express what they feel clearly.

Further, the social group to which a person belongs influences the nature of that person's facial

expressions. Some of this is due to the different social rules and norms that apply to various social groups. Women, for example, are expected to smile more and in fact do smile more than do men. But there are other more subtle influences. Specifically, certain factors that covary with group membership, such as facial morphology or appearance, may lead decoders to interpret the same facial expressive movements quite differently depending on the specific nature of the face on which they are displayed. For example, the facial morphology of women and younger individuals appears to enhance the cues associated with happiness, whereas those of men and older individuals enhance those associated with anger. The facial morphology differences across racial groups also affect the clarity of cues associated with specific emotions. For example, the strong contrast between teeth and dark skin makes smiles more easily perceptible, whereas the eye fold of some Asian eyes obscures the widening of the eyes shown in fear.

Independent of the cues actually present on the face of another, the perceptions of these are going to be filtered through the goals, concerns, motivations, and stereotypes that individuals bring to an interaction. These factors may attract attention away from or toward the cues specifically linked to particular emotions. Thus, the belief that women are more likely to experience sadness tends to lead people to perceive more sadness in female than in male faces—even when the same androgynous face is simply rendered male or female by adding the corresponding hairstyle.

Facial Expression and Person Perception

Facial expressions express more than emotions. Specifically, facial expressions modulate perceptions of the personality dimensions. Thus, individuals who show anger or disgust are perceived as more dominant and those who show happiness or sadness as more affiliative. Facial expressions of anger have also been linked to perceptions of competence (at least for men) and toughness. By contrast, expressions of sadness suggest lack of competence and submissiveness. Smiling in turn leads to attributions of trustworthiness. Appraisal theories of emotion provide a theoretical rationale for the link of expression to person perception.

Specifically, facial expressions of emotion relate to the underlying appraisal. For example, showing anger rather than sadness when learning bad news suggests that person appraises the situation as potentially changeable rather than as irreversible and, hence, implies that the person has the required competence to deal with the problem.

Measurement of Facial Expressions

There are three primary means of measuring facial expressions. First, facial expressions can be shown to naïve judges who are asked to identify the mental state of the person. For expressions shown spontaneously by individuals in a social interaction, inter-rater reliability is usually only low to moderate and hence demands a relatively large number of judges to achieve acceptable levels of agreement. Also, judges tend to fatigue rapidly and can therefore only rate a limited number of expressions (probably not more than 100). This implies that the logistic requirements for this method can be prohibitive. Second, facial expressions can be measured by trained coders who use a descriptive coding system such as Ekman and Friesen's Facial Action Coding System (FACS). This system allows coders to categorize every possible facial movement based on the appearance changes associated with that movement and has the advantage of high reliability and precise information on the actual facial movements shown. More difficult is the task of assigning specific meaning to the facial patterning. This procedure is also fairly time consuming (1 minute of expressive behavior requires approximately 1 hour of coding time). Recent advances in computer coding of facial action units may eventually overcome this particular limitation of FACS. There are specific versions of FACS for the use with infants (whose faces wrinkle differently than adults' faces do) and chimpanzees, allowing for developmental and comparative studies using facial measurement. Finally, instead of measuring overt facial behavior, it is possible to use electromyography to measure the relevant facial muscle activity. This approach has the advantage of providing excellent time and space resolution, thus allowing for the measurement of subtle expressions that are not or are only barely visible (such as facial

mimicry reactions). The disadvantage is that only a limited number of muscles can be assessed at any one time. Also, it is not always easy to assign specific meaning to a specific muscle reaction. For example, Corrugator Supercilii activity occurs in sadness, in anger, and when concentrating. However, this problem can be solved by looking at patterns and constraining the experimental situation appropriately.

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See also Emotional Communication; Nonverbal Communication, Status Differences

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FAIRNESS IN RELATIONSHIPS

Romantic relationships are generally associated with love, trust, commitment, and caring for each other's needs and much less with issues of fairness or justice. In the past, most justice theorists have therefore typically considered justice and fairness—terms that are used interchangeably—as unimportant in close relationships. More recently, however, theories of fairness and justice have been increasingly applied to close relationships, and there is consensus that justice issues are important in close relationships. Fairness and justice refer to laws and formal rules that guide human behavior, but also to the ideas that people have about right and wrong, about how we should or ought to behave, and about what we are entitled to. As one of the first social justice researchers, J. Stacy Adams, addressed the fairness of the allocation of resources or outcomes, generally referred to as *distributive justice*. Later, John Thibaut and Laurens Walker argued that people's fairness judgments depend not only on the allocation of outcomes, but also on the procedures that precede the allocation of outcomes. This type of justice is referred to as *procedural justice*. This entry discusses the basic principles of distributive and procedural justice and how fairness affects close relationships.

Distributive and Procedural Justice

The three basic principles of distributive justice are *equity, equality,* and *need*. Equity theorists such as Elaine Hatfield and her colleagues were among the first to apply justice theories to the domain of close relationships. Equity exists when partners perceive the same ratio of inputs and outcomes as their partner, or in other words, when partners perceive an equal balance in their relative inputs and outcomes in the relationship. When partners perceive inequity in their relationship (i.e., when they feel overbenefited or underbenefited), they become distressed. Second, people feel a right to be treated equally with others who are like them. According to the equality principle, partners will feel satisfied in their relationship if each receives the same level of outcomes, regardless

of their inputs. This principle holds for the distribution of positive outcomes such as goods, benefits, and rewards as well as for negative outcomes such as costs, burdens, and duties. Finally, the need-based principle refers to the rule that resources and outcomes should be allocated on the basis of the partners' needs, regardless of the partners' inputs. Researchers such as Margaret Clark argue that the need-based rule of justice is the prevailing justice norm for close (or *communal*) relationships, as romantic partners are expected to be responsive to each other's needs, instead of keeping track of inputs and outcomes. Others have shown that exchange principles such as equity and equality also apply to close relationships, for example, when partners divide paid and unpaid (i.e., household) labor, exchange intimate behaviors (e.g., spending time together, sexual relations), and when they regard their overall contributions to the relationship.

Procedural justice entails both formal procedures such as laws and rules and informal procedures such as being treated with dignity and respect or having the opportunity to voice one's opinion. Research in organizational and experimental settings has shown that procedural justice affects human behavior, attitudes, satisfaction, and affective feelings. People are more satisfied with their relationship and more committed to a distribution of outcomes when they have been treated fairly than when they have been treated unfairly. This effect is commonly referred to as the *fair process effect:* People react more positively to outcomes or other events that follow from fair rather than unfair procedures. Procedural justice is enhanced by the opportunity to express one's views and opinions and the opportunity to present information relevant to the decision (i.e., *voice*). This effect is commonly referred to as the *voice effect:* Individuals perceive a procedure to be more fair and satisfying when they are granted voice than when they are not granted voice.

Fairness in Close Relationships

Research on fairness in close relationships has focused almost exclusively on distributive justice. This research has addressed the use of the equity, equality, and need-based rules. In addition, Melvin

Lerner's *justice-motive theory* has provided a different theoretical approach and proposes three basic schemas that are developed in early childhood: an identity schema (i.e., the other is the same as the self and identities are merged), a unit schema (i.e., the other is similar to the self and an equal interaction partner), and a non-unit schema (i.e., the other is different from the self and a competitor). Situational cues that are present in the interaction with a close other will determine which justice rule is appropriate, given a certain basic schema. Situational cues are vicarious dependency (i.e., partners largely depend on each other for attaining desired resources), convergent goals, and divergent goals. For example, partners who have recently married usually feel merged with each other (identity relation). When partners have to decide who will attend a school meeting, situational cues of vicarious dependency (e.g., one partner is not feeling well) will elicit feelings of caring and the other partner will decide to attend the school meeting (i.e., using a need-based rule). The same situation may lead to a different decision in a couple that is about to divorce (non-unit relation). The other partner may now apply the equity rule to determine whether both are doing their fair share in attending school meetings.

Individual differences and relationship norms matter also. For example, women tend to feel deprived in their relationship more often than men do. Bram Buunk and Nico van Yperen showed that both men and women perceive women to contribute more to their marriage in relational inputs (i.e., love, attention, accommodation) than do men and to receive fewer outcomes (i.e., interesting work, opportunities to meet others, freedom to do what one wants). Furthermore, individuals differ in whether they favor a communal orientation, in which they generally desire to give and receive benefits out of concern for others' needs, versus an exchange orientation, in which they generally seek direct reciprocity from others in benefits and demonstrations of affection. They will use justice norms accordingly.

Another area of research on distributive justice in close relationships has dealt with gender inequalities in various domains in close relationships, with the division of family labor (i.e., housework and childcare) standing out as the predominant area of research. Women do a much larger share of the

family work than men, regardless of their employment status, both in Western Europe and in the United States. Surprisingly, only a minority of women regards the division of labor as unfair. Apparently, mere gender inequality is not a sufficient condition of feelings of injustice. The *distributive justice framework* was developed by Brenda Major and Linda Thompson to understand this "paradoxical sense of contentment" with the unequal division of labor. It is a conceptual analysis of partners' perceptions of fairness in the relationship that claims that fairness judgments are affected by people's wants and values, comparison standards, and justifications.

Wants and values refer to the outcomes people desire or value. Fairness judgments depend on the individual's aspirations, expectations, and desires. Individuals must value or want an outcome in order to feel inequitably treated or deprived if they do not have that outcome. Faye Crosby's *two-factor model of relative deprivation* further states that feelings of injustice result from a combination of unfulfilled wants and feelings of entitlement or deservingness. Women will not feel deprived if their partner does not do his fair share in the household unless they *want* their partner to participate more in household tasks and feel that they are *entitled to* their partner's help. Thus, wanting and feelings of entitlement are a necessary condition for feelings of deprivation or injustice. Gerold Mikula further adds that attributions of blame are basic elements of the experience of injustice. Women will regard the division of labor as more unjust when they blame their partner for not doing his fair share.

Comparison standards refer to the standards people use to judge their outcomes. Feelings of injustice depend on the outcome of a social comparison process. For example, partners compare their own inputs and outcomes with those of their partner. Consistent with Equity Theory, partners who perceive inequity in the division of labor will feel distressed. Buunk and van Yperen labeled this type of social comparison with the partner as *relational comparison*. In line with Social Comparison Theory, partners also compare their inputs and outcomes in the relationship with those of similar others in a reference group—family members, friends, and acquaintances of the same gender. This type of comparison with similar others is referred to as *referential comparison*. Because people generally tend to make downward comparisons with regard to their close relationships (i.e., people generally tend to view their own relationship as better than other people's relationships), women tend to perceive more fairness in their own relationship than in the relationships of other women. This adds to the explanation of the paradoxical sense of contentment with the unequal division of labor.

Justifications refer to procedures, attributions, or rules that legitimize a given outcome. Women can justify an unequal division of labor (or a negative outcome) when they believe that the outcome resulted from the application of a fair procedure. As mentioned in the introduction of this entry, the literature on procedural justice has shown that people judge the same outcome as more fair under conditions of high procedural fairness than under conditions of low procedural fairness. Research has shown that women perceive the division of labor as more fair when they have had a voice during relationship conflict over the division of labor.

Little is known about the role of procedural justice in close relationships, even though it has been argued in the social justice literature that procedural justice generally has great consequences for the way people react to (in)justice. These consequences often have more impact than do those of distributive justice. It could well be argued that procedural justice has strong effects on partners' reactions toward injustice in close relationships. Tom Tyler and Alan Lind have argued that relational motives shape procedural justice judgments. Their influential Relational Model of Authority states that relational concerns play a major role in the individual's sensitivity to procedural justice. People care about procedural justice because it communicates that their interaction partner values them, and this information validates their status, identity, self-esteem, and self-respect.

Research conducted by Esther Kluwer and her colleagues indicates that the relationship between procedural justice in the context of a relationship conflict and several outcome variables (affective feelings and relationship satisfaction) is stronger for women than for men, suggesting that women react more strongly toward procedural (in)justice than men. This gender difference disappeared under conditions of strong relationship orientation.

A strong relationship orientation made men more vulnerable to how they were treated by their partner during a relationship conflict. The findings suggest that procedural justice operates at a dispositional level for women, who are generally more relationship oriented, whereas it operates at a relationship-specific level for men. Men are affected by procedural justice only when they are highly committed to their relationship, when they strongly identify with their partner, or when their relationship is experientially made salient.

Esther S. Kluwer

See also Communal Relationships; Division of Labor in Households; Equity Theory; Interdependence Theory; Justice Norms Applied to Relationships; Rewards and Costs in Relationships; Sex Differences in Relationships

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FALLING IN LOVE

Falling in love is the onset of a strong desire for a close, romantic relationship with a particular person—the transition from not being in love to being in love. Falling in love appears to be a universal phenomenon, appearing in every culture for which data are available, in every historical era, and in every age group, from 4- to 100-year-olds and beyond. Analogues to falling in love are found in a wide variety of higher animal species and may well have played a critical role in human evolution. Falling in love is often an intense experience, a source of some of the greatest joys, including connectedness, ecstasy, and fulfillment, and some of the greatest problems, including depression, rage, stalking, suicide, and homicide. It is also a common phenomenon: It happens at least once to most U.S. residents at some point in their lives, with only somewhat varying rates across cultures. This entry reviews the literature on the falling in love process, including distinguishing it from onset of sexual desire, discussing predictors of falling in love, and identifying the consequences of the experience of falling in love.

History of the Study of Falling in Love

Falling in love has been the subject of both artistic and scholarly attention from the earliest times. Some classical contributions in Western culture are Plato's *Symposium,* Stendhal's book-length 18th century essay *de L'Amour,* and Sigmund Freud's extensive discussions of the topic. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, cultural anthropologists and clinical writers outside the Freudian tradition became interested in the topic; researchers in the 1960s and 1970s mainly focused on initial romantic attraction between strangers. The 1980s set the stage for much current thinking on romantic love, most prominently including the extension of Attachment Theory to adult love, descriptive work on intense passionate love, the identification of lay understandings of love, and the development and application of relevant theoretical models. Researchers in the early 1990s added work on unreciprocated love and love ideals. The major developments in the late 1990s and early 21st century include an upsurge of interest in romantic love in adolescence and old age, ethnic and cultural differences, love as an emotion, and—most prominently—biological approaches, including work on oxytocin and vasopressin in

monogamous prairie voles, the related work it has inspired in humans, and brain imaging and other neuroscience methods.

What Is Falling in Love?

As noted, falling in love is the transition from not being in love to being in love. The metaphor of "falling" suggests a rapid transition, but many individuals report a gradual transition, sometimes over years, as from an acquaintanceship to an intense passion. Nevertheless, regardless of how long it takes, falling in love for most people clearly refers to a transition from something not at all intense to something quite intense, involving a major redirection of one's attention and energy, and more than just a passing or ephemeral attraction or valuing of an individual.

The key definitional issue has been about what is being fallen into: "What is love?" Extensive research by Beverly Fehr and others has shown that people understand love by its resemblance to a prototype, a standard model, or idea (as one would recognize a bird by its resemblance to a robin). The prototypical features of love encompass, in order of centrality, intimacy, commitment, and passion. Scientists such as Art Aron, by contrast, have defined love in a more formal way, for example, as "the constellation of behaviors, cognitions, and emotions associated with a desire to enter or maintain a close relationship with a specific other person." Researchers have found romantic love to be associated with dependence, caring, and exclusiveness, as distinguished from mere liking, which emphasizes similarity, respect, and positive evaluation. Elaine Hatfield and Ellen Berscheid also distinguished passionate romantic love ("intense longing for union with another") from companionate love ("affection . . . for those with whom our lives are deeply entwined"). Some items on the standard research measure of passionate love are "I would rather be with ___ than with anyone else" and "I melt when looking deeply into ____'s eyes." A similar distinction is between those whom one "loves" and the subset of these with whom one is "in love."

Other research approaches have focused on typologies. One, based on the work of John Alan Lee and Clyde and Susan Hendrick, identifies six "love styles:" *eros* (romantic, passionate love), *ludus* (game-playing love), *storge* (friendship love), *pragma* (logical, "shopping-list" love), *mania* (possessive, dependent love), and *agape* (selfless love). Another influential approach is the Triangular Theory, developed by Robert Sternberg, which conceptualizes love in terms of intimacy, commitment/decision, and passion, the various combinations of which define diverse types of romantic love.

Falling in Love Versus the Onset of Sexual Desire

Sexual desire is clearly linked with passionate love. For example, the features that identify the lay understanding of love include "sexual passion" and "sex appeal." Similarly, the standard measure of passionate love described earlier includes items emphasizing physical response to the partner. Nevertheless, romantic love and sexual desire have been shown to be associated with different nonverbal cues and behavioral responses. For example, head nodding and smiling are significant predictors of love but not necessarily of sexual desire. Another relevant finding is that 5-year-old children, who presumably do not have the same kind of sexual response as do adolescents, report levels of passionate love as high as 14 to 18 year olds. Finally, brain imaging studies of romantic love have consistently found patterns of brain activity that only minimally overlap with activation patterns found in studies of sexual arousal.

Variations in Falling in Love

Personality

Those who fall in love most often and most intensely are people high on a dimension of "anxious-attachment," those who, presumably as a result of inconsistent love from their primary caregiver as infants, as adults are hungry for love, tending to seek it more avidly and to be more engaged in the concern about the partner's response. Other research has reported a similar pattern for those with low self-esteem.

Gender

On average, and across the cultures studied, men appear to be more variable (either having

been many times in love or none at all) and are more romantic and passionate than women are, but women are more likely to be in love at any given time. However, nearly all observed gender differences are only slight average trends, with substantial overlaps between the genders. Many studies find no gender differences.

Cultural Context

Cross-cultural comparisons suggest that people fall in love everywhere, that there is a universal, core element of passionate love. However, how it is enacted may depend heavily on the cultural context. In particular, the greatest variation seems to be in just what precursors lead to falling in love and different styles of expressing and experiencing love and in its incidence across the life cycle. Much of the cultural variation may be due to people in "collectivistic" cultures (e.g., many Asian societies), compared with those in more "individualist" cultures (e.g., North American societies), being less motivated to separate from the family and community context to become intimate with each other.

Whether or Not the Love Is Reciprocated

Autobiographical accounts of being rejected and of being the undesired object of someone's attraction have reported that rejection can lead to strong organization as well as strong disorganization of thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. Both the rejectors and rejectees largely express passive behaviors, both are unhappy with the situation, and both usually end up disappointed. The intensity of a person's feelings of unrequited love can be predicted by how much the individual wants the relationship, how much he or she likes the state of being in love (whether reciprocated or not), and whether the rejectee initially believed his or her love would be reciprocated.

Predictors of Falling in Love

Numerous experiments have identified factors that lead to liking in general and to initial romantic attraction. These factors include discovering that the other person likes one's self; attraction to the other's characteristics, including kindness, intelligence, humor, good looks, and social status; similarities with one's self, especially in attitudes and background characteristics; proximity and exposure to the other; confirmation and encouragement from one's peers and family that this is a suitable partner; and meeting under conditions of shared humor. With romantic attraction, versus mere general liking, there is a greater importance of physical appearance and that the being liked by the other is specific to oneself (as opposed to the other person liking everyone). In addition, a predictor specific to romantic attraction is being physiologically stirred up at the time of meeting a potential partner. For example, one study found that men who met an attractive woman when on a scary suspension bridge were more romantically attracted to her than were men who met the same woman on a safe bridge; another study found that individuals felt greater romantic attraction to an individual whom they met just after running in place for a few minutes! Finally, systematic analyses of people's retrospective accounts of falling in love find that the most common scenario is discovering that a reasonably appropriate and desirable person is attracted to you.

Effects of Falling in Love

Those experiencing intense passionate love report a focused attention on the beloved, heightened energy, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, euphoria and mood swings, bodily reactions such as a pounding heart, emotional dependence on and obsessive thinking about the beloved, emotional and physical possessiveness, craving for emotional union with the beloved, and intense motivation to win this particular partner.

Is this a good or a bad thing? On the one hand, in the week after falling in love, people experience an increase in self-esteem and an expanded, more diverse sense of one's self. Further, falling in love quickly and intensely, including idealizing the partner, is associated even years later with less divorce and more positive relationships. On the other hand, falling in love may be much less positive, as when it is not reciprocated or when one is already in a relationship with someone else. Also, falling in love can be highly disruptive of one's friendship network. Whether falling in love is seen as a good

or bad thing also seems to differ by cultures. For example, Chinese, more than U.S. residents, associate it with negative features such as sadness, heartbreak, and darkness.

The Biology of Falling in Love

In her 1998 review of the animal literature, anthropologist Helen Fisher concluded that birds and mammals evolved several distinct brain systems for courtship, mating, and parenting, including (a) the sex drive, characterized by a craving for sexual gratification; (b) attraction, characterized by focused attention on a preferred mating partner; and (c) attachment, characterized by the maintenance of proximity, affiliative gestures and expressions of calm when in social contact with a mating partner, and separation anxiety when apart. Each neural system is associated with a different constellation of brain circuits, different behavior patterns, and different emotional and motivational states. With regard to human love, one can equate "attraction" with falling in love. Indeed, recent human studies using brain imaging and biological markers confirm this view.

How Does Falling in Love Work? Major Theoretical Approaches

Love as Attachment

Attachment Theory, originally developed by John Bowlby in relation to infants and extended to adults most prominently by Philip Shaver, has been among the influential approaches to understanding romantic love. The theory emphasizes that early experience with caregivers strongly shapes individual differences in adult love experiences. Thus, for example, those who have had inconsistent caregiving (e.g., those high on the anxious attachment dimension) are much more likely as adults to experience intense passionate love. They are also more likely to experience intense unrequited love given their propensity to easily fall in love but not to trust that the other returns the love, even if the other does return the love. In contrast, those who experienced a consistent lack of security as an infant are said to be high on the avoidant dimension of attachment. As adults, they are

especially unlikely to fall in love, given their tendency to reject passionate love as real and to avoid closeness of any kind.

Love as a Story

Sternberg suggested that loving relationships can be described accurately by the people involved through narrative autobiographies, often suggesting culturally prototypical "stories." For example, the story of a couple locked in constant struggle is common, as is the story of couples growing to love each other over time. Each type of story has a characteristic mode of thought and behavior that often corresponds to other views of love (e.g., someone with a game-based love story will behave in ways consistent with the ludus love style). Having a particular love story can also affect one's expectations of what a romantic relationship should be like. People tend to seek romantic partners with similar love stories and complementary roles within these stories. Finally, these stories are inextricably linked with the rest of one's life: Particular stories can influence behavior in a relationship, and stories can be shaped and modified by one's experiences.

Evolutionary Approaches

Because courtship and mate choice are central aspects of reproduction in avian and mammalian species, it seems plausible that the experiences, behaviors, and neural underpinnings of falling in love might be strongly shaped by evolution. Thus, as noted earlier, Fisher proposed that the brain system for romantic attraction evolved to motivate individuals to select among potential mating partners, prefer particular conspecifics, and focus their courtship attention on these favored individuals, thereby conserving precious courtship and mating time and energy. Other evolutionary-oriented theorists have proposed that many human traits, including language and even some artistic talents, evolved as display devises to trigger attraction. Another important line of evolutionary thinking emphasizes gender differences in what features are desirable in a mate. For example, across cultures, men more than women consistently say they care more about a potential partner's physical appearance and women more than men care about a

potential partner's social status. Finally, some approaches to the evolutionary basis of romantic love have argued that the mating system exploits an evolved bonding module between infants and parents.

Self-Expansion Model

Another approach to understanding falling in love is Arthur and Elaine Aron's Self-Expansion Model. This model posits (a) that a primary human motivation to expand one's self in terms of potential to attain desired goals and (b) that a main way people seek to expand the self is in terms of "including others in the self" through close relationships so that the other's resources, perspectives, and identities are treated to some extent as one's own. Both principles have received considerable research support. In terms of romantic love, the researchers argue that the exhilaration and intense, focused attention of passionate love arises from the rapid rate of including the other in the self often associated with forming a new romantic relationship. Falling in love, according to this model, arises when one perceives the opportunity for substantial self-expansion by including a particular other person in the self.

Conclusions

Falling in love is much less a mystery than it once was. Scientists are no longer just watching the storms and heat waves with at best only a poetic sense of what is going on. We know what people mean fairly precisely by "falling in love." We know that it is not just sexual desire. We know many of the systematic similarities and differences across personality, gender, culture, and whether the love is reciprocated. We know a fair amount about falling in love's effects on the individual experiencing it and on how its intensity affects relationships that develop from it. We know a great deal about the variables that predict falling in love. We have a growing basis for understanding its biological correlates and cross-species similarities. And several theoretical approaches offer substantial insights into underlying mechanisms.

Yet, mystery remains. Most of what we know, as noted throughout this entry, is extrapolation from work on initial attraction or on romantic love, the states on either side of falling in love, each of which has been much more thoroughly studied. Nevertheless, one can look forward to continued important work using existing approaches, as well as to exciting findings from entirely new approaches or new adaptations of successful paradigms from other research domains. Given the sophistication and innovation that have characterized research in this area to date, it seems likely that it will not be long before falling in love is as well understood as other relationship phenomena. Indeed, one can look forward in the not too distant future to both being and falling in love becoming as well understood and predictable as the next storm or heat wave.

Arthur Aron, Helen Fisher, and Greg Strong

See also Infatuation; Interpersonal Attraction; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Love, Prototype Approach; Love, Typologies; Love, Unreciprocated; Obsessive Love

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FAMILIARITY PRINCIPLE OF ATTRACTION

The *familiarity principle of attraction* refers to the idea that objects and people seen repeatedly are subsequently rated more positively than are those seen less frequently. This principle stems from research on the *mere exposure effect,* which predicts that repeated exposure to neutrally valenced objects increases *attitudes,* or evaluations, of those objects. Early studies on the mere exposure effect varied the exposure frequency of nonsense syllables and Chinese characters (to non-Chinese fluent samples) and showed that those seen more frequently were rated more favorably. These effects seem to generalize even to non-humans; rats have been shown to prefer music that they were raised with to novel music.

Subsequent research has investigated the effect of increased exposure on social stimuli. For example, hearing a rumor repeatedly can lead one to believe that the rumor is true. When it comes to interacting with people who have been seen frequently, there are a wide range of effects. For example, people tend to agree with persuasive arguments from individuals they are familiar with, compared with that same argument from those they were not previously exposed to. Likewise, people tend to comply with the requests of those they are familiar with. At the foundation of these effects is the fact that we like those that we have seen repeatedly. Laboratory studies have shown that individuals prefer to interact with those with whom they have had more previous exposure. In addition, faces presented more frequently are rated as more attractive.

These findings generalize beyond the laboratory as well. In a clever study, researchers planted four female confederates in a college class (i.e., they posed as students). The confederates were pretested to be of similar physical attractiveness, and their class attendance was varied during the semester. At the end of the term, there was a strong association between students' ratings of the confederates and their class attendance (i.e., familiarity); the confederate who came to class most frequently was rated as the most attractive and likeable, and the one who never came to class was rated lowest on these dimensions.

The effect of familiarity can even be seen in individuals' preferences for pictures of themselves compared with their friends' preferences. Because we typically see ourselves "backward" (i.e., in the mirror), we tend to prefer our own images if reversed. However, our friends typically see us the "right way," and they will prefer our non-reversed picture. Furthermore, when rating the attractiveness of opposite-sex others, participants prefer faces of others that look similar to themselves. Using computerized image-morphing, participants were shown a range of faces, and unbeknownst to them, some included their own face transformed into an opposite-sex target; these were the faces that received the highest attractiveness ratings.

In addition to the implications for liking in interpersonal relationships and attraction, the familiarity principle has been applied extensively in consumer and political contexts. According to this perspective, one rationale for the frequency and effectiveness of advertising is that viewers should prefer products and political candidates that they have seen more often.

Many potential mechanisms underlying the mere exposure effect have been investigated. One particular process that has received support is that familiarity involves *classical conditioning* in situations absent of aversive events. It is possible that the lack of aversive stimuli elicits a positive response, which through subsequent trials (i.e., exposure) becomes paired with the person or target repeatedly presented, yielding a preference for those objects or people that are familiar. In addition, the principle of familiarity makes sense from an *evolutionary perspective;* those objects that are seen often are viewed as safe and pleasant, whereas unfamiliar things are unknown and may promote uncertainty. A preference for familiar

objects would have led individuals to gravitate toward safe and predictable situations and away from the unfamiliar, thus facilitating survival and reproduction. Therefore, according to this perspective, selective pressures would have reinforced the preference for familiar stimuli within ancestral populations.

Familiarity effects have been found to be stronger when people are unaware that they have seen the stimulus more often and when stimuli are presented for short durations. For example, the mere exposure effect can occur when stimuli are presented *subliminally*. The familiarity principle, however, does not mean that increased exposure to people or objects that are previously disliked will lead individuals to like them more. Though liking for neutral objects or those with a preexisting positive evaluation may be facilitated with increased exposure, evidence indicates that increased exposure to negatively evaluated objects causes a further decrease in liking of those objects.

Closely related to the familiarity principle are the effects of *proximity* on attraction, which predicts that people will be attracted to those who are physically nearby, given that those in close proximity are also likely to be seen more often and offer opportunities for interaction. Thus, the familiarity principle is one explanation for why proximity is associated with attraction.

Benjamin Le

See also Proximity and Attraction

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FAMILIES, COPING WITH CANCER

The diagnosis and treatment of cancer has immense emotional and practical repercussions for the entire family as well as for the patient. Although the medical community has long treated cancer as a "family disease," the psychological implications of cancer on families have only begun to receive empirical attention during the past two decades. This entry focuses on the psychological ramifications of the diagnosis of cancer on the adult and his or her spouse, children, and other family members, as well as the role of family support in psychological adaptation to cancer.

Impact of Cancer on the Spouse and the Marital Relationship

Most studies suggest that between 20 percent and 30 percent of spouses report clinically relevant levels of psychological distress, although higher rates of distress (50 percent) have been reported among spouses of individuals with advanced stage disease. Numerous studies have compared rates of distress of patients and their partners, but a recent meta-analysis suggests that the higher rates of partner distress reported in previous studies might be associated with gender: Women report more distress than men regardless of whether they are the person with cancer or the spouse. Many couples are drawn closer together by the cancer experience, but a subset of couples, particularly those with preexisting marital dissatisfaction, report increased marital difficulties after cancer. Although some early studies suggested that divorce or marital separation were more likely after cancer, current research does not consistently support this contention.

Impact of Parental Cancer on Children

Current research indicates that most children who have a parent with early-stage cancer do not experience clinically relevant psychosocial problems. However, evidence suggests that children experience greater internalizing problems, such as depressive or anxious symptoms. Adolescents report more anxious, depressive, and aggressive

symptoms than prepubescent children do. Gender of the child, as well as gender of the affected parent, may influence how the child copes with parental cancer. Adolescent daughters, particularly daughters of women with cancer, report greater internalizing difficulties relative to sons, or to adolescents of either gender whose fathers have cancer. Other evidence suggests that families coping with cancer may experience positive outcomes, such as less family conflict, greater family expressiveness and cohesiveness, and better social competence among children. Though most data indicate that illness-related variables are not related to children's functioning, at least one study found that depressive or anxious symptoms decreased for both children and adolescents as the time since diagnosis increased. Most studies have focused exclusively on children experiencing maternal cancer; paternal cancer may not have the same effect.

Impact of Cancer on Patients' Adult Siblings and Parents

Few studies have examined the impact of cancer on adult siblings and parents of individuals with cancer. Sisters of breast cancer patients who are at high familial breast cancer risk (i.e., from hereditary breast-ovarian cancer families) report that they do not experience increased psychological distress. However, other studies have reported that female first-degree relatives (i.e., parents, siblings, and children) of breast cancer patients, who are at increased (but not necessarily familial) risk report high distress, suggesting that community samples may report higher distress than relatives of women recruited from cancer risk registries. Studies assessing distress in first-degree relatives providing care to cancer patients indicate that levels of distress may be influenced by the type of cancer the patient has.

A large body of literature examines how pediatric cancer affects families, a topic too extensive to include in this entry; however, few studies have looked at the impact on parents of adult children diagnosed with cancer. Most studies have examined parents whose adult children died from cancer. These studies indicate that parents may feel uncertain of their role in their

adult child's healthcare and experience conflicting desires to care for their child as well as allow him or her to maintain autonomy. One study examined parents' distress approximately 2 years after the death of their adult child from cancer and found that parents did not report higher than normal levels of distress. Psychological issues of adult family members of individuals with cancer would benefit from greater empirical attention.

Family Support and Cancer

Social support is one of the most-studied contributory factors to the psychological adaptation to cancer. Social support is typically defined as the perception that emotional, practical, self-esteem bolstering, or informational help would be available from others if it were needed or the perception of the receipt of these same behaviors from others during the cancer experience. Other studies have evaluated perceived satisfaction with support provided by others. Most studies have evaluated global perceptions of support from the patient's network of family and friends with relatively few studies separately examining the role of support provided by family. In these studies, family support generally correlates positively with mental and physical health. Among family members, spouses are the most studied source of social support. Both perceived and received spousal support predict higher levels of psychological adaptation, with several studies suggesting that supportive responses from spouses predict adaptive coping responses such as greater use of problem-solving coping. Not all responses from family are viewed as supportive by cancer patients. For example, avoidance of talking about the cancer by changing the topic and responses that are perceived as minimizing the patient's concerns are considered unsupportive, and these responses, both from spouses and other family members, have been associated with greater psychological distress as well as with less adaptive coping strategies by the individual with cancer, including avoidance. The literature to date suggests that not avoiding talking about the cancer, asking the patient and his or her family members directly what he or she wants in terms of support, and

attempting to provide esteem-bolstering support are all beneficial.

Family-Focused Interventions

Although support from family is a key resource for patients coping with cancer and bolstering support is likely be beneficial effects for both patients and the family members who care for them, few psychological interventions incorporate family members. Family-focused grief therapy, which includes patients with advanced cancers at the end of life and their family members, has been shown to facilitate post-death adaptation of family members. Couple-focused group and individual couples' interventions have also shown promise in reducing distress for patients and their partners. Finally, recent studies targeting distress among family caregivers of patients with advanced disease have shown promise. Psychological interventions may benefit from including family members.

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See also Family Therapy; Health, Relationships as a Factor in Treatment; Health Behaviors, Relationships and Interpersonal Spread of; Illness, Effects on Relationships; Marriage and Health

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FAMILIES, DEFINITIONS AND TYPOLOGIES

Family is the primal relational experience for most people. Most people assume that they know what a family is. Yet, the basic definition of this universal phenomenon has recently become intensely controversial. Recently, California's Supreme Court followed Massachusetts in ruling that gays and lesbians can marry and raise children—in essence establishing a legal family—just as heterosexuals do, although this ruling was overturned by public referendum. Whether referendums to ban gay marriages are passed, traditional definitions of family are changing. The rise of gay rights is not the only social change to challenge traditional notions of family. With the divorce rate long higher than 50 percent, single-parent and blended families have become as commonplace as the traditional nuclear family with a father, mother, and biological children. Likewise, the rise of long-term cohabitation has created a social unit, sometimes called a *common-law marriage*, that has also challenged traditional conceptions of family. Laws protecting children have also led to increasing numbers of children being removed from their biological parents and adopted or placed in foster care. Likewise, there are cross-cultural variations in what constitutes a family and what a family looks like. Polygamy is accepted in some cultures or subcultures but not in others. Different cultures have different traditions for where to draw the boundaries of the extended family. All of these variations have political and legal implications.

This entry presents three approaches to defining what constitutes a family: structural, functional, and process. It also describes several of the most popular and useful family typologies.

Definitions

Dictionaries usually define terms reflecting common usage. Scholars define terms to facilitate research and communication, not necessarily to advance a political agenda. Nevertheless, because a definition of a family typically includes certain social groupings and excludes others, most definitions will have political implications. Some people

have attempted to skirt the issue by simply saying that a group is a family when its members say that it is. Whereas this approach probably works well for most practical situations, it may not prove useful for systematic research, analysis, or understanding. Scholars have usually defined *family* in terms of structures, functions, or processes.

Structural Approach

Structural approaches to defining what a family is may be the most challenged by societal changes and cultural variations. The structural approach usually distinguishes between the *family of procreation* (often called the *nuclear family*) and the *family of origin* (also called the *extended family*). The family of procreation is the "immediate family" in a household responsible for the raising of children, usually parents and their children. The extended family includes less immediate relationships including in-laws, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on. The bases of the family's relationships are viewed as biological (blood) and legal (e.g., marriage or adoption). The challenges to legal distinctions have been noted; however, with the rise of in vitro fertilization and surrogate parenting, even the biological basis for family membership is potentially controversial.

Typically, structural definitions require at least one adult or guardian and at least one child (though the child can be an adult). A marital relationship is typically considered a subsystem or part of the family system, but not a family by itself. A typical structural definition would describe a family as *an intergenerational social network of relationships based upon biological (hereditary) and legal (e.g., marriage, civil union, or adoption) kinships.*

Functional Approach

A functional definition defines a family in terms of the function(s) that it accomplishes. The primary function that most people identify with family is the raising of children—both their nurturing and their socialization. However, families also provide other functions (e.g., social support), but these often do not distinguish them from other social groups or networks. As families progress through their life cycle, the function of care and support often shifts such that children are responsible for the support and care of their parents. In a purely functional definition, a group is a family if it accomplishes the functions of a family, regardless of its structure. Whereas some definitions focus on structure and others on function, these are not mutually exclusive. Structures often evolve to support functions. A typical definition that combines the structural and functional approaches holds that a family is *an intergenerational social network of relationships based upon biological (hereditary) and legal (e.g., marriage, civil union, or adoption) kinships whose primary functions are the socializing, supporting, and nurturing of children and other family members.*

Process Approach

It has become increasingly popular to define families in terms of the communication and social-psychological processes that characterize them. Processes, like structures, cannot be separated from the functions that they accomplish. Processes are the means by which functions are accomplished. These definitions focus upon *how* groups function as families.

Families are highly interdependent. The behavior of one member affects all other members, and all members of the family share a common fate. The needs of an infant may place an added burden on a working parent, may require an added time commitment from a nurturing parent, and may take away from time and resources available to another child. When mom loses her job, dad may have to work more hours, and daughter may not get her own car or may not have enough to eat. When children quarrel, parents may need to step in to mediate, and when parents quarrel, children are emotionally affected. It is both popular and useful to consider a family as a *system* (i.e., an interdependent group that acts as a unit because of the relationships between its members and subgroups). Whereas family systems may vary in the degree to which they orient inward or interact with the outside world, for a family to act as a system, some degree of coordinated interdependence and identity is necessary.

Families are intimate interacting systems. Though families and individuals within families certainly vary in the extent to which they guard their privacy or are open and confiding (see the following discussion of

family types), a degree of intimacy is unavoidable in an intact family. By virtue of the degree of interdependence, the amount of time that they spend together, and the basic requirements of family life, private and personal information is more available to family members than to most other people. Family members know what other members look like before they comb their hair, and they know how other members act behind closed doors.

Probably more than any other type of group, *families create their own social realities.* Children come to know who they are by how others treat them, and the first and most important source of such information is the family (parents, grandparents, and siblings). A child's identity is initialized by the family. Children are socialized into a culture, and they are indoctrinated into a worldview that the parents and other family members negotiate and cocreate. If children are loved and protected in the family, they are likely to see the world in a different way than if they are abused, neglected, or told that others are out to hurt them. Research on Attachment Theory shows that these views of self and others formed within the family system predict emotional coping, cognitive development, and the nature of future relationships.

Families require commitment. Though members may be born into a family, if they lose their loyalty or ties to the family, the family ceases to function as an ongoing interdependent system. Members can drift away from each other and remain members in name only. Such a group might remain a family under the structural definition but would not be a family under a process definition. It is, of course, more difficult to "divorce" one's family than to separate from most other social groups because of legal and social pressures. This may be what is responsible for many behaviors within families (e.g., rudeness and conflict) that might break apart groups with less commitment.

Families maintain a degree of continuity of relationships over time. This does not mean that they don't develop and change—they do—but the relationships extend over years and generations. Many groups create a group identity, but *a family creates a "sense of home."* This is a feeling of belonging and a sense of place that extends beyond the present to the past and future.

As noted in the following typological discussion, there is a lot of variation both within and across cultures in the extent of interdependence and identification with the family. For example, in collectivist cultures, the interdependence and sense of identity with the family is likely to be much higher than within individualistic cultures. Nevertheless, a degree of interdependence, commitment, and identity is necessary for a group to function like a family.

According to a process definition, a family is *an interdependent and intimate interacting system, which creates its own social reality, its own conception of home, and maintains itself through a continuity of commitment over time.* This begs several questions. In addition to what one normally thinks of as a family, can a social gang (the Mafia or the Crips) be a family under this definition? Yes, and it has been argued that the need for a sense of "family" is a primary reason why people often join such groups. Are a biological mother, father, and son or daughter who by choice no longer have contact or interaction still a family under this definition? No. Nevertheless, most intact groups that would be considered families under the structural definition would also be defined as families under the process definition. Likewise, the prototypical instance of the process definition family would be the prototypical structural family. Definitions are evaluated based upon their utility. The process definition invites focus on the central communication and social-psychological processes that create the family experience.

Family Typologies

It is not controversial to observe that not all families are alike. The question is, on what systematic basis does one differentiate between families? To say no two families are alike, though true at some level, is of little help in improving understanding. Whereas there are many ways to differentiate between different types of families, a *typology* makes those distinctions systematically based on a set of fundamental principles. As the previous discussion would suggest, these distinctions can be based on variations in structure, function, or process.

Typologies based on structure may differentiate families according to who is considered part of the family system and the biological or legal basis for such inclusion. Variations from the prototypical

nuclear family (two married parents with children) include single-parent families, foster or adoptive families, blended families, civil unions with children, grandparents raising grandchildren, and so on.

Typologies Based on Processes

Several typologies distinguish between families based on distinctions in functions or processes. David Reiss proposed a typology based on the issues or functions that the family is most sensitive to. He suggests that families may be consensus sensitive, interpersonal distance sensitive, or environment sensitive. This typology holds that environment-sensitive families are more likely to produce children who are mentally healthy.

David Kantor and William Lehr proposed an early typology of families based on three targets or goals (affect, power, and meaning) and three access dimensions (space, time, and energy). Family members seek to obtain affect or power or make sense of things using space, time, and energy. Variations in these goals and processes constitute the ways in which families handle the fundamental issue of autonomy and connection. Kantor and Lehr proposed three types of families.

Open families maintain flexible boundaries such that family members freely interact with their environment and the world outside the family and what is learned feeds back to influence the family system. Rules and understandings are also subject to negotiation and change. For example, the parents of a daughter in an open family might always make sure that she gets to spend time with her friends and do things outside the family. However, she must let her parents know beforehand where she is and what she's doing. She might even go away with her friend's family for vacation instead of with her own family.

Closed families maintain more fixed boundaries by interacting less with and being influenced less by the outside world and spend their time and energies on the family. This produces a higher degree of predictability in how they interact and function. For example, a son in a closed family might spend every weekend with his family. On those few occasions he does spend time with his friends, his parents monitor his activities carefully. This family might hold to the motto "what goes on in the family stays in the family."

Random families by contrast tend to be highly unpredictable with members at times maintaining a high degree of separation or autonomy from the family. For example, a child in a random family might never know who will be at home when she comes home from school or where her parents might be. Her family may never all sit down to dinner together. Whereas the open family is flexible, the random family is chaotic and disjointed.

David Olson and his associates use two separate dimensions to distinguish between families: cohesion and flexibility. According to this typology, families that are too extreme on either of these two dimensions are likely to be dysfunctional, whereas those that are more moderate are more functional. If a family is too cohesive (enmeshed) or lacks any cohesion (disengaged), it is dysfunctional, whereas families that are moderate (i.e., connected or separated) are healthier. An enmeshed family may not allow any autonomy for its members or exhibit "codependency" (the inability of members to separate their own feelings from those of others). Disengaged families would be families in name only, but fail to function as a unit. Likewise, families that are either rigid or chaotic (not flexible enough or too flexible) are unhealthy, but moderately flexible or structured families are likely to be healthier. A rigid family adheres so strictly to proscribed rules or structures that family members cannot adapt to changing or novel situations. A chaotic family has so little structure that there is no predictability or coordination of the family unit. The combinations of four levels of these two dimensions produce 16 family types. Whereas the underlying dimensions of the Olson typology are similar to the Kantor and Lehr typology, cohesion and flexibility are viewed as more distinct in the Olson system and Olson makes finer distinctions and, therefore, proposes a more elaborate typology. This typology may have its greatest benefit for family therapists, but may not describe families in ways that the family members themselves would identify with.

Jack McLeod and Steven Chaffee proposed a typology of families based on communication patterns, which was further developed by Mary Anne Fitzpatrick. Families are typed based on their members' self-reports on two aspects of family communication: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. These two dimensions

form the basis by which families create their own social realities.

Families that focus more on conversation and concepts than on conformity in forging their reality are called *pluralistic families*. Their family communication is unconstrained and open regarding all family members. For example, a married couple may be strong Democrats, but when their son begins expressing conservative ideas and supporting Republican candidates, the parents engage him in debate without demanding that he change his views.

Protective families are oriented more toward conformity than toward open conversation and, therefore, their communication is based on conformity to parental authority and limited concern for conceptual issues. Unlike the prior example, such a family would not encourage the expression of views, political or otherwise, conflicting with the parents' expressed worldview.

Families that attempt to use both open conversation focused on concepts *and* adherence to parental authority are termed *consensual families*. Their communication displays the tension that comes from the tendency to conform while attempting to openly discuss new ideas and issues. In the example of differences over political orientation, the family would be in tension until all members were able to negotiate a common family viewpoint.

Finally, when families are focused on neither conformity nor open conversation, they display the uninvolved or disengaged relationships of a *laissez-faire family*. For example, in such a family, members might not know or care about the political positions of other members.

There are clear similarities between the Kantor and Lehr, the Olson, and the McLeod and Chaffee typologies. For example, the descriptions of the random, disengaged, and laissez-faire families are somewhat similar, though not necessarily identical. They come close to not being families under the process definition. For these types to qualify as a family under the process definition, some limited degree of cohesion and coordination are necessary. All of these process typologies consider how families create their own reality, negotiate autonomy and connection, and display predictability or flexibility. However, McLeod and Chaffee's typology does not view any family type as inherently functional or dysfunctional. Rather, each type has its own strengths and weaknesses. There can be functional and dysfunctional families in each of the four types.

C. Arthur VanLear

See also Attachment Theory; Families, Demographic Trends; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Families, Public Policy Issues and; Family Communication; Marital Typologies; Parent–Child Relationships; Sibling Relationships

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FAMILIES, DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

This entry reviews various demographic trends and, in so doing, illustrates the fluidity and complexity of families. Before beginning the discussion, it is

worthwhile to review a few terms. *Demography* is a study of characteristics pertaining to the human population, such as fertility, mortality, structure and distribution, geographic mobility, immigration, emigration, and population density. This includes examining changes over time. *Family demography* involves examining factors associated specifically with the family, such as number of families, presence of children, living arrangements, and relationship status. Much of this information can be obtained from U.S. Census data, which contains a collection of demographic information. This enumeration (or headcount) is mandated by the U.S. Constitution. In a U.S. Census *Current Population Report* developed by Jason Fields (2004), family living arrangements were reviewed.

According to Fields's (2004) report, the Census Bureau developed two typologies—*family households* and *family groups*—in an attempt to assess demographic characteristics of families.

- *Family households*: A household is defined as everyone residing in a housing unit. It may consist of one or more people. The householder is the person who rents or owns the unit. There are family households and nonfamily households. Unlike a household, a family household consists of at least two related people; these people can be related by marriage, birth, or adoption. One of these people is the householder. Children may or may not be present in family households. Family households, according to definitions provided by the census, are maintained either by married couples or by a man or a woman with whom other kin are living. Identifying family households entails asking who in the home is related to the householder.
- *Family groups:* Identifying family groups entails counting family units. In this case, the householder may or may not be a member of the family. This means that family groups include all related and unrelated subfamilies. An example of an unrelated subfamily is a married couple who is not related to the householder. An example of a related subfamily is an offspring and that offspring's spouse living in the household of the offspring's parents.

There were about 76 million family households and 79 million family groups in the United States in 2003.

A factor that generally comes to mind when discussing families is the presence of children. About 60 percent of nonmarried-couple family groups and 45 percent of married-couple family groups included an own child under the age of 18 years in 2003. The proportion of large family groups with children decreased between 1970 and 2003. For example, the proportion of family groups with four or more children was 17 percent in 1970, 8 percent in 1980, 5 percent in 1990, and 5 percent in 2003. Some children living in the homes were older. In 1960, 52 percent of family households included a male adult child aged 18 to 24. In 2006, that figure was 53.7 percent. In 2006, about 14.3 percent of family households included male children aged 25 to 34 living with their parents and 9 percent included adult female children in that age range. There are many possible reasons that adult children return to their parents' home; they may return in need of support as a result of job loss, poor economy, or divorce.

Relationship Status: Trends Among the Married, Never-Married, and Divorced

Although more than 80 percent of the U.S. population will eventually marry, the proportion of nonfamily households has increased since 1970. One reason for this increase is the rise in the age at first marriage. Age at first marriage was reviewed by Jason Fields, who reported that among men, the median age at first marriage was 23.2 in 1970, 24.7 in 1980, 26.1 in 1990, 26.8 in 2000, and 27.1 in 2003. Among women, the median age at first marriage was 20.8 in 1970, 22.0 in 1980, 23.9 in 1990, 25.1 in 2000, and 25.3 in 2003. Although age at first marriage increased for both men and women, women married at younger ages than men did. The proportion of never-married men and women increased slightly during the aforementioned decades. For example, among men, the proportion never-married was 28.1 percent in 1970 but 32.1 percent in 2003. Among women, the proportion never-married was 22.1 percent in 1970 and 25.4 percent in 2003.

A careful examination of specific age groups reveal that between 1970 and 2003, the proportion of never-married women 20 to 24 years old increased more than twofold (that is, 36 percent to

75 percent) and increased more than threefold (6 percent to 23 percent) for women 30 to 34 years old. Significant changes were also observed among men. The proportion of 20- to 24-year-old never-married men increased from 55 percent (1970) to 86 percent (2003); the proportion of 30- to 34-year-old never-married men increased from 9 percent (1970) to 33 percent (2003). Though the proportion of never-married increased, the proportion married decreased. Among men, the proportion married was 65.4 percent in 1970, 61.4 percent in 1980, 58.7 percent 1990, 56.1 percent in 2000, and 55.4 percent in 2003. Similarly, among women, the proportion married was 59.7 percent in 1970, 56.1 percent in 1980, 54.0 percent in 1990, 52.3 percent in 2000, and 51.6 percent in 2003. Socioeconomic status (SES) plays a significant role in marriage trends. The attractiveness, as well as the size, of the marriage pool affects the options of low-income women. Furthermore, an imbalance in the ratio of women to men among the severely economically disadvantaged hinders the ability of women to find spouses. Key trends contribute to this occurrence, such as higher mortality rates among marriageable-aged, low-income men compared with women and the incarceration of a greater proportion of marriageable- aged, low-income men. Although some issues cut across race, other issues tend to be more race-specific. Census data provide information about Whites, Blacks, Asians, American Indians/Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islanders.

According to the U.S. Census 2000 brief *Marital Status: 2000,* by Rose Kreider and Tavia Simmons, which was issued in 2003, of all the racial groups, Blacks represented the lowest proportion married; moreover, there was a difference between women and men. Forty-two percent of Black men were married, compared with only 31 percent of Black women. That was the largest difference between men and women among any of the groups. Of all the racial groups, Black men and women also represented the largest proportion who had never been married in the year 2000. Blacks represented the *lowest* proportion married, whereas Asians represented the *highest* proportion married (women, 61 percent; men, 60 percent). Besides racial differences, there are regional differences in marital status as well as differences by state.

For example, states with the highest proportion of people *married* when Census 2000 was taken were Idaho (60 percent) and Utah (59 percent). New York and Massachusetts had the highest proportion of *never-married* people; the proportions were 32 percent and 31 percent, respectively.

Just as marriage trends differed by sex, state, and race/ethnicity, such differences also existed in divorce and separation. In 1970, 3.5 percent of men and 5.7 percent of women were separated or divorced; in 2003, that figure was 10.1 percent for men and 13.3 percent for women, according to Fields's report. When the Census 2000 was taken, Asians represented the lowest proportion separated and divorced (women, 7 percent; men, 4 percent), which means that Asians were less likely to divorce than were other groups. Those representing the highest proportion divorced when Census 2000 was taken were American Indians and Alaskan natives. The state with the lowest proportion of divorced adults was New Jersey (7.5 percent), and the state with the highest proportion divorced was Nevada (14 percent), according to Kreider and Simmons. Instead of married or divorced, some people fell under the category of unmarried-partner households.

Unmarried-Partner Households

The proportion of unmarried-partner households has been increasing. Cohabitation began growing in the 1970s and increased in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1996, 2.9 percent of households were categorized as unmarried-partner households; that proportion increased to 4.2 percent in 2003. More than 4 million households consisted of a householder living with someone of the opposite sex as an unmarried partner in 2003. This may be an underrepresentation for at least two main reasons. First, some people may be hesitant to describe themselves as cohabiting and may alternatively label themselves as friends or roommates. Second, according to Fields, all unmarried couples in a given household are not counted; only householders and their partners are counted. Decades ago, many cohabiting relationships tended to lead to marriage. In the 1970s, about 60 percent of cohabiting relationships resulted in marriage within a time span of about 3 years. That figure

dropped to 33 percent 20 years later. Andrew Cherlin explained that this reflects the trend that fewer trial marriages are leading to actual marriages. Perhaps cohabiting unions are not necessarily trial marital unions.

Relatively New Addition to Decennial Census: Grandparental Caregiving

Earlier, the presence of children was discussed. Not all children are taken care of by their parents. Some are raised—for either brief or extended periods—by their grandparents. Census 2000 marked the first time the decennial census included questions about grandparents serving in the role of caregivers for their grandchildren. This is yet another indication of the complexity of families. Once again reviewing a few terms is worthwhile:

The *Census 2000 Brief* prepared by Tavia Simmons and Jane Lawler Dye indicated that 5.8 million people aged 30 or older living in households in the United States were coresident grandparents—meaning that they were living with grandchildren who were younger than 18 years of age. About 2.4 million of those coresident grandparents *grandparent caregivers*. More than 90 percent of grandparent caregivers were the *householder* or spouse of the householder. Some of those households are referred to as *skipped generation households* because the parents of the grandchildren are not living in the home.

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See also Age at First Marriage; Culture and Relationships; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship; Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends; Marriage Markets; Singlehood

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FAMILIES, INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN

Intergenerational family relationships are those between family members within a common lineage. Although such relationships tend to be primarily biological, they also arise through adoption, as well as step- and quasi-family arrangements. Although studies of parent–child relations have dominated the literature, a great deal of attention

has also focused on relationships between non-adjacent generations such as those between grandparents and grandchildren. These relationships are noteworthy for their stability and their sheer longevity. With human life expectancy almost doubling in length since the beginning of the 20th century, it is now common for children to reach midlife, and not unusual to reach old age, with at least one parent still alive. Similarly, it has become routine for grandparents to live long enough to see their grandchildren reach young adulthood and beyond. This entry focuses on intergenerational family relationships of older adults with their adult children and grandchildren.

Theoretical Perspectives on Intergenerational Relations

During the past several decades, the study of intergenerational relationships has been principally guided by two conceptual orientations: the solidarity-conflict paradigm and Ambivalence Theory. Building on theoretical and empirical advances in the social psychology of small group cohesion, the solidarity-conflict paradigm codifies the sentiments, behaviors, attitudes, values, and structural arrangements that bind the generations. This scheme is operationalized along seven dimensions: affectual solidarity (emotional cohesion), associational solidarity (social interaction), structural solidarity (opportunities for interaction based on geographic proximity as well as family size and gender composition), functional solidarity (support and assistance), normative solidarity (filial obligation), consensual solidarity (agreement on values and opinions), and functional solidarity (provisions of material, instrumental, and social support of intergenerational family members). Continuing efforts to refine the solidarity model have resulted in the inclusion of intergenerational conflict as a principal dimension. Although conflict was originally conceptualized as the absence of solidarity, it subsequently began to be considered a form of engagement that could exist alongside positive aspects of solidarity.

Most research suggests that the dimensions of solidarity are all-inclusive descriptors of the strength of intergenerational bonds, but other research finds that the dimensions are not additive and do not form a unitary scale. Alternatives to examining these dimensions additively include clustering approaches that allow the identification of relationship types based on various combinations of the dimensions. Using five dimensions from the solidarity model, the following general types of parent–child relationships were identified in national data: (a) *tight-knit,* characterized by high levels on all dimensions of solidarity; (b) *sociable,* characterized by frequent contact, shared values, and emotional closeness, but little exchange of support; (c) *obligatory,* characterized by frequent contact and exchange of support, but emotionally distant and with few shared values; (d) *intimate but distant,* characterized by emotional closeness and shared values but with infrequent contact and little exchange of assistance; and (e) *detached,* characterized by low levels on all dimensions. Although a plurality of relationships fell into the tight-knit type, the three variegated types—strong on some dimensions and weak on others—formed a majority when taken together. Thus, intergenerational relationships are diverse and complex in form, with most falling somewhere between the polarities of tight-knit and detached.

In recent years, the concept of ambivalence has received much attention as either a competing or complementary perspective to the Solidarity-Conflict Model. *Ambivalence* refers to the coexistence of both positive and negative feelings about those in other generations, often described as having "mixed feelings" toward another. An evolving scholarly debate centers on the question of whether ambivalence is an emergent property of relationships, one that is irreducible to any constituent parts, or whether it can be conceptualized as the intersection of attractive and repulsive tendencies in relationships.

Attempts to bridge the conceptual divide have explicitly incorporated ambivalence into the Solidarity-Conflict Model as the space where opposing dimensions of solidarity and conflict meet to describe contradictory aspects of relationships. Other more critical approaches ask how pressures outside the family such as work responsibilities produce ambivalence by introducing competing demands that tear individuals in two directions with regard to their intergenerational relationships—a phenomenon known as structural ambivalence. Several investigations into sources of

ambivalence in late-life intergenerational relationships have centered on the negotiations surrounding caregiving and the attendant tensions between autonomy and dependency of the older adult and role-reversal of the caregiver.

Life-Span Models of Intergenerational Relationships

Styles of intergenerational relationships in adulthood have their roots in early family experiences. This perspective stresses continuity in intergenerational ties. A key example is the body of research that demonstrates how the strength of parent–child attachment early in the family life cycle is linked to whether adult children provide care to frail aging parents much later in the family life cycle.

Other perspectives consider life-course variations in intergenerational relations based on dynamic conditions in the family. Mapped over the lifetimes of families, norms of filial obligation for older parents, for instance, were found to peak in the middle age of adult children and decline in strength thereafter. Affection for aging parents has been found to be largely stable, but tends to decline with the onset of functional disability that sometimes imposes difficult demands on adult children.

An exchange perspective posits that intergenerational relationships are guided by the principle of reciprocity, predicated on the notion that stable relationships strive toward balance in their exchange of resources. This perspective maintains that the obligation to repay a debt is no less found in intergenerational family relations than it is in market relations—but with a crucial difference. Given that intergenerational relationships are rarely abrogated, they are capable of tolerating relatively long periods of imbalance until the direction of support shifts. Research has shown that parents who provided greater investments of time, money, and emotion in their adolescent and young-adult children tend to receive more social support from those children decades later when old-age vulnerabilities emerge. The metaphor of the "support-bank" has been used to describe this long-term pattern of reciprocity.

Another way parents influence their children is by demonstrating the desired behavior to them. Parents model behaviors they hope their young offspring will eventually emulate toward them, such as caregiving or sharing time with an older parent. Parents also train or socialize their children to feel responsible for elders in the family. Filial responsibility of adult children has been conceptualized as a form of invested social or moral capital, whereby parents who instilled in their children the duty to help older generations are able to "withdraw" that capital in the form of support.

Social Change and Intergenerational Relationships

Social and demographic changes in the family have been the object of much scrutiny in the study of intergenerational relationships because they influence both kinship structure and function. Declining fertility and increasing divorce rates, combined with the rising labor force participation of women, have raised concerns about the continued viability of intergenerational support for the aged. Evidence shows that older divorced fathers may be particularly at-risk of experiencing support deficits. Demographic shifts can also cause intergenerational realignments. For instance, female labor force participation has reduced the amount of care mothers offer their children but has also increased the likelihood that grandmothers will provide childcare.

Accounting for these social changes has resulted in the need to develop new models of complex family forms. An alternative perspective is that marital disruption and remarriage, and the various family recombinations that result, have increased the kin supply by adding stepkin to biological kin in the support portfolio available to older adults. One example of such a model is the "latent kin matrix" that brings to light how intergenerational relations are negotiated and actively constructed, but also emphasizes greater uncertainty in the durability of these more volitional family ties.

By some accounts, the basis of family life is threatened by reductions in fertility and by the growth of the childless population. Preferences for family size are affected by the perceived cost and value of children. Today, the value of children is tied more to their emotional than to their utilitarian benefits. For example, having children is less needed than in the past to ensure old age support;

public transfer programs and private investments now provide economic security in retirement, and supportive services can be privately purchased or provided by the government. In the developed world, and ever more so in developing nations, fewer parents expect or want their children to be their sole sources of support when they are old.

Demographic change and improvements in population health have also altered multigenerational family roles. Increased longevity and later childbearing have produced families with more surviving generations but with fewer members per family. These elongated family lineages have increased the number of middle-aged individuals who are simultaneously caring for frail older parents and young children or grandchildren. Although there is debate about the prevalence of such families in the population, those in the so-called sandwich generation clearly face difficult challenges if they are still working in the labor force and have fewer siblings with whom to divide the labor in caring for older parents.

Intergenerational Relations in National Context

The availability of internationally comparative data has sparked empirical investigations concerning the role played by national context in microfamily interactions and support. Specifically, relationship intensity, as measured by proximity and frequency of contact, are weaker in nations that are more geographically mobile, possess a less coercive family culture, and have a more liberal public service sector. Thus, older adults in Western Europe tend more to rely on state-provided economic and instrumental support compared with older adults in Southern and Eastern European nations, who tend more to rely on family members for needed support. In part, this pattern reflects fundamental differences in whether intergenerational responsibility for older people is primarily considered a collective responsibility or mainly considered a private concern. In the United States, this tension is reflected in current policy debates about whether Social Security should remain a program that redistributes economic resources across generations or should be privatized as an individual investment vehicle.

Nowhere have intergenerational relations changed more radically than in developing nations of the world. Profound social and economic changes have shifted the center of gravity of the family from being elder-centered to being youth-centered. Extended family structures in many developing countries have traditionally been the basis for economic production, providing older adults with both power and the ability to rely on the wider kinship network. However, recent changes, such as the declining importance of agriculture, rural-to-urban migration of working-age adults, and greater education of youth, have reduced the primacy of the older generation. The ideology of filial piety, found in most East Asian nations, is almost certainly in decline when defined by the degree of intergenerational coresidence. However, other expressions of filial piety remain strong and have even been enhanced by economic growth, such as providing financial support to older parents. The accumulated impact of social change is already altering traditional expectations and forcing the adaptation of social understandings between generations.

Grandparent–Grandchild Relations

Advances in life expectancy increased the availability of grandparents dramatically during the 20th century. Whereas in 1900, only about one-quarter of children were born with all four grandparents alive, today that proportion has risen to slightly more than two-thirds. Grandparenting is a common family role and is currently occupied by about 70 percent of persons in the United States older than age 50. However, declining fertility rates raise the specter of increasing grandchildlessness, as well as increasing competition among grandparents for the attention of fewer grandchildren.

Grandparents vary markedly in the way they enact their roles, ranging from having sole custody of grandchildren to being remote figures in their lives. Generally, grandparents serve as secure attachment figures and confidants to grandchildren, sometimes compensating for various gaps and deficits in the family. For example, grandchildren raised in single-parent and divorced families particularly benefit in their social and emotional development from having close relations with grandparents, as do grandchildren in families with

working parents. A large body of literature focuses on the circumstances of the roughly 10 percent of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. These studies find that custodial grandparents are self-sacrificing and committed caregivers who heroically substitute for parents under the most dire of family conditions, such as drug and alcohol abuse, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, and extreme poverty.

A wide range of factors influences the nature of grandparent–grandchild relations; these include the grandparent's and grandchild's gender, lineage (paternal or maternal), age, family structure, and race/ethnicity. Factors that are out of the control of grandparents and grandchildren influence the way their relationships are maintained. Geographic mobility and divorce of parents, as well as the quality of the grandparent–parent relationship, strongly affect how much access grandparents and grandchildren have to each other. Advances in digital communication technology have mitigated some of the effects of these disruptions, enabling grandparents and grandchildren to maintain independent relationships and stay in touch whether they are across the block or across the world.

Merril Silverstein and Sarah Ruiz

See also Caregiving Across the Life Span; Family Functioning; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship; Social Exchange Theory; Social Support and Health

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FAMILIES, PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES AND

This entry describes current thinking about a significant type of public policy in the United States—family policy. As the diversity of U.S. society and culture has continued to grow, there has been corresponding debate and discussion of the meaning of the concept *family*. For some, the term refers to individuals related by blood (traditional), marriage, or legal adoption. For others, a broader definition that reflects changing demographics and cultural attitudes is more appropriate and useful. In fact, there is no universal definition of family even though everyone grows up in some constellation of people that they consider "family."

In parallel fashion, in the realm of policy, there is ongoing debate about what "family policy" actually is. From one perspective, it is about policy that explicitly pertains to the business of families (e.g., mutual personal and economic support, procreation, care giving, rearing the next generation). From a broader view, anything and everything that happens in policy (whether in the public or private sector) eventually influences families. Therefore, all policy can be viewed as family policy. A fundamental aspect in discussions of family policy concerns a long-held value in U.S. society that seeks to limit the role of government in family life, that is, to limit the role of public policy in family life. This idea will be expanded in the last section of this entry.

When the two concepts (family and policy) are brought together, that is, when *family* is used as an adjective to modify the term *policy,* the full

range of different worldviews, political agendas, and ideologies are brought to the fore. So, although all policy involves politics to one degree or another, the kinds of debates that characterize family policy are particularly subject to strong ideologically based discussion.

Definitions

Karen Bogenschneider articulated a broad definition of *policy* as a statement, regulation, rule, law, or code adopted for pursuing a course of action. Policies are developed by governments, businesses or other organizations, individuals, families, teachers, coaches, friends, and spouses—to name just a few possibilities. Therefore, *public policy* is but one kind of policy, that which is proposed and produced by any branch of government (executive, legislative, judicial) at any level of government (federal, state, local). Public policy includes every manner of interest to governments and to citizens, for example, defense policy, health policy, environmental policy, monetary policy, and, indeed, family policy. *Family policies* affect families in one or more ways, but family policies may or may not be public policies.

Here are several examples of policies (1–3 are public policies that affect families, whereas 4 and 5 are private sector family policies):

1. Public Law 94-142 (1975), Education of All Handicapped Children Act (now, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) provides among other things for a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities.

2. There will be a 60 percent increase in the minimum wage phased in over a 5-year period.

3. In a state, there is a legal right for same-sex couples to marry, or there is not a legal right to do the same.

4. A family agrees that "we will eat at least 3 dinners a week at home together."

5. A company will provide, for full-time workers who have been in its employ for more than 10 months, 4 days of paid leave per year to perform home care for family members.

Contextual Issues, Public Policy, and Families

As is the case of family development generally, public policies of importance to families are not islands unto themselves. During the most recent three to four decades, family scholars such as Urie Bronfenbrenner (the ecology of human development), Richard Lerner (developmental contextualism), and Glen Elder Jr. (family life course development) have developed comprehensive approaches to explain the role that extra-familial factors play in family issues more fully. During this same period, there have been significant demographic changes in family structure and functioning in U.S. society, just as there have been in most other countries.

Bronfenbrenner conceptualized these multiple contextual influences on families as a set of interacting systems. The microsystem comprises the family itself—all their relationships, the time family members spend together, the various roles that each performs—and all other systems that contain the family. The church, a community center, a neighborhood, and extended family are all examples of microsystems in which families directly participate. The exosystems that influence families do not contain the family on a regular basis but, rather, indirectly influence families through a process of filtering in which decisions and judgments by others affect the family—for example, a school board meeting, the board room of a public company for which a family member works, a state legislature, a business or company's health care and other benefits or changes in those, and so on. The macrosystem is yet further removed from direct family context and is the set of societal values, ideologies, laws, and mores that contribute to setting the tone for families in the society.

Neighborhood quality, local and national unemployment levels, quality of available dependent care, policy related to food and drug safety, and workplace policy pertaining to flextime and family leave provide a sampling of issues that both affect and are affected by public and family policy.

On a broader level, it is increasingly observed that national public policies—whether specifically aimed to affect families or, more often, not articulating potential impacts on families—can have strong and enduring impacts on families. For example, consider the effects on families of prison

policy, of whether the nation is at war, of the condition of the national economy, or of trade policy. Although researchers, the general public, politicians, and the media continue to debate what family policy is, whether public and family policy should be less or more expansive, and what the roles and responsibilities of public and private sector policies should be relative to families, U.S. society is increasingly locating families at the center of public policy considerations. Given the high economic and social importance of individual and family development, increased understanding by policymakers and citizens of several essential core policy issues is paramount.

Core Policy Issues

The core policy issues discussed in this section are relevant for all types of public policy, but they are particularly relevant to the family policy realm. In addition, of the four issues discussed, the first, the essential tension between family privacy and government (state) involvement in families, is most influential to U.S. society. This matter is ideological in two senses: first, in relation to the founding of the nation primarily because of inordinate involvement by the monarchy in all aspects of colonial life. Second, although involvement of the community in private family life was acceptable, and even desirable given the challenges to basic survival in the 17th and 18th centuries, colonists drew a sharp differentiation between community involvement and state involvement.

One example of how this tension has reverberated through U.S. history is seen in the history of child abuse legislation. In the mid 1870s, the first case of child abuse was prosecuted by using the laws against cruelty to animals. Thereafter, it took almost 100 years before the individual states in the United States passed child abuse laws to protect children. In effect, these laws gave the government permission to intervene in family life in ways that had previously been unthinkable. These developments bear witness to the deeply held belief that family privacy and government involvement in families are not easily reconciled matters.

A second core policy issue is the issue of direct (explicit) or indirect (implicit) family policy. The focus here is on whether the stated intention of the policy is to affect families in some way. Examples of explicit public family policies are the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 and the Earned Income Tax Credit (first passed in 1975 and expanded periodically since). Examples of implicit policy include the increase in the minimum wage (focused on individual earners in low-paying jobs), which helped increase family income in low-income families, and the changes in U.S. prison sentencing laws in the 1990s, which has affected families in which the father or mother was imprisoned for minor substance-use offenses.

These latter kinds of often unintended outcomes lend support to the broader conceptualizations of family policy, exemplified perhaps most clearly by Sheila Kamerman and Alfred Kahn. Essentially, these approaches assume that any policy (whether aimed at family outcomes or not) has at least the potential to affect families. From this perspective, all policies should be analyzed for their potential impact on families—so-called family impact analysis, which is akin to the environmental impact statement. Others, such as Gilbert Steiner, see this view as much too broad because it includes all (public) policy and does not, therefore, make meaningful distinctions.

A third core policy issue concerns the issue of cost: direct, indirect, short-term, and long-term. The U.S. political system, much like a private sector that often focuses on immediate rather than long-term profit or cost, often does not lend itself easily to long-term strategic thinking. Thus, many considerations of family and public policy focus primarily on short-term direct costs. For example, discussions about educational funding often take this approach even though it is well established that most investments in early childhood education and intervention, investments in childhood immunization programs, and many other prevention policies more than recoup their short-term costs.

Another core policy issue concerns whether the goal of a policy is seen primarily as a "public good" or a "private good." Consider education: Is education a public good (a benefit to the society at large) or a private good (a benefit to the individual only)? The answer to this question would likely be linked to one's position on a proposed tax levy to support school funding. Just as the matter of cost is more complex than it first appears, so is the

answer to the question of whether a policy goal is a private good or a public good. In the case of education, for example, the conclusion that it is a private good is supported by the research data showing that economic and other benefits accrue to individuals in direct relation to their years of completed education. However, from a broader perspective, years of education are associated with lower likelihood of violent criminal activity, more years of employment, greater tax payments to the public treasury, and so on—outcomes that support the belief that education is a public good.

Conclusion

Policy, and family policy in particular, is inherently political in nature. When problem definitions and proposed policy solutions consider historical, contextual, and cross-cultural data and experience, they are more likely to be at least partially data based and less likely to be entirely ideologically driven. Finally, the level and quality of explicit family policies vary widely from country to country, as does the degree to which those policies reflect more individual-oriented or more family-oriented approaches to addressing family issues.

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See also Child Abuse and Neglect; Developmental Designs; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Family Data, Analysis of; Public Policy and Relationships; Values and Relationships; Work–Family Conflict; Work–Family Spillover

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FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Family interaction constructs and reflects family relationships and supports members' management of everyday life. In addition to creating families through blood and legal ties, many family members establish and manage their identity and relational ties, in whole or part, through their communication practices. As individuals live longer and experience varied family structures, these issues of meaning and identity become complex.

Change characterizes contemporary family life. No one majority family form exists in the United States. Although U.S. residents continue to marry, and wedded couples account for a slight majority of U.S. households, many of these relationships represent a second or third marriage for at least one partner. Whereas the divorce rate appears to have stabilized, almost half of all marriages still result in divorce; a high percentage of these divorced individuals choose to remarry one or more times, often creating stepfamilies. The percentage of single-parent families continues to rise, as does the number of cohabiting partners. Increasingly, families, including single parents and same-sex partners, are formed in whole or in part through the use of reproductive technologies, surrogacy, and adoption.

As more families reflect ethnic, religious, and class differences, as well as complex structural variation, members confront challenges in incorporating significant differences into their management of family identity. Many families are defining themselves, for themselves and others, through their interactions. The more complex the family

membership, the more family identity becomes dependent on discourse or talk among family members and between family members and outsiders. Through such talk, family members coordinate their understandings of how their family is formed and maintained.

David Olson's research reveals three central dimensions of behavior that family members must manage: cohesion, adaptability, and communication. Cohesion involves emotional bonding as well as acceptable levels of autonomy that family members experience. Cohesion is represented in areas such as adult partner relationships, family members' involvement with each other, subgroups and coalitions, and internal and external family boundaries. Adaptability, or a family's capacity to alter rules, roles, and power in response to stress, is evidenced through dimensions such as leadership, discipline, and negotiation. Communication facilitates the maintenance or change of patterns within these two dimensions. This entry focuses on the role of communication patterns across all stages of family life.

Family Communication Patterns That Influence Meanings

Families actively engage in *meaning making,* or creating shared understandings, of how members view the world. Shared meanings develop over time through the continuous interpretation of, and response to, interpersonal messages and family members' reactions to life events. Family meanings establish family identity as they evolve into patterns over time. Family communication patterns tend to move across generations, unless deliberately rejected. Each generation, consciously or unconsciously, teaches the next generation practices for managing issues such as those involving intimacy, conflict, and stress.

Family communication patterns can be traced across three and four generations on genograms (family trees depicting family relationships and interaction patterns). Unique family heritages and cultural norms influence the communication patterns passed through generations. Family meanings commonly emerge from patterns in the following areas: communication rules, narratives, and rituals.

Family Communication Rules

Every family develops and conveys rules for its members. Rules involve shared understandings of what communicative practices are appropriate in various circumstances. Relational rules indicate expectations for behavior between and among family members. Children are taught what can be talked about, how it can be talked about, and who is allowed to hear. As partners form new families, they often struggle with coordinating the different rules they learned in their previous family experiences. Rules are learned implicitly (e.g., a parental disapproving look) as well as explicitly (e.g., "Never tell anyone Dad got a DUI"). Cultural norms influence family communication rules; children raised in Chinese families may learn different rules for disagreeing with parents than do children raised in Jewish families.

Secrets, a critical subset of family communication rules, involve information that one or more members purposely conceals. Rules for creating, keeping, and revealing secrets shape family interaction patterns, establishing boundaries between the family and the outside world or between individual members. Family secrets range from causing pleasurable surprise to poisoning relationships. Secrets serve functions such as bonding members, maintaining relationships, or defending the family. Secrecy is often created or revealed at periods of family change, such as the birth of a child or a divorce. Secrets may be maintained across generations. For instance, families of Holocaust survivors often operate based on rules of silence regarding relatives' experiences; similarly, parents diagnosed with HIV struggle with whether to tell their children.

Family Narratives

Research suggests that family stories serve many functions: remembering key persons and events, creating a family identity, teaching values and expectations, socializing new members, providing family stability by connecting generations, and entertaining members. Stories remind members of their heritage and reinforce family themes, such as "The Carsons Stick Together." For examples, survival narratives frequently are found in stories about overcoming adversity, such as immigration stories. These are told to the next generations, reinforcing family roots and values. Many family

stories are lost because of circumstances such as divorce or relational distancing. Historically, secrecy developed around issues such as adoption, criminal behavior, and violation of family values; the silence results in lost or inaccurate stories. Researchers who study how family members tell their stories report different styles of storytelling by married couples, ranging from skilled joint performances to individual performances marked by member disagreements. A recent study of family triads telling stories revealed that the most common family narratives depicted dealing with stress.

Family Rituals

Family rituals communicatively connect and maintain relationships while reinforcing family values. Rituals may involve two or three members, such as a father and his young children making pancakes together every Sunday morning, or extended family groups, such as birthday gatherings. Additionally, rituals connect families to cultural practices, for example, Thanksgiving dinner or Kwanzaa. Intergenerational rituals may involve attending sporting events or sharing a summer vacation home, which connect generations. Frequently grandparents develop their own rituals with grandchildren. Weddings, graduations, and funerals serve as family ceremonials providing opportunities for significant member interaction involving storytelling, reminiscing, and catching up.

Family rituals may create complications. Many newly formed blended families struggle to learn how to selectively enact some of the family traditions from the former family while developing their own identifying rituals. Although family rituals are usually positive, families may sometimes enact negative rituals, such as when one or more members are repeatedly hurt by others' behavior. When living with alcoholism, drug abuse, or aggression, members often encounter painful ritualistic arguments or physical violence. Ritualistic verbal or physical abuse can damage adult–child or sibling connections.

A central communicative function of family life is to manage predictable tensions or relational dialectics. A dialectic approach to family communication suggests family life involves managing constant tensions as members manage their relationships through their give-and-take on multiple competing issues, such as separateness and connectedness, novelty and predictability, and openness and closedness. These tensions raise questions such as the following: How much openness or privacy works for each of us in this relationship? What levels of closeness or distance create a workable relationship for us? Family members manage dialectical tensions through a variety of communicative strategies. These strategies include choosing one of the opposing poles (e.g., disclosing everything and rejecting personal privacy), adapting behavior to varying contexts or circumstances, or switching between one pole and the other. Although most dialectical family research addresses interfamily interactions, other tensions may play out as a subunit (e.g., partners) relates to outsiders, such as a boss or friend, while managing tensions around personal disclosure or spending time with others.

Relational Maintenance and Intimacy

Maintaining family relationships is a significant communicative task that involves keeping a relationship in satisfactory condition or repairing a damaged relationship. Usually family members interact according to patterns without consciously considering their behaviors. Occasionally, members consciously enact certain communication behaviors to nurture and maintain relationships. Research demonstrates that people who engage in ongoing relational maintenance behaviors, or make efforts to support the relationship and each other's needs, tend to stay together and find greater satisfaction. Studies of marital maintenance by Daniel Canary and Laura Stafford reveal five key maintenance strategies—(1) expressing positivity and avoiding criticism, (2) being open or self-disclosing and sharing feelings about the relational issues, (3) giving assurances of commitment to a future connection, (4) sharing social networks of family and friends, and (5) sharing tasks. Many of these strategies can apply to other family ties within the immediate or extended family. Siblings may work to maintain their relationships through strategies such as visits, humor, aggression, and role modeling. John Gottman's research reveals that marital maintenance can be helped by a "5:1 magic ratio of positivity to negativity." In other words, partners in stable couples

were characterized by making five times more positive communicative behaviors toward each other than negative behaviors.

Intimacy involves a strong sense of commitment, connection, and devotion. Family members develop intimate relationships that reflect the nature of their bond (e.g., grandparent–grandchild) and the caretaking behaviors each person brings to their relationship. Developing and maintaining such intimacy requires effort and attention to the needs of the other. For example, sharing relational currencies, or messages that express affection, contributes to family intimacy. Relational currencies arise from family-of-origin patterns for sharing affection and may differ across family life stages and cultures. Some currencies, such as positive verbal statements, listening, touch, and adult sexuality, send direct messages about the level of caring. Other currencies, such as money, favors, staying in touch, or spending time together, require more careful interpretation. Satisfaction comes when both parties agree on the meaning of the act—when a sister understands that her brother's regular e-mails are a way of showing he cares. However, if the sister needs to hear compliments or endearments from her brother, his desire to demonstrate care via e-mail is lost.

Voluntary self-disclosure, another example of a relational currency, may deepen relational ties among family members old enough to appreciate the risk and level of commitment involved. Adult partners build intimate ties, in part, by sharing deep feelings with each other and expressing honestly their positive or negative feelings about issues that affect the relationship. In functional families, parents and children learn to share more personal and private information during periods of late adolescent and adulthood. Openness may result in feelings of sadness or anger in other members, necessitating discussion and, possibly, forgiveness. The act of forgiveness affects relational longevity and connection. Sometimes forgiveness implies an explicit renegotiation of a relationship through metacommunication, or communicating about the way one or more family members communicate.

Family Typologies

Family typologies provide one way to generalize about groups of families with similar characteristics.

Early research identified *open, closed,* and *random* family types. Closed families are characterized by predictability and regularity, open families by flexibility and variability, and random families by fluctuations and unpredictability. More recently, Mary Anne Fitzpatrick and L. David Ritchie described four types of families based on the family's orientation to conformity and their orientation toward open communication. Orientation toward conformity and orientation toward communication can be thought of as being on two axes. *Consensual* families are high in both conversation and conformity strategies. Their communication is characterized by pressure for agreement after an expression of ideas or desires. *Pluralistic* families are high in conversation and low in conformity, support open communication, and avoid pressuring for conformity. *Protective* families resist open communication and value regulation and conformity. Finally, members of *laissez-faire* families value individualism, interacting little because of their pattern of nonconformity and their lack of support for conversation. Such family communication styles affect the adults' partnering and parenting practices as well as children's communication practices.

Conflict and Challenges

Conflict, a source of distress and growth, is a necessary and predictable part of family life. A total absence of conflict may lead to negative long-term consequences because differences are suppressed. Everyday family life often involves the exchange of hurtful messages such as accusations, teasing, or negative evaluations. Family members may respond to hurtful messages through confronting the statements, acquiescing, or appearing invulnerable. Recurring patterns characterize marital and family conflict; couples conflict over the same issues approximately 70 percent of the time. Nonproductive, repetitive family conflicts tend to move through stages beginning with a predictable trigger, followed by frustration awareness, active confrontation, temporary solution or nonsolution (e.g., leaving the room), and routine follow-up behaviors. Gottman's research identifies a pattern of marital distress and dissolution beginning with criticizing, followed by contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling, although over time couples may

display certain distress patterns more frequently. Unless outside circumstances change or members work together to eliminate such patterns, they will continue indefinitely. Conflict produces growth when members can manage their differences with respect and flexibility. The capacity to forgive and to accept forgiveness remains central to ongoing marital and family satisfaction.

Power, Influence, and Decision Making

Families' daily interactions are affected greatly by how power and influence are used and how decisions are made. Each family member holds some power over his or her and often others' behavior. This power is generally mutually constructed—for example, a child may have power over his parents by acting out to get attention. If the parents instead choose to ignore the child's poor behavior, the child loses power. Each family member may rely on different resources for power. A father might use his role as breadwinner to assert power over the family's financial decisions; a child might discover that her ability to make others laugh gives her power to avoid punishments for breaking rules.

Influence, or using power to try to change or modify another family member's beliefs or behaviors, is central to a family's daily interactions. A parent may try to persuade an adult child to bring her husband and children home for Christmas, or a child may try to persuade an older sibling to lend him money. Researchers have identified a variety of strategies used in trying to influence family members, including bargaining, begging, and emotional appeals through pouting or "sweet talking."

Family life requires frequent decision making. Smaller, routine decisions (e.g., which brand of orange juice to buy) may be made routinely by a family member assuming a certain role. Other, larger decisions (e.g., where to go on a family vacation, how to spend an income tax refund) may be made only after much discussion and input from various family members. Decisions may ultimately be characterized as any of the following: (a) consensus—all family members agree on the final decision after discussion and often compromise; (b) accommodation—some family members just "give in" to others to end the discussion; or (c) de facto—no agreement is reached and one family member acts despite that.

Family Communication Challenges

Recent developments in areas of health and technology confront many families with unforeseen challenges. In particular, families face challenges in managing members' health as life expectancy increases. Currently, communication researchers are studying the ways in which family members discuss health-promoting practices (e.g., brushing teeth and exercising) and health risk-reduction behaviors (e.g., moderation in drinking or practicing safe sex). An examination of a family's health rules and how those rules guide adolescent behavior reveals that highly expressive families rate lower on health compliance and conformity-oriented families rate higher on shared understanding of health rules.

Ongoing research on marital couples reveals that the quality of married couples' interactions affects physical health through changes such as blood pressure or heart beats per minute. Conflict has a particularly negative effect on wives' health. Research reveals identifiable communication patterns, such as verbal (name calling) or nonverbal (eye rolling) displays of contempt that characterize families affected by alcoholism, drug abuse, eating disorders, or mental illness. Any time a family member is diagnosed with a disease ranging from cancer to Alzheimer's disease, other family members experience pressures from new roles, such as acting as a patient advocate or becoming a caregiver. Ongoing genetic research affects family interaction. Family discussions about genetic risk center on identifying who is at risk, deciding whether and how to disclose this risk to family members, and supporting family members managing genetic diseases.

Technological advances, such as the Internet and other interactive technologies, have altered family life significantly. Traditional family hierarchical structures are experiencing role reversals as more children develop skills and acquire information unfamiliar to their parents. Adolescence and young adulthood no longer imply powerful generational separations as cell phones, e-mail, text messaging, and tracking devices increasingly

involve parents and offspring in continual interaction. As adult siblings and extended family members develop unique ties through technology, a key adult no longer must serve as the communication hub of an extended family network. Unique family applications of technology include sharing family news or health information on family Web sites, blogs, or through round-robin e-mails. Research indicates that some family members use e-mail instead of face-to-face interaction to address painful topics or conflicts.

Family communication patterns and practices vary by a family's developmental stage, culture, and stresses. As families are confronted with the challenges of the 21st century, they will need to commit to making efforts to sustain their relational ties, engage in communication strategies that reinforce their family commitments, and evidence a willingness to adapt to cope with the challenges that they encounter

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See also Maintaining Relationships; Marital Typologies; Parent–Child Communication About Sex; Parenting; Sexuality; Work–Family Conflict

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FAMILY DATA, ANALYSIS OF

Family data analysis involves the application of statistical analysis methods to those particular relationships found in families; for example between spouses, parent–child, and sibling relationships. Most research in the social sciences considers the outcome for only one individual; for example, studies of childhood depression. In this case, standard statistical analyses can be used to test hypotheses. However, in studies of the relationships among family members, interdependence can make the outcomes of different family members systematically similar to—or different from—one another. When the outcomes of two or more people are being studied and those outcomes are correlated, researchers say that there is nonindependence of observations. *Independence of observations* is a requirement for most common, statistical methods, so special analytic methods are often required for family data. This entry focuses on the unique characteristics of family data, sources and patterns of nonindependent outcomes, and models for the statistical analyses of these patterns.

Family Roles

In textbooks about families, one of the first issues considered is "What *is* a family?" This discussion often leads to controversy regarding which roles should be included in the definition of the family. Mother, father, and child are the conventional roles associated with family, but gay and lesbian

couples also raise children together; some families include adoptive or stepparents, natural siblings, and stepchildren; and many households consist of single parents. For the purposes of this discussion, it is not important to define the family by specific roles, but the fact that there are distinguishable roles remains important. Most family research is organized around family roles (e.g., mother, father, parent, child, and sibling).

Levels of Analysis

Statistically, family group data are typically studied as a two-level system. The family as a group is considered level 2, and the individuals within the family are considered level 1. Put differently, individuals are nested within the family, just as students may be said to be nested within a classroom. This is important statistically because the sample size differs at the two levels. Fifty couples may be observed in a study of marital relationships, a relatively small sample, but there would be 100 individuals in the study, a relatively large sample. The ability to detect a significant relation between two variables (i.e., the statistical *power* of the analysis) depends heavily on the sample size. The level at which a problem is analyzed, for example group versus individual, is called the *level of analysis*.

In family research, the level of analysis is usually the family or the *dyad* (a two-person group) even though the *unit of analysis* (i.e., the level at which measurements are made) may be the individual (e.g., a personality measure) or a particular relationship (e.g., how much one family member trusts another). This is so because, as mentioned earlier, the outcome scores of individuals within the group are usually correlated or nonindependent. To the extent that the scores are correlated, they cannot be counted as two separate individuals statistically (i.e., the *N*, or sample size for the analysis, must be adjusted). Some statistical procedures (e.g., *hierarchical linear modeling*) make these adjustments automatically and are capable of simultaneously testing predictions at both the group and individual level. It is important to include enough families or dyads in a sample so that effects at the group level can be reliably estimated.

Sources of Nonindependence in Family Data

Historically, the fact that family members' scores are correlated has been considered a nuisance because ordinary statistical procedures cannot be used. To avoid the issue, researchers will sometimes combine the outcomes of all the individuals at level 1 (e.g., husbands and wives) and just analyze the data at the group level. Unfortunately, when there is an outcome for more than one person in the group, such a process sacrifices information about individual-level effects. A more interesting and informative approach is to *model* the sources of the nonindependence within the analysis. To model the sources of nonindependence means to include in the analysis any variable that might be causing the scores to correlate. Including such variables within the analysis has the effect of controlling for these factors so that they do not bias the statistical results.

There are three primary sources of nonindependence in family members' scores; common fate, partner effects, and feedback loops. *Common fate* occurs when two people are both affected by the same factor. For example, a parent and a child may be similar in some respect because they share a certain gene. After controlling for the effect of this gene, their responses (e.g., friendliness toward each other) may no longer be correlated. By modeling factors that cause nonindependence, two things are achieved. First, the explanation for the similarity of their scores is elucidated. This may be of key theoretical importance in itself. Second, the effects of other factors that may affect fathers' or children's friendliness toward each other (e.g., personality traits) can be estimated without bias. To have an unbiased estimate of the effect of one variable on the outcome, the effect of other causes of the outcome must be controlled. This is one reason why the guidance of a good theory is so important. Theory tells us what variables need to be controlled in the model.

Partner effects occur when the behavior of one individual in the family is affected by the behavior of another individual in the family. In the previous example, the child may have been friendly toward the father because the father has the personality trait of agreeableness. The effect of the father's agreeableness on the child's friendliness is a partner effect. If father's agreeableness makes him

friendly toward the child and also makes the child friendly toward the father, then the father and child friendliness scores would be correlated and nonindependent. To obtain an unbiased estimate of the partner effect for father on child, other factors affecting child friendliness must be included in the model. One of these factors may be the child's own agreeableness. When a person's own characteristics predict their own outcome, it is called an *actor effect*. In general, when one wants to test for partner effects, actor effects should be included in the model, and when one wants to test for actor effects, partner effects should be included in the model. When theory suggests that both people affect each other (i.e., there are partner effects for both individuals), then actor effects for both people should also be included in the model. A two-person model with both actor and partner effects for each person (e.g., parent and child) is called the *actor-partner interdependence model,* one of several techniques for dyadic data analysis.

In all likelihood, researchers will not know or be able to measure all factors that may make two family members' scores correlated. When this is the case, the *residual variances* (i.e., the variance in the dependent variable scores that is not explained by the independent variables) will still be correlated. Some statistical procedures (e.g., *structural equation modeling*) allow one to include these residual correlations in the model. Inclusion of the residual correlations in the model helps control for these unknown sources of nonindependence so that the estimates of the actor and partner effects and the effects of other independent variables are not biased.

Feedback processes are a third source of nonindependence in family members' outcomes. Feedback occurs when each person's outcome has a direct effect on the other person's outcome. For example, if the child is friendly toward the father because the father is friendly toward the child, and correspondingly, the father is friendly toward the child because the child is friendly toward the father, there is a feedback loop. In the actor-partner interdependence model, it may be that only one of the partner effects is significant (e.g., father influences child), so there is not mutual influence. When there is feedback, mutual influence exists by definition. Feedback processes can be modeled statistically, but the procedures can be quite complex. A simple version of such an analysis in two-person relationships is called *the mutual influence model*. Imagine that the father's agreeableness does not affect the child's friendliness but only affects his own friendliness. In other words, there is an actor effect but no partner effect. Imagine also that this is true for the child; that his or her agreeableness affects his or her friendliness toward father, but does not affect father's friendliness. In this situation, it is possible to test the mutual influence model to see whether each person's friendliness affects the other's friendliness. In general, if a researcher expects partner effects, the mutual influence model should not be tested. Advanced statistical methods (i.e., structural equation modeling or hierarchical linear modeling) are used to test this model. The actor-partner interdependence model and the mutual influence model are generally applied to data from two-person relationships or dyads. When studying family groups that include three or more people (e.g., mother, father, and child), the Social Relations Model is generally more appropriate.

The Social Relations Model

When relationship specific measures (e.g., interpersonal trust) are taken from each family member about his or her relationship with each of the other family members (i.e., *a round-robin design*), the Social Relations Model (SRM) can be applied to the data to obtain interesting and important information about patterns of family relationships. According to the SRM, one person's relationship with another family member is a function of characteristics of the family as a group (*a family effect*), characteristics of the person from whom the observation is taken (*an actor* or *perceiver effect*), characteristics of the partner in the relationships (*a partner* or *target effect*), characteristics of the unique relationship of the particular actor to the particular partner (*a relationship effect*), and errors of measurement. For example, how much the mother trusts the father will be the result of the overall level of trust in the family (the family effect), how trusting the mother is of other family members in general (mother's actor effect), how much the father is trusted by other family members in general (i.e., how trustworthy he is, a

partner effect), and the degree to which mother's trust of father is unique to her relationship with him (the mother-to-father relationship effect). Each relationship in the family is partitioned into these components, so that in a two-parent two-child family, there will be 1 family effect, 4 actor effects, 4 partner effects (one of each for mother, father, older child, and younger child), and 12 relationship effects (one for each person's relationship with each of the other 3 family members).

The SRM also tests whether people get what they give in their family relationships (i.e., *reciprocity*). Using a sample of families, the correlation of the actor and partner effects for each role (for example, mother's actor effect and mother's partner effect) tests reciprocity for individual roles in the family (e.g., are trusting mothers trusted by other family members?). Similarly, the correlation of relationship effects for each dyad in the family tests whether there is reciprocity that is unique to particular relationships (e.g., if mothers trust fathers, do fathers trust mothers?). It is also possible to test similarities between members of the same generation by correlating their actor or partner effects. For example, a negative correlation of mother and father partner effects for ratings of "influenceable" suggests that the more one parent is experienced as influenceable (or permissive), the less the other parent is experienced as influenceable (i.e., more strict). The family SRM provides a comprehensive snapshot of the family system, but it can only be tested using advanced statistical methods (e.g., structural equation modeling or hierarchical linear modeling). However, it is the most sophisticated model of family relationships that has ever been specified in a measurable, refutable, manner.

William L. Cook

See also Assessment of Families; Dyadic Data Analysis; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Systems Theories

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FAMILY FUNCTIONING

When discussing the institution of the family, in general terms, or individual families in specific terms, the discussion often hinges on issues surrounding the structure of the family and how the family functions. *Family structure* refers to the type of family being discussed, with a wide variety of terms used to describe family structure. *Family functioning,* on the other hand, refers to the roles family members play and the attitudes and behaviors they exhibit in their relationships with each other. This entry focuses on family functioning, the difficulties in studying it, and the range of frameworks that have been developed for understanding it, with special emphasis on the Circumplex Model and the Family Strengths Framework.

Toward a Better Understanding of How Families Function

Studying how families function poses significant challenges for researchers because so much of what happens in families goes on, literally and figuratively speaking, *behind closed doors.* To compound this problem, many people are often reluctant to invite social and behavioral scientists into this most intimate of environments. The difficulty for researchers is magnified when the family behavior under study is especially intimate, stigmatized by society, or indicative of significant family problems that members are not especially eager to expose. In short, people do not always tell the truth when being interviewed and do not always act "normal" when being observed.

Investigators interested in how families work, fortunately, have proven to be creative in devising ways to navigate the closed and private nature of

family functioning. These research methods for developing a better understanding of family relationships can be broadly divided into studies from an *insider* perspective or from an *outsider* perspective. An insider perspective when studying family functioning relies on what family members themselves have to say about how well the family is functioning. An outsider perspective emphasizes what professional observers and analysts have to say about the family after observing the family in action or studying written testimony or test results. Both insider and outsider perspectives have their strengths and weaknesses, and studies marrying the two approaches can yield important findings. In these types of studies, the investigators look closely at what family members themselves have to say about the family, they observe the family in action in a relatively normal environment, and the investigators make their own judgments about the family's functioning, based on professional training and experience.

In the final analysis, families are remarkably difficult to study because of their closed nature and the challenges of obtaining valid data (which actually measures what researchers think they are measuring) and reliable data (which passes the test of being able to stand up over time, even though by nature families are likely to be constantly evolving and changing). These difficulties, fortunately, make the work of family researchers enduringly fascinating.

Conceptual Frameworks for Understanding Family Functioning

Theoreticians, researchers, and practitioners have developed many conceptual frameworks to help us better understand family functioning. Several that are relatively prominent today will be briefly discussed here.

Family Systems Framework

The family systems framework for understanding family functioning is especially popular today among theoreticians and researchers and valued by many family therapists working to help strengthen relationships. From a systems perspective, everything that happens to any family member has an impact on everyone else in the family. Besides being a system in itself, families live in a hierarchy of interconnected systems: The family system is connected to systems in the community (school systems, business systems, work systems, medical systems, and so forth); and the family system is connected to systems on the national and international level as well (government systems, justice systems, political systems, economic systems, and so forth).

Family systems theorists describe families that are relatively flexible and capable of making changes, calling these *open* or *morphogenic systems*. Other families avoid change and struggle to always maintain the status quo. These families can be labeled *closed* or *morphostatic systems.* Using family systems terminology, couples and families often struggle to maintain a workable balance between separateness as individuals and togetherness as a group. Some members strive for a greater sense of closeness, whereas other members seek more time outside the group to develop their own sense of individuality.

Communication is especially important in families, and systems theorists describe feedback loops that can either be positive or negative. *Positive feedback* in families is intended to create change, whereas *negative feedback* minimizes change and keeps things the same.

Family Development Framework

The family development perspective was created to help researchers understand how family members deal with various roles and developmental tasks within the family as it moves through relatively predictable stages. In the 1950s, Evelyn Duvall originally identified eight stages: (1) the newly married couple (adjusting to each other, adjusting to each other's family of origin), (2) childbearing, (3) preschool children, (4) school-age children, (5) teenagers, (6) launching youth into adulthood, (7) middle-aged parents (refocusing on marriage), and (8) aging family members (adjusting to retirement, selling the family home, coping with death and living alone). Later theorists focused on the considerable diversity of experience regarding couple and family development, noting that not everyone marries or has children and that divorce, single parenthood, and remarriage make matters much more complex when trying to

describe relatively predictable stages. Other theorists have created stage theories with as few as 4 stages and as many as 24. Though the family development framework cannot adequately describe the complexity of life in families today, thinking about families from a developmental perspective does help us understand that couple and family relationships are likely to change over time and these changes are often linked to common events in many people's lives, such as marriage, parenthood, divorce, retirement, and so forth.

Symbolic Interaction Framework

A family is *a unity of interacting personalities* from the symbolic interaction perspective, which emphasizes the importance of individual perceptions of the interactions that occur. Family members are likely to see what is happening in the family in different ways. Within the family, each member occupies a position or positions (e.g., first child, father, grandparent) to which a number of roles are assigned (e.g., role model for younger children, provider, caretaker). Each individual perceives the assigned role(s) and role expectations held by other family members in her or his own way. This attention to shared meanings and interactions helps us understand why, for example, parents and adolescents perceive communication and family dynamics differently. It also suggests that family functioning cannot be understood simply by observing a family. To understand what is happening in the family, the investigator needs to learn how each individual's *definition of the situation* may differ from everyone else's definition.

Another concept derived from this framework is the *looking-glass self,* the notion that your feelings about yourself are derived from how others react to you. One's self-concept emerges in childhood as a reaction to others' perceptions of who you are and your value in the family. A child who is devalued by parents and siblings is likely to feel worthless inside.

Feminist Framework

Women are exploited, devalued, and oppressed, according to the feminist perspective, and societies around the world should commit to equality for men and women in political, economic, and social spheres. Family functioning is a key area for feminist-oriented researchers, focusing on ways in which women are sometimes forced into roles that as individuals they might not wish to play. When the current wave of feminist thinking in the United States began in the 1960s, it was seen as *normal* for women to want to marry, have children, and stay at home to focus on marriage and motherhood. With the publication of Betty Friedan's groundbreaking book, *The Feminine Mystique,* a national and international discussion began once again regarding Friedan's belief that women needed a more active voice in decisions that affect them.

Friedan was reacting, in part, to a culture that sanctified the thinking described by the *structural/functional framework* for understanding family functioning, which was developed in the 1950s. This approach, created by academics such as Talcott Parsons, assumed that the family was most functional when husbands played the *instrumental role,* being in charge of tasks, and wives played the *expressive role,* being nurturing in the home.

Some men today are offended and feel threatened by feminist thinking, which argues that women have the right and responsibility to grow and develop without regard to social traditions that may try to dictate what is proper *feminine* behavior. On the other hand, other men today feel they have received significant benefits from feminist thinking in terms of family relationships. These men argue that feminism has encouraged men to express their feelings, to share wage-earning responsibilities and power with their partners, and to focus less energy on winning in their careers and more energy on loving their children and wives. Two wage-earners in a family reduces the pressure wage-earners often feel, and two actively involved coparents ease the strain while giving both parents the opportunity to enjoy seeing children grow.

Social Construction Framework

Human beings are profoundly immersed in a social world, and how we think about this world is a product of our social interactions. Similar to symbolic interactionism, social construction theorists believe that because the self is a product of social processes, individuality is difficult to develop

because our lives are caught up in a social environment. Social construction theories are closely related to current postmodernist and multicultural intellectual movements. Postmodernism posits skepticism in regard to questions of truth, meaning, and historical interpretation. Our view of the world is colored by the social environment in which we live. In effect, we do not see the world *as it is;* rather, we see the world *as we are,* but we fool ourselves into believing that we really see the truth with a capital *T.*

Regarding family functioning, then, the truth about who a particular family is and what the family does can change as time passes. A troubled family can learn to create a new, more positive story about who the family is and where family members are going in life. *Narrative therapy,* an approach to family therapy that grew out of social constructionist and postmodernist thinking, helps a family develop a new way of looking at itself and creating a new story line for a better future.

From a social constructionist perspective, this encyclopedia entry is not necessarily the truth about family functioning, but more realistically speaking simply the work of three family scholars who have spent a good deal of their lives observing, thinking, reading and writing about families. This entry, thus, is colored by the experiences of the writers and by the social environment in which they have lived, and another team of writers would most likely come up with a considerably different perspective.

Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Couple and Family Map)

Heavily influenced by family systems theories, David H. Olson and his colleagues created the Family Circumplex Model, also described as the Couple and Family Map. This framework, which is illustrated in a graphic, map-like form, describes how families function (see Figure 1). This perspective uses three broad dimensions: cohesion, flexibility, and communication. The basic hypothesis of the Family Circumplex Model is that families that are *balanced* (central areas of the model) tend to function better than families that are *unbalanced* (more extreme areas of the model). Another hypothesis is that balanced families tend to have

better communication compared with unbalanced families. More 1,000 studies have been conducted using the self-report assessment called Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES) and the observational Clinical Rating Scale that strongly support these hypotheses.

Cohesion is a feeling of emotional closeness with another person. Cohesion is achieved by balancing separateness and togetherness. Extremely low cohesion in a couple or family is called *disengaged.* Extremely high cohesion is called *enmeshed.* Olson believes that healthy couples and families are balanced in the amount of cohesion they demonstrate. Couples and families often struggle to maintain a workable balance between separateness and togetherness.

Flexibility, the second dimension in the Family Circumplex Model, focuses on a balance between stability and change. Flexibility is the ability of the family to change over time. Families need a basic foundation of beliefs and behaviors that give them stability. But they also need to be open to change, especially in a time of crisis when a change in thinking and actions can be of benefit. The two extremes on the dimension of flexibility are a *rigid* family system, indicating a low degree of change in the family, and *chaotic* family system, indicating an extremely high degree of change. Couple and family systems that have a more balanced level of flexibility tend to function better over time.

Communication, the third dimension of this model, is the grease that smoothes frictions between family members. As the reader will recall, cohesion and flexibility are best in medium doses, not too much and not too little of each quality. Communication, on the other hand, is directly related to the strength of the couple and family relationships.

The findings of two other prominent research groups bear mentioning here, in relationship to Olson's work: the Beavers System Model focusing on family competence and the McMaster Model focusing on healthy or normal families. Both approaches have long, rich traditions. The Beavers Model looks at many dimensions of family functioning, including the following: centripetal/centrifugal interactions (interactions that either push family members apart or pull them together), closeness, parent coalitions, autonomy, adaptability, egalitarian power, goal-directed negotiation,
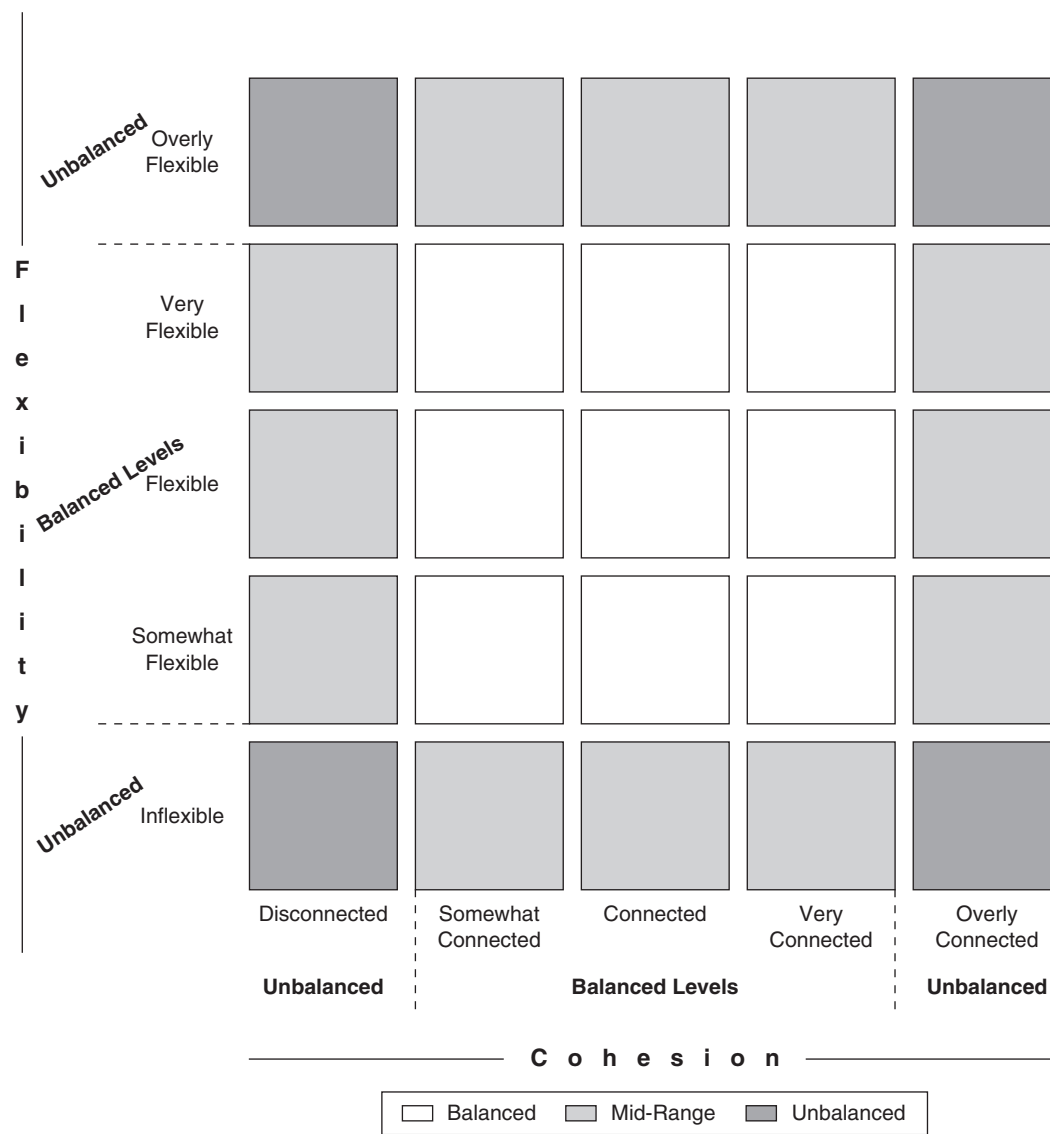
Figure 1   Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems

Source: Courtesy David H. Olson.

the ability to resolve conflict, clarity of expression, range of feelings, openness to others, and empathic understanding. The McMaster Model team posits that studying healthy or normal family functioning may be "a fool's errand" because of the complex nature of family interaction, and focuses on the dimensions of affective involvement, behavior control, and communication. In this context, note the similarity of the elements of family functioning under study by the different research teams. Though each team approaches the task at hand from different perspectives and uses different research techniques, the basic elements of healthy family functioning deemed worthy of study by each group of researchers are remarkably similar.

Family Strengths Framework

The family strengths approach to understanding family functioning has roots in the work of Herbert Otto in the 1960s and was further developed by Nick Stinnett, John DeFrain, and many colleagues. The researchers have focused on better

understanding the strengths of families that describe themselves as strong, happy, and satisfied with their life together, and believe they love and care for each other well. So-called strong families exhibit six major clusters of qualities:

- *Appreciation and affection for each other:* friendship, respect for individuality, playfulness, humor.
- *Commitment to the family:* trust, honesty, dependability, faithfulness, sharing.
- *Positive communication:* giving compliments, sharing feelings, avoiding blame, being able to compromise, agreeing to disagree.
- *Enjoyable time together:* quality time in great quantity, recognizing good things take time, enjoying each other's company, sharing fun times.
- *Spiritual well-being:* living a meaningful life, hope, faith, compassion, shared ethical values, oneness with humankind, oneness with the world.
- *Ability to manage stress and crisis effectively:* adaptability, seeing crises as challenges and opportunities, growing through crises together, openness to change, resilience.

Today, this model has evolved into the International Family Strengths Framework, which demonstrates how family strengths, community strengths, and cultural strengths are woven together in a seamless fabric: Strong families contribute in positive ways to the health of the communities in which they live and the cultural values of the nation of which they are a part. Likewise, the health of the nation and local communities is essential to the healthy development of individual families. Family strengths researchers argue that the family, in all its remarkable diversity, is the foundation of all known societies in the world; that family strengths, community strengths, and cultural strengths are remarkably similar from country to country; and that these similarities give human beings common ground for creating international relationships and organizations that support the well-being of families worldwide.

John DeFrain, Sylvia M. Asay,
and David H. Olson

See also Affection and Affectionate Behavior; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Community Involvement; Family Communication; Feminist Perspectives on Relationships; Resilience; Stress and Relationships; Symbolic Interaction Theories; Systems Theories

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FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

Family scholars from sociology, psychology, demography, and economics have employed the concept of the family life cycle (FLC) to examine family relationships. The concept provided researchers with a meaningful way to look at how families changed over time by outlining a series of stages through which families passed across the life course. Although there were different versions of the FLC model in terms of the number of stages proposed, most included the major transition points in the formation and dissolution of the family such as marriage, childbearing, childrearing, empty nest, and widowhood. A family's location in the family life cycle was thought to influence family interaction patterns and, hence, members' satisfaction with the quality of their relationships.

Although popular for more than four decades (1947–1990), the concept has largely fallen out of favor as a result of conceptual and empirical problems. Nevertheless, many family therapists continue to use the FLC as a guide to practice and research. Feminist scholars argue that the continued use of the concept is problematic because it stigmatizes those who are not a member of a traditional nuclear family. Proponents of the FLC argue that the concept describes at least half of the families in the United States (i.e., those who are not divorced) and therefore is still useful. Further, depending on how the concept is operationally defined, proponents believe the FLC can be applied to alternative family forms such as blended families and single-parent families.

This entry describes the historical background of the FLC concept, its conceptual and empirical problems, a feminist critique, and concludes with directions for future research.

Historical Background

The original impetus for studying family change was the unprecedented rates of unemployment during the Great Depression. Research by Charles Loomis revealed that changes in family size and composition were correlated with household income. Families were at greatest risk of poverty when their children were too young to work and when the parents were too old to work after their children had been launched. After World War II, researchers such as Paul Glick, Evelyn Duvall, and Reuben Hill further developed the idea by delineating specific stages that families went through based on family size, births, ages, launching of children, and the retirement of spouses. Early studies found that the length of family stages was related to age at first marriage, duration of childbearing, and number of children. For example, couples that married late in life would be more likely to have children soon thereafter and consequently would not remain in the childless stage of the family life cycle as long as would couples who married early in life. Similarly, couples who chose to have a large number of children would remain in the childbearing stage of the family life cycle longer than would couples who chose to have fewer children.

Early Conceptual and Empirical Challenges

Although it was initially used by demographers for descriptive purposes, family developmentalists continued to advance the concept. The continuing evolution of FLC was met with excitement because it provided a dynamic view of families to replace the previously static one. On the basis of the epigenetic principle of developmental change, families were viewed as going through a sequence of stages over time. Each stage built on the immediately preceding stage. Only after families mastered the tasks specific to one stage could they proceed successfully to the next stage and its tasks. A succession from one stage to the next was considered normal development.

Although widely accepted, the value of the FLC had not been empirically evaluated. When researchers examined it, they were disappointed with the results. For example, one classic study investigated the predictive power of FLC relative to two other measures of family development—marriage cohort and birth cohort—and found that FLC was no better at predicting a variety of variables related to family development. Another classic study found that the relationship between FLC and family variables disappeared when length of marriage or presence of children was controlled.

Further, life-course scholars argued that the FLC perspective failed to recognize that historical events such as wars and depressions could interrupt the timing, length, and sequence of family stages. The developmental approach to the FLC did not address the ways family relationships are influenced by historical context, and other life-course scholars pointed out that calculating the average timing and duration of stages obscured social class and ethnic group variations as well. Further, not all families followed a linear progression through the stages.

Finally, changes in the demography of families also forced a reevaluation of the FLC perspective. Initially, the concept of FLC had been used to examine differences between generations in the timing and duration of major events of a "typical" family. The concept was based on common marital patterns of the time: intact, nuclear families with one wage earner. However, eventually demographic changes challenged the exclusion of stages previously considered atypical. By the 1980s, premarital birth, separation, divorce, remarriage, and single parenting had become commonplace, making it necessary to expand the FLC to include these variations in its stages. However, even when less traditional family transitions such as divorce and remarriage were included in analyses, the findings showed that the FLC explained only a small amount of the variance in subjective evaluations of life.

Significance of FLC for Human Relationships

How useful are the stages of FLC for the study of human relationships? Some say FLC stages are useful if they are considered as guidelines for following the progression of family careers; however, it is important that these stages not be reified. Other family scholars say there is value in searching for common patterns in family life-course stages because they provide an indication of the pressures families face. As families move from one stage to the next, the progression changes role relationships and families must adapt. Consequently, the quality of family relationships, as indicated by such measures as marital satisfaction, can be influenced. Feminists argue, however, that the significance of the FLC is that it stigmatizes those who do not engage in normative behaviors.

The Feminist Critique of FLC

Feminists are critical of the concept of the FLC and its treatment of gender and divorce. They argue that although FLC has been the conceptual model for the fields of family development and family therapy for decades, it is largely mythological.

The FLC perspective assumes that the normative family is intact, White, middle-class, and male-headed; this is the family form against which all others are compared. The FLC approach uses a deficit comparison model, where any variation from the normative family form is viewed as inadequate. Thus, single-parent families are problematic from the FLC approach because it is assumed that women would not choose to raise children alone. Contrary to the FLC model, which views divorce as an indicator of social decline, feminists view female-initiated divorce as a sign of women's resistance to the oppression they have experienced in traditional families.

Even though family theorists eventually added new phases to the FLC framework to accommodate single-parent families as well as divorced and remarried families, they continued to compare these new family forms to two-parent nuclear families using a deficit model.

Feminists argue that by relying on marriage and the presence of children to define family, the FLC approach eliminated the legitimacy of choosing not to be married or not to have children and be a family. Its emphasis on intact, married, nuclear families disenfranchised the experiences of individuals and families who did not conform to these stages, including those in poor families, minority families, and gay and lesbian families. These latter families are marginalized and deemed deviant by comparison. Thus, the feminists' critique of the FLC concept echoes those coming from a life-course perspective: The concept ignores the fact that family events are shaped by historical and cultural context. These mounting criticisms led to a severe decline in the popularity and use of the concept.

Conclusion

What is the future of the FLC concept? Recently, the usefulness of the FLC has been empirically

reexamined. New proponents of the concept argue that previous researchers did not adequately test the FLC. Rather than using family-relevant dependent variables, past researchers used the stages in the FLC to predict demographic variables or individual level variables. To provide a true test of the usefulness of the concept, new proponents argue it is necessary to examine the relationship between the FLC and *family* variables. In their reevaluation, the new researchers found that FLC stages did predict family commitment—a family variable—even after controlling for age and length of marriage. But FLC did not predict marital satisfaction—an individual variable—as they expected.

These researchers also suggested that the FLC could be applied to complex, blended families, as well as to single-parent households, if the concept was operationally defined in terms of the age of the youngest child. Researchers stated that because the rearing of young children is extremely time consuming, the age of the youngest child could provide valuable information about the role demands faced by the parent(s). Such an operational definition could also be used with cohabiting heterosexual or gay and lesbian couples that have children. Thus, this research could potentially reinvigorate interest in the FLC concept.

However, feminists argue that even this operationalization of the FLC is problematic because it suggests that adults who are childfree, whether by choice or not, are not part of a family. Feminists point out that the FLC concept privileges the family of procreation over the family of origin. Consequently, childfree individuals are seen as not having a family and as not moving through family stages.

Thus, the challenge for future researchers is to determine whether the FLC can be operationally defined in a way that can accommodate the vast range of family arrangements that exist in today's society.

Roseann Giarrusso

See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Families, Demographic Trends; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Martial Satisfaction and Quality; Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends; Stage Theories of Relationship Development

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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE

No aspect of adolescent development has received more attention than family relationships. Much of the research indicates that despite altered patterns of interaction, relationships with family members remain important social and emotional resources well beyond childhood. Yet it is a challenge to reconcile this conclusion with the widespread perception that family relationships decline in quality and influence over the adolescent years. This entry summarizes theories that address the origins of transformations in family relationships during adolescence, followed by a summary of research on these alterations. The entry concludes with an assessment of the impact that changes in family dynamics have on adolescent development.

Theories of Relationship Transformation

Conceptual models of adolescent family relationships vary in whether their primary focus is on the adolescent or on the relationship. One set of theories holds that adolescent maturation undermines

patterns of interaction established during childhood, whereas another set of theories emphasizes enduring bonds that are assumed to be the foundation for continuity in the relationship. Most theories focus on parent–child relationships; less attention has been given to sibling relationships during adolescence.

Theories Emphasizing Individual Change

Maturation models focus on relationship disruptions caused by adolescent physical, social, and cognitive maturation. These models hold that changes in adolescents provoke changes in families. Diminished closeness and heightened conflict are expected to accompany adolescent maturation and continue until parent–child relationships are renegotiated. Sibling relationships may undergo similar transformations.

Puberty is central to many models. Psychoanalytic theorists assume that hormonal changes at puberty give rise to Oedipal urges that foster rebelliousness and distance from the family. Evolutionary views also link puberty to relationship transformations, such that physical and cognitive advances encourage adolescents to separate from the family to seek mates elsewhere.

Other maturation models give cognitive development a central role in relationship change. In these accounts, advances in abstract and complex reasoning foster egalitarian views that are inconsistent with the unilateral organization of relationships with parents and siblings. As a result, adolescents increasingly aspire to reciprocity and equal power, which may create conflict and curtail closeness. Eventually, familial roles are renegotiated to acknowledge the adolescent's enhanced status and maturity.

Systemic theorists argue that as relationships with firstborn children change, so too must relationships with later-born children. According to the spillover model, relationships with later-born children deteriorate and are renegotiated concurrent with (or shortly after) relationships with firstborn children. The Learning-from-Experience Model posits that parents hone their skills with firstborn children and are thus better able to cope constructively with developmental changes in later born children. According to this view, the

magnitude of change in parent–child relationships differs between firstborns and later-borns, rather than the timing of that change.

Theories Emphasizing Relationship Continuity

Alternative models of family relationships focus on forces that promote stability. The most prominent example, Attachment Theory, emphasizes the strong emotional ties between parents and children. As a mutually regulated system, parents and children work jointly to maintain the relationship in a manner consistent with cognitive representations derived from their history of interactions. Attachment in adolescence is different from attachment during earlier age periods, but the functions are similar. Whereas security facilitates exploration of the immediate environment for young children, security affords adolescents a sense of confidence in family support for explorations outside the family, including those that involve the formation of new relationships. Children and parents with a history of sensitive, responsive interactions and strong emotional bonds should maintain these positive features throughout adolescence. Children and parents with a history of difficult, unresponsive interactions should also experience continuity in the quality of their interactions, however unsatisfactory they may be.

Interdependence or social relations models describe close relationships characterized by frequent, strong, and diverse interconnections maintained over an extended time. In an interdependent relationship, partners engage in mutually influential exchanges and share the belief that their connections are reciprocal and enduring. These interconnections are internalized by participants and organized into mental schemas that shape expectations concerning future interactions. High levels of interdependence characterize most adolescent relationships with parents and siblings. As the child becomes more autonomous, the degree to which relationships change depends on the degree to which participants consider their exchanges to be jointly beneficial, which is closely linked to perceptions of relationship quality. Increased conflict may occur in poor quality relationships, along with a decline in closeness, as adolescents express a growing dissatisfaction with treatment perceived

to be unfavorable. High-quality relationships may change little during adolescence, or may even improve, as participants build on beneficent interactions to adjust exchanges in a mutually satisfactory manner.

Patterns of Relationship Transformation

Family relationships vary across the adolescent years in the content of interactions, the distribution of positive and negative exchanges, and the cognitive and emotional responses of individuals. There is widespread acknowledgement that family members experience their relationships differently. A much higher percentage of mother–child interactions fall into the category of mundane socialization than is true for father–child interactions. In contrast, fathers devote a higher proportion of their time with adolescents to recreational activities. Simply put, mothers spend relatively more time telling adolescents to pick up their socks, whereas fathers spend relatively more time in activities that don't involve wearing socks. These distinctions are amplified by the number of children in the household.

Perceptions of sibling relationships vary according to the relative age of the child; older siblings have a wider variety of experiences outside of the household than younger siblings have, which means that the former may place less emphasis on family relationships than the latter. Family members interpret their interactions according to their experiences; fathers minimize socialization hassles with children, whereas mothers invest considerable emotion in mundane interchanges. This means that fathers experience fewer ups and downs in relationships with adolescent children relative to mothers.

Changing Expressions of Closeness

Most families report that parent–child and sibling relationships are quite positive. Of course, manifestations of closeness change as the child matures. Intimacy, as expressed by physical affection, decreases during the transition into adolescence, whereas conversations in which feelings are expressed increase. Companionship is also modified. As children get older, they are more apt to watch TV with their families and less apt to share meals and go out together.

Adolescents spend more time with their mothers and are more likely to share feelings and disclose personal matters to them. Fathers may be somewhat distant figures, who tend be consulted primarily for information or advice and instrumental or material support. Sons and daughters have similarly warm relationships with mothers, but fathers are typically closer to sons than to daughters. These commonalities notwithstanding, views of the family are notable for their divergence, particularly during early adolescence. Where mothers and fathers see distinctive relationships with children, adolescents see monolithic relationships with parents. Mothers tend to appraise the family in positive terms, routinely reporting more warmth and affection among family members than do adolescents, which may be an attempt to ward off the decline in maternal life satisfaction that accompanies adolescent detachment.

Younger siblings report greater warmth and affection toward older siblings than older siblings report for younger siblings. Those who perceive differential treatment or favoritism from parents report worse relationships than do siblings who see parental treatment as equal.

Developmental changes in closeness are well documented. Although perceptions of relationships remain generally warm and supportive, both parents and children report that they spend less time together and that they are less likely to express positive emotions across the adolescent years. Relative to preadolescents, adolescents perceive less companionship and intimacy with parents and report lower feelings of acceptance by parents and less satisfaction with family life. Decreases in closeness appear to be steepest from preadolescence to mid-adolescence, tapering off or even rebounding by late adolescence. Warmth expressed by daughters declines more than that expressed by sons, partly because the former start from a higher level than the latter do. Birth order appears to moderate these trends. Firstborn children report the warmest relationships with mothers and fathers across adolescence, but firstborns also report the steepest drops in warmth from early adolescence to mid-adolescence.

Descriptive data on age-related declines in closeness probably overstate the significance of changes

in parent–adolescent relationships. Declining dependence is not synonymous with erosion in the salience of the relationship. It is not uncommon for late adolescents to name a parent as their closest relationship partner. In most cases, parents remain the most influential of all relationships, shaping important decisions that confront children, even as parents' relative authority over prosaic details of adolescents' lives wanes. Thus, adolescents turn to parents for advice about school, work, and careers and expect parents to help them out when significant troubles arise; peers hold sway over issues such as appearance, leisure activities, and media preferences.

Sibling relationships undergo similar transformations. As young people spend less time with the family, closeness between siblings declines. Few adolescents indicate that their most important relationship is with a sibling, yet most adolescents report high levels of interdependence with siblings. These relationships are remarkably resilient; adolescents will frequently turn to siblings for advice and comfort in times of trouble, particularly when experiencing difficulties in relationships with parents or peers. Across the adolescent years, sibling relationships become more egalitarian. Older siblings are often admired by younger siblings, and in these circumstances, they may be particularly salient sources of influence. There is some indication that adolescents are closer to same-sex siblings than to opposite-sex siblings, but the latter may be considered uniquely important because of the advantages they proffer in navigating the currents of romantic relationships.

There is considerable continuity between positive features of relationships during adolescence and those earlier in life, despite the normative transformations of adolescence. Indeed, the best predictor of family warmth during the second decade of life is family warmth during the first. Most families capitalize on greater adolescent maturity by fostering interactions that promote a psychological closeness that is no longer tied to the frequency of interactions. Families with a history of interpersonal problems, however, may lack the adaptive patterns needed for new forms of closeness during a time of relative distance. Longitudinal evidence is consistent with the notion that some families experience greater diminutions in warmth and support than others. Young people who report

high levels of warmth from parents at the outset of adolescence experience little or no decline in perceived support across adolescence, whereas those who perceive low initial levels of warmth report steep drops in subsequent perceived support. Thus, stereotypes of adolescents as uncommunicative, withdrawn, and disengaged from families overstate the case in all but a few extreme instances.

Changing Expressions of Negativity

Conflict, which is ubiquitous in all close relationships, is especially prominent between family members. Surveys of adolescents indicate that disagreements are most common with mothers, followed by siblings, friends, and romantic partners, then fathers; angry disputes arise more frequently with family members than with close peers. Rates of conflict and levels of negative affect are highest in mother–daughter relationships. Most parent–adolescent disagreements concern daily hassles, so-called garbage and galoshes issues; siblings tend to disagree about possessions, control of electronic media, and annoyances. Disagreements between family members are usually resolved through submission or disengagement; compromise is relatively rare. Negotiation is more common with mothers than with fathers; disengagement is more typical of conflict with sons than of conflict with daughters. Adolescents report that most conflicts with parents and siblings have few negative repercussions for their relationships. Disagreements are more constructive when they involve one parent than when they involve both; fathers and sons are particularly likely to alter conflict behaviors in the presence of another parent.

Contrary to popular views, family conflict does not rise and fall across the adolescent years. Instead, the highest levels of conflict are during preadolescence and early adolescence. Evidence from multiple studies reveals linear declines in the frequency of conflict from early adolescence to late adolescence. Significantly, however, the anger associated with these conflicts increases from early adolescence to mid-adolescence, with little change thereafter. Thus, conflict rates fall as negative affect rises, leaving families with the perception of worsening discord. Conflict rates decline more in mother–child relationships than in father–child relationships, but gender does not moderate

changes in affective intensity. Parents appear to become either more skilled or less invested in changes in relationships with later-born children as compared with firstborn children; alternatively, later-born children may learn how to navigate relationships with parents by watching their older counterparts. In any event, second-born children report less conflict during early and mid-adolescence than firstborn children do during these age periods. Less is known about conflict with siblings, although there is some indication that it too decreases during adolescence. Coercion declines in both parent–child and sibling relationships, accompanied by an increase in disengagement and, during late adolescence, compromise.

Important changes in views concerning family authority and decision making stem from disagreements with parents. Across the adolescent years, but particularly during early adolescence, parents and children renegotiate domains of authority. Adolescents come to view an increasing number of issues as personal matters outside of parental authority (e.g., the cleanliness of one's own bedroom), whereas parents continue to see the same topics as matters that fall within their jurisdiction. These disagreements prompt families to renegotiate roles and responsibilities. The upshot is a dilution of maternal authority as mothers cede control over day-to-day matters to their adolescent children. Fathers tend not to be involved in this area of socialization, and their authority over other domains remains relatively undiminished. Not coincidentally, mothers also report the most negative repercussions from conflicts with adolescent children. Parents and children view these developmental trends somewhat differently. Parents may regard changing patterns of interaction as signs of rejection and deteriorating relationships, whereas adolescents may regard them as evidence of enhanced maturity. The fact that parent and child reports of conflict grow more consonant during late adolescence suggests that disagreements, though often unpleasant, play an important role in aligning expectations and facilitating communication among family members.

More than any other form of social interaction, disagreements offer family members an opportunity to reconsider and revise expectations and relationships. Most families successfully meet the challenges of adolescence, drawing on healthy patterns of interaction and communication established during earlier age periods. Difficult relations during the teenage years are generally limited to families that had difficult relations during childhood—estimates put the figure at somewhere between 5 percent and 15 percent of the population. Families with histories of ineffective communication are at risk for dysfunctional discord as they encounter pressures to realign relationships in response because they lack the resources for constructively addressing the developmental demands of adolescence.

Implications for Development

A large body of literature links parenting practices to maladaptive adolescent outcomes. Antisocial behavior and substance use are best predicted by an absence of behavioral control; self-esteem and an absence of internalizing problems are associated with high levels of warmth and autonomy granting; school grades are uniquely and positively linked to warmth, autonomy granting, and behavioral control. The impact of family conflict appears to vary as a function of the perceived quality of the relationship. Conflict is inversely related to well-being if the relationship is perceived to be poor, but moderate amounts of conflict may be beneficial for those whose relationships are good. The negative tenor of conflicts in relationships perceived to be unsupportive undoubtedly plays a central role in these deleterious outcomes.

Perceptions of differential treatment by parents have an adverse impact on siblings, particularly if that treatment is perceived to be unfair. The quality of sibling relationships suffers as a consequence of differential treatment, and many young people report depressed mood and heightened anxiety. Other aspects of sibling relationships have been tied to adolescent well-being, but the magnitude of these effects tends to be quite modest. Far more important is the quality of the parents' marital relationship. Aside from the infant and toddler years, parents report that the adolescent years take the greatest toll on marital satisfaction. Poor marital relationships tend to adversely affect parent–child relationships, which, in turn, have a debilitating effect on adolescent development.

Marital conflict often leads to conflict between parents and adolescents, and links between marital distress and adolescent internalizing and externalizing problems tend to be mediated by harsh discipline and parent–child discord.

Conclusion

As families adapt long-standing patterns of interaction to the maturational changes that accompany adolescence, communication may falter for a time, only to recover much of its fluency, albeit in a different form. Emotional ties in most families are quite stable. A small minority of families experience significant perturbation, but these households are noteworthy for dissonance before adolescence. Far more typical are families who cope constructively with the challenge of revising relationships during adolescence, setting the stage for interconnections that endure well into adulthood.

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See also Family Relationships in Childhood; Friendships in Adolescence; Parent–Child Relationships; Sibling Relationships

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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN CHILDHOOD

Among all developmental contexts, families provide the most direct and extensive environment for the growth of children. Families generally encompass the earliest and longest lasting relationships for children. Although each child, and eventually each teenager and adult, holds a different view of his or her family, these important contexts do share certain roles and functions. Common across families are the expectations that children will be cared for and provided with what they need until they become independent enough to care for themselves. Families also share the responsibility of teaching children about their culture and history, often through the sharing of stories, rituals, and traditions. A much more variable function of families is how they fulfill these expectations. The ways in which families accomplish these expectations and functioning largely occurs through family relationships and interactions among family members. The characteristics and qualities of these family relationships are important because of their linkages with children's growth, health, and adjustment, both individually and relationally, across the life span. This entry describes the central relationships of children in families, including interparental (or relationships between parents), parent–child relationships (or children's relationships with parents), sibling relationships (or children's relationships with siblings), and children's relationships with grandparents and other extended family members. In addition, this entry will highlight common approaches or methodologies to studying these family relationships along with major research findings. Finally, future directions in the study of family relationships in childhood are addressed.

Interparental Relationships

The committed relationship between a child's parents, in the form of either marriage or cohabitation, plays a critical role in family functioning and child development. Among parents' many roles in the family, at least among U.S. families, are expectations that they maintain and develop their romantic relationship as a couple and play complementary roles to one another, serving as coleaders of the entire family as they jointly raise their child(ren). The relationship between parents in an intact family sets the stage for the quality of connections among all family members. Interparental relationships directly and indirectly socialize children to how relationships between people function, including those that occur within and outside of the family system.

Substantial evidence indicates that how parents manage differences or resolve the conflicts that arise between them has widespread effects on family relationships and family members. Interparental conflict directly affects children. Partners who consistently resolve their conflicts through hostility, criticism, and anger tend to have higher levels of conflict and issues that remain unresolved and have children who themselves tend to show more anger or withdrawal. Further, children may blame themselves for parents' high levels of conflict or try to serve as resolution mediators, especially when parents argue over childrearing or family-related issues. Conversely, conflict that is resolved, and that does not include high levels of hostility or personal attacks, serves as an example to children that differences between people are manageable and as a model for how their own interpersonal disputes should be handled. Importantly, children who experience most of their interparental conflict handled in this way tend to feel more emotionally secure about their family and themselves.

As interparental relationships demonstrate higher levels of hostility and unresolved conflict, other family relationships such as parent–child relationships and sibling relationships have higher levels of negativity themselves. As examples, marital discord experienced in childhood is associated with greater differential treatment of young siblings (through tendencies to favor one child over another) and with higher levels of rivalry and jealousy among adult siblings. Although parents may compensate for an unsatisfactory marital partnership by being overly positive with or connected to their child, most family relationships share similar qualities. As the interparental relationship flourishes or suffers, so too will relations among all other family members and subsystems.

Parent–Child Relationships

Relationships between parents and children are nonreciprocal in that parents are expected to fulfill many roles for children, whereas children are not expected to serve the same or as many functions for parents. Parents are children's first teachers and socialize them to guidelines and expectations within and outside the family. Parents encourage children to develop appropriate and timely behaviors through reinforcement and modeling. Parents' ability and success in such roles depends largely on the quality of early relationship established with their child. In other words, parent–child relationships with positive qualities (such as feelings of closeness and support) tend to promote more effective developmental success, whereas those with negative qualities (such as conflict and alienation) are linked with more problematic growth in multiple child outcome domains. A child's development in the context of a positive parent–child relationship is linked with more optimal outcomes in the areas of behavioral and emotional development, relationships with siblings and friends, and academic achievement.

The foundations for enduring parent–child relationships are generally set in motion by infancy attachment. Attachment refers to the close, enduring emotional bond between parents and children. As attachment figures, parents serve as a secure base for children, providing a sense of security that encourages safe exploration of environments and safety and reassurance in times of stress. The laboratory-based test developed by leading attachment researcher Mary Ainsworth to assess this security is known as the Strange Situation. In a series of separation and reunion paradigms, observations are made of how young children respond to and interact with their primary caregivers (usually their mothers). Most children demonstrate behavior consistent with a secure attachment and positive relational qualities; they seek and obtain safety

and comfort when reunited with their caregiver after stress and separation. Children who demonstrate an Insecure/Resistant (also known as Ambivalent) attachment respond to their caregiver's return in a clingy manner. They may initially seek a connection with their mother after the separation, but are not soothed or comforted by it. Children who demonstrate an Insecure/Avoidant attachment style seem indifferent toward their caregiver upon being reunited. These children tend to ignore their caregivers following the stressful situation. Children who display a Disorganized or Disoriented attachment style show no clear or consistent way of interacting with their caregiver when reunited following a separation. These children may want to approach their mother but also seem fearful of doing so. Children with a Disorganized or Disoriented attachment style show contradictory expressions, such as smiling then freezing. Research indicates that how children fare during the Strange Situation tends to correlate with their attachment behavior at home.

Extending these descriptions of attachment styles, children's earliest relationships with their parents also depend on parental sensitivity and responding. Parents who are able to accurately identify their child's needs and provide them in a loving way establish close connections with their child. These connections have been shown to predict how children function within the family, how their peer relationships develop, and their feelings about self across the life span. Similarly, parenting qualities tend to be consistent across childhood; that is, sensitivity and responsiveness during infancy is linked with parental effectiveness later in childhood, which continues to affect how children think of themselves and what they expect of other interpersonal relationships within and outside of the family.

As young children move beyond infancy and grow into more active and independent family members, parental behavior takes on an increasing role of control or authority. Accounting for parent–child relationships in terms of the two essentially separate dimensions of responsiveness (or warmth and support) and demandingness (or control and structure), Diana Baumrind described four resulting parenting styles. First, an *authoritarian* parent is low on warmth and high on control, resulting in a harsh and demanding style.

This type of parent lays out rules or punishments without explaining why. Second, a *permissive* or indulgent parent is high on warmth and low on structure. This type of parent responds to his or her child's emotional needs, but does not set limits that help children develop appropriate regulation and control. Third, an *authoritative* parent is high on both warmth and structure. Thus, this type of parent sets appropriate limits and controls and explains why. Authoritative parents also demonstrate affection and respect toward their child, allowing the child freedom to act within appropriate limits, thereby developing a sense of autonomy and independence over time. Fourth, *neglectful* or rejecting parents (also known as uninvolved) are low on both warmth and control. They do not monitor children's behavior or respond emotionally, often remaining more focused on their personal needs rather than on those of their child. These parenting styles set the emotional tone for children in the family and relate to many domains of child development. Children of parents who are high on both control and warmth (consistent with an authoritative style) generally have higher levels of academic and social outcomes compared with children of parents with other parenting styles.

Mothers and fathers may experience differences in parent–child relationships. As examples, mothers tend to spend more overall time with their children, but fathers tend to spend more time playing with children than mothers do. Overall, fathers interact with children of all ages less than mothers do. However, new research suggests that mothers' behavior may encourage or inhibit fathers' involvement with their child: Fathers with partners who engaged in low levels of criticism and high levels of encouragement were rated as relatively more competent and involved in childcare activities.

Sibling Relationships

Although not all children develop alongside siblings, most U.S. families have more than one child. Children who are raised with and without siblings generally do not differ on a whole range of development outcomes, including behavior and emotional adjustment, peer relationships, and academic

functioning. However, for children raised in the context of brothers and/or sisters, these sibling connections are a particularly important type of family relationship.

Siblings contribute both positive and negative influences during childhood. Brothers and sisters serve as important sources of companionship, learning, and cooperation, on the one hand, and conflict and competition for resources, on the other hand. Siblings affect child development directly (through their roles of teacher or playmate) and indirectly (through effects they have on parents). Younger children may benefit from having siblings to engage with during play and fantasy and to model behaviors and conversations. Children may benefit from growing up with siblings who are more similar to peers than parents are, thus providing early examples of friendship. Having close emotional connections with siblings offers opportunities for children to learn how to manage negative feelings and to foster mutual attachments. Although sibling relationships consist of both positive and negative feelings, they tend to improve with time. As would be expected, the quality of sibling relationships tends to covary with the quality of the parents' marital relationship and parent–child relationships.

Discordant sibling relationships are more likely to occur if siblings experience differential treatment from parents. That is, the extent to which parents treat children in unequal ways has been linked with higher levels of sibling rivalry, jealousy, and conflict. In addition, families in which parents demonstrate higher levels of negative and unresolved conflict tend to contain more disrupted sibling relationships.

Even though siblings share the same status as children in a given family, they may experience different developmental contexts. First, each child has a unique family experience. This may stem from either parental treatment or birth order. Firstborn children receive more time alone with their parents. Oldest-child status may foster a greater sense of responsibility that comes from caring for younger siblings. Oldest children typically rely more on parents for developmental needs, whereas younger children learn to rely on both parents and other siblings. Younger children, however, tend to be more socially extraverted compared with older children.

Relationships Between Children and Grandparents or Other Extended Family Members

Although relatively understudied, many children's family relationships include close connections with grandparents and other extended family members such as aunts, uncles, and cousins. Extended family-member relationships may replicate the role of parental relationships in socializing children. Relationships with extended family members may fill in for relationships that children lack. For example, an only child may develop relationships with cousins that serve similar roles to sibling relationships, including providing sources of learning, companionship, and cooperation, on the one hand, and conflict or competing interests, on the other hand.

Future Directions

Family scientists continue to highlight the contributions of family relationships to childhood by designing increasingly complex research studies. These investigations typically include multiple family members and relationships. In addition, by conducting longitudinal studies, or those that capture family dynamics over time, family scientists are able to identify how relationships are linked to children's development across the life span. Although these types of research designs are time consuming and expensive, they provide rich sources of information about how children develop in the context of family relationships. Individuals in families and the relationships among them should be examined together for obtaining the clearest view of family dynamics and family functioning.

Family scientists continue to expand investigation of the diverse contexts that encompass family relationships. As examples, families' cultural backgrounds and connections have been linked to many of the relational qualities described earlier, with different cultures varying in how much they emphasize closeness among family members or express conflict. A recent study comparing Argentine, Italian, and U.S. mothers found that Italian mothers were more sensitive toward their child and optimally structuring of their child's activities, and Italian children were more involving and responsive

than occurred with mother–child dyads from Argentina and the United States. Such findings may reflect differential importance placed on individualism, social responsiveness, and warmth by societies and cultures. In addition, families' economic stress and pressures may increase conflict and tension between family members, thereby impairing the quality of family relationships in childhood. Socioeconomic status is related to family socialization processes, including marital quality, parental emotional distress, and parenting behaviors, and with child health and well-being. Studying multiple contextual influences on families sheds light on variations on family relationships and their links to childhood development.

Family studies are increasingly including genetic components to account for family members' shared environments and shared heredity. Research has indicated genetic influences on factors such as how children express social and physical aggression and on how marital discord affects child behavior problems. Thus, behaviors of family members and relationships among family members draw from both nature and nurture influences. By including both components in family studies, researchers can delineate further the sources of influence in childhood and across the life span.

Researchers' scope of families continues to broaden as children are raised in more diverse types of families. For example, more children in the United States now are raised in blended families that combine multiple primary families following parental divorce or death and in single-parent households. In addition, children tend to experience more transitions into different family structures. Thus, children now have a higher likelihood of being members of multiple family systems during their childhood and thereby experiencing multiple instances of these central family connections, including sibling or parent–child relationships. Finally, the trend of children being born to older parents might change the impact of relationships with extended family members. For example, future research will need to explore whether children have less opportunity and time to develop relationships with grandparents when born to later-age first-time parents and how this relates to their longer term development within and outside the family.

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See also Adulthood, Sibling Relationships in; Assessment of Families; Attachment Typologies, Childhood; Aunts and Uncles, Relationships With; Extended Families; Family Functioning; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Parent–Child Relationships; Stepfamilies

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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN LATE ADULTHOOD

Changing demographics and societal beliefs offer new opportunities for maintaining and expanding family relationships in late adulthood. Early definitions of aging families focused on relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and, to a lesser extent, grandparents and grandchildren and siblings. With the aging of the baby-boom generation, a shift occurred in describing the variety and complexity of family connections in the second half of life, generating a more multifaceted view of family relationships. In 1997, Victoria Bedford and Rosemary Blieszner defined aging families to include relationships determined by biology, adoption, marriage, and social designation, and existing even in the absence of contact or emotional involvement, and in some cases, even after the death of certain members. This entry focuses on the structure, dynamics, and salience of family relationships in late life.

Demographic and Societal Shifts Shaping Aging Families

More persons are living to older ages than ever before because of advances in medical care and technology, improvements in nutrition and sanitation, and decreases in infectious disease. Thus, many older adults will be members of three-, four-, and even five-generation families. This means that family members have the opportunity to experience a variety of roles and relationships for a longer time than ever before. For example, more than 60 percent of all older adults are married and approximately 90 percent have living children; of those with adult children, about 94 percent have grandchildren and 60 percent have great-grandchildren. These percentages vary according to age, gender, race, and ethnicity.

Because of increases in the number of years people live and declines in the number of births per year, a change is occurring in the age structure of the population. Through most of the 19th century, the shape of the population structure by age in most industrialized nations, including the United States, was that of a pyramid, with a large base of children tapering to a small group of persons aged 65 and older. Families typically had many small children, fewer middle-aged adults, and no or only one or two older members. By 1990, the age pyramid began shifting to more of a rectangular shape, reflecting "beanpole" families with more generations alive concurrently within families, but with fewer children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, siblings, and other extended kin in each generation than in previous times. By 2030, the population age structure will be rectangular, with similar numbers across all ages from bottom (young children) to top (older adults).

The progression from pyramid families to beanpole families has important implications for family functions and relationships in late life. The increased life span of older family members in recent decades results in more years of shared lives across generations. That is, although the number of kin within families is declining, the likelihood that families have members from multiple generations is increasing. For example, less than one-fourth of persons born in 1900 had a living grandparent when they turned 30; for individuals born in 2000, more than three-fourths will have at least one living grandparent with whom to celebrate their 30th birthday. Thus, the availability of aging members brings greater opportunity for greater family continuity, stability, and support across generations. At the same time, younger family members may face extended years of caregiving for dependent older adults.

There also is increasing diversity in the composition of aging families. Divorce, remarriage, long-term cohabitation, childlessness, single parenthood, nonmarital childbearing, and gay and lesbian marriage and parenthood are prominent features in the contemporary families of older adults. In addition, older adults interact with and rely on persons not related to them by birth or marriage, but whom

they converted or upgraded to kin-like relationships. For example, an older person may view a neighbor as being "like a daughter" when describing a relationship that is important and supportive. Because families play a key role in providing help and emotional support, as well as long-term care to their older members, it is uncertain how these changes in family structures will influence interactions and support patterns. For example, will adult children feel an obligation to care for both biological and stepparents? Will persons who choose not to have children be at risk of having fewer family resources? Will society acknowledge and accept family-like relationships as important sources of support and caregivers for elders?

Family Dynamics and Support

Family members provide one another with information, help with personal tasks, and emotional support. The type, frequency, and amount of support provided or received vary depending on individual needs and abilities, the type of relationship, and personal resources. Social and cultural norms or beliefs also strongly influence the extent and type of support and care provided by family members. In contrast with the majority White U.S. culture, which emphasizes democracy and individuality, the needs and well-being of the family unit are of utmost importance and a driving influence in the lives of many minority families in late life.

Social exchange theorists assert that people constantly evaluate their relationships, based on the comparability of the support exchanged. In mutually dependent relationships, such as those between family members, the costs (e.g., time, money) and rewards (e.g., personal satisfaction, companionship) occur in the context of reciprocal exchanges that take place over the course of the relationship. That is, reciprocity, when defined by familial norms, is a generalized process that does not require that exchanges occur at the same point in time and does not necessarily involve giving and receiving the same things. For example, family members in the middle stages of life tend to be the net givers of support; they provide more types of support to younger and older generations than they themselves receive. Families most often view this give-and-take of assistance and support across

generations and time as normative or routine practice rather than as a special or burdensome response to family members' needs.

Receiving emotional support and assistance from family members often promotes and enhances older family members' positive feelings about themselves. Emotional support, more so than actual help, acts as a buffer against the negative effects of stressful situations such as failing health or relationship disruptions. This may be because of the general societal belief that family members should provide tangible help to each other in times of need. Thus, whereas older adults expect assistance from their children and grandchildren, they value equally and perhaps benefit even more from the emotional support they receive from these relationships.

For older adults experiencing chronic health problems, having meaningful family relationships helps minimize symptoms of depression and promotes greater well-being and life satisfaction. However, not all relationships result in positive outcomes. Older adults' desire for independence may color the intent of the help and support provided by family members, thereby increasing their feelings of distress and unhappiness. When older adults receive help that is undesired or perceived as excessive, it reinforces feelings of vulnerability, dependence, and incompetence. If they view their family members as overbearing, older adults use a variety of strategies to reduce the frequency of negative interactions. Such strategies include embracing family members' assistance with gratitude, enabling a peaceful relationship that supports their ability to care for themselves; accepting their help with mixed emotions that occasionally generate tension, potentially compromising their ability to manage their daily lives; or refusing family member help and concealing their health problems or concerns. Thus, older adults' response to the assistance provided (or lack thereof) depends on a variety of individual factors including their beliefs about the need for help and how they interpret the help provided by their family members.

Couples

For older couples, spouses or partners are often the primary source of daily help and support. When either person experiences the onset of a disabling health condition, it transforms the life

patterns and roles of both individuals. The way in which older persons and their partners relate to one another and the degree to which they adjust to health-related changes have considerable influence on their relationship and overall well-being. Most late-life couples are satisfied with the help and emotional support they receive from one another. However, when they receive more assistance from their partners than perceived as necessary, seemingly helpful behaviors may actually result in less satisfying relationships.

Parents and Adult Children

Although older parents often wish that their children lived nearby, it frequently is not possible. Although geographic distance may limit face-to-face contact, it does not influence the quality of the parent–child relationship in late life. Regardless of where they live, older parents typically have at least weekly contact with at least one of their adult children and view their relationships with their children as positive. Older parents hesitate to differentiate their feelings for their children, although they may favor some children over others in feelings of closeness and exchange of help and emotional support. As is true for many relationships, parents have higher levels of closeness and lower levels of conflict with adult children to whom they are more similar. The mother–daughter bond is the strongest and most enduring filial connection. Perhaps this is because older mothers believe that their daughters are more sensitive to their feelings and concerns than are their sons.

Older parents express a desire for affection, thoughtfulness, and communication from their adult children more than they want their children to provide direct care for them. Both aging parents and adult children frequently report a mutual exchange of help with tasks, financial assistance, and emotional support and assess their interactions as positive. Some parents, however, report tensions and ambivalence in their relationships with their children, with feelings of exclusion, discrepancies in perceived need for assistance, and undesirable personal attributes contributing to both overt and suppressed conflict between older parents and their adult children.

Individual and family circumstances and history influence patterns and expectations for assistance to and from aging parents. For example, young-old parents (i.e., persons aged 65 to 74) and those with no or minor health problems often provide routine assistance to their adult children. In addition, financial assistance more commonly flows from aging parents to adult children than in the reverse direction. Adult children who are financially insecure are more likely to receive support from their older parents and to receive more of it than are siblings with fewer financial needs. Those children who return home to coreside with their aging parents usually do so because of a change in their marital, employment, or health status. These are often less than reciprocal relationships, with adult children benefiting greatly from the support of their parents. In some families, parents never stop providing direct care and oversight for their children. For examples, parents of children with developmental disabilities and mental illness frequently are lifelong caregivers.

Grandparents and Grandchildren

Although older adults consider relationships with grandchildren to be meaningful, grandchildren are often peripheral to their everyday lives. Grandparents' direct involvement with their grandchildren depends on the interplay of multiple variables such as geographic distance from grandchildren, grandparents' health, and the quality of the relationships between the grandparent and parent generations. In general, the power of parents to facilitate cross-generational relationships remains strong throughout the family life cycle. Additionally, almost one-half of grandparents will become great-grandparents; little is known about the function and meaning of this relationship whose members are potentially separated by more than a half century.

Siblings

Sibling ties in later life represent perhaps the longest kin relationship, one built on a shared family history that provides a basis for mutual emotional support and understanding. Gender, marital status, number and proximity of siblings, and family structure encourage as well as constrain interactions between siblings' relationships in later life. Ties between older sisters appear stronger than do

ties between brothers or sisters and brothers. For older men, having a sister increases the likelihood of contact and support among siblings. Having multiple siblings allows for selectivity and discretion concerning contact and frequency of interaction with any one sibling. Siblings typically provide more emotional support than physical help in late life, frequently serving as confidants and companions for one another. Brothers and sisters value their relationships with one another and typically assess their interactions as positive. However, some siblings also report conflict in their relationships, as earlier rivalries and hostilities often endure into late life.

Family Caregiving

When older persons' need for personal assistance and emotional support is required for their daily well-being, caregiving emerges as a distinct type of family support. Nearly three-fourths of older adults who need assistance with daily activities rely exclusively on family members for care. Housekeeping, meal preparation, and shopping are common caregiving tasks, and more than one-half of family caregivers regularly help their older members with feeding, bathing, dressing, and using the toilet. Older adults' preference for family care follows a predictable pattern known as the "hierarchical compensatory" model of care. Spouses are most preferred and most likely to provide care, but if unavailable because of disability or death, help from adult children is accepted, with daughters more likely than sons to take on the duties. Alliances and bonds among family members also often influence the likelihood that a particular person will provide care for another. Older adults typically adjust their expectations for care to reflect the specific realities of their family members' lives, whereas adult children must balance the needs of their dependent elders with those of their entire family. For example, more than one-half of caregivers have children living at home and juggle work with caregiving responsibilities to meet both their immediate family's financial obligations and the costs of caring for their aging parents.

Although caring for a spouse or parent is increasingly common practice in older families, a family care situation receiving increased attention recently is that of grandparents assuming full-time parenting responsibilities for their grandchildren. Approximately 2.4 million grandparents have primary responsibility for their grandchildren. These custodial grandparents assume the care of their grandchildren for a variety of reasons including parental illness, divorce, incarceration, and substance abuse. Although older families representing all race and ethnic groups are raising grandchildren, minority grandparents are two to three times as likely as are their White counterparts to assume parenting roles. Regardless of race, ethnicity, or social class, though, few grandparents plan, anticipate, or are prepared for a second parenthood. When they assume responsibility for raising their grandchildren, they often confront several personal and social challenges as they make adjustments in their daily lives to accommodate their acquired parental roles. Many grandparents feel as if they have to manage their situation alone and report feeling judged, criticized, and abandoned by their family, friends, and community.

Regardless of which generation is providing care, there are differences in burden according to race and ethnic identification, with White caregivers typically reporting feeling greater burden than do caregivers in minority families. Differences in the level of perceived burden may be a result of stronger feelings of family obligation and greater acceptance of the caregiving situation often found in minority families. Conversely, members of race and ethnic minority groups may be experiencing similar levels of burden as that of their White counterparts, but may be less likely to express or admit to feelings of burden and stress.

Family dynamics also shape the caregiving experience for late-life families. Family caregivers of all ages often report feeling as though they have no time for themselves or others. Isolation and feelings of loneliness may result from a loss of social contacts or, perhaps more devastating, the loss of normative roles and relationships (e.g., husband–wife; parent–child; grandparent–grandchild). Although there is a tendency to focus on the negative outcomes of caregiving, family members acknowledge the positive benefits of the caregiving experience, including personal growth (e.g., gaining medical knowledge and health care skills), appreciating the elder's contributions to the

world, feeling that one is repaying an elder for care provided during earlier times in life, and more satisfying relationships.

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See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Caregiving Across the Life Span; Couples in Later Life; Family Relationships in Middle Adulthood; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Kin Relationships; Negative Interactions During Late Life

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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

Family life for a midlife person is busy time, with significant changes and role transitions. Generally regarded as encompassing the years between 40 and 60, people during midlife typically experience significant changes in their family relationships, including caring for their parents and grieving their deaths, launching their young adult children, maintaining marriage/couple relationships, and becoming grandparents. In this entry, middle adulthood is defined, and then family relationships during this time are outlined, including relationships with children, grandchildren, partners, siblings, and parents.

Middle Adulthood Defined

A brief demographic portrait of midlife adults using U.S. Census data indicates that most are married and have children. Racial diversity exists, however, in marital status. Although 79 percent of Caucasian men and 74 percent of Caucasian women between the ages of 45 and 54 are married, only 62 percent and 51 percent of African-American men and women, respectively, are married. African-American midlife adults are more likely than are Caucasians to be either never married or divorced. Seventy-eight percent of midlife adults have at least two children, with 13 percent having five or more. A national study of midlife found that 70 percent of those married were in their first marriage, and 30 percent were remarried. In addition, 5 percent of the never-married, divorced, or widowed midlife adults were cohabiting.

Midlife is a demanding period of time for most adults. The number of significant roles a person occupies is related to increased role conflict, role strain, and overall stress. Adults accumulate roles in early adulthood, reaching a peak in midlife. Adult child, partnership, parenting, grandparenting, occupational, and community roles converge to create substantial strain in the lives of midlife adults. The time demands of midlife were highlighted in a recent national study of midlife couples. These couples, aged 40 to 50 years, were

asked what they would change in their marriage relationship if they could change one thing. The most common theme was a wish that they could spend more time with their spouses. Twice as many responses addressed this theme rather than others such as children, sex, and money. Thus, many couples value their relationships and enjoy spending time together, yet the busy nature of their lives may interfere with couple time.

Relationships With Children

Midlife parent relationships with children are diverse. Although some parents have small children during this time, many have adolescent and emerging adult children. In addition, many middle adulthood parents have foster, adoptive, and stepchild relationships.

Parent–child relationships can be somewhat strained during middle adulthood because both parents and children are negotiating different levels of control, support, autonomy, independence, and responsibility. Regarding these goals, research has indicated that the well-being of parents in middle adulthood is related to the assessments they make of their children's accomplishments. Teenage and young adult children who mature, complete their education, gain experience with work and romantic relationships, and prepare to leave the home contribute positively to parental well-being. As children launch from the home, most parents experience a successful transition. In addition, parent–child relationships typically improve after children leave home.

Relationships With Grandchildren

Many parents transition into the grandparent role during middle adulthood. Although grandparents take different styles and approaches to interacting with their grandchildren, most are satisfied with these relationships. Often, the approach grandparents take is linked to the meaning that they derive from the relationship. For many, grandparenting is a formal experience, with occasional interactions, some indulgence, and little discipline. Others prefer a fun-seeking approach, engaging in the relationship with playfulness. Grandparents can become involved in their grandchildren's lives

to the extent that they provide daily care and discipline. This is especially so among African-American and Hispanic households. About 6 percent of grandparents provide custodial care of their grandchildren, and this phenomenon is growing. Even though the stress of custodial grandparenting is associated with physical and emotional strain, grandparents find satisfaction in this role and report they would take in their grandchildren again if needed.

Several additional factors influence grandparenting in middle adulthood. Grandparents in middle adulthood have more visits and phone contact with grandchildren than older grandparents have. Middle-aged grandparents, however, also report that their relationships with grandchildren are more tiring. This is likely because they have younger grandchildren who require more physical supervision. The salience of grandparent–grandchild relationships is most strongly influenced by the relationship of the grandparent with her or his child (the grandchild's parent). When these relationships are strong, grandparent–grandchild relations also tend to be strong. Grandparent–grandchild relationships also tend to be stronger when the middle-generation link between the grandparent and the grandchild is female. Proximity, or the distance between grandparent and grandchild residences, influences the amount of contact grandparents have with grandchildren and the degree of involvement they experience in each others' lives. Lastly, ethnicity plays an important role in grandparent–grandchild relationships. Specifically, African-American grandparents often play a more integral role in the lives of their grandchildren than do Caucasian grandparents, many times providing direct care for the grandchild. Hispanic grandparents are also typically involved to a greater degree than are Caucasian grandparents and sometimes live in multigenerational households. In summary, grandparents in middle adulthood often have an active and satisfying relationship with their grandchildren.

Relationships With Partners

Although couple relationships in middle adulthood are quite diverse, romantic relationships at this stage are most commonly found in the form

of marriage. In a life-course context, marital satisfaction generally declines slightly with time, yet may improve in the later years. Research suggests that this early decline may be because of the presence of children (resulting in increased workload and less time together) and role demands associated with family, work, and community. As midlife couples move into their later years, they generally have fewer role demands associated with parenting, which allows for more time together as a couple. In addition, research by Laura Carstensen suggests that couples experience fewer negative interactions and more positive ones in their relationship as they get older.

Midlife often introduces physical challenges and health concerns to the marital relationship. Common age-related health problems such as Type II diabetes, cardiovascular problems, and arthritis may require adjustment in marriage. Some health changes related to intimacy also occur during middle adulthood. The most common of these is menopause, where hormonal changes in women can influence mood, physical comfort, and sexual functioning. Conversely, intimacy among post-menopausal women and their partners may improve as worries about pregnancy are no longer an issue. For men, cardiovascular functioning can also lead to changes in intimacy, such as with erectile dysfunction. Available medications and hormone replacement therapies can sometimes assist with the health changes women and men experience in middle adulthood.

Divorce

Divorce is most common among couples during the early years of adulthood, but it also affects a number of midlife couples. In the United States, 27 percent of divorces in a given year involve men between the ages of 45 and 64, while 18 percent of divorces involve women between the same ages. In contrast, 71 percent of men and 80 percent of women experiencing a divorce are under the age of 45. Only 2 percent of divorces involve either men or women older than 65 years. The probability of future divorce is 23 percent among 40-year-old men, 8 percent among 50 year olds, and 2 percent among 60 year olds. Among women, the probability decreases from 18 percent at age 40, to 6 percent at age 50 to 2 percent at age 60.

However, the divorce rate in midlife is increasing. The divorce rate among 45 to 49 year olds has doubled since 1971, and it has tripled among those aged 50 to 54. Predictors of mid- and later-life divorce include higher education, discrepancy in spouses' marital history, being in a second marriage, older ages of children, and having a small number of siblings. A recent national study of people who divorced after age 40 found that women initiate the divorce most of the time. The most frequent reasons for divorce among women were, in order, verbal, physical, and emotional abuse; different values and lifestyles; infidelity; and alcohol or drug abuse. For men, the most common reasons were falling out of love; different values and lifestyles; verbal, physical, and emotional abuse; and infidelity.

Marital dissolution generally has negative economic and psychological consequences. One study found that divorced men between the ages of 50 and 73 who had been married at least 15 years experienced a 61 percent decline in income, while women suffered a 66 percent decline. Thirty-five percent of the women and 21 percent of the men in a national study of midlife divorce reported suffering significant symptoms of depression following the divorce, with 31 percent of the women and 18 percent of the men having been diagnosed with depression by a physician.

Evidence suggests that people divorcing in midlife have an easier adjustment than do those who divorce earlier in adulthood. Women divorcing after age 40 are less likely than younger women to suffer from depression and feelings of hostility. Among those who have been divorced at least twice, 53 percent of the men and 42 percent of the women in one study reported that their first divorce, when they were younger, was more difficult, usually because of the emotional and legal complexities of having younger children.

Divorce in mid- and later life affects intergenerational relationships, especially among midlife fathers. Research has consistently found that divorced midlife men experience deteriorated relationships with their adult children. They have substantially less contact with their children, and adult children report significantly worse relationships with their fathers after their parents' divorce in later life. One study found that adult children whose parents are divorced are 33 percent more

likely than are adult children of married parents to have a detached relationship with their father. In summary, divorce affects family relationships in middle adulthood in numerous ways.

Relationships With Siblings

Sibling relationships are often the longest family relationships a person experiences. In some ways, sibling relationships in middle adulthood may be characterized by patterns established earlier in life, such as extent of competition or playfulness. In other ways, life changes influence patterns of sibling interaction and emotional closeness.

Competition among siblings often continues into middle adulthood. This competition may play out in vocational success, closeness to parents, and accomplishments of their children. At the same time, previous conflicts among siblings have often been overcome by the time siblings reach middle adulthood.

The frequency of contact between siblings in middle adulthood follows a different trajectory to the emotional connections siblings share. Some have suggested that contact between siblings across the life course follows an hourglass shape, with the most frequent contact in childhood and later life and less interaction during middle adulthood. The distance in middle adulthood is often caused by role demands of having spouses, children, work demands, community involvement, and so forth. When role demands decrease, such as with launching children, retirement, and divorce or widowhood, sibling interactions often increase. Caring for aging parents also often encourages siblings to interact more frequently than before and to work together for a common cause. Although sibling interaction and contact may decrease in middle adulthood because of these role demands, sibling relationships, in general, remain emotionally close, and may even become closer with time. Closeness in sibling relationships is influenced in middle adulthood by transitions such as divorce and (re)marriage, launching children, retirement, caring for aging parents, and the death of parents. Sibling relationships are sometimes close as a result of being encouraged by parents. When this is the case, after aging parents die, sibling relationships tend to dissipate. In addition, sibling relationships

among sisters are typically stronger than among brother pairs or brother–sister pairs. In summary, sibling relationships in middle adulthood consist of less interaction than at other times in life, yet emotional closeness often remains stable or increases.

Relationships With Parents

Middle adulthood is a time of both stability and change in relationships between adult children and their aging parents. Regarding stability during this stage of life, adult children and their parents can potentially enjoy mature, positive, and companionable relationships. Regarding change, it is common for midlife adults to assume the responsibility of providing care for a disabled parent. In many cases, the older parent's spouse is the primary caregiver, with middle-aged children serving as secondary caregivers. Although they may not provide day-to-day personal care, they help with transportation, perform household upkeep and repairs, and provide respite for the primary caregiver. In families where the older parent is single or the spouse is physically unable to provide care, adult children generally assume primary caregiving responsibilities.

Caregiving

A recent national survey of primary caregivers indicated that 68 percent of child caregivers were between the ages of 45 and 65 and an additional 14 percent were over the age of 65. Slightly more than half of them reported coresiding with their parent. They typically cared for their disabled parent 7 days a week, averaging 25 hours of primary care each week.

Providing care for parents is stressful. Research comparing caregiver children with similar midlife adults who do not have caregiving responsibilities indicates that caregivers are more likely to suffer from depressive symptoms and experience health problems. Although stressful, most adult children report deep satisfaction in their caregiver role. An exception occurs if the relationship between the parents and the child is strained; in these instances, the caregiving obligations may create resentment. Caregiving also often creates stress with work

situations. In one study, more than half the adult child caregivers reported that their jobs had been negatively affected by their caregiving responsibilities, with nearly one-fourth of them taking time off from work without pay to care for their parent.

Bereavement of Parents' Death

Midlife is the most common stage in which a person's parents die. Ninety-five percent of 40-year-old adults have at least one living parent, while only 25 percent of 62 year olds have a living parent, suggesting that parental loss is most commonly a midlife experience. This can be one of the most stressful, traumatic events in a person's life, with surviving children of deceased parents experiencing symptoms of grief, including depression and physical ailments. Moderators resulting in less intense and complicated grief include having a positive relationship with the deceased parent, being married, being religious, anticipating the death, and providing extensive care for the parent before death. The last moderator is due to the buffering effects of being relieved of demanding caregiving responsibilities. Having an ambiguous, hostile, or distant relationship with a parent leads to a more complicated grieving process.

Published research suggests that the death of a parent of an adult in midlife can have a negative impact on the quality of the midlife couple's relationship. In a cross-sectional study, after the death of a mother, 20 percent of the midlife respondents reported an increase in conflict with their spouse. The death of a father resulted in 29 percent of the adult children reporting increased conflict with their partner. More specifically, 11 percent of the couples reported that the death of a parent contributed directly to their decision to divorce or separate. The most common reason cited was that they no longer felt the need to remain together because of parental expectations. Many respondents also stated that their significant other was unable to understand the depth of their grief or provide the needed support during this difficult time. In 1995, Debra Umberson's analysis of longitudinal data confirmed the impact of parental death on midlife marital quality over time, showing that marital relationship quality declined when either a father or a mother died. Analysis of the open-ended interview data suggested that the

relationship stress was largely the result of the unbalanced nature of the grieving process. Typically, only one partner went through an intense grieving process, which put the partners in different emotional states. The relationship stress, though, was usually temporary because the relationship regained emotional balance as the intensity of the grieving process diminished.

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See also Adulthood, Sibling Relationships in; Caregiving Across the Life Span; Couples in Middle Age; Dating and Courtship in Midlife and Later Life; Empty Nest, Effects on Marriage; Parent–Child Relationships

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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD

Early adulthood is marked by exploration and experimentation in new roles, and frequent, fast-paced, life-course changes. Most young adults have not "settled down," but experience frequent changes in life circumstances, including home-leaving, moving into and out of romantic relationships, jobs, and educational settings.

Consistent with Glen Elder's notion of the dual dynamic of individual and family change—the simultaneous and mutual influence of family members' individual developmental paths and change in the family system—research has made clear that offspring's individual development and family relationships are mutually influencing during early adulthood. Moving into adult roles reshapes sons' and daughters' network of family relations. At the same time, family relationships may support or impede young adult development and transitions. This entry describes the family relationships of young adults, ages 18 to 25. The review focuses on relations with parents, on which the bulk of research has been done. Relations with siblings and grandparents are also discussed.

Changing Relationship With Parents

In early adulthood, the parent–child bond evolves toward a relationship between two adults rather than between adult and child. This is marked by a growing ability of youth to express differences and separateness while remaining emotionally close to parents. Nonetheless, parent and young adult offspring have not become equals in the relationship. Jeffrey Arnett's research with U.S. youth suggests that most young people in their late teens and early twenties will not think of themselves as fully adult, but as between child-hood and adulthood. Goals for youth during this phase include increasing their independence from parents, taking responsibility for their own decisions, and becoming financially self-sufficient. At the same time, most young adults need both emotional and material support from parents to thrive. Research in this area has focused on U.S. and Western European youth. Its applicability to developing and non-Western countries has not been determined.

The interplay between young adults' needs for both autonomy and continued dependency on parents may be one of the strongest forces reshaping family relationships during this phase. The tasks that face both young adults and their parents often involve reconciling contradictory impulses. Parents need to acknowledge the adult status of their sons and daughters, relinquish control, and, at the same time, remain ready to provide the care and material support their offspring need to thrive. Young adults need to pursue independence from the family of origin while still relying on support from parents or other kin to enhance their ability to explore new roles. Parents and offspring need to negotiate their expectations about family obligations as young adults move toward financial and residential independence and establish their own families and households.

Maturity for young adults also means coming to understand their parents as individuals in their own right. Referred to as *filial maturity,* this involves adult children's growing ability to understand their mother and father apart from their parent roles, to appreciate a parent's unique life history, and to develop a deeper understanding of a parent's needs, desires, and worldview. Filial maturity implies becoming dependable to parents (rather than dependent on them) and is a precursor to becoming a source of support for parents in later life. Children's felt obligation to support parents grows stronger in early adulthood and is linked to increased reciprocity in parent–child exchanges of support.

Continuity in Parent–Child Relationships

Social Learning Theory and Attachment Theory provide a basis for expecting continuity between

earlier patterns of parent–child interaction and parent–child relationships in early adulthood. Social Learning Theory holds that patterns of interaction ingrained when children were younger will be repeated as children and parents enter a new life stage. Attachment Theory suggests that the attachment relationship with parents formed in early childhood may become a stable aspect of personality influencing later styles of interaction. Empirical evidence for these theoretical notions is mixed. Data from longitudinal studies have shown modest levels of continuity over time but a substantial capacity for change. Research by Jay Belsky that followed children from age 3 to age 26 in New Zealand found that interaction patterns from early and middle childhood were unrelated to relations between parents and their 20-something offspring. There was some evidence of continuity from adolescence into early adulthood, with parent–adolescent relationship quality positively associated with young adults' closeness to parents. Although significant continuity effects have been found in several other longitudinal studies, these effects tend to be modest. The New Zealand study showed that parent–adolescent interaction patterns explained less than 4 percent of the variance in parent–young adult relationships when measured from the young adult's perspective. William Aquilino's longitudinal research using the National Survey of Families and Households showed slightly larger continuity effects from adolescence into early adulthood when relationship quality was measured from the parents' perspective. Parent–adolescent conflict predicted higher levels of parent–adult child conflict and accounted for about 10 percent of the variance in adult conflict.

The moderate influence of past interaction patterns suggests that grown daughters and sons can establish relationships with parents that are qualitatively different from those of earlier stages. The changing life course of parents and children provides the impetus for a reappraisal and renegotiation of the parent–adult child relationship. Children's transitions into adult roles furnish an opportunity for parent and offspring to forge new patterns of interaction. Home-leaving may be the most critical transition. Leaving home marks the end of direct parental supervision and daily contact with parents. This opens the door to a deeper understanding among parents and offspring that their relationship has changed, or needs to. Home-leaving has been linked to adult children's heightened feelings of autonomy and more warmth and less confrontation with parents. The influence of parent–adolescent relations on parent–adult child relations diminishes after children leave home.

A substantial body of research has shown that changes in family composition and custody arrangements during childhood have long-term effects on parent–child relations in early adulthood. Conflict between parents, before and after marital dissolution, results in children feeling reduced intimacy with parents in adulthood. The negative effects tend to be especially strong for adult children's connections to the noncustodial parent, but lasting negative effects are not inevitable. When noncustodial parents maintain strong relations with their offspring after the divorce, children tend to experience less anger toward the parent and less sense of loss in early adulthood. Parental divorce that occurs after children are grown also weakens adult child-parent relations, resulting in reduced contact and intimacy, especially with fathers. Father–daughter relations appear to be more vulnerable to later-life parental divorce than any other parent–child dyad.

Emotional Bond With Parents and Young Adult Outcomes

Family relationships affect young adults' psychological well-being, transitions to new roles, capacity for intimacy, and individuation from the family of origin. Important aspects of the emotional bond between adult child and parent include levels of involvement, warmth, support, and mutual acceptance.

In early adulthood, a parent–child relationship marked by strong attachments and emotional closeness will foster sons' and daughters' autonomy from the family and their ability to function independently. Research on adolescence during the past several decades has shown that continued connectedness to parents, rather than repudiation of parental ties, facilitates individuation from the family of origin and successful transitions into adult roles. Parental acceptance and support for independence lead to higher self-esteem among grown children. Parental resistance to children's

growing autonomy slows individuation from the family and contributes to psychological distress and impaired social functioning in early adulthood. Sons' and daughters' achievement of independence proceeds best when they feel connected to parents, understood and loved in their families, and secure in being able to call upon parents for support.

Relations with parents may affect young adults' capacity for intimacy. Longitudinal studies that have tracked young people from the teenage years into early adulthood have found that parental behavior marked by warmth, support, acceptance, and involvement is associated with young adults behaving in a more supportive and less hostile manner with their romantic partners. Cohesion and a flexible style of control in the family of origin have been linked to young adults reporting more happiness in their romantic relationships. Research with never-married adults age 19–35 has shown that parental divorce can lead to difficulties in romantic relationships for young adults, more so for women than men. Women with divorced parents reported less trust and satisfaction, and more ambivalence and conflict, in their intimate relationships. For some young adults, however, the consequences of experiencing a parental divorce for their own intimate relationships can be positive. The capacity for positive effects depends on how well the adult sons and daughters come to understand their parents' divorce. Youth with a more integrated understanding of their parents' divorce, involving an awareness of the complexity of their parents' relationship and an appreciation of their mother's and father's viewpoints, report higher levels of intimacy and enjoyment in romantic relationships.

Family Economic Support and Young Adult Outcomes

Parents who provide financial support to their young adult offspring enhance their children's success in the transition to adult roles. Parents' financial backing results in increased educational attainment and higher living standards for their adult children. Parents may provide economic support in a number of ways, including paying tuition for college or other postsecondary education;

providing financial subsidies that enable young adults to live independently (e.g., paying monthly bills); allowing adult children to coreside in the parental household; paying for health and auto insurance; and providing other necessities to their grown offspring, whether they live with parents or reside independently.

Parents' capacity to offer economic support to adult children varies positively with parental income and education and is negatively related to family size. Other factors affecting the propensity for parents to make financial transfers to adult offspring include parental divorce and remarriage. Family disruption during childhood and the transition to a stepfamily weaken parental feelings of obligation to support adult children economically. Stepchildren receive less parental economic support than do children from two-biological-parent households.

Some parents have been shown to use their economic leverage to achieve more control over the behavior of young adult children, especially with regard to transitions into and out of the parental home. Parents can facilitate their son's or daughter's home-leaving by helping to pay for the child's daily living expenses, thus making it more feasible for youth to establish an independent household. When young adults live independently, parents who are unhappy with a child's lifestyle or who doubt his or her ability to make sound decisions may try to nudge the child back into the parental home by cutting off the financial subsidies that enabled independent living.

In the United States, it is common for youth in their early to mid-twenties to live in their parents' households. According to U.S. census data, 56 percent of men and 43 percent of women age 18 to 24 lived at home with one or both of their parents in 2000. One in four young adults leave home for the first time after age 22. Returning to live with parents after a period of independent living is also common. About 40 percent of youth who first leave home between ages 17 and 20 later return to live with parents. These returns are usually for a limited time, less than 2 years, while making the school-to-work transition or while changing jobs.

Adult child coresidence can be considered a form of parental economic support even though it may not involve direct cash transfers to children. Most adult children live rent-free in the parental

home, and relatively few make monthly monetary contributions to the household budget. Data from the National Survey of Families and Households showed that fewer than one quarter of coresiding young adults made room and board payments to parents.

Similar to direct financial transfers, the economic benefits of coresidence with parents may be advantageous for the prospects of sons and daughters making the transition to adulthood. Modern labor markets have increasingly favored job seekers with more education, skills, and training. Young adults can use the secure base of the parental home to gain more time and have more resources needed to prepare themselves for achieving financial independence. Money saved by residing with parents will make attending college or acquiring other postsecondary training more feasible. Without the burden of monthly bills when living independently, young adults can undertake a fuller exploration of career options in which changing jobs or switching career paths will not result in a financial crisis.

Among young adults from poor or lower socioeconomic status families, living at home, with minimal living expenses, will make attending a local college or technical school more feasible. It will be easier for young adults to combine part-time employment with postsecondary education when they are not also responsible for sustaining an independent household. Among youth not attending college, coresidence provides for their basic needs as they negotiate a difficult job market and gain experience in low-paying, entry-level jobs. Lower socioeconomic status families may also benefit from the economic contributions coresident offspring make to the household.

Research has shown that parent–adult child relations during periods of coresidence are generally good, as long as parents perceive that their offspring are making progress toward independence by furthering their education, developing new job skills, or seeking employment. Parental satisfaction with the living arrangement increases when coresiding adult children contribute to their own upkeep by paying for some or all of their own transportation, clothing, insurance, and entertainment expenses. Parental reactions to adult–child coresidence tend to be most negative when offspring appear to be floundering in making progress

toward independence, such as when youth are simultaneously not employed and not pursuing further education or training. The most difficult coresident situation for parents is when sons or daughters bring their own children into the home as well. The three-generation household thrusts parents into caring for young children, a role most had happily relinquished as their own offspring moved toward adulthood.

Naomi White's qualitative research on Australian youth who returned home revealed a number of difficult interpersonal issues that challenged both parents' and adult children's satisfaction with the return home. Both parents and children struggled with establishing emotional boundaries and often lamented the loss of privacy they previously enjoyed when living apart. Despite their dependence on parental resources, offspring wanted to be recognized by parents as independent adults. Resentment surfaced when parents attempted to set rules for overnight visitation, curfew, and contributions to housework.

Other Family Relationships: Siblings and Grandparents

There is little empirical research on sibling relationships in early adulthood. This is one of the least studied relationships in the family system. There is conflicting evidence in prior research about whether sibling relationships are important to young adults' social networks and whether sibling relationships contribute to well-being in this life stage. Although some research suggests that young adults are nearly as close to their siblings as to their parents, other evidence suggests that friends become more central to the social networks of young adults than siblings do. College students tend to share more interaction and communication with friends than with siblings. However, sibling relationships appear to strengthen with age. In middle age and later life, adults increasingly look to their siblings for support.

Observational research by Joann Shortt and John Gottman has provided insights into processes that facilitate strong sibling relations in early adulthood. To build strong bonds in adulthood, siblings need to move beyond the asymmetrical relationship characteristic of childhood sibling

relations, where age differences are critical and older siblings often dominate, and establish a more symmetrical relationship between equals. When the power differential between siblings remains an issue, similar to the power relations between children of different ages, research has shown that conflict and defensiveness are more likely to interfere with the establishment of strong bonds and open communication among siblings in early adulthood. Eliminating the power imbalances that characterized childhood interaction may be a critical task necessary for siblings to enjoy supportive relations in early adulthood.

There are also relatively few studies of young adults' relationships with grandparents. Gender and race are two factors that appear to strongly influence the nature of grandparent–grandchild relations in early adulthood. Because women often function as "kin-keepers" in the family and maintain stronger ties to their extended families than do men, it is common in the United States for children to grow up feeling closer to their maternal grandparents than to their paternal grandparents. In addition, the granddaughter–grandmother relationship tends to be the closest compared with other gender pairings. As grandchildren move into adult roles such as employment, marriage, and parenthood, their relationships with grandfathers improve.

Research suggests that grandparents can play an important role in providing support to young adult grandchildren. Most studies in this area have focused on minority youth, with particular attention to the African-American family. Among college students, African-American youth are more likely to engage in supportive exchanges with grandparents than are White students. African-American grandparents are more likely than are White grandparents to act as surrogate parents to grandchildren. To understand more fully the family resources and support available to youth during the transition to adulthood, research should include the contributions of grandparents and other extended kin. This appears to be especially important for understanding the prospects of African-American and other minority youth. Research is needed to illuminate the extent of grandparents' economic support to adult grandchildren, the impact such support may have on the early adult life course, and the factors that affect the likelihood of young adults receiving support from grandparents.

Conclusion

Frequent and fast-paced changes in the young adult life course transform family relationships, leading to new styles of interaction with parents and other family members. At the same time, family relationships shape the individual life trajectory of sons and daughters in early adulthood. The quality of relationships with parents and kin and the availability of emotional and material support from the family of origin play a critical role in young adults' achievement of autonomy and maturity. Family support bolsters the young adult's prospects for success in the transition to adult roles. The tension between the young adults' drive for autonomy and their continued dependence on family support reshapes the terrain of family relationships during this life stage.

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See also Attachment Theory; Connectedness, Tension With Autonomy; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Parent–Child Relationships; Sibling Relationships

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FAMILY ROUTINES AND RITUALS

Families organize their collective lives through the structure of routines and impart what it means to belong to the group through its rituals. This entry provides a general definition of routines and rituals and charts how they change through the family life course.

Routines are behaviors or activities that involve a sequence of highly ordered steps. For instance, routines around dinnertime might include a set time and place for dinner, roles (e.g., who puts napkins on the table), and assigned seats. Routines are repeated over time with little change in sequence. *Rituals,* however, are highly symbolic and provide a sense of belonging for family members. Elements of such symbolic gatherings are anticipated and thought about long after the event concludes. For instance, the family may have a special Sunday evening meal that is anticipated by all family members. The emotion and affect accompanying such a special gathering might be the subject of stories told long after the event.

Families have a life course that involves various phases as the family develops over time. The family life cycle typically moves from being a married couple, to living with young children, parenting adolescents, and then the absence of children in the home. However, not all families follow a nuclear family structure; there might be other family members (e.g., cousins, grandparents) living with the family. Further, these life phases are not rigid because divorce, remarriage, extended family moving into the home, and even death may prompt the family to experience one or more of these phases again or concurrently. Transitions from one phase to another are often stressful, so routines and rituals can promote healthy adaptation and continuity across the life cycle. Routines and rituals provide the family with a sense of structure and meaning that allow family members to anticipate future events and look forward to them even in the midst of stressful times.

Early Marriage

During early marriage, couples choose new routines and rituals, as well as deciding which routines and rituals from their upbringings will carry forward into their life together. For many couples, this will involve agreeing on the meaning and incorporation of religious observations and rituals. Interviews from married couples suggest that there are several types of marriage rituals including couple-time rituals (hobbies, sports, movies), which often involve the couple setting time aside to be alone together (coffee on Sunday mornings). Other types of rituals may be idiosyncratic or symbolic (favorite television programs, celebrations), daily routines (household management, meals), and communication rituals (daily phone calls).

Transition to Parenthood

With the birth of a child, the couple must adapt to new routines and schedules (e.g., feeding, bathing). These new routines also provide infants the opportunity for social interaction. For instance, when a parent responds to an infant's cry for food, the parent is aiding the child in developing a sense of awareness about how its actions influence others. Feeding routines help the infant develop a wake-sleep cycle that can lead to regular sleeping routines and generally better self-regulation. When routines become stable for an infant, the infant is easier to soothe and care for. This, in turn, may ease the transition to parenthood. Cultural variations in routines are seen in many different specific behaviors, for example, the incorporation of high chairs during feeding. High chairs are especially prominent in Western cultures, whereas a Puerto Rican mother is more likely to hold the infant in her lap during feeding.

Parenting Preschool and School-Age Children

Young children practice various routines including daily routines such as mealtime and bedtime, household duties, discipline routines, and homework routines. As the child develops both cognitively and behaviorally, negotiation and problem solving occur between parent and child, allowing for more variations in routines among preschool

and early school-age children. Between the ages of 3 and 6 years, interactions within the family allow for language development through joint book reading and dinnertime conversations. Structured routines during this period also help prepare the child for routines during the school day and contribute to better behavioral adjustment. Routines allow children to reliably expect and depend on a sequence of events, which ultimately facilitates better adjustment among children. Culturally, variations in mealtime discussions are noted where U.S. families tend to focus more on daily events and are more child-centered, whereas other cultures, such as Japanese American, focus more on past events shared by the family.

Parenting Adolescents

Although adolescents seek autonomy, family routines and rituals continue to be important sources of stability for the adolescent. Adolescents may perceive routines as an indication of parental emotional investment in the family and develop a stronger sense of self from such routines. Further, the structure supplied by family routines often reduces the adolescent's feelings of anxiety and even exposure to risk-taking situations. Adolescents experience less anxiety because the familiarity of a particular routine and may also be less likely to deviate from such certainty into more risky situations. Although the time spent engaging in such routines might decrease, the meaning and importance of family rituals for the adolescent may not. For example, many religious rituals, such as bar or bat mitzvahs, serve as a means for the family to recognize simultaneously the independence of the adolescent and the adolescent's strong family connections.

Children as Older Adults

As children become adults and move out of the home, there tends to be a decrease in the practice of routines in the home. Further, with children no longer in the home, rituals tend to be centered on religious and community-linked events (e.g., holidays), rather than on those that were unique to the family. When the couple later becomes grandparents, there is often the desire to pass rituals on to the next generation.

In sum, routines aid families as they transition from one part of the life cycle to the next, create a context that is conducive to social and emotional development, and when repeated over time become part of the family's ritual life. Passed down across generations, these rituals encourage family, personal, social, and even cultural identity, which let individuals know that they belong to an important group.

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See also African-American Families; Asian-American Families; Belonging, Need for; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Family Functioning; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Family Relationships in Childhood; Hispanic/Latino Families; Parenting

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FAMILY THERAPY

Families represent one of the most important contexts for human relationships. Although individuals experience many types of relationships during their lifetimes, both lay persons and experts in the field generally agree that family relationships are among the most influential and complicated. For instance, there are countless studies in developmental psychology demonstrating that the quality of key family relationships has important and long-lasting impact on the development of virtually every personality characteristic and form of psychopathology. When family relationships function well, they are one of the most satisfying experiences a person can have. However, when family relationships do not function well, they are one of the most distressing experiences a person can have. When family problems emerge, families are

increasingly turning to family therapists for help. In fact, family therapy is one of the most common forms of mental health treatment. This entry discusses how family therapy is defined, reviews existing research about the efficacy of family therapies and about family therapy process, and explores current research to further understanding of the effectiveness of family therapy.

Definition

Defining *family therapy* is a difficult task for several reasons. Family therapy is sometimes labeled by virtue of the presence of multiple family members in the therapy room, but also is at times labeled by the presence of a systemic perspective in any therapy format that emphasizes the family system in the therapeutic work. For instance, Bowen Therapy is an example of a one-person family therapy. As scientists have refined their conceptualization of family therapy, consensus has grown that what matters most is whether or not the therapy was family-based rather than who was present in the therapy room.

Further, many family therapies today are actually multicomponent treatment packages that may involve the use of medication, group sessions for a client presenting with a specific problem, sessions with family members excluding the client, individual therapy sessions for the client, psychoeducation, and therapy sessions with all family members. There is also debate about whether couple and family therapies should be grouped together because they both involve treating multiple family members at the same time. Still, some believe that couple and family therapy differ sufficiently enough to merit separating the two. For present purposes, this entry uses *family therapy* to describe therapy methods that use a systemic focus on the family.

Family Therapy Principles and Models

To understand family therapy, it is important first to understand the basic tenets that underlie family functioning. A family typically involves two to four generations. A family is influenced and facilitated by the opportunities and constraints of its social context. To ensure its own existence, a family adapts available resources to normal and abnormal transitional and crisis stress events. Family resources involve the ability of family members to contribute tangible help such as material support, income, childcare, and household maintenance and nontangible aid such as expressive interaction, emotional support, instruction, and social training and regulation. All families have explicit and implicit rules that govern their interactions, and those rules usually promote robust patterns of interactions. How well a family functions depends on such aspects of family life as the clarity of its communication, rules, and ability to actualize family resources during a time of crisis.

A family systems perspective is central to family therapy. From this perspective, individual problems occur in the broader context of the family. Therefore, family therapy focuses primarily on interpersonal interactions rather than on intrapsychic phenomena. For instance, the goal of family therapy for depression is to change the relationship patterns between a husband and wife to mitigate depressive symptoms, the rationale being that depression can cause relationship problems and that relationship problems can cause depression. This contrasts with traditional Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for depression where the focus is on altering an *individual's* thoughts and behaviors. Moreover, family therapists have historically understood causality in family interactions through cyclical causal patterns—that is, sequences of ongoing, interactional behaviors that have no clear beginning or end.

Each family system comprises a number of subsystems, which affect one another. "Wholeness" highlights that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, with the implication that there is little point in considering one part of the family system without regard to the rest of the system. Family therapists believe that such properties of systems affect individuals within the system. In earlier views, systems, much as in the context of physics, were seen as homeostatic, that is, moving to reduce change. However, more recent views have seen the family as a source of resilience more than of homeostasis. Today's family therapists believe that families possess the ability to rally their resources to restore healthy family functioning.

Family therapists go about understanding symptomatic behavior in many different ways. Some

view symptoms as a result of the family under stress, others look for the meaning or function of the symptom, and still others view symptoms as a result of repeated use of the same flawed solution. Such different ways of understanding symptomatic behavior in one or multiple family members is closely related to the theoretical orientation of the family therapist. *Psychodynamic models* focus on the family as an integral context in the etiology of adult personality and believe that to solve family problems, it is necessary to understand intrapsychic processes within the individual, to understand early parent–child relationships, and to understand the evolution of family problems across generations. *Experiential models* focus on increasing the family's sensitivity and sharing of feelings. *Structural family therapy* focuses on patterns of interaction within the family to understand its basic structure and organization. S*trategic models* use paradoxes as a technique for changing family patterns and interactions. Therapists using *narrative* and other *postmodern models* believe that there is no objective reality; rather, people construct their realities and focus on understanding the family's shared definition of the problems. C*ognitive behavioral models* use principles from learning theory and social exchange theory to understand family processes. Each of these viewpoints has evolved into a school of family therapy.

Most recently, a movement away from specific theoretical orientations has developed in favor of identifying a set of generic strategies or principles that cut across theoretical orientation. Most family therapy today, in part, uses strategies that work with family structure; strategies that work with cognitions, narratives, or attributions; strategies based in psychoeducation; and strategies for working with affect. Hence, the field of family therapy has moved toward a both/and paradigm rather than an either/or paradigm. Current views of Systems Theory allow the therapist to examine causal processes, to examine the differential impact of family systems processes on different family members, and to examine the impact of intrapsychic processes of individual family members on the larger family system. Although systemic conceptualizations have changed over time, the ultimate goals of successful family therapy remain the same: to resolve the family's difficulties and add to adaptive functioning by rectifying a family's

dysfunctional, repetitive interactions, communication, and problem-solving skills.

Effectiveness of Family Therapies

With now about 40 years of research on the efficacy of family therapy, it is clear that family therapy is effective. Research has shown that clients in family therapy are better off than approximately 70 percent of clients not receiving treatment. Research also shows that family therapy is at least as effective as other treatment modalities, such as individual therapy. There is more evidence for the efficacy of family therapy for specific problems (e.g., conduct disorder in children and adolescents) than there is evidence that specific types of family therapy are better than any other specific type (i.e., structural vs. strategic family therapy). Family therapy has been shown to have a particularly powerful role in the treatment of adolescent substance use disorders and delinquency, schizophrenia and bipolar disorders, and eating disorders. For example, research has found that family treatments result in approximately 80 percent of adolescents being drug-free at termination and that family treatments produce twice as many drug-free adolescents at termination when compared with group therapy or family-based drug education programs. Other research has shown that family therapy focused on reducing expressed emotion, which is characterized by high levels of emotional intensity and criticism of the patient, reduces relapse and symptomatic behavior when used in conjunction with medication and skills training in the treatment of clients with schizophrenia and bipolar disorders. Rates of recidivism have been reduced by as much as 50 percent through the addition of such family treatment strategies. Both these threads of research show that with some problems, family treatment is far more cost effective than are individual therapy, hospitalization, and standard, nonfamily treatments.

Family Therapy Practice: How Family Therapy Works

What happens both inside and outside of therapy sessions that leads to desired outcomes such as

improved functioning, improved communication and relationships, and decreased symptoms? This is a topic about which research has only recently begun to emerge. One important finding is that a strong alliance between the therapist and the family is central for positive change to occur. This therapeutic alliance includes each individual family member's alliance with the therapist, as well as the family's alliance as a whole with the therapist and each family member's view of the therapist's alliance with the other family members.

Family therapists tend to take a more assertive and active role in therapy than do most individual therapists. When family members make positive changes in therapy, the changes tend to cross the dimensions of cognitive, affective, and behavioral change. The effectiveness of a family therapy session is influenced by the family's level of cooperation and family members' active participation in the problem-solving process.

Balancing the needs of multiple family members and working in the best interest of the family system can be challenging. What may be in one family member's best interest may not be in the best interest of another family member, nor is it necessarily in the best interest of the entire family.

Further research is needed to understand to the role of culture in families and the diversity of family forms: What may be aberrant in one cultural context may be normative in another. Increasing attention to culture in family therapy has led to renewed attention to the vital importance of context in understanding and working with families.

Anthony L. Chambers and Jay Lebow

See also Contextual Influences on Relationships; Couple Therapy; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Family Data, Analysis of; Family Functioning; Family Life Cycle; Family Therapy for Adult Psychopathology; Family Therapy for Noncompliance in Children and Adolescents

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Family Therapy for ADHD in Children and Adolescents

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, is one of the most common behavioral disorders of childhood. Once thought to be a disorder of childhood that could be "outgrown," modern research has indicated that for most children, symptoms are likely to continue into adolescence, possibly increasing in severity. For some, symptoms will continue into adulthood. Intuition suggests that any chronic problem of health or behavior experienced by a child possesses potential to negatively affect immediate family members.

With ADHD, however, family members carry a greater burden. They are at the fore in experiencing the problems and stress of the disorder, and the individual characteristics and response patterns of family members, particularly parents, may influence the intensity of symptoms. Thus, parenting behavior or style might not *cause* ADHD, but family members can significantly influence the severity of ADHD symptoms over time. Additionally, parents and family members have been shown to fill a significant role in the successful treatment of ADHD. This entry provides a brief review of ADHD diagnostic criteria, prevalence rates, comorbid concerns, and prevailing theory regarding the cause of ADHD as a premise for considering the importance of family involvement in treatment of the ADHD child. The final portion of the entry summarizes specific therapeutic roles often assigned to parents as a component of treatment for ADHD.

Diagnosis, Prevalence, and Comorbid Concerns

Diagnostic criteria for ADHD are outlined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* fourth edition, text revision (*DSM-IV-TR*). ADHD criteria are largely based on empirical data although the consensus among most experts is that diagnostic refinement is necessary. Evidence of chronic, maladaptive, and developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention (e.g., failure to attend to details, difficulty sustaining attention) and hyperactive (e.g., constantly moving or fidgety) or impulsive (e.g., impatient, interrupting, reactive) behavior must be present for a diagnosis to be made. Such behaviors must be present across settings and have persisted since childhood. Finally, impairment must negatively affect function within typical childhood domains and cannot result from an alternative mental disorder.

Prevalence rates of ADHD vary dramatically depending on measurement and sampling. However, when rigorous methods are employed, prevalence estimates typically fall between 3 and 6 percent. Prevalence rates vary by age and sex of the child with younger male children exhibiting the highest rates.

Additional clinical concerns often occur comorbidly with ADHD. Rates of comorbidity vary significantly depending on the methods employed across studies. Estimates in excess of 50 percent are common and have been observed to be as high as 80 percent. The other disruptive behavior disorders of childhood, conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder, are most commonly observed comorbidly. However, there is elevated risk that children with ADHD will also develop mood or anxiety disorders. The issue of comorbidity is significant because parental involvement in treatment becomes paramount when additional disorders are present.

Causes

An exact cause of ADHD has not been identified, and this is an area of fervent research. A 1998 National Institutes of Health (NIH) conference of ADHD experts concluded that despite clear links between neurobiological systems and the behaviors typical of ADHD, no clear causal explanation could be specified. Nonetheless, genetic and biological explanatory theories have been advanced and, increasingly, empirical data supports a significant, if not causal, role of biological mechanisms.

Among biologically based theories, none is more prominent than the theory forwarded by Russell Barkley. Barkley argues that ADHD reflects the child's failed ability to self-regulate, or maintain internal control over behavior. This failed ability reflects disruption of specific executive functions of the brain that require behavioral inhibition as the base from which they operate (e.g., the ability to disrupt an ongoing motor response given negative feedback). Thus, a developmental delay in behavioral inhibition sets the stage for subsequent cognitive processes to go awry.

Although ADHD may be best accounted for by genetic and neurobiological factors, inconsistent findings across these domains have led many to conclude that ADHD may result from multiple causal pathways that give rise to the varied symptom presentation observed among children.

Family Involvement in Treatment

Family involvement, usually meaning parents, is supported by multiple sources of data and is

logically consistent with current understanding of the disorder. In practice, parent involvement often takes the form of traditional behavioral parent training (BPT), which emphasizes the parent's role in managing the home environment and effectively responding to childhood misbehavior. In contrast, treatment strategies that emphasize participation of all family members have not been endorsed as a recommended practice guideline and there is a relative dearth of research examining their effectiveness in treatment of ADHD. Nonetheless, logical arguments can be made for involving all family members at certain points during treatment.

A substantial body of research has established BPT as effective in the treatment of disruptive behavior disorders. However, in the case of ADHD, questions have arisen regarding the degree to which treatment gains maintain across settings and their effectiveness in addressing the core symptoms of ADHD relative to the use of medication. Such concerns have resulted in clinical trials to assess the relative effectiveness of independent and combined or multimodal approaches to treatment. To date, the most authoritative clinical trial has been conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health and is referred to as the Multimodal Treatment Study of ADHD. Results from studies of this type have indicated that medications, parent training, and combined treatments are effective for ADHD children. Medications seem to be most effective in addressing the core symptoms (impulsivity, hyperactivity, inattention) of ADHD. In contrast, parent training appears to be less effective in addressing core symptoms, yet advantageous in that comorbid behavioral concerns improve. Parents also express greater satisfaction with this approach. These results have led many to conclude that multimodal treatments that combine medication management and BPT may be optimal.

Additional support for parent training as an effective treatment for ADHD has been attained from research designed to assess which forms of psychotherapy are most effective for children and the degree to which family involvement in therapy facilitates positive treatment outcomes. Across studies, this research has revealed that parental involvement is essential and that therapies that emphasize behavioral management strategies tend to be more effective, especially for disruptive behavior disorders.

To summarize, there is widespread acknowledgment that family members, especially parents, should be involved in the treatment of ADHD. Accordingly, the American Psychological Association has included BPT on its published list of evidence-based treatments for ADHD. Similarly, the American Academy of Pediatrics has included behavior therapy, implemented by parents, as a critical component of their clinical practice guidelines in the treatment of ADHD. An additional conclusion drawn from the NIH consensus conference on ADHD was that multimodal treatment of ADHD is an empirically supported practice that likely possesses merit beyond the use of medication alone.

Therapeutic Roles

Not all approaches to BPT or multimodal therapy require family members to fill identical roles. Variability may reflect differences in the conceptualization of treatment and the emphasis of treatment (e.g., problem-solving versus behavior management).

Available data implicate a genetic contribution to the development of ADHD. Thus, in some families, parents or siblings may also struggle with ADHD or comorbid problems and may need treatment. At a minimum, ADHD is likely to alter family interaction styles and cause burdensome familial stress. Parental involvement in therapy can lead to the development of parenting skills and strategies that will minimize stress in the home environment and aid parents in properly caring for themselves. Traditional family therapy may also be a method for securing valuable treatment for multiple family members and has been incorporated in some multimodal treatments that hold promise in ADHD treatment.

Parents also can facilitate treatment success by providing external prompts and guides that encourage the child's engagement in acts of behavioral inhibition. In this sense, parents may cue a child's appropriate response in a challenging situation and reinforce appropriate behavioral display, thereby increasing the likelihood of similar behavior over time. Additionally, parents can engage the child across settings, which is hypothesized to promote generalization of the child's adaptive behavior.

Education regarding the cause, nature, and prognosis of ADHD is an important aspect of treatment. Participation in learning about ADHD is a relatively universal role of family members during treatment. Through this process, parents and siblings can become advocates for the child with ADHD, misconceptions of the disorder can be corrected, and family members are able to experience a degree of empowerment as understanding is enhanced and problem behavior becomes more predictable.

Participating in BPT is a common role of parents in therapy and involves teaching parents to understand and manage problem behavior that is often pronounced and disruptive among ADHD children. Parents are (a) trained to manage their attention carefully and use BPT strategically to shape childhood behavior, (b) encouraged to utilize developmentally appropriate commands and implement positive and negative consequences (e.g., praise, time-out) in relation to compliance, (c) provided information regarding the effective use of home rules, and (d) instructed in maintaining a home token economy (a system of behavior modification based on the principles of operant conditioning that is carried out by family members at home), in managing problem behavior in community settings, and in partnering with school administrators to address issues related to homework and school performance. Length of treatment within a BPT framework varies but usually requires between 10 to 20 hours of direct therapeutic contact. Therapy is typically implemented in a stepwise fashion wherein parents attend weekly therapy sessions, are trained to implement core strategies within the home environment, and are provided ample opportunity for practice via role play and feedback within sessions. Parents then implement strategies within the home environment between sessions. In most instances, weekly data are collected to monitor treatment progress and therapy typically concludes when core behavior management skills have been implemented and child behavior has markedly improved.

It is not uncommon for older children and adolescents with ADHD to exhibit social skill deficits and experience social isolation. Social skills training is a common treatment target for older youth and may represent an opportunity for family participation in therapy. As a result of participation, parents and siblings are able to model appropriate social skills in home environments and can directly engage the target youth in social skills practice and feedback outside of therapy sessions to promote generalization. Similarly, family members may be trained in methods of effective communication and may gain experience in implementing useful problem-solving strategies. For families of adolescent youth with ADHD, such strategies may be crucial for minimizing stress and parent–child conflict while facilitating solution-oriented interactions. Indeed, in the absence of family involvement in the treatment of ADHD, negative effects of the disorder would likely be compounded as family members would remain at risk for misunderstanding and reacting in an unhelpful or ineffective manner.

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See also Behavioral Parent Training; Family Therapy for Noncompliance in Children and Adolescents; Parenting; Psychopathology, Genetic Transmission of; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members

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Family Therapy for Adult Psychopathology

Psychiatric disorders, like physical illnesses, can have a profound effect on the family, and conversely, family support can have a major impact on the course and outcome of both types of disorders. Family therapy for adult psychopathology describes the use of psychotherapeutic treatments focused on the entire family, rather than just on the individual, to improve the management and outcome of a mental illness in one or more of its members. This entry begins with a brief history of early theories of mental illness that suggested the family played a key role in the cause of psychiatric disorders. Next, the emergence of the stress-vulnerability theory of psychiatric disorders is described, which posits that the onset and course of psychiatric disorders is the result of a dynamic interplay between biological factors, individual psychological factors, and the environment, including the family. This more modern and broadly accepted model provides a general framework for understanding the role of the family in the treatment and management of psychiatric disorders. The goals of family therapy in the treatment of mental illness, based on the stress-vulnerability model, are described. Finally, methods and approaches to working with families are described, concluding with a description of a typical family therapy session.

The term *family therapy* has been used by some to refer to psychotherapeutic approaches designed mainly to explore family dynamics and develop insight into the nature of their problems and by others to refer to a broader variety of treatments. This entry adopts a broader definition of *family therapy* to include a wide range of treatment methods, including providing family members with information about psychiatric illness (or education), teaching skills for reducing stress in the family and improving the quality of communication, addressing conflict between members, involving family members in the treatment of a member's psychiatric disorder, and helping individuals develop insight into issues such as relationship problems and the effects of mental illness on family dynamics.

Brief History of Family Therapy for Psychiatric Disorders

It has been known for more than 100 years that most psychiatric illnesses "run in families"; that is, someone with a mental illness is more likely to have a similarly afflicted relative than is another person with no such illness. In addition, it has long been recognized that families who have a member with a psychiatric disorder often have dysfunctional and stressful relationships. These two observations were pivotal in leading to early theories that proposed mental illnesses were the product of disturbed family interactions and relationships. For example, one influential theory hypothesized that schizophrenia was the result of aberrant childrearing by a "schizophrenogenic mother," and a related theory speculated that contradictory messages from parents to a child led to an impasse or "double-bind" for which no rational solution existed, thus leading to psychosis and schizophrenia.

Based on theories that disturbed family relationships were at the root of adult psychopathology, early forms of family therapy sought to address relationship problems by fostering insight and making previously covert beliefs and power structures more explicit. It was hypothesized that helping family members develop insight into these problems would enable members to correct them and thereby eliminate the psychiatric illness.

Central to these approaches to family therapy was the assumption that the disturbed behavior and functioning of a member diagnosed with the "mental illness" reflected underlying problems in the family, rather than simple pathology in the individual himself or herself. Thus, these approaches targeted the whole family, rather than the individual with a psychiatric disorder. Although the ill member was conceptualized as "the identified patient," the whole family was actually understood to be ill. For example, using a family systems approach, the therapist may prompt a family to recognize that the parents have become distant from each other and have substituted close relationships with their children to meet the parents' emotional needs. As they grew into adolescence and adulthood, the children may have experienced the tension of striving for independence while not wanting to leave their parents unsupported. Within a family systems approach, this tension may have led to any of the psychiatric illnesses that often develop in late adolescence or early adulthood (depression, substance use, schizophrenia, eating disorders), and it is thought that these may improve if the parents become closer again and rely less on their children to meet their emotional needs.

Although family therapy models based on these theories dominated until the 1960s and 1970s, a confluence of factors led to a gradual shift in how mental health professionals conceptualize the role of families. First, growing evidence indicated that many psychiatric disorders have a biological basis, with vulnerability to specific disorders often passed down through genetic transmission, although it was also understood that environmental factors played a role in the specific expression of the underlying genetic defect. Research showed that the biological children of a mother with a mental illness were at increased risk for developing that illness, even if they were reared by an adoptive mother. These findings provided an alternative explanation for the observation that psychiatric disorders tend to aggregate in families. Other findings bolstered the hypothesis that biology, especially prenatal and natal factors, played an important role in the development of psychiatric disorders. For example, in research conducted on the survivors of World War II, it was found that the children of mothers who experienced severe distress (perhaps because of lack of food or death of a partner) during the second

trimester of pregnancy had subsequent higher rates of psychiatric illness than do those who experienced this stress in the first or third trimester. The unique impact of distress in the second trimester was thought to be because this is when the baby's brain is developing the most. Similarly, in the 1950s and 1960s, a range of different psychotropic medications were discovered to reduce or eliminate some of the most severe symptoms of psychiatric disorders, including psychotic symptoms (e.g., delusions, hallucinations), depression, anxiety, and severe mood swings. The dramatic effects of these medications on psychiatric symptoms suggested biology played a significant role in the development and maintenance of many psychiatric disorders.

As more was learned about the biological nature of mental illness and its interactions with the environment, mental health professionals began to shift from viewing the family as a culprit toward seeing relatives as potential allies in treating psychiatric disorders. One key to this change in approach was the emergence of the stress-vulnerability model of psychiatric disorders, which provided a new conceptualization of the role of the family in the treatment of psychiatric disorders. This theory is broad enough to encompass most serious psychiatric disorders and is briefly described in the following section.

Stress-Vulnerability Model of Psychiatric Disorders

The stress-vulnerability model proposes that the onset and course of psychiatric disorders is determined by a combination of biological vulnerability and environmental stress. According to the model, biological vulnerability to a specific mental illness is a necessary condition for someone to develop that disorder, with vulnerability being determined by a combination of genetic and other biological factors, such as obstetric complications. Biological vulnerability interacts with stress in the individual's environment to increase the chances that he or she will develop a psychiatric disorder and to worsen the course of the disorder. Biological vulnerability can be reduced by medications or worsened by substance abuse. Furthermore, substance abuse can lessen the protective effects of medication on vulnerability.

Just as biological vulnerability can be modified, so can absolute levels of stress, as well as sensitivity to stress. High levels of conflict and stress can worsen outcomes (e.g., frequent fighting in the home, criticism of the ill person). However, the effects of stress on vulnerability can be reduced by increasing social support from family members and others, as well as by enhancing the individual's skills for coping with stress and symptoms and for achieving personal life goals.

Goals of Family Therapy

The stress-vulnerability model points to a variety of ways to improve the outcomes of serious psychiatric illnesses, and many of these involve the family. Family therapy teaches the family to reduce biological vulnerability and stress, while increasing social support and coping. Common goals of family therapy across different psychiatric disorders are described in the following sections.

Stress Reduction

Psychiatric disorders are characterized by a combination of abnormal and dysfunctional feelings, thoughts, and behaviors and their negative effects on relationships, self-care, and functioning at work or school or as a parent. The social nature of psychiatric disorders, combined with the natural interdependence and caring among family members, means that when mental illness develops in one person, most other members of the family are affected. Family members may be frightened, bewildered, frustrated, angry, or sad when their loved one begins to act and function differently. The illness may require relatives to attend to the ill family member's needs, to compensate for lost roles the person used to play in the family, such as worker or homemaker, and to divert time and money toward helping the relative. Thus, stress in relatives of people with a mental illness is common, which can increase stress on the person with the illness and inadvertently worsen the psychiatric symptoms and increase the likelihood of relapses. Reducing stress through family therapy can improve everyone's quality of life, as well as the course of the psychiatric disorder.

Improving Adherence to Recommended Treatments

A wide range of interventions is effective for the treatment of different psychiatric disorders, including medications, individual or group therapy, and psychiatric rehabilitation approaches such as supported employment and social skills training. People with these disorders who do not take their medication regularly or fail to develop coping skills are prone to frequent symptom relapses and psychiatric hospitalizations, which can be upsetting and disruptive to everyone in the family. By understanding what treatments are recommended for the relative's mental illness, family members can support the person's adherence to treatment, and receive the benefits of fewer symptoms and better functioning.

Minimizing Alcohol and Drug Use

Alcohol and drug abuse and dependence are common problems in the adult population, affecting about 15 percent of people over their lifetimes. Among people with a psychiatric disorder, rates of substance abuse and dependence are much higher, typically ranging between 25 and 50 percent over the lifetime. The increased rate of substance use problems in people with a mental illness is partly caused by their biological vulnerability to the psychiatric disorder, which makes them more sensitive to the effects of even modest amounts of substance use. In addition, people may attempt to cope with or escape their mental health problems by using substances. Family therapy aimed at reducing substance use and promoting sobriety in the person with mental illness can improve the management of the disorder and the person's psychosocial functioning.

Fostering the Development of Coping Skills

For people with a psychiatric disorder, effective coping can reduce the impact of stress and persistent symptoms and improve adaptive functioning. Individual and group therapy approaches often focus on helping people with a mental illness improve their coping and social skills. These individuals may also benefit from the support and help of their relatives in learning and practicing new coping skills. A common goal of family therapy is

to facilitate the ability of family members to help a loved one improve his or her coping skills.

Supporting the Individual's Pursuit of Personally Meaningful Goals

Having a mental illness can cause enormous disruptions in an individual's life, and interfere with daily functioning, close relationships, school, and work. Psychiatric disorders are often episodic in their course, with symptoms varying over time in severity, making it difficult to achieve consistent optimal functioning. The chronic nature of psychiatric disorders is often discouraging and demoralizing, leading some people to give up hope for improving their lives and achieving their goals. Illness education for relatives can help them play an invaluable role by believing in their loved one's ability to improve over time, instilling hope for the future, and helping their loved one articulate and pursue personal goals. Family therapy can rally the family around helping a member with mental illness develop a meaningful and rewarding life, even when symptoms persist.

Approaches to Family Therapy

Some family therapy focuses primarily on teaching participants skills and providing information on helping a relative with a mental illness. Other therapies may take a more family-systems approach, helping family members better understand their own family system, how the mental illness has affected it, and how they can better help their relative. Family therapy based on modern and scientifically informed understanding of mental illness has been shown to be effective at improving the course and functioning of individuals with a variety of different psychiatric disorders, including schizophrenia-spectrum disorders, mood disorders (e.g., bipolar disorder, major depression), and anxiety disorders. It is important to clarify what is meant by the term *family* here. In newer models of family therapy, the term applies to both families of origin as well as marital or conjugal-like dyads. In some models, it may also include adult siblings or children of ill persons or even close non-kin relationships (e.g., friends, pastors, 12-step sponsors of self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous).

Family therapy approaches vary in their format, duration of treatment, and the settings in which they can be provided. Usually the patient and relatives attend together. Some approaches have families attend by themselves, but sometimes they attend in groups where they can see how other families successfully meet challenges and obtain support from others. Family therapy programs may be short term, such as several weeks to several months, or longer term, lasting 9 months or more; longer term programs are typically related to better outcomes in serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. Family therapy can be provided in a local community mental health center, in a psychiatric or general hospital, at a private practice office, or in the family's home.

Although different methods are used in family therapy programs, many approaches include a core set of features designed to help the family facilitate the treatment of the member's mental illness. These key features of most effective programs are briefly described here.

Illness Education

Mental illness is often not recognized and is poorly understood by people, which can lead to blaming the individual for being lazy, selfish, reckless, or undependable. Family therapy programs often seek to legitimize psychiatric disorders as genuine illnesses and to familiarize the family with the characteristic symptoms and principles of treatment. Reducing blame, increasing acceptance of the mental illness, and teaching families about treatment can reduce stress in the family and enlist the support of relatives for the member's participation in treatment.

Collaborative Stance With Treatment Providers

Early approaches to family therapy for psychiatric disorders often led to tension between family members and mental health professionals. Modern approaches aim to develop a collaborative relationship with the family. Such collaboration recognizes that families have much to contribute to helping a loved one manage a mental illness and make progress toward recovery, and that involving relatives in treatment planning and helping a

member follow through on recommended treatments can optimize outcomes. Furthermore, in the absence of collaboration, and lacking understanding of the psychiatric disorder, families may inadvertently undermine a relative's adherence to treatment. The collaborative aspects of family therapy include involving family members in treatment planning, teaching them how to monitor the illness and to develop relapse prevention strategies, providing them with easy access to treatment providers to obtain information and alert providers to significant changes in their relative's disorder, and helping them develop strategies for facilitating their loved one's adherence to recommended treatments, such as taking medication, attending individual/group therapy appointments, participating in psychiatric rehabilitation programs, and following through on therapeutic homework assignments to practice specific skills related to their treatment.

Focus on the Here-and-Now and Future, Rather Than on the Past

The primary emphasis of most newer effective models of family therapy for a psychiatric disorder is on the present and the future, positing that there are limited benefits to dwelling on the past, and that the preponderance of work to be done involves helping the family develop the knowledge and skills to manage the mental illness and promote improved functioning for the relative.

Improving Communication and Problem Solving

All families have to deal with conflicts and problems, and difficulty handling problems effectively can lead to strain, even in the absence of a mental illness. When a close family member has a mental illness, the number of problems often multiplies, increasing stress and tension, and resulting in a breakdown of effective communication and problem-solving skills. This added stress can contribute to relapses of the psychiatric disorder, further worsening the strain on all members. Family therapy programs typically aim at improving the quality of communication between members and their ability to solve problems cooperatively.

Format of a Typical Family Therapy Session

There are many kinds of family therapy. However, a typical 50-minute individual family therapy session, often attended by the patient and two or three relatives, might have the following structure: The session might begin with the therapist inquiring if there had been any emergencies or problems during the week and addressing them, and then asking about completion of any homework assignments (e.g., practice on a communication skill taught the previous week). The therapist and family would then review how family members had used the skills during the week, and each would get a chance to practice (i.e., to "role-play") the skill in the office to ensure he or she could use it well; other family members would give constructive feedback. The therapist would then introduce another skill—perhaps another communication skill or an effective method to do problem solving—and everyone in the family would then practice that skill in the session, with members giving feedback on what each did well or might improve. The therapist would then ask the family to practice the skill at home and might provide homework sheets to record their efforts for review at the next session.

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See also Disabilities, Chronic Illness, and Relationship Functioning; Mental Health and Relationships; Psychopathology, Genetic Transmission of; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members; Systems Theories

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Family Therapy for Noncompliance in Children and Adolescents

Noncompliance (NC) is generally defined as a child's failure to follow directions, instructions, or commands and reflects disregard toward authority figures. In research contexts, NC is operationalized using specific details that promote reliable measurement (e.g., the failure to initiate an appropriate or expected response within 5 seconds following a command). In fact, there are many different forms of NC (e.g., NC to commands, NC with rules).

NC is a relative term that must be considered within a developmental context and requires that *compliance* is possible. For example, the absence of compliance with instruction from a 1-year-old child is rarely viewed as noncompliance and is qualitatively different than the response of a 2-year-old child who says "no" when told to do something he or she prefers not to do. However, each describes a possible outcome when considering the defining characteristics of early childhood developmental processes (e.g., emerging verbal ability, establishing identity, display of self-expression, emerging autonomy) relative to the complexity of the command (e.g., use of familiar terms, simple, direct, meaningful).

NC becomes a behavioral concern with clinical implications when it occurs (a) outside of expected developmental stages, (b) with significant frequency, or (c) when it is experienced as unmanageable. In these circumstances, NC may be viewed as atypical.

Certain types of NC, direct (blatant acts of defiance accompanied by anger) and passive (ignoring), are of particular concern because they may reflect limited social development and are predictive of later disruptive behavior problems. Atypical NC has been referenced in the research literature as a *keystone* behavior in the development of disruptive behavior disorders because it is a stable, behavioral precursor of emerging antisocial behavior. Within this entry, NC is considered from a diagnostic perspective and prevalence rates and comorbid concerns are briefly reviewed. Hypothesized causes of atypical NC are considered along with the importance of family involvement in its management. Finally, the therapeutic roles of family members are considered within the context of evidence-based approaches to treatment.

Diagnosis, Prevalence, and Comorbid Concerns

NC is a negative behavior often observed among children and is most prevalent during preschool years. In fact, disruptive behaviors (e.g., noncompliance, tantrums, sibling conflict) are the most common concerns voiced by parents to pediatricians during pediatric primary care clinic visits and persist as the most frequent referral concern among older children referred for mental health services.

Research suggests that a substantial portion of youth who display chronic and severe disruptive behavior during later childhood and adolescence also displayed significant behavior problems during early childhood. This has lent empirical support to the notion that early, chronic, disruptive behaviors (e.g., NC) may be developmental precursors of subsequent antisocial behavior.

Most children exhibit occasional NC. It has been reported that 50 percent of parents of children (ages 4–7) in nonclinical samples indicate that disobedience is a problem in the home setting, but 85 percent of parents of clinic-referred children (age 4–7) indicated that NC is a concern. There is little disparity across nonreferred and referred samples of preschoolers, with nearly 60 percent of all children displaying disobedience at least occasionally. However, there is a decided shift among school-age children: Approximately only 40 percent of nonreferred children and nearly 75 percent

of referred children continue to display problems with disobedience.

Most children exhibit at least occasional NC. Research has also estimated *how often* children who exhibit NC do so. Nonclinical samples of preschool children have been observed to be non-compliant to nearly 40 percent of parental commands whereas clinic-referred pre-school children fail to comply at a rate of nearly 60 percent. In sum, it appears that most young children display NC as a response to approximately half of appropriately delivered commands. Further, higher rates of NC are displayed by clinic-referred children.

NC is a behavior with which many parents must contend. Recall that atypical NC (e.g., developmentally inappropriate, frequent displayed, experienced as unmanageable) is more likely to trigger clinical concern and may be the primary target of clinical intervention but does not function as the independent basis of formal diagnosis. The primary comorbid concerns associated with NC are additional disruptive behaviors (e.g., tantrums, verbal aggression). Formal diagnosis of a disruptive behavior disorder requires clustering of multiple disruptive problems within a limited timeframe.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* specifies criteria for the primary disruptive behavior disorders of childhood, including oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). NC is the prominent feature of ODD, making this the likely diagnosis when atypical NC is the primary clinical complaint. ODD is defined as a consistent pattern of negativity, hostility, or defiance directed toward authority figures such as parents and teachers. Specific diagnostic criteria require that at least four of eight problematic behaviors be present during a 6-month period. Primary behaviors to be considered include loss of temper, arguing with adults, refusing to comply with adult requests, deliberately annoying others, blaming others for one's mistakes, being easily annoyed by others, displaying anger or resentment toward others, and engaging in spiteful or vindictive behavior. In addition to these concerns, impairment (typically social or academic) must be present and problem behavior cannot be better accounted for by some other psychological problem. ODD is most commonly observed among younger children with prevalence rate estimates observed to range from 2 percent to as high as 15 percent.

Causes

The relatively common display of NC during early childhood appears to be closely linked to critical aspects of development. NC is likely to be observed within the first 2 years of life and has been observed to peak in frequency around the third year of life. Subsequently, rates of NC decline, and this is thought to be linked to the child's cognitive (e.g., problem-solving ability, verbal competence) and social (e.g., awareness of others, emotion regulation) development but is undoubtedly also influenced by environmental response (e.g., reactions of siblings and parents).

Evidence has accumulated suggesting that genetic inheritance may contribute to the display of NC. Child temperament (e.g., stable, seemingly reflexive behaviors exhibited in response to environmental stimuli), as an expression of genetic influence, may mediate the display of atypical NC. The exact contribution of temperament to the display of NC remains unclear but behaviors associated with specific temperamental styles (e.g., aggression, emotional reactivity, resistance to being controlled by others) may be involved.

As mentioned previously, NC has been described as a keystone behavior in the development of childhood antisocial behavior. A prominent theory, termed the *coercive model*, posits that significant disruptive behavior problems develop as a result of enduring chronic, negative, and intense parent–child interactions wherein each attempts to coerce or control the other and is reinforced for doing so. The model asserts that the onset of these negative interactions is linked to the child's display of typical misbehavior (e.g., noncompliance during preschool years) that parents fail to manage effectively. What begins with ineffective interactions related to something as simple as NC may develop into a display of chronic disruptive behavior. Within this model, a number of risk factors have been identified (e.g., child temperament, parent psychopathology, family discord, limited attachment), and it is hypothesized that the combination of a subset of these along with problem behavior (e.g., NC) and ineffective parental response yields a pattern of future disruptive behavior problems.

Family Involvement in Treatment

NC may be the sole target of treatment; however, it is more likely to be part of a cluster of behavioral concerns related to the diagnosis of ODD. Nonetheless, NC is a primary target of treatment given its hypothesized prominence in the eventual development of behavioral concerns. The most effective treatments for ODD align closely with the coercive model that was described previously and are designed to directly target parenting skill deficits. Thus, parents and the target child are primarily involved in treatment, although parents are encouraged to incorporate siblings as warranted. Treatment is generally referred to as behavioral parent training (BPT), and although there are multiple types of BPT programs, they overlap considerably in their approach to treatment. The primary goal of BPT is to enhance parent understanding of disruptive behavior (e.g., NC, tantrums, aggression) and to promote mastery in implementing basic behavioral management skills within the home environment. BPT is considered to be a "best practice" in the treatment of ODD and is usually offered as the first line of treatment. Data indicate that BPT is more effective than a variety of other therapies (e.g., parent or child individual psychotherapy, play therapy) in treating ODD.

The typical format of BPT requires attendance and participation of parents and the target child. Both parents may not be required to attend, although this is usually strongly encouraged. Therapy sessions are typically 1 to 2 hours in length and families are asked to attend anywhere from 6 to 20 sessions. Treatment progress is carefully monitored and is a primary factor determining the duration of therapy. A typical session involves a review of treatment progress and completion of therapeutic homework since the last session; direct instruction with parents in the use of a target parenting skill; and within-session application of the skill via a combination of modeling, role-playing, and direct interaction with the target child. Therapeutic homework typically involves home and community implementation of the target skill. For example, parents may be coached to deliver effective commands as a skill that promotes compliance. As homework, parents would then be expected to practice and record their success in using this skill within the home environment.

Therapeutic Roles

Within BPT, the primary therapeutic role of parents is that of *primary treatment provider*. BPT acknowledges that few measurable changes in parent or child behavior are actually achieved within therapy sessions. Rather, treatment gains are achieved as parents implement effective skills and strategies with consistency, within natural living environments. Thus, parents manage and implement the treatment, and the therapist provides training and support for the parents.

As the primary treatment agent, parents are taught to fill key parenting roles. These roles include (a) monitoring their child's behavior across settings to detect instances of appropriate and inappropriate responding, (b) using positive consequences (e.g., praise, attention, tangible rewards) to strategically encourage prosocial behavior, (c) using positive and negative consequences (e.g., timeout, privilege loss) to alter environmental contingencies and teach new behavior, and (d) engaging in family-based problem solving as needed, while (e) maintaining positive parental involvement (e.g., developing family traditions, scheduling family activities, participating in the child's extracurricular activities) over time.

Family dysfunction (e.g., parental psychopathology, marital dissatisfaction/conflict, low socioeconomic status) yields increased risk that a child will develop atypical NC or drop out of treatment prematurely. However, addressing such familial concerns is beyond the scope of BPT. Consequently, BPT may be combined with various other treatment strategies in an approach that is termed *behavioral family therapy* (BFT). Within BFT, parents and siblings may fill expanded treatment roles that directly benefit the target child and the family system. For example, a parent may participate in individual psychotherapy to address a personal addiction, parents may participate in marital counseling to improve aspects of their relationship, or parents and siblings may become involved in accessing community resources to relieve specific family burdens (e.g., participating in afterschool study programs, using public mass transportation).

Clinton E. Field

See also Behavioral Parent Training; Parenting; Psychopathology, Genetic Transmission of; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members

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FAMILY THERAPY FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN ADOLESCENTS

Adolescent substance abuse research has emerged from the shadows of the adult drug abuse field and entered a new developmental stage. Policymakers, treatment providers, and funding agencies now recognize this scientific area for its uniqueness, theory base, clinical model diversity, and accumulating body of basic and applied research. These constituencies have become more interested than ever in supporting adolescent substance abuse research. However, as is the case with all new developmental periods, this one has unique risks, opportunities, and challenges. This entry discusses family therapy—one of the most exciting advances in the adolescent drug abuse specialty.

New Conceptual Approach to Teen Drug Problems

Steady professional, lay public, and media interest has been fueled by the continuing problem of adolescent substance abuse and related difficulties, by its far-reaching public health implications, and by a growing awareness that adolescent drug problems are best understood as a set of complex, multilevel behaviors. Simultaneously occurring problems—interpersonal difficulties, family, school, and legal problems—interact, and in clinical samples are more often the norm than the exception. As a heterogeneous disorder, there are multiple pathways to drug taking and drug abuse, and it has multiple short-term and longer term consequences for interference in development as well, involving many aspects of adolescent functioning. Basic science advances in nosology, classification, assessment, and life-span human development have enhanced treatment, but made it more complex to do. The challenges for teaching this kind of therapy and transferring it to nonresearch settings are just beginning to be recognized.

The use of developmental knowledge to guide understanding of adolescent problem behaviors and adolescent substance abuse has been transformative. Today, clinicians and researchers base their work on specific developmental principles derived from developmental psychology and psychopathology. The importance of parental monitoring in the context of the ongoing and emotionally involved and supportive parent–teen relationship, the growing influence of peers throughout the adolescent years, and how this fact, among other developments, necessitates a renegotiation of the parent–adolescent relationship are examples of essential knowledge for clinicians. The variety of new, clinically useful knowledge that has been developed is impressive. In addition to the systems level content just mentioned, researchers have established that individual level factors, including difficulties in one's assumptions about the unharmfulness of drug use or problems of impulsivity and sensation seeking, interact synergistically with familial and environmental circumstances to increase a teen's risk of developing drug problems. Research reveals a simple and rather daunting equation—as the number of risk factors increases, the probability of a teen developing drug and other problems increases as well.

These types of knowledge-building advances in the basic science of adolescent substance abuse and related problem behaviors have established a foundation for significant changes in treatment

development and research. Although the policy implications of these changes have yet to be fully realized, contemporary treatments for substance abusing teens, particularly family-based treatments, differ on many dimensions from previous forms of intervention. Beyond the parameters of today's treatments being different from earlier periods, however, the interventions are more effective as well. Whether one considers engagement or retention rates, the expanded capacity to decrease or eliminate drug taking or behavior problems, how contemporary treatments produce demonstrable increases in protective factors in the teen's and family's life (i.e., putative change mechanisms such as changes in family functioning, increased bonding to school, decreased affiliation with drug-using peers), or the extent to which new interventions are disseminated widely through novel and expanded communication and institutional outlets, contemporary approaches are superior to earlier generation models.

Clinical Methods Target Known Determinants of Drug Use and Problem Behavior

Contemporary adolescent treatments target research-derived, well-defined, and in most cases easily assessable risk factors. Behaviors and contextual circumstances known to be related to the development and maintenance of drug and other problems include such things as the quality of the parent–teen relationship, authoritarian parenting practices, conflict or emotional disconnection in the day-to-day family environment, and the parents' own history of and current substance use, mental health functioning, and criminal justice involvement. These aspects of the teen's proximal social ecology are important to all aspects of youth development and everyday functioning, as well as to atypical development, so these dimensions are prime intervention targets in changing a teen's drug taking. How knowledge about the most desirable treatment targets is used in clinical work pertains to the intervener's abilities, to the approach followed, and to the specificity of the protocols used within that approach to address the target areas. For example, empirically based family therapy models focus on parenting practices, a parent's psychological functioning, and the teen's individual characteristics and developmental deficits.

Family therapy models intervene differentially according to the stage of treatment. The initial individual meetings with a parent focus on motivating that adult to get more involved in the child's life because the teen's development is off track, and long-term well-being is in question. In therapy's second (i.e., middle) stage, clinicians teach, coach, and actively shape a parent's responses to the teen's problems in individual sessions and in meetings with the parent and youth together. Playing both sides of the interaction, clinicians help teens speak their minds and show aspects of themselves to their parents that are not usually experienced by the parents or others inside the family.

Sessions may happen in the home, in the clinic, in the waiting room at court, in the visitor's area of the juvenile detention center, or in a spare room at the school. Therapists use the structural family therapy method called *enactment* to decentralize themselves from family interviews and encourage family members to face each other, literally and figuratively, and discuss important but touchy relationship topics and recent unsettling events. These methods have in-session and longer term goals. The desired proximal outcome may be several things—to develop and practice a new way of relating, resolve past and current conflict, build a foundation for more adaptive future relating and functioning, emotional experiencing, or expand the behavioral range or repertoire in these developmentally important but underfunctioning family relationships. Success in using these methods is fundamental to overall clinical success in family therapy. Changing the individual functioning of a parent and the parent–teen relationship are instrumental to altering the youth's drug taking and other problem behaviors. Although studies have not yet established family therapy's contraindications, clinical situations where families are not physically available perhaps because they live in other countries or other states may represent a contraindication. At the same time, some family therapists have developed systemic therapies that use family therapy principles with individuals and that do not require the physical presence of the family.

Typical Characteristics of Family Therapy Models

Reflecting on these examples alone, one can see how today's treatments have become more

comprehensive. This reflects a growing belief in the field that multicomponent treatments are needed to address interconnected impairment areas in the lives of clinically referred teens. But the clinical usefulness of the risk factor research base is only one element in the evolution of adolescent drug abuse treatments. Today's adolescent treatment models also incorporate knowledge about protective factors. Protective factors are those characteristics and circumstances that combat the harmful and development-detouring processes involved in teen drug abuse. Such factors include success in and connection to school, affiliation with nonusing peers, healthy family relations, and the development-facilitating role of prosocial recreational activities (and the relationships that occur with these activities). Therapy is more than problem removal. Knowledge about teen and family development teaches therapists what to target for reduction or removal, as well as what to target for growth and enhancement. Clinicians help problem solving to improve, but also facilitate positive factors and protective forces in the youth's and family's life. Helping a teen to secure a proper school placement, get free of the juvenile justice system, develop interests in and find new prosocial, fun, non–drug-related activities are examples of the practical activity orientation within most family therapies, as well as intervention foci that "grow" protection in as many areas as possible of the teen's life.

How treatment achieves its effects is a topic of intense and growing interest. And in this regard, process research has illuminated therapy's interior. For example, therapy process studies have revealed the instrumental role played by changes in parent functioning, such as increases in parenting competencies, in determining youth outcomes. Studies have underscored the importance of the contribution of multiple therapeutic alliances in family therapy (vs. individual therapy, where there is only one alliance: therapist–individual client) to engagement and bottom-line outcome. In family therapy, clinicians must develop working relationships with the parent and the individual adolescent, as well as with those outside of the family who are relevant to various corners of the teen's world. This includes school personnel—a vice principal or special education teacher, for example—or relevant people in the juvenile justice system, such as

a probation officer or juvenile court judge. Other process studies have clarified the nature of in-session conflict between family members, charted this conflict, and characterized it by its content, historical roots, and capacity to change when subjected to well-defined and protocol-directed therapist techniques.

Examples of Treatment Outcomes

Large-scale evaluation studies reveal that on average, outpatient treatment outcomes have improved during the past decade. Unfortunately, dropout rates are still unacceptably high, and drug-use relapse, as is the case with adults, is not uncommon. One recent U.S. national-level study found that only 27 percent of youth completed the recommended (by the program director) 3-month (once weekly) treatment dose. Although complete abstinence from alcohol and illicit drugs is the benchmark used most often in determining whether a teen has relapsed during or after treatment, adolescent treatment outcome study reviews document relatively low rates of continuous abstinence following treatment. One review noted that the average rate of continuous abstinence following treatment was 38 percent (range: 30–55 percent) at 6 months and 32 percent (range: 14–47 percent) at 12 months, and another reported a median of 39 percent abstinence (range: 16–54 percent) at 6 months, and a median of 44 percent abstinence (range: 25–62 percent) at 12 months.

Overall, however, many advances have been made in adolescent drug abuse treatment and research. State-of-the-science treatments change the drug abuse of teens (e.g., more than 50 percent reductions in drug use) and key aspects of the teen's environment (family, connection to school). Treatments can maintain these kind of effects, in many cases for a year or more beyond the termination of relatively short-term (outpatient, once a week, for 4–5 months) therapy programs.

Most studies report family therapy as producing significant reductions in drug use following treatment. In one study examining 30 outpatient programs, average drug usage at discharge decreased to approximately 50 percent of pretreatment levels. Other research reported a 50 percent reduction in average drug usage at 9 months' posttreatment

for adolescents in family therapy groups and for those whose parents attended parent support groups. Family therapy studies also typically report changes in other functional areas of the teen's life, including delinquency (arrests, time spent in out-of-home detention or placement) and mental health problems (internalizing and externalizing problems). A recent influential review found family therapy to be more effective than other forms of nonfamily outpatient treatment (individual therapy, adolescent group therapy, family drug education, or meetings with probation officer) in five of six studies.

Important Current Developments

As is often the case, the more the field learns, the more it needs to know. Clinically referred teens have a harder time benefiting from treatment, although clinicians do not yet know if this is because the treatments are not yet sufficiently complex to intervene in all the necessary ways. Adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system need far-reaching services in addition to the core treatment interventions that typically are provided and that target drug use and other individual and family problems. Individually tailored treatments that are culturally or ethnically sensitive or gender specific exist but are thought to be at an early stage of development. Although evidence indicates that culturally specific therapies can be advantageous in some respects (in treatment engagement, for instance), researchers do not know if these therapies are likely to enhance outcomes (e.g., drug abuse) with diverse subgroups of teens.

Conclusion

Family therapy approaches have been involved in some of the most extensive research of all available adolescent substance abuse therapies. Research reviews and meta-analyses have discussed the comparative superiority of family therapy for adolescent substance abuse. Several approaches have been developed in one or more studies, and some of these treatments have been in use for two and a half decades. New models translate this knowledge into clinical interventions for working with parents, teens, and families,

as well as with the teen's extrafamilial psychosocial ecologies. Interventions target the individual parent and teen (cognitive schemas, emotional expression capacities, communication skills, behavioral range in problem solving, and flexibility, for instance), the family transactional patterns, and also the teen and parent relative to their functioning with and interaction in important systems outside of the family. Rigorous research has established the effectiveness of family therapy for teen drug problems, and current studies are testing this method's transfer potential in diverse clinical settings. This new generation of studies may yield a new level and kind of contribution of the family therapies for adolescent drug abuse to the field.

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See also Assessment of Families; Caregiver Role; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Family Therapy; Friendships in Adolescence; Parent–Adolescent Communication; Substance Use and Abuse in Relationships

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FATAL ATTRACTION

Fatal attraction refers to a relationship process in which a quality that an individual comes to dislike in an intimate partner closely relates to one that was attractive and initially appealing. The disliked quality often appears as an exaggerated form of the originally attractive characteristic. This phenomenon is termed *fatal,* not because it is "deadly" to the involved individuals nor necessarily deadly to the relationship itself. Rather, it foretells a sequence in which the initial attraction unlocks an inevitable progression that ends in disenchantment with a partner. The quality that was initially considered attractive becomes undesirable. Fatal attractions are relatively common in intimate encounters, occurring in between 29 and 67 percent of intimate relationships, depending on the sample and research design. This entry provides common illustrations of fatal attractions, provides a social exchange perspective to fatal attraction, and discusses potential ramifications for relationship dissolution.

Following are illustrations of several common types of fatal attractions that have been documented in empirical studies. In this research, individuals report the qualities about a partner that initially attracted them and then later describe the qualities that they now dislike about that same person.

- *Nice to Fake:* Some people report being attracted to their partners because they viewed them as nice, caring, and sensitive. In fatal attractions of this type, they subsequently report that their partners now are overly nice or even fake. In such cases, it appears that seemingly nice, sensitive, soft-spoken, and caring partners are later viewed as having traits that are the consequence of being *too* nice.
- *Confident to Cocky:* Another common fatal attraction occurs when individuals are attracted to confidence and intelligence in another person, but then report that they now dislike their partner's egotistical, or overly confident, nature. In such cases, it seems that they reinterpret their spouse or partner's desirable qualities in a negative manner. Originally, the loved one is seen as exuding confidence, but later that same person is viewed as displaying an ego.

- *Fun to Foolish:* Another type of fatal attraction involves qualities related to fun or humor. Individuals report that their partner's sense of humor initially attracted them, for example, but now complain that he or she jokes excessively or fails to take other people's feelings seriously. Having a particularly good sense of humor is both the source of attraction as well as the eventual source of friction in these kinds of relationship.
- *Sexy to Slut:* Fatal attractions also occur with regard to the trait of sexiness. In such instances, respondents report an attraction to the many physical qualities, or sexiness, of their partner. Yet when asked what they now least like about their partner, these same individuals complain that their relationship is based too much on physical aspects and in some cases, even refer to their partner in derogatory terms (e.g., "slut"). The positive trait of sexiness, in other words, appears to be interpreted as overly sexy and lustful at a later time.

One of the main theoretical traditions within the relationship field, social exchange theory, can help explain this process of fatal attraction. According to the perspective of social exchange, individuals attempt to maximize the outcomes they gain from their intimate encounters, and satisfying relationships are apt to be those in which the perceived rewards greatly exceed the costs. Disenchantment with a partner's characteristics is likely when the costs associated with those qualities exceed the inherent rewards. For example, a committed relationship with a mate who is appealing because of his or her drive, motivation, and success at work is likely to have rewarding aspects, such as the possible prestige and money the person can bring to the couple, as well as the potential for stimulating conversations. Yet if the mate's ambitions interfere with a couple's time spent together, and intrude on their emotional and physical intimacy, disenchantment is likely because the relationship becomes high in costs. More generally, individuals are apt to be drawn to the noticeable strengths of another person, and those strengths are often closely related to a person's weaknesses and therefore entail relationship costs.

According to empirical studies, fatal attractions transpire among U.S. college-age heterosexuals, married couples, lesbians and gays, and those from

various race and ethnic backgrounds. Certain romantic relationships are more susceptible to this phenomenon of fatal attraction than are others, however. According to research, individuals often become irritated with the desirable qualities of their partner that are either dissimilar from their own, extreme, unique, or strange, and they are less apt to be disturbed by the similar, appealing qualities of another.

Furthermore, although certain types of fatal attractions are more common than others, they take place with respect to a wide range of personality characteristics. There are instances of fatal attractions when individuals are drawn to any of the following major personality types in a partner: agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and emotional stability. No strength, it seems, completely lacks a possible, corresponding weakness.

The findings discussed here have potential ramifications for relationship dissolution. Many accounts of breakups imply that these endings are circumstantial and out of an individual's control. Yet fatal attraction research indicates that for a substantial proportion of couples, people may play an instigative role in the demise of their relationship by selecting as a partner someone whose strengths they will eventually find annoying. The potential battlegrounds for couples are also evident. Common complaints about a mate in couples' disagreements include, for example: a lack of seriousness, domineering ways, or unpredictable and irresponsible behavior. The puzzle, of course, is that these types of grievances about a loved one frequently seem so closely related to the features initially found pleasing. The notion of fatal attraction, therefore, raises the intriguing possibility that such objections about a partner, and related dyadic conflict, may be predictable from the initial stages of a relationship. The findings bring to mind the common adage: "Be careful what you wish for."

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See also Disillusionment in Marriage; Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Falling in Love; Interpersonal Attraction; Lust

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FATHER–CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

This entry discusses father–child relationships, which encompass interactions, thoughts, and emotions between a father and his children across the life span of both. Father–child relationships shape the development and life satisfaction of both fathers and children through direct effects of father–child contacts and through indirect effects such as fathers' economic provisions for children, the quality of the father's relationship with the child's mother, and children's peers' attitudes toward parental authority. The quality, intensity, centrality, and perceived importance of father–child relationships fluctuate as both children and fathers develop and experience changes in other aspects of their lives such as schooling, work, friendships, family formation and dissolution, and coresidence. Father–child relationships have become an area of increased focus in social science research and social policy since the mid-1970s, paralleling rapidly changing norms for gender equity in work and family. Decreases in men's earning power have been accompanied by increasing participation of women in paid work. Public attention to fathering has also been fueled by debates about topics relevant to father–child relationships, such as divorce, single-parent households, teen pregnancy, nonmarital childbearing, responsible fatherhood, and paternal rights.

In developed nations, two paradoxical patterns of father–child relationships have increased concurrently: (1) greater involvement by fathers in the lives of their children and (2) growing prevalence of father absence. These trends are moderately associated with, though not solely determined by, economic status, educational attainment, and ethnicity. Middle- and upper-class fathers are generally expected to have increased involvement with their children in comparison with previous generations. Social norms pressure middle-class fathers to be involved in childcare and education in addition

to playing with children and providing financial support. Mounting evidence indicates that, on average, contemporary middle-class fathers are involved in these activities with their children to a greater degree than their own fathers were. In the lower class, by contrast, there is greater risk for father absence associated with a higher prevalence of multipartner fertility, nonresidential fathering, higher incarceration rates, and frequently shifting household composition. Generally, lower educational attainment is associated with decreased employment opportunity and barriers to providing a living wage in the legitimate marketplace. A significant proportion of fathers below the poverty level engage in illicit activities to provide economically for their families. These latter patterns are associated with increased risk for violence and judicial intervention, placing continued father involvement at risk. These divergent patterns of family life account for the simultaneous trends of greater father involvement and greater father absence. Approximately 1 in 4 children in the United States live in father-absent homes and approximately 1 in 20 live in single-father homes. Most U.S. children now spend a portion of their lives in father-absent homes because of divorce, separation or relationship dissolution, or paternal incarceration, placing increased emphasis on research, intervention, and policies that target nonresidential fathers.

Diversity of Father–Child Relationships

Relationships between fathers and their children vary based on characteristics of fathers, children, and the context of the relationships, creating extensive diversity in kind, quality, frequency, and outcomes of relationships. Father–child relationships are embedded within a complex array of changing factors.

Father–child relationships vary by differences in fathers' life circumstances and roles. Men who are acknowledged as fathers may be the biological father of the child (the procreator) or a social father (e.g., foster father, adoptive father, stepfather, father-figure, mother's current significant other). Fathers may be coresidential or nonresidential with their children, or they may alternate periods of residency and nonresidency. These differing arrangements result in different patterns of availability and absence. They may share legal custody or not and may share physical custody of their children or not. Fathers may be employed full time or part time or be unemployed. They may be the family's sole economic provider, the primary provider, a coprovider, a minor contributor to the family finances, or an economically nonproviding father. Fathers may be primary caregivers, active coparents, or relatively or completely detached from direct interaction with their children. Fathers may be cohabiting, married, separated, divorced, remarried, or widowed. Paternal race, ethnicity, culture, and subculture represent other dimensions of diversity in the father–child relationship.

Men's developmental maturity and personal resources are another source of variability in father–child relationships. Fathers differ in psychological, social, physical, and spiritual characteristics such as mental health, intelligence, interpersonal skills, physical health, and engagement in faith communities. Fathers of different ages have unique patterns of strengths and weaknesses in personal characteristics. Variety in the timing of the transition to fathering is extensive, and men fathering children during their teen years ("early-timing" fathers) must negotiate a different set of resources and challenges than do men who delay fathering until a later age. Men who become fathers during socially defined "on-time" periods have typically completed more of their education and made further progress in establishing work or career than early-timing fathers. Late-timing fathers tend to have more financial and developmental resources than do either early or on-time fathers, but the transition to fatherhood may entail greater life adjustments for them than for "on-time" fathers. Some men view fathering to be a central or primary role in their lives, but other men view fathering to be secondary or less important than other roles or pursuits. Variety in father–child relationships also may stem from fathers' history with their own fathers and the quality and nature of their relationship with the child's mother. Men who continue in ongoing romantic relationships with their child's mother tend to be more involved with their children over time than do those who do not. These sets of characteristics interrelate with one another and are likely to change with time, influencing continuity or discontinuity of paternal involvement

with children as developmental and other changes impinge on father–child relationships.

Similarly, children's differing characteristics introduce yet more variability into father–child relationships. Sex of the child, birth order, temperament, personality factors, health, and developmental abilities are a few of the primary factors that influence quality and amount of father–child relationship over time.

Father Involvement

Researchers and policymakers have viewed amounts and qualities of fathers' involvement with their children as central moderators of father–child relationships and subsequent outcomes. Patterns of father involvement are related to the varied contexts of fathering and are known to be influenced by fathers' psychological factors (e.g., motivation, the centrality of fathering identity in a man's overall view of himself, self-confidence), biological factors (e.g., health, substance use, mental health), ecological factors (e.g., economic opportunities, cultural ideologies), public policies (e.g., judicial processes, child support enforcement, welfare reform), and social support (e.g., quality and nature of family relationships and friendship networks, fathers' relationship history with his own parents).

Though there have been debates regarding the specific components and the best ways to understand and quantify father involvement with children, there is widespread professional agreement that developmentally facilitative "good fathering" is associated with positive outcomes for children, for fathers, for families, and for the communities in which they reside. In contrast, father absence, neglect, or maltreatment is associated with negative child outcomes unless ameliorated by consistent and substantive relationships with other caregivers.

For these reasons, recent social policies have attempted to target increasing the involvement of fathers in their children's lives. By fostering positive father involvement, such policies may yield developmental benefits for children, fathers, and their families. However, forced compliance that exposes children to negative father–child interactions is likely to be associated with deleterious results.

Documented Differences Related to Father–Child Relationships

Linking father–child relationships to specific documented differences in developmental "outcomes" (e.g., child well-being) is challenging. Such differences are difficult to quantify precisely because the development of children occurs in the context of other relationships (e.g., mother, siblings, extended family, peers, teachers, mentors, clergy) and contexts (e.g., extrafamilial care, schooling, mass media, and cultural scripts) that shape development. To unequivocally demonstrate causal links between particular kinds of father–child relationships and child outcomes, experimental studies would be necessary. For ethical and practical reasons, controlled experiments on father–child relationships are not possible. Further, developmental "outcomes" are best thought of as snapshots of functioning at a particular time and as subject to measurement challenges and subsequent change. Nonetheless, a confluence of research studies and theories makes it clear that father involvement contributes to shaping child development outcomes and the kinds and amounts of father involvement influence child outcomes.

Father involvement affects child outcomes differently by gender and age of the child, as well as by the quantity and quality of father involvement over time. Outcomes may be examined in terms of physical, cognitive, psychological, social, and spiritual development in both children and their fathers.

When child well-being is measured in more global and quantitative ways, positive father–child relationships are associated with greater academic attainment in children (test scores, grades, graduation rates), lower rates of juvenile delinquency, fewer conduct problems, less substance use, and lower teen pregnancy rates. In developing nations, father involvement in provision and protection is linked to child survival rates. Measures or assessments that are more qualitative and process-oriented connect positive father–child relationships to better social adjustment and skills in children (e.g., popularity, leadership, life satisfaction), greater self-esteem, and lower depression.

Involved fathers report that they are better people for having engaged in involvement with their children. They describe perceived positive changes in responsibility, maturity, health, and life

satisfaction and meaningfulness. Though involved fathers can articulate personal as well as financial costs of having children, they tend to view the costs to be outweighed by the benefits that they have experienced.

Factors of Importance in Father–Child Relationships

Because of the varied father–child relationships evident across the many contexts in which families live, the social science literature presents many different views of father–child relationships. Yet a careful review of research studies and prominent theories brings a focus to a select set of factors in father–child relationships that always matter, regardless of the gender or age of the child, the context of interaction, or other circumstantial factors. These factors could be identified as (a) the emotional climate of the relationship, (b) fathers' behavior, and (c) the interplay of the relational climate and behavior. When the *emotional climate* of the father–child relationship is focused on mutual warmth, trust, love, attachment, security, provision, involvement, connection, protection, and "being there," both fathers and children develop more positively than when these factors are lacking or negativity, neglect, or harshness is present. When the father's behavior is characterized by moderate control and high warmth, responsiveness to questions, appropriate interest in their children's lives and interests, monitoring and attentiveness to them, availability, and frequent interactions with the child, father–child relationships are considered to be of higher quality than when these behaviors are not present. Such father behaviors are associated with positive father–child relationships, and better psychological and social adjustment for children. The central attributes of "good fathering" can be partially facilitated and supported through training and intervention programs for families experiencing lack in these areas.

As children mature and can reciprocate fathers' interests and needs, mutually positive father–child relationships can extend across the life span. Both fathers and children report that positive father–child relationships are meaningful in shaping life meaning and satisfaction.

Rob Palkovitz

See also Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Family Relationships in Childhood; Mother–Child Relationships in Early Childhood; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenting

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FEAR OF DEATH, RELATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Fear of death is a universal human attribute, the avoidance of which is the motivational impetus for a substantial proportion of human behavior. Given the fundamentally social nature of our species, it is not surprising that close relationships, such as those between family members, friends, and romantic partners, are greatly influenced by concerns about mortality. This entry provides an overview of how fear of death relates to the development and maintenance of close relationships.

Anthropologist Ernest Becker proposed that the uniquely human awareness of death gives rise to potentially paralyzing dread that is assuaged by culture. Cultural worldviews consist of humanly constructed beliefs about the nature of reality that provide a sense of meaning and value. Every culture has an account of the origin of the universe,

prescriptions for appropriate conduct, and promises of either symbolic or literal immortality to those who meet or exceed standards of value. Research based on terror management theory supports Becker's claims by demonstrating that (a) self-esteem (the belief that one is a person of value in a world of meaning) reduces anxiety in response to threat, and (b) reminders of death (mortality salience) instigate efforts to bolster faith in one's cultural worldview.

Introducing Death Into the Science of Love

Recently, theory and research have documented the importance of close relationships as a third psychological resource (in addition to self-esteem and cultural worldviews) that affords protection against the potential terror engendered by death awareness. According to John Bowlby's Attachment Theory, the anxiety-buffering function of close relationships develops in early childhood, as highly immature and vulnerable infants' undifferentiated fears in response to threats impel them to maintain physical and emotional proximity to primary caregivers. (Such "attachment" is evolutionarily advantageous by keeping vulnerable babies close to be protected by their caregivers.) "Secure" attachment to caregivers—that is, the confident dependence of a child who appraises his or her caregiver as likely to respond to the child's distress—alleviates anxiety and promotes growth-oriented activities such as exploration, play, and affiliation. Thus, even in young children, fears related to self-protection, though preceding explicit death awareness, instigate the formation and maintenance of close relationships.

Parental provision of protection and sustenance provides children with positive feelings of safety and satiety and is at first provided unconditionally. During socialization, however, parents' approval becomes contingent on engaging in certain culturally prescribed activities (e.g., standing for the Pledge of Allegiance) and refraining from others (e.g., urinating in the swimming pool). Now children learn to associate feeling safe and secure with being "good" and anxiety and insecurity with being "bad." This is how self-esteem initially becomes an effective anxiety buffer: positive self-feelings are reminiful of parents' love and protection.

Later in childhood, youngsters realize that their parents are human and mortal and, thus, ultimately incapable of protecting them from life's dangers. Coincidentally, children recognize the inevitability of their own death. These developments compel children and adolescents to develop or adopt beliefs about the world that address existential issues, such as the origin and purpose of life and the meaning of death, in emotionally soothing ways. Consequently, they begin to (quite unconsciously) transfer their psychological allegiance from parents to the cultural worldview and garner self-esteem by adhering to standards of value associated with their social roles as fledgling members of their culture, in pursuit of literal (e.g., an afterlife) or symbolic immortality (e.g., living on through one's accomplishments or progeny).

Because of the developmental interconnectedness among close relationships, self-esteem, and worldviews, all three mechanisms function interdependently to maintain psychological equanimity in adulthood. Research has demonstrated that securely attached individuals (similar to those with high self-esteem) are less likely to respond defensively to reminders of death. Additionally, death reminders increase the desire for intimacy, affiliation, willingness to initiate social interactions, and commitment to existing romantic relationships. Moreover, when close relationships are threatened, people become more insecure and subconscious thoughts related to death become more active. Current research also demonstrates that threats to one of the three anxiety-buffering mechanisms (attachment relationships, self-esteem, or cultural worldviews) instigate compensatory activation of the other mechanisms, suggesting that the three function as a coordinated security system.

Summary and Conclusion

In sum, human beings are prone to existential terror by virtue of their awareness of the inevitability of death, which can occur at any time for reasons that are often unanticipated and uncontrollable. Infants secure psychological equanimity by forming close emotional bonds to significant others, and security is subsequently fortified as individuals embed themselves in a cultural worldview and believe themselves to be valuable

contributors to the meaningful universe that the worldview describes. Close relationships, cultural worldviews, and self-esteem are all thus essential components of effective management of death fears. However, because close relationships are forged in infancy, long before we are aware of death or the cultural constructions we unknowingly adopt to cope with mortality or the psychological gyrations we employ in our incessant pursuit of self-regard, they may be the most potent and effective psychological bulwark against the ravages of time. As the great Roman poet Virgil put it more than 2,000 years ago: *Omnia vincit Amor*—Love conquers all!

Sheldon Solomon and Joshua Hart

See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Emotion Regulation in Relationships; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Socialization; Uncertainty Reduction Theory

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FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON RELATIONSHIPS

Feminist perspectives on relationships are found not in a singular theory but, rather, in a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives that value women's lives and experiences and seek to understand how gender is systematically constructed and performed in ways that naturalize social inequities and difference. This entry discusses common themes of feminist perspectives on relationships: gender as a social construction, intersectionality, power dynamics (both interpersonal and structural), historic and sociocultural contexts, rejection of unitary and uncomplicated notions of relationships and families, and methodologies that embrace deconstruction, reflexivity, and acknowledged politicized inquiry.

The Social Construction of Gender

As a central component of their theorizing, feminist scholars view gender as a social construct that embodies cultural views of femininity and masculinity; in this view, gender is created through everyday practices, interactions, and institutions that shape our ideas and enactment of what it means to be male and female, masculine and feminine. These gender constructions are inextricably interwoven into both social structures (such as work, family) and the distribution of privileges, resources, and power.

Whereas gender is a social status that organizes many aspects of relational and familial life, it is also enacted continuously in interpersonal relationships (often described as "doing gender"). Such a conceptualization of the ongoing construction and performance of gender sharply contrasts with biological notions of gender (which place gender into the realm of the natural, inextricably linked with anatomical sex), and *gender-role* perspectives (which emphasize gender as a social role that is marked by a well-articulated set of behaviors and attitudes that through socialization become integral to one's self-conception). Such biological and role perspectives emphasize *gender difference* and may overemphasize differences between men and women. Research on whether and to what degree men and women evidence divergent patterns of interpersonal communication (e.g., men use more interruption, self-display, and assertion; women are more relational in their speech and attuned to nonverbal cues) is a case in point here, to the extent that the

researcher either states or implies a biological basis for the differences, or treats the differences as so inherent to men versus women as to naturalize them. Feminist researchers on the other hand, seek to deconstruct the observation of gendered patterns of communication by examining how these patterns are constituted in the first place, how they play out in interpersonal interactions, and how they reflect and reinforce the structural inequities of men's and women's lives. Feminist perspectives further emphasize how individuals subvert and remake such gender constructions and seek to understand how both exaggerating and obscuring gender differences are constructions in and of themselves.

Feminist scholars also deconstruct sex and sexuality, with an emphasis on challenging binaries to understand the diversity of sexual identities, orientations, and practices. Here, the binary construction of heterosexuality as "normal" and other sexualities as deviant or pathological is critiqued, as are ways in which sex and sexuality are essentialized and inextricably linked with gender. Feminist analyses have given visibility to the ways in which heterosexuality, masculinity, femininity, and family ideology are so tightly intertwined and coconstructed as to make them nearly impossible to conceptualize separately. Thus, feminist theorists also contest *heteronormativity* (the ways in which heterosexual models of relationships are assumed to be so normal and natural that they go unquestioned and unrecognized).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality emphasizes the ways in which the interplay of social locations (such as race, class, gender, sexuality, nation) influences the identities, privileges, and oppressions of individuals and families. For example, racism, sexism, and their unique and multiplicative confluence shape both the stereotypes of Black women's intimate relationships and the choices Black women have in responding to relationship stressors. An emphasis on intersectionality stems from the work of multicultural and critical race feminists, who challenge conceptualizations of the experience of White, Western, heterosexual women as universal and monolithic, and instead situate difference and identity across the fluid intersections of multiple social locations. Intersectional perspectives call for an examination of the ways in which multiple forms of oppression (including heterosexism, racism, class privilege) are cocreated with sexism. Scholars using intersectional perspectives also deconstruct and look for variation within social locations, for example, examining variation in sexual expression that goes beyond categories of heterosexual, gay, or bisexual or looking for the wide variety of cultural expressions and histories that are present within a group of Latinas. Feminist standpoint theorists in particular examine how the "politics of location" are negotiated and experienced and emphasize the ways in which multiple intersecting identities mutually contribute to identities and experiences.

Attention to Power

Feminist researchers seek to articulate the power processes that are embedded within (and support) gendered constructions of relationships, families, and institutions by highlighting the ways that men and women are granted differential access to material, symbolic, and social resources. These structural inequities play out in a variety of ways, not the least of which are the construction of inequality as an inevitable outcome of natural gender differences, and the devaluation of women's work at home and in the paid labor force. In taking a feminist perspective on relationships, the interplay of institutional or structural power and interpersonal power is emphasized. For example, feminist research on wife battering highlights how institutionalized privileges have historically granted men the right to control women and children, how such domination plays out in the powerful interpersonal tactic of physical and psychological aggression, and how a woman's responses to the battering she experiences are constrained by social institutions and economic realities. Power processes are not always so overt; for example, power processes are often concealed within a romanticized discourse of equality that masks male domination of relationships.

Situating Relationships and Families Within Sociohistorical Contexts

Feminist perspectives on relationships push scholars to go beyond the individual and relational levels to consider the interplay of larger sociohistorical contexts. Feminist researchers question the notion of "the family as a haven in a heartless world"; rather, the family is viewed as a key institutional structure that has contributed to women's subordination and oppression. Heterosexual romantic relationships and families in the United States are undergirded by a history that includes the isolation of the nuclear family, romantic heterosexual love as the basis for legal marriage, separate spheres for men and women, and differential access to economic resources. Although relationships and families experienced fundamental changes during the 20th century, particularly in beliefs and practices around egalitarianism, feminist researchers have analyzed the ways in which ideologies and discourses about ideal romantic, parental, and family relationships still are deeply intertwined with the gendered division of household labor and the allocation of time between work and family. Ultimately, feminist scholars emphasize the problems inherent in an exclusive focus on characteristics of individuals or relational processes and call for attention to the historical, economic, and structural roots of gendered practices and beliefs that contextualize and fundamentally influence intimate relationships.

Rejection of Unitary and Idealized Notions of Families and Relationships

Feminist scholars challenge both the idea of a universal heteronormative family (i.e., male-headed, heterosexual, lifelong, existing across time and culture) as well as the notion that the biological nuclear family should be the ideal against which all other family forms are judged. Instead, families and relationships are viewed as socially constructed and historically bounded; emphasis is placed on families and relationships as changing over time and place in structure and meaning. Marriage is viewed as a special category of intimate relationships— one that hinges on and elevates gender difference (given that the family is the primary arena where

gender is constructed). The tensions and contradictions of intimate relationships are examined; for example, feminist scholars have noted a "paradox of love and violence" that occurs when violence is perpetrated by a family member who also professes love for the victim. Feminist perspectives also emphasize that while the family is a site of women's subordination, women are still active agents in their family and intimate lives—they creatively resist and subvert gender/family constructions and use their strengths to negotiate around and through constraints and oppression.

Feminist perspectives embrace the diversity of families, relationships, and people, looking at the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexual preference, ability, and nation. Feminists also critique the ways in which the privileging of heteronormative, White, middle-class family forms have affected research on families of color, lesbigay families, poor families, and so forth. Feminist scholars bring variation and diversity in intimate relationships to the forefront, examining, for example, the multiple and diverse household formations that effectively nurture children, the strengths and stressors experienced by lesbian parents and their children, the strong kin and community ties of Black couples, and the experiences of noncustodial mothers.

Feminist Methodologies

Feminist relationship and family scholars use research methodologies that are recovering, reflexive, critical, and politicized. Feminist methodologies analyze gendered epistemologies, working both to recover women's voices and experiences and to challenge the disciplines by rethinking theories, concepts, assumptions, and methods. Feminist critiques include analysis of what "counts" as knowledge in the academy, whose knowledge production is privileged, and the hierarchy of methods, theories, and data collection techniques that ascribes higher value to particular research approaches. Feminist methodologies openly acknowledge that all research is historically, culturally, and politically bounded (even positivist, objective, "scientific" research). Reflexivity in research requires

conscious reflection about how the researcher comes into and enacts the research, including analysis of one's subjectivity, relationship with research participants, and questioning of the researcher as the ultimate "knower." Feminist methodologies also emphasize the importance of maintaining a dialectic between theory and practice and the inherently political nature of scholarship that aims to critique and change social institutions, families, and relationships in fundamental ways.

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See also Communication, Gender Differences in; Egalitarian Relationships; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Gender Roles in Relationships; Gender Stereotypes; Power Distribution in Relationships; Sex Differences in Relationships

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FICTIVE KINSHIP

Fictive kinship comprises all those relationships socially understood as kinship different from descent and marriage, indicated by the usage of its terms, either modified (e.g., *comadre*) or not, as in some cases of fosterage, in which the term *mother* is the same regardless of whether it is the birth or foster mother. Taken literally, *fictive kinship* is a misnomer. As an antonym of *real, fictive* implicitly values such ties to be "false" or "not genuine" kinship. But people engaging in practices of fictive kinship experience these relationships as real as the ones based on "blood" and marriage, not least as they are also often tied to a prohibition of incest. After addressing the phenomenon in general, three aspects will be discussed in this entry that highlight the significance of kinship's fictive forms for individuals, power processes, and theories of society.

Fictive kinship is found worldwide and covers highly diverse practices and experiences. Its most widespread forms are adoption (prominent in Oceania, in Western countries, and among South American Indians), sponsorship practiced in kinship such as godparenthood in Christian cultures (*compadrazgo*) or *oyabun-kobun* in Japan, fosterage (Central Africa, South America), blood brotherhood (Africa, North American Indians), more regionally specific types such as milk-kinship in Muslim societies or *miteri*-bonds in Nepal, and finally forms that are practiced without being named.

The differences between the documented forms of fictive kinship might be ascribed to the ways of its institutionalizations. Although people

commonly refer to rituals such as baptism to create a fictive kin relationship, in others people actualize it by continued reciprocal figurative use of kinship terms *and* actions that are understood socially as ideal kinship behavior. A figurative use of kin terms alone therefore does not institute a fictive kin relationship—it must be accompanied by concrete action. For example, people living together for a prolonged time with concomitant reciprocal use of kin terms may establish fictive kinship ties. Finally, all practices of fictive kinship are discernible as kinship only because people understand them as such. Further differentiating parameters lie in the quality of the relationship preceding the establishment of fictive kinship. Benjamin Paul devised an "intensive" and "extensive" choice of fictive kin for grasping analytically if individuals were related before (intensive) or not (extensive), and Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf addressed the question of whether the people involved were of the same or a different social status with the respective terms *horizontal* or *vertical* relationships.

Three aspects of fictive kinship are central for its understanding and theoretical significance: connection, loyalty, and power. First, fictive kinship endows people with a social institution capable of bridging ethnic, religious, and class boundaries, therefore enabling individuals to establish or ascertain kin ties with social *others*. Fictive kinship, then, is singularly prominent in vertical relationships, especially in patron-client-ties that found their icon in Mario Puzo's novel *The Godfather*. Albeit the institution of fictive kinship, conferring the egalitarian design of kinship ties upon vertical relations, never achieves an erasure of social inequality in practice, it allows humans to refer ideally to equality.

This widely documented social function leads to the second central aspect of fictive kinship: the institutionalization of a moral imperative of loyalty and solidarity within relationships. Fictive kinship establishes or heightens an affective relatedness, promising in turn an enduring relationship. Contrary to friendship, the relations of kinship are ideally irredeemable. The voluntary character of choosing fictive kin, in an intensive choice reenacting and assuring existing kin relations, explicates its social importance. When people endow their relationships with kinship's moral imperatives of solidarity and loyalty, they signal a reciprocal will to achieve a psychological maximum of security against internal discord.

Herein rests, thirdly, the theoretical significance of fictive kinship. It demonstrates as an actively sought transformation of relationship into kin ties that kinship in general offers the most efficient social technique to naturalize processes of power. The evident intentional character of fictive kinship substantiates the genuine social constitution of all kinship ties because these are sustained in practice only if individuals voluntarily actualize it by renewing its significance continuously. Even consanguineous kinship, that is, by "blood," is meaningless in practice if individuals diverge socially, leading to a social exclusion of kin and potentially subsequent erasure from genealogical knowledge. The affective impact of the moral appeal of kinship ties, its characteristic imperative of solidarity and loyalty, is embodied through affects experienced early in life, habitus, and the culturally influenced socialization. Though relationships designed as kinship yield no guarantee of loyalty, ties practiced as kinship continuously render a security, even if self-suggestive, which cannot be attained otherwise.

As it is a culturally induced posture not to understand kin relationships as competitive or even as instrumental for one's own power sake, they empower people, in particular when competitors or enemies are transformed into fictive kin. Although the intended continuation or intensification of kinship among social equals ideally suspends internal dissent, among unequals, it furthermore legitimizes exploitation and requires, at least partially, a participation in the power of the social superiors. These assigned qualities actualize the social and theoretical significance of kinship in general and of its fictive forms in particular.

But fictive kinship is still considerably underestimated in the social sciences. The field lacks both more detailed ethnographic investigation and theoretical synthesis of data. Perceived from a relational angle, fictive kinship critically influences societal arrangements. The fact that personal loyalty is not considered sufficiently in theories of class proves the necessity to advance the investigation of fictive kinship regarding psychological motives, relations of power, and society.

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See also Ideals About Relationships; Kin Relationships; Materialism and Relationships; Morality and Relationships; Power Distribution in Relationships

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FIELD OF ELIGIBLES AND AVAILABLES

Humans seek relationship partners, and eventually mates, according to principles that help to narrow the universe of possibilities to a final choice. At least three general concepts are useful when thinking about how this winnowing process works: eligibles, availables, and desirables. Each of these may be thought of as a field or pool, a set of qualifying persons and, by implication, a residual set of others who do not qualify. This entry discusses each of these concepts in the context of the mating process.

The field of eligibles refers to socially acceptable categories of partners. This field has two types of boundaries. *Endogamous norms* specify eligible partners according to their membership in the same or similar groups. The most commonly operative endogamous criteria are social class, race, ethnicity, religion, and age. We are supposed to seek partners similar to ourselves in these respects because it is believed that such matches lead to more satisfactory relationships. The other eligibility criterion involves *exogamous norms.* Social expectations usually require or encourage us to seek partners who are different from ourselves

in certain respects. The two most common exogamous norms are that we should seek opposite-sex partners and partners who are not too closely related by blood to ourselves. Homosexual unions are legally prohibited in many but not all jurisdictions, and almost every society has rules that discourage or punish incest.

The field of availables refers to those potential partners whom we are likely to meet and with whom we therefore could develop a meaningful relationship. The two most common manifestations of availability are geographic proximity and not already being in a committed relationship. Proximity, sometimes known as propinquity, has obvious implications. We cannot become acquainted, let alone fall in love, with people if we have no chance of ever meeting them. Research shows that the closer two people reside geographically, the more likely they are to marry. So, proximity influences opportunities to meet. Marital status also influences availability. In societies that require monogamy, already being married makes you unavailable for a new romantic relationship. Despite the restrictions imposed by shared expectations about availability, it is easy to appreciate how these norms may be challenged. Advances in technology have made it possible to meet geographically remote people on the Internet. Extramarital affairs testify to the occasional disregard of marital status when dealing with rules about availability. The relative weakness of restrictions about availability has even led to the idea that everybody is permanently available to everybody else.

The field of desirables refers to those people who meet a set of personal preferences about possible partners. Among the most important factors here are physical attractiveness, personality characteristics, and leisure interests. Potential partners may have to meet certain standards of fashion, grooming, and beauty to be considered serious possibilities. They also may have to be sociable, pleasant, good listeners, and have a nice sense of humor. Desirable partners also may have to share several leisure interests in common with the person making the evaluation. Although preferences may appear to be unique to the person having them, many preferences are widely shared within a given culture. For example, standards of beauty may be influenced by the appearances and practices of

celebrities and the ways in which the mass media portray them.

When people apply ideas about fields of potential partners to a search for real partners, several practical considerations are involved. First, mate choice is interactive. For a couple or union to form, both partners must fall within their partner's acceptable fields. So, it is wise to be attentive to one's own appeal, not just to the appeal of potential partners. Second, the searching process occurs within competitive markets, so we have to display to potential partners some advantages over likely rivals. The size of the relevant fields of both rivals and potential partners shapes our chances of success. In addition, cultures differ in how inclusive or restrictive their fields of potential partners are. For example, first cousins are eligible mates in some cultures, but not in others.

Because most mate selection is heterosexual, the criteria that apply to defining appropriate males and females sometimes may be incongruent. For example, although males are generally taller than females, if few tall males are available, the normal expectations about height differences may be violated without objection. Finally, fields of potential partners depend on the purposes of the relationship. If we are dating just for fun, the field of acceptable partners may be much broader than if we are searching for a lifelong marriage partner.

We narrow our fields of potential partners in different ways. We may first eliminate ineligibles, and then from among those available, search for desirables. Alternatively, we may concentrate entirely on those who are available, then determine desirables, and finally deal with eligibility. Whatever sequence the winnowing process may follow, our successive experiences of success and failure shape the way we approach our next opportunity.

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See also Assortative Mating; Marketplace Approaches to Courtship, Love, and Sex; Marriage Markets; Matching Hypothesis; Mate Preferences

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FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Every interaction with a new person entails a first impression. The impressions we form of others and they of us influence practically every aspect of our lives, including our friendships, romantic relationships, and career prospects. Impression formation occurs rapidly, is often automatic and unconscious, and frequently occurs based on mere glimpses or instantaneous appraisals of "thin slices of behavior." First impressions have important consequences in many different domains, including in the judgments of relationships, in job interviews, and in assessing others' personalities. And first impressions are critical because these original evaluations are often lasting, influential, and set the stage for subsequent expectations, behavior, and interactions. This entry first discusses the accuracy and downstream consequences of first impressions in the domains of relationships, deception, job interviews, and personality. This discussion is then followed by an examination of the characteristics of good judges of first impressions.

Thin Slices of Behavior

Thin slices of behavior was coined by Nalini Ambady and Robert Rosenthal to describe brief excerpts of expressive behavior sampled from the behavioral stream that contain dynamic information and are less than 5 minutes long. Thin slices are an excellent way to examine first impressions, and the slices can be sampled from any available

channel of communication, including the face, the body, speech, the voice, transcripts, or combinations of these. Hence, static images (e.g., photographs) and larger chunks of dynamic behaviors would not qualify as a thin slice.

The type of judgment being made affects accuracy. Thin-slice judgments are predictive and accurate only to the extent that relevant variables are observable from the thin slice sampled. Using the analogy of an onion, some characteristics, similar to the more visible, transparent outer layers of the onion, are easily observed and judged from thin slices. But other characteristics are hidden, similar to the inner layers of the onion, and are less easily judged from thin slices of behavior. Variables that are more observable and that are revealed through demeanor and behavior, such as extraversion, warmth, and likeability, are more easily and accurately judged from thin slices. In contrast, less observable variables, such as perseverance, are not easily or accurately judged from thin slices. This is because information regarding perseverance is more likely revealed through actions and behaviors that unfold over a relatively long period. Such information is less likely to be gleaned from thin slices of behavior.

Research on thin-slice judgments has had an impact across social, applied, and cognitive psychology and economics and has penetrated the popular literature as well. Thin-slice judgments are particularly useful in examining interpersonal relationships. For instance, judgments based on thin slices have been shown to accurately predict aspects of the doctor-patient relationship, including patient satisfaction and adherence to treatment, the relationship status of opposite-sex pairs interacting, judgments of rapport between two persons, and courtroom judges' expectations of a defendant's guilt.

Judging Relationships

Even nonhuman primates show an ability to quickly scan the social environment and recognize relationship patterns among others. These relationship patterns include those of kinship and status. During evolution, being able to make quick and accurate assessments of others' relationship patterns is important for survival of the species.

Among humans, do first impressions provide signals about different types of relationships? Evidence indicates that people can judge different types of relationships. For example, people (and animals) can judge kinship from minimal cues. They can also judge the status of individuals in an interaction, such as who is the boss and who is the subordinate, from first impressions. These accurate responses depend on a correct interpretation of available verbal and nonverbal cues. Thus, both kinship and status relationships are judged from cues such as posture and gaze. Finally, individuals can judge whether people are strangers, friends, or romantic partners based on minimal cues, such as posture, facial expression, and gaze.

In addition to identifying the type of relationship people share, perceivers also make inferences about the quality of relationships. One important characteristic of the quality of the relationships is the level of rapport between partners. Rapport is defined as the extent to which a relationship is pleasant, engaging, and harmonious. When two people feel rapport toward each other, they are more attentive to each other, more positive in their behavior to each other, and better coordinated in their movements. Can rapport be judged from first impressions? It turns out that people are not good at judging rapport or whether other people are "in sync" from observations of brief video clips. Thus, it seems that people are better at judging types of relationships than they are at judging the quality of relationships.

Another characteristic of the quality of a relationship is the love that exists between the partners. Studies relying on self-reports have found no differences in relationship quality between couples that reported falling in love at first sight and those whose relationships had evolved from friendships. Recent work on speed dating has yielded interesting insights regarding first impressions in romantic relationships. One important insight is that preferences for certain characteristics of an ideal partner expressed before speed dating do not predict the characteristics of the partner selected from the speed-dating event. Thus, predictions before the dating event do not line up with actual choices, suggesting that prior theories and beliefs do not accurately predict first impressions and liking.

How good are people at judging love between others based on their first impressions? People are

not good judges of the love between other couples from thin-slice video clips. Research has shown that people who were in love reported being more confident about their ability to judge whether other couples were in love but were actually less accurate than people not involved in romantic relationships. Thus, those in love may feel more confident about their ability to judge love, but are more biased than are those not in love. In sum, although perceivers have little difficulty categorizing the type of relationship that two people share, they are not as good at gauging the quality of that relationship, in terms of the rapport or the love between partners, from first impressions.

Deception

How well can deception be judged based on first impressions? Lying is ubiquitous in social life, and most lies are "white lies," which are relatively harmless and are told to avoid friction and to maintain harmony in relationships. Other lies, however, are less innocuous, such as when liars maliciously manipulate individuals and organizations to advance their own self-interest.

Though people might lie quite often, they are not good at judging when others are lying. Meta-analyses of lie detection ability find average accuracy rate is 54 percent, only slightly better than that afforded by chance guessing.

One important moderator of accuracy in lie detection is the relationship between the liar and the detector. Research reveals that close friends show a substantial and significant improvement in lie detection accuracy (accuracy increased from 47 percent to 61 percent) over time as they get to know each other better, but less close friends show a small decrease in accuracy over time.

Factors such as expertise, experience, and formal training in lie detection do not seem to improve detection accuracy. "Professional lie catchers," such as police officers, detectives, judges, secret service agents, and parole officers, are no more accurate at detecting deception than are students and other citizens. The one group of individuals that does seem to be more accurate at detecting lies than others is people with elevated levels of depression symptoms, who are better able to spot false reassurances and phoniness.

When perceivers do successfully distinguish truths and lies, they rely heavily on different streams of expressive behavior, including facial displays, gestures, and tones of voice. Are any of these channels particularly revealing of deception? The amount that people can control the information communicated by different channels of communication affects how revealing or "leaky" that channel of communication is considered. Verbal statements are believed to be the most controllable and therefore the least leaky channel of communication, followed, in order, by facial displays, gestures, and vocal tone. Vocal tone may be the leakiest channel of communication because the speaker's perception differs from that of the listener. Because the voice sounds different to the speaker than to the listener, the speaker has difficultly monitoring and modulating it. Indeed, deception is most accurately detected from changes in the tone of voice compared with other channels of communication.

The bulk of research on deception detection comes from laboratory studies with undergraduate participants in which the liar's motivation to be successful may be minimal. One meta-analysis of the literature examined whether the cues to deception become more transparent during "high-stakes" lies, when the liar has greater motivation to succeed. This analysis revealed that when liars are more highly motivated to succeed, they become tenser; specifically, they use less eye contact and use higher vocal pitch. This pattern is seen during real-life high-stakes situations, including murder, rape, and arson suspects undergoing police interrogations. Whether this greater transparency during higher stakes situations results in greater perceiver accuracy remains to be determined.

Job Interviews

First impressions are critical in job interviews, as documented in the plethora of books and articles on impression management in the job interview. Recent work suggests that interviewers' early impressions affect interview outcomes. In general, studies have found that the more favorable the interviewers' impressions on the preinterview measures are, the more positively they treat the applicant, and the more likely they are to extend

an offer to the applicant. Specifically, interviewers use a more positive vocal style with applicants who have made a positive first impression. Moreover, interviewers try to recruit the applicants who have made more positive first impressions by attempting to "sell" the company and the job to a greater extent and providing more information about the company than they do to applicants who have made less positive first impressions. Interviewer behavior also affects applicant communication style, and the more positive the interviewer, the more positive the applicant behavior. Thus, interviewers' first impressions affect how they conduct the interview, and how interviewers conduct the interview is subsequently related to applicants' behavior and their evaluation by the interviewer.

Personality

The ability to accurately gauge others' personalities is also central to the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. How accurate are our first impressions of other's personalities? The answer depends on the personality trait that is being judged.

In a pioneering study in 1938, Stanley Estes compared perceivers' impressions of personality with targets' self-reported assessments. After viewing two-minute film clips of people engaged in expressive movement, perceivers were able to judge emotionality, inhibition, and apathy at levels above chance. Half a century later, other researchers have examined the accuracy of perceptions of the Big Five personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to experience) from first impressions based on brief encounters as well as on videotapes and thin slices. Judgments of extraversion and conscientiousness show the highest correspondence with self-assessments, but neuroticism, agreeableness, and openness were less well judged. Even when targets' romantic partners or family members are asked to describe targets' personality, extraversion and conscientiousness emerge as the most accurately judged traits from first impressions.

Another line of research has shown considerable agreement or consensus regarding personality traits of complete strangers. Several studies suggest that unacquainted judges exhibit a surprisingly high degree of consensus in their impressions of a stranger's personality. Although consensus increases with increased exposure, independent perceivers still agree in their assessments of a target's personality even in the absence of interaction with that target. Consensus is again particularly strong on two personality traits: extraversion and conscientiousness.

Perceivers can be surprisingly accurate in their impressions even without the benefit of direct interaction. Impressions formed after brief observations lasting a mere 10 seconds are as accurate as those based on 5-minute observations, indicating that personality is often revealed in thin slices of expressive behavior. Moreover, a surprising amount of information about personality is revealed in the environments we construct—whether real or virtual. For instance, first impressions of individuals' personalities based on their bedrooms or offices have been shown to correlate with their self-reports as well as with close acquaintances' ratings of the target person's personality.

Individual Differences:
The Good Judge of First Impressions

What are the characteristics of good judges of first impressions? Several factors affect individual differences in the accuracy of first impressions of relationships, including differences in personality and motivation. For instance, individuals who are more highly motivated to understand others and who have greater social skill and competence are more accurate in their first impressions. Conversely, people who are self-preoccupied perform poorly. Knowledge about social relations is also an important moderator. People who have had advanced theatrical training score higher on some tasks that measure the accuracy of first impressions. This could be because their theatrical training sensitizes them to the meaning of particular gestures, facial displays, and vocal patterns.

Women tend to be more accurate judges of first impressions and nonverbal behavior than men do. This female advantage may be the result of socialization and societal expectations. Women may have more knowledge of nonverbal cue meanings and may be more sensitive to such cues.

Increasing evidence also indicates that the most accurate judges of first impressions are people who are socially well adjusted. Certain groups of people with clinical disorders such as autism, schizophrenia, mania, and alcoholism are particularly impaired in their ability to form accurate first impressions.

Even though, overall, both children and adults who enjoy greater interpersonal success are generally better judges of first impressions, individual differences are tempered by cultural and subcultural exposure. For example, people are better at accurately judging targets from their own culture and cultures similar to their own than with more foreign targets.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecies in Interpersonal Relationships

Both accurate and inaccurate first impressions may affect the perceiver's subsequent behavior toward the target as revealed in the studies on job interviews discussed. Perceiver behavior shapes and constrains targets' responses, creating self-fulfilling prophecies (also termed *interpersonal expectancy effects* or *behavioral confirmation*). A self-fulfilling prophecy is an originally false definition of the situation that evokes behaviors making the false conception come true. Empirical research on interpersonal self-fulfilling prophecies emerged from Robert Rosenthal's influential work showing that experimenters' expectations can unwittingly bias the results of their experiments with both human and animal participants. For instance, in one study, the rats of experimenters who were led to believe that their rats were good at running mazes, ran the maze faster than did the rates of experimenters who were led to believe that their rats were not good at running mazes. The false expectations of the experimenter thus evoked behavior from their animal subjects that validated the expectations, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Rosenthal and his colleagues later documented this phenomenon in other interpersonal domains, including the classroom. They showed that the expectations of teachers affected the intellectual performance of students. Teachers were told at the beginning of the year that some students in their class (selected randomly by the experimenters) were going to be "late bloomers" and show gains in intellectual competence in the next few months of school. At the end of the year, those students showed higher intellectual test performance scores than did children in the control group, indicating that teachers' expectations affected student performance. Although the idea that experimenters' and teachers' expectations could create self-fulfilling prophecies was initially met with considerable resistance, eventually enough replications were published to quell most critics. Meta-analyses of the literature on expectancy effects have subsequently shown that these effects are statistically significant and accompanied by a mean effect size that is moderate in magnitude.

Self-fulfilling prophecies have consequential effects on many different types of interpersonal relationships. In one study, for instance, male participants were given a description sheet of a female with a photograph of either an attractive or unattractive woman and were told that they were going to have a telephone conversation with her. After seeing the photograph but before conversing, men expected attractive women to embody more positive traits. After conversing with a female confederate, men's impressions remained consistent with their initial expectations: Women believed to be attractive were rated more positively, whereas women believed to be unattractive were rated more negatively. Interestingly, independent coders who were unaware of which photograph the men had seen rated the audiotaped conversations of the women who had randomly been paired with the attractive photos more positively. Further analyses of the audiotapes showed that male participants treated partners whom they believed to be less attractive in a less warm, sociable manner, thereby eliciting a more negative reaction from these women than from partners whom the men believed were more attractive. Thus, interpersonal expectations, even over a brief telephone conversation, created a self-fulfilling prophecy that resulted in female participants behaving in ways consistent with their male partners' initial appearance-based expectations. Similar results have been found in other behavioral confirmation studies that have manipulated impressions or expectancies regarding a variety of target traits, including personality, race, hyperactivity, and mental illness.

Thus, both accurate and inaccurate first impressions lay the foundation for subsequent behavior. First impressions are critical in the formation of fundamental social relationships and influence both whether a relationship is established and the quality of the relationship once it is established.

Nalini Ambady

See also Communication, Nonverbal; Communication Skills; Deception and Lying; Emotional Communication; Facial Expressions; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Liking; Nonverbal Communication, Status Differences; Rapport; Speed Dating

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FLIRTING

What do peacocks displaying their plumes, strutting chimpanzees, and smiling women in bars have in common? Chances are they are engaged in flirting. Birds, nonhuman animals, and humans all engage in behavior designed to attract potential mates. These primarily nonverbal behaviors are designed to show off the individual's desirable traits (large, colorful plumes, big chest, or bright teeth, respectively), attract attention, and signal that one is open to "approach." Scientists who study animal behavior, or ethology, have long studied how animals signal their interest and availability to potential mates. More recently, social scientists have begun to explore how humans do the same. This entry explores why humans flirt, how men and women flirt in cross-sex relationships, and why women and men may differ in their interpretations of flirting behaviors.

Why Do We Flirt?

From an evolutionary viewpoint, one of the most important task humans (and other animals) must accomplish is to locate a mate with whom they can reproduce. If humans fail at this most basic of duties, the species ceases to exist. To some extent, then, we are hardwired to flirt. It helps us attract the attention of potential mating partners. But why do happily married and committed individuals flirt with the mail carrier or the waitperson at the local café? They do so because flirting serves a variety of other purposes as well. Flirting validates others' sexual appeal, which provides enjoyment and enhances self-esteem; thus, flirting can increase liking and act as a "social lubricant" that makes interaction smoother and more successful.

Basic biological differences, however, have influenced men and women to develop different roles in the mate selection process. Because women can become pregnant and must devote years to any

offspring produced, they have greater investment in being selective. Men, however, benefit from being less selective in that doing so increases their chances of mating and producing offspring while incurring relatively low costs. Therefore, women tend to control the early stages of mate selection by choosing desirable males to whom they signal their availability, often through flirting.

Verbal and Nonverbal Flirting Behaviors

Women initiate flirting by targeting males to whom they signal their interest nonverbally—often by displaying the "coy glance." The *coy glance* refers to a sequence in which a woman begins by looking at a male and offering a quick smile, then drops and turns her head as she offers a sidelong glance. This is a flirting signal that Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, founder of the field of human ethology, documented in cultures around the world. Other nonverbal signals of interest women use are the "head cant," where the neck or the nape of the neck is exposed; the "skirt hike," in which the legs are crossed so more of the leg is revealed; and the "forward body lean," which signals interest as well as emphasizes the bosom and narrows the waist. Perhaps the most commonly enacted nonverbal flirting cue used by women is the hair flip—where a woman tosses her hair over her shoulder or uses her hands to move it about to draw attention. These behaviors occur frequently because they signal that one is open to being approached, and because they highlight physical attributes that reveal one is attractive, healthy, and sexually fit as a potential mating partner.

Men also flirt nonverbally, though not to as great an extent. In courtship settings, such as bars and parties, men often display an open body stance. That is, they stand so that the chest is expanded and hands are placed on the waist—which emphasizes the triangular body shape preferred in men. This posture also suggests he is unthreatening and approachable. Men, as well as women, use prolonged eye gaze to signal interest and capture the attention of a desirable other. Finally, both men and women perform the "eyebrow flash," which describes the tendency for individuals to raise their eyebrows (usually unconsciously) when they find someone to be attractive.

Not all flirting occurs nonverbally. Both men and women use verbal strategies to entice and attract each other. Men are more likely to approach women to initiate a verbal interaction; thus, men are better known for using "pick-up lines" or utterances designed to foster conversation. Although the best pick-up line seems to involve simply saying hello, men also use innocuous statements such as "Do you know the time?" A few brave (or perhaps brazen) souls may attempt to use funny-cute lines, such as "If I told you that you had a beautiful body, would you hold it against me?" However, funny-cute lines tend to be evaluated negatively by women, who report preferring direct or innocuous opening lines.

Once interaction is initiated, both men and women use conversational strategies to engage one another. They may ask questions designed to give others a chance to talk about their strong points and that can serve simultaneously as a compliment. For example, one might ask, "Do you work out a lot?" Other conversational strategies used to signal interest are empathizing, mentioning an upcoming activity, and asking for or giving one's phone number.

Sex Differences in Interpreting Flirting Behaviors

Although both men and women are active during the flirting process, they don't always agree on what the behaviors mean. Men are more likely than women to say that women's flirting behaviors reveal sexual interest, but women more often state that they are being friendly. This difference in interpretation occurs for two reasons. First, as discussed, men run fewer risks from mating and are the ones who approach a potential partner; therefore, they increase their chances of successfully mating if they interpret a broader range of behaviors as signaling sexual interest. In addition, flirting behaviors are deniable by design. That is, flirting behaviors are subtle and ambiguous enough that one can deny one was flirting at all. If faced with rejection or the angry partner of one's target, an individual accused of flirting can save face (and possibly body) by arguing that he or she was just being friendly or was simply acting socially engaged and pleasant.

Flirting serves an important role in relationship development, and those who are competent at it increase the pool of candidates from which they can select a partner. However, men and women need to be aware that they may not agree on what, exactly, constitutes flirting.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Communication, Nonverbal; Developing Relationships; Mate Selection; Opening Lines

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FOOD AND RELATIONSHIPS

We spend a large portion of our time preparing for, thinking about, planning, and consuming our meals. Food is more than an essential component of physical survival. Along the course of evolutionary history, we have developed rituals and culture around food to make it a social experience. There is a reciprocal connection between the food we eat and the relationships we have, affecting us as a society, as a family, and individually. Food can affect our social relationships just as social relationships can affect our food consumption. This entry reviews the current literature and discusses the ways in which food and relationships intertwine.

Food and the Evolution of Society

In our early evolutionary history, food was scarce, and great efforts were made just to obtain foodstuffs to eat. During this time, sharing food became a valued strategy to gain access to more resources, aide survival, or increase mating opportunities. Societies used four major strategies of food sharing, sometimes in combination with one another, to gain access to these benefits.

The *kinship model* (or kin selection-based nepotism) describes food sharing between kin; it predicts that food sharing should be more prevalent among individuals who are closer in genealogical relatedness. Consistent with evolutionary theory, kinship food sharing is thought to increase gene survival and reproductive success of offspring and related family members. In most societies, food sharing is more prevalent among family members than strangers, especially for younger and older kin who cannot provide for themselves.

The *costly signaling* model holds that food is used as a status symbol and mating strategy. Men with the biggest food production or displays of bravery during a hunt are revered in their communities and prove that they can provide for their women and families. In addition to providing nutrients, food sharing is a way to display power and gain a selective mating advantage.

According to the *reciprocal altruism* model, sharing food is an important way to keep food on the table during times of scarceness and allows for gestures of goodwill between families and tribes. Showing goodwill and a desire to work with other groups establishes mutually reciprocal relationships, in which each group consistently helps the other. This model describes an ongoing equal trade between groups, using such commodities as money or other traded goods. By creating trustworthy relationships, food is used to build bridges between different groups.

A final model of food transfer is described as *tolerated scrounging,* in which individuals give up their food to another person without expectation of return. This can encompass making donations to a beggar or giving up food to a thief. Generally, transfers of this kind occur when the cost of protecting the food is less than the benefit of giving it up.

Demographic Influences of Food Preferences

Food choices are associated with family-related demographics. For example, in genetic studies, twins show similarities in ratings of hunger, the amount of food eaten, and liking of foods beyond what can be explained by the environment. In the

nature–nurture debate, our relatives have some impact on the way we perceive and consume food.

Family culture also plays a part in food preferences. For example, Puerto Ricans eat more fried foods and sauces compared with Hondurans, and Northern Chinese people prefer wheat-based products such as dumplings to rice, which is preferred by Southern Chinese people. In certain cultures, a plump figure is seen as healthy, and slenderness is seen as frailty. Cultural influences determine what parents and children eat and often their attitudes toward food.

Food choices of parents are also related to socioeconomic variables of education and income. Higher education is often associated with healthier food choices, such as higher fruit and vegetable consumption. Having parents who are well educated about nutritional choices helps children model the same behaviors. In addition, it increases the chances that those healthier foods are available in the household. Those with higher income can also afford to be more selective about the foods they eat, buy more nutritional foods even if they are already prepared, or hire help to run the household and cook.

Food and Family Dynamics

Food has been associated with relationships starting from infancy with mother-to-child feedings. During infant feedings, skin-to-skin contact and mutual gazing is thought to promote emotional bonding between the pair. *Oxytocin,* a mammalian hormone, is released during labor and when nipples are stimulated. The release of this chemical during breastfeeding is associated with lower heart rate and lowered anxiety in the mother enhancing the tendency to bond with the infant. The bonding in turn helps with infant survival by promoting mothers to stay close to their child.

As infants grow, mealtime often becomes a family ritual. Mealtimes help us socialize about food and food-related rules. Routines at mealtimes teach children about the way in which meals are consumed, how food is served, how to leave a dinner table, how and when to eat snacks, permissibility of wasting food, and how much and what kinds of food to eat. Parents, grandparents, caretakers,

and peers guide learning of these habits that are developed at an early age and persist through adulthood.

Food consumption is also influenced by rewards and punishments, verbally as parents communicate the distinction between what is okay and not okay, and also physically when food is used to reward—if you finish your vegetables or get straight A's, then you get ice cream. Rewarding and punishing experiences can help people associate emotions with foods, although they may lead to emotional eating; for example, eating sweets to make yourself feel better. While positive relationships with food can create healthy eating habits, criticism, inappropriate rewards, and misinformation can lead to disordered eating and other negative eating habits.

Besides being just an educational opportunity, mealtimes are also for individuals to come together and share an experience as a group. They provide opportunities to talk to one another and connect, discuss daily concerns and issues, give opinions, and have conflict. Even the ritual of having regular meals together can provide stability to a family, which is important in maintaining family cohesion and healthy eating, especially for daughters. In other words, nutritional quality is enhanced in more cohesive, functional family environments.

Changes in Family Mealtimes

Despite the benefits and social importance of mealtimes, recent studies, including landmark work by Robert Putnam, document the decline of family dinners. One explanation for the decreases in family mealtime is *time scarcity*—feeling like there isn't enough time. This effect is caused by the increase in responsibilities as family members work both inside and outside the home, an increase in productivity and longer work hours for some. Working more hours is especially true for those with less income, minorities, dual-income families, and single mothers. As a consequence of increasing demands both at home and at work, individuals experience less time to plan for, prepare, and consume meals.

Responsibility for food planning and preparation has been shifting in recent times, from being solely the woman's responsibility to being slightly

more egalitarian, with men and husbands taking on more household and food preparation responsibilities than in previous generations. As a consequence, couples and families are more involved in negotiating responsibilities of food planning.

Despite the added help, however, families still experience time constraints and feel that they have less time to prepare meals, which leads individuals to eat more outside of the house, many times consuming fastfoods. The availability of family restaurants and fast-food eateries makes dining convenient, but it often has the negative side effect of compromising nutritional quality and family mealtimes. Parents can see the exchange as a necessary compromise given their busy schedules and limited personal energy; however, this trade off is also often associated with guilt for not being able to provide the "right" kinds of foods and forgoing family bonding time.

Other Social Influences

Whether we know it or not, food consumption is also influenced by the people around us. One theory of *impression management* suggests that people restrict their food consumption to increase favorability in the eyes of others. Individuals who eat lightly are thought to show self-constraint, good manners, or femininity when eating. When paired with opposite-sex strangers, people decrease the amount of food they eat. When paired with people who eat sparingly, participants eat less than when paired with people who eat a lot. Food consumption is restricted when others are watching, despite one's level of hunger, and this effect is especially exaggerated when the other person is not eating.

People generally restrict eating or match others in how much they eat to present themselves in a favorable light. However, *matching* occurs even when other people are not present in the room. If there is any chance that someone can evaluate them, people tend to look for cues from others, or cues left by others, to determine what is appropriate and eat similar amounts. Because eating can produce a self-conscious experience, when someone might be observing, restricted eating can decrease the time spent in such an uncomfortable state and may be the only way, in some cases, to make a favorable impression on an observer.

Most impression management and matching studies are conducted with strangers or in labs, where situations may be somewhat ambiguous. This may lead to more self-conscious eating and the need to take cues from others. In contrast to these previous findings, another major finding in the food consumption literature is that of *social facilitation,* which shows that we tend to eat more with others than we do when alone. This effect seems to be stronger when eating with familiar others, such as friends or family, than it does when eating with strangers. The effect is also generally stronger as the size of the group increases.

According to the *time-extension hypothesis,* time spent in the presence of food increases when others are present, so that increases the amount of food eaten. Alternatively, having a lot of people around may distract us from paying attention to our own food consumption, feelings of fullness, and the need to manage our impression.

Food as an Aphrodisiac

Whether used to enhance a sexual experience or to actually increase the libido, foods such as chocolate, oysters, ginseng, and strawberries have often been thought to boost one's sexual appetite. To date, however, research has not supported the sexual effects of food on libido or sexual performance. Foods can produce physiologic effects—for example, spicy foods increasing heart rate, chocolate enhancing mood, and alcohol lowering inhibitions. Although foods may have some effect, their direct connection to sexual desire or performance has yet to be determined.

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See also Body Image, Relationship Implications; Family Routines and Rituals; Gender Roles in Relationships

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FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a response to being wronged that entails a change of heart in which anger, resentment, or indignation gives way to an attitude of goodwill toward the wrongdoer. Married persons view the capacity to seek and grant forgiveness as one of the most significant factors contributing to marital longevity and marital satisfaction, supporting Robert Quillen's widely cited observation, "A happy marriage is the union of two forgivers." In Western culture, forgiveness is thus considered critical in close relationships. The relevance of forgiveness for intimate relationships is further emphasized by the fact that our deepest affiliative needs are satisfied in close relationships and that partners in such relationships inevitably injure each other. Forgiveness provides a means of maintaining relatedness in the face of such injury. Recognition of this fact has led to an explosion of research on forgiveness in close relationships over the last decade.

Because it is a complex construct, considerable effort has been expended on conceptualizing forgiveness and how it might best be studied. Although a consensus has yet to emerge, central to various approaches to forgiveness is the idea of a freely chosen motivational transformation in which the desire to seek revenge and to avoid contact with the transgressor is overcome. It is generally agreed that forgiveness is an intentional process initiated by a deliberate decision to forgive. This position is consistent with philosophical writings that define forgiveness as the forswearing of resentment toward the wrongdoer. This entry reviews what is known about forgiveness and its effects on close relationships.

Forgiveness Distinguished From Related Constructs

The reference to effort by the forgiver embodied in the definition of forgiveness just outlined distinguishes forgiveness from related constructs such as forgetting (passive removal of the offense from consciousness; to forgive is more than not thinking about the offense), condoning (no longer viewing the act as a wrong and thereby removing need for forgiveness), and pardon (which can be granted only by a representative of society, such as a judge). Thus, the common phrase, "forgive and forget," is misleading, as forgiveness is only possible in the face of a remembered wrong.

In the relationship context, forgiveness needs to be distinguished from reconciliation. Although an inherently interpersonal construct, forgiveness occurs primarily within the individual. Interpersonal events, such as expressions of remorse by the wrongdoer, influence forgiveness, but the motivational change it embodies occurs largely within the individual. Reconciliation, in contrast, restores a relationship between persons and is a dyadic process that requires appropriate participation by both parties: It involves the restoration of violated trust and requires the goodwill of both partners. Forgiveness increases the likelihood of reconciliation but is not synonymous with it. There is no contradiction involved in forgiving a wrongdoer and ending one's relationship with the person. Reconciliation can occur without forgiveness, further emphasizing the need to distinguish between them.

Forgiveness also needs to be distinguished from accommodation. Accommodation involves responding to potentially destructive partner behavior by inhibiting the natural tendency to react in kind and instead reacting in a constructive manner. Potentially destructive partner behavior may take many forms but only when it represents a wrong is forgiveness relevant. Wrongs give rise to moral anger, a form of anger that occurs when a moral principle (an ought) is abrogated. In addition, accommodation might occur because potentially destructive partner behavior is construed in such a way that its destructive nature is ignored, overlooked, or downplayed or, when fully recognized, is condoned or excused. Under these circumstances, forgiveness is not a relevant concern. Although under certain conditions accommodation and forgiveness overlap,

accommodation is a much broader construct than forgiveness.

Who Benefits From Forgiveness?

Considering this question highlights a further characteristic of forgiveness. One view is that release from negative affect, cognition, and behavior toward the offender makes the forgiver the primary beneficiary. Because research on forgiveness has focused primarily on the forgiver, forgiveness has been viewed from this perspective. Most of what is known about forgiveness therefore rests on inferences made from the absence of a negative motivational orientation toward the transgressor. A second viewpoint emphasizes the offender as the primary beneficiary because he or she receives an undeserved gift and is released from an obligation. This perspective tends to emphasize the positive dimension of forgiveness. At the empirical level, there is evidence of at least two underlying dimensions of forgiveness, a negative dimension and a positive or benevolence dimension. However, there is less agreement among researchers about whether forgiveness requires a benevolent or positive response (e.g., compassion, empathy, affection, approach behavior) to the offender or whether the absence of negative responses (e.g., hostility, anger, avoidance) is sufficient.

The negative dimension, known as unforgiveness, sometimes yields two sub-dimensions, retaliation directed at the partner and partner avoidance. In the context of close relationships, change regarding both positive and negative dimensions of forgiveness is necessary. It is difficult to imagine an optimal relational outcome without forgiveness restoring real goodwill toward the offending partner. Given ongoing interaction between intimates, the nature of the relationship (e.g., closeness, quality) was a natural starting point for the study of forgiveness in relationships.

Forgiveness Is Related to Central Relationship Characteristics

A number of studies have shown that forgiveness is robustly and positively related to core relationship constructs, specifically commitment, closeness, and relationship satisfaction. In addition, forgiveness is positively associated with the ability to effectively resolve relationship conflict. Although important, the documentation of such associations raises questions about the direction of effects. It can be argued that following a relational transgression, forgiveness has to occur before damaged closeness and commitment can be restored: It is difficult for the hurt individual to feel close to his or her offending partner if he or she still harbors a grudge about the transgression. Conversely, it also has been argued that the forgiveness-commitment association is driven by commitment because highly committed individuals may be more motivated to forgive simply because they intend to remain in their current relationship. Consistent with this viewpoint is some experimental data suggesting that greater commitment facilitates interpersonal forgiveness. However, manipulation of constructs such as commitment and forgiveness raises practical and ethical difficulties making experimental research difficult. Recognition that psychological changes in forgiveness, closeness, and commitment following an interpersonal transgression necessarily have a temporal component points to longitudinal research as a potential means of determining direction of effects.

Longitudinal evidence indicates that forgiveness promotes increases in commitment, whether forgiveness is assessed in terms of decreased retaliation, decreased partner avoidance, or increased benevolence toward the partner. Limited evidence also shows effects from commitment to forgiveness in that greater commitment predicts decreases in partner avoidance. Regarding relationship satisfaction, the picture that emerges also supports bidirectional effects. For example, a spouse's marital satisfaction predicts his or her forgiveness 12 months later and vice versa. In a similar vein, husband marital quality predicts later wife forgiveness whereas wife forgiveness predicts husband's later marital satisfaction.

Relationship satisfaction also influences documented differences between victim and perpetrator perspectives of transgressions, which may explain why forgiveness and satisfaction are related. Specifically, victims tend to overlook details that facilitate forgiving and embellish their memories with details that make forgiving more difficult, whereas transgressors tend to embellish details, such as extenuating circumstances, that facilitate

forgiving. However, individuals in highly satisfying relationships are less likely to exhibit these self-serving biases than are individuals in less satisfying relationships. Existing data are consistent with a causal sequence in which positive relationship quality leads to more benign interpretations of a transgression, which in turn promote forgiveness. Relationship satisfaction may therefore help meet the challenge forgiveness poses whereby the victimized partner has to cancel a debt that is often perceived as bigger than the debt acknowledged by the transgressing partner.

More Than an Artifact?

The robust association between forgiveness and relationship satisfaction raises an important challenge. Because forgiveness is conceptualized and measured at the intrapersonal level, data pertaining to it rely exclusively on self-reports. It is thus possible that forgiveness serves merely as a proxy for relationship satisfaction. Research on marriage is replete with constructs and measures that unknowingly tap into the same domain. As a result, the marital literature is strewn with an unknown number of tautological findings resulting from content overlap in the operations used to assess purportedly different constructs. Is the study of forgiveness in relationships simply the latest instance of this phenomenon?

A few studies have addressed this challenge by statistically controlling relationship satisfaction scores when examining forgiveness and its correlates. This work suggests that forgiveness is not simply relationship satisfaction by another name. For example, a well documented correlate of relationship satisfaction is conflict behavior. Forgiveness accounts for variability in concurrent conflict resolution beyond that which can be attributed to the relationship satisfaction of the partners in the relationship. Moreover, over a 12-month period, wives' self-reported benevolence predicts husbands' reports of conflict resolution independently of each spouse's satisfaction and wives' reports of conflict resolution.

More Than a Trait?

Perhaps forgiveness in close relationships simply reflects the partners' traits. This seems like a reasonable hypothesis given the finding that a substantial portion of the variability in willingness to forgive a transgression (between 22 percent and 44 percent) is attributable to stable individual differences in the tendency to forgive. This hypothesis embodies two notions, that forgiveness reflects a stable tendency of the forgiver, their dispositional forgivingness, or the forgivability of the offending partner. But there is also a third possibility in that forgiveness may reflect relationship-specific factors. When these possibilities were examined, reactions to spouse transgressions were found to be determined largely by relationship-specific factors rather than by individual characteristics of the forgiving spouse or the offending partner.

More Than an Act?

There is the temptation to identify forgiving with a specific statement of forgiveness or an overt act of forgiveness. However, the verb form *to forgive* is not performative but instead signals that a decision to forgive has occurred. The statement by itself does not constitute forgiveness but sets in motion a process with a presumed endpoint that unfolds over time.

This creates particular challenges in a relationship. Although the words "I forgive you" may signal the beginning of a process for the speaker (of trying to forgive the transgression), they tend to be seen as the end of the matter by the offending partner who is likely to be only too willing to put the transgression in the past and act as if it never happened. The offending partner may therefore be puzzled, annoyed, or angry when incompletely resolved feelings of resentment about the harmdoing intrude on subsequent discourse or behavior in the relationship.

The potential for misunderstanding also occurs when communications regarding forgiveness are poorly executed. The partner may see even forgiveness that is offered in a genuine manner as a put down, a form of retaliation, or a humiliation if it is unskillfully executed. Finally, statements of forgiveness may be intentionally abused. They can be used strategically to convey contempt, engage in one-upping, and the like. Likewise, verbal statements of forgiveness may not reflect true feelings. Such statements of forgiveness without accompanying internal changes have been labeled *hollow forgiveness*.

What Determines Forgiveness?

Researchers have repeatedly found that the more severe the transgression the harder it is to forgive. Forgiveness can be observed in exchanges between the offender and the victim, and how these exchanges unfold is likely to influence the forgiveness process. For example, it is well established that a sincere apology from the transgressor facilitates the forgiveness process.

Certain individual differences are related to forgiveness of relationship partners. Greater forgiveness is predicted by more agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and extraverion and higher self-esteem and need for approval. However, as noted earlier, relationship level factors are relatively more important in predicting forgiveness, and these include the factors mentioned thus far, as well as the tendency to repeat offenses and the degree of dependent and anxious attachment that exists between partners.

Benign attributions for the offending partner's behavior (e.g., "He was late for our date because the traffic was heavier than usual) are related to greater levels of forgiveness than are nonbenign or conflict-promoting attributions (e.g., "He was late for our date because he doesn't value our time together"). Among married couples, benign attributions predict forgiveness both directly and indirectly through lessening negative emotional reactions to the transgression and increasing empathy toward the transgressing spouse. Evidence also suggests that, compared with husbands, wives' attributions are more predictive of their forgiveness, a finding that is consistent with a larger body of evidence that supports a strong association between attributions and behavior among women. The robust association between attributions and forgiveness has led practitioners to pay explicit attention to attributions in interventions designed to facilitate forgiveness.

Finally, empathy plays an important role in the forgiveness process. Empathy has been shown to weaken motivations to avoid and seek revenge against the transgressor and to foster benevolent motivations regarding him or her. These motivational changes are assumed to occur because empathy causes the victim to resume caring for the transgressing partner on the basis of (a) the transgressor's imagined guilt or distress over his or her behavior, (b) the transgressor's imagined longing for a restored relationship, or (c) a desire to repair the breached relationship. Empathy may also help restore the perceived overlap between one's own identity and the identity of the transgressing relationship partner. This perceived overlap might cause the victim to view forgiveness as being in his or her own best interests as well as in the best interests of the transgressor. However, the precise mechanism whereby empathy influences forgiveness remains unclear.

Can Forgiveness Be Taught?

Several interventions have been shown to increase forgiveness in romantic relationships, and various theoretical models of forgiveness have been used to develop these interventions. Most often, these are delivered in the context of psychoeducational groups or relationship enrichment interventions. An initial meta-analysis of 14 studies showed that there is a linear relationship between the length of an intervention and its efficacy: Clinically relevant interventions (defined as those of 6 or more hours duration) produced a change in forgiveness that is reliably different from zero, with nonclinically relevant interventions (defined as 1 or 2 hours duration) yielding a small but measurable change in forgiveness.

A more recent meta-analysis of 27 studies yielded a similar result and demonstrated that interventions were more effective in promoting forgiveness of partners than were attention placebo and no treatment control groups. In this analysis, however, intervention status predicted intervention effectiveness beyond the amount of time spent in the intervention. Most of the interventions included attention to helping couples understand what forgiveness is and is not (87 percent), encouraged them to recall the hurt (95 percent), and helped victims empathize with the offending partner (89 percent).

Although these findings demonstrate that we have made good progress in devising interventions to induce forgiveness, they refer only to self-reported forgiveness. This raises the question, "Does induced forgiveness produce positive individual or relationship outcomes?" Few studies address this question, and those that do have provided mixed results. This reflects, in part, the

fact that interventions tend to have been delivered to samples that are asymptomatic with regard to individual and relationship health. It is therefore noteworthy that participants screened for psychological distress before a forgiveness intervention showed improved mental health (less depression and anxiety) post intervention and at a 12-month follow-up. The analogous investigation to document impact on relationship outcomes remains to be conducted.

Cautionary Note

Research on forgiveness interventions and on forgiveness more generally has paid insufficient attention to an important element of the relationship context. Specifically, by focusing on forgiveness of isolated transgressions, patterns of offenses and forgiveness within a relationship have been overlooked. Given the rich history of transgressions that most couples experience, it is important to move beyond single offenses because each transgression is embedded in a complex relational story. For example, one cannot help a wife move toward forgiveness of her husband's onetime infidelity in the same manner that one would treat a couple in which the husband had a history of multiple transgressions of this kind. Thus, there is the need to consider how the pattern of transgressions over time influences the forgiveness of subsequent offenses within the relationship.

Conclusion

Recognition that forgiveness can be conceptualized and studied in secular terms has led to a marked increase of research on the topic, including its role in close relations. Forgiveness is related to core relationship constructs such as commitment and relationship satisfaction, though the mechanisms that account for the relationship are not yet fully understood. Evidence also indicates that psychoeducational interventions can facilitate forgiveness, but the impact of such interventions on individual and relational well-being remains to be determined. Promising findings from basic research on forgiveness in relationships suggests that facilitating forgiveness will prove to be salutary.

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See also Apologies; Attribution Processes in Relationships; Conflict Resolution; Couple Therapy; Revenge; Satisfaction in Relationships; Vengeance

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FOSTER CARE, RELATIONSHIPS IN

In 2005, Child Protective Services (CPS) found that almost 1 million children in the United States were substantiated victims of child abuse and neglect. Importantly, more than one third of these children were placed in foster care because they were at "imminent risk" for danger. Based on federal statistics, children enter foster care for several reasons: neglect (64.4 percent), physical abuse (9.1 percent), sexual abuse (3.3 percent), or multiple abuses (16.0 percent). Family-based foster care is the most common placement for children removed from their biological families, with 70 percent of

youth being placed in a nonrelative (46 percent) or kinship (24 percent) foster home. The average age of children entering care in the United States is 8.2 years old, and their mean length of stay is 28.6 months, although the range can vary from days to years. Half of those children entering foster care are expected to return to their biological parents.

Although practices vary, there is usually little preparation for children entering foster care. Children often move straight from their biological family into a foster home. The child and birth parent are given little or no information about the family with whom the child will live. The same is true for foster parents. They receive a call from a social services agency with vague details about a child needing placement. Further, foster families have a range of parenting experiences and may never have had a child in their home before. Most states have training for foster parents that addresses common issues, but little is known about the effectiveness of these programs for increasing knowledge of children's needs and development. Relationships, although theoretically central to foster care, often take a back seat to the pressing demands of the system. This entry explores the historical factors that affect the relational quality of children in foster care, as well as those they develop with their foster-care givers.

Psychosocial Adjustment of Children in Foster Care

Research on the many risk factors in foster care includes maltreatment, prenatal substance exposure, parental mental health problems, exposure to chronic poverty, and a disrupted and chaotic home life. The trauma of separation from biological parents as children enter foster care may be another risk factor for development. Individually, each of these risk factors is associated with a host of negative outcomes. Cumulatively, they put this group of children at high risk for poor outcomes, including those (e.g., unemployment and incarceration) that are costly to communities and to society in general.

Given these risks, it is not surprising that children in foster care have social and emotional problems at rates 3 to 10 times higher than the general population, as well as developmental delays, physical problems, and difficulties in academic functioning that far surpass those of other children in the community. During adolescence and adulthood, studies show that children in foster care are at increased risk for substance abuse, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, school failure, incarceration, and suicide. Although these findings appear bleak, the consequences of remaining in an abusive home are even more dire. Scientifically, it is hard to show that foster care has improved children's lives, although research is beginning that suggests children who are removed from their birth families do better socially, emotionally, and academically than do their siblings living at home.

Relationships and Risk Factors in Foster Care

By definition, children entering foster care have suffered a disruption in their relationship with their primary caregiver, as well as with friends, teachers, classmates, neighbors, and pets. Children move from an unsafe home into a home with strangers. Importantly, evidence suggests that in addition to the actual placement disrupting the parent–child relationship, many of the risk factors that bring a child into care are also those that have been independently linked to disturbed emotional ties with caregivers.

Maltreatment

Many of the risk factors associated with foster care are also correlated with relational disturbances. Most children enter foster care having experienced child abuse or neglect. Research is clear that maltreatment has an adverse effect on children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. Childhood maltreatment has been linked to aggression, depression, anxiety, attentional deficits, cognitive delays, and academic difficulties. In adulthood, a history of maltreatment predicts a host of psychological, social, and health problems, which may include heart troubles, alcoholism, and suicide.

Problems begin early in the lives of maltreated children. Young children show difficulties in their relationships with primary caregivers. Research indicates that without intervention, most maltreated infants will form maladaptive relationships with

their foster-care givers. This is because the history and problems that children arrive with often require specialized parenting skills. For example, Mary Dozier's research has shown that foster parents often respond to their children's responses "in kind"; that is, if the child does not seek attention, then the parents will not go out of their way to attend to the child. However, research suggests that foster infants can form secure attachments with their caretakers, but it is more likely to occur if the child is placed before 12 months of age and the foster-care givers exhibit their own history of an early secure attachment. More is known about the attachment of maltreated children who remain home. Recent research by Sheree Toth and associates indicates that almost 90 percent of infants with a substantiated CPS report who remained at home exhibited a disorganized attachment, which remained relatively stable over time. Disorganized attachment status in childhood has been linked to a range of psychological symptoms across the life span and is likely a factor in the reported increase in the incidence of attachment disorders in maltreated youth.

Parental Substance Abuse

Although no well-defined method exists for assessing substance abuse for biological parents of children in foster care, research indicates that it is common, with rates ranging from 43 percent to 79 percent. Substance abuse interacts with child well-being and relationships. The literature on children of substance-abusing caregivers highlights difficulties in development, including biological, emotional, and behavioral functioning. The link between parental substance use and child development is not simple, and multiple pathways have been demonstrated. Past research has identified direct links between parental substance use and the development of similar problems in offspring, especially for same-sex parent–child pairs. The child's early primary relationships provide an indirect link through caregiver mental illness, stress in the parent–child relationship, and deficits in parenting and parental monitoring.

Parental Psychopathology

Although only limited data are available for children in foster care, research on families involved with CPS indicates that parental mental health needs are common. Results from the only national study of families involved with CPS indicate that 23 percent of caretakers whose children stayed in home reported symptoms indicative of a depressive disorder. In addition, estimates of other mental health disorders include 13 percent with psychotic disorders and 7 percent with other unspecified mental health disorders. This is important because maternal depression is related with reduced attachment security, less parental monitoring, and increased parenting stress.

Family Poverty

Children in foster care are exposed to maltreatment, parental substance abuse, and other trauma and live in some of the poorest U.S. homes. Family finance data for birth families of children in foster care are not available, but the income of 52 percent of families involved with CPS was at or below the federal poverty level. This compares with 11 percent of the general population who reported living at this level in the 2000 census. Financial findings for foster homes were significantly better, with 42 percent of nonrelative and 32 percent of kinship foster parents reporting incomes greater than 200 percent of the poverty level.

Poverty is a social condition, as well as a factor associated with negative effects on child development. Contextual influences such as adverse conditions in the home environment, poor quality of parenting, and parental physical and mental health problems appear to exacerbate neighborhood influences. One prevailing conceptualization maintains that poverty may affect children through the disruption of interpersonal relationships and interactions. As poverty alone adversely affects child outcomes, the added hazards associated with maltreatment and other risk factors are particularly pernicious.

Placement Disruptions

Moving from one foster home to another is common in foster care. One study of children's moves during foster care in California found that the average child moves 4.2 times in an 18-month period (the range was 1–15). Repeated movement is likely to have a profound effect on children's

relationships with caretakers—foster, biological, or other. Although relationship status has not been assessed as a function of moves, Rae Newton and associates found that moves often occurred in response to children's disruptive behavior, but that these behaviors escalated with each move. Thus, the transient nature of foster care appears to be yet another factor impairing the relational quality of its youngest consumers.

Relationships in Foster Care

Foster care was originally designed to provide "normal" homes for "normal" children. This initial assumption is inaccurate because research shows that the children who enter foster care actually show above average rates of psychological and behavioral problems. The formation of positive, healthy relationships between children and their foster parents is theoretically important because, as researchers have noted, there is no greater influence on children while they are in foster care than those who directly care for them. The foster family potentially provides a healthy context for children to solidify competencies, modify maladaptive behaviors, and develop new skills that may not have been modeled or taught in their biological homes.

Little research has focused on the qualities of foster parents that are related to optimal child outcomes. A review of available work indicates that parental nurturance, consistent limit-setting, and commitment to the child over time—regardless of whether they return to the birth home or not—are important to children's adjustment and functioning in foster care. In fact, commitment has been shown to be a better predictor of children's adjustment than attachment. This is most likely because commitment is transportable, but attachment, which develops over time and may be terminated after the child moves, is built on constancy and the level of security. In addition, a safe and stimulating home environment and a stable placement all contribute to positive outcomes for children in foster care. Examining the necessary ingredients for a quality foster relationship from the children's perspective is an area of study that is in its infancy. A recent study found that most children in care were satisfied with the people with whom they lived,

with high levels of relatedness and closeness to caregivers.

Although questions about relationships in foster care are not limited to attachment, this has generally been the focus of child welfare and mental health. The attachment status of children in foster care is important because these relationships affect interactions with the primary caregiver, as well as how youth will approach and react to later relationships with adults and intimate partners. Thus, early caregiving deficits, paired with repeated rejections and movements in the foster-care system make it less likely for children to form healthy, secure relationships in the future.

Although attachment interventions for children in care are rare, recent studies shed light on the benefits of improved relationships with foster parents. Dozier and colleagues' attachment intervention aims to train foster parents to better provide nurturing care to infants. Similarly, Phil Fisher and colleagues' preschool intervention targets developmental and social needs through a range of treatments. These programs both have been shown to produce increases in attachment security, but also a change in the children's biological systems. More specifically, past research on children in foster care show that they have significantly higher rates of cortisol abnormalities than do their nonmaltreated peers. Cortisol is an important hormone because it moderates the body's physical response to stress. The production of cortisol is especially important during infancy and early childhood because it is socially regulated and is highly vulnerable to disturbance in the absence of sensitive, nurturing caregiving. Cortisol dysregulation has long-term implications and has been linked to a range of symptoms, such as aggression, anxiety, and depression. The research provided by Fisher, Dozier, and others indicates that interventions can enhance attachment status while children are in foster care, and that the relationships developed in these programs benefit children across the broad range of functioning.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Alcoholism, Effects on Relationships; Attachment Theory; Child Abuse and Neglect; Mother–Child Relationship in Adolescence and Adulthood; Mother–Child Relationship in Early Childhood; Parent–Child Relationships

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FRIENDSHIP, CONFLICT AND DISSOLUTION

Conflicts occur when friends seek incompatible goals or outcomes or they favor incompatible means to the same ends. To prevent interpersonal conflicts from adversely affecting their relationship, friends need to effectively manage these conflicts. Much of what has been written about conflict and relationship dissolution pertains to courtship, marriage, and family. This entry focuses on those aspects of interpersonal conflict and relationship dissolution that pertain specifically to friendship. Although there may be many causes of friendship dissolution, such as separation (moving away), change in social or financial status, marriage, or change in interests, this entry focuses on conflicts over relationship rules, which may destroy the relationship.

Rules of Friendship

From a rules perspective, people are faced with choices. As mutual expectations regarding what is appropriate in a given situation, rules generally function as criteria for choice among alternatives. As constraints on the availability of choices, rules are guides to action. These constraints are normative in that when people know the rules, they tend to conform to them.

Data collected from a variety of countries show that the following six rules are generally endorsed as important for friendship:

1. Volunteering help in time of need.

2. Trusting and confiding in each other.

3. Showing verbal and nonverbal emotional support.

4. Communicating in ways that make him or her happy while in each other's company.

5. Speaking up for the other in his or her absence.

6. Sharing news of success with him or her.

This list is not meant to be all-inclusive but, rather, to suggest that identifiable rules define and govern friendships. If one views all but the second rule as indicative of a helping orientation and the second rule as the trust-confidentiality dimension, then helping orientation, trust, and confidentiality are important in defining friendship.

Identifying rules that are essential to a relationship more clearly distinguishes that specific relationship from other types. For example, friendship may be distinguished from romantic relationships, especially marriage. For many people, marriage involves its own rules such as agreeing to express a long-term commitment in a public ritual or wedding, to no longer play the field, to engage in sex, to share property, and to have and care for children. In the United States, spouses also expect one another to be good friends, so they usually share two relationships, a marriage and a friendship.

Friendship Conflicts

Like people in other types of relationships, friends may engage in many conflicts that do not involve relationship rules. For example, they may disagree about a political candidate, movie, or type of food. These disagreements usually do not threaten the friendship. However, disagreements about the rules of friendship may dissolve it.

Friendship rules become issues in interpersonal conflicts when one of the friends breaks one or more relationship rules, such as failing to help in time of need or lying to the other. Another way occurs when friends misunderstand the friendship rules and take too much advantage of others. The friendship rules are the issues in the conflict because the people involved have tacitly or overtly agreed on them, and now one person has violated or misunderstood one or more of the relationship rules.

Conflict and Dissolution

How does conflict regarding a friendship rule lead to relationship dissolution? Imagine that a person runs out of gas outside of town and calls someone she considers a good friend to come get her. Suppose the other responds with "Why call me? Why don't you call a taxi?" If one fails to help in time of need, the friendship is in trouble. The same logic holds for the friendship trust rule. As we develop friendships with others, we tend to develop a truth-bias toward them: We assume that they tell us the truth. So, lying to an acquaintance about why one does not want to go shopping is different than lying to a good friend because friends are supposed to trust each other. Violating the friendship rules of helping when needed and telling the truth become conflict issues because the two people involved have tacitly or overtly agreed to be friends, which means abiding by the rules governing the relationship, and now one person has broken "the agreement." Rules theory would predict that a friendship is in trouble when one of the partners violates the rules of friendship.

Although one might break a friendship rule, others might misunderstand their application and try to take too much advantage of friends who want to help them. Some people have acute emotional needs that can turn a friendship into a pseudo therapist-client relationship. This is different from a confidential type of friendship where friends listen to each other, give advice, and occasionally vent their anger. In more extreme cases, it is difficult for the average person to help a friend who constantly dwells on his or her own emotional problems and cannot change the subject for long without returning to and dwelling on it.

In other cases, a friend's needs may be too great a financial burden. Such a friend can present real problems because he or she constantly asks to borrow money, or when a friend accepts that person's checks, they bounce. Some may move in and live off their friends, contributing nothing financially. According to relationship rules, there are other types of interpersonal relationships, where one may expect to receive a greater degree of financial help than from friends, such as one's spouse, parents, and adult children. Friends may be expected to help one another, but a dependent person may demand too much. In this case, the problem consists of a single "behavior," such as asking to borrow constantly or only talking about one's personal emotional problems.

Other problems occur when the problem pertains to more than a single behavior. Many friendships are based on similar interests, usually involving a particular activity, such as people who play golf, bar hop, square dance, play cards, fish, or hunt together. These friends see themselves as companions. They can trust their companions to meet with them, play fair, and keep discussions about their activity among them. One does not expect a friend to tell "outsiders" that he or she is a bad golfer, drinks too much, or performs any questionable acts. These friendships may comfortably be limited to particular shared interests. However, if one tries to expand the limited basis for the friendship to other activities or attempts to develop a more confidential type of friendship, where they disclose at great depth, they may push the friendship beyond the limits of trust or other friendship rules. People need to be sensitive to their friends, work with them on maintaining a comfortable level of involvement, and not push them beyond their capabilities. This problem differs from misunderstanding the helping orientation rule discussed earlier in that it consists of more than one behavior. The other person depends too much on a friend in a variety of ways. For example, Ernesto enjoys fishing two to three times a week and meets Marty, who agrees to fish with Ernesto. The problem is that Marty also wants Ernesto to fish every day, wants him to accompany him on other activities during the rest of the day, and calls frequently just to talk. When Ernesto declines to meet more often or says he can't talk right then, Marty gets angry at Ernesto. The

problem is that Marty is demanding a broader range of activities and more time and effort from Ernesto than he can give to the friendship.

Friendship Repair Ritual

The previous cases call attention to common conflicts that may dissolve a friendship. However, if the offending person follows a "repair ritual," she or he may be able to repair or preserve the friendship. Of course, at many of the steps of the ritual, one person could elect to terminate the relationship. The repair ritual has four steps:

1. *An offending situation:* A person believes that the other has acted in an inappropriate way.

2. *A reproach:* The offended person calls attention to the offense and asks the offending person for an explanation. However, the offended person may decide to end the friendship by avoiding the other person.

3. *A remedy:* The other person takes action to rectify matters. However, an offender may refuse to take such actions, which in all likelihood ends the friendship. Refusals include turning the reproach around and questioning the right of the offended person to make a reproach. If, however, the offender is willing to take responsibility for his or her actions, there are three types of actions an offender can take to restore the friendship: offer an account (through excuses or justifications), make a concession, offer an apology, or combine any of these.

   Accounts are explanations for behavior when questioned. Accounts serve an important function in that they explain how people interpret the situation at hand. Accounts may take the form of excuses or justifications. These types of accounts are not always concocted but, rather, may be legitimate extenuating circumstances unknown to the person offended. In such cases, one may simply explain his or her side of the matter, without admitting guilt or apologizing. In other cases, it may be necessary to apologize. *Excuses* admit that the offense occurred but deny responsibility for it. The offender can claim impairment, diminished responsibility, or overriding problems of his or her own.

   Justifications diminish the meaning of the offense rather than diffuse responsibility for it. Here, the offender acknowledges that an act was committed while maybe claiming that it hurt no one, the offended person deserved it, or the offender had good intentions when committing the offense. *Concessions* admit the offender's guilt and include apologies and offers of restitution. When an excuse or justification is not acceptable, some concession must be made or an apology given. *Apologies* allow a person to take responsibility for an action, but they also request a pardon for the action by attempting to convince the offended person that the incident is not representative of what the offender is really like.

4. *An acknowledgment:* An evaluation of the account is supplied by the one offended. The offended party may honor the account, signaling that the "score is even." The offended party may retreat from the reproach, dropping his or her right to make it. The offended party may also simply drop or switch the topic, moving away from the reproach without resolving the issue. Most problematic for the friendship is a *rejection of the account,* either by taking issue with it or by simply restating the reproach as though no account was given. When the offender offers a remedy that is rejected, the friendship may be over.

The repair ritual provides friends with the means to restore a friendship following conflicts that range from embarrassing situations to relational transgressions. There may be other ways to restore or preserve a friendship without confronting the other and attempting to repair the friendship by resolving the conflict. People may choose to avoid the relationship issues raised in a conflict and act as though nothing happened. Or they may get back together after enough time passes. Based on the idea that it is better to be proactive than reactive, probably it is best to understand what it means to be a friend and abide by the rules of friendship.

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See also Accounts; Embarrassment; Repairing Relationships

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FRIENDSHIP FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In the classic film *Casablanca,* the saloon owner delivers a famous line: "Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." This entry addresses questions surrounding the beginnings of friendships. How do people "make" friends? What is the process by which an acquaintanceship is transformed into a friendship? Research reveals that friendship formation is a complex process in which a number of factors must converge. First, the *environment* must bring two people into contact with one another. Second, the *situation* must be "right" for a friendship to develop. For example, both people must be at a point in life where they have the time and resources to devote to a new friendship. The qualities that people possess also play a role in friendship formation; *individual* factors such as attractiveness and social skills matter. Finally, friendship is ultimately a *dyadic* process. In other words, it takes two to form a friendship. As will be seen, friendships are more likely to form when the two people share important similarities, when liking is mutual, and when self-disclosures are reciprocated.

The Environment

For a friendship to develop, two people must be brought into contact with one another. The role of physical proximity in friendship formation is well documented. For example, in a classic study, married students living in a student housing complex were asked to name the three people in the complex with whom they socialized most. Two thirds of the people named lived in the same building, and two thirds of these people lived on the same floor. Other studies have shown that people are likely to form friendships with those who live nearby (i.e., residential proximity). Proximity effects also have been shown in the workplace, in college dormitories, and in classrooms.

What is it about neighborhood, workplace, and school settings that promotes friendship formation? The short answer is that these settings provide opportunities for contact. The greater the amount of contact between two people, the greater the likelihood that they will become friends. However, physical proximity is becoming less important than it was in the past. Many people are now relying on the Internet as a venue for meeting potential friends. Thus, it is possible that in the future, environmental factors will be less crucial for friendship formation, although the people with whom we rub shoulders on a day-to-day basis will probably continue to be candidates for friendship formation.

The Situation

A number of "chance" factors influence whether or not friendships develop. One such factor is whether the two individuals will have opportunities for ongoing interactions and whether they will be able to interact on frequent basis. Importantly, both people also must be "available" for this kind of relationship.

Opportunities for Interaction

When two people meet each other, they usually know whether this is likely to be a one-time occurrence (e.g., chatting with a fellow passenger on an airplane) or whether their interactions will be ongoing (e.g., chatting with a new coworker). We are more likely to pursue a friendship with a person when we believe that there will be future opportunities to interact with him or her. This was demonstrated in a classic study in which research

participants watched a videotape of three people having a discussion. Some participants were led to believe that they would not be meeting anyone on the videotape; others were told that they would have a one-time meeting with one of the people on the videotape; still others were told that they would be meeting with one of the people during the next 5-week. Those who expected to meet during a five-week period rated the person in the videotape the most positively, followed by those who expected a one-time meeting. Those who did not expect to meet at all provided the least positive ratings. Other studies have shown that when we expect to interact with someone over an extended period, we tend to emphasize the positives and downplay the negatives so that our future interactions with the person will be smooth and enjoyable.

Frequency of Interactions

As just discussed, if we anticipate future interactions with a person, we evaluate him or her more positively than if we do not. Does the frequency of those interactions matter? The answer is yes. Considerable research shows that the more often we see someone—or even a photograph of a person—the more we like him or her. This phenomenon is referred to as the *mere exposure effect*. There is one exception: If we initially dislike someone, repeated contact can cause us to like the person even less. In general, however, the more contact we have with a person, the more we will like him or her, and the greater the probability that a friendship will form.

Availability

We do not form a friendship with every person with whom we have ongoing interactions. Another factor must be considered, namely whether we have room in our lives for a new friendship. Friendships require a number of resources—time, energy, and even money. Other commitments in life, such as time-consuming studies, work demands, and existing relationships (romantic partner, family, friendships) can prevent us from pursuing a promising new friendship. A friendship can form only if each person is available for this kind of relationship.

Thus, circumstantial factors affect the development of friendships. Friendships are more likely to form if two people expect that they will have ongoing interactions, that they will be able to see each other on a frequent basis, and when each person has the time and energy to devote to forming a new relationship.

The Individual

Even if the situation is "right" for the development of a friendship, there is no guarantee that a friendship will form. Another important class of variables comes into play, namely whether the other person has qualities that we want in a friend—and vice versa. A number of characteristics make a person a desirable friendship candidate, including physical attractiveness, social skills, and responsiveness.

Physical Attractiveness

It is well known that looks are important in determining attraction to potential romantic partners. However, physical attractiveness also matters in the friendship selection process. Research conducted with adults and children shows that physical attractiveness is correlated with popularity—the better looking someone is, the greater the likelihood that he or she will be sought out as a friend.

Why are good-looking people at an advantage when it comes to making friends? One reason is the tendency to assume that "what is beautiful is good." In other words, when people are attractive on the outside, we assume that they also are attractive on the inside and attribute positive qualities to them. Research also has shown that we assume that people who are good looking are similar to us in personality and attitudes. (As is discussed later, it is well-established that we are attracted to similar others.) Finally, evidence also indicates that people who are physically attractive may have better social skills than do those who are less attractive. From childhood on, good-looking people experience positive reactions from others, which results in increased self-confidence and social competence. Thus, interactions with physically attractive people may actually be more enjoyable than are interactions with those who are less attractive. There are a number of reasons, then, why good-looking people are pursued as friends.

Social Skills

It has been said that making friends is a skilled performance, much like learning a new sport or learning to drive a car. Research conducted with adults and children confirms that people who have good social skills are liked more than are those who are less socially skilled. Social skills include being competent at initiating conversations, asking appropriate questions, and showing interest in what the other person is saying. Social skills also include nonverbal behaviors such as appropriate patterning of eye contact and gaze and following norms for interpersonal spacing (e.g., respecting the other's personal space). Social skills are crucial at the beginning stage of friendships; those who are socially skilled are better at getting friendships "off the ground." Once a friendship is established, however, it becomes less important to be socially skilled and more important to be competent in providing warmth and support.

Responsiveness

Another individual-level characteristic that is closely related to social skill competence is responsiveness. A responsive individual pays attention to questions he or she is asked and makes appropriate, relevant responses. These behaviors convey interest, liking, and concern. As a result, the interaction partner feels more comfortable opening up, which, as we shall see, is an important element of the friendship formation process (see section on Self-Disclosure). Indeed, several experiments have shown that when people are interacting with a responsive (versus a nonresponsive) interaction partner, they feel liked by him or her, they report greater liking for him or her, and they see the person as someone who potentially could become a friend.

Thus, several individual characteristics are associated with friendship formation. Those who are physically attractive, who have good social skills, and who are responsive are likely to be sought out as friends.

The Dyad

A friendship is a relationship between two people. Thus, analyses of friendship formation must consider the characteristics of each individual, as well as the interplay or the "chemistry" between them. As discussed next, friendships are most likely to form when liking is reciprocal, when self-disclosure is mutual, and when the two people share similarities.

Reciprocal Liking

"How I like to be liked, and what I do to be liked!" These words, penned by the 19th-century English writer Charles Lamb, are as applicable today as they were 200 years ago. In a classic demonstration of this phenomenon, groups of same-sex strangers engaged in weekly discussions during a 6-week period. Before the first meeting, each participant was told that based on personality information gathered earlier, the researchers could predict which group members would like him or her. (The names of these group members were actually randomly selected.) As expected, participants expressed the greatest liking for those group members who they believed liked them.

Interestingly, the perception that another person likes us may cause us to behave in ways that confirm that expectation. In another landmark study, researchers led participants to believe that their interaction partner either liked or disliked them. Those who believed their partner liked them engaged in more intimate self-disclosure, were more pleasant, and demonstrated fewer distancing behaviors than did those who believed they were disliked. Importantly, these behaviors lead the interaction partner to like them. Thus, when another person likes us, we tend to like them in return. Even the belief that another person likes us creates liking because it puts in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby we behave in ways that produce the liking that we initially expected.

Self-Disclosure

We are generally attracted to a person who self-discloses to us because revealing personal information sends a message that he or she likes us and desires a closer relationship with us. Indeed, many studies have demonstrated that we like people who engage in intimate self-disclosure more than we like those who engage in non-intimate disclosures. The one exception to this pattern is when another person reveals "too much too soon"—highly intimate

self-disclosures from a stranger can elicit dislike, rather than liking.

We also like those to whom we have self-disclosed. The effect of engaging in self-disclosure (rather than being on the receiving end) was examined in a study in which pairs of strangers participated in a 10-minute "get acquainted" discussion. The more a participant self-disclosed, the more he or she liked the other and saw the other person as a potential friend. Thus, in general, the greater another person's self-disclosure, the more we like him or her. We also like those to whom we have self-disclosed.

At the early stages of relationships, it is important for disclosures to be reciprocal. If Person A reveals something intimate about himself or herself, Person B needs to reciprocate with an equally intimate disclosure. Indeed, considerable evidence indicates that reciprocity of disclosure is associated with greater liking for an interaction partner. Reciprocity is considered important in establishing trust in a relationship. When we first meet another person, we do not know whether he or she can be trusted to keep our self-disclosures in confidence, whether he or she might use the information we have disclosed to hurt us, or whether he or she might ultimately reject us. We are more willing to risk being vulnerable if the other person is also taking the same risk. Thus, self-disclosure generally takes the form of "turn taking" in which we reveal personal information and then assess whether the other person reciprocates and whether he or she can be trusted with the information that we have shared. If the other person seems trustworthy, we will gradually increase the intimacy of our self-disclosures, while monitoring whether the other person is also increasing the intimacy of his or her disclosures. Once trust is established, it is not necessary for each self-disclosure to be reciprocated in each specific interaction; rather, there is an assumption of reciprocity over the long term.

Similarity

One of the most widely researched predictors of friendship formation is similarity. A broad base of evidence indicates that people are likely to become friends with those who are similar to them in demographic characteristics (e.g., age, physical health, education, religion, family background), residential proximity, social status, physical attractiveness, and so on. Although adult friendships are the focus of this literature, most of these effects have been obtained in studies with children and adolescents as well.

The classic domain in which similarity effects have been investigated is attitude similarity. In early investigations of the role of similarity in attraction, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing their attitudes on a variety of issues (e.g., politics, religion, tuition increases). They were then shown the same questionnaire supposedly filled out by a person who would be their partner during an experiment. In actuality, the researchers completed the questionnaire so that it appeared either similar to that of the research participant or dissimilar. Participants then were asked to give their impression of this person, before meeting him or her. Those who believed that the partner held attitudes similar to their own reported greater attraction and liking than did those who believed that they and their partner held dissimilar attitudes. Subsequent research demonstrated that these findings also apply to real-world friendships, namely that people tend to form and maintain friendships with those who are similar to them in attitudes. People also tend to develop friendships with those who share their values.

Similarity effects also are pronounced for activity preferences. We are more likely to form friendships with people who enjoy the same hobbies, sports, and leisure preferences that we enjoy. Interestingly, there is little evidence that people become friends because of personality similarity, although similarity effects have been found for more relationally oriented characteristics such as social and communication skills.

There is one domain in which similarity effects are found for children's and adolescents' friendships, but not for adults' friendships, namely similarity in prosocial and antisocial behaviors. These effects are strongest for antisocial behavior. For example, research has shown that aggressive children seek out other aggressive children as early as preschool and that this tendency becomes more pronounced with age. Research also shows that adolescents tend to seek out as friends those who are similar to them in drug and alcohol use and school delinquency (e.g., cutting classes, quitting school).

Overall, substantial evidence indicates that we are likely to become friends with those who are similar to us. The only area in which similarity effects seem to be weak or nonexistent is personality similarity. Thus, it seems to matter less that our friends share our characteristics, than that they share our attitudes, values, social competencies, and leisure preferences.

Why are we more likely to form friendships with similar, rather than dissimilar, others? The most common explanation is that our views are validated by interacting with someone who shares them. Put another way, we feel more confident that we are "right" in our thinking if we encounter someone else who thinks just like us. Another explanation focuses on the enjoyment of interactions. The idea is that interactions are smoother and more pleasant if we agree with another person on most things. Disagreement tends to make interactions tense and strained.

In summary, a number of dyadic factors promote the formation of friendships. The two people must like each other. They must engage in a process of mutual self-disclosure in which the intimacy of information revealed gradually increases over time. And, finally, potential friends should be similar in most ways.

Beverley Fehr

See also Acquaintance Process; Developing Relationships; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friendships in Adolescence; Friendships in Childhood; Friendships in Late Adulthood; Friendships in Middle Adulthood; Friendships in Young Adulthood

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FRIENDSHIPS, CROSS-SEX

A cross-sex friendship (also called opposite-sex friendship or cross-gender friendship) is a friendship between a genetic female and male in which both partners label the relationship as a friendship. Cross-sex friendships do not involve family members, are nonromantic, and are almost always devoid of sexual contact. However, teens and young adults will sometimes have what they call *friends with benefits,* which are nonromantic cross-sex friendships in which the friends have sexual relations with one another.

Most cross-sex friendship research has focused on the friendships of heterosexual individuals, with little attention given to friendships between men and women or girls and boys in which one or both individuals are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or postoperative transsexuals. Some studies suggest that the dynamics are different in cross-sex friendships in which one or both partners are not heterosexual. For example, the mutual sexual attraction that often exists in heterosexual cross-sex friendships becomes much less of an issue if one of the friends is gay or lesbian.

As suggested by the definition of cross-gender friendships, cross-sex friendships are a type of friendship, similar in many respects to other kinds of friendship such as same-sex friendships and interracial friendships. Friendships between females and

males have been documented from early toddler-hood through old age. This entry tracks cross-sex friendship initiation and development across the life span; that is, from early childhood through the twilight years of one's life. In particular, generic and unique advantages of these friendships are identified and described as well as challenges that members of cross-sex friendships sometimes contend with. The entry concludes with speculation about the future of cross-sex friendship research and theory.

Cross-Sex Friendships Across the Life Span

Cross-sex friendship scholars generally agree that friendships between females and males sometimes occur between individuals as young as one year of age. Once boys and girls reach the age of about 3 or 4, they have friendships with members of the other sex, and they recognize that their friend is of a different sex than they are, something they were not able to do if they had such friendships as early toddlers. Research indicates that friendships between young girls and boys, say between the ages of 1 and 5, are not unusual until they leave early childhood and enter into middle childhood and elementary school. This developmental transition is often accompanied by a process called gender or sex segregation. *Sex segregation* means separating the biological sexes simply on the basis of whether they are female or male, and it can be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary gender segregation begins to occur around the age of 5 or 6 and involves the intentional separation of oneself from members of the other sex. Involuntary gender segregation occurs when adults separate children at schools and daycare centers, sometimes even at home and in their neighborhoods, according to their biological sex. For example, some of the readers might remember their elementary school teacher saying "Girls on this side of the room, boys on the other side."

When children leave middle school, most of them are in the process of entering puberty and adolescence. The biological, cognitive, and social changes that accompany puberty make it the single most important developmental stage for individuals regarding their desire to be around members of the other sex. Before the onset of puberty, children between the ages of about 6 to 10 typically do everything in their power to avoid contact with children of the opposite sex. The hormonal and social changes that go hand-in-hand with the coming of adolescence often prompt children, who are now becoming teenagers, to break the gender barrier. Whereas cross-sex friendships were quite common in early childhood (approximately 1 to 5 years old), and nearly nonexistent in middle childhood (approximately 6 to 11 years old), once adolescence starts, the walls of gender segregation begin to crumble and individuals have more and closer cross-sex friends.

Adolescence ends and adulthood begins around the age of 18 to 20, although some researchers categorize individuals in their early twenties as still being in late adolescence. Regardless, young adults continue the pattern they started in high school in regards to the number and closeness of their cross-sex friendships. Probably more so than any other stage of the life cycle, young adults in their twenties and early thirties have a significant number of cross-sex friends, often as many as five or six. Research has demonstrated that individuals who attend college have more cross-sex friends than do those who do not, because of the increased opportunity for cross-sex interaction that college affords young people. Additionally, it is not unusual for some college students, typically females more than males, to prefer the company of cross-sex friends to that of their same-sex ones.

The number and closeness of cross-sex friends usually declines if individuals get married and even more if they have children. Investigations of marriage and its impact on cross-sex friendship shows that marriage often interferes with the formation of new cross-sex friendships because of jealousy issues. But if the cross-sex friendship existed before the marital partners met one another, the chances for its continued existence after the marriage are greatly enhanced. However, marriage sometimes will facilitate the formation of what are called *couple friendships,* which are cross-sex friendships that arise from two married couples doing things together. For example, if a woman and man are close cross-sex friends, they might introduce their respective spouses to the spouse of their friend so that they may continue to see each other and at the same time circumvent jealous suspicions from their spouse or unwanted temptations that might arise from within the friendship.

Just as cross-sex friendships have been somewhat marginalized and given less research attention than same-sex friendships and romantic relationships, older U.S. residents are also a marginalized group. This double marginalization has resulted in an embarrassingly small number of studies done on the cross-sex friendships of what gerontologists call the young-old (ages 60 to 74), the old-old (ages 75 to 84), and the very old (ages 85 and older). The scant research that has been done is dated, not allowing for the possibility that baby-boomers who are now entering old age might have a different view of the viability of cross-sex friendships than does the generation that preceded them.

Advantages of and the Challenges in Cross-Sex Friendships

Cross-sex friends across the life cycle provide both generic and unique advantages, but they also face what are sometimes formidable challenges to their initiation and maintenance. A generic advantage is an advantage that can be provided by any kind of friendship. For example, similar to all other kinds of friendships, cross-sex friends throughout the life span give one another social support in the form of affect, aid, and affirmation. Whether it is a friendship between two young children or two elderly individuals, all cross-friendships offer social support by giving help (aid) in time of need, by supplying companionship and emotional support (affect), and by making one another feel good about themselves (affirmation).

Unique advantages are benefits that are unique to cross-sex friendship and do not occur in the main type of friendship with which it is often compared, that is, same-sex friendships. For example, research has shown that men and women and girls and boys enjoy their cross-sex friendships because those friendships provide them with an insider's perspective on how members of the other sex think, feel, and behave. For instance, a woman may tell her cross-sex friend what it is like to be moody because she is on her period. This insider's perspective allows the male to better understand other females in his life who may be going through the same thing. In a similar fashion, a young teen boy may explain to his adolescent cross-sex friend

why so many teenage boys are obsessed with video games. However, researchers do not know with certainty when the recognition of an insider's perspective first arises, and it arises for different individuals at different times. Scholars speculate that the cognitive realization that one is receiving an insider's perspective and what that means becomes apparent as soon as the friends know the difference between males and females, which usually occurs around the age of 3.

The second commonly reported unique advantage of cross-sex friendship is the provision of opposite-sex companionship for the participating members. From early childhood through adulthood, females and males report that one of the intangible benefits of cross-sex friendship is enjoyment of the company of a member of the other sex. The provision of other-sex companionship is clearly linked to the first unique advantage because part of the reason why friends enjoy opposite-sex companionship is the insider's perspective that is sometimes communicated during those interactions.

Unfortunately, U.S. society often makes it difficult for men and women and boys and girls to form friendships with one another. Mass media such as television and movies do not help with their portrayals of relationships that start out as friendships, but then change into romantic or sexual relationships. For example, in the TV program *The X-Files,* which ran for 9 years, the female and male FBI partners started out as enemies, then became good friends, then lovers. Females and males who want to be friends must sometimes overcome a host of challenges. One of the main challenges of heterosexual cross-sex friendships is dealing with the romantic and sexual tensions in the friendship. Consider the case where one member of the friendship wants to redefine the relationship into a romantic or sexual association, whereas the other wants the friendship to remain platonic. This kind of challenge comes from within the friendship itself, and often the one wanting to change the nature of the relationship will attempt to do so in a less than straightforward way. Some challenges originate from outside the relationship, such as jealous romantic partners, gossipers at work, and parents who prevent their child, especially their female child, from spending time with members of the other sex. Additionally, because of

gender segregation that begins early in life and often continues into the work environment and other social settings, the opportunity for cross-sex interaction and thus friendship formation is seriously curtailed.

The Future of Cross-Sex Friendship Research

Cross-sex friendships in each stage of the life cycle are complex relationships. That complexity requires broad, focused, and imaginative research designs. Although cross-sex friendship researchers have repeatedly requested that more research be conducted on these relationships, friendships between females and males are still understudied. Explorations of cross-sex friendships are usually limited because of the atheoretical approach taken and the lack of longitudinal research. An *atheoretical orientation* means researchers collect data on cross-sex friendships without an articulated theoretical framework within which to analyze that data. Theories about cross-sex friendships could be complemented with utilization of longitudinal research designs, which are designs that allow investigators to study the same cross-sex friendships over an extended period. For example, almost no research focuses on individuals and their cross-sex friendships as they transition from one stage of the life cycle to the next, such as transitioning from middle and late childhood through the first few years of puberty.

Michael Monsour

See also Casual Sex; Computer-Mediated Communication; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friends With Benefits; Self-Concept and Relationships

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FRIENDSHIPS, SEX DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

Attempting to capture the essential differences between women's and men's same-sex friendships, Paul Wright described them respectively as "face-to-face" and "side-by-side." Although the observation that women, compared with men, describe their same-sex friendships as more intimate, emotionally expressive, and supportive has been repeatedly verified, exploration of what this means and why it occurs continues. Too much attention to gender differences can also obscure important similarities between women's and men's friendships. This entry focuses on same-sex friendships, but cross-sex friendships will also be discussed.

Friendships are nonkin, nonromantic, voluntary, and reciprocal personal relationships. Reciprocal relationships and frequent use of the word "friend" emerge by the time a child is 4 years old. Friendships are often cross-sex in preschool, become increasingly same-sex (as much as 95 percent) during middle childhood, and then less exclusively gender concordant in adolescence and adulthood. Friends are expected to be equals, to confide in one another, to do things together, to be comfortable being one's self with one another, and to be supportive, trustworthy and accepting. Not having friends has been linked to depression, lower feelings of self-worth, and less social competence throughout the life span.

Gender Differences

Children, adolescents, and adults have been asked in many ways what they do with their friends, how they perceive their friends and their friendships, what they give to and receive from their friends and how they feel about their friends and

their friendships. A sampling of results from these studies of friendship shows that in childhood girls, compared with boys, have fewer friends but more exclusive, intimate, and expressive relationships with their same-sex friends; girls rate their best friends higher for companionship, help, security, and closeness; both pre-adolescent girls and college women report greater communion with their best friend (i.e., support, nurturance, intimacy, validation, love, loyalty, and companionship); women rate their best friends higher than men rate their best friends on supportiveness, security, concern, and desire to spend free time together; in describing providing help to a same-sex friend, women report spending more time helping; women engage in more intimate self-disclosure to a same-sex friend; women report talking to their same-sex friends more about relationships, personal problems, and secrets; women express more affection, verbally and nonverbally, toward their same-sex friends; and women use more supportiveness, openness, and interaction in maintaining their same-sex friendships.

Conversely, boys are somewhat more likely than girls are to describe their same-sex best friend as someone who fulfills instrumental needs, such as competition, status, guidance, favors, and praise for accomplishments; young men are more likely than are women to describe their same-sex closest friend as someone with whom they compete, quarrel, and tease; and men talk more with same-sex friends about sports, hobbies, work, and shared activities. Although some researchers have found that women are more satisfied with their same-sex friends, others have found no sex differences in satisfaction. Even in a sample where women reported more personal self-disclosure and involvement in their interactions with same-sex friends, women and men gave similar ratings for meaningfulness, pleasantness, and satisfaction.

Although sex differences in same-sex friendships are reliably found, they tend to be small to moderate in size, meaning that being male or female accounts for a relatively modest portion of the overall variance in same-sex friendships. A further caveat is that most data on friendships are collected from self-reports, where participants are asked to describe their relationships with friends, rather than through direct observation, making it probable that what men and women think their

friendships should be like, as well as what their friendships really are like, influence participants' responses.

Gender Similarities

Despite these many differences, women and men generally share similar views of same-sex friendships, valuing intimacy, trust, emotional closeness, and self-disclosure. Also, when researchers focus on within-gender differences rather than between-gender differences, similarities emerge. Although women may give higher ratings than do men on some measures, the rankings for what women and men value in friendships tend to be similar. For example, when describing ideal and real same-sex best friends, women and men rate communal characteristics, such as support, intimacy, and loyalty, higher than instrumental ones, such as competition, status, and network access. Both women and men agree that self-disclosing interactions create more intimacy in friendships than activity-based interaction does. Both women and men recognize connection as the most important goal in same-sex friendship and trust as the most valued quality of a friend. These friendship characteristics have also been found to predict friendship quality for both women and men. Finally, data from diary techniques indicate that friends spend most of their time together talking and that women and men do not differ in this regard.

Understanding Differences

If women and men value similar friendship qualities, then why are women's same-sex friendships consistently rated as higher in intimacy and closeness? Beverley Fehr asked women and men to generate descriptions of behaviors that contribute to intimacy in friendships. Frequent responses involved self-disclosure and emotional support, and these were generated equally by women and men. On the other hand, women were more likely than men to regard these behaviors as central to friendship intimacy. Violations of these intimacy patterns were perceived by women as more damaging to friendship intimacy and by both men and women as more damaging if they occurred in a female same-sex friendship compared with a male

same-sex friendship. Thus, women have both a stronger belief in the importance of self-disclosure and emotional support to intimacy in friendships and, as many studies have shown, are more likely to engage in these behaviors. Researchers studying these patterns have generally concluded that men simply prefer not to engage in these behaviors that lead to closer and more intimate friendships.

If men and women agree on the path to friendship intimacy but women choose to travel further down this path than men, are there barriers to intimacy in men's same-sex friendships? Barbara Bank and Suzanne Hansford found that emotional restraint and wanting to maintain distance from gay men were most helpful in explaining gender differences in intimacy and support in a same-sex best friendship. Having no role model (a same-sex parent with close friends) reduced the effect of gender on supportiveness, and masculine self-identity reduced the effect of gender on intimacy. The authors concluded that men's tendency to be emotionally cautious and reserved with their male friends may account to some extent for their failure to establish more intimate and supportive same-sex friendships. Although these barriers to male friendship contributed to explaining sex differences in friendship intimacy and supportiveness, these barriers did not eliminate the differences, suggesting that although characteristics of the male role do help us understand these gender differences, they do not fully account for them.

Although men have been described as not preferring behaviors that promote closeness and intimacy, it may be that they choose these behaviors without necessarily preferring them. Evidence indicates that men would like more openness in their same-sex interactions and that given the proper context, they are willing to express affection toward same-sex friends. Men may also suffer more from these choices; failure to meet communal needs in friendships was found to predict loneliness for men but not for women.

Recent research has included a focus on the instrumental aspects of same-sex relationships in addition to the more frequently studied communal aspects. Results for sex differences are mixed. Lynne Zarbatany and her colleagues found that boys and men prefer friends who provide competition, encouragement, and status and who are

influenced by their actions and opinions, but Bank and Hansford, measuring status orientation toward friendship, found that women were more likely than men to want friends who respect and depend on them and who are influenced by them. These noncommunal characteristics of friendship also appear to contribute positively to friendship quality. Researchers might also pay more attention to the ways in which friendship interactions provide fun, relaxation, and relief from boredom. Integrating both instrumental and communal aspects of relationships may be critical for establishing effective friendships. That Joyce Benenson and Athena Cristakos found that adolescent females have same-sex best friendships of shorter duration and more former best friends, suggesting in their words "greater fragility," indicates that there is more to know about friendships than just how close and intimate they are. Rather than focusing on men's problems with friendships, the field might better address the multifaceted benefits of friendships, the strategies that women and men use to accrue these benefits, and the barriers they each experience in meeting their friendship goals.

Cross-Sex Friendships

Less research has addressed the experience of cross-sex friendships. Cross-sex friendships are common in preschool children, become rare in middle childhood and reemerge in adolescence and young adulthood, becoming less frequent again as adults enter marriage and parenthood. Romantic partners and spouses are often viewed as close, or even best, friends. For research purposes, however, cross-sex (and same-sex) friendships are defined as nonromantic relationships. There is less research on cross-sex friendships, and results may be affected by the age of the sample and the nature of the measures. In general, results suggest that females receive fewer benefits from cross-sex friends than males. Men rate their cross-sex friendships higher on enjoyment, nurturance, and overall quality than women rate their cross-sex friendships. Men have also been found to rate their cross-sex (female) friends as more accepting, intimate, and emotionally supportive than are their same-sex friends.

Gays, Lesbians, and Friendships

Same-sex and cross-sex friendships are generally assumed to occur between individuals with a heterosexual orientation. But sometimes this is not the case. In studies of teenagers and young adults with homosexual orientations, Lisa Diamond and Eric Dube found that lesbians had particularly strong connections to other females, as friends, best friends, and attachment figures; whereas gay men were the least likely, compared with lesbians and heterosexual youth, to have same-gender best friends and more likely than others to form cross-gender friendships. Conversely, Peter Nardi and Drury Sherrod, with an older sample, found no differences between lesbians and gay men in their ratings of same-sex friends on satisfaction, social support, self-disclosure, or activities. Nardi and Sherrod did find, however, that many lesbians and gay men reported having had sexual relationships with their friends.

Structural Factors in Friendships

Friendships, being voluntary and nonobligatory, are often studied as if they were context-free. One context that has received some attention is culture. Although most studies of friendship, including those previously mentioned, are based largely on North American samples, researchers have studied the influence of collectivistic and individualistic cultures on perceptions of same-sex friends in childhood and adulthood. Although there were differences based on culture, these were not affected by gender; in other words, culture influenced both sexes equally. Virgil Sheets and Robyn Lugar, comparing friendship in Russia and in the United States, found stable gender differences across countries, but Russian men were particularly unlikely to have cross-sex friends. Culturally defined gender roles may have a particularly strong effect on cross-sex friends.

Other contextual factors may also affect gender and friendships. In the workplace, for example, gender similarities were found on measures of quality of same-sex friendships. Social settings—such as school, work, neighborhoods, churches, interest groups, and sport teams—also provide opportunities for friendships. They may play differential roles in the formation and maintenance of friendship. Might one be more likely to share activities with a friend made at work or through team sports but self-disclose and provide support with a friend from the neighborhood or an interest group? The structural factors that influence friendships and perhaps help account for the gender differences described here are just beginning to be defined and explored.

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See also Daily Diary Methods; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Friendships in Adolescence; Friendships in Young Adulthood; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Sex Differences in Relationships; Workplace Relationships

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FRIENDSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE

This entry addresses conceptual views and research findings pertaining to friendships during the second decade of life. In many respects, friendship sits at the frontier of adolescent social development. Friendships provide the formative context for learning the complex close relationship skills needed to establish close emotional bonds with people outside the family. These bonds help teens move beyond childish dependencies on parents toward autonomous independent lives as young adults, thus serving as a bridge between childhood attachments to parents and adult attachments to spouses and children. Friends also shape adolescent character and personality development. As teens begin to make their own choices, they gravitate toward the social niches they find most appealing and comfortable. Their chosen friends often share similar preferences and identities that reinforce and amplify their own emerging characters. Friends also "co-socialize" each other when they test limits together and encourage conformity to peer-group norms. Thus, it is not surprising that friendships exert heavy sway over teenagers' emotional well-being. The challenge of making and keeping friends is the source of considerable stress and anxiety, and youth who are excluded or without friends suffer painful loneliness and depression. At the same time, friendship is the source of immense excitement and camaraderie. Adolescent friends serve as vital allies and supporters in times of need and may afford experiences of intimacy and affection remembered for a lifetime.

Transition From Childhood to Adolescent Friendship

Considerable research documents changes in the features of friendship from childhood through adolescence. Preschool playmate preferences are transformed during the grade-school years into true dyadic friendships in which children reciprocally identify themselves as friends, spend time doing things together inside and outside school, and are able to cooperatively play together. These friendships unfold within the broader context of classroom peer-group status; most everyone likes popular children, most everyone dislikes rejected children, and neglected children are neither liked nor disliked by classmates. Rejected children are most likely to be friendless, often because of some combination of their own aggressiveness, poor social skills, or other "misfit" characteristics. Overall, about 85 percent of all children have at least one reciprocated friendship, with most children having two to four good friends.

Whereas childhood friendships are based on propinquity (proximity) and similarity of objective characteristics, children are especially drawn to peers who share their interests in particular activities, be it competitive sports, computer games, social conversation, or academic subjects. Dyads tend to be highly segregated by age and gender, with opposite-sex friendships viewed as atypical. Theorists have argued that the self-imposed isolation of boys' and girls' friendships creates different socialization cultures, with girls' friendships fostering a more connection-oriented focus on talk and close relationships, whereas boys' friendships foster a more agency-oriented focused on activities and competition. As children approach the teenage years, these gender barriers collapse as sexual and romantic interests erupt.

Early Adolescence

Abilities for thinking abstractly and idealistically emerge during early adolescence. This cognitive transition coincides with pubertal maturation, which happens about 2 years earlier among girls (9–12 years) than among boys (11–14 years). Paralleling these maturational changes, friendship becomes more talk focused and emotionally intimate in quality. Gossip about peers is a mainstay of conversation. A good deal of gossip is malicious in nature, with teenage friends sharing the latest news about so-and-so and critiquing the appearance, behaviors, and motives of fellow peers. At times, this type of gossip is used as a form of social aggression. Youth insult, criticize, and spread disparaging rumors about enemies and rivalries in attempts to get back at, or gain social advantage over, them. Researchers originally thought that such relational regression was the province of girls, but more recent research shows that boys also engage in aggressive gossip. Boys, however, engage

in substantially more physical aggression than do girls, and thus girls engage in more social aggression relative to physical aggression.

But not all gossip is motivated by cruel intentions. One psychological benefit of gossip is enabling collaborative construction of opinions and values. Through hours of conversation, friends explore and arrive at their conceptions of others and themselves. Gossip also builds intimacy and closeness between friends. Self-disclosure requires that friends be trusted to keep secrets and remain loyal when other peers entice them to disparage teens behind their backs. Friends show their trust by disclosing risky opinions, which enhances felt intimacy when opinions are mutually shared. Thus, intimate self-disclosure, trust, and loyalty all intertwine to become the key features of early adolescent friendship.

This talk-focused feature of friendship is more characteristic of female than of male friendship and begins earlier for girls than boys. The growth of gossip and intimate talk roughly parallels the timing of pubertal development. For girls, there is rapid increase in the frequency and depth of intimate disclosure among friends between 9 to 14 years of age, whereas for boys what growth occurs takes place between 12 to 17 years of age. Indeed, only when boys establish romantic attachments in later adolescence do they manifest the same levels of conversational intimacy that girls generally achieve in early adolescent friendship.

The broader world of peer relations also grows more complex in early adolescence as teens move into large middle schools with rotating class periods. Crowd identifications (jocks, nerds, skaters, or druggies) heavily influence friend selection, with teens gravitating toward peers who are "like me" and away from members of crowds "not like me." Interactions with friends take place within smaller cliques of friends rather than in large-crowd activities. Friendship cliques typically have 2 to 12 members, with an average of 5 friends, who often do things together such as sleeping-over, hanging out at malls, or going to movies as a group. Some cliques, such as the popular jocks and cheerleaders, have generally higher status than other cliques do, but most cliques differ more in qualitative characteristics than in status.

Life within friendship cliques has its highs and lows. Doing things with a group of friends is exciting and fun and sometimes pushes the limits of risky activities. Inclusion by the group creates a genuine sense of belonging; being excluded or relegated to marginal status is painful. Jealousies among clique members are not uncommon. These inter- and intra-group dynamics can involve relational aggression where some teens engage in disparaging gossip intended to sabotage others' standings in cliques for personal gain or to retaliate for perceived slights. Being without a friendship clique, however, is associated with loneliness, boredom, and depression. Having just one close friend tends to mitigate feelings of loneliness and alienation. Although exclusive "best friends" are more the exception than the rule, research has found that such alliances can buffer even chronically victimized teens from adverse mental health outcomes.

Middle Adolescence

During middle adolescence, close friendships become even more talk-focused and intimate. Honest and intimate self-disclosure becomes a prominent dyadic process. Gossip, humor, social comparison, and mind reading are frequent in friends' conversations, and these social processes often work in the service of revealing oneself to friends. Besides building solidarity between friends, self-disclosure also provides a forum for exploring self-worth and personal identity. Adolescents' growing cognitive abilities foster introspection and evaluating self and others in terms of abstract psychological traits and dynamics. Middle adolescents are also better able to consider things idealistically and analyze how things are relative to how they could be. Conversations with friends contribute to the growth of socio-moral reasoning and the elaboration of self-concept.

Friends further come to depend on one another for emotional support. Providing support effectively is a challenging, but important role to master because it plays a key role in later romance and parenthood. Styles of support giving and support seeking in adolescent friendships are predicted by styles originating in earlier parent–child attachment relationships. Teens with histories of relationships in which they felt secure are more likely to seek emotional support from, and sensitively provide support to, their friends. In contrast, teens

who developed avoidant patterns with parents feel uncomfortable seeking support from, or providing support to, friends and therefore are likely to avoid supportive exchanges with friends. Teens who manifest heightened dependence and preoccupation with problems can overwhelm friends with excessive self-disclosure and frustrate them because the friend is unable to help relieve the teen's preoccupation with distress. As givers of support, teens showing this latter pattern tend to become overly involved in their friends' problems, alternating between becoming mired in the friend's problems or intrusively giving advice.

Two of the most common topics friends share involve emergent problems with parents and romance. Research shows that as an outgrowth of teens' desires for increased autonomy from parents, family relations can become conflicted and distant during middle adolescence. Teens often turn to friends as confidants with whom they discuss and compare family pressures. This is an important shift because, before adolescence, parents were the chief source of emotional support. Teens also typically turn first to friends to discuss romantic interests and heartaches. This is only natural because initial forays in dating and romance commonly happen in the context of mixed-gender friendship cliques. Not all disclosure and support attempts between friends, however, work out for the best. Recent research reveals an unhealthy form of "co-rumination" among friends where pairs incessantly talk their problems to death. Although such talk tends to make friends feel especially close to each other, it also seems to contribute to more, rather than fewer, depressive symptoms. This is more common among girls' than among boys' friendships.

The influence of friends seems to reach its zenith during middle adolescence. Parents and researchers have long been interested in the influence of teenage friends on tastes, attitudes, and behaviors. In the mid-20th century, adolescents' peers were seen as corrupting influences that pressured teens to conform to values and behaviors that were at odds with those of parents and the broader society. Initial research seemed to confirm this view. When surveys forced teens to choose whether to conform to parent versus friend values and tastes, teens more often sided with friends. Developmentally, conforming to peer norms rose from childhood

and peaked during middle adolescence. But subsequent research revealed a more complex picture: teens are influenced by both parents and peers, their relative influences varying by domain. In core moral, religious, and political attitudes and values, parents usually hold more sway than friends do. But in matters of fashion, tastes, and activity choices, friends usually exert more influence than parents do.

Friend influence on activity choice—especially smoking, drinking, drug use, sexual activity, and delinquency—has been of great interest to researchers. Friends are usually quite similar in their involvement in these activities. These correlations have led some to conclude that deviant friends are responsible for exerting corrupting influence on teenagers. But these correlations can also reflect the way friends are selected. Research shows that teenagers are attracted to others who share similar interests and activity preferences, as in the adage "birds of a feather flock together." In careful research studies trying to tease apart whether similarity between friends is the result of selection factors or influence factors, teenagers' levels of involvement in substance use, sexuality, and delinquency are tracked across time along with the involvement of peers who are potential friends. The findings reveal that similarity of friends is mostly because teenagers gravitate toward making friends with peers who share their interest (or disinterest) in substance use, sexual activity, and delinquency.

At the same time, evidence indicates that friends become more similar to each other across time, indicating that some influence is also taking place. This is especially true for smoking and drinking. This is because friends often take part in these activities together and thus support and implicitly encourage (or discourage) involvement. One interesting study discovered that some friends engage in "deviance training" together. Young teenage friends who intentionally misbehaved during an observational session (e.g., cursed and made obscene gestures to the camera) were more likely to commit serious crimes several years later compared with pairs of friends who behaved themselves during the session. Thus, the friends rewarded and encouraged each other for being defiant and disruptive, which led to increasing deviance in the future.

Late Adolescence

As youth look forward to leaving high school and beginning adulthood, the greater permeability of boundaries between crowds affords opportunities to explore new spheres of possible friends. The search for identity becomes more personal as older teens strive to find career, religious, political, and romantic self-definitions that uniquely fit their own identities rather than the caricatures they had adopted during early adolescence by identifying with particular crowds. Not surprisingly, the conversations between friends become both more forward- and inward-looking. Friends explore with one another their emerging philosophies of life along with their fears and hopes for the future. Moreover, friendship continues to play central roles in helping older teens achieve mature autonomy from family, explore and settle on identities, and establish truly intimate romantic attachments.

Friendships play a particularly important role in romantic development. During late adolescence, friendship cliques become more heterosexual in composition, with most high school seniors averaging two opposite-sex friendships and four same-sex friendships. This is compared with sixth grade, where on average children report no or one opposite-sex friendship and five or more same-sex friendships. At one level, mixed-sex friendship cliques provide older teens access to potential romantic partners. By going places and doing things together as a mixed-sex group, teens form friendships that can progress into romantic relationships. Clique members also introduce each other to outside friends, which further broadens the field of potential romantic partners.

At another level, mixed-sex friendship groups provide an education in how to understand and relate to members of the opposite sex. Gender socialization and early segregation of peer groups led males and females to adopt different interpersonal styles and values. The male style is organized around the pursuit of common activities and individual status. Their conversational style is task focused and blunt and places value on "being right" and showing how individuals differ from one another. By contrast, the female style is organized around sharing feelings and building relationship connections. Their conversational style is supportive and nuanced, and it places value on

affirming the partner and down-playing differences. A major developmental task of adolescence for males and females is to learn how to relate effectively to one another given their different styles. Mixed-sex friendships are a forum in which these differences are often discussed and explored. Mixed-sex clique discussions often focus on differences between men and women and how they expect to be treated in romantic relationships.

At still another level, late adolescent friendships shape "mental models" that they carry into subsequent romantic relationships. Recent research shows that the attachment security that older teens experience in their serious romantic relationships is predicted more by experiences in same-sex friendship than by experiences in parent–child attachments. Again, this highlights the role that friendship plays as a bridge between childhood dependencies on family and adult relationships. This is not surprising because of the overlapping nature of friendship and mature romance. At the core of romantic relationships are the key features of friendships: companionship, disclosure, intimacy, support, trust, and loyalty. Thus, whereas early relationships with parents create a starting point for a basic sense of security or insecurity in close relationships, experiences in adolescent friendships broaden the range of relational features and concomitant interpersonal skills that will be called upon in adult romance and marriage.

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See also Dating Relationships in Adolescence and Young Adulthood; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friendships in Childhood; Self-Disclosure

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Friendships in Childhood

This entry describes friendships in childhood and examines their developmental significance. Most children succeed in forming these relationships, although about 10 percent fail to do so. Enormous differences exist in the number of these relationships that children have, the traits that characterize friends, and the texture of these relationships. Friendships also change in important ways from their earliest manifestations on through childhood and into adolescence even though certain features remain constant.

Social reciprocity and mutuality are central to the meaning of friendships for almost everyone. Sometimes these reciprocities consist of equivalence in resource exchanges; mostly, however, "giving-and-taking" in a broader sense undergirds the attraction that exists between friends both in childhood and adulthood. The most significant age changes observed in childhood occur in the individual's awareness and understanding of these reciprocities and their implications. Cognitive and affective representations of friendship change considerably, but the underlying meaning structure, based in reciprocity, remains constant.

Aspects of Friendship in Childhood

Incidence

Infants and toddlers sometimes show preferences for one another, seeking out other youngsters who have been more-or-less regularly responsive to them. These preferences are revealed in the time that children spend with particular playmates and are not especially nuanced linguistically or affectively. Young children are known to be less fearful of strange situations in the company of a familiar peer rather than an unfamiliar one, but familiarity is not equivalent to friendship.

The word *friend* usually appears in the third or fourth year, and sometimes preschool-aged children miss their friends when they are absent or talked about. Usually, friendship is defined by the young child in terms of concrete reciprocities ("We play") and, during the preschool years, approximately 75 percent have preferred playmates. Play, indeed, is the main content of the interaction between friends at this age, and the proportion of the child's time spent with specific partners is a good index to use in identifying these relationships. The number of children possessing these relationships rises during middle childhood when about 85 percent have a best friend and several good friends.

Friendship networks consisting of children and their friends are relatively small during early childhood (approximately 1.7 and .9 for boys and girls, respectively) becoming somewhat larger in middle childhood (3.0 to 5.0, depending on whether unreciprocated choices are included). Amount of time spent with friends increases until adolescence, when

about 30 percent of time awake is spent with these associates.

Gender

Children's friendships are gender concordant. About 30 percent of preschool children's friends are other-sex, but this percentage declines through middle childhood reaching 5 percent and rising again in adolescence when about 25 percent of teenagers' friendship networks become mixed-sex. Other-sex friends are likely to be "secondary" rather than "best friends" throughout childhood. Girls have a higher proportion of other-sex friends than boys do, and the other-sex friends of girls are likely to be older than themselves whereas the opposite is the case for boys.

Boys and girls do not differ in the proportion of children who have friends. Every observer knows, however, that the activities of boys with their friends are different from the activities of girls with theirs. During middle childhood, intimacy is a much greater concern in girls' talk about their friends than in boys' talk. Self-ratings of their friendships by girls are more intimate than are those of boys and self-disclosure is more common. At the same time, girls employ relational aggression (including threats to terminate these relationships) more frequently than boys do. Children of both sexes understand these differences. Little is known, however, about intimacy in friendship interaction that is based in camaraderie and shared mastery.

Friendship Expectations

Friendship expectations differ from expectations about other relationships: Preschool-aged children recognize differences in social power between themselves and their parents, for example, but do not expect power differences to exist between themselves and their friends. Friends are not expected to be the help-givers that parents are, or to provoke conflict as frequently as siblings do. Companionship and intimacy are expected of one's friends, rather than compliance and conflict. Refinements in these basic differentiations among relationships occur through middle childhood into adolescence.

Friendships are understood by children to be based in symmetric reciprocity at all ages although differences emerge in the amount, complexity, and organization of information and ideas about these relationships. Among young children, friendship expectations emphasize common interests and concrete reciprocities that occur mostly in play. Older children describe friends as sharing values and rules about loyalty and trust; friends also expect to spend time with one another and to engage in constructive conflict resolution. Adolescent friends expect shared interests, understanding, empathy, and intimacy with friends; similarity between oneself and one's friends is increasingly important.

These changes in friendship expectations during childhood are correlated with certain aspects of cognitive development, including the number of constructs children can apply to a relationship and their complexity; some writers have also linked changes in friendship expectations to changes in perspective taking that occur during childhood. Whatever the case, older children and adolescents perceive and think about these relationships in nuanced ways even though symmetrical reciprocities remain their major basis.

Behavior With Friends

In most instances, children have to be in the same place at the same time to become friends. However, propinquity does not guarantee the formation of a relationship, and initial encounters between children are largely devoted to establishing common ground or its absence. "Hitting it off" may require short or longer periods, but once this happens, communication is more connected, conflicts are managed more successfully, attention is drawn to similarities between the nascent friends, and, especially among girls, self-disclosure increases. Should common interests not be maintained after this "build up" period, relevant information must be exchanged again, much as in first encounters. Continued consensual validation and commitment are required for friendships to be maintained over the long haul.

Both preschool- and school-aged children spend more time with their friends than with other associates. Social exchanges of friends and nonfriends differ in four ways: *positive engagement* (friends talk, smile, and laugh together more than nonfriends do); *task-related activity* (friends orient to

the task at hand more extensively and spend more time on-task than nonfriends); *mutuality* (friends affirm one another more and exhibit greater mutuality and attention to reciprocity in their partners than nonfriends); and *conflict management* (while exhibiting as many conflicts with one another as nonfriends do, friends use disengagement and negotiation more frequently and use power assertion to a lesser extent). The mutuality and symmetry existing in the social exchanges between friends are reasons for suggesting that reciprocity is the sine qua non for these relationships during the first two decades of life.

Similarities Between Friends

Given the common ground that brings friends together, one would expect friends to be similar to one another in a variety of ways. Not surprisingly, then, the probability that two young children will be attracted to one another has been shown to vary according to the number of behavioral attributes they share. Also, children who are strangers initially are attracted to one another when their cognitive and play styles are similar rather than different. Actually, children are likely to dislike other children who are different from themselves. Similarities, not "opposites," attract.

Children and their friends resemble one another closely in age, gender, ethnicity, and sociometric status (how well other children like them). Behavioral concordances can be detected among preschool-aged friends, and these grow more extensive through middle childhood. School-aged friends, compared with nonfriends, are more like one another in prosocial behavior, antisocial behavior, shyness-dependency, depression, popularity, and achievement. Friends also share biases in their perceptions of people and relationships: For example, when friends rate their classmates on aggression or shyness, their ratings are more alike than classmate ratings made by nonfriends. Considerable variability occurs, however, in the similarities existing across these behavioral domains as well as within them.

Children are similar to their friends for a variety of reasons. First, children from the same neighborhood are likely to be more similar to one another than are children from different neighborhoods; socialization histories are also likely to be more

similar. Second, children are attracted to others like themselves because of the reinforcing properties that similarity seems to encompass. Children then sort themselves out by a somewhat disorganized process that is informally called "shopping" and formally called "selection."

Friendship similarities also derive from mutual socialization; that is, children become more alike because of their interaction over time. The extent to which selection and socialization, respectively, contribute to friendship similarity depends, however, on characteristics of the children themselves (which derive from their genetic makeup as well as their social histories), their interaction with one another, and which behavioral characteristics are being measured. For example, the genetically mediated expression of physical aggression, but not social aggression, is stronger among children who have physically aggressive friends compared with children whose friends are not physically aggressive.

Friendship Variations

Having Friends

Correlational studies show that children who have friends, in contrast to those who are without friends, enjoy better psychosocial adjustment; they are more sociable, more cooperative, more altruistic, less aggressive and impulsive, and less lonely. In most studies, "having friends" means having "good" friends or "compatible" friends even though not all friendships are harmonious. It is thus somewhat difficult to argue that merely having a friend, disregarding the nature of the relationship, facilitates good adjustment. Nevertheless, merely having friends is an indicator in longitudinal studies of good later outcomes: having positive feelings about oneself and one's family as well as having a romantic partner in adolescence and being relatively free of depression. Most investigators interpret these findings to mean that the complex reciprocities experienced with a friend during childhood promote the kinds of social competence that make one a desirable companion later on. Disharmony between friends attenuates these benefits but, overall, childhood friendships appear to facilitate good adjustment—both at the moment and later.

Friendship Stability

Children change friends with some regularity, although childhood friendships last longer than is commonly believed. Nursery school children often maintain friendships for many months and stability increases through adolescence, at which time about 70 percent of individuals report that their friendships last a year or more. By the end of middle childhood, it is not uncommon to find children reporting friendships that have lasted between 1 and 5 years. Friendship stability, however, depends on a number of conditions. For example, relationships between aggressive, antisocial children are more unstable than are relationships between nonaggressive children. Other psychosocial difficulties are associated with friendship instability, too, probably resulting from the children's limited capacities to regulate emotion and other deficits in social skill.

Friendship stability also has implications for the child's social adaptation. For example, school-age children who have friendships that last through a school year show greater improvement in attitudes toward school and greater improvement in other school-related behaviors than do children with less stable friendships. Other implications of friendship stability vary according to the children involved. Stable friendships among children who have conduct problems increases children's own behavior problems. In contrast, friendships with shy or withdrawn children seem not to affect a child's own social withdrawal. The developmental implications of friendship stability thus differ according to the behavior being measured and aspects of the children's relationships with one another.

Who the Partner Is

Childhood friends enhance social adaptation when one's partners are socially competent but are developmental risks when partners evince poor adaptation. Examples: When friends are aggressive and antisocial, children become more aggressive over time, especially those who are disposed toward aggression and who perceive themselves as socially rejected. When children have friends and these friends are socially well-adjusted, marital disruption has fewer effects than otherwise. Finally, social adjustment improves after school transitions when friends are well-adjusted, but otherwise not.

Partner effects are not well understood. Modeling and reinforcement during interaction with friends may be responsible for some of these effects; poorly adjusted partners do not model "competence" as consistently as do better adjusted ones and may not provide social rewards for competence behaviors as regularly. In many instances, conversations also seem to be powerful mechanisms for behavior change within friendships, especially when these conversations are persuasive. Aggressive children and their friends, for example, entice one another into "deviant talk," in which rule-breaking and other aggressive activities are discussed much more frequently than nonaggressive friends discuss them. Conversations between aggressive friends also contain more conflict and aggression than the conversations of less aggressive friends. Other observations show that increased depression is sometimes an outcome when childhood friends spend inordinate amounts of time "co-ruminating," that is, talking endlessly and intensely about issues rather than letting them drop after a reasonable period. Developmental contexts thus differ for children according to who their partners are, and these differences are related to behavior change.

Friendship Quality

Friendships in childhood vary in their structural and affective qualities, and these variations are significant for adaptation. Some friendships are warm, intimate, and supportive; others are rife with conflict, relational aggression, and other disharmonies. The outcomes of friendship experience are now known to vary according to these differences, not merely according to whether a child has friends. Supportive, intimate friendship relations—at least in middle childhood—are associated with sociability, good social reputations, popularity, and avoidance of aggression. "Prosocial friendships" are linked to school achievement as well as to popularity, whereas "antisocial friendships" are linked to peer rejection and delinquency, and "socially withdrawn" friendships are associated with low self-esteem, peer rejection, and depression.

Linkages such as these are moderated by other conditions—sometimes according to other aspects of the friendship experience and sometimes according to characteristics of the child himself or herself.

For example, the positive outcomes of supportive friendships (mentioned earlier) occur mainly when friendships are stable rather than unstable. In addition, disharmony in friendship relations increases aggression in children over time, but mainly when friendships are not harmonious to begin with. Although the affective and behavioral qualities of children's friendships may be clearly related to behavior changes over time, the magnitude of these effects is often moderated by other conditions.

Developmental Implications

Family relationships in earliest childhood set the stage and carry forward to relationships that children have with their peers. The sensitivity of early caregiving and the security of early attachments are both antecedents of harmony, responsiveness, and competence in peer interaction during childhood and beyond. Linkages between family relationships and friendship, however, are less direct: Good family relations in the earliest years do not ordinarily predict friendship functioning in either early or middle childhood. Rather, the peer competence that is linked to early family relationships predicts having friends and friendship functioning in childhood. Friendships, in turn, predict individual differences in romantic relations in adolescence. These mediated trajectories have been observed in several studies and illustrate the complexity with which family relationships, friendships, and even romantic relationships are intertwined in human development. The development of antisocial behavior in children shows a similar progression. Coercive mother–child relations lead to aggressive behavior during childhood, both at home and outside; aggressive children, in turn, affiliate with other aggressive children, including those who may be regarded as friends; having aggressive friends, in turn, predicts increases in aggression and antisocial behavior as well as delinquency in early adolescence.

One exception to these developmental scenarios concerns sibling relationships. Although these relationships are sometimes thought to presage peer functioning, the evidence suggests otherwise. Although "only" children are more likely to conjure imaginary friends than are those who have siblings (suggesting some strong need for companionship in early childhood), no consistent pattern has been found in either social or cognitive development that differentiates children with siblings from those who do not have them. Sibling relationships and friendships are, rather, quite different social contexts—especially as related to conflict. Conflicts with siblings are more intense and aggressive than are those between friends and less likely to be resolved with negotiation and conciliation. Children themselves recognize these differences.

Finally, friendships in childhood "buffer" children from family vulnerabilities and stress. For example, well-functioning friendships, as contrasted to poorly functioning ones, are linked to better social outcomes for children from dysfunctional families; few benefits are evinced, however, for children from good family environments. Once again, the developmental significance of childhood friendships is revealed in interaction effects rather than direct linkages.

Conclusion

Friendships in childhood are commonplace, and what children think and expect of them, as well as certain social interactions that distinguish them, have been identified. Yet these relationships are not all alike; considerable variation exists in how many friends children have, what partners are like, and what social and affective qualities characterize the relationships themselves. Although general conclusions can be drawn about children's friendships and their dynamics, developmental significance can only be inferred by considering these variations as they occur over relatively long periods.

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See also Children's Peer Groups; Friendship, Conflict and Dissolution; Friendship Formation and Development; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friendships in Adolescence; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Sibling Relationships

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Friendships in Late Adulthood

For many persons, both friends and family are important for fulfillment of social needs and maintenance of well-being throughout the life cycle. Yet, by late adulthood, people vary in the degree to which friends are available in their social networks as a result of personal choices in friendship as well as circumstances that support or inhibit the development and maintenance of friendship. This entry describes developments in friendship in later life, factors that influence continuity and change in friendship, the contribution of friends to well-being, and special challenges to friendship in late adulthood.

By definition, friendship involves a voluntary relationship: Friends choose one another and are free to determine what they will do together and how often they see one another. Often this mutual choice is based on commonalities of interests and preferred activities, shared humor, and attitudes about important issues. Fundamental to friendship is reciprocity, that is, a balanced exchange of attention, affection, and support. Considerable social skills are necessary for development of friendship and achievement of reciprocity and for the maintenance of friendships during life transitions. For various reasons friendships may end; when interactions are no longer positive, a friendship may be discontinued intentionally or may be allowed to fade away. Those that developed within specific contexts such as a neighborhood or work may end when involvement in that setting ends. Thus, a combination of personal choice and situational opportunities and constraints influence continuities and discontinuities in friendship in later life.

Relational Functions of Friendship and Well-Being

To understand why having friends is advantageous in later life, consider the functions that friendship fulfils. One of the main functions of friendship is the provision of pleasurable companionship; engaging in favorite activities and sharing stories and social rituals make being with friends especially stimulating and enjoyable. Older adults are happier in the company of friends than when they are alone or with family only, as are younger adults and adolescents. For older adults, spending time with friends helps them remain socially integrated when other roles and relationships have been lost. New friends as well as old friends may provide this kind of companionship.

Another function of friendship is the provision of support. When faced with challenging situations or transitions related to aging, friends listen to one another, show affection and concern, and offer useful information. Support from friends can be especially effective when they have been through the same transition themselves, by describing their own experience, giving advice, or suggesting alternative ways of understanding and dealing with the situation. Therefore, those facing retirement benefit from contact with friends who are already retired whereas widows and widowers seek the company of others who understand what it means to lose a partner. In the new situation, friends

support one another with the task of reorganizing their lives, whether this is because of widowhood, retirement, or other changes. Friends even socialize one another to old age, by serving as examples and exchanging information on important transitions.

When family members fail to provide sufficient practical help or are unavailable during challenging situations, friends may step in to provide the necessary aid. Usually this help is offered on a short-term basis. Friends in need of such help may be wary of asking for it or even accepting help when it is offered because this disturbs the balance of reciprocity that is fundamental to friendship. However, some circumstances promote the exchange of practical help, such as the proximity of friends in the neighborhood or special practical skills or expertise that friends are willing to share.

Although forms of support offered by friends vary, a more general function of friendship is reassurance of worth. This is because of the awareness that each party is chosen as a friend and that friends make the effort to maintain the friendship. Long-time friends are especially valuable for mutual confirmation of identity in later life, reminding one another that each is the same person despite various changes in appearance, health, and life circumstances. Thus, it is not surprising that older adults often describe old friends as their closest friendships.

Another more general feature of friendship involves sharing the process of attributing meaning to experiences as friends age together. Because of the similarities and commonalities on which friendship is based, as well as shared life history, values, and historical perspective, friends are useful as companions for interpreting and understanding new experiences. When talking with friends, people usually feel free to express their opinions or doubts, whether this involves understanding changes in childrearing practices, relationships between the sexes, politics, or personal events.

Social control involves regulating or influencing one another's behavior, thereby encouraging compliance with social norms. Although social control is not a function usually associated with friendship, when one regularly interacts with friends, a certain degree of social control is likely to develop. For example, friends often exchange information about their current health situation and develop shared norms about when to see a doctor, change medication, or adopt a calmer life style in late adulthood. They also provide one another direct feedback and advice on such matters.

This review of the functions that friendship may fulfill in later life shows that friendship is a multi-faceted relationship that contributes to well-being in various ways. The pleasure and stimulation of companionship with friends and reassurance of worth that they provide have a direct effect on happiness and life satisfaction. Because friends contribute to fulfillment of a variety of social needs, they are important in preventing or reducing loneliness in later adulthood. During stressful life events or transitions requiring adaptation, support from friends often has a buffering effect, reducing stress and other negative emotional consequences and contributing to positive adaptation. Furthermore, friends also contribute to social integration; involvement in regular social activities with friends is associated with better physical and mental health, as well as lower mortality than is found among those who are socially isolated in later life.

Who Is Likely to Have Friends Available?

Throughout adulthood, individuals demonstrate considerable variation in the tendency to maintain existing friendships and to develop new friendships under changing circumstances. In a study on older persons' life histories with respect to friendship, Sara Matthews identified three friendship styles. Those with an *acquisitive style* had continued to accumulate friends throughout their lives. Some had friends from various life periods (childhood, adolescence, early and middle adulthood), whereas others with this style made new friends as their circumstances changed without necessarily maintaining their oldest friendships. A second style, called *discerning,* involved development of one or two close friendships that were maintained from youth through late adulthood. These friends are irreplaceable, should they be lost. The third approach to friendship, the *independent style,* involves a preference for friendly relations rather than close friendships. Those persons who are available for friendly interactions are considered one's friends; they are replaceable when circumstances change and social contacts are disrupted.

One's style in friendship influences the degree of vulnerability to loneliness in later life. Those persons with an acquisitive or independent style are less vulnerable to loneliness because of possibilities for compensating for social losses through friendship, whereas the discerning are more vulnerable because their friends are few and irreplaceable when lost. Matthews suggests that those persons who are discerning in friendship earlier on may change their orientation to friendship in late old age, leaning more toward an independent style or even becoming more acquisitive. In general, the oldest tend to broaden their definition of friendship so that "friends" remain available despite losses of friends of similar age. Neighbors, home helpers, and those one meets regularly at local activities for older adults are more readily considered to be friends in this phase of life. As a result of this process, friendships become more heterogeneous: there are greater age differences between the oldest old and their current friends and even more cross-sex friendships in late old age.

In addition to personal dispositions that influence the availability of friends, there are other social structural influences such as gender and marital status. Gender differences in friendship found earlier in adulthood continue in later life. Men tend to develop friendships based on shared, structured activities; during their working lives, friendships often develop from work-related contacts. Upon retirement, men are likely to lose contact with work-related friends. Whether or not these are replaced depends on their participation in other associations following retirement. One study found that after age 75, men were less interested in individual friendships. This may be because of the death of male friends and a desire to avoid further loss of friends.

Women's friendships involve more confiding and exchange of emotional support in addition to the companionship that characterizes men's friendship. Thus, women tend to develop more personal, multifaceted friendships. When involvement in active parenting ends, women have more time available for contact with friends; at this point, they may intensify existing friendships or develop new ones, depending on their personal disposition in friendship. Women continue their interest in maintaining and developing new friendships in late old age. Friends serve as especially valuable resources in adaptation to widowhood because of the companionship and emotional support they provide one another. Widows have a larger pool of potential friends because more women are widowed than are men. For both men and women, personal cross-sex friendship, outside of friendship between couples, is relatively rare in late adulthood, at least until late old age.

Marital status influences availability of friends in late adulthood in several ways. Married couples often have more friends in their social networks because of the inclusion of couple-companionate friends. Married couples represent the largest social group in society so more people of similar status are available for friendship. However, married persons tend to spend less time with friends in late adulthood compared with widowed, divorced, or never-married older adults. Those living alone need to seek companionship and reassurance of worth outside the home and thus tend to have more frequent contact with friends. Men who are no longer married are at a disadvantage because they have smaller networks and fewer friends in later life. When widowed or divorced, they tend to develop new partner relationships to meet their social needs and rely less on friends than do older widows.

Developments in Friendship in Late Adulthood

By late adulthood, various transitions have taken place that affect the availability of friends in social networks. These include the end of active parenting; becoming a caregiver for older parents, the partner, or (grand)children; retirement from the workforce; relocation; changes in health; and widowhood. These transitions affect social needs and the time and energy available for friendship, as well as proximity to friends and the commonalities which friends share. All parties involved in friendship undergo such transitions in the course of late adulthood, so they represent a challenge to the durability of friendships.

Two theories on adaptation in late adulthood are relevant to developments in friendship in this phase of life. According to the social compensation model, individuals strive for continuity in their social involvements and activities. When a particular relationship is no longer available or particu-

social activities cease, people tend to develop new relationships or social activities to maintain their customary social life style. If friendships are lost, then older adults will be motivated to develop new friendships, according to this model. When social activities are lost, adults will tend to seek out other social activities that can serve as contexts for the development of new social contacts. This model predicts continuity in the availability of friendships in social networks, partly because of the development of new friendships in late adulthood.

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory focuses on changes in goals that individuals strive to achieve during the life course. Acquisition of information and emotional regulation are considered as two of the main goals in social relationships. As individuals realize that the time they have left to live is limited, they become increasingly oriented toward maximizing benefits in the present. Therefore, engaging in interactions with persons with whom positive emotional experiences are more likely and avoiding interactions with those with whom the quality of interactions is uncertain or likely to be negative become increasingly important. As a result of the change in time perspective, older adults become increasingly selective in their social relationships. They prefer to interact with close family members and their closest friends and spend less time and energy on maintaining more distant relationships, including less close friendships. This is presumably a universal process that affects most persons in late adulthood and will thus influence the mutual selection process involved in maintaining friendships. Thus, this model predicts decline in the number of friendships that are maintained in late adulthood compared with those in earlier phases of life.

Longitudinal studies on large representative samples of persons in late adulthood tend to find a decrease in the number of friends in personal networks as individuals age. This is due to loss because of death, illness, or relocation of friends, as well as the process of selection. However, studies that focus on adaptation to important life events or transitions, such as becoming widowed or relocation to retirement community, report increases in the number of friends or in the time spent with friends within the first few years following the transition. Following retirement, women also tend to increase involvement with friends. It appears

that women are more inclined to seek the support and company of friends while adjusting to a major transition in late adulthood. This effect does not seem to be apparent for men following retirement or loss of the partner. These findings suggest that during transitions that disrupt social involvements, friendships may be intensified and friendship networks may be expanded, which supports the notion of social compensation (at least for women). The two processes of selection and compensation in social relationships are not necessarily contradictory, but can be seen as complementary. Whether or not they are influential in a particular phase of life depends on the circumstances of individuals in that phase and the personal disposition or inclination to seek compensation for loss of activities and relations through friendship.

Challenges to Friendship in Later Life

The general decline in friendship with age has been mentioned, as well as a variety of factors contributing to its impermanence. An important factor is the voluntary nature of friendship; the two persons who are involved in a friendship need to be committed to the continuation of the relationship. As individuals develop with age, they may no longer share the commonalities in interests and activities that form the basis of a friendship. Changes in health status may interfere with the ability to engage in preferred activities with friends; furthermore, it may become difficult to maintain reciprocity in the friendship as a result of differences in health status. As mentioned earlier, the process of socioemotional selectivity affects friendship as individuals age; an increasing preference for interaction with one's closest relations, including friends, means that less close friendships will be dropped or allowed to fade away. The arrival of grandchildren may cause some older adults to focus more time and energy on children and grandchildren and less on friends. Thus, preferences for particular friends (or relatives) are influenced by developments in the lives of all parties involved.

Changes in circumstances with age also influence whether or not friendships are continued. Relocations of friends that reduces proximity will have a stronger effect on casual friendships than

on close friends, who are more likely to use the available communication channels such as telephone and Internet to maintain contact. Changes in marital status or occupational status also influence commonalities that older adult friends share, which in turn influence the likelihood that friendship will be continued or the intensity with which they are continued. It is often a challenge for a member of a new couple or a newly single older adult to maintain contact with older friends who shared one's former partner status but not the new one.

Another reason for discontinuing friendship arises when overt problems develop in friendship. These may be because of violations of the implicit rules that govern friendship, such as the discovery that a friend is not trustworthy, does not respect one's privacy, or has become overly critical. A conflict of loyalties may arise between one's partner and a friend or between two different friends. Those who have more friendships tend to have more problematic friendships in late adulthood. Unfortunately, little is known about the reasons for maintaining a problematic friendship, rather than ending it actively or passively.

Some friends are discontinued or lost in later adulthood, but long-term friendships that have faded into the background of social lives during middle adulthood because of preoccupations with career and family life may be revived. Retirement, widowhood, and relocation are transitions that lead to reassessment of social needs and opportunities. Naturally occurring reminiscence may increase one's longing for contact with old friends, as well as curiosity about them in later adulthood. Reunions of various sorts provide contexts for getting back in touch with former friends; the Internet also enables people to find one another many years after losing touch. Renewed contact may lead to rejuvenation of old friendships, when those involved discover that they still have much in common and that one another's company is still stimulating and a source of pleasure.

Friendship is a dynamic type of relationship during the life cycle, subject to many personal and situational influences. When asked about the importance of friendship in their lives, most older adults describe this type of relationship as (very) important. The efforts that are made to maintain or revive old friendships, and to develop new ones, attest to the significance of friendship in late adulthood.

Nan Stevens

See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friendships in Middle Adulthood; Social Skills, Adults

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FRIENDSHIPS IN MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

In midlife, generally defined as the period between young adulthood and old age, friendships provide affection, companionship, understanding, and social support and therefore contribute to well-being.

Friends can also affect the status, power, wealth, attitudes, behaviors, and values of middle-aged people. In addition to these consequences for individuals, midlife friendship patterns can affect society, such as by reinforcing the class structure and upholding the institution of marriage. Friendship is thus an important type of human relationship during this stage of life. This entry synthesizes what is known about the interactive processes exchanged between friends during midlife, the internal structure of midlife friendships, and how these friendships vary across contexts and individual demographic characteristics.

In Western societies, friends are not determined by blood ties, as relatives are, or by residence, as neighbors are. This absence of a structural definition of friendship results in a lack of clear consensus about which relationships are considered friendships and about the normative expectations relevant to this type of relationship. Although scholars have generally conceptualized friendship as a voluntary relationship between equals, research shows that individuals use the term to refer to relationships that do not meet these criteria, sometimes applying it to mere acquaintances and sometimes reserving it for intimates. Despite this variation in the use of the term, however, most people define *friendship* social psychologically and, more specifically, affectively, as a close relationship with nonkin.

With age, opportunities for and constraints on friendships change and people approach friendship with different attitudes, skills, and dispositions. Although people experience the middle years in different ways, midlife is the stage of the life course with the potential for the most responsibilities. Not all middle-aged people are committed to partners, have children, are employed, or care for older adults in their families, but these circumstances are expected of middle-aged people in Western society and can affect friendship. For example, involvement in a committed romantic partnership sometimes means dropping some friendships, adding new ones, and spending more social time with couples. Children absorb a great deal of time, which can interfere with friendship, but they also provide new sources of friends for their parents—the parents of their friends. Caring for an aging parent can limit the amount of time available to spend with friends, but can also widen a social circle, for example by adding acquaintances from the parent's neighborhood or from a caregiver's support group. Similarly, work both uses time that could be spent socializing and provides new opportunities for friendships with coworkers.

Friendships of midlife adults are also likely to differ from those of younger or older persons because of the developmental maturity often characteristic of this stage of life, such as an ability to handle a highly complex environment, the emergence of a highly differentiated self, and an achieved balance between productivity and stagnation. Midlife friendship patterns are thus different than those of younger and older people. Furthermore, concurrent sociological and developmental forces affect midlife friendships, as do prior experiences. Given that the longer people have lived, the more time they have had to follow different paths, friendship patterns are more varied across individuals during midlife than they are during earlier periods of life.

Unfortunately, given the importance of friendships during middle age, few studies define *midlife* theoretically. Most of what is known about midlife friendship is derived from general samples of adults, which sometimes include participants as young as 18 years and as old as or older than 65 years. Even those studies that focus on midlife adults often impose arbitrary age boundaries on the category rather than using theoretically derived definitions of stage of life course or level of developmental maturity to determine which adults should be included as participants. In a sense, midlife is the residual age category and sometimes represents the norm against which people of other ages are implicitly compared. The literature on children, college student, and older adult friendship is thus larger than the literature on midlife friendship.

Although scholars from many disciplines have contributed to the study of friendship, collaborations among scholars from these different disciplines are rare. For this reason, the literature on friendship in general and on midlife friendship specifically is somewhat fragmented. Psychologists and communication scholars tend to study dyadic processes using experimental methods on convenience samples of volunteers. Sociologists (and some anthropologists) study network structure, usually conducting small-scale surveys of

specialized populations. Finally, some historians, anthropologists, and sociologists study midlife friendship qualitatively in context, describing case studies in detail without comparing friendships across contexts.

Interactive Processes in Friendship Dyads

Interactive processes are the action components of friendships or what is exchanged between friends, including what they do with their friends and how they think and feel about them. Perhaps because researchers have assumed all friends feel close to each other, they have concentrated on studying friendship behaviors and cognitions rather than focusing on the feelings involved in friendship.

Recent studies of midlife friendship behavior focus mainly on communication patterns, social support, and conflict. Friends communicate better than acquaintances do because they share more mutual knowledge, display greater levels of self-disclosure, are more relaxed with each other, exchange more information, and communicate more positively in ways that build morale. In midlife, women are more likely to emphasize the importance of self-disclosure in their friendships than men are, and women tend to discuss different topics with their friends than men do. Women friends tend to discuss intimate relationships, reveal their fears and doubts, and talk in depth about personal problems. In contrast, men friends are inclined to talk about sports, business, and politics.

Research on social support by friends in midlife is concentrated on studies of women. A particularly important feature of women's closest friendships at this stage of life is the emotional support they provide. This research also shows that women rely more heavily on friends than on family members in the aftermath of difficult events (e.g., an abortion or a diagnosis with a chronic illness). One possible explanation for this finding is that midlife women's friends tend to be other midlife women who, by virtue of their age and sex, are more likely than partners and other family members to have experienced the same problems or to have thought through how they would handle them.

Scholars have also examined relational conflict during midlife, including disagreements over beliefs

and values and those regarding habits and lifestyles. Men's friendships involve more conflict than do women's, possibly because women who are currently middle-aged or older have been taught to suppress or avoid conflict. Conflict is also less common in same-sex friendships than in opposite-sex friendships, and middle-aged and older people work harder at resolving conflicts with their friends than younger people do.

Researchers have also studied cognitive, processes in midlife friendships. Research shows that, like in younger and older people's friendships, similarity of values, interests, and background is important in middle-aged people's friendships. These similarities contribute to the ease of communication and the likelihood of shared experiences. Midlife friends also evaluate each other on the basis of politeness and friendliness.

The way people describe their friends and the meaning they attribute to friendship do not vary much across ages, but the discrepancy between how people describe real friends and how they describe ideal friends differs across age groups. Differences in descriptions of real and ideal friends are smallest among middle-aged people. This might reflect middle-aged people's greater selectivity compared with younger people regarding their choice in friends and the fewer physical and social constraints on their friendships compared with older adults.

Internal Structure of Friendship Networks

Scholars have studied the *internal network structure* of friendship (i.e., the form of ties linking an individual's friends) less exhaustively than they have studied their internal processes, perhaps because the network literature tends to focus on social networks in general, without distinguishing family, neighbors, coworkers, and friends from each other and from other types of associates or because interviewing people about their networks is expensive and time-consuming.

One of the most basic structural characteristics of friendship networks is their *size*. Although some researchers have reported that the frequency of interaction with friends decreases with age or even that friendship networks are larger in midlife than in old age, the number of friends does not vary

much during the life course. A national study of U.S. residents conducted by Gallup in 2004 reported that the number of *close* friends does vary by age, at least somewhat, with middle-aged people (30–49 years, 7.0 friends; 50–64 years, 8.7) reporting fewer close friends than younger (8.9 close friends) and older adults (12.5). The variation in the average number of friendships and close friendships reported by midlife subgroups is substantial enough that reporting an overall average is somewhat misleading, however.

Even studies of friendships in a particular subgroup often have yielded different results. For example, findings on gender differences in the number of friends during midlife are mixed. Some studies show that adult men have more friends than adult women have, and other studies show the opposite depending on other characteristics of the samples. For example, some data indicate that among white-collar adults, men have more friends than women do and that among blue-collar adults, women have more friends than men do. Although the average number of friends in midlife and how this number varies across subgroups is not clear, research has shown that the size of friendship network and global measures of number of friends are associated positively with access to resources, social support, and various indicators of well-being.

Studies of midlife friendship *network density* (i.e., the percentage of all possible links among friends in a network that do in fact exist) are rare. Perhaps the two most well-known studies of adult network density are Edward Laumann's analysis of Detroit Area Study data and Claude Fischer's report on the Northern California Study. Laumann, who only examined density among his respondents' three closest friends, found that 27 percent of them had networks that were completely interlocking (100 percent dense), 42 percent had partially interlocking networks, and the rest had radial networks (0 percent dense). Fischer reported that the average density of the network of associates was 44 percent and that the more kin and the fewer nonkin in the network, the denser it was. This suggests that friendship network density, if he had reported it, would have been lower.

The density of networks is related to the processes that take place within them. For example, dense networks make it possible for information to be transmitted quickly and therefore are easy to mobilize during crises. In contrast, confidences are less likely to be kept in high density networks and so self-disclosure is risky in them.

One of the most robust findings regarding friendship network structure is that they tend to be *homogeneous* (i.e., friends tend to occupy similar social structural positions). Studies have shown that midlife friendships are homogeneous in occupational status, ethnicity, age, marital status, income, education, gender, and religion. In general, higher status middle-aged people tend to have more homogeneous networks than do lower status people. Although sociologists generally posit a structural explanation for these findings (i.e., people, especially higher status ones, have more opportunities to meet others who are similar to themselves than do dissimilar others), preferences resulting from socialization may also contribute to the homogeneity of networks. Although findings vary across types of homogeneity, in midlife, homogeneous friendships tend to be closer than heterogeneous ones.

In most studies that include measures of friendship structure, the structural characteristics of friendship networks are used to predict outcome variables such as psychological well-being, occupational success, or educational achievement. The paucity of studies examining midlife friendship network structure is unfortunate because these are important outcomes. As the examples already provided demonstrate, some studies suggest that the internal structure of friendship networks and dyads affects the processes that are exchanged among participants. There are also fewer studies about how interactive processes sustain and modify friendship structure. For example, frequent contact with friends increases the chance that those friends know each other, so frequent positive contact increases the density of friendship networks over time.

Variations in Friendship Across Contexts

Friendships do not, of course, occur in a vacuum; they are embedded in societies, communities, and immediate social environments (e.g., neighborhoods, buildings, and organizations). Although few societal-level studies comparing midlife friendships

in different historical periods or in different countries have been conducted, since the founding of the field of sociology scholars have theorized about how the broader social context affects the friendships that take place within it. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for example, German scholars such as Max Weber and Ferdinand Tönnies argued that the importance of friendship had declined with industrialization and urbanization because of increasingly diverse social environments, residential mobility, and the development of impersonal bureaucracies, social forces that all are particularly salient in midlife. In a series of articles in the 1960s, Eugene Litwak rejected the notion that close relationships and bureaucratic organizations are incompatible and argued instead that they perform different, but complementary tasks. More recently, scholars have argued that in the process of industrialization and modernization, the more communal social life of the past has been replaced with a concern for the private world of home and family. Whereas in the past, social lives, including those of the middle aged, centered on relationships with coworkers and neighbors, now improvements in transportation and communications technologies have reduced the importance of local ties. Some scholars have argued that this has led to increased isolation, but others have argued that people are now free to develop a wider variety of friendships.

Only a few studies have been conducted comparing midlife friendships in across societies or periods of history in the same society, and few quantitative studies have compared midlife friendships in various communities or immediate social environments. Ethnographic studies (i.e., studies of specific settings that usually are qualitative and include observation), however, raise questions about whether findings can be generalized across contexts and suggest some connection between the characteristics of contexts and how friendship is enacted. For example, ethnographies of poor or marginal populations are more likely to discuss the closeness of relationships in a setting and to describe the social support friends provide to each other. In contrast, ethnographies of the middle class tend to describe friendships in terms of sociability rather in terms of closeness and as focused on specific activities rather than being central to everyday survival. If the friendships in these same settings were systematically compared, quantitative researchers would be able to document how friendship processes and structure varied across these two types of settings more precisely. Comparing these ethnographies also suggests certain characteristics of friendships are the same across contexts. For example, no matter what the setting, ethnographers tend to describe most friendships as homogeneous, probably because most immediate social environments and communities are themselves fairly homogeneous.

Individual Differences

Depending on the study, individual differences are conceptualized and examined differently. Although researchers who study dyadic processes and those who study network structure both tend to discuss individual variation in midlife friendship patterns across demographic characteristics, they use the same measures to indicate different concepts. For example, psychologists often use "sex" as a proxy measure of disposition (e.g., personality, motives, personal preferences, biologically based tendencies), and sociologists use it as a proxy measure of social structural location (i.e., external opportunities and constraints). Researchers who study midlife friendship processes tend to place more emphasis on the relationships among characteristics of friendship (e.g., such as closeness, self-disclosure, satisfaction, perceptions of equity) and less emphasis on studying individual variation within samples. In contrast, those who study midlife friendship structure tend to include many independent variables in their equations and focus on a limited number of friendship characteristics, each measured with a single item. Ethnographers do not often describe individual variation in midlife friendship patterns and when they do, interpretations of findings about how individual characteristics affect outcomes are often difficult to distinguish from contextual effects because contexts tend to be homogeneous.

However they conceptualize and interpret demographic variables, researchers study some effects more than others. Gender is by far the favorite demographic variable among midlife friendship researchers who use quantitative methods, whether they study interactive processes or internal structure. Researchers do not, however,

typically include race, ethnicity, or social class as independent or control variables in their analyses, so ethnographic case studies are the main source of information on the effects of these variables on midlife friendship patterns. Quantitative studies of friendship processes in minority populations are relatively uncommon as are those of noncollege-educated populations.

Not much is known about the effects of age on adult friendship. The information included on midlife friendship in this entry is derived from studies that are not focused on children, adolescents, young adults, or old adults. Often studies that incorporate theoretical definitions of midlife do not include people from other age groups and so explicit comparisons are not possible. When studies do include other age groups, they are typically cross-sectional and do not permit separation of age, period, and cohort effects. Much remains to be discovered about midlife friendship patterns, how they differ from friendship patterns during other stages of life, and how they vary across contexts and demographic groups.

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See also Friendship, Conflict and Dissolution; Friendship Formation and Development; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friendships in Adolescence; Friendships in Late Adulthood; Friendships in Young Adulthood; Social Networks, Dyad Effects on; Social Networks, Effects on Developed Relationships; Social Networks, Role in Relationship Initiation

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FRIENDSHIPS IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD

Friendships are among the many personal relationships people engage in during their lifetimes. Most of what relationship scientists know about friendship stems from research on children or college students in Western cultures; however, the research that has been conducted has consistently shown that people value and enjoy their friendships, that people invest time and effort to maintain their friendships, and that people with established friendships fare better psychologically and even live longer than do those without. Benefits notwithstanding, friendships also entail costs and pose challenges. This entry discusses the importance of friendship in young adults' lives; describes the process of friendship initiation, the development of closeness, and precursors to friendship dissolution; and highlights differences between men's and women's friendships and between same-sex and cross-sex friendships during young adulthood.

Importance of Friendship in Young Adulthood

During young adulthood, a given individual is likely to be navigating myriad personal relationships, including sibling relationships, parent–child relationships, employee–employer relationships, friendships, romantic relationships, team relationships, and teacher-mentoring relationships. At this

point in life, however, friendships and romantic relationships take center stage. In one sample of unmarried college undergraduates, for example, almost half identified a romantic relationship as their "closest, deepest, most involved, and most intimate relationship" and more than a third identified a friendship. And, when young adults are asked about sources of joy and meaning in their lives, "friends" is among their most frequent responses.

A look at the quality of life during young adulthood (and in adolescence), particularly in Western cultures, might clarify the distinctive quality friendships have during young adulthood. During adolescence and young adulthood, individuals are likely to be romantically involved but not yet married or with children. Moreover, individuals generally spend a lot of time with others of their same age—in school and at play—at a time when they are exploring different relationship partners and developing their interpersonal skills and an understanding of their own enduring strengths, weaknesses, and desires and goals. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that at this point in life, people rate companionship, emotional support, and personal disclosure as among the most important qualities of friendship. During adolescence and young adulthood, friends seem to play an integral role—through constant conversation, activity sharing, and emotional support—in each other's understanding of self and others.

eating, and just "hanging out" with each other. Fourth, friends disclose: They reveal information about themselves to one another that they presumably would not share with just anybody. Although the degree of intimate self-disclosure varies from dyad to dyad and as a function of the sex composition of the dyad, friends tend to share their thoughts and feelings. Finally, young adults perceive friendships as involving a voluntary sense of mutual aid and loyalty. In other words, they perceive a friend as someone they can rely on and as someone who can rely on them when the going gets rough.

These defining features of friendship might also be thought of as "rules" of friendship. For example, consider a young man who is disappointed that others seem to "befriend" him only because he can help them with their math homework. One of the benefits of friendship is task support, but this young man has experienced a betrayal of the implicit notion that friendships are founded in mutual enjoyment more than task assistance. And when one woman borrows a few dollars from her friend, she might be disappointed if her friend talks incessantly of needing to be paid back so that their "score is even." The aid and loyalty held in high regard in friendship involves not tit-for-tat exchange but, rather, the perception that the relationship has a long future—the score will even out in its own time—and that a friend will be there for them through thick and thin, regardless of the current score.

Defining Features of Friendship

Given the importance young adults attach to their friendships, one might expect to find clear definitions of friendship. However, *friendship* is difficult to pin down in a few concise words. That said, various studies consistently point to several defining features of young adults' perceptions of friendship. First, friendships are characterized by interdependence: One person's behavior both influences and is influenced by the other person's behavior. Second, that interdependence is *voluntary:* Friends seek out each other's company rather than interact by obligation (as is often the case in family relationships). Third, friends enjoy each other's company, even if that company is not as frequent as they would like: Friends enjoy talking,

Becoming Friends

Several characteristics predict the formation of a friendship between two individuals. In young adulthood, people are more likely to become friends with frequent interaction partners, such as coworkers and individuals who live close by, than with infrequent interaction partners. As a general rule, people prefer friends (and other relationship partners) who are physically attractive and socially skilled. Related to social skill, people also tend to fall into friendships with people who they perceive as "responsive." Responsive individuals answer questions about themselves, thus demonstrating a willingness to share a bit about themselves with others. Perhaps more importantly, responsive people also ask questions about other people,

listen to the answers, and respond supportively and sympathetically. In short, people become friends with those who display an interest in them.

People like those who are similar to themselves, and they perceive the people they like to be similar to themselves. Not surprisingly, then, individuals who are similar to each other, and who perceive themselves as similar to each other, are likely to become friends. For example, freshmen roommates in college who are placed together at random are more likely to like each other if they share similar values and attitudes. Friends are similar in many ways. They tend to be similar in age, level of education, family background, income, values, religion, political views, and the activities they enjoy. Limited research even suggests that same-sex friends may be similar in how physically attractive they are.

There are multiple, and not necessarily mutually exclusive, explanations for the similarity observed among friends (and other relationship partners). One suggestion is that humans are driven by a need for cognitive consistency, or *balance*. According to this perspective, we prefer to be around individuals who perceive other things and other people the same way we do. Another theory is that we are more likely to encounter similar others than dissimilar others, given that our interests and values guide the environments we select for ourselves. According to this perspective, it is not necessarily all that surprising when two previously unacquainted people who sign up for the same tai chi class (or any other specialized activity) realize they have much in common and quickly develop a satisfying friendship. Another prominent theory is that humans have evolved to select interaction partners who are genetically similar to themselves. In support of this theory, known as Genetic Similarity Theory, friends (and spouses) tend to be more similar to each other on characteristics that are under stronger genetic influence, such as anthropometric characteristics and highly heritable social attitudes.

Degrees of Friendship

If you ask young men and women to tell you about a friend of theirs, the first thing they will probably

do is attempt to clarify whether you want to know about a casual friend, a good friend, a close friend, or a best friend. This request for clarification demonstrates people's tendency to categorize their friendships along a continuum of closeness. Again, however, there are no concise, objective definitions of closeness but, rather, typical features. Generally, these features parallel those already mentioned earlier. In other words, each level of friendship (casual—good—close—best) is associated with increasing levels of similarity, interaction, disclosure, support, and enjoyment.

Some research suggests that people also have an intuitive perception of whether a given friend is a "true" friend or a "fair-weather" friend. A true friend seems to closely parallel people's perceptions of a "best" friend—this friend is genuinely happy for you when things go your way and would do just about anything for you when things do not go your way. Some researchers have speculated that true friendship forms under the conditions of *mutual irreplaceability*, that is, when each member perceives the other as offering him or her unique and desirable benefits that would be difficult to find in anyone else.

Types of Friendship

Young adulthood is one of the only stages in life, at least in many industrialized nations, that if you ask young men and women to tell you about a friend, they might also ask if you want to know about a *same-sex* friend or a *cross-sex* friend. During adolescence and young adulthood, most males and females report that they have one or more friends of the other sex (although they tend to have more same-sex friends than cross-sex friends). Thus, a thorough discussion of friendship must at least touch upon the complicated dynamics of cross-sex friendships and how they compare and contrast with same-sex friendships.

In the most fundamental ways, same-sex friendships and cross-sex friendships are similar. Both forms of friendship involve voluntary interdependence. And, when young adults report on their most common experiences with a close same-sex or cross-sex friend, nominations related to companionship, help, and support, and having someone to talk to are mentioned frequently for both

forms of friendship. Same-sex and cross-sex friendships do, however, differ in some of the rewards they offer and costs they entail. For example, in heterosexual samples, one of the most prominent benefits of cross-sex friendships for young adults is gaining an insider perspective about the opposite sex. Another common finding is that sexual attraction and sexual tension can operate—albeit frequently at low levels—in some cross-sex friendships. In one study, more than one-half of college students reported that they had had sex with a cross-sex friend at some point in their lives. Friends differ in the degree to which they perceive sexual undertones operating in their friendship, as well as in the degree to which they perceive it as adding spice to the relationship (for example, by affirming one's desirability as a romantic partner) or complicating it (for example, if sexual attraction is not mutual). Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that although individuals value intimate disclosure in both their same-sex and cross-sex friendships, they are more likely to avoid talking about certain topics, such as sexual and dating experiences, with their cross-sex friends than with their same-sex friends. Young adults also are more likely to deceive their cross-sex friends than their same-sex friends about their current romantic relationship involvement and whether or not they have feelings of romantic attraction toward their friend. Individuals who are simultaneously involved in a romantic relationship and cross-sex friendships report that their cross-sex friends and romantic partners alike may experience jealousy.

Same-sex friendships also provide unique benefits and pose unique challenges. Young adults devote substantial effort to maintaining their same-sex friendships, by offering the benefits that friendships should provide—such as companionship and emotional and task support. Some of the primary benefits of same-sex friendship, then, are also the primary costs. In other words, young adults perceive the time and effort they devote to their same-sex friendships as both a benefit and a cost.

Same-sex friendships, like cross-sex friendships, are linked with romance and mating. In adolescence as well as young adulthood, same-sex friends spend a lot of their time talking about the other sex. That is, young men talk about women and young women talk about men (and relationships).

It is not uncommon for young adults to perceive their same-sex friends as relationship advisers and mate-seeking partners. Yet, at the same time, they also perceive them as rivals. In one sample of young adults, more than half reported that they had competed with a same-sex friend to attract a member of the opposite sex. They perceived such competition as one of the most costly aspects of their same-sex friendship. Perhaps by befriending those who are similar to ourselves in values, activity preferences, and physical attractiveness, people fall into friendships with those who can both facilitate and interfere with their mating desires.

Gender Differences in Friendship

In many ways, men and women have similar perceptions of their friendships and similar friendship experiences. For example, both sexes value close friendships and intimacy in those friendships. Both sexes maintain close friendships that endure for many years. Men and women hold similarly high levels of trust in their friends, report similar unwillingness to confront their friends when something hurtful is said, and maintain similarly frequent contact with their friends. In young adulthood, men and women both spend a lot of time with their friends—in some cases, 10 to 25 hours per week. Despite the similarities, however, there also are some striking differences between men and women.

Gender differences in *same-sex* friendships are largest in the domains of activity and self-disclosure. More than anything else, women enjoy talking with their same-sex friends. Other activities—such as shopping, canoeing, or knitting—are preferred to the extent that they also allow for conversation. Men, in contrast, emphasize activities over talking. When men and women engage in conversation with their same-sex friends, women's self-disclosures include more personal and emotional information, and they tend to talk about their relationships and other people; men's conversations involve less personal information and more talk of sports and shared activities such as drinking. In essence, women's same-sex friendships tend to be more oriented toward personal sharing, and men's same-sex friendships tend to be more oriented toward joint activities.

Men's lower level of intimate self-disclosure in their same-sex friendships, relative to women's, does not necessarily imply that men are less capable of intimacy. In fact, men engage in more intimate self-disclosure in their cross-sex friendships than in their same-sex friendships (and more disclosure in their cross-sex friendships than women do). Thus, research suggests that men are capable of experiencing intimacy but either cannot or choose not to in their same-sex friendships. Men's intimacy needs appear to be met in their other relationships, including their cross-sex friendships and romantic relationships.

The most consistent sex differences in cross-sex friendship have been documented in the domain of sexual attraction. Although overall levels of sexual attraction to cross-sex friends are not high, men report greater sexual attraction to their cross-sex friends than do women. Men also overestimate the degree to which their friends are attracted to them and perceive sexual attractiveness as a more desirable characteristic for a cross-sex friend to possess. There are two primary, but nonmutually exclusive, explanations for this. One possibility is that men are socialized by the media, and pressured by their peers, to sexualize women. Conversely, evolutionary models of human behavior propose that men may have evolved to perceive reproductive-age women (who are not perceived as genetic kin) as potential sexual partners. It is likely that both causal forces are operating.

Friendship Conflict and Dissolution

Friendships are not without conflict. Sources of conflict are tied to the rules of friendship, characteristics involved in friendship formation and development of closeness, and the costs and benefits of friendship. For example, a primary benefit of friendship is self-disclosure, with increasing degrees of self-disclosure linked with increasing friendship closeness. One rule of friendship is that those disclosures are kept between friends; when that rule is broken, a friend has been betrayed and dissolution may result. A betrayal is one of several painful reasons for friendship dissolution, which also include nagging and criticizing, not confiding, jealousy, and not helping when needed. Young adults report that most of their friendships end

because of physical separation from a friend, acquisition of new friends, betrayal by a friend, or establishment by self or friend of a romantic relationship. Romantic relationships tend to interfere more with women's same-sex friendships than with men's same-sex friendships. Perhaps the lower level of emotional intimacy and greater level of specific shared activities in men's same-sex friendships allows them to more easily invest simultaneously in same-sex friendships and romantic relationships.

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See also Closeness; Friendship Formation and Development; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Intimacy; Rules of Relationships; Similarity Principle of Attraction

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FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS

We all know that friendships between men and women differ from heterosexual romantic relationships. To give one example, sexual interaction typically occurs in close, intimate, romantic relationships whereas friends generally eschew these encounters. The boundaries between friendships and romantic relationships, however, are not as rigid as some may think. For example, one of the challenges facing some close cross-sex friends is sexual or physical attraction. Moreover, modern sexual interactions between heterosexual men and women differ dramatically from a half-century ago. One recent example of this change, noted primarily on college campuses, is the topic of this entry: *Friends With Benefits*. Put simply, friends with benefits relationships (FWBRs) represent a relational hybrid of friendships and sexual partnerships. More formally, FWBRs are platonic friendships (i.e., partners who are not dating and do not consider themselves to be romantically involved) in which individuals engage in some degree of sexual interaction. The sexual activity generally occurs on repeated occasions (in contrast to a one-night-stand or hookup), and can include behaviors ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse. This entry discusses the nature of FWBRs, how their ideal differs from their reality, and the variety of these relationship types.

Friends with benefits relationships attempt to combine the best of two relational worlds by fusing the communication and closeness of a friendship with the sexual intimacy of a romantic relationship. At the same time, however, partners try to avoid the commitments and responsibilities (the "strings") typical of a romantic entanglement. In addition to lacking commitment, FWBRs typically lack exclusivity so that if partners wanted to date or engage in casual sex with other partners, they are generally free to do so.

Friends With Benefits: The Ideal Versus the Real

The ideal FWBR is simple: sex between friends. College students typically use the phrase "no strings attached" to describe this ideal FWBR form. Friends repeatedly engage in sexual behavior, but try to avoid anything that will make the partners feel tied down, such as commitment, exclusivity, and deeper emotional connections like romantic love or jealousy. Partners are free to have sex with each other, but can also investigate outside entanglements, romantic or otherwise.

In many cases, the reality of FWBRs is quite different from the ideal. It is relatively rare to find long-term FWBRs. There are several reasons why this might be the case. First, the FWBR label (though not necessarily the phenomenon) is relatively recent. (The FWBR label comes from the 1996 Alanis Morissette song titled *Head Over Feet*.) Given the relative rarity and recency of the relationship form, there are likely no cultural (or subcultural) scripts for FWBRs partners to follow. Second, managing a balance between a close sexual, but not romantic, friendship appears to be a difficult task. Contrary to the primary emotional commandment in FWBRs (i.e., "thou shalt not get attached"), it is typical that one partner develops feelings for the other. These feelings violate FWBRs' primary emotional commandment and likely generate a fear, or actual instances, of unrequited love. Third, FWBR partners generally do not communicate about the relationship, its definition, or how to make it work. Friends with benefits relationships are likely difficult to maintain over time under the best of circumstances. A lack of explicit relational communication likely makes it nearly impossible.

Given the difference between the ideal and the real in FWBRs, it is not surprising that some partners maintain their FWBRs only so long as there is no other romantic option available to them. Some partners describe terminating their FWBR when they find a "real" romantic relationship that better serves their emotional needs. Despite the primary emotional commandment, finding a "real" relationship likely will not happen simultaneously for both partners, leading to hurt feelings by the "dumpee." Another instance of hurt feelings might occur when one partner views the FWBR as

potentially romantic, a view that is not reciprocated by the other partner.

Variations in Friends With Benefits Relationships

Most discussions assume that FWBRs represent a single consistent relationship type. When college students were asked to describe their FWBR experience, however, a number of other relationship forms appeared under this label. The most popular FWBR form is the prototypical good friends who have sex with one another. At the opposite end of the spectrum, we see a second type involving serial hookups where partners appear to have relatively little interaction other than to arrange and engage in sexual encounters. Third, an intermediate position suggests that FWBRs are opportunistic. Partners who are members of the same social circle might not be particularly close, but can always rely on hooking up with each other if neither finds a different sexual partner by the end of the night.

The final two forms of FWBRs suggest that they are, in some cases, closely connected to romantic relationships. First, some partners meet, get to know each other, and form a FWBR as a means of testing the romantic waters. Conversely, in some cases, FWBRs represent the smoldering embers of a terminated relationship. That is, partners were previously romantically linked, terminated their relationship, however, miss (and, therefore, decided to continue) the sexual connection. Therefore, in some cases, FWBRs represent a transition *into* a romantic relationship, whereas in others, FWBRs represent a transition *out* of one.

In summary, it appears as though the term *friends with benefits* is used in a strategically ambiguous manner. The term communicates enough (i.e., two people are having sex but aren't dating or in a romantic relationship), without saying too much (i.e., doesn't communicate how close partners are, the frequency and nature of the sexual interaction, or the potential for a romantic relationship). Future research should investigate the various meanings associated with the FWBR label to gain a greater understanding of this difficult and complex relationship type. Future work could also explore the apparent disparity between the ideal and the reality of FWBRs, and examine the ways that partners manage those dilemmas.

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See also Dating Relationships in Adolescence and Young Adulthood; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Hooking Up, Hookups; Love, Unreciprocated

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FUN IN RELATIONSHIPS

Having fun in relationships is an important motivation for individuals' entering into relationships and has consequences for closeness and attraction to partners. People establish and maintain relationships for a variety of reasons including security, companionship, and intimacy; relationships and romantic partners are also a source of fun and enjoyment. Actually, one of the primary goals of romantic interactions is to have fun, especially during early stages of relationship development. This entry discusses how partner and relationship characteristics, as well as the types of experiences couples have together, can increase the amount of fun in relationships.

Humor in Relationships

Fun is closely associated with humor in relationships. Humorous individuals are perceived as attractive, and sense of humor is an important

characteristic when selecting a romantic partner. Furthermore, in studies of preferences of partners' characteristics, sense of humor is rated as an increasingly important attribute as relationships become more serious (i.e., from friendships to short-term to long-term relationships). In particular, research on mate selection indicates that sense of humor is especially important for females when selecting a romantic partner, whereas males put less emphasis on humor relative to other characteristics, such as physical attractiveness. Humor has a significant function in relationships by promoting fun, enjoyable interactions, and intimacy. Furthermore, individuals in satisfying relationships report that humor occurs frequently and view humor as a central part of their relationships. Although humor is clearly a valued aspect of romantic relationships, it may be troublesome in cross-sex friendships because it can be interpreted as unwanted flirting or harassment.

Along with humor, other relationship characteristics may facilitate fun. For example, having fun in a relationship may be a function of the degree of similarity between partners. Research conducted by Brant Burleson and Wayne Denton indicates that people who are similar to their partners enjoy their interactions with partners more than do those who are dissimilar, and enjoyment of interactions is an important factor leading to attraction in relationships. In short, similarity promotes fun in relationships, and fun is associated with attraction.

Furthermore, relationship quality may be enhanced by playfulness between partners in more established relationships. People who engage in playful interactions in their relationships tend to experience more positive emotions, relationship satisfaction, and feel closer to their partners. Interestingly, playfulness can include mock aggression, or *play fighting,* between partners. Mock aggression occurs frequently in relationships and is generally reported as being associated with positivity in the relationship.

Fun and Self-Expansion

In the most general sense, people pursue relationships that are rewarding or that benefit them in some fashion. Fun and enjoyment are common rewards that relationships provide. Art and Elaine

Aron's *Self-Expansion Model* provides a theoretical basis for why fun would be particularly desirable in close relationships. According to the model, people are fundamentally motivated to enhance their capabilities through the accumulation of knowledge, experience, identities, and other resources. One way to accomplish this is through participation in self-expanding activities that involve novelty, challenge, fun, and enjoyment. The model further states that the primary way people satisfy this motivation is through close relationships. The Self-Expansion Model hypothesizes that initial romantic attraction is greatest for partners who provide the potential to maximize one's own expansion. Thus, engaging in novel activities with a partner should be experienced as fun and therefore enhance attraction for that partner and increase relationship satisfaction.

Research by Aron and colleagues has examined the association between fun activities and marital satisfaction. In their study, married couples initially rated a list of activities for how exciting or pleasant they found each activity. Couples were then randomly assigned to either engage in exciting and fun activities or pleasant activities, or did not engage in special activities over the following weeks. Exciting and fun activities included activities such as skiing, dancing, and hiking. In contrast, pleasant activities were generally less fun and included activities such as visiting friends, seeing a movie, and eating out. Those in the no special activity condition were from the waiting list. Results indicate that relationship satisfaction 10 weeks later was greater for those who engaged in the fun and exciting activities compared with the pleasant activities or those who did not engage in any special activities. These results suggest that having fun is important for marital satisfaction.

Other studies by Aron and colleagues investigated the role of novel, challenging, and arousing experiences on self-expansion. A series of laboratory experiments tested whether these types of fun experiences enhanced relationship quality. In these experiments, married couples first completed some questionnaires, participated together in a task, and then completed more questionnaires. The questionnaires before and after the task served as a pretest and posttest measures of experienced relationship quality. The task was experimentally manipulated so that couples in the experimental

condition engaged in an activity that was novel, challenging, and arousing and those in the control condition took part in a less novel, less challenging, and less arousing activity. In the experimental condition, the couple was tied together on one side at the wrists and ankles and then took part in a task in which they crawled together on mats for 12 meters, climbing over a barrier at one point, while carrying a foam cylinder with their heads and bodies. In the control condition, one partner slowly crawled to the middle of the mat and back, then the other partner did the same, then the first partner repeated this, and so on. The first study employing this paradigm found a significantly greater increase in experienced relationship quality for couples in the experimental (novel/challenging/arousing) condition compared with the control condition. Additional studies revealed parallel findings when a no-activity condition was included, and when relationship quality was measured based on videotaped interactions between members of the couple. These results suggest that engaging in fun activities (in this case, activity that is also novel, challenging, and arousing) leads to increases in relationship quality.

The Self-Expansion Model suggests that fun experiences would be beneficial because they add to one's self-concept and promote closeness. The influence of humorous experiences on closeness has been examined. Participants in this study were pairs of strangers randomly assigned to humorous tasks (e.g., blindfolded dance steps) or a no-humor condition (e.g., dance steps without a blindfold). As predicted, participants completing the humorous tasks felt closer to one another, with these results being produced by the experience of self-expansion with the partner.

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See also Arousal and Attraction; Mate Preferences; Play Fighting; Self-Expansion Model; Similarity Principle of Attraction

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Gain-Loss Theory of Attraction

The Gain-Loss Theory or model of interpersonal attraction is concerned with the effect that a sequence of positive, negative, or positive and negative evaluations about a person may have about that person's attraction to the person or persons making those evaluations. For example, when giving feedback to individuals on how they have performed on a task, is it better to start with what they have done well or what they need to improve? The model was first proposed in 1965 by Elliot Aronson and Darwyn Linder and was the subject of a relatively small number of studies carried out in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This entry defines the gain-loss effect in attraction and provides five explanations for its occurrence.

The model proposes that a change in evaluation (i.e., a gain or a loss) has a greater effect on a person's attraction toward the evaluator than does no change in evaluation (i.e., all positive or all negative). More specifically, the model states that a change in a sequence of evaluations of a person from negative to positive (i.e., a gain or − +) may be more rewarding to that person than a series of uniformly positive evaluations (i.e., all positive or + +). Similarly, a change in a series of evaluations of a person from positive to negative (i.e., a loss or + −) may be more punishing than a sequence of similarly negative evaluations (i.e., all negative or − −). Stated in this way, the model applies primarily to the way a person feels toward the evaluator, although the gain-loss phenomenon is likely to also affect how the person feels about him or herself. The model itself does not explicitly say that the effect of these evaluations works through recipients' feelings about themselves. The most rewarding sequence is gain (− +), followed by all positive (+ +), all negative (− −) and loss (+ −). More support has been found for the gain effect than for the loss effect.

Five explanations have been put forward for gain-loss effects. Recipient anxiety or anxiety reduction is one of them. A negative evaluation is likely to bring about negative affect such as anxiety, hurt, and self-doubt. A subsequent positive evaluation is likely to reduce these negative feelings of anxiety. Consequently, recipients should feel more positively toward an evaluator who has reduced their anxiety than toward someone who has not made them anxious in the first place. Although it seems clear how this explanation may account for a gain effect, it is more difficult to see how it can be applied to a loss effect where a generally more negative evaluation should evoke greater anxiety.

A second explanation is an evaluation contrast one. Positive evaluations may seem more positive after negative evaluations than after positive ones. Similarly, negative evaluations may appear more negative after positive evaluations than after negative ones. This explanation implies that these effects should be less pronounced when a neutral evaluation is used because the contrast is less strong.

Evaluator discernment is a third explanation. Evaluators expressing uniformly positive or negative evaluations about another person are likely to be seen as being less discerning or discriminating by that person than will evaluators whose evaluations vary because the unvarying evaluations will be seen as being more a reflection of the evaluator than of the person being evaluated. A less discerning person may be seen as less attractive than a more discerning one. When evaluators change their evaluation, later evaluations are seen as being more carefully considered and accurate than earlier ones. Thus, later evaluations have greater effect.

A fourth explanation is a recipient competence one. The evaluation may affect how competent recipients feel and the way they subsequently behave. Recipients given a negative evaluation may feel less competent and may be motivated to make a more competent impression. Recipients receiving a positive evaluation after a negative one may feel that they have become more competent and that this increased competence has been recognized by the evaluator. Thus, they find the evaluator more attractive. Recipients obtaining a negative evaluation after a positive one may feel less competent than would those receiving a positive evaluation after a negative one because they have not had an opportunity to show how competent they are.

Evaluator flattery is a fifth explanation. Evaluators making all positive evaluations may be seen as trying more to flatter the recipient or to ingratiate themselves with the recipient than would evaluators who also make some negative evaluations that may be seen as trying to provide a more accurate evaluation. Evaluators who are seen as being flattering or ingratiating may be considered less attractive than are those who are seen as trying to be honest. This explanation has not been explicitly articulated to account for why a gain sequence may lead the recipient to see the evaluator as more attractive than a loss sequence. Presumably, the positive evaluations that follow negative ones may be perceived as a less strong attempt to flatter the recipient than all positive evaluations. It is not clear how this explanation could apply to accounting for a loss effect. Evaluators making negative evaluations after positive ones may be seen as trying to be more accurate than evaluators making positive evaluations followed by negative ones. Consequently, loss evaluators should be viewed as more positive

than gain evaluators but this effect has not been found. This explanation has not been considered a viable one for studies in which recipients were led to believe that the evaluator was not aware that her or his evaluations were being received by the recipients. In other words, in this situation there was little reason for recipients to believe that the evaluator was trying to flatter them.

Despite the relatively limited research on Gain-Loss Theory, this topic remains an important one particularly in everyday situations where positive feedback needs to be tempered with negative feedback.

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See also First Impressions; Ingratiation; Interpersonal Attraction; Liking; Reassurance Seeking; Rewards and Costs in Relationships, Self-Concept and Relationships

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GAY, LESBIAN, AND BISEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Intimate same-sex relationships have existed throughout history and in places across the globe. This entry presents scientific knowledge about gay and lesbian relationships in contemporary society. Although the relationships of bisexuals are not well understood, key findings are highlighted. A notable limitation of current knowledge is that most research has been conducted in the United States with primarily White, middle-class people.

About 1 percent of adult women self-identify as lesbian and 2 percent of adult men self-identify as gay. Many of these individuals have an intimate relationship. In an illustrative project, demographers Christopher Carpenter and Gary J. Gates analyzed representative surveys and census data from California. They estimated that about 40 percent of gay men and more than 50 percent of lesbians age 18 to 59 are currently living with a same-sex partner. In comparison, about 60 percent of heterosexuals age 18 to 59 are currently living with an other-sex partner. At the time of this study, same-sex couples in California could register as domestic partners with rights and responsibilities similar to those of married heterosexuals. Carpenter and Gates found that almost half of cohabiting lesbians are registered as domestic partners, compared with less than a quarter of cohabiting gay men. U.S. Census data show that gay and lesbian couples can be found in all parts of the country.

The experiences of same-sex couples in the United States are influenced by the social stigma of homosexuality. Although social attitudes are becoming more tolerant, many gay and lesbian individuals and couples report incidents of social rejection, prejudice, and discrimination. In national polls, only half of Americans say that same-sex couples should be allowed to form legally recognized civil unions or domestic partnerships. The topic of same-sex marriage continues to be a source of heated controversy.

Despite the differing social contexts for same-sex and heterosexual relationships, there are many commonalities in the close romantic relationships of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual individuals. Human needs for intimacy and the capacity to form strong emotional attachments affect all of us. Most adults want to have a committed love relationship, and lesbians and gay men are no exception. In one national survey, three of four lesbians and gay men said that if same-sex marriage were legal, they would like to get married at some time in their lives. Whatever their sexual orientation, most individuals seek similar qualities in a romantic partner, including affection, dependability, shared interests, and similarity of religious beliefs.

Relationship Satisfaction

Researchers have compared gay, lesbian, and heterosexual couples using standard measures of love, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction. The consistent finding is that same-sex couples do not differ significantly from heterosexual couples on these measures. This does not mean, of course, that all same-sex couples have satisfying relationships but, rather, that lesbian and gay couples are no more likely to have good—or bad—relationships than are their heterosexual peers.

Further, the factors that enhance or detract from satisfaction in same-sex and heterosexual relationships are similar. For example, regardless of sexual orientation, relationship quality is greater when partners trust each other and have effective communication skills. On average, same-sex and heterosexual couples do not differ on these predictors of relationship quality. Relationships also benefit when partners receive support from people in their social network. The support experiences of same-sex and heterosexual couples do sometimes differ. When asked to name the individuals who provide them with help, advice, and emotional support, lesbians and gay men are more likely than heterosexuals to name friends and less likely to mention family members as support providers. On balance, however, same-sex and heterosexual couples usually receive comparable levels of social support, but from different sources.

No relationship escapes at least occasional disagreement or conflict. Lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples generally report disagreeing about similar topics, with finances, affection, sex, criticism, and household tasks heading the list. They also report arguing with similar frequency. Same-sex couples face some unique problems, however, such as whether to disclose their sexual orientation or the intimate nature of their relationship to other people. Another central issue is how successfully partners are able to solve problems that arise in their relationship. Both self-report surveys and studies observing couples in laboratory settings indicate that lesbians and gay men are at least as good as heterosexuals in solving relationship problems.

Sexuality

In general, gay and lesbian partners report levels of sexual satisfaction comparable with those of heterosexuals. Greater sexual satisfaction is usually associated with greater overall relationship satisfaction. There is wide variability in sexual

frequency and a general decline in frequency the longer a couple is together. On average, lesbian couples report having sex less often than either heterosexual or gay male couples. Early in a relationship, gay male couples have sex more often than other couples do. The reasons for these differences in reports of sexual frequency are not well understood. Some speculate that gender socialization leads women to repress sexual feelings, to have difficulty initiating sex with a partner, or to define sexuality differently than men do. Others suggest that men are generally more interested in sex than women, leading to more frequent sexual activity in a couple with at least one male partner.

A consistent finding is that gay men differ from both lesbian and heterosexual couples in their attitudes and behavior about sexual exclusiveness. Data from the large American Couples study conducted by Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz are illustrative. Only 36 percent of gay men said it was important to them to have a sexually monogamous relationship, compared with 71 percent of lesbians, 75 percent of heterosexual husbands, and 84 percent, of wives. In actual behavior, only a minority of lesbians (28 percent), husbands (26 percent), and wives (21 percent) had engaged in sex outside their primary relationship, compared with 82 percent of gay men. Sexual fidelity is positively related to relationship satisfaction for lesbian and heterosexual couples, but not for gay male couples. One reason is that some gay male couples have agreements permitting sex outside their primary relationship.

Gender Roles

Western societies have traditionally defined heterosexual marriage as having distinct gender roles: the husband is the head of household, economic provider, and chief decision maker, and the wife is the homemaker and follower. It is often assumed that same-sex couples adopt similar husband-wife roles as a model for their relationships. Actually, most contemporary lesbians and gay men reject these roles.

Most gay men and lesbians are in dual-earner relationships. Both partners are employed, and neither is the exclusive breadwinner. When same-sex couples live together, the most common division of household work involves flexibility, with partners sharing domestic activities or dividing tasks according to personal preferences. Although the equal sharing of household labor is not inevitable in same-sex couples, it is more common than among heterosexuals. Lesbians and gay men generally favor power equality in their relationships. Not all couples achieve this ideal, however. In summary, research shows that most contemporary lesbians and gay men avoid husband and wife roles, instead constructing a more egalitarian pattern of shared responsibilities and decision making.

Creating Enduring Relationships

Many same-sex couples desire long-lasting relationships. How successful are lesbians and gay men in attaining this goal? This question is difficult to answer with precision. Public records of heterosexual marriage and divorce provide standard estimates about marital stability over time. For same-sex couples, comparable records do not exist. Several studies have documented the experiences of gay and lesbian couples who have been together for 20 years or longer. The recent analyses of representative data from California by Carpenter and Gates found that gay men currently living with a same-sex partner had been together for an average of 10 years; gay men who had registered as domestic partners had been together for 12 years. Lesbians' relationships were slightly shorter: 8 years for women living with a partner and 9 years for women who had registered as domestic partners. On average, these gay men and lesbians were in their early 40s, indicating that they had spent a substantial proportion of their adult lives with their current partner.

Another approach to understanding the longevity of same-sex relationships is to conduct studies that follow couples over time. Lawrence A. Kurdek compared gay and lesbian couples with married heterosexual couples with and without children. During more than 10 years, the breakup rates for same-sex and heterosexual couples without children were similar: about 1 in 5 couples ended their relationship. In contrast, married heterosexuals with children had a substantially lower breakup rate of only 3 percent. In these comparisons,

relationship stability was affected by the presence of children, rather than by the partners' sexual orientation.

To understand why there may be differences in the longevity of same-sex and heterosexual relationships, it is helpful to consider factors affecting partners' commitment to their relationship. First, positive attractions such as love and intimacy make individuals want to maintain a relationship. Second, the availability of attractive alternatives to the current relationship, including other possible partners or the prospect of being alone, reduces commitment. Third, barriers to leaving a relationship are important. Barriers include investments that increase the emotional or financial costs of ending a relationship, as well as moral or religious feelings of obligation to one's partner. Research shows that these same factors affect commitment in both same-sex and heterosexual relationships. One difference is noteworthy, however. Gay and lesbian couples consistently report fewer barriers to ending a relationship than do heterosexual married couples. Same-sex couples are less likely to own joint property or have children together. In contrast to married heterosexuals who must pay for and go through a legal divorce, most gay and lesbian couples do not need legal proceedings to end their relationship. It is possible that as legal and social recognition for same-sex relationships increases and more same-sex couples become parents, the barriers to ending same-sex relationships will become more similar to those of married couples.

Couples' Counseling

When relationship problems arise, couples sometimes seek the aid of a counselor. Although many issues are common among all types of romantic relationships, therapists who work with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients should be knowledgeable about the unique issues these clients may face. In 2000, the American Psychological Association adopted "Guidelines for Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients," designed to improve the education of mental health professionals and the quality of the services they provide.

Some therapists adopt approaches to therapy that affirm the value and legitimacy of gay, lesbian, and bisexual lifestyles. These affirmative therapies emphasize the potential impact of societal prejudice and acknowledge the importance of same-sex relationships. Although many gay affirmative therapists are themselves gay or lesbian, an affirmative approach can be used by therapists regardless of their own sexual orientation.

Relationship Dissolution

When people are asked why a recent romantic relationship ended, gay, lesbian, and heterosexual partners mention similar problems. These include a partner's frequent absence, sexual incompatibility, mental cruelty, and lack of love. Other common reasons are a partner's nonresponsiveness (e.g., poor communication or lack of support from the partner), a partner's personal problems (e.g., an alcohol problem), or sexual issues (e.g., the partner had an affair).

The ending of a serious romantic relationship is often difficult. When asked to describe their emotional reactions to ending a recent same-sex relationship, lesbians and gay men describe similar emotions. Emotional reactions to a breakup differ for the partner who initiated the breakup (who may feel guilt but also relief and happiness) and the partner who was left behind (who may feel lonely, angry, and helpless). The reasons for the breakup may also make a difference.

After a relationship ends, former partners may experience such problems as financial stress, deciding on the nature of their continuing relationship with the ex-partner, and difficulties finding a new partner. Although partners' reactions to the ending of same-sex and heterosexual relationships are generally similar, there may also be distinctive issues for lesbians and gay men. For example, because gay male and lesbian communities are often small, there may be pressure for same-sex ex-lovers to handle breakups tactfully and to remain friends.

The death of a loved partner is often traumatic, and the emotional aftermath of bereavement appears to be similar for surviving partners whatever their sexual orientation. However, the social context of bereavement often differs for same-sex and heterosexual partners. Gay and lesbian survivors may receive less social support for their loss, especially if they have concealed the nature of their

relationship from family or friends. The lack of legal protection of the rights of same-sex couples can also pose problems. Under U.S. federal law, a gay or lesbian surviving partner is not eligible for spousal benefits from Social Security or the Veterans' Administration. Without wills or other legal documents, the survivor may have no claim to the estate of a long-term partner that they contributed to building. If children are involved, there may also be issues about child custody. For gay men, the effects of the AIDS epidemic have been devastating. The social stigma surrounding AIDS can heighten the difficulties of bereavement for the survivor.

Relationships of Bisexual Men and Women

Some individuals are attracted to both men and women. What are their romantic relationships like? A problem in answering this question is that the term *bisexual* is used in several distinct ways. One approach focuses on individuals who self-identify as bisexual, in contrast with those who identify as gay, lesbian, or heterosexual. Another approach characterizes a person as bisexual if his or her lifetime history of sexual behavior includes partners of both sexes. In a recent U.S. national survey, only 0.8 percent of adult men self-identified as bisexual, although 4 percent said they had had sex with both male and female partners since age 18. Similarly, only 0.5 percent of women identified as bisexual, but 3.7 percent had had sex with both male and female partners since age 18. Personal identity and behavior do not always correspond. Consequently, understanding the relationships of bisexuals requires studies that focus on specific subgroups of individuals who differ in their patterns of bisexual identity and behavior. Although there are many anecdotal accounts about the relationships of bisexuals, scientific research is extremely limited.

In the 1980s, Martin S. Weinberg and his colleagues interviewed self-identified bisexuals in San Francisco. Most of these White, college-educated individuals were permissive in their sexual attitudes. This and other studies permit a few generalizations about the relationships of self-identified bisexuals. Most bisexuals who are in a primary relationship have a partner of the other sex, and some are legally married. Most bisexuals have partners identify as heterosexual, lesbian, or gay, rather than as bisexual. This can create relationship problems. Some heterosexual partners may view bisexuality as a sign of immaturity, indecisiveness, or promiscuity. Lesbians and gay men may also have negative stereotypes about bisexuals, believing that they are denying their true homosexual orientation or that bisexuals are likely to desert a same-sex partner for a heterosexual one. The extent to which bisexuals' experiences of satisfaction, conflict, and commitment differ depending on the gender and sexual identity of their partner is not known.

Another focus of research has been the experiences of teenagers and young adults who are developing their sexual identity and relationship preferences. A large-scale survey of more than 20,000 U.S. adolescents found that 3.9 percent of girls and 6.3 percent of boys reported romantic attractions to both males and females. Longitudinal studies have documented that some young people change their sexual identity and behavior over time, a pattern that has been termed *sexual fluidity*. Research by Lisa M. Diamond is illustrative. She interviewed women age 18 to 25, all of whom identified as not being heterosexual. Some women initially identified as lesbian or bisexual; others said they were questioning their sexual identity or rejected labeling themselves. During a 10-year period, more than two-thirds of these women changed their sexual identity, for instance, shifting from questioning to lesbian or from bisexual to heterosexual. The reasons for identity change were varied and included changes in whom the women were dating and pressure from friends or partners about their sexual identity. Research suggests that sexual fluidity is found among both women and men, but is more common for women.

Other patterns of bisexual behavior have also been studied. Many adults who currently identify as gay or lesbian have had heterosexual relationships in the past. Indeed, some individuals now in same-sex relationships were formerly in a heterosexual marriage and have children from that relationship. These individuals are typically included in research on same-sex relationships. In addition, some adults, typically men, identify strongly as heterosexual yet have casual sex with men. Public health researchers concerned with

sexually transmitted diseases often include these individuals in studies of men who have sex with men. Some social settings such as prison can lead individuals who view themselves as heterosexual to form romantic or sexual relationships with same-sex prison mates.

Conclusion

Scientific research on the relationships of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals is growing. Many lesbians and gay men create satisfying, long-lasting relationships, even in the face of societal prejudice and discrimination. Although the social contexts for same-sex and heterosexual relationships differ, the internal processes affecting same-sex and heterosexual couples are remarkably similar. Limitations of available studies should be noted. Most research on the relationships of contemporary lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals has investigated the lives of White, middle-class Americans. Much less is known about the experiences of working-class or ethnic-minority couples in the United States or the experiences of individuals from other cultures.

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See also American Couples Study; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Gender Roles in Relationships; Satisfaction in Relationships; Sexuality

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GENDER-ROLE ATTITUDES

Gender-role attitudes are people's beliefs about the appropriate role-related behaviors for women and men and girls and boys. This entry focuses on the definition and measurement of gender-role attitudes. Research on correlates of gender-role attitudes are reviewed along with findings about how these attitudes relate directly to romantic and other relationships.

People described as having "traditional" gender-role attitudes believe that women should focus on being housewives and mothers, but men should have a job that supports their wives and children. Traditional gender-role attitudes are also associated with the idea that men, not women, should make important decisions and that men should behave in "masculine" ways whereas women should behave in "feminine" ways. Such attitudes are different from stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are beliefs about the *characteristics or nature* of men and women and boys and girls. Thus, the

belief that men are aggressive is a stereotype, but the belief that men *should* act aggressively would be a gender-role attitude. Related concepts include femininity and masculinity, which are based on stereotypes, but relate to one gender or the other. Femininity is a set of ideas about the nature of women and girls, whereas masculinity is a set of ideas about the nature of men and boys, based partly on stereotypes. Self-labels, that is, viewing the self as having masculine or feminine characteristics, are often a focus of gender-related research.

Measuring Gender-Role Attitudes

Several widely used scales assess gender-role attitudes. Each of these scales measures slightly different aspects of gender-role attitudes. The scale most often used by researchers is the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS), originally published by Janet Spence and Robert Helmreich in 1972. This scale measures agreement with the traditional division of labor, with women being housewives (sample items: "It is ridiculous for a woman to drive a truck and for a man to dust furniture" or "Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers") and men being supported in their roles as workers (a sample reverse coded item is, "There should be a strict merit system in job appointment and promotion without regard to sex"). Other items include these: Telling dirty jokes should be mostly a masculine prerogative, the initiative in dating should come from a man, and the husband has in general no obligation to inform his wife of his financial plans. Other items include that a woman should not expect to go to exactly the same places or to have quite the same freedom of action as a man. Thus, the emphasis is on male dominance in relationships. A person who agrees with these traditional attitudes is labeled as "sexist" by researchers using this scale. Those who disagree with these ideas and prefer that women and men be treated equally in the workplace and believe that women should have equal rights with men in the home are labeled as egalitarian or nonsexist. Although the original version had 55 items, most researchers prefer to use a briefer 15-item version of the AWS.

Many newer scales have been published, but none has been widely used. In selecting an appropriate scale for measuring gender-role attitudes, it is important to assess exactly what the scale is measuring. The AWS focuses on views of equality for women and men in the workplace and of division of household labor. A few items assess interpersonal communication or other aspects of relationships. Issues such as the acceptability of men engaging in nontraditional activities outside the workplace are not addressed, nor is general positivity toward women or men.

In the mid-1990s, Peter Glick and Susan Fiske argued for a reconceptualization of sexism, or gender-role attitudes. As they pointed out, traditional gender-role attitudes contain two different components. First, there is a hostility toward nontraditional women. Second, there is what Glick and Fiske labeled as *benevolent sexism*, where men are seen as appropriately dominant over weaker women and where men are expected to take care of women. These two dimensions are included in their Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI). This scale is more explicitly concerned with relations between women and men and largely ignores ideas about roles and rights of women (which is the primary focus of the AWS). The 11-item Hostile Sexism Scale includes items such as, "Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist," and "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men." The 11-item Benevolent Sexism Scale includes items such as, "Women should be cherished and protected by men," and "Women, compared with men, tend to have a superior moral sensitivity." The ASI measures something different than the AWS, but the scores tend to be highly correlated. The ASI is widely used by researchers today. Extensions of the ASI have included scales measuring hostility and benevolence toward traditional men.

A question of much interest to researchers is how gender-role attitudes differ among groups and whether they have changed over time. Because of its continuing popularity, it is possible to compare AWS scores obtained in the United States during the different decades in the latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st century. Such studies have shown a continuing trend for U.S. adults and college students to be *less* in favor of strong role divisions for women and men over time. Recent studies of college students using the AWS show high levels of egalitarianism. Despite this floor effect of low traditionality, AWS scores still show

some variability and show consistent relationships with other variables, as discussed later.

Unfortunately, these scales measuring gender-role attitudes are focused on the United States. Researchers have used scales such as the AWS or ASI in other cultures, but generally find that at least some of the items have to be omitted because of their lack of applicability in other cultures. Because of language differences as well as cultural differences, it is difficult to compare scores directly across cultures. However, attempts to do this generally show gender-role attitudes in the United States as less traditional than are those from other cultures. Others have attempted to develop parallel scales for other cultures, such as the Islamic Attitudes Toward Women Scale developed for Muslim cultures. This scale builds on the AWS and incorporates some of its items. New items include beliefs about the acceptability of women consenting to marriage, negotiating marriage contracts, clothing covering the body, veiling, and seclusion of women—issues of direct relevance to Muslim societies today. A study comparing scores on this scale of Pakistani immigrants in the United States indicated that those who had been in the United States longer were less traditional than were newer immigrants.

Correlates of Gender-Role Attitudes

Studies using scales such as the AWS have indicated that men support traditional gender roles more than women do. This can be seen in studies using the AWS, as well as in other measures, in college student samples, and in other samples. However, this pattern of men being more in support of traditional gender roles is not always seen in other cultures. For example, recent work indicates that women may be more supportive of benevolent sexism than are men in countries with high levels of gender inequality. Consistent with the finding of changes toward more egalitarian attitudes during the last half of the 20th century in the Unites States, data also show that younger and more educated samples tend to have less traditional attitudes and fewer gender stereotypes.

What makes some people more traditional than others? Researchers have only a partial answer to this question. First, those more strongly identified with traditional religions tend to hold less egalitarian attitudes, being more in support of the traditional division of labor between women and men. Judaism, Christianity and Islam all place a strong emphasis on women's roles as mothers, so it is not surprising that those who attend religious services and receive more exposure to these ideas tend to be more traditional in their gender-role attitudes.

In addition, there is an effect of role modeling. Children growing up in families where their mother is employed outside the home tend to have less traditional attitudes.

The authors of the ASI suggest that high scores on the Hostile Sexism Scale are found in men who desire power over women and who may be likely to sexually harass women.

Relationship Issues and Gender-Role Attitudes

Beliefs about appropriate gender-role behaviors for women and men affect relationships in various ways. For example, people who believe in gender equality might have different expectations than might people with traditional gender-role attitudes about whether or not household labor should be shared. Expectations about childcare may also be directly affected. That women generally are more favorable toward gender equity but men have more traditional gender-role attitudes may create disagreements as couples develop their lives together and make basic decisions about employment and taking care of the home. Although in most households, women still perform most of the household labor, research has shown that husbands and wives who divide household labor more equally tend to be more satisfied with their marriages than are those who adhere to a strict traditional division of labor.

Acceptance of traditional gender-role attitudes may result in other strains to relationships as well. Traditional men and women experience more jealousy in their romantic relationships than do egalitarian men and women. Men who hold traditional gender-role attitudes are also more likely to engage in coercive sexual activities and are more accepting of a husband assaulting his wife than are egalitarian men. Thus, rather than complementing one another, traditional attitudes may put men and women at odds with each other, reducing relationship satisfaction, and creating strains on the

relationship. Another consistent finding is that gender-role attitudes affect choices of activities, especially in children. Those with the most traditional attitudes interact primarily with those of the same gender in their leisure activities.

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See also Feminist Perspectives on Relationships; Gender Roles in Relationships; Gender Stereotypes; Power Distribution in Relationships; Sex-Role Orientation

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Gender Roles in Relationships

Gender roles are sex-specific, reciprocal claims and obligations. Because women and men move in many contexts and kinds of relationships, they occupy many roles. Understanding how gender roles shape behavior in relationships involves distinguishing between sex—biological differences between males and females—and gender—the cultural distinctions that people draw between masculinity and femininity. Gender is not a biological given, but is what people collectively agree that sex attributes mean. Men and women are expected to perform in ways consistent with these cultural ideals, and gender is taught and rehearsed daily throughout life. Though people may not always live up to the obligations specified by (or implicit in) gender roles, accountability to those ideals shapes behavior nonetheless.

Gender roles are sets of connected behaviors that are expected of men and women in specific contexts (such as family homes or public places of work). These expectations are upheld by ideologies (collective systems of beliefs about right and wrong) that legitimate these roles. For instance, many Western societies assign women most care work within family homes (gender role), on the shared understanding that they are more nurturing by nature (ideology). People give little girls dolls and boys trucks; girls and boys then develop different skills appropriate for jobs of different status, which people take as signs of natural differences, thereby justifying their gender roles within families. These gender roles are associated, in turn, with relative advantages and disadvantages. For example, men's abilities to work for pay relatively unfettered by family care allow them to acquire greater status and wealth; women's positions and well-being are thus often dependent upon men's. In this sense, men's privileges are intimately tied to women's disadvantages, and none of this depends on individuals' intentions. People reproduce gender inequality without necessarily meaning to do so.

Drawing on this understanding of gender and institutional contexts, this entry explores gender roles within three common relationships: romantic, family, and friendships.

Romantic Relationships

Women's roles typically involve labor performed in the service of others, including care work and attending to the emotions of others. Researchers find that women prioritize the sexual and other needs of male dates more than vice versa, a finding that dovetails with research on communicative exchange that documents men's conversational dominance and women's greater deference. Further, men are more likely to decode women's nonverbal cues as being sexual in nature and to interpret women's friendliness as sexual interest.

Men, more than women, use physical attractiveness to select dating partners. Although traditional roles specify that men initiate dates, research indicates that, at least in Western society, women are more likely to ask men out than in the past and are more likely to want to share the expenses of the

date. Studies also show that men are more likely to view these women as more sexually interested than women who follow traditional dating protocols.

Whereas research suggests that men and women hold certain different attitudes and beliefs about romantic relationships, such differences are often exaggerated in the popular press and do not hold across cultures. Thus, research comparing men and women in the United States and China finds that culture explained more variation in beliefs about love and romantic relationships than did gender. And within the United States, race, ethnicity, and class differences are often as predictive of differences as is gender. That said, within the United States, most recent studies on romantic ideology find little or no gender differences. Large numbers of both men and women are likely to insist that love be the basis for marriage; not quite as high a proportion believe love is necessary for marriage maintenance. Despite these similarities, compared with women, men are more likely to say that they would be willing to marry without love, and they are less likely to view emotional satisfaction as important to marriage maintenance.

Sexual satisfaction is related to overall relationship satisfaction, whether among married, heterosexual couples or among gay men and lesbians in committed relationships, and gender roles play a role in shaping sexual intimacy. For instance, among single persons, wishing to nurture a partner, emotionally valuing a partner, and experiencing pleasure motivates coitus among men and women alike, but valuing a partner emotionally motivates women to engage in intercourse more so than it does men; women remain less accepting of casual sex. Similarly, research on "hooking up" among college students reveals that the prevalence of such activity does not signal gender equality in relationships. Men still initiate such activity, men's sexual pleasure appears to be prioritized (as they are far more likely than are women to reach orgasm), and women remain more likely to gain bad reputations for having multiple sexual partners.

Despite their different gender roles, men and women have some similar expectations of intimate relationships. A sense of equity is important for both, and greater equality between men and women fosters healthier relationships for women and greater relationship stability and sexual satisfaction for men. Men who hold traditional masculine ideologies report lower relationship quality, whether they are engaged in heterosexual or gay relationships; women who hold traditional feminine ideologies also report lower relationship quality.

Family and the Division of Labor

Historical and cross-cultural evidence suggest that there are no universals in the tasks that fathers and mothers perform apart from the earliest infant care and breastfeeding. Economic and structural changes have had enormous impact on both men's and women's access to social resources and subsequent gender relations within families. For instance, in the United States, industrialization and the 19th-century transition away from an agricultural, family-based economy changed the ways that men and women related to social institutions and to one another. Within the family-based economy, women, men, and children had worked together; both parents took responsibility for childrearing. The change to a market economy pulled men into paid employment outside the home; women were relegated to the domestic realm of unpaid work, which became devalued, given the premium placed on money in the new economy. Gender-role expectations altered such that middle-class fathers shifted from interacting with and teaching children, to providing financially for families (the "good provider"), and the home became a child-centered haven of mothers' (the "homemaker") responsibility, even though race and class relations precluded many men and women from living up to these idealized gender roles.

This "separate spheres" mentality of paid work for men and the domestic realm for women has been disrupted by economic changes from the 1970s on that created both a greater need and wider opportunities for women's paid labor. Dual-earner households have become more prevalent, and men and women, married and single, are expressing more egalitarian gender-role expectations than in the past. Married men and women express desires to share equal responsibility for decision making, childrearing, and household chores, although for the most part, men's behavior has lagged behind these expectations. Further, the ability to balance work and family varies by race and class.

According to the current construction of gender roles in U.S. families, women are expected to provide the bulk of caregiving at all stages of the life course. For instance, the motherhood role demands that women be the primary caregiver to children, even women who work full time, and the less-involved style of parenting for fathers has persisted well past the demise of the normative marital combination of breadwinner and homemaker. However, recent research finds that fathers within two-parent households have increased their interaction with and responsibility for children, though they still lag behind mothers' labor, and their contribution rises in relation to increases in education, income, number of hours worked by their wives, and propensity toward egalitarian attitudes. Fathers who spend more time with their children express greater satisfaction with their marriages, community, and family ties and report overall higher life satisfaction. The degree of involvement, however, varies by race; Hispanic fathers spend more time with their children on the weekends than White fathers do, followed by African-American fathers.

Change in gender roles concerning household labor has lagged even further, giving rise to the notion that women experience a "second shift," including primary responsibility for domestic labor; this unpaid work commences when they conclude their paid work. Gender relations are apparent in the consistent finding that husbands,' but not wives,' gender-role attitudes influence the distribution of household labor. Further, these ideologies vary by race and class. For instance, White men with higher levels of education are more likely to have attitudes that support women who deviate from traditional gender roles, such as working full-time. African-American men, who are more likely to have been raised in families wherein mothers worked for pay, also hold more liberal role attitudes toward their working wives. Thus, until recently, most of the decline in White women's domestic labor could be attributed to women simply doing less, or paying others to do the work for them, including housecleaning or purchasing services outside the home.

Recent evidence from U.S. time diaries shows some shift by husbands, and the ratio of women's to men's time in all unpaid work (housework, childcare, and shopping) has declined substantially since 1965. This is both because of a decrease in women's housework and an increase in men's housework and childcare. Still, on average women do 1.6 times as much unpaid work as men. This situation is even less equitable when multitasking (doing two or more paid or unpaid work tasks simultaneously, such as doing laundry and preparing dinner, or doing laundry and clerical work) and all work time is considered. Because mothers do more paid work than in 1975 *in addition to* their unpaid work, and mothers do more multitasking, the ratio of mother's time to father's time spent in all work has *increased* since 1975.

Further, although in 1975 women and men had comparable amounts of free time, women now have less free time than men because women's time allocations to paid work increased more than their allocations to housework declined. Thus, access to free time is an emerging dimension of gender-related time use, and housework may be less important today in the symbolic production of gender.

The power relations underlying gender roles are perhaps most obvious in gay and lesbian families. Such families tend to be more egalitarian than heterosexual couples; partners have been raised with the same gender expectations, so the gender-related labor that is taken for granted in heterosexual households must be negotiated. In this regard, research finds that the perception of equity in housework is more egalitarian among lesbian couples than heterosexual couples. Same-sex couples, who have both grown up in a world of gender roles that devalue women's work in the home, tend to rate their relationship as inequitable if either has to perform more "women's work."

Friendships

Friendships provide emotional intimacy and are important to both men and women. Men's friendships tend to focus on shared activities whereas women are more likely to emphasize talking and emotional sharing. Further, women are more likely than men are to seek social support from friends when they have problems. And although men report more same-sex friends than women do, men are more likely to be intimate with women than with other men. Men report that

friendships with women are more satisfying than friendships with men.

The biggest gender differences in friendship appear in relation to self-disclosure. Even though both men and women report that they value intimacy, research finds that women share more about themselves and their feelings with same-sex friends than do men. Although some researchers point to socialization as an explanation for the observed differences, gender inequality, such as differential access to various social resources, plays an additional role. For instance, in the United States, the 19th-century transition to the market-based industrial economy changed the ways that men and women related to social institutions and to one another. Men's interactions in the public sphere allowed them little privacy and hence restricted their ability to engage in self-disclosure. In contrast, White, middle-class women, excluded from paid work and suffrage and confined to the domestic sphere, adopted new home-based responsibilities, including emotional responsibility for children and husbands and hence, self-disclosing intimacy with similar women nearby, such as neighbors, as well as with family.

This brief overview of gender roles in relationships points to the ways in which the expected behaviors of men and women are tied to gender relations and the power differentials therein. Women's gender roles tend to be tied to work for others, which gives them stronger support networks over the life course, whereas men's lend them greater autonomy and status.

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See also Dual-Earner Couples; Feminist Perspectives on Relationships; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Gender-Role Attitudes; Power Distribution in Relationships

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GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender-associated beliefs influence how people respond to us from the cradle to the grave. From birth, our parents shape our world based, in part, on their beliefs about what boys and girls are and should be like. As we develop, we learn how to interact with members of the same and the other sex, both in groups and as individuals. Friendships, family relationships, romantic partnerships, and workplace associations are affected by cultural beliefs about the sexes. This entry focuses on gender stereotypes, defined as organized, consensual beliefs and opinions about the characteristics of women and men and about the purported qualities of masculinity and femininity. As will be discussed, people hold gender-associated beliefs about the basic categories of "woman" and "man," but usually recognize that men and women are also simultaneously members of other social groups, and they hold more fine-grained stereotypes about these subtypes. The extent to which gender stereotypes influence relationships depends on the social context of the relationship and on the power and status associated with the male and female gender role.

Gender-Associated Beliefs

Until recently, most research on gender stereotypes focused on the basic category level. Early work from the late 1960s and early 1970s identified two constellations of traits, one associated with women and one associated with men. Stereotypes about women are represented by a *communal* or *expressive* cluster that includes traits such as emotional,

kind, and understanding. Stereotypes about men are represented by an *agentic* or *instrumental* cluster that includes traits such as active, competitive, and self-confident. These characteristics are the core of two well-known measures of gender stereotyping, the Bem Sex Role Inventory and the Personal Attributes Questionnaire. These measures are used to assess people's perceptions about their own traits and their beliefs about others' traits. In an average sense, women's and men's self-assessments correspond to the gender stereotypes they apply to others.

More recent work has demonstrated that gender-associated beliefs are multidimensional; to capture the full picture of gender-based stereotypes, one must consider the roles women and men occupy, their physical characteristics, their cognitive abilities, and their emotions. Women's roles, for example, are stereotypically assumed to include cooking the meals and caregiving, whereas men's roles are assumed to include being the breadwinner and being a leader. Men are stereotypically described as tall and rugged whereas women are described as pretty and petite. Women's cognitive skills are believed to include an artistic bent and strong verbal skills; beliefs about men's cognitive abilities center around their strong mathematical skills and their ability to reason. Finally, people hold stereotypic expectations about appropriate emotions for the sexes. In general, women are seen as both experiencing and expressing more emotion than men do; emotions associated with women include happiness, embarrassment, love, fear, and distress. Only two emotions, anger and pride, are stereotypically associated with men.

Characteristics of Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes have several characteristics that merit attention. First, as with most stereotypes, there is both a descriptive component, representing the content of people's beliefs, and a prescriptive component, representing what people believe others *should* be like. In the context of a heterosexual partnership, for example, beliefs about gender roles often lead to the assumption that women ought to have greater responsibility for the children and that men should naturally assume the role of breadwinner. A second characteristic of gender stereotypes is that they are

remarkably stable. Respondents in the United States have beliefs about gender that are similar to those held by Germans or Koreans; John Williams and Deborah Best, for example, found that respondents in 30 countries held similar gender stereotypes. Respondents in the new millennium hold beliefs similar to respondents in 1970, and older adults hold views similar to younger people. There is an exception to the general finding that gender stereotypes are stable, however; Amanda Diekman and Alice Eagly found that today's women are viewed as more agentic than women in the 1950s and that people expect that women and men will become more similar in agency in the future. Men's agency, however, is not viewed as changing over time, nor is either women's or men's communion. Such perceptions are consistent with the power and status women are gaining in a variety of roles.

One question that often arises is whether gender stereotypes are accurate and, at the group level, they appear to be. Judith Hall and Jason Carter, for example, studied 77 traits and behaviors and found that people's stereotypic beliefs correspond to women's and men's self-reported characteristics. This correspondence, however, does not tell us what individual women and men are like. Although men are generally more aggressive than women, for example, there are certainly aggressive women. At best, stereotypes provide global cues about group members' characteristics; that people can readily identify gender stereotypes does not mean that they should endorse them.

Gender Polarization

Another important characteristic of gender stereotypes is reflected in people's assumption that gender-associated characteristics are bipolar. That is, people believe that what is masculine is not feminine and vice versa. This perceived gender polarization leads people to view gender-associated characteristics as a package: a person with feminine traits, for example, is believed to occupy feminine roles and to have feminine physical characteristics. Similarly, a person who occupies a masculine role is believed to also have masculine traits and a masculine appearance. People also make predictions about a person's sexual orientation, based on their perceived gender-associated characteristics. Men with feminine characteristics,

then, are often assumed to be gay and, to a lesser extent, women with masculine characteristics are often assumed to be lesbian. Finally, gender stereotypes are strongly associated with judgments of power and status; the more powerful, higher status roles are associated with men and masculinity and the less powerful, lower status roles are associated with women and femininity. Yet men's greater perceived power does not mean men are preferred; instead, research suggests women are liked better than men, a finding Alice Eagly and Antonio Mladinic have dubbed the *women are wonderful effect.*

Subtypes of Women and Men

The research discussed so far addresses beliefs about the basic social categories of woman and man. However, research has identified more than 200 gender-associated subtypes. These subtypes capture the reality that women and men also are of a particular age and ethnicity and that they occupy many different social roles. These subtypes can be grouped into major categories including occupations (manager, secretary), family roles (housewife, family man), ideologies (punk, libber), physical features (jock, athletic woman), and sexuality (macho man, sexy woman). When classifying others into subtypes, people appear to first create separate subtypes for women and men. However, people also use a traditional (e.g., housewife) or modern (eternal bachelor) dimension in their groupings and make distinctions between younger (adolescent, prissy girl) and older (granddad, old maid) gender-based subtypes.

Susan Fiske and her colleagues have shown that stereotypes can be classified along two global dimensions: a warmth dimension, related to the communal stereotype associated with women, and a competence dimension, related to the agentic stereotype associated with men. These dimensions are applied independently when judging subtypes of women and men. People may view managers as competent, for example, but also see them as cold. Similarly, people may see housewives as warm but may not respect them. Echoing the research on basic social categories, subtypes that are viewed as competent are seen as having higher status than are subtypes that are viewed as warm.

Influence of Context

People need to process stereotypic information quickly to make sense of their social world; otherwise, they would be overwhelmed by the amount of information they face. Because of this, at first pass, people often automatically rely on gender stereotypes. Mahzarin Banaji and her colleagues, for example, have shown that when people are primed for (or subconsciously made aware of) gender stereotypic traits, they subsequently judge others in gender stereotypic terms and are faster at making gender-related judgments such as identifying which names are associated with women or men.

Despite the ubiquity of gender-based stereotyping, however, in actual interactions, perceivers may eschew these stereotypes, turning instead to a more fine-grained assessment of women and men. Kay Deaux and Brenda Major have proposed a comprehensive model of how, when, and why gender influences behavior. In their model, the context sets the stage for the interaction; if this context is highly gendered, such as a romantic setting, people are more likely to rely on gender stereotypes. In contrast, during a business meeting, people are likely to rely on workplace-related cues and, accordingly, may be less likely to use gender-associated beliefs as a guide. This model also assumes that perceivers and their interaction partners are not passive players; that is, both parties in an interaction work in tandem and how their interaction progresses determines the extent to which gender stereotypes influence that interaction.

Even so, gender-associated beliefs can create a double bind for people who step outside gender roles. Women who fulfill a traditional male leadership role, for example, can experience prejudice as a result of stereotypic expectations. Madeline Heilman has proposed the stereotype-fit hypothesis to explain why women are less likely to occupy the manager role than are men. Her model postulates that the characteristics associated with effective manager are similar to the characteristics associated with men (and quite different from the characteristics associated with women). Hence, people see congruence between "man" and "manager" and a disconnect between "woman" and "manager." The perceived fit for men and the perceived lack of fit for women results in more men being selected as managers. And, even when

women are chosen to be managers, the belief that their characteristics do not fit the role can result in more negative performance evaluations and, ultimately, can affect their opportunities for further advancement.

Although the stereotype-fit hypothesis addresses gender stereotyping in the workplace, research suggests that these processes apply in a variety of settings; men, for example, who assume primary care for their children often experience negative reactions from family and friends, presumably because of the perceived lack of fit between male and caregiver. More generally, passive men and aggressive women are viewed less favorably than are men and women who behave consistently with their gender roles. However, individuals who endorse a blend of gender-associated characteristics are liked more than are those who are one-dimensional, even if that one dimension is completely gender congruent.

A limitation of the research described here is that researchers, either implicitly or explicitly, assess stereotypes associated with White women and men from the middle class. The relatively few studies that have examined stereotypes of other groups show that this presents an incomplete picture. Gender-related beliefs about Black men and White men are similar, for example, but Black women and lower-class women are seen as less feminine than are White and middle-class women. Similarly, research suggests that stereotypes of other social categories, such as age and sexual orientation, are linked to gender stereotypic beliefs. Another limitation is that the people who are reporting their stereotypic beliefs are themselves usually White and middle class; the views of other social groups are largely unrepresented. Research addressing this shortcoming is long overdue.

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See also Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Culture and Relationships; Gender Roles in Relationships; Prejudice; Sex-Role Orientation; Workplace Relationships

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GOAL PURSUIT, RELATIONSHIP INFLUENCES

Goal pursuit (also called goals, motivation, self-regulation) is a common part of the everyday experience. People place great importance on their personal aims, whether they be career goals (e.g., finish a project by noon, impress a new client), health goals (make it to the gym every day), or financial goals (save money for retirement), to name a few common types of goals. Although people don't tend to think about how their personal goals might affect their relationships with friends, family members, romantic partners, and colleagues, research suggests that the impact of personal goals on interpersonal relationships can be strong. Similarly, although people aren't necessarily aware of it, interpersonal relationships with friends and family can affect the kinds of personal goals pursued and how they are pursued.

Imagine that Annie has a goal of becoming a successful lawyer. She knows that this goal will determine much about her professional and academic life—her path through school, where she considers moving, her financial plans, and her study hours will all be affected by her goal to

become a lawyer. Less obviously, this goal will determine much about Annie's social life as well—her friendships, family relationships, and romantic relationships will also be affected.

Now imagine that Annie starts a new romantic relationship. She knows that her new partner will determine much about her romantic and social life—the way she spends her weekends, her social activities, and her sex life. Less obviously, this new relationship will determine much about her professional and academic life as well—her academic goals, career goals, and financial goals will also be affected.

This entry discusses how people's personal goals shape their thoughts, feelings, and behavior in their most intimate relationships and how people's intimate relationships can shape their personal goal pursuits.

Interdependence of Goals and Relationship Partners

Relationship partners have many opportunities to facilitate or obstruct each other's goal pursuits within everyday interactions: For example, a husband can make breakfast for his wife, saving her time in the morning and giving her energy for a day at work, or he can forget to take out the garbage, costing her time and increasing her stress level before a day at work. As a more serious example, a husband can stay home with a new baby so that his wife can pursue her career, or he can accept a new job in a new city, disrupting his wife's career. Dozens of times throughout the day, in both tiny and consequential ways, people have opportunities to either help their partners pursue goals or (whether intentionally or accidentally) to stand in the way of goal pursuit.

Interdependence Theory describes goal pursuit as woven into the very fabric of social relationships. Indeed, few people could achieve their goals without facilitation by family, friends, colleagues, and romantic partners—if they were obstructionary, intentionally or unintentionally, goal pursuit would be exceedingly challenging. This is one way that researchers have thought about the interplay between goals and relationship partners—by suggesting that relationship partners can influence one's ability to achieve goals, and shape which goals people choose to pursue. For example, people are likelier to pursue goals they feel their romantic partner will support and facilitate; they are also likelier to pursue goals that are compatible with their partner's goals. If Annie's husband hates exercise and enjoys spending his evenings relaxing with Annie, she is less likely to pursue a goal of training for a triathlon, knowing her husband wouldn't be supportive and that she would be interfering with his own goal to relax together at night. Ellen Berscheid's Emotions in Relationships Model emphasizes how the interplay of goals and relationships has important consequences for goal pursuit and for relationships: Feelings about relationship partners are thought to be determined by how those partners obstruct or facilitate one's goals, such that people feel closer to partners who help their goals, and less close to partners who hinder them. Both theories predict that when romantic partners' goals are compatible—Annie hopes to lose weight and Aidan wants to start cooking more healthfully—the couple will be more successful in their goals and feel more positive emotion toward each other. When romantic partners' goals conflict—Annie hopes to lose weight and Aidan wants to become an expert baker—the couple will be less successful at their goals and feel more negatively about each other.

Effects of Relationship Partners on Goals

How do friends, family members, and romantic partners influence people's ability to successfully pursue their goals? One answer comes from the literature on *social support*. Although there are many definitions of social support, most of the psychological research on the topic focuses on the benefits of helping relationship partners cope with stressful life events and challenges. For example, researchers have studied how relationship partners support individuals as they struggle through trying circumstances, such as preparing for the bar exam. A large body of research has established that social support of this type—helping partners cope with stress—leads to more satisfying relationships, as well as greater emotional and physical health and well-being. Of course, by providing support (or failing to provide support) in times of strife and challenge, relationship partners also

affect individuals' ability to successfully manage these challenges and succeed at their goals.

Social support can also consist, however, of more directly helping partners enhance their personal development and successfully pursue their goals. Brooke Feeney has shown that having a supportive partner frees people to pursue their goals more confidently, much as having a reliable parent nearby can free children to explore a playground more confidently. Thus, by openly offering support to each other, relationship partners can paradoxically increase each other's independence; this is one more route via which relationship partners can shape the self's goals.

Relationship partners can also have a more subtle impact on the goals that people pursue. Recent research has shown that individuals create—and over time, ultimately automate—mental links between relationship partners and the goals that individuals commonly pursue in the presence of these partners. In a long-term relationship, such as with a romantic partner or close friend, individuals slowly develop strong mental associations between their goals and these important relationship partners, links that can have important consequences for goal pursuit. That is, just being around a particular partner may automatically trigger the "linked" goals, which then may shape behavior.

Indeed, studies have shown that for students who have a goal to make their parents proud by achieving at university, subtle reminders of their parents can lead them to work harder and be more successful. These results suggest, for example, that if Annie often spends time with a certain friend when training for a triathlon, just being around that friend may trigger Annie's health and fitness goals. However, these findings have an important qualification: People don't always act in line with these triggered goals. Subtle reminders of overly controlling or manipulative relationship partners can actually produce the opposite effect. For example, when students are reminded of a controlling partner who wants them to work hard, they react by working *less* hard—to defy the controlling other's wishes. Thus, although in most situations people go along with their partner's goals for them, they are unlikely to do so when they feel their freedom is being threatened, as with a domineering partner.

Interpersonal goal conflicts are another route through which relationship partners can influence each other's goals. For example, when people's personal goals (e.g., to eat healthfully to lose weight) conflict with their social or relational goals (e.g., to have fun with their friends at a barbecue), recent research has shown that relationship partners can lead people to temporarily abandon their personal goals. Of course, people will not always abandon their personal goals in favor of their social goals; indeed, recent research suggests that striking a balance between the pursuit of personal and social goals is important for life satisfaction and well-being.

Effects of Goals on Relationship Partners

Thus, research has suggested that relationship partners can influence goal pursuit. But what about the reverse? How do goals influence relationships? For example, if a romantic partner helps or hinders someone's ability to achieve a desired goal, how does this influence that person's feelings about the romantic partner?

Recent research has addressed this question by looking at how friends' and romantic partners' *instrumentality* (i.e., usefulness) for students' achievement goals affects how the students feel about their relationships. For example, in one study, students nominated relationship partners who were instrumental or non-instrumental for their academic achievement goals, and were subsequently reminded of their achievement goals by a technique known as "goal activation," in which goal-related words are presented in a subtle fashion to activate the mental representation of the goal. Next, students evaluated their feelings of closeness to the relationship partner, as well as rated the importance of the relationship compared with other relationships.

When an academic achievement goal was activated, students felt closer to instrumental relationship partners, wanted to spend more time with them, and had greater motivation to approach those others. They also felt less closeness to relationship partners who weren't instrumental for active goals, wanted to spend less time with them, and had greater motivation to avoid those others. This research suggests, for example, that if Annie wants to lose weight, she would feel closer to her husband Aidan if he learned to cook healthfully

and feel less close to Aidan if he learned to become an expert baker of cakes and cookies.

Importantly, then, being instrumental for the achievement of a partner's goals can be beneficial for the relationship, and failing to be instrumental can have relational costs. Just as research has shown that being supportive for a partner's goals helps the partner achieve goals and be more independent, this research shows that being supportive for a partner's goals can reap benefits for the relationship.

Interplay of Personal and Relationship Goals

Of course, people don't just have personal goals—goals to lose weight, save money for a new car, or earn a new promotion. People also have important interpersonal goals—goals to make new friends, get along better with in-laws, or become closer to a new romantic partner. These kinds of relationship goals may surpass personal goals in their importance and influence; most people name their close relationships as their most important value in life. In many cases, personal goals (achievement, health, career goals) may ultimately serve more fundamental relationship goals (finding a romantic partner, building a happy family, belonging to a social group). If so, it would be counterproductive to promote personal goals at the expense of relationship goals: It certainly would not be wise to derogate your partner for not helping you lose weight if your reason for losing weight is to stay attractive for your partner.

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See also Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Emotion in Relationships; Goals in Relationships; Interdependence Theory; Motivation and Relationships; Social Support, Nature of

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GOALS IN RELATIONSHIPS

Goals may be defined as the events, outcomes, and feeling states that we desire. Most of the things we want in life occur in the context of our relationships with other people. If you can imagine what your life would be like alone on a desert island (like Robinson Crusoe), you can appreciate how achieving most of your goals would be impossible without other people. This entry will first consider some core social goals or motives that characterize all of our social interactions. Next, the special goals people seek in close, romantic relationships will be considered. The last sections will examine some of the factors that determine the relative importance of different goals, with a special focus on the different goals men and women may have for close relationships.

General Social Interaction Goals

Starting with William James, psychologists have long believed that goal seeking is a fundamental aspect of human behavior. One early social

psychologist named William McDougall proposed a list of instincts—such as fleeing because of fear and seeking because of curiosity—that guided all behavior. More recently, Susan Fiske drew attention to the interconnected goals of belonging, understanding, controlling, enhancing self, and trusting others in her BUCET (or bucket) framework. The goal of *belonging* leads people to seek out others to bond as dyads or become part of a groups. Our moods typically benefit from these associations, and our health, adjustment, and well-being may suffer if we are deprived of these social connections. The goal of *understanding* is instrumental to achieving a sense of belonging because we need to perceive others accurately to predict their actions and coordinate with them. In addition, a sense of understanding and certainty allows people to feel in control and is beneficial to health. Other people can promote our sense of certainty by agreeing with our opinions, providing us with social validation. The goal of *controlling* is evident when people strive for competence in their social interactions, often with the goal of assuming leadership or directing the behavior of others. When people feel that their sense of control is threatened, the need appears to grow stronger. For example, people with an ambivalent attachment style often feel suspicious of their partners, clinging to them in a jealous and controlling manner.

The goal of *enhancing the self* manifests itself in our efforts to keep our self-esteem at a high level and in our constant quest for self-improvement. Our interactions with other people are, of course, crucial to accomplishing this goal. For example, people seek out others who will provide social support by validating their opinions and complimenting them on their accomplishments. Just knowing that one is in a committed romantic relationship, in itself, can be a source of self-esteem for many people. One explanation for this increase in self-esteem is that the self "expands" when we form a close relationship, and this expansion increases our satisfaction with the relationship. Finally, the goal of *trusting others,* particularly those in our ingroup, allows us to maintain a sense of optimism and interact with others in a confident manner. When bad events do occur (such as interpersonal betrayal), they are typically unexpected and prompt a quick response to deal with them. People feel a sense of loyalty to their group that promotes cooperation and prepares the group to compete more effectively with outgroups.

Although these five goals are believed to be a universal part of human nature, the strength of the goals may vary across different cultures. For instance, the goal of understanding seems to require greater social unanimity and harmony in a collectivist culture compared with an individualist or independent culture. Individualist cultures seem to be more accepting of diverse opinions and behavioral styles. As another example, compared with collectivist cultures, individualist cultures seem to promote a more trusting and optimistic view of others, particularly those in the outgroup.

Specific Goals Sought in Romantic Relationships

The five goals reviewed in the previous section are also relevant when people choose their romantic partners. For example, being married is likely to satisfy one's need for belonging and provides opportunities for receiving social support and understanding from a partner. The marital link also carries with it a high degree of dependence and potential control over one's family, especially when children are part of the relationship.

Marital partners are vulnerable to one another such that trust is central to the success of the relationship. The close, trusting bond of marriage can also enhance the self-esteem of the partners.

But when people consider entering into a romantic relationship, some unique goals come into play. The goal of finding sexual passion and excitement represents one such unique focus. Goals related to seeking social or economic status and preserving one's independence may also become important as the relationship matures. Moreover, goals related to belonging and trust may take a different form in a romantic relationship. For example, people may desire a deeper level of commitment and intimacy from a romantic partner than from a casual friend or coworker.

Garth Fletcher and Jeff Simpson suggest that people have ideal standards (or goals) in mind when they evaluate intimate relationship partners and when they think about the relationship itself. These standards operate as knowledge structures or schema that allow us to evaluate the suitability

of prospective partners. For example, if our goal is to find a sexy, exciting lover, we may turn down the advances of someone who is rich, charming, but homely looking. Once the relationship is in progress, these goals also regulate the progress or changes that may take place. For instance, if one of the partners is primarily interested in social status, that partner may consider exiting the relationship if couple is facing bankruptcy or home foreclosure. In general, people will be more satisfied with their partner and the relationship to the extent they feel their goals and ideals are being met.

Much of the work in this area is guided by theorizing about how evolutionary pressures guide mate selection. The underlying assumption is that individuals seek mates who will promote their own reproductive fitness. A prospective partner can signal his or her mate value in a variety of ways. Qualities associated with (a) being a good parent; (b) appearing young, healthy, and fertile; and (c) having the potential to achieve high social status may be particularly important. With this evolutionary focus in mind, researchers in the area of close relationships have focused most on the following goals. First, people seek *intimacy, trust, and commitment* from their romantic partners. These qualities signal that a partner is likely to be a good investment in terms of providing emotional support, cooperation, and care giving, especially for children. Second, people tend to seek *passion and excitement*. A partner who is young, attractive, healthy, and energetic will score high along this dimension. Cues of this sort signal high reproductive potential (fertility). Third, people seek *social and economic status*. By mating with a partner who is ambitious or appears able to climb social hierarchies, one increases the chances of having sufficient material resources to live comfortably and raise a family. Fourth, people may value their *freedom and independence*. Strong values of this sort may interfere with the formation of a mating bond. For instance, some people shy away from marriage for fear of being "tied down." But even in successful relationships, partners often need to negotiate how time and money are spent to preserve a sense of individuality.

Finally, people may rely on the relationship to *raise self-esteem*. Close relationships can bolster self-esteem in a variety of ways. Simply being married, for example, may carry some prestige, perhaps indicating that one is valued and accepted. In addition, by linking ourselves with a partner who possesses socially desirable qualities (e.g., beauty, intelligence, or social status), we indirectly signal our own value. After all, if we can attract such a desirable mate, we ourselves must possess many good qualities. Psychological processes related to self-expansion and social support also come into play. Accordingly, the bond with our partner broadens our world and offers opportunities for our partner to support us in good times and bad. Partners often idealize each other, seeing both their partner and the relationship through rose-colored glasses. This tendency may further increase self-esteem and is associated with greater relationship satisfaction. Given these considerations, the dissolution of a close relationship can be devastating to our self-esteem.

Factors That Influence the Importance of Different Relationship Goals

The relative importance of the five specific relationship goals just presented is not rigid and is influenced by both situational factors and individual differences among people. The following section considers how goal importance is influenced by male versus female differences, length of the relationship, cultural factors, and individual differences in attachment style and sociosexual orientation.

Male Versus Female Differences

When discussing our ancestral past, evolutionary models suggest that men and women faced different challenges in mate selection. Men were faced with the challenge of finding women who signaled their reproductive potential with youth and good looks. Men who had sex with many such women tended to succeed in the reproduction game by leaving many children behind. In contrast, the challenge for women was to find men who could provide material resources (e.g., food and shelter) to the family unit. As products of their ancestral pasts, therefore, modern males put greater stress on a partner's physical attractiveness, whereas modern females put greater stress on a partner's earning potential or social status. Indeed, many studies—including those that analyze personal want ads—suggest that men often seek beauty in their partners,

but women often seek financial stability. Although these differences are certainly consistent with evolutionary theorizing, sociocultural explanations may be equally plausible. For example, the different preferences of men and women are likely to be shaped by traditional sex role socialization and the fact that, in many cultures, women suffer from restricted economic opportunities.

Short-Term Versus Long-Term Relationships

The different mating preferences of men and women described earlier are most evident in choices concerning a short-term mating partner, compared with a long-term partner. That is, when short-term relationships are considered, men are much more likely than women to seek a large number of partners who are young and attractive. Still, the sexes are alike in some ways. When it comes to choosing a partner for a long-term relationship, most people emphasize the warmth and trustworthiness of the partner. But when choosing a partner for a short affair, most people will emphasize the physical attractiveness of the partner. In addition, both men and women people are more selective about a long-term partner than a short-term one. When considering marriage, for instance, prospective partners are likely to place strong emphasis on all of the goals discussed.

Cultural Factors

In many individualist cultures, such as the United States, people tend to believe in romantic love, including the notion that one is entitled to a partner who is physically attractive. In some collectivistic countries such as India, however, the idea of romantic love is less prevalent. Instead, parents often arrange the marriages of their children with practical goals such as achieving long-term stability in the marriage and forging family alliances. Consequently, the goals of finding a partner high on intimacy/trust and social status tend to rank higher under these circumstances.

Individual Differences in Attachment Style and Sociosexual Orientation

Individuals who vary in their attachment styles may stress different relationship goals. For example, someone with an anxious style of attachment might be especially concerned with intimacy/trust and self-esteem issues, but little concerned with freedom and independence issues. In contrast, someone with an avoidant attachment style might put less emphasis on intimacy/trust and self-esteem, but be highly concerned about maintaining some degree of independence outside of the relationship.

Finally, individuals vary in their sociosexual orientation. Some people have a more "restricted" sociosexual orientation in the sense that they would have sex with someone only if they felt a close, committed, emotional bond to the person. In contrast, those with an "unrestricted" orientation are willing to engage in sex without such preconditions. Not surprisingly, research indicates that people with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation put less emphasis on intimacy/trust when choosing a partner.

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See Also Attachment Theory; Belonging, Need for; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Culture and Relationships; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Ideals About Relationships; Intimacy; Mate Selection; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Self-Expansion Model; Sociosexual Orientation; Trust

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GOD, RELATIONSHIPS WITH

People may perceive themselves as being in relationships with other people, as well as with God or some Higher Power. (In this entry, "God" is used for brevity.) Many people experience connections to God that include relational elements: communication, attachment bonds, and the potential for conflict. However, this particular relationship differs in important ways from interpersonal relationships. First, although many people report that they can sense God's presence, most people do not report seeing or hearing God in a direct, physical way. Second, God is typically seen as being much more powerful than humans. For example, the monotheistic ("one God") traditions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity usually portray God as all-knowing, all-powerful, and capable of being everywhere at once. Third, many people see God as morally perfect and incapable of sin. Given these important differences, relationships with God cannot be reduced to simple interpersonal relationships, even though they share many features.

The idea of a relationship with God fits most easily within certain faith traditions: those focusing on a personal God who intervenes in people's lives. Such beliefs are more likely in Protestantism than in Zen Buddhism, for example. Existing research has overemphasized Western, Christian samples, yielding a somewhat lopsided picture of how humans experience the sacred. Yet the concept of a relationship with God may apply to some who do not regard God as a personal, relational being. For instance, studies suggest that people can become angry at impersonal forces such as tornadoes or illnesses. People can also experience a profound sense of communion with nature, which is usually seen as an impersonal force. Thus, some relational concepts presented here may apply to faiths that do not include a personal God. For simplicity, this entry emphasizes religions that include one God. The dynamics become more complex in religions that include more than one God.

Communication

One crucial ingredient of relationships is communication, and most religions do frame prayer as communication with God. Prayer, like conversation, takes many forms: petitions, complaints, expressions of gratitude, and simple sharing of thoughts or happenings. At one level, prayer could be seen as an internal dialogue or a one-way form of communication, and some people do see it this way. Some see prayer as two-way conversation, believing that God speaks to them through forms such as sacred texts, impressions or images, or external events.

Yet prayer is not the same as ordinary conversation. Prayer involves a "virtual" element, because people typically do not claim to see or hear God directly. (Given the myriad communication problems that characterize human relationships, one can only imagine the difficulties that can ensue when one's partner is not visible or audible!) Also, because God is often seen as holy and all-powerful, prayer sometimes takes the form of worship or confession of sins; this clearly takes it out of the realm of everyday interpersonal conversation.

Attachment Bonds

People often hold internalized images of God that reflect both their male and female caregivers from early in life. Studies also suggest that many people respond to God as an attachment figure: They want to stay close, seeing God as a secure base and a haven of safety, and they experience anxiety when there is a threat of separation.

One controversy in the attachment-to-God literature centers on how perceived relationships with God differ based on attachment style. Some evidence supports a correspondence hypothesis, in which people's relationships with God mirror their relationships with parents or romantic partners. For example, people who see their parents as harsh, distant, or cold often tend to have similarly negative images of God. Other evidence supports a

compensation hypothesis, in which people compensate for insecure attachments in other relationships by seeking greater closeness to God.

As noted by faith development researchers, attachment bonds do not need to remain in a passive, infantile form. Some people experience connection with God as a leader-follower relationship, a mutual partnership, or a romantic love relationship. They may see themselves as partners or as a part of God's team. However, because people often see God as being holy and all-powerful, even a close partnership is usually not seen as an equal-status relationship.

Relationship Conflict

As with human relationships, negative events can prompt negative feelings and conflict in people's relationships with God. When people believe that they have transgressed against God, they often feel guilt, shame, and a desire to seek forgiveness. In other cases, God is seen as the one who has caused harm. When facing death, accidents, natural disasters, or even everyday disappointments, people who attribute such events to God can become hurt and angry. They may feel abandoned or betrayed, and some will assume that God is punishing or rejecting them. In many ways, the resulting emotions are similar to those surrounding interpersonal conflicts.

Here again, though, there are some key differences from interpersonal relationships. Because people usually view God as extremely powerful, many fear retribution (e.g., the lightning bolt from heaven) if they acknowledge anger or negative feelings toward God. As a result, people may hide negative feelings from others and perhaps even from themselves. The topic of anger toward God is often considered taboo.

Because people typically do not see or hear God with their senses, they often use cognitive means to resolve conflicts regarding God. For example, some people revise their God images, envisioning God as less powerful, benevolent, or protective than previously believed. Others conclude that God does not exist or that God's ways are ultimately unknowable.

Another difference from human relationships is that many people see God as incapable of error or wrongdoing. Thus, when negative events occur, many people seek explanations that do not imply transgression on God's part. Some shift responsibility elsewhere, pointing the finger at themselves, another person, or the devil. Others reframe God's actions in a positive light, finding benefit in them or trusting that they are part of greater plans that are meaningful but mysterious.

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See also Anger in Relationships; Attachment Theory; Religion, Spirituality, and Relationships

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GOSSIP

Gossip is ubiquitous. Anthropological literature suggests it is virtually universal in human societies, and ethnographic data often reveal a high percentage of gossip in common conversation. Most people encounter gossip in one form or another in the course of a day, either in conversation or from the media. It can be entertaining or dull, useful or destructive. Some researchers have argued persuasively that gossip provided evolutionary advantage to the human species. Modern societies have institutionalized the activity in mass media. This entry focuses on the social functions of gossip, in the context of interpersonal exchanges and at the level of larger social groups.

Gossip may be defined as the exchange, in a context of congeniality, of personal information (positive or negative) in an evaluative way (positive or negative) about absent third parties. Interpersonal gossip is typically traded among (and about) people who have a common history or shared interests. Thus, the evaluative elements in

gossip arise from implicit comparisons to social norms to which the conversationalists tacitly subscribe. That is, if people share a social history, remarks exchanged about others in their circle will frequently express or imply comparisons to norms based on known elements of that history.

In defining gossip, the context, setting, and tone of a conversational exchange must be considered. Congenial informality is perhaps the key situational factor that differentiates gossip from other kinds of evaluative exchanges about someone not present. That is, a mood of familiarity, novelty, and a certain "thrill" are essential to the expression of gossip. Parents discussing their child's performance in school with a teacher, for instance, although conforming to the letter of the definition given, would therefore not be considered gossip because the spirit of the conversation lacks the kind of spontaneity and excitement we usually associate with this form of communication.

Although researchers often include positive gossip in the domain, the behavior commonly elicits disapproval and opprobrium colloquially, primarily because the popular assumption is that it disseminates only negative content whose truth value is frequently in question. How much effort gossipers or gossipees take to validate the content of gossip may depend on the individual and the milieu (e.g., workplaces, Internet chat rooms, neighborhoods, dormitories, etc.). In gossipy conversation, phrases such as, "I've heard that . . . ," "It seems to me that . . . ," "An inside source said . . . ," "I saw him doing . . . ," " . . . or so I'm told," and so on each convey a slightly different truth value on the accompanying information. Verification of gossip by the gossipee is typically cursory. People seem more likely to rely on casual and indirect confirmatory indicators, such as the status or expertise of the source, than to seek direct access to information when evaluating the truth of gossip.

Researchers have delineated numerous social functions of gossip. It is frequently described, for example, as an efficient and, occasionally, even exclusive means of gathering and disseminating social information. Along these lines, and as developed in social exchange theory, gossip can be seen as a kind of currency, traded like any other, and assessed for its value by the taker on the basis of timeliness, usefulness, and, especially, rarity. This accounts for how an individual may boost his or her social status—temporarily, at least—by being the first to pass a piece of gossip.

Another important function of gossip is to help form and solidify friendships or intimacy. Between friends, sharing gossip is a way to telegraph confidence in the "dyadic boundary" and thereby cement the relationship and distinguish insider from outsider. Indeed, newcomers may find themselves struggling to stay up to speed in casual conversations among longtime friends, as meanings are firmly rooted in long and complicated histories of experience and information exchange. At the group level, what begins as trusted exchanges in private becomes the knowledge, norm, and trust margins of communities, cultures, and other bounded social identities. This phenomenon may be a means by which long-simmering ethnic tensions remain salient over decades or even centuries: Whispered gossip between members of one group perpetuates the inclusion of like members and the exclusion of members of another group, and the process is repeated innumerable times in innumerable private exchanges.

Perhaps the most evident social function of gossip is its simple entertainment value. As a form of immediate amusement and stimulation, gossip is readily available to everyone of almost any age in almost any situation for virtually no cost. The storytelling aspect of gossip can satisfy emotions in a quasi-literary way and may provide relief from the monotony of workplaces or from social isolation in any setting. Nearly everyone enjoys sharing gossip in one form or another (notwithstanding protestations to the contrary).

Finally, gossip is a means of social influence. As such, it may involve a different type of motivation than is generally encountered in its informative, friendship, or entertainment functions; the contrast hinges on influence being essentially a deliberate and meditated effort. In the workplace, for instance, sharing gossip with a new hire is a kind of informal initiation ritual that perpetuates norms, validates the status quo, or aligns political factions. More generally, with gossip, social cheats are criticized and paragons are praised. Norms are thus upheld, and group cohesion and boundaries are maintained. Culture in general depends on the repetition of norms and mores both formally and informally to enforce conformity on members. Gossip serves this social function well.

Learning what our fellow humans believe to be either praiseworthy or blameworthy is a serious task in life. To remove gossip from the behavioral repertoire would result in our learning important life lessons less early and less clearly. Therefore, gossip should not be reduced to a benign pastime, on the one hand, or to an evil instrument of indirect social aggression, on the other. It can mislead but it can also inform. It can fracture and mend. It can banish and welcome into the fold. Along with its ubiquity, this Janus-like character of gossip is why it has attracted more systematic attention and study recently.

Eric K. Foster

See also Cohesiveness in Groups; Group Dynamics; Information Seeking; Relational Aggression; Social Comparison, Effects on Relationships

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GRANDPARENT–GRANDCHILD RELATIONSHIP

As a result of increased life expectancy, most adults spend a considerable portion of their lives as grandparents. Increased life expectancy also means that most children have long-term relationships with multiple grandparents. As such, the grandparent–grandchild relationship is a significant family bond. Although there is great variation within individual grandparent–grandchild relationships, the relationship is highly valued and beneficial. This entry examines the nature of the grandparent–grandchild relationship, variations in this relationship, factors that influence grandparent–grandchild involvement and closeness, and consequences of a positive grandparent–grandchild relationship.

Although grandparents can be abusive toward their grandchildren or absent from their lives, most grandparents and grandchildren have long-term, loving relationships marked by high levels of affection, contact, and emotional closeness. Grandparent–grandchild relationships have been described as mutually satisfying, particularly when they are reciprocal (both parties actively participate) and symmetrical (both parties share similar feelings).

Grandparents interact with their grandchildren in a variety of ways. They give gifts, serve as playmates, provide cognitive and social stimulation, offer advice, and supply emotional support. They also provide instrumental support in the form of money, free babysitting, or other tangible goods. Depending on the quality of the relationship between their children and grandchildren, some grandparents may serve as buffers within the parent–child relationship. Grandparents also link past and future generations and assume responsibility for transmitting family history, culture, traditions, and values. Additionally, grandparents indirectly influence their grandchildren by providing emotional and material assistance, serving as role models, stabilizing or assisting the family in times of crisis, and preserving extended family ties.

Although some adults find their relationships with their grandchildren to be uncomfortable or disappointing, most enjoy being grandparents. Grandparents appreciate the sense of biological renewal, symbolic immortality, emotional self-fulfillment, and vicarious accomplishment they receive from participating in their grandchildren's lives. Many grandparents also enjoy the opportunity to indulge their grandchildren without the added responsibilities of parenting and discipline. They may derive satisfaction from the opportunity to teach their grandchildren or provide them with financial or material resources. For grandparents who felt that their work responsibilities kept them away from their own children more than they would have liked, interacting with grandchildren may represent a "second chance" at parenting.

Just as not all grandparents enjoy their grandchildren, not all grandchildren feel close to or appreciate their grandparents. However, many grandchildren enjoy positive relationships with their grandparents. Although younger grandchildren thrive on the attention they receive from grandparents, adolescent and adult grandchildren often appreciate their grandparents' wisdom, support, and guidance. Older grandchildren may also view grandparents as confidants and approach them with problems that they do not feel comfortable discussing with their parents. Grandparents are so important to grandchildren that many adult grandchildren express a desire to support and care for their grandparents, especially when their grandparents need assistance with household responsibilities and personal care.

Variations in Grandparent–Grandchild Relationships

There is significant variation in how grandparents and grandchildren enact their relationships. Numerous researchers have identified distinct styles of grandparent–grandchild interaction. For example, in their seminal research, Bernice Neugarten and Karol Weinstein identified five ways that grandparents interact with their grandchildren:

1. *Formal* grandparents are involved in their grandchildren's lives and activities. However, they do not assume any parental authority or responsibility with their grandchildren.

2. Grandparents who are *fun seekers* enjoy an informal, pleasurable relationship with their grandchildren. They view time with their grandchildren as a leisure activity.

3. Grandparents who are *surrogate parents* assume caregiving responsibilities for their grandchildren.

4. *Reservoir of family wisdom* grandparents, who are typically grandfathers, behave as authority figures and sources of knowledge. They tend to have emotionally distant relationships with their grandchildren.

5. *Distant* grandparents have limited contact with their grandchildren. They may only see their grandchildren on holidays and birthdays.

Although there have been several other classifications of grandparent–grandchild relationships, this example illustrates the broad range of relationships that exist between grandparents and their grandchildren.

Factors Associated With Involvement and Closeness

The frequency of contact between grandparents and grandchildren, as well as the degree of emotional closeness within the relationship, has been associated with numerous individual and family factors. When considering frequency of contact, there is little association between the amount of contact and relationship quality. Thus, it is possible for grandparents and grandchildren to have limited contact, yet still report a highly satisfying relationship.

Individual Factors

Individual factors refer to personal characteristics of the grandparent or grandchild. Although the grandparent role is important and satisfying to both grandmothers and grandfathers, grandmothers tend to be more involved with grandchildren than grandfathers do. Grandmothers also tend to be more expressive in their relationships with their grandchildren—displaying a high degree of warmth and affection, especially to their granddaughters. In contrast, grandfathers tend to be more instrumental with their grandchildren, especially their grandsons, in that they provide assistance with education, employment, or finances. Grandchildren report the closest ties with their same-sex grandparents, with grandmothers and granddaughters reporting the closest relationships.

Lineage also affects grandparent–grandchild relationships. Because women are traditionally responsible for maintaining extended family relationships, maternal (the mother's side of the family) grandparents tend to be more involved with and closer to their grandchildren than do paternal (the father's side of the family) grandparents. Grandchildren also describe greater emotional closeness with their maternal grandparents, particularly their maternal grandmothers. Grandchildren are especially close to their maternal grandparents

when their mothers are single or the grandchildren have experienced parental divorce.

The age of the grandparent and the grandchild may affect their relationship. Younger grandparents, who tend to be in better physical health, are usually more active with their grandchildren. Although physical and cognitive declines may force older grandparents to be less involved with their grandchildren, grandparents' affection for their grandchildren usually does not diminish with age. Younger grandchildren tend to be more involved with their grandparents. Involvement begins to decline as grandchildren reach adolescence and continues as grandchildren launch their own careers and families. Despite these normative declines in involvement, grandchildren do not report age-associated declines in the quality of their relationships with their grandparents. Moreover, evidence indicates that involvement with grandparents increases again once grandchildren establish their careers and have children. Thus, involvement between grandparents and grandchildren may be cyclical and influenced by the grandparent and grandchild's stages in the life course.

Finally, the ethnic background of the grandparent and grandchild may influence their relationship. When compared with White grandparents, the grandparent role has been observed to be more important to Native American, African-American, Hispanic, and Asian grandparents. Additionally, minority grandparents are more likely than are their White counterparts to live with their grandchildren and assume significant childrearing responsibilities. Although there is wide variation in the exact nature of the grandparent–grandchild relationship among various ethnic groups, influential cultural factors include the degree of grandparental authority, the grandchild's sense of filial piety (responsibility to love, respect, and care for older family members), whether the grandparent lives with the grandchild, language compatibility, and degree of acculturation (how much a person or family has adopted the beliefs and behaviors of the dominant culture).

Family Factors

Characteristics of the family also influence grandparent–grandchild relationships. When grandchildren are young, their parents dictate the amount and type of contact they have with grandparents. For this reason, the quality of the parent–grandparent relationship has a significant impact on the quality of the grandparent–grandchild relationship. More specifically, a positive relationship between parents and grandparents is associated with better grandparent–grandchild relationships. However, as grandchildren age, they can negotiate relationships with their grandparents that are independent of their parents. Generally, the quality of the relationship between adult grandchildren and their grandparents is similar to the quality of the relationship when the grandchildren were young.

Family structure can also affect interaction between grandparents and grandchildren. Divorce and remarriage can facilitate or disrupt grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren. For example, following a divorce, maternal grandmothers increase the amount of childcare they provide for their grandchildren. Maternal grandparents may also increase their financial support of their grandchildren. Alternately, as a result of divorce, paternal grandparents may lose contact with their grandchildren. Although some states allow grandparents who have lost contact with their grandchildren to seek visitation rights, some states do not allow grandparents to seek visitation. Remarriage also poses challenges for the grandparent–grandchild relationship. Grandparents often have a difficult time knowing how they should relate to their stepgrandchildren. Children tend to have better relationships with their stepgrandparents when they enter the family at a young age and live full-time with their stepgrandparents' adult child.

In response to changing family structures and other demands on families, many grandparents provide care for their grandchildren. The degree of responsibility grandparents have for their grandchildren ranges from occasional babysitting to full-time parenting. During the last 30 years, there has been a significant increase in the number of grandparents raising grandchildren. Hispanic, African-American, and Native American grandparents are especially likely to be raising their grandchildren. When grandparents assume responsibility for their grandchildren, they often experience numerous stressors including poverty, legal problems, health concerns, social isolation, and psychological distress.

Grandparent caregiving also affects the grandparent–grandchild relationship. The more a grandparent

provides care for a grandchild, the more likely the grandchild is to view the grandparent as a parental figure. Among grandparents who are not responsible for raising their grandchildren, the greater the degree of grandparent caregiving, the more frequent the contact and the closer the emotional relationship between the grandparent and grandchild. When grandparents raise their grandchildren, there may be increased emotional closeness. However, increased conflict and ambivalence is also common.

A final family characteristic that has been associated with grandparent–grandchild relationships is geographic distance. In an increasingly mobile society, many grandparents live a significant distance from their grandchildren. Greater geographic distance between grandparents and grandchildren has been linked to less frequent contact, less support, and lower levels of emotional closeness. However, the influence of geographic distance on the grandparent–grandchild relationship is complex in that it also intersects with the quality of the parent–grandparent relationship, the use of technology, the importance of grandparenting to the grandparents, and family members' previous experiences with grandparents.

Consequences of Grandparent–Grandchild Relationships

Research indicates that a positive grandparent–grandchild relationship is beneficial to the mental health and well-being of both grandparents and grandchildren. For example, Linda Drew and Merril Silverstein found that grandparents experience increased symptoms of depression when they lose contact with their grandchildren. These depressive symptoms persist over time, which can be detrimental to grandparents' health, functioning, and personal relationships. Similarly, Sarah Ruiz and Merril Silverstein found that when adolescent and young adult grandchildren are emotionally close to their grandparents, they experience fewer depressive symptoms. Although grandchildren from a variety of family constellations experience this benefit, grandchildren raised in single-parent families are particularly likely to experience decreased depressive symptoms as a result of having a close relationship with their grandparents. As this and other research suggests,

grandparents may play a protective role in that they may compensate for deficiencies in other arenas of their grandchildren's lives.

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See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Extended Families; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Kin Relationships; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Multigenerational Households

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GRATITUDE

Gratitude is a common interpersonal emotion. Feeling grateful was the third most common discrete positive affect experienced in a sample of older adults, reported by nearly 90 percent of those surveyed. Gratitude can also represent a broader attitude toward life—the tendency to see all of life as a gift. Gratitude thus has various meanings and can be conceptualized at several levels of analysis ranging from momentary affect to long-term dispositions. It has been conceptualized as an

emotion, an attitude, a moral virtue, a habit, a personality trait, and a coping response. The word *gratitude* itself is derived from the Latin *gratia,* meaning grace, graciousness, or gratefulness. All derivatives from this Latin root have to do with kindness, generousness, gifts, the beauty of giving and receiving, or getting something for nothing. This entry discusses why gratitude is important in human relationships and, more generally, in life itself.

Although a variety of life experiences can elicit feelings of gratitude, prototypically gratitude stems from the perception that one has received a gift or benefit from another person. Grateful emotions and behaviors typically result from the perception that another person has intended to promote one's well-being. Most existing theories concur that gratitude is mostly under a specific set of attributions: (a) when a benefit is evaluated positively, (b) when the benefit that one has encountered is not attributed to one's own effort, and (c) when the benefit was rendered intentionally by the benefactor. Existing research suggests that gratitude is a typically pleasant experience that is linked to contentment, happiness, and hope. There is consensus that gratitude can be regarded as a moral emotion in that it leads to behavior intended to benefit others. The experience of gratitude results from acknowledging the "gratuitous" role sources of social support may play in propagating beneficial outcomes in our lives. Gratitude aids in reciprocating kindness toward those who have been kind to us.

Gratitude serves important functions in human's social and emotional lives. Recent work has suggested that gratitude is a reliable emotional response to the receipt of benefits, and that the experience and expression of gratitude may have important effects on behavior in the moral domain. From the perspectives of moral philosophy and theology, gratitude is seen as a human strength that enhances one's personal and relational well-being and is beneficial for society as a whole. Gratitude is a moral affect—that is, one with moral precursors and consequences. By experiencing gratitude, a person is motivated to carry out prosocial behavior, energized to sustain moral behaviors, and inhibited from committing destructive interpersonal behaviors. Specifically, gratitude serves as a *moral barometer,* providing individuals with an affective readout that accompanies the perception that another person has treated them prosocially. Second, gratitude serves as a *moral motive,* stimulating people to behave prosocially after they have been the beneficiaries of other people's prosocial behavior. Third, gratitude serves as a *moral reinforcer,* encouraging prosocial behavior by reinforcing people for their previous good deeds. Gratitude is also motivating. There is an energizing and motivating quality to gratitude. It is a positive state of mind that gives rise to the "passing on of the gift" through positive action. As such, gratitude serves as a key link in the exchange between receiving and giving. This is a response to kindnesses received, as well as a motivator of future benevolent actions by the recipient. In the language of evolutionary processes, gratitude leads to "upstream reciprocity." As much of human life is about giving, receiving, and repaying, gratitude is a pivotal concept for human social interaction. Moreover, gratitude may spur spontaneous acts of altruism.

Gratitude Interventions and Subjective Well-Being

From ancient scriptures to modern devotional writers, counting blessings is frequently recommended as a strategy to improve one's life. Considerable research has examined the ability of gratitude to produce positive psychological, interpersonal, and physical outcomes. Experimental studies use random assignment to gratitude-inducing conditions and control groups. Gratitude interventions have shown that undergraduate students, adults with neuromuscular diseases, clinical patients suffering from depression, and school-aged children have benefited from increased gratitude in their lives. Gratitude interventions, by increasing the intensity and frequency of grateful emotions, have been shown to have sustainable effects on emotional and interpersonal well-being, as well as physical health. For example, research has found that those who kept gratitude journals on a regular basis exercised more regularly, reported fewer physical symptoms, felt better about their lives as a whole, and were more optimistic about the upcoming week compared with those who recorded hassles (every complaint and annoyance) or neutral life events. Those keeping gratitude journals also reported higher levels of high

engagement positive emotions, such as interest, excitement, enthusiasm, and vitality. A gratitude intervention with schoolchildren resulted in those keeping gratitude journals feeling significantly more optimistic about their upcoming week compared with those who recorded hassles. The gratitude condition also elicited greater satisfaction with school compared with both the hassles and control condition. Similar to adults, counting one's blessings seems to be an effective intervention for well-being enhancement in early adolescents.

Expressing gratitude for life's blessings—that is, a sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation—is likely to elevate happiness for a number of reasons. Grateful thinking fosters the savoring of positive life experiences and situations, so that people can extract the maximum possible satisfaction and enjoyment from their circumstances. Counting one's blessings may directly counteract the effects of hedonic adaptation, the process by which our happiness level returns, again and again, to its baseline, by preventing people from taking the good things in their lives for granted. If we consciously remind ourselves of our blessings, it should become harder to take them for granted and adapt to them. And the very act of viewing good things as gifts itself is likely to be beneficial for mood. Additionally, there are interpersonal benefits to feeling grateful. When feeling grateful, people feel closer and more connected to others, and less lonely and isolated. As a social emotion, expressions of gratitude are essential to successful, vital, and thriving long-term relationships.

Gratitude as a Trait

The grateful disposition is a generalized tendency to recognize and respond with positive emotions (appreciation, thankfulness) to the role of other's benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains. A self-report measure of gratitude as a personality disposition has been constructed. Items on the Gratitude Questionnaire reflect gratitude intensity (e.g., "I feel thankful for what I have received in life"), gratitude frequency (e.g., "Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone," scored in the negative direction), gratitude span (e.g. "I sometimes feel grateful for the smallest things"),

and gratitude density (e.g., "I am grateful to a wide variety of people"). These individual difference measures emphasize the emotional component of gratitude more so than the moral component of reciprocity.

People who score highly on measures of gratitude as an affective trait tend to experience a high degree of life satisfaction and positive affects such as happiness, vitality, and hope. They also experience relatively low levels of negative affects such as resentment, depression, and envy and higher levels of prosocial behavior, empathy, forgiveness, religiousness, and spirituality. Among the Big Five personality traits, the grateful disposition is related most strongly to Agreeableness (positively) and Neuroticism (negatively). For people who are dispositionally prone to feel grateful, the amount of gratitude in their daily moods is determined so thoroughly by personality processes that their moods are resistant to the effects of gratitude-relevant daily life events (e.g., experiencing many discrete gratitude-eliciting events; experiencing gratitude to a large number of people) and their discrete emotional responses to these daily events (i.e., feeling intense episodes of grateful emotion in response). This suggests that gratitude interventions may be less effective in inducing grateful emotions in these people who are already prone to feeling gratitude.

Be it as a state or trait emotion, gratitude has clearly been linked to subjective well-being. Indeed, happy people tend to be grateful people. They also tend to be more successful in their relationships. Moreover, expressing gratitude seems to intensify our already felt positive affect in response to being the beneficiary to a benefactor's kind behavior (e.g., giving a gift). Subsequently, capitalizing on positive experiences by dwelling on them seems to be psychologically beneficial. Indeed, the ability to notice positive occurrences in one's life and to enjoy them allows us to have more fulfilling experiences. Gratitude is easily cultivated and is efficacious in kindling positive emotions generally and appears also to stimulate prosocial behavior including willingness to become an organ donor.

Gratitude and Resilience

In addition to the positive benefits that can accrue from the conscious practice of gratitude, additional

studies have shown that gratitude can buffer a person from debilitating emotions and pathological psychological conditions. One study examined the frequency of positive and negative emotions before and after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Out of 20 emotions, gratitude (for life and loved ones) was the second most commonly experienced (only compassion was rated higher). Positive emotions were critical characteristics that actively helped resilient people to cope with the September 11, 2001, disaster, suggesting another potential role that gratitude can play in interventions. Indeed, a whole line of research shows that benefit-finding can help people cope with disasters, deadly diseases, and bereavement. Even painful experiences can become something for which people are ultimately grateful. Thus, the regular experience and expression of gratitude can help build personal and interpersonal resources for coping effectively with stress and adversity.

Gratitude may also offer protection against psychiatric disorders. A factor-analytically derived measure of thankfulness (which included items explicitly related to gratitude, along with others that seemed to have more in common with love and acceptance) was associated with reduced risk for both internalizing (e.g., depression and anxiety) and externalizing (e.g., substance abuse) disorders in a study involving 2,616 male and female twins. So, gratitude may facilitate positive interpersonal functioning, and it appears to buffer against psychiatric disturbance and harmful interpersonal behaviors.

Some Obstacles to Gratitude

Any discussion of the benefits of gratitude would be incomplete without consideration of factors that render gratitude difficult. Scholars have suggested a number of attitudes that are incompatible with a grateful outlook on life, including perceptions of victimhood, an inability to admit to one's shortcomings, a sense of entitlement, envy and resentment, and an overemphasis on materialistic values. Some of these obstacles are likely to be deeply ingrained in personality. A major personality variable that is likely to thwart gratitude is narcissism. People with narcissistic tendencies erroneously believe they are deserving of special rights and privileges. Along with being demanding and selfish, they exhibit an exaggerated sense of self-importance that leads them to expect special favors without assuming reciprocal responsibilities. The sense of entitlement combined with their insensitivity to the needs of others engenders interpersonal exploitation, whether consciously or unconsciously intended. In short, if one feels entitled to everything, then one is thankful for nothing. Interventions to cultivate gratitude cannot ignore these obstacles for it may be necessary to confront them on their own terms before initiating a gratitude focus.

Conclusion

In the history of ideas, gratitude has had surprisingly few detractors. Aside from a few harsh words from a small handful of cynics, nearly every thinker has viewed gratitude as a sentiment with virtually no downside. Andre Comte-Sponville, a philosopher, recently called gratitude "the most pleasant of the virtues, and the most virtuous of the pleasures." It is virtuously pleasant because experiencing it uplifts the person who experiences it and edifies the person to whom it is directed as well.

But that people typically consider gratitude a virtue and not simply a pleasure also indicates that gratitude does not always come naturally or easily. Gratitude must, and can, be cultivated. And by cultivating the virtue, it appears that people may get the pleasure of gratitude, and all of its other attendant benefits, thrown in for free.

The science of gratitude is still in its infancy, and much is not known. A distinguished emotions researcher recently commented that if a prize were given for the emotion most neglected by psychologists, gratitude would surely be among the contenders. Basic issues, such as the emotional structure of gratitude; its uniqueness from other positive emotions; the consequences of its experience and expression for emotional, physical, and relational well-being; and the cognitive mechanisms that build and sustain gratitude over time require further study.

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See also Capitalization; Emotion in Relationships; Happiness and Relationships; Reciprocity, Norm of; Resilience; Social Capital

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Group Dynamics

Many of the interpersonal relationships that link people to one another are initiated by and organized within groups. Cliques, teams, crews, families, gangs, peer groups, military squads, professional associations, clubs, congregations, and the like are all groups, for they are networks of interdependent individuals with relatively well-defined boundaries and stable memberships. Groups, in many cases, are the wellsprings of relationships, for by joining a group, one becomes linked interpersonally to the other members of that group. These relationships, however, are rarely static. Just as the dynamic processes that occur in groups—communication among members, shifts in influence and power as members vie for social status, pressures put on individual members to adhere to the group's standards, the eruption of conflict and discord as members find that others do not share their beliefs or interests—change the group, so they also change the relationships among members that the group sustains. This entry examines the role groups play as a source of enduring and significant human relationships, as well as the significant impact of group dynamics on those relationships.

Memberships as Relationships

The basic unit of analysis in relationship research is the dyadic pairing—the one-to-one link of one person to another. Individuals in a dyadic relationship—a father and son, two lovers, a leader and a follower, a teacher and student, two best friends—are interdependent: Their actions, affect, and cognitions are causally interconnected. These causal connections, or ties, may be strong emotional bonds, such as the links between members of a family or a clique of close friends. The links may also be relatively weak ones that are easily broken with the passage of time or the occurrence of relationship-damaging events.

When two people join in a dyad, an elemental group comes into existence. Although many of the features of larger groups, such as coalition building, shifting exclusions, and hierarchy, are necessarily absent in such groups, the dyad nonetheless includes many defining features of a group: interaction between the members; interdependence as members influence other's thoughts, actions, and emotions; patterning of behaviors over time and situations; shared goals; and a sense of inclusiveness.

As groups grow in size, the number of relationships that sustain the group increases. The maximum number of relationships within a group, where everyone is linked to everyone else, is given by the equation $n(n-1)/2$, where n is the number of people in the group. Only one relationship is needed to create a dyad, but the number of links in a group increases exponentially with increases in group size. Ten links, for example, are needed to

join each member of a 5-person group to every other member, 45 for a 10-person group, and 190 relationships for a 20-person group. In consequence, many ties between members in groups are indirect. Persons A, B, and C might all be group members, but A's influence on C is always mediated by person B. In groups, too, members may feel as though they are tied to specific members, to smaller cliques of members, and to the group as a whole.

In many cases, groups are created deliberately when people realize that they must collaborate with others to accomplish desired goals. Groups also come into existence, sometimes unexpectedly, when formerly independent, unrelated individuals, prompted by their personal needs or the press of environmental and social circumstances, seek a connection to others. Groups may, for example, emerge gradually over time as individuals find themselves interacting with the same subset of individuals with greater and greater frequency. These repeated associations may foster feelings of attraction, as well as a sense of shared identity as the interactants come to think of themselves as a group and people outside the group begin to treat them as a group.

Groups also tend to grow in size and complexity over time, as more members are added through both deliberate and spontaneous elaboration. A dyad may remain a two-person group throughout its duration, but more typically, groups grow in size as the core seed group establishes relationships with other individuals. A clique of adolescents, for example, forms when two friends are joined by two other individuals and they begin to recruit other friends to join the group. Groups also form when otherwise unrelated individuals are drawn to a single individual who becomes the informal leader, or hub, for gradually developing bonds among the various members.

The same factors that influence the development of such personal relationships as friendships and romances also influence the formation of member-to-member relationships. Just as people form romantic relationships with those who are similar to them, they also join groups comprising others who are similar to them. These similarities include psychological qualities, such as attitudes, values, and beliefs, but also categorical and demographic characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, sex, and age. Members also tend to have similar individual and group level goals; they are each seeking their own individual outcomes and accomplishments, but they are also unified in their pursuit of shared collective outcomes. Groups, therefore, tend to be homogenous rather than heterogeneous—birds of a feather flock together even in human groups. Diversity actually tends to reduce the overall cohesiveness of a group, even though it may increase a group's creativity and efficacy in dealing with complex problems that require a range of experiences and expertise.

Interdependence Theory's emphasis on the economics of membership—the rewards and the costs of membership in a particular group relative to membership in alternative groups—suggests that people join groups that provide them with the maximum level of valued rewards while incurring the lowest level of costs. Rewards include acceptance by others, camaraderie, assistance in reaching personal goals, developing new interests, social support, exposure to new ideas, and opportunities to interact with people who are interesting and attractive. But groups have costs as well: time, money, exclusion by other group members, forced association with individuals—both within the group and in other groups—who may not be particularly likable, and the occasional need to modify one's personal preferences to conform to the dictates of the group. As with other types of personal relationships, individuals are more satisfied with a group if the rewards outweigh the costs, but degree of investment in the group (commitment) and the value of alternative group memberships are also critical variables that must be considered when predicting one's willingness to continue as a group member. When members feel as though they have invested a great deal of themselves in their group, perhaps because they have been a member for a prolonged period or because they have expended considerable personal costs to gain membership, then they are loath to terminate their membership even when the value of the group (the rewards relative to costs) declines. Individuals are also likely to remain in the group when they have no alternative; in most cases, membership in a group of low worth is psychologically more satisfying than membership in no group at all.

Group Dynamics and Relationships

Groups create relationships between members and substantially influence the nature and duration of those relationships. Group dynamics are the influential actions, processes, and changes that occur within and between groups over time. These dynamic processes change the group in predictable ways, and these changes naturally affect the relationships among the members of the group.

Early in the life of the group, *formative processes* strengthen the relationships that link members to one another. Initially, individuals may be unwilling to disclose personal information to others and may feel little loyalty to the group and its members. As the group becomes more cohesive, however, members may shift from the superficial and banal to more personal or even provocative topics. As members become acquainted with each other, they form general impressions of each other, and as they interact, each one in turn strives to make a good impression. Over time, as intimacy increases, group members express their trust in and commitment to the group, with the result that the group becomes more cohesive. Group cohesion is the integrity, solidarity, or unity of the group and tends to be closely linked to the strength and durability of the relationships between the members. Members of cohesive groups express greater attraction toward one another, they are more satisfied with their membership, and they are likely to resist leaving the group. Members of cohesive groups also tend to categorize themselves as group members, and as a result identify strongly with the group and their fellow group members. These *social identity processes* result in changes in self-conception, as individuals increasingly think of themselves in ways that are consistent with their conception of the prototypical group member and less in terms of personal, idiosyncratic qualities.

Increases in the cohesiveness of the group generally go hand-in-hand with increased group structure, as members come to occupy specific roles within the group and norms emerge that provide standards for behavior. These s*tructural processes* organize the group's procedures, interaction patterns, and intermember relations. Distinctive networks of communication and interaction often develop in groups, as cliques or coalitions emerge within the group. This sociometric differentiation means that some members of the group enjoy strong, positive interpersonal ties with others in the group, but others might become more isolated from others. Status differentiation in the group, in contrast, creates differences in power and influence. When first formed, group members may be equal in their capacity to influence other individuals and the group as a whole, but status-organizing processes tend to replace this egalitarian structure with a more hierarchical one. Particularly in larger groups, the role of leader develops as one or more individuals take on the responsibility for guiding other members, often by organizing, directing, coordinating, supporting, and motivating their efforts.

Social influence processes also significantly influence members' relation to each other and to the group. As interactions become patterned and members become more group centered, the pressure to conform becomes greater and individuals' resistance to these pressures becomes weaker. As a result, individuals often change when they join a group, as their attitudes and actions align to match those of their fellow group members. They are also more likely to conform to a group's judgment rather than risk ostracism or weakening their positive relations with others. In extreme cases, group members will perform behaviors that they would not otherwise undertake because they do not want to lose their group's approval.

Conflict processes are also omnipresent, both within the group and between groups. When conflict occurs in a group, the actions or beliefs of one or more members of the group are unacceptable to and resisted by one or more of the other members. These tensions tend to undermine the cohesiveness of the group as well as cause specific relationships within the group to weaken or break altogether. Many group and individual factors conspire to create conflict in a group, but the most common sources are competition, disagreements over the distribution of resources, power struggles, uncertainty and disagreement over a decision, and personal antipathies. As conflicts worsen, members shift from weak to strong tactics, and the group may break up into rival coalitions that embroil formerly neutral members in the conflict. Conflict also often generates strong emotions, with the result that members who were once friends may become partners in an escalating series of hostile verbal exchanges. If unresolved, the conflict may eventually result in

the dissolution of the group. Once the group disbands, all the relationship that the group created and sustained may be severed, but more likely, the members will manage to create a newly configured group that does not include those who are thought to be the primary sources of the tension.

Groups and Relationships

Membership in a group creates significant and far-ranging interpersonal consequences for members. Fleeting, impersonal associations do little to meet people's need for meaningful connections with others, but membership in groups that create stable, reliable alliances among members—neighborhoods, cliques of coworkers, athletic teams, social clubs, and the like—is associated with gains in well-being and resilience to stress. Moreover, even though group membership is not often considered as essential a type of interpersonal relationship as are friendship and love relationships, people in groups can, in time, become so intimately connected that these relationships become the psychological equivalent of intimate relationships. Groups can be the source of distress and disappointment for their members, but they also securely link individuals together in a complex web of social relationships. As social creatures, individuals are embedded in a rich network of mutual, collective, and reciprocal group relationships; thus, individuals' actions cannot be understood fully without considering the groups to which they belong.

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See also Cohesiveness in Groups; Conflict Patterns; Cooperation and Competition; Developing Relationships; Interdependence Theory

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GUILT AND SHAME

Shame and guilt are members of a family of self-conscious emotions evoked by self-reflection and self-evaluation. People feel shame, guilt, or both when they fail, sin, or cause harm to another person. As a result, shame and guilt are often referred to as "moral" emotions because of the presumed role they play in fostering moral behavior. Although both are negative emotions precipitated by failures and transgressions, shame and guilt are not synonymous. Research suggests guilt is the more adaptive emotion, benefiting relationships in a variety of ways. In contrast, shame brings with it hidden costs that may actually interfere with interpersonal relationships. This entry begins with an overview of the difference between shame and guilt, followed by a discussion of the adaptive nature of guilt, and the maladaptive nature of shame. We conclude with a discussion of group-based shame and guilt.

What Is the Difference Between Shame and Guilt?

People often use the terms *guilt* and *shame* interchangeably. But recent research indicates these are distinct emotions. Some theorists have suggested shame is a more "public" emotion, arising from public exposure and disapproval, whereas guilt is a more "private" experience arising from self-generated pangs of conscience. As it turns out, research has not supported this public-private distinction regarding the actual characteristics of emotion-eliciting situations. For example, when researchers analyze people's descriptions of personal shame and guilt experiences, shame-inducing behaviors are no more likely to occur in public than are guilt-inducing behaviors.

Where does this notion that shame is a more public emotion come from? Although shame- and guilt-inducing situations are equally public in the likelihood that others are present and aware of one's failure or transgression, people pay attention

to different things when they feel shame compared with when they feel guilt. When feeling guilt, people are apt to think about their effects on others (e.g., how much a careless remark hurt a friend or how much they disappointed their parents). In contrast, when feeling shame, people are more inclined to worry about how others might evaluate them (e.g., "Do others think I'm a jerk?" "Do my parents see me as a failure?"). In short, when feeling shame, people often *focus* on others' evaluations, but *actual* public exposure isn't any more likely than in the case of guilt.

Another basis for distinguishing shame and guilt, and the distinction most strongly supported by social psychological research, centers on the *object* of one's negative evaluation. According to this view, when people feel guilt, they feel badly about a specific *behavior*. When people feel shame, they feel badly about *themselves*. This differential emphasis on self ("*I* did that horrible thing") versus behavior ("I *did* that horrible *thing*") may seem minor, but it sets the stage for different emotional experiences and different patterns of motivation and subsequent behavior.

Shame is an especially painful emotion because one's core self, rather than simply one's behavior, is the issue. Shame involves painful scrutiny of the entire self, a feeling that "*I* am an unworthy, incompetent, or bad person." People in the midst of a shame experience feel worthless, powerless, and "small." When feeling shame, people are actually inclined to adopt a "shrinking" posture, as if they wish they could just disappear.

Guilt, on the other hand, does not affect one's core identity because the focus is on a specific behavior, rather than the self. Guilt involves a sense of tension, remorse, and regret over the "bad thing done." People in the midst of guilt are often preoccupied with the transgression, replaying the experience over and over again, wishing they had behaved differently. Rather than encouraging escape and avoidance, guilt motivates reparative behavior such as confessions, apologies, and attempts to fix the situation to undo the harm that was done, which is more likely to result in better outcomes.

Shame-Prone and Guilt-Prone Individuals

People react differently in similar failures or transgressions. Although most people have the capacity to experience both shame and guilt, some people are more inclined to feel guilt, whereas others are more inclined to feel shame. For example, a shame-prone person might feel intense shame upon learning her scathing e-mail about office politics was mistakenly sent to her boss. In response to such a transgression, a shame-prone person might brand herself worthless and avoid her boss, possibly even missing work as a means of escape. A guilt-prone person, on the other hand, might respond to the same transgression with profound guilt. Such a person would be inclined to focus on the specific behavior, thinking about it over and over, feeling a sense of tension, remorse, and regret. In turn, this focus on the behavior is likely to prompt efforts to make amends with the boss, possibly by writing an apology or addressing concerns in a more appropriate forum.

Guilt as More Adaptive Moral Emotion

On the whole, guilt appears to be the more adaptive emotion, benefiting individuals and their relationships in a variety of ways. The following is a summary of the research literature in five areas—motivations, empathy, aggression, moral behavior, and psychological adjustment.

Hiding Versus Amending

Research consistently shows shame and guilt lead to different motivations or "action tendencies." Shame has been linked with efforts to deny, hide, or escape the shame-inducing situation. Guilt, on the other hand, has been linked with reparative action—confessing, apologizing, and undoing. For example, when people are asked to anonymously describe personal shame experiences, they indicate they feel more compelled to hide from others and less inclined to admit what they had done, compared with when they feel guilt. In short, guilt motivates people in a constructive, future-oriented direction, whereas shame motivates people toward separation, distance, and defense.

Other-Oriented Empathy

Empathy is a highly valued emotional process that is an essential ingredient of warm, close interpersonal

relationships. Empathy motivates altruistic, helping behavior and inhibits antisocial behavior and aggression. Research indicates guilt and empathy go hand-in-hand, whereas shame is apt to disrupt an empathic connection. This differential relationship of shame and guilt to empathy has been observed at the levels of both emotion traits (dispositions) and emotion states. For example, researchers have consistently found, across various ages and demographic subgroups, that guilt-prone individuals express more adaptive forms of empathy, such as perspective taking and empathic concern, than do their less guilt-prone peers. In contrast, shame-proneness does not facilitate empathy. In fact, shame is more apt to be associated with personal distress (a self-oriented form of empathy).

Anger and Aggression

Based on her observations as a clinical psychologist, Helen Block Lewis first noted the relationship between shame and anger (or humiliated fury). She observed clients' feelings of shame often preceded expressions of anger and hostility in the therapy room. More recent empirical research has supported her claim. Studies of children, adolescents, college students, and adults have consistently shown proneness to shame is positively correlated with feelings of anger and hostility and an inclination to externalize blame.

Shame-prone individuals are more likely to externalize blame and anger but once angered, they are more likely to express their anger in a destructive fashion. For example, in a study of children, adolescents, college students, and adults, proneness to shame was consistently correlated with malevolent intentions, and a propensity to engage in direct physical, verbal, and symbolic aggression, indirect aggression (e.g., harming something important to the target, talking behind the target's back), all manner of displaced aggression (e.g., yelling at a roommate when an individual is actually angry at a professor), self-directed aggression, and anger held in (a ruminative unexpressed anger).

Shame and anger are similarly linked at the situational level. For example, in a study of anger among dating couples, shamed college students were significantly more angry, more likely to engage in aggressive behavior, and less likely to elicit conciliatory behavior from their partners, compared with students not shamed. Described by some as a "shame-rage spiral," the findings suggest (a) shame can lead to feelings of irrational anger, (b) and destructive retaliation, (c), which can then prompt anger and resentment in the partner, (d) as well as expressions of blame and retaliation in kind, (e) which can then further shame the initially shamed person, reinitiating the cycle, and so forth—without any constructive resolution in sight.

In contrast, proneness to guilt is unrelated to anger. That is, guilt-prone people are no more or less likely to experience anger than are their peers. But once angered, guilt-prone individuals are inclined to manage their anger constructively, (e.g., engaging in nonhostile discussion or attempting to fix the situation), and they are disinclined to become aggressive.

Moral Behavior

Decades of research have failed to yield evidence for the "moral" self-regulatory nature of shame. Instead, recent research has linked shame with a range of illegal, risky, and otherwise problematic behaviors. In contrast, guilt appears to foster a lifelong pattern of generally following a moral path, motivating individuals to accept responsibility and take reparative action in the wake of the inevitable if only occasional failure or transgression. For example, one study found guilt-prone children were less inclined to become delinquent in adolescence than were their nonguilt-prone peers. Guilt-prone children were more likely to practice "safe sex" and less likely to abuse drugs. Even among adults already at high risk, guilt-proneness appears to serve a protective function.

Psychological Functioning

Finally, "shame-free" guilt is not associated with poor psychological adjustment or well-being, as Freud and Woody Allen would suggest. Research has found that, when differentiating between shame and guilt, the propensity to experience guilt is essentially unrelated to psychological symptoms. Numerous independent studies converge: shame, but not guilt, is consistently related to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and a host of other psychological problems.

When Does Guilt Become Maladaptive?

Why is guilt frequently cited as a symptom in such psychological disorders as anxiety and depression? What is the chronic, ruminative guilt described by so many clinicians? One possibility is many of these problematic guilt experiences are actually feelings of guilt *fused with feelings of shame*. It seems likely that when a person begins with a guilt experience ("Oh, look at what a horrible *thing* I have *done*") but then magnifies and generalizes the event to the self (" . . . and aren't I a horrible *person*"), many of the advantages of guilt are lost. The person is faced with tension and remorse about a specific behavior that needs to be fixed, and he or she is saddled with feelings of contempt and disgust for a bad, defective self. In effect, shame-fused guilt may be just as problematic as shame itself. Research shows the unique variance in guilt (the part of guilt that is independent of shame) is most clearly related to positive interpersonal behaviors and adjustment. Co-occurring shame and guilt are associated with poor outcomes, much as is shame unaccompanied by guilt.

Vicarious, Group-Based, or "Collective" Shame and Guilt

Until recently, most research has focused exclusively on personal shame and guilt experienced in response to one's *own* failures and misdeeds. A number of investigators have substantially expanded the literature on self-conscious emotions by considering vicarious or group-based shame and guilt—feelings experienced about the transgressions and failures of *other* individuals. According to Social Identity Theory, to the extent that the self is, in part, defined by interpersonal relationships and group affiliations, it is possible to construe the behavior of an ingroup member as reflecting on the self. Research findings on vicarious shame and guilt are similar in many respects to the research on personal shame and guilt experiences described thus far. For example, group-based guilt (feeling guilt for the behavior of an ingroup member) has been associated with empathy and a motivation to repair or make amends. Vicarious group-based shame has been linked with anger and a desire to distance oneself from the shame-eliciting group or event.

Scientific study of shame and guilt is a relatively recent endeavor, and much remains unknown. The next generation of research on these moral emotions will no doubt further incorporate other related fields to better understand the development of moral emotions and the neurobiological mechanisms by which they function, with the ultimate goal of translating this knowledge into action for the good of society.

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See also Aggressive Communication; Anger in Relationships; Empathy; Morality and Relationships; Perspective Taking; Social Identity Theory

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H

HAPPINESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Social relationships are often described as the most important factor in determining a person's happiness. If there is a single characteristic that best distinguishes people who are extremely happy from everyone else, it appears to be the quality of their social relationships. People who are more satisfied with their relationships report higher subjective well-being and greater objective health—including longer lives and less vulnerability to illness. Although social processes are important to people's happiness, the causal arrow often points in the other direction, with happiness leading to stronger and more satisfying relationships. The links between happiness and social relationships also vary depending on the definitions being used to investigate the topic. Happiness is frequently thought to consist of separable elements: positive affect, negative affect, life satisfaction, and satisfaction with particular life domains (e.g., work). As for social relationships, research has focused on relationship quality and satisfaction, various positive and negative relationship processes, and different types of relationships. Furthermore, definitions and methodologies can moderate the magnitude (and sometimes the direction) of relations between happiness and social relationships. This entry reviews research on relationships and happiness, and discusses implications for social policy and future research.

General Findings

Sociability

The degree to which people are sociable is one of the strongest predictors of frequent positive affect and life satisfaction. Researchers have used experience-sampling methodologies to collect information from people during in vivo social events. Typically, respondents are asked to complete a series of questions at random moments or immediately after every social interaction that lasts at least 10 minutes. By collecting comprehensive information about how people think and behave in their natural environment, researchers can examine factors that might influence the benefits of socializing. Most people—including those who are shy or introverted—consistently report greater positive affect when socializing compared with being alone. Similarly, people who spend a greater percentage of their time with others report being more satisfied with their lives. In the few longitudinal studies on the topic, being more sociable (as defined by self-reported talkativeness, assertiveness, and preferences for social gatherings) leads to greater happiness over time and, in turn, people experiencing more positive affect report larger and higher quality social networks across time.

The link between relationships and happiness is more modest, but still meaningful, when examining behavior in the laboratory. When talking to strangers, for example, research participants reporting being happier are observed to smile more

frequently and be more talkative, energetic, and humorous. In turn, strangers perceive happier people as more likable and show a stronger interest in forming relationships with them. In other studies, people induced into good moods were observed to be more sociable when interacting with strangers and more likely to be talkative, responsive, and generous and to initiate humor. The benefits of social interactions tend to be stronger when they are less formal and relatively unstructured.

The studies reviewed focused on positive affect and life satisfaction as markers of happiness that are moderately correlated with various social outcomes. That said, it should not be inferred that negative affect is associated with lesser sociability. Recent evidence shows that positive and negative emotions are distinct psychological and neural systems, so that the correlation between measured positive and negative affect is often minimal. Furthermore, a substantial literature indicates that negative affect is not related to the size of a person's social network, frequency of naturally occurring social interactions, or overall social activity. When getting acquainted with strangers, the average person experiences a surge in positive affect but no change in negative affect. In specific cases, however, stressful and hurtful social interactions can lead to profound increases in negative affect, and in turn, people suffering from depression and other emotional disturbances often behave in ways that lead to social rejection.

There is evidence for bidirectional relations between happiness and sociability. This conclusion, however, is tempered by important contextual influences. When happiness is defined by positive affect or life satisfaction, moderate to strong relations emerge with various measures of social activity. Negative affect is generally unrelated to social activity. In addition, not all social activities are equivalent. For example, taking part in highly structured social interactions and spending time with others during sedentary activities are typically unrelated to markers of happiness.

Real-World Relationships

How do different types of relationships influence happiness? Evidence indicates small positive correlations between frequent, intense positive emotional experiences (called *trait affect* by researchers) and marital satisfaction, the number of close relationships a person has, and the frequency of contact with these individuals. These correlations are larger in magnitude when family members are excluded and the focus is on friends and other self-selected relationships. Some studies show that people are happier when they are with friends compared with strangers or family members or are alone. Thus, although family relationships are associated with each element of well-being across the life span, friendships appear to be more important.

Perhaps the primary exception to this generalization is early parent–child attachment bonds. The presence of a warm, enduring relationship with a caregiver early in life promotes happiness and success in life. The quality of parent–child relationships predicts high levels of emotional adjustment, social competence, and life satisfaction. The underlying mechanisms appear to be bidirectional because parents with emotional difficulties and dissatisfied lives are also less likely to form strong, secure bonds with their children.

Sexuality and the intimate connections that characterize romantic relationships are uniquely relevant to psychological well-being. Generally, married people are happier than are single adults who, in turn, are happier than are those who are divorced or widowed. Yet these results often ignore context. For example, when people are highly satisfied in their marriages, their general life satisfaction often surges upward. In contrast, problematic, conflict-laden relationships lead to infrequent positive affect, frequent negative affect, and disruptions in life satisfaction. Another important contextual factor is the nonrandom selection of romantic partners. People often choose spouses based on desirable personality traits that are readily apparent before marriage. In longitudinal studies, for example, people who are generally happy are more likely to have satisfying marriages whereas people who eventually divorce show lower levels of happiness even before their relationships had begun. This fits with the larger body of research showing that happier people engage in social behaviors that foster healthy relationships including altruism, generosity, affection, empathy, responsiveness, cheerfulness, and supportiveness.

Although there are fewer studies on relationships within organizational settings, happier people

also exhibit better relationships at work. These positive relationships translate into greater productivity and work satisfaction and a sustainable source of meaning and life satisfaction. Thus, it appears that the degree to which a person is happy has direct implications for the health of families, work environments, and communities. Preliminary evidence for these types of societal benefits can be found in the fact that even in economically disadvantaged communities, strong social relationships may buffer the dire effects of poverty.

Evolutionary and Biological Perspectives

Human beings, like our primate cousins, are social animals who naturally dwell together in family units and larger communities. Social relations appear to be fundamental to human adaptive evolution as evidenced by kin selection, specific neural circuitry for recognizing faces, moral social norms (such as those related to obedience and reciprocal altruism), and a wide variety of important social and psychological mechanisms. If sociability is, in fact, an evolutionary advantage, then it is interesting to ponder how happiness might be implicated in this process.

Historically, emotional states have been viewed as instrumental to survival. For example, negative emotional states such as fear are thought to improve survival in threatening situations by limiting thoughts and actions, leading to rapid responding. Positive emotional states are thought to accompany nonthreatening situations and promote social coalition building, personal skill development, and a variety of expansive cognitive and behavioral repertoires. Joy, specifically, has been found to promote playfulness, which, in turn, facilitates better relationships. Thus, happiness appears to be a critical element for human survival because it leads directly to helping others, engaging in group recreation, and a propensity to form mutually beneficial social coalitions.

Preliminary evidence also indicates a beneficial, direct link between specific neurological activity and social relationships. For instance, the hormone oxytocin is released during intense social interactions and appears to facilitate pair bonding. This hormone stimulates feelings of joy and love and initiates behaviors such as affection and caretaking.

Oxytocin further interacts with opioids to attenuate psychological and biological stress responses. During stressful situations, the release of oxytocin leads to social support seeking and nurturance behaviors. As evidence of its role in strengthening social bonds, oxytocin is released by mothers when breastfeeding infants and by adults when engaged in sexual acts. Interestingly, the effects of oxytocin depend on an animal's social role. Oxytocin makes dominant animals more aggressive and hypersexual whereas submissive animals become more affiliative and acquiescent. Essentially, oxytocin modifies emotions, cognitions, and behaviors to increase the likelihood of strong, functional social bonds (there are diverse paths to reaching these social bonds). One of the hormone's by-products appears to be an increased ability to form satisfying relationships and find happiness.

A Note About Culture

Culture is a fundamental social construct that plays an interesting role in the link between social relationships and happiness. Several researchers have identified areas in which cultural norms influence happiness. For example, cultural factors influence how individuals value and define the experience of happiness itself. Asian cultures, for instance, place a premium on low-arousal positive emotions such as peace and contentment, whereas individualists in many Western cultures prize high arousal positive emotions such as exuberance and joy. Researchers have found that parental expectations influence individual happiness and that these differ across cultures. Similarly, some cultures appear to value mastery over enjoyment, and individuals in these cultures are more likely to sacrifice short-term happiness for long-term achievement. Taken together, the research on culture and happiness indicates that cultural processes are an important moderating variable.

Important Caveats

Despite research findings indicating that social relationships play an important—if not central—role in personal fulfillment, there are several important caveats. First, most of the research on

happiness and relationships is correlational and, therefore, causal directions remain uncertain. Second, relationships may also have psychological costs. For example, empathic responses to friends and family members can lead to personal distress (e.g., when witnessing a friend experience hardship), guilt (e.g., when one has hurt a loved one), or a lack of sense of self (e.g., when attempting to meet the needs of others at the expense of unmet personal needs). Although close personal relationships usually come with a variety of benefits, heavily investing in others can have drawbacks if that person leaves or betrays the relationship. For example, research on the happiness of widows suggests that the average widow may take years after her spouse's death to regain former levels of life satisfaction. Finally, it should be noted that whereas relationships generally promote happiness, and vice versa, this connection depends on the type of relationship. There is evidence of gender differences, with women deriving greater benefits from social affiliation and support but less happiness in marital relationships compared with men. The relation between happiness and social ties also may differ based on the specific type of relationship under consideration (e.g., family, work, friends). Thus, caution is warranted in assuming that relationships universally promote happiness.

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See also Bereavement; Dark Side of Relationships; Emotion in Relationships; Fun in Relationships; Health and Relationships; Need Fulfillment in Relationships; Singlehood

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Hard-to-Get Phenomenon

The *hard-to-get phenomenon* refers to the notion, held across diverse cultures and espoused by sources ranging from Socrates to Ovid to the *Kama Sutra,* that individuals experience greater attraction to a person who is or seems difficult to attract than to a person who is or seems easy to attract. Although theorizing on the hard-to-get phenomenon dates back to ancient times, the phenomenon did not receive empirical attention until the 1970s. This entry briefly reviews and evaluates the empirical research on the hard-to-get phenomenon in romantic contexts.

Laboratory Experiments

In 1973, Elaine Hatfield (formerly Walster) and her colleagues published a series of six experiments designed to test the hypothesis that hard-to-get women are more romantically desirable to men than are easy-to-get women. The first five experiments uniformly failed to provide any evidence in support of the notion that hard-to-get women are more attractive than easy-to-get women. In one study, for example, women who initially declined a date with a man before eventually accepting it were no more or less desirable to

the man than women who eagerly accepted the date right away. After these five failures, Walster and colleagues went back to the drawing board and recognized that there are actually two distinct ways in which a man can think of a woman as being hard to get: (1) how hard it is for *me* to get her and (2) how hard it is for *other men* to get her. The scholars hypothesized that men would be most attracted to the woman who is *selectively* hard to get—easy for them to get but hard for other men to get.

In a sixth study, college-aged men evaluated the desirability of five college-aged women who had ostensibly matched with them through a dating service. (In reality, these women's profiles were created by the researchers.) The experimenter explained that three of the five women had previously attended a session in which they had completed five "date selection forms," one for each of their five male matches. For each of these three women, the participant saw that one form included ratings of himself and the other four forms included ratings of fictitious men. One of these women was *uniformly hard to get,* rating all five of her matches as not especially appealing. One was *uniformly easy to get,* rating all five of her matches as highly appealing. And one was *selectively hard to get,* rating the other four men as unappealing but rating the male participant as highly appealing.

The men exhibited an overwhelming preference for the selectively hard-to-get woman. She was the top choice of 59 percent of them, with each of the other four women (including the two who ostensibly had not yet completed their date selection forms) winning top-choice honors from only 7 to 15 percent. The men viewed this woman as having all of the advantages of her competitors, but none of their liabilities. For example, they perceived her as being just as popular as the uniformly hard-to-get women (while being less cold) and just as friendly as the uniformly easy-to-get woman (while being more popular). Subsequent research including both men and women participants revealed a second reason why selectively hard-to-get individuals are so desirable: Being liked by such individuals raises one's self-esteem.

The notion that people who are selectively hard to get are especially desirable has gone largely unchallenged, but a series of studies from the mid-1980s partially resurrected the notion that being uniformly hard to get (or at least not being uniformly easy to get) can also inspire others' romantic interest. In contrast to the studies by Walster and colleagues, participants in these subsequent studies learned how *generally* selective a target person was—that is, without the target directly evaluating the self. Participants found targets who were moderately to strongly hard to get more desirable than targets who were easy to get in these circumstances where personal rejection was no longer implied by the hard-to-get manipulation.

Recent Real-World Evidence

Recent research by Paul Eastwick and colleagues has sought to extend research on the hard-to-get phenomenon beyond the laboratory. Scholars employed speed-dating procedures to test whether people are attracted to others who are selectively hard to get, uniformly hard to get, or both. Men and women participants completed a brief questionnaire after each of their 12 speed dates, indicating the degree to which they experienced romantic desire for that partner.

Two key results emerged. First, when a speed dater found one of the partners more desirable than the others, that partner tended to reciprocate this unique liking. This finding is consistent with the well-validated notion that people are attracted to others who selectively like them. Second, when a speed dater tended to find all of the partners desirable, those partners tended *not* to find him or her desirable in return. This finding is consistent with the notion that people are not attracted to others who are uniformly easy to get; instead, they prefer somebody who is uniformly hard to get. This study suggests that being uniformly hard to get might make individuals more desirable, but peppering one's selectivity with unique liking for a particular partner will enhance the degree to which that partner desires the self.

Conclusion

Overall, the laboratory and speed-dating studies provide robust evidence that people tend to be attracted to selectively hard-to-get others (those who uniquely like the self). These studies are less

definitive in discerning whether people tend to be more attracted to others who are uniformly hard to get than to others who are uniformly easy to get, but preliminary evidence from real-world dating encounters suggests that there may be some truth to the notion that uniformly hard-to-get people are especially desirable after all.

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See also Initiation of Relationships; Interpersonal Attraction; Reciprocity of Liking; Social Relations Model; Speed Dating

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Health, Relationships as a Factor in Treatment

Close relationships such as marriage can have either a positive or negative impact on an individual's successful adjustment to and management of a chronic health condition. Because of this influence of family on health, researchers have developed family-oriented, psychosocial, or behavioral treatments to supplement the medical care received by the ill individual. This entry describes the reasons that relationships are important to consider in the treatment of chronic illness in adulthood, the different types of family-oriented treatments, and the evidence for the effectiveness of these treatments.

Why Are Relationships Important in the Treatment of Health Conditions?

The rationale for involving a family member in treatment can be found in the biopsychosocial model of health and illness, specific marital and family systems frameworks, and family caregiving and care-receiving models. These theoretical frameworks have been supported by empirical evidence that close social relationships affect biological systems, health behaviors, and psychological well-being. Specifically, emotionally and instrumentally supportive actions by family members, as well as family conflict and criticism, affect immune function, blood pressure, and depressive symptoms, as well as future illness events (e.g., recurrence of cancer, myocardial infarction). Family members' attitudes toward illness and their own health behaviors also affect patients' decisions to follow recommendations for medical treatment and their ability to initiate and maintain difficult changes in diet and exercise.

Many of the linkages between family and health have been observed across chronic conditions as diverse as heart disease, chronic pain disorders, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes, renal disease, breast cancer, and spinal cord injury. An example of positive associations between family and health is the finding that individuals with Type 2 diabetes who have more supportive families are also more adherent over time for glucose testing, insulin injection, and a dietary regimen. In addition, for people with end-stage renal disease who are undergoing hemodialysis, greater perceived family support has been associated with greater psychological well-being, adherence to fluid-intake restrictions, and survival at a 5-year follow-up. To provide an example of negative associations between family and health, interpersonal conflict has been linked with greater disease activity (e.g., joint swelling) in people with rheumatoid arthritis.

In turn, physical illness can take a toll on patients' close family members. Patients' illness symptoms, negative mood, and need for emotional support or physical assistance often become taxing to family members over time. These experiences may result in family members' psychological distress, decreased relationship quality with the patient, caregiving burden, and poorer physical health. These consequences are especially likely in

cases where the health condition is life threatening or results in a high level of dependency. For example, a study of recently hospitalized individuals with cancer showed that despite patients' improvement or stabilization after discharge, their family caregivers continued to experience high levels of psychological burden 6 months after patients' hospitalization. Spousal caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease (AD) have been shown to have an impaired immune response to influenza virus vaccination, as well as impaired wound healing, in comparison with individuals who are not caregivers to a spouse with AD but similar to those caregivers in other ways (e.g., age, gender).

A logical conclusion that can be drawn from this body of research is that incorporating a close family member in a psychosocial or behavioral treatment for chronic illness may have a positive impact on the patient as a result of enhancing the family member's empathy and supportiveness. The family member may also become more helpful in practical ways such as monitoring the patient's blood pressure at home and providing more effective assistance with activities of daily living such as dressing, getting around the house, and managing medications. In addition, the family member is likely to experience decreased burden stemming from improvements in patient functioning, validation of caregiving experiences (i.e., confirmation that the illness is difficult for him or her, as well as for the patient), and improved interactions with the patient. In other words, the bidirectional links between health and family relationships suggest that family-oriented treatments may benefit the health and well-being of both patient and family member.

What Approaches Are Used to Involve a Close Family Member in Treatment?

Some researchers have developed dyadic treatments by modifying patient-focused treatments to include a family member, most commonly the spouse or an adult son or daughter. For example, weight loss programs for obese individuals with a chronic illness have been modified to include the spouse. Other researchers have developed caregiver treatments that are targeted solely at the family member on whom the patient primarily depends for assistance support. For example, stress management skills training has been targeted at spousal caregivers to individuals with AD or stroke. Both of these approaches are family oriented in their focus on the patient's closest family member, either with or without patient involvement.

Family-oriented treatments are most commonly psychological, social, or behavioral in nature or use a combination of these approaches. Psychological approaches may include stress management skills training, or information about the illness and its treatment, and may be targeted at the dyad or the family member alone. Socially focused approaches often take the form of peer support groups (i.e., meeting with other dyads who are dealing with the same illness, or other family caregivers) or counseling aimed at maintaining or improving dyadic relationship quality in the face of illness. Behaviorally focused treatments are often aimed at getting both patient and family member to work together in creating a healthier lifestyle. In addition, these behavioral treatments may be aimed at changing family members' overly solicitous reactions to patients' pain or fatigue, such as jumping in to provide assistance with various tasks before such help is warranted or desired by the patient.

Family-oriented treatments for chronic illness also vary in how intensively they involve the family member. Some of the less intensive approaches may enlist the family member's help in monitoring the patient's health (e.g., blood pressure checks) or encouraging healthy behaviors, or provide the family member with information about the patient's illness (e.g., causes, symptoms, available medical treatments). In contrast, treatments that more intensively involve family may also target supportive and unsupportive communications within the dyad (e.g., counseling for couples dealing with the wife's breast cancer) or address the family member's burden and concerns.

Is Including Family in Treatment an Effective Approach?

Reviews of the research literature indicate that patients who receive family-oriented treatment in addition to usual medical care benefit more than

do patients who receive medical care alone. Specifically, treatments that include the spouse result in small, positive improvements in depressive symptoms across various illnesses. In addition, behaviorally focused, family-oriented treatments for individuals dealing with hypertension or cardiovascular disease result in a small decreased risk for mortality that outweigh the benefits of medical care alone. Some research has examined whether the family member also benefits from family-oriented treatment. These studies have shown that family members experience small improvements in how depressed or anxious they feel, and report less stress or burden from caregiving, in comparison with family members of patients who receive medical care alone.

Another question that researchers have tried to answer is whether patients who receive family-oriented treatment benefit more than do those who receive patient-oriented treatment (with both groups also receiving usual medical care). This research literature indicates that the advantage of family-oriented treatment over patient-oriented treatment for patient health and well-being is not yet clear, and the comparative benefits for family member health and well-being are rarely assessed at all. The advantage of one type of treatment over the other seems to depend on factors such as specific treatment approach. For example, studies focused on rheumatoid arthritis or osteoarthritis have shown that family-oriented treatments that use cognitive-behavioral approaches (e.g., training spouses to help patients change their negative ways of thinking about and responding to pain) rather than psychoeducational approaches (e.g., providing information to both partners about the illness and its treatment) result in greater reductions in patients' pain or joint swelling than cognitive-behavioral interventions for patients only. The advantage of family-oriented treatment over patient-oriented treatment may also depend on patient gender. For example, a couple-oriented behavioral program for obese individuals with Type 2 diabetes resulted in more weight loss for female patients than did a patient-oriented program, whereas male patients lost more weight in the patient-oriented program.

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See also Health and Relationships; Health Behaviors, Relationships and Interpersonal Spread of; Marriage and Health; Social Support and Health

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HEALTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships can be broadly defined by their structural components such as the simple existence of social ties (e.g., married, belonging to voluntary groups) and by their functional components for what they may provide us (e.g., sense of comfort, available support). The notion that health, which encompasses disease-related morbidity or

mortality, could be influenced by relationships is relatively new. For a century, the dominant approach to understanding health focused on physiological and pathogen-related contributions to disease. However, these types of explanations paint an incomplete picture of human health.

Recent interdisciplinary research is beginning to unravel the complex mysteries of disease by simultaneously considering relevant psychosocial risk factors. Of these risk factors, one of the most consistent predictors to emerge is the quality and quantity of one's social relationships. This entry summarizes general research findings, including how researchers define and measure relationships, data linking relationships to health, potential pathways responsible for such links, and intervention approaches.

What Do Researchers Mean by Relationships?

Research on social ties and health often defines relationships in different ways. A broad distinction between structural and functional aspects of relationships is common but within these categories are numerous exemplars. Structural measures often tap into the extent to which a person is situated or integrated into a social network. For instance, researchers may ask participants if they are married, how many family members they have contact with, or if they participate in any social activities. This work has its roots in the concept of symbolic interactionism, a social-psychological concept that highlights the importance of meaningful social roles in the development of one's identity. The use of structural measures has been the most longstanding (and popular) approach to examining links between relationships and health.

More recently, many studies examine relationships and health in terms of the particular supportive functions they serve. These functions are usually organized along two dimensions. One dimension is what support is perceived to be available. The other dimension is what support is actually received or provided by others. What is perceived as available may or may not correspond to what is actually provided. For instance, individuals who perceive support to be available may not actually seek support as a first coping option, and just knowing support is available may alleviate stress

because it acts as a "safety net." Therefore, both measurement approaches are important. So what exactly is made available or provided by supportive individuals? Many researchers argue that the types of support that may be provided are what can be termed *emotional* (e.g., expressions of caring), *informational* (e.g., information that might be used to deal with stress), *tangible* (e.g., direct material aide), and *belonging* (e.g., others to engage in social activities) support.

Recent research on relationships and health is moving toward a more comprehensive view of relationships that is affecting how we measure it. The most important trend is probably the explicit acknowledgement of the detrimental influences of negativity (e.g., conflict) in close relationships on health. Although this has long been acknowledged in the larger close relationships literature, its impact on the health literature has been less given the prior emphasis on support processes. However, considering negativity in relationships is important because conflict in stable, long-term relationships (e.g., marriage, family) can theoretically influence the development of chronic conditions that develop slowly over time (e.g., cardiovascular disease).

What Is the Link Between Relationships and Physical Health Outcomes?

A large body of epidemiological studies shows that both the quantity and quality of one's relationships influence disease morbidity and mortality. Most of these studies have focused on the positive aspects of relationships and were well-controlled, long-term studies with thousands of participants, which gives us greater confidence in their conclusions. In this literature, structural aspects of relationships, especially composite measures of relationships (indicating the existence of important social contact—e.g., marriage, family members) and participation in voluntary groups appear to be consistent predictors of lower all-cause mortality rates. It is thought that structural variables, such as participation in social groups, increases (a) access to support, (b) self-esteem, and (c) purpose in life. These factors, in turn, may decrease risk for mortality via enhanced coping with stress and greater efficacy and motivation to care for oneself. Strong evidence also indicates

that functional aspects of relationships, such as emotional support, predict lower all-cause mortality. For specific diseases, reliable evidence links relationships to cardiovascular disease outcomes. Preliminary evidence also points to the influence of structural and functional aspects of relationships on infectious disease risk, with more controversial links to cancer outcomes.

Although the general findings from this literature are on strong ground, several emerging issues deserve attention. First, evidence indicates that not all functional types of support are beneficial for health. Of these, emotional support appears the most beneficial, whereas there is a trend for individuals who receive relatively high levels of tangible support to have higher mortality. A simple potential explanation based on the concept of support mobilization is that individuals who are more dependent on receiving tangible support are also more physically impaired to begin with. However, studies do not appear to support this explanation as most considered the influence of initial health status or limitations in activities of daily living. Several potential viable explanations for this link (e.g., negative psychological effects of dependence, increases in conflict) are currently being evaluated.

A second issue is that relationships, although sources of support and caring, may also be linked to interpersonal conflict. Many of our relationships contain a mix of both positive and negative aspects, which is important because conflict may cancel out any benefits of relationships or be detrimental in their own right. Evidence links negativity in relationship, such as divorce or family conflict, to poorer health outcomes. The negative aspects of relationship are often not highly related to the positive aspects. As a result, high levels of positivity in a relationship do not imply that there are no important negative aspects. This issue will need greater attention in future research.

A third issue is a focus on the person perceiving or receiving support, as well as on the person providing it. Research typically emphasizes the detrimental influences of such roles (e.g., the burden experienced by caregivers of a family member with Alzheimer's disease). However, under more moderate levels of stress (or choice in pursuing the role), some recent studies have shown that individuals who are providers of support have lower all-cause mortality. This emphasis is important because

health-relevant relationship processes unfold in a dyadic (e.g., wife, husband) or group (e.g., family) context. The emphasis on individuals who provide support is a step in the direction of modeling more complex interpersonal processes.

What Are the Pathways Linking Relationships to Health?

One of the most important areas of research is focusing on how relationships are managing to influence such acute and chronic physical health outcomes. These pathways are being examined from an interdisciplinary perspective and can broadly be categorized as psychological, behavioral, and physiological in nature.

Many studies have examined links between relationships and psychological or mental health outcomes. However, direct examination of these outcomes as pathways in epidemiological studies is missing. Nevertheless, the larger literature on relationships and mental health can be used to inform future studies because there are a number of promising links. First, relationships may influence one's interpretation (appraisal) of a stressful situation so that its harmful influences are mitigated. For instance, knowing that you have individuals in your life who can provide emotional or informational support may help you feel more confident about dealing with stressful changes in life (e.g., job, family). This might also increase your feelings of mastery or control over life. Relationships also appear to protect one from depression and anxiety by serving as a potential resource during times of need. Finally, relationships can influence self-related processes such as one's identity via social roles or an affirmation of the self as competent and worthy (i.e., self-esteem). These psychological factors are important because they may be linked to physical health in their own right (e.g., depression) and, hence, are promising mediators for future research linking relationships to health. Modeling these and related psychological processes remains a high priority for relationships and health research.

The importance of behavioral pathways is highlighted by social control theorists who have shown relationships to be related to better health behaviors. For instance, relationships (e.g., being married, engaging in social roles) are generally related to

more exercise, better diet, and cooperation with medical regimens. Social control theorists argue that relationships are linked to such health behaviors because they provide us with important incentives to live. An example would be a father deciding to take better care of his health so he can see his child grow up. Such theorists also argue that relationships provide us with direct social control because spouses can impose sanctions on their significant others if necessary (e.g., refusing to talk to them if they do not see a doctor). The context of social control is important to consider as relationships may not always be linked to positive influences (e.g., peer influences on drug use).

The behavioral factors examined by social control theorists are attractive as potential pathways because they are risk factors for physical health problems in their own right. Indeed, research suggests that at least part of the link between relationships and physical health is explained by such health behaviors. However, many studies continue to simply statistically control for health behaviors (confound) in examining links between relationships and health despite its theoretical role as a pathway.

Finally, physiological processes are increasingly being modeled as pathways linking relationships to health. This is particularly important because it allows health-relevant "intermediate" outcomes that confer risk to later (or in some cases immediate) health problems. The largest literature links relationships to cardiovascular processes known to predict disease. This research suggests that individuals who have greater support in their lives appear to have lower resting blood pressure, cardiovascular reactivity, and ambulatory blood pressure. Recent research also highlights links to immune-mediated inflammatory responses. Such research is promising given its potential to integrate research on relationship and immunity to cardiovascular disease, but the small number of current studies do not allow for strong conclusions.

More general links between relationships and aspects of immune function that can influence infectious disease risk are on strong grounds. These studies examine the functional ability of immune cells to mount a response (e.g., natural killer cell activity, antibody titers to vaccination) and show that positive aspects of relationships (e.g., emotional support) predict stronger functional responses. Likewise, social stressors (e.g., marital conflict) appear to have detrimental influences on functional immune responses.

There is less research examining links between relationships and neuroendocrine pathways. Sufficient studies, however, exist suggesting social support is related to lower cortisol levels, whereas social conflict (e.g., marital) is linked to higher cortisol levels. These findings are important because cortisol has well-documented immunosuppressive effects. Future research on neuroendocrine pathways will be important because such hormones influence both cardiovascular and immune function. In the absence of such research, researchers will have difficulty modeling potential cascading links between physiological systems that ultimately compromise physical health.

A final physiological pathway starting to receive attention is seen in studies that use sophisticated imaging techniques to examine brain activity as a function of relationships. These studies complement work on psychological and biological pathways; preliminary evidence links relationships to lower activation of stress-related areas of the brain. Although only a few studies now exist, such research promises a more integrative picture of how relationships influence the central nervous system, with direct links to peripheral "downstream" health-related alterations.

Can This Work Inform Relevant Interventions?

Research on relationships and health is stimulating much interest in relevant interventions. Would it be possible to teach individuals to access their existing relationships in a way that is health-promoting? As it turns out, there is already an extensive literature on relationship-based interventions (e.g., marital, family, support) that differ in their focus depending on the relationship or disease context. Most of these relationship interventions that focus on health attempt to foster adjustment more generally in chronic disease populations such as cancer or HIV patients. Many of these interventions also do not directly focus on physical health but more on mental health (e.g., depression) and relevant behavioral change (e.g., smoking cessation).

Even these health-oriented support interventions differ dramatically in their approach and orientation. Benjamin Gottlieb proposed one widely used categorization scheme. He argued that support interventions can be categorized along two dimensions based on the provider of support. The first dimension has to do with the nature of the relationship between the support provider and participant. Is the support provider a newly formed relationship (e.g., practitioner, peers) or does it involve already established relationships from a person's existing support network? The second dimension focuses on the unit of support. Is support provided in a one-on-one setting or is it provided in a group setting?

Based on this typology, there are several types of relationship-based interventions in health research. The first type involves support from professionals. Such individuals can be good sources of support given their expertise in the disease context. These interventions often take the form of doctors, nurses, or other health educators who provide the patient with informational, but in some cases, emotional support. These interventions appear promising in fostering adjustment in disease populations, especially those involving educational interventions. However, some inconsistencies in this literature may be the result of the diverse patient populations examined who may have differing needs.

A second type of intervention with new relationships is grounded in peer support groups. In such interventions, a professional is often utilized to guide discussion but the focus is on what each member brings to the group context. An important guiding principle is based on experiential similarity in which members share a common basis (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous; cancer support groups). The potential importance of such peer support groups in the health domain was spearheaded by the well-known results of David Spiegel's intervention in the 1980s, which found that cancer patients lived longer if they were in support groups. Recent evaluations of peer support groups have failed to replicate this effect on survival (perhaps due to less stigma and the greater support now available to cancer patients)—but continue to document positive influences on mental health outcomes. In general, such peer support interventions appear to foster adjustment, especially for individuals who may have deficits in their existing social network.

Finally, many relationship-based interventions in health utilize existing network members. These interventions usually attempt to mobilize a person's network via differing strategies. These usually including teaching the patient support-seeking skills and/or educating existing support members on the disease in question and how to best support the patient. It may also be important to teach the support provider additional coping skills as this can be a significant source of stress in some contexts (e.g., caregiver for an Alzheimer's disease patient). These interventions can be complex, given the long history of these relationships, but if harnessed carefully have shown to be beneficial for individuals.

A few additional comments about relationship-based interventions are important. First, it should be highlighted that such interventions in a health context are often cost effective, estimated in some cases to save the average patient thousands of dollars. A second issue is that most of the relationship-based interventions focus on individuals who are entering the health care system due to existing disease. Researchers such as Robert Kaplan have convincingly argued for the importance of primary prevention strategies that focus on healthy individuals. In the context of relationships and health, this is quite important because the major cause of morbidity and mortality are chronic diseases that develop slowly over time. Most of these early interventions have focused on social skills training in adolescents using a different set of outcomes (e.g., friendships, grade point average, etc.). Their potential influences on longer-term outcomes may be promising, as they may place individuals on more positive early relationship trajectories that then influence a wide array of outcomes.

Conclusion

There is a relatively large body of research linking relationships to physical health outcomes. As a result, recent research is examining the possible pathways responsible for such links. These studies are interdisciplinary in nature and helping to provide a more integrative picture of the complex links between social ties and health. This work holds great promise to not only complement

existing biomedical views, but also to highlight multiple potential entry points for intervention.

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See also Health, Relationships as a Factor in Treatment; Isolation, Health Effects; Marriage and Health; Mental Health and Relationships; Social Support and Health; Stress and Relationships

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Health Behaviors, Relationships and Interpersonal Spread of

Human beings are embedded in networks of other individuals from the time they are born, and these *social networks* have important consequences for all aspects of human experience. A thorough understanding of the relationships that constitute these networks is crucial to understanding the nature of any individual. This is true with respect to social and personality aspects of the individual and true of physical attributes, including the health of the individual. Many studies have now shown that social isolation puts people at increased risk of disease and early death. Conversely, social relationships have positive effects on health and longevity. People with larger social networks, for instance, are generally healthier and live longer. This entry discusses the role of relationships in the health of individuals across the life course and how health states spread within a social network.

Health Depends on Relationships

The powerful role of relationships in determining the health of the individual begins in infancy. During this earliest stage of our lives, we begin to form intense bonds with our primary caretakers (typically our parents). If the infant is not allowed to bond normally, its health may suffer serious adverse effects. This kind of disturbance of relationships early in life has been implicated as the causal factor in a syndrome known as "nonorganic failure to thrive," wherein the child fails to grow normally and remains small and sickly. This occurs despite a lack of any apparent organic cause. First observed by Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham in their work with children separated from their parents during World War II, phenomena such as these have made the aspect of human relationships known as *attachment* one of the most powerful explanatory tools in the understanding of healthy child development.

Just as with infant–caregiver attachment, attachments later in life have been implicated in determining the health and survival of the individual. A careful examination of how health is related to human relationships reveals that our health is

inextricably linked to those with whom we share our lives. For example, death in one spouse increases the risk of death in the other in what is known as the *widower effect*. Even hospitalization of one spouse may increase the risk of death of the other. But the widower effect may be a special case of a broader socio-medical phenomenon whereby health outcomes in one person are associated with health outcomes in those with whom that person is in a relationship. These outcomes could include not just death, but also illness, disability, and health behaviors.

Scientific attention to the role of social ties as determinants of health has increased dramatically in recent decades, and the effects of social relationships on health are ubiquitous and important. For example, greater "social support," usually measured as more frequent contact with people with whom we have supportive relationships, is associated with lower incidence of disease and with better adjustment to specific illnesses, such as cancer and heart disease. Many of these positive effects of social support may be the result of the stress-reducing nature of receiving social support. The many stresses of everyday life contribute to illness, but the assistance and emotional support of close others tend to ameliorate that stress. In this way, our relational ties may make us resistant to the long-term effects of stress and illness on our bodies, leading to better health and longer life.

The Spread of Health States Within a Social Network

One important question that does not yet have a satisfactory answer is the extent to which interpersonal health effects may be found outside of spousal relationships—among siblings, friends, coworkers, or neighbors. For example, might not a heart attack or stroke in one individual trigger changes in the health or health behavior of others? Might eating or exercise patterns in one person induce similar patterns in others?

Some of these questions suggest that health states and behaviors may spread from person to person, in the manner of a fashion trend. There may be epidemics of health problems such as obesity, alcoholism, suicide, or depression that might spread in a peer-to-peer fashion. A striking illustration of such an interpersonal spread of health states is provided in a study by Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler, who examined the spread of obesity in a group of individuals enrolled in a large medical study known as the *Framingham Heart Study*. For each member of this group of 5,124 individuals enrolled in 1971, whom they term "egos," the researchers identified a diverse set of individuals (their "alters") connected via various kinds of social ties (e.g., spouse, friend, sibling, neighbor), for a total social network size of 12,630 individuals. Changes in family relationships (because of birth, death, marriage, or divorce) and other relationships (because of residential moves or new jobs or friendships) were captured across seven survey periods between 1971 and 2003. At each of these seven points in time, many physical measures were also taken, including height and weight. Obesity was found to spread among individuals in a variety of different relationships. With respect to mutual friends, for example, one becoming obese increased the other's risk of obesity nearly threefold. Similar interpersonal social network effects were seen for other phenomena, such as smoking behavior or depression.

Conclusions

In summary, health is a social phenomenon supported by an architecture of social relationships. Within our social networks, the health of one person affects the health of others, often in profound ways. Illness, health behaviors, or death in one person can contribute to similar outcomes in others in their social networks, through a non-biological spread of disease. In this way, human relationships form a framework in which health states arise and are maintained. Understanding precisely how social network ties affect human health is an important new area of research on health and health care policy.

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See also Health, Relationships as a Factor in Treatment; Health and Relationships; Helping Behaviors in Relationships; Illness, Effects on Relationships; Interpersonal Influence

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HELPING BEHAVIORS IN RELATIONSHIPS

Helping behaviors are behaviors intended to benefit a relationship partner in response to an actual or perceived need; examples include the provision of social support, willingness to sacrifice, and accommodation. Helping behaviors are a type of *prosocial behavior,* which is a broader category of social behaviors intended to benefit others. Although there are many forms of prosocial behavior (e.g., sharing, cooperating, adhering to norms of honesty, fairness, and reciprocity), only a subset of these are enacted in response to the needs of others and are thus considered forms of helping. This entry describes different forms of helping behavior, examines the motivational underpinnings of helping, and identifies the personality and relationship factors that predict effective and ineffective helping in ongoing relationships.

What Is Helping?

Helping behavior can take many forms, but the type of help most often studied in ongoing relationships is *social support.* Social support serves two broad functions: (1) to help others cope with stressful life events and (2) to facilitate their goal strivings. The first type of social support—assisting others during times of adversity—has been labeled *safe haven* support. This type of support involves the provision of *instrumental aid* (e.g., material resources, task assistance, problem solving) or *emotional support* (e.g., physical affection, comfort,

understanding) that is intended to relieve another person's distress, assist that person in his or her coping efforts, and protect or promote his or her health and well-being. Research has shown that receiving social support during times of adversity helps individuals cope more effectively with stress and is associated with better health and psychological adjustment.

The second type of social support—assisting others in their goal pursuits—has been labeled *secure base* support. This type of support involves the provision of *instrumental aid* (e.g., material resources, information) or *emotional support* (e.g., encouragement, validation) that is intended to facilitate another person's goal-strivings, personal growth, and exploration. Research has shown that when people receive support for their goal strivings, they have higher self-esteem and self-efficacy, are more motivated to pursue personal goals, and more likely to make progress toward actually achieving these goals.

Two related lines of work examine other pathways through which partners help each other achieve their goals and celebrate their successes. First, research on the *Michelangelo phenomenon* shows that people are more likely to become the person they want to be (their ideal self) when a partner affirms and validates their ideal self and behaves in ways that help move them toward this ideal. Second, researchers have shown that partners play a critical role in helping each other capitalize on positive events. For example, when one person shares a success with another (a process called *capitalization*), the benefits of this success for that person's well-being are amplified if a relationship partner responds with active, enthusiastic support (e.g., by expressing pride and excitement or sharing the achievement with others). This research demonstrates that relationship partners play an important role in helping each other benefit from the good times, rather than just coping with the bad times.

Another form of helping behavior is *willingness to sacrifice.* Situations involving willingness to sacrifice arise when relationship partners have conflicting goals, needs, or preferences (through no necessary fault of either partner). Sacrifice occurs when one partner forgoes his or her own desires to allow the other partner to fulfill an important desire. Sacrifice is a form of helping behavior

because it involves one person's willingness to forgo self-interest to respond to the needs of a relationship partner.

Other forms of helping behavior include *accommodation* and *forgiveness*. Situations involving *accommodation* and *forgiveness* arise when one partner engages in a negative act (a transgression or betrayal), thereby imposing an emotional or material cost on the other partner. *Accommodation* occurs when the offended person refrains from responding negatively and instead responds in a constructive manner that defuses negativity and promotes the well-being of the other person (and the relationship). *Forgiveness* occurs when the offended person ceases to feel resentment or anger toward the transgressor or ceases to demand punishment or restitution. Accommodation and forgiveness are forms of helping because one person overcomes negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to benefit the partner or the relationship. Moreover, accommodation and forgiveness are often motivated by the desire to meet the emotional needs of a partner. For example, forgiveness is often motivated by a desire to reduce another person's suffering by relegating the betrayal to the past and relieving the offender of guilt or shame.

In summary, helping behavior can take many forms in ongoing relationships and can occur during good times and bad times. Common in all these forms of helping is an act of caring or goodwill by one person that is intended to meet the needs of another, thereby promoting that person's well-being.

Although helping is intended to benefit others, not all helping efforts will be successful, and even well-intended behavior can have unintended negative consequences. For example, helpers may offer support in a way that leads the recipient to feel incompetent, indebted, or like a burden. Thus, researchers have focused on the quality of the help people provide as well as on whether people help (or how much they help). Effective helping behavior is characterized by two key features: *sensitivity* and *responsiveness*. *Sensitivity* reflects the degree to which the helper's behavior is in synchrony with, and appropriately contingent upon, the needs of the recipient. *Responsiveness* reflects the degree to which the recipient feels understood, validated, and cared for. Thus, regardless of the type of help being provided, the benefits of that

help will depend on the degree to which it is sensitive and responsive to the recipient's needs.

Providing effective help is not always easy—it requires a variety of skills (e.g., perspective taking, emotion regulation), adequate resources (e.g., cognitive and emotional resources), and sufficient motivation. As such, helping is likely to be easier for some people than for others and in some relationships compared with others. The following sections examine the motivational, personality, and relationship factors that predict whether people help and whether their helping behavior is sensitive and responsive.

Motivations for Helping

Social and evolutionary theorists agree that caring for others is a universal human tendency—human beings have an innate propensity to engage in actions that benefit others, to feel compassion toward those who are suffering, and to protect and promote the welfare of others. Nevertheless, the motivation to provide help in specific situations (and the quality of help provided) will vary across situations, people, and relationships. Researchers distinguish between two different aspects of motivation: (1) one's overall degree of motivation to help (felt responsibility for responding to another's needs) and (2) the specific form of that motivation (altruistic versus egoistic).

In general, people will be more motivated to help others if they feel personally responsible for meeting the others' needs and have the skills and resources to do so. Felt responsibility can vary across relationships (e.g., people feel more responsible for meeting the needs of their children than of their friends), people (e.g., people differ in their chronic level of *communal orientation*), and situations (e.g., people feel more responsible for helping when they are the only person present during a situation of need).

Even if individuals are equally motivated to care for others in terms of felt responsibility, they may differ in the nature of that motivation. Helping behavior may be motivated by the desire to promote another's welfare (*altruistic motivation*) or the desire to gain benefits for the self (*egoistic motivation*). These motives may be dispositional, relationship-specific, or situation-specific. One

important situational factor is the degree to which the helper feels *empathic concern* (sympathy, compassion) versus *personal distress* (alarm, anxiety, guilt) in response to a person in need; empathic concern increases altruistic motivation, whereas personal distress increases egoistic motivation.

Distinguishing between altruistic and egoistic motives is important because these motives shape helping behavior. Helpers who are altruistically motivated tend to be more effective helpers—they are more attuned to their partner's signals, more willing to expend effort to respond appropriately to these signals, and more likely to provide help in a manner that expresses their benevolent motives. In contrast, helpers who are egoistically motivated tend to be focused on their own needs, which interferes with their ability to provide optimal help to others. Although altruistic motivation is associated with more effective helping than is egoistic motivation, both forms of motivation mobilize helping behavior and increase the likelihood that an individual will respond to the needs of others.

Individual Differences in Helping

Because effective helping requires adequate skills, resources, and motivation, people differ in their willingness and ability to help others in need. Research shows that individuals who have a *secure attachment style* (who are comfortable with closeness and confident that they are loved) are more likely to provide sensitive and responsive support to their relationship partners and more likely to help for altruistic versus egoistic reasons. In contrast, insecure individuals are less effective helpers. Those who are high in attachment *anxiety* (worried about being rejected or unloved) tend to have an over-involved, intrusive caregiving style that is out of synch with their partner's needs, and although they are altruistically motivated to help others, they are also egoistically motivated (e.g., they help others to be loved and needed). In contrast, those high in attachment *avoidance* (uncomfortable with closeness) tend to be neglectful and controlling in their caregiving style, and they tend to help others for largely egoistic reasons (e.g., to gain benefits for the self or to avoid sanctions for not helping).

Researchers have also identified broad personality dimensions that are linked to helping behavior.

Individuals who are high in *agreeableness* (pleasant, kind, concerned with cooperation and social harmony), dispositional *empathy* (a tendency to take the perspective of others and to feel compassion for those less fortunate), *prosocial personality orientation* (a tendency to be concerned for the welfare of others and to act in ways that demonstrate this concern), *communal orientation* (adherence to a norm of mutual, noncontingent responsiveness to needs), and *compassionate love* toward humanity (an attitude containing feelings, thoughts, and behavioral predispositions focused on caring for, supporting, and understanding others) are more likely to provide help to others in need (strangers as well as ongoing relationship partners).

Individual differences in chronic social motives have also been linked to various forms of helping behavior. For example, approach and avoidance motivations have been linked to different motives for sacrifice in intimate relationships. Individuals who are high in *approach motivation* (who focus on attaining social incentives such as closeness and affiliation) are more likely to sacrifice to attain positive outcomes for their partner and their relationship (e.g., to make their partner happy, to increase closeness). In contrast, those high in *avoidance motivation* (who focus on avoiding social threats such as rejection and conflict) are more likely to sacrifice to avoid negative outcomes (e.g., to avoid feeling guilty, to avoid upsetting their partner). Approach motives for sacrifice are associated with better psychological and relationship outcomes. In related work, individuals who give priority to pursuing *ego goals* (who seek to construct, maintain, protect, and enhance positive images of the self) are less likely to cultivate supportive friendships than are those who give priority to *compassionate goals* (who seek to support and promote the welfare of others).

Evidence also suggests that chronic differences in self-regulatory resources affect certain forms of helping behavior. For example, individuals who have *poor self-regulation skills* (who have difficulty controlling their impulses) are less likely to engage in accommodation behavior in their intimate relationships. Likewise, individuals who are *chronically self-focused* are less effective support providers, presumably because they have fewer cognitive and emotional resources for discerning

and attending to the needs of others as well as more egoistic motives for helping others.

Finally, researchers have examined sex differences in helping. Overall, there are few differences between men and women in their helping behavior or in their motivations for helping, but two reliable effects have emerged. First, men are less likely than are women to provide sensitive emotional support to same-sex friends. This difference appears to be due primarily to norms concerning the appropriateness of comforting behavior in male same-sex relationships, but evidence also indicates that men are less skilled than are women at providing emotional comfort. Second, men are more likely to provide instrumental aid to strangers in need (a situation in which women may feel less comfortable or safe intervening), but it is not yet clear whether this gender difference also occurs in close relationships.

Relationship Features That Promote Helping

Although personality factors play an important role in helping behavior, the strongest predictors of helping in ongoing relationships are features of the relationship itself. Many of these features increase helping by increasing felt responsibility for the welfare of relationship partners. Felt responsibility is greatest in relationships that are high in interdependence, commitment, emotional closeness, and trust, all of which foster communal norms that encourage mutual responsiveness to needs. For example, according to *Interdependence Theory*, when one person's life is deeply intertwined with a relationship partner, and when that person is committed to maintaining this relationship, they enact *transformations of motivation* in which the desire to pursue self-interest in a given situation is replaced or supplanted by the willingness to pursue outcomes that promote the welfare of the partner or the relationship. Research shows that relationship commitment increases a variety of pro-relationship behaviors including accommodation, forgiveness, and willingness to sacrifice.

Relationships also differ in the norms that govern the giving and receiving of benefits. *Exchange relationships* (such as relationships with business partners) involve a tit-for-tat norm in which benefits are given with the expectation of immediate and comparable benefits in return. In contrast, *communal relationships* (such as relationships with family and friends) involve a norm of mutual responsiveness, in which benefits are given in response to needs as they arise with no expectation of benefits in return. Relationships also vary in their level of *communal strength*. Communal strength reflects the degree to which a person feels responsible for meeting the needs of a partner and is willing to incur costs to meet those needs. For example, parent–child relationships are high in communal strength; parents feel a great deal of responsibility for meeting their children's needs and are often willing to incur large costs to meet these needs. Overall, research shows that people are more likely to help others with whom they have a communal versus an exchange relationship and that helping behavior increases as the degree of communal strength increases (e.g., people are more likely to help a spouse than a friend, and more likely to help a friend than a neighbor.)

Relationships highest in communal strength tend to involve kin. This pattern is consistent with evolutionary perspectives on helping. According to Kin Selection Theory, prosocial behavior evolved because it increases inclusive fitness (the successful transmission of one's genes from all sources to the next generation); therefore, helping behavior should increase as the degree of genetic relatedness increases between the helper and the person in need. Consistent with this approach, research shows that people are more likely to help kin than to help nonkin; and even among kin relationships, degree of genetic relatedness predicts additional variance in helping behavior. Some theorists have suggested that feelings of emotional closeness or communal strength (which promote helping behavior) may be proximal psychological mechanisms that mediate the link between genetic relatedness and willingness to help.

In addition to increasing the motivation to respond to the needs of another, relationship features also affect whether individuals are altruistically or egoistically motivated to help others. For example, altruistic motives are greatest in relationships that are high in compassionate love and emotional intimacy, partly because these qualities foster empathic concern, which is a critical source of altruistic motivation. Altruistic motives are also strong in relationships that are high in trust and

felt-security (confidence in a partner's love and commitment), partly because these qualities reduce self-protective (egoistic) motives for helping (such as helping to earn a partner's love or helping to increase a partner's dependence on the relationship) that can interfere with other-oriented emotions and actions. Research shows that when individuals feel secure and confident in their partners' regard, they are more willing to sacrifice, more accommodating, and more willing to forgive transgressions; they are also more likely to provide sensitive and responsive support to relationship partners during stressful and nonstressful times.

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See also Accommodation; Capitalization; Jaremka Caregiving Across the Life Span; Communal Relationships; Compassionate Love; Empathy; Forgiveness; Responsiveness; Social Support, Nature of; Transformation of Motivation; Willingness to Sacrifice

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HISPANIC/LATINO FAMILIES

The U.S. Census reports that since the turn of the 21st century Hispanics/Latinas(os) have become the largest racial/ethnic minority in the country. In 2003, Hispanics/Latinas(os) surpassed African Americans, who were then the largest racial and ethnic minority, reaching an unprecedented 13 percent of the U.S. racial/ethnic population. The labels *Hispanic* or *Latina(o)* are panethnic concepts frequently used to describe Latin-American and Caribbean immigrants and their children. These concepts are a convenient, albeit controversial, way to describe this rather diverse community. The label *Hispanic* was introduced by the U.S. Census and is used mostly in government, policy, and social science reports, whereas the label *Latina(o)* is a community-based term frequently presented as a political alternative to *Hispanic.* Surveys conducted in the Hispanic/Latino communities suggest that endorsement of these labels varies a great deal by nationality and that sometimes both terms are used interchangeably. Yet, surveys also reveal that the preference for most immigrants and their U.S.-born second and third generation is to be identified by nationality. The lack of a standardized terminology can be explained by the demographic diversity in the Latino community and the politics of ethnic labeling.

Indeed, Hispanics/Latinos are a community differentiated by nationality (Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans are the three largest groups), race (there are White, Brown, and Black Hispanic/Latinos), social class, and gender or sexuality. Within each of these communities, age, education, and immigration status further differentiates individuals and families. Most social scientists agree

that each group in the Hispanic/Latino community has had a unique history of migration, settlement, and incorporation into U.S. society. Mexicans, for example, are by far the largest group of recent arrivals, but with a long presence in U.S. history. Their entry goes back to 1848 when 40 percent of Mexico's territory became part of the United States as stipulated by the Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo. As a consequence, the largest and oldest Mexican communities can be found in the Southwest and on the West Coast. Puerto Ricans do not cross a national border because they are U.S. citizens by birth, but their migration to the United States goes back to 1898 when the island became a U.S. territory (colony). Several generations of Puerto Ricans have called New York City home, making it the oldest and largest Puerto Rican community on the mainland. Significant settlements can also be found in Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and Orlando. Groups such as Cubans, Dominicans, and Guatemalans represent unique and complex chapters in the most recent Hispanic/Latino immigration waves. But, regardless of the differences that exist between and within these communities, the family is (and has been) an important institution in the Latino community across the hemisphere, the topic this entry seeks to address.

Unfortunately, descriptions of Latino family life and family relations have been distorted by both positive and negative stereotypes. *Familismo* is a concept frequently used to describe large extended family relations and the notion that Latinos place a high value on family, marriage, and tradition. Other cultural stereotypes that have become accepted scholarly concepts are the notions of *machismo* and *marianismo*. *Machismo* is a stereotypical construction used by social scientists to describe Latino men across social classes and locations as physically strong, tough, virile "machos" who demand respect and control of the family. Marianismo, on the other hand, is used to describe women as passive, docile, self-sacrificing, and submissive mothers and daughters. These concepts have been deployed by social policy analysts and social scientists to make blanket assessments and evaluations of Latino families as steeped in tradition and unable to change because of rigid gender roles. For example, machismo has become a convenient explanation for a range of social problems facing Latino families such as inability to adapt to U.S. culture, poverty, and domestic violence. Similarly, the image of the docile mother, wife, and daughter attached to tradition has become a prevalent stereotype of Latinas and a convenient trope for explaining the perceived higher fertility rates and the lack of social change in Latino families. These stereotypes rest in the pervasive distortion of Latin America and the Caribbean as societies steeped in tradition with a rigid gender division of labor and the United States as a "modern," more flexible society where gender roles can be negotiated. Researchers seem committed to the *machismo/ marianismo* dichotomy even when the historical conditions across the hemisphere suggest otherwise. The task for future researchers interested in studying Latino families is to learn to recognize how family gender relations are shaped by material and historical conditions. In other words, gender dynamics in Latino families have been forged historically and have varied by race and social class.

Historical Overview

We know that the institution of the family played an important role in the historical settlement of the Americas. Many of the values associated with Hispanic/Latino families today—large extended families, honor, respect, religiosity, among cultural values—are rooted in the colonization of the Americas by Spain and Portugal. Historians have documented how legal marriage and the social rituals of marriage were important markers of social status and the foundation of the successful transplantation of Spanish and Portuguese cultures to the Americas. Latin America and the Caribbean stand today as visual and tangible representations of the power of cultural transformation (some may say collision) when multiple cultures come into contact. Yet, we face a formidable task here because historical records have tended to privilege elites by preserving their history and neglecting how marginalized groups, in this case African and indigenous peoples, contributed to the cultural (re)construction of families in the Americas. An analysis and description of family life and family relations in the Hispanic/Latino communities requires recognition of how race, social class, and gender hierarchies were (still are) maintained and reconstructed through both the

material conditions and discursive practices of families across the hemisphere.

In colonial Latin America, endogamy characterized marriage for elite families, but that did not prevent Spanish and Portuguese men from establishing extramarital affairs with Indian and African women, defying the strict rules about procreation and sex ordered by the Catholic Church. Today, many Latinas/os continue to organize family life according to Roman Catholic religious ideologies. For example, premarital sex and birth control are for the most part prohibited. Historically, the state and church gave men patriarchal control and power over women and children in the context of family life. In Latin America and the Caribbean, that did not mean that women were passive and dependent. Elite colonial women, for example, helped run their large-estate households (haciendas) and in the absence of their husbands took control of family business. One characteristic of marriage among the elite was large age differences between older husbands and young wives, resulting in higher rates of widowhood among elite women. In some cases, women remarried, but widows in Latin America accrued a great deal of social status by virtue of their inherited wealth. Marriage was a family affair, and because most people among the elite married each other, it meant the consolidation of wealth and property. Marriage also guaranteed the successful transmission of wealth and power to the next generation of landed elites.

Marriage for poor and working-class Indian, African, and *mestizo* (mixed race) women and men had different meanings. Most Indian, African, and mestizos were frequently found in consensual unions and what historians call *concubinage*, semi-permanent relations with a married man. The patriarchal bargain for working women was that since historically men's wages have been higher, a consensual relation allowed women to exchange both sex and domestic work for a portion of men's earnings and emotional support. The working poor needed each other to survive, and as a consequence, this helped in the formation of social class solidarity. For families, social class solidarity allowed working-class men and women to face the constant intrusion of elites on family life. Consensual unions afforded both men and women some protection and economic stability. Today, consensual unions continue to characterize Latino/a

families across the hemisphere, and social class solidarity has characterized social protests and revolutionary movements in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Other social problems that shaped (and continue to shape) family life across the hemisphere were high rates of illegitimate children and the presence of female-headed households. The need for survival frequently brought women together in family-like arrangements where rent, work, and childcare were shared. Like today, female-headed households were among the poorest and most marginalized groups in Latin American and the Caribbean. Children in these family arrangements were also vulnerable to poverty, malnutrition, and other social problems. The historical continuities shaping Latina/o family life are striking, but one must also recognize how changing social and economic conditions have shaped the formation of other family patterns and social problems.

The stereotype of Latinas as home-bound, passive, and submissive has been challenged by the realities of family life and women's work experiences across the hemisphere. Latinas have supported their families through both work for wages in the formal and informal economy and the work done on behalf of their families such as reproducing the next generation of workers and caring for family members. Feminist scholars have captured this duality as the productive-reproductive dimensions of family life. Industrial and postindustrial capitalism (also known as *globalization*) has consolidated the entrance of women into wage labor across the hemisphere. Women in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Chile, Cuba, and Brazil have entered the labor market in great numbers both to supplement the wages of their husbands and to provide for their families given the high rates of single-headed families. The feminist movement in Latin America and the Caribbean has also raised expectations about the social role of women in Latina/o societies. The consolidation of women's role as providers has introduced many problems for families across the social spectrum partly because this change was not accompanied by any significant changes in men's roles and social policies to aid families with childcare and other social services. Instead, like women in the United States, Latin-American and Caribbean women face the double burden of working for wages and the second shift at home. Even in Cuba,

where the state has offered women a range of social benefits such as government-subsidized childcare and paid maternity leave, Cuban women continue to bear the burden of caring for their immediate and extended families.

Family, Gender, and Migration

Across social classes, internal and international migration has been a strategy used by both women and men to address a range of family needs, whether economic, educational, health, or gender related. The tendency to see migration as simply an economic act has been challenged by decades of research on the gendered dimensions of migration and settlement conducted among Hispanic/Latino communities. Feminist researchers in both Latin America and the United States have documented the multiplicity of ways family relations have been altered by migration practices and how migration strategies are forged to address a multiplicity of family needs and problems, including gender oppression. Gender oppression has emerged as an important factor shaping the contemporary migration of Latin-American and Caribbean women to the United States and other parts of the world.

Research with Mexican immigrants in California has documented how the spousal separation endured by men and women because of restrictive immigration laws has altered women's and men's roles in the family. It has pushed married women left behind to work outside the home and forced men in the United States to take on household tasks such as preparation of food, laundry, and cleaning. Researchers have also documented how some working-class immigrant men develop second families in the U.S. communities, thereby reproducing the historical tendency for men to have extramarital affairs and children outside marriage. One of the most intriguing areas of research is the work currently being conducted to analyze the changes in the social reconstruction of masculinity among Latino immigrant men.

Researchers have also documented how women use migration as a way to assert their gender identities and reunite families. Research with Central-American immigrants has documented how single mothers forge migration practices to provide for their families by becoming domestic workers and surrogate mothers for privileged U.S. families. These transnational mothers, as they are frequently called, support themselves and their families across time and space. They have forged a gendered identity of themselves as working mothers that accounts for long absences and that splits social reproductive work between the United States and their countries of origin. Many of these women have entered the United States without documentation, thereby adding an additional source of stress to their family lives. In a post–September 11, 2001, world of border enforcement and deportations as a way to enforce immigration laws, Latina working mothers have become targets of government persecution. In 2007, the case of Elvira Arellano, an immigrant woman from Mexico who had entered the United States without documentation, called attention to the plight of working immigrant mothers. She had worked for many years in the city of Chicago, eluding immigration authorities. She had also given birth to a son, Saul, who was an American citizen by birth. She fought deportation by seeking asylum in a church in the city of Chicago and pleaded with government officials to allow her to stay and continue to raise her son, who by now was going to school. When she left the church to attend an immigrant rally in Los Angeles, she was arrested and deported to Mexico.

Research with Puerto Rican migrants in Chicago suggests working-class men tried to maintain a more traditional family life and division of labor by taking on two jobs, thus allowing women to stay home and care for children, a task many perceived as critically important to the cultural survival of the family given the dangers of living in large urban centers. Yet, economic needs frequently pushed working-class women to work outside the home and support their families. In Chicago, as in Puerto Rico, working-class women were responsible for both the reproductive work that supported their families and working outside the home. Educated and middle-class immigrant women in Chicago reported a more flexible gender division of labor, partly because they had already negotiated work and family arrangements in Puerto Rico. Indeed, researchers agree that working outside the home gives women a measure of freedom and empowerment, but such "liberation" can be seriously eroded by racial and social class hierarchies

that compound the difficulties faced by immigrants living in the postindustrial economies of destination societies.

For other immigrant groups, particularly Central-American immigrants, women have become primary breadwinners for their families because of labor market conditions in many U.S. cities, namely decline of manufacturing and need for service and unskilled work. The inability of some Central-American men to provide for their families leads to spousal separations, divorce, and domestic violence in the family. By contrast, indigenous Guatemalan immigrants come from more egalitarian family arrangements and thus perceive women's increased ability to procure jobs as an opportunity that benefits all in the family.

Children of Latino immigrants, many of whom have been born and raised in the United States, are also developing their own family dynamics and practices. Research conducted among second- and third-generation Latinos in California, Illinois, and New York suggests that, for example, parents are more likely to be educated and employed. Women have lower fertility rates when compared with their mothers, but researchers caution that some nationality variations are worth noting. Among Latinas, Cubans have lower fertility rates when compared with Mexican-origin women and U.S.-born Mexican women. Second- and third-generation Latinos are also more likely to live in nuclear families, in contrast to their immigrant parents. Second- and third-generation Latinos are also more likely to marry outside their group—in some cases, that means other Latino groups (Mexicans and Puerto Ricans) and across groups (Whites and Blacks). U.S.-born Latinos report a more egalitarian gender division of labor, but that is also shaped by social class differences.

In closing, the diversity that exist in the Latina/o experience makes generalizations difficult though key social processes such as globalization and migration have shaped family dynamics across the hemisphere.

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See also African-American Families; Asian-American Families; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Families, Demographic Trends

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HOLIDAYS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Holiday initially was derived from the longer term *holy day,* involving a relationship with a spiritual deity. The word now encompasses a range of secular, national, and religious celebrations inherently linked with personal relationships. Indeed, in the modern United States, spending a holiday alone is considered by many to be the pinnacle of isolation. Different holidays include different rituals, social partners, and types of relationships. Holidays provide a forum for explicating the nature of relationships. Celebrating a given holiday together can define the degree of intimacy between social partners. Some holidays expand social networks, whereas other holidays demarcate boundaries around close ties. Holidays also provide a sense of continuity and rhythm that allow for shared reminiscence and common bonds, particularly within families. Shifts in patterns of celebration can indicate transitions within those relationships. Finally, because holidays make explicit those aspects of relationships that may typically go unstated, holidays can generate intense emotions. This entry explains how holidays provide definition and continuity in relationships and how individuals may react to those celebrations.

The range of celebrations and festivities mimics the range of personal relationships in the modern world. Holidays help define ties between people, with some holidays encompassing a wide array of social ties, and other holidays limited to the closest ties. For example, a Christmas card list may include intimate, acquaintance, past, and business ties. Likewise, people celebrate national festivals such as the U.S. 4th of July with a conglomerate of friends, friends-of-friends, neighbors, and picnic lovers. By contrast, Thanksgiving brings together extended family, whereas an anniversary is a personal holiday, circumscribed to the two people in that relationship. Some holidays, such as birthdays, are semiprivate. Individuals presume a degree of intimacy with people who send a birthday card or gift.

Personalizing holidays can also establish intimate relationships or define cycles within those relationships. For example, romantic couples may create holidays to commemorate important moments in the relationship, such as eating annually at a certain restaurant. During the development of the romantic tie, negotiations over how to spend holidays typically celebrated with family (e.g., Thanksgiving) may formalize the relationship. Childrearing also often entails the institution of new holidays or personalizing existing holidays to reinforce the family as a unit. Families may engage in a formal rite of definition such as the family reunion, or they may generate idiosyncratic holidays such as the annual camping trip, an ice cream party on the first day of school, or even the Pie Day one family dreamed up.

Holidays also generate discontinuity from the normal routines of daily life in favor of rituals or celebrations. Holidays recur on a cyclical basis, usually each year. In the modern world, we tend to conceptualize time as linear, viewing individuals and relationships as developing and changing. Holidays can facilitate this progression and further strengthen ties. For example, birthdays indicate the growth of a child and shifts in relationships with that child, whereas anniversaries mark the duration of a marriage. Yet, holidays also introduce cycles within relationships and generate feelings of continuity. The annual nature of the rituals is reassuring and may ground the relationship.

The repeated nature of holiday celebrations also allows for connection via shared memories and experiences. Reminiscence with social partners regarding past holidays allows people to feel connected in the moment, as well as over time. For example, holiday rituals generated in childhood often transcend to the next generation, with cookie recipes passed down on stained paper. Likewise, people derive connections from maintaining relationships that arise only at a holiday, including distant partners who exchange Christmas cards or an in-law's hard-of-hearing grandmother who attends Thanksgiving dinner. These individuals are not a part of everyday social networks, but provide a sense of stability over time.

Holidays are marked by symbols and rituals that provide a forum to render implicit features of relationships explicit. People may communicate sentiments they do not typically state. The greeting card industry has capitalized on this aspect of holidays, even marketing new holidays (e.g., Grandparent's Day) for expressing feelings of attachment. As such, items associated with the

holiday can take on deep meaning in the context of relationships, such as the ornament a grandchild made in kindergarten or the punch bowl a couple always uses on New Year's Eve.

Holidays also set up platforms for social exchange, both with regard to artifacts (e.g., holiday cards) and in terms of who is the host of the celebration. Social partners may celebrate a certain holiday at one person's house, and the next holiday at the other person's. Alternately, one person may always host a particular holiday, symbolizing that person's role as the leader in a set of relationships.

Because holidays are deeply embedded with formality and ritual, individuals may fall into traditional relationship roles they do not assume in daily life. For example, couples that try to be equitable in their housework may find gender roles intensify around holidays with the women in the kitchen baking and cleaning up while the men watch football games. Grandmother may be the "kinkeeper" who organizes all of her progeny to attend an event at her house.

Holidays also may mark critical transitions within relationships. When a son brings his new girlfriend to the annual Memorial Day cookout, family members note this event as an indicator of the seriousness of that romantic tie (for that matter, it may signify the same to the son and his girlfriend). In another setting, the entire family may be aware that grandfather's health is failing, but it is the evening when he allows someone else to lead the Passover Seder that formalizes his relinquishing the role of patriarch and the evolution of new familial roles.

Although the premise of a holiday implies celebration, holidays also may involve challenges. Some holidays include arduous rituals such as the fasting periods of Jewish Yom Kippur or Muslim Ramadan that place shared privation on adults within these communities. As such, these holidays may provide a forum for people to solidify relationships as they support one another through the fast and celebrate the end in a collective meal.

Even holidays intended to be festive may evoke negative emotions. The cyclical nature of holidays allows family systems to fall into established behaviors that may be maladaptive for some of the members. Popular media often portray the dread adults feel about returning to their parents' home to celebrate Thanksgiving with extended family.

Holidays can bring together large family groups with ingroup dynamics from the past that evoke individual distress or subgroup dynamics, such as the yearly family argument.

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See also Developing Relationships; Food and Relationships; Kinkeeping; Turning Points in Relationships

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Homelessness and Relationships

People who are homeless sometimes lack positive relationships with others who might have provided them a social safety net to prevent homelessness. Indeed, some scholars consider social isolation or "disaffiliation" a defining characteristic of homelessness. This entry follows the more usual practice of defining homelessness in terms of residential status. Researchers in the United States tend to focus on *literal homelessness* or sleeping in shelters, public places, or other locations (such as cars or abandoned buildings) not intended for habitation. European researchers often include living with others because one has no place else to go, or having tenuous ties to housing, conditions

that are also labeled "precariously housed." U.S. definitions of adolescent homelessness also tend to adopt a broader framework, including staying with strangers because one cannot or does not want to go home. This entry examines bidirectional associations between homelessness and both lack of positive relationships with others and presence of negative or disruptive relationships.

Homelessness and Lack of Positive Relationships

Researchers in this area most often study people in the midst of a homeless episode, rather than those on the verge of homelessness or the much larger group of people who have reestablished themselves in housing. Many, but not all, such studies find that some currently homeless people have impoverished social relationships with friends or relatives who might be able to help them. In some cases, the loss of social relationships clearly predates homelessness. Homeless adults, whether homeless by themselves or with their families, are more likely than are other poor people to have been separated from their families of origin, been placed in foster care, or had a parent die when they were children. The loss of a relationship, such as divorce, sometimes precipitates homelessness, and rates of single parenthood are high among homeless families in the United States, as they are among poor families generally. Perhaps a quarter of single homeless adults have experienced mental disorders such as schizophrenia that often involve social isolation, but such disorders are rare among homeless families.

In other cases, people draw on friends and relatives for housing and other supports before becoming homeless, but eventually wear out their welcomes with members of their social networks. A study in Chicago found that homeless adults had lacked steady jobs for an average of 2 years longer than they had been homeless, and a study in New York City found that over three quarters of homeless families stayed with friends and relatives before turning to public shelters. At the time of their initial shelter request, homeless families reported more recent contacts with relatives and friends than did a comparison group of poor families who remained housed. In these cases, it

may not be lack of social ties so much as the inability of social network members to supply material resources that leads to homelessness.

Even where lack of social relationships predates homelessness, the critical missing ingredient may be economic resources rather than emotional support. Rates of homelessness are much lower in Europe, and homelessness among families is rare even where rates of single parenthood are comparable to or higher than in the United States, probably because of more generous income support policies. In a longitudinal study in New York City, housing subsidies created the same levels of housing stability for previously homeless families as for families in the welfare caseload generally. After accounting for housing subsidies, no psychosocial characteristics or characteristics of relationships, past or present, predicted housing stability.

An episode of homelessness can also disrupt social relationships when it leads to residential mobility, loss of phone service, or relocation to new neighborhoods. Shelters sometimes require families to break up, with men and older boys segregated from women and younger children, and homeless mothers often become separated from their children, who may stay with relatives or go into foster care. Embarrassment by people becoming homeless or anger that friends and relatives did not do enough to help, along with guilt by network members, can lead to tensions. Nevertheless, most people maintain some contact with friends and relatives while homeless, and many intersperse stays on a friend's couch with episodes of literal homelessness.

Homelessness and Negative Relationships

The presence of negative social relationships may be more important to homelessness than is lack of positive relationships. Friction with family is often marked for homeless adolescents, who are sometimes dubbed "runaways" or "throwaways." Adolescents most often cite family conflict as their reason for becoming homeless and report high rates of neglect and both physical and sexual abuse. Adolescents who become homeless, like their adult counterparts, have frequently been in foster care.

Homeless adults, especially but not exclusively women, also report high rates of physical or sexual

abuse and domestic violence. Studies that use brief, global measures find higher rates of domestic violence among women in homeless families than in comparable poor families. However, studies that use detailed checklists of violent behaviors find high rates of violence in both homeless and housed groups and few differences between them. Whatever the relative levels, it is clear that homeless women experience high levels of interpersonal trauma.

In sum, research suggests that the association between homelessness and social relationships is bidirectional. Lack of positive relationships and presence of negative relationships can contribute to homelessness in the absence of other sources of support, and homelessness, in turn, can disrupt people's social ties to others.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Family Functioning; Foster Care, Relationships in; Social Networks, Effects on Developed Relationships; Social Support and Health

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HONEYMOON

Honeymoon refers to a social custom or ritual linked to the transition to marriage that follows the wedding and typically involves a distancing of the newlywed couple from their social network and exemption from nonmarital responsibilities. Although popularly thought to be a uniform custom practiced throughout the ages, the term itself is more recent and the practices defining the experience are far from uniform, although unique to modern societies. This entry discusses the historical development of the honeymoon and the functions of honeymoons.

The term first appeared in Thomas Blount's *Glossographia* in 1656, in which the definition makes no allusion to any ritual or custom but instead is used to identify a stage in early marriage where love is at first intense and sweet (like honey) but then diminishes like the waning of the moon. The word likely originated from a Northern European tradition where the newlywed couple drank honey mead for the first month of their marriage (the passing of one full moon). There are, however, earlier precedents for certain aspects of the honeymoon ritual. The earliest can be found in the Hebrew Bible book Deuteronomy, where husbands are exempted from military and economic responsibilities for the first year of marriage. Another precursor may have been the Northern European tradition of abducting one's wife from a neighboring village and remaining in hiding for a period when her family would have stopped looking for her (about one month). Although these traditions share some common elements with contemporary honeymoons (exemption from nonmarital responsibilities and distancing from community), neither approaches the sophisticated customs, meanings, or functions of today's honeymoons.

Historical Development of the Honeymoon

Historical evidence suggests that the "tradition" of honeymooning began in the late 19th century and was mostly developed into a cultural practice during the middle and late 20th century. Although there is evidence of couples practicing a "wedding night" tradition before this time, this amounted to little more than an opportunity to consummate the marriage and, as John Gillis points out in his history of marriage, was often a night interrupted by the high jinx of friends, family, and townspeople. Perhaps the closest precursor to the honeymoon was the "bridal tour" taken exclusively by the wealthy as this tradition involved temporary exemption from nonmarital responsibilities and a trip to a foreign location. Often, however, this trip was made to visit relatives and establish the couple

in a network of wealth—not a purpose associated with the honeymoon of today.

Based on a review of popular press writings on the honeymoon, Kris and Richard Bulcroft and Linda Smeins identified three distinct cultural story lines (or narratives) in the development of the honeymoon as practiced today. These narratives tell us only about cultural meanings attached to the honeymoon. In actuality, there is little evidence to suggest that honeymoons were practiced widely as recently as 1900. The custom has grown in popularity since, however, with most couples today taking a honeymoon and many preferring a lengthy experience (a week or more) in a distant, and usually tropical, location. These changes in practice reflect the changing narratives.

Before 1930, the honeymoon narrative involved short trips after the wedding where the couple immersed themselves in a local natural setting (e.g., canoeing down a river, staying at a self-care cabin) where they played out traditional marital roles involving protection and provision by the husband and domesticity and emotional support by the wife.

Between 1930 and 1960, this narrative gradually gave way to a second one infused with high levels of anxiety related to a new emerging model of marriage premised on the importance of psychological and emotional fulfillment in marriage rather than the enactment of instrumental roles. This new narrative stressed the importance of the honeymoon as a transitional event where the couple was expected to engage in intimate disclosures and develop a sense of mutual fulfillment. To help relieve this anxiety, many of the articles in this period incorporated the advice of relationship "experts" (physicians, therapists, social workers, ministers).

The setting for honeymoon stories during this time remained much the same, although advances in transportation made longer trips possible and the emergence of the "honeymoon resort" replaced more rustic accommodations. These resorts were critical to the custom because they provided for all the instrumental needs of the couple, freeing them to engage in the deep emotional and psychological work now required in modern marriages. With the growing emotional significance of the honeymoon, it also became an event of greater significance for brides than for grooms.

Over time (beginning in the 1960s through today), the importance of honeymoon resorts increased but their character and function for the couple began to change. A dominant theme of this last narrative involves high levels of planning and orchestration of an event that is infused with symbols of romance, takes place in a natural but now exotic (foreign and usually tropical) environment, and includes a myriad of fun activities to ensure that the event is highly rewarding.

Purpose or Functions of the Honeymoon

Early sociological writing on the honeymoon proposed that the honeymoon was an important "stage" in the development of marriage. Rhona and Robert Rapoport argued that the honeymoon was a "critical role transition" where the future of a relationship depended on the ability to complete two sets of "developmental tasks." Two individual tasks to be accomplished were (1) developing sexual competence and (2) developing a facility for living with someone else. Two couple tasks were (1) developing a mutually satisfying sexual relationship and (2) engaging in a mutually satisfying shared experience that could help sustain their interest in the relationship later in marriage. Although these are four important factors in the development of relationships, the importance of honeymoons as a critical custom to help couples achieve these goals is more dubious, especially in a time when cohabitation and premarital sexuality are more the norm. If these were the reasons behind honeymoons, then the custom should be less widely practiced today instead of being more popular than ever before. These reasons also fail to explain why couples have become increasingly drawn to more elaborate, planned, and exotic honeymoon settings.

Reflecting on changes in relationships in modern society and in the honeymoon narrative suggests an alternative reason for taking honeymoons today. Perhaps this custom plays a part in helping couples confirm that they have made the best choice of partner by having a meticulously planned and "perfect" experience; obtain a sense of authenticity in their relationship by going to an exotic (nonmodern) tropical locale that provides heightened sensory experiences; and develop a couple

identity in an increasingly unconnected social world by going to a place imbued with meaning of class privilege and wealth, where they will be singled out as a newly married couple and where they can record their couple experiences for later presentation to others. Alternatively, or in conjunction with these reasons, participation in the honeymoon today may be fueled by economic interests present in a highly developed capitalistic society. Honeymoons are big business today. Whether the economic value of the custom drives its popularity, the personal and couple needs that do so, or a combination of both, there is little likelihood that this custom will become less important in the foreseeable future.

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See also Marriage, Expectations About; Marriage, Transition to

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HOOKING UP, HOOKUPS

Casual sexual interaction among adolescents and young adults, especially college students, has been an important topic of study in the last three decades. *Hooking up* is a contemporary form of casual sexual relating popular among youth. *Hookups* are brief sexual encounters between individuals who are not-at-all, barely, or somewhat acquainted and with whom there is no expectation of further relating. In keeping with the popular definition of casual sex, neither commitment nor emotion is expected in hookups. Hookups involving partners who know each other and may even be friends are referred to as "friends with benefits."

Hookups involve a variety of sexual behaviors, including but not limited to sexual intercourse. More than half of older adolescents and young adults have hookup experience; some estimates are as high as 80 percent. Some evidence suggests that about half of individuals who hook up tend to engage in vaginal sexual intercourse as part of the interaction. Kissing, petting, and oral sex are also common in hookups.

Researchers and practitioners have viewed forms of casual sex as physically risky behavior, primarily increasing the hazard of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Thus, a primary goal of research on casual sex, including hookups, has been to determine who is most likely to hook up and under what circumstances to develop prevention programs to effectively reduce the physical risks associated with these risky casual sexual behaviors. For example, researchers have examined personality and social factors common among youths who hook up. Individuals who have a preference for risk taking are more likely to hook up, as are individuals who have permissive sexual attitudes.

Individuals who begin to use alcohol at an early age, and especially those who tend to binge drink, are more likely to hook up. Alcohol use is also common before and during hookups, particularly those involving partners who do not know each other. Such risk takers, especially under the influence of alcohol, are also more likely to engage in sexual intercourse and are less likely to use condoms or other contraceptives during the hookup.

Youths are more likely to hook up in some situations than in others. Research on hooking up has focused primarily on college students. Only a few studies have studied noncollege-attending late adolescents and young adults; hooking up appears to be more frequent among youths in colleges and universities than among youths not attending college. Research on the transition from high school to college has revealed an increase in casual sexual behavior upon entering college. Researchers have also studied youths on vacation, especially during spring break, the famed college holiday. The likelihood of

engaging in hookups during spring break is quite high, as is other risk-taking behavior, such as lack of condom and other contraception use and bingeing on alcohol.

Youths' perceptions of social norms, or how common hooking up is in a particular situation, influences their likelihood of hooking up. Moreover, youths practice "pluralistic ignorance" wherein their perception of how comfortable or enjoyable their peers find hookups is greater than their own experience. This motivates youths to engage in hookups, partly because their skewed perceptions of their peers' experiences lead them to anticipate a positive experience and because they seek social acceptance and conformity with what they perceive as the norm. For some youths, hookups are seen as a route to social acceptance and status.

More recent research has further explored the subjective experience of hookups, including what motivates youths to hook up, and the unexpected emotional risks associated with hooking up. Motivations for both men and women include sexual desire and interest in sexual exploration and experimentation, as well as the possible outcome of positive social or interpersonal consequences such as popularity or romantic commitment. Some researchers have found that women are more likely than men to engage in casual sexual intercourse to increase their chances of starting a long-term relationship with their partners, whereas men are more likely than women to engage in casual sex to show their sexual prowess and enhance their social status.

Yet, research has also shown that hookup experiences are rarely simple and often result in complicated emotions. Most youths experience mixed positive and negative emotions during and after hookups. Women are more likely to feel certain negative emotions after hookups than men. Some hookups result in unwanted sexual interaction and can include sexual aggression and violence.

Young men and women have become more similar in sexual behavior patterns during the past two decades. However, it appears that youths' attitudes about sex, particularly the sexual double standard, are not changing as quickly. The sexual double standard is the Western cultural mandate that men are encouraged and rewarded for seeking opportunities to initiate and engage in sexual activity with a number of women, but women are encouraged and rewarded for abstaining from sexual activity and controlling men's access to sexual activity. As a result, men experience validation for their sexuality whereas women experience chastisement for their sexuality. Such external responses are frequently internalized such that men feel pride in their sexuality and women feel shame and guilt.

The sexual double standard continues to play a role in some young adults' attitudes toward hooking up and especially in self-evaluations of their own sexual experiences. Women are more likely than are men to report feeling bad or used after their last hookup experience, and they are more likely to feel shame and regret for *their* (versus their partner's) behavior. Evolutionary psychology explains sex differences in emotional reactions to sexual experiences consistent with findings on the sexual double standard. This theory posits that women's negative affect following casual sex (i.e., "low-investment copulation") is adaptive—a warning that steers women away from low-investing men. In contrast, cognitive and social constructionist theories explain how cultural gender attributes may influence emotionality in casual sexual experiences. Cognitive theorists assert that emotional responses are labeled according to cultural *feeling rules* that are learned through socialization. Social constructionists view emotions as expected parts of social *scripts,* also learned through socialization. With traditional gender socialization comes sensitivity to expectations and "interpretational frameworks"—such as the sexual double standard—guiding specific emotional responses in sexual interactions.

In summary, hooking up is a significant feature of contemporary Western youth culture. Hookups are also complex interpersonal experiences that often surprise youths with their emotional intensity and complications. Just beginning to be explored by researchers and practitioners is the role of hookups in youths' development of important relationship skills. Hookups infrequently lead to the formation of a committed relationship, and when they do, the relationship tends to be short-lived. Also of interest is how hookup experiences and associated emotional ramifications affect later efforts to establish a stable love relationship.

Elizabeth Paul

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HORMONES RELATED TO RELATIONSHIPS

Hormones are the chemical messengers of the body and are linked to romantic love, sexual arousal, social attachment between parents and their children, aggression, and many other aspects of human relationships. To understand how hormones play a role in relationships, it is first necessary to understand what hormones are and how they operate in the body. This entry explores what is known about the association between hormones and relationships, specifically social attachment, romantic relationships, and sexual behaviors.

What Are Hormones?

The word *hormone* comes from the Greek for "to arouse," which is the primary function of these chemical messengers. The nervous system controls the release of the hormones. Most hormones travel through the circulatory system to stimulate target cells; however, some of these chemical messengers are released by nerve cells into the junction between two nerve cells (the synapse) or transported by the cerebrospinal fluid. Hormones are also called neuroregulators because they stimulate or inhibit functioning in the nervous system. The steroid hormones are produced in the testes (androgens including testosterone) and ovaries (estrogens and progestins). Two of the hormones most associated with human relationships, oxytocin and vasopressin, are considered neurohormones or neuropeptides because they are manufactured in the hypothalamus area of the brain and then stored for subsequent release from the nerve terminals in the posterior pituitary gland. The hypothalamus is a part of the brain involved with the regulations of functions such as emotional behavior, arousal (including sexual arousal), biological rhythms, and homeostasis of the systems in the body.

Social Attachment and Love

Social attachment is thought to be at the heart of emotional bonds formed between people. This can be the bond between parents and their children, couples in love, and other forms of social bonds. The first of these bonds to be formed is the attachment between a caregiver and an infant. This attachment provides a secure foundation for the infant's development, providing protection, nourishment, and socializing interactions. Research indicates that secure attachment between the child and caregiver is important to healthy child development.

Caregiver–Infant Social Attachment

Mothers experience a series of heightened hormonal processes before and during the birth of their children, including stress hormones from the adrenal glands and the release of oxytocin and vasopressin. Oxytocin is integral to the muscular contractions necessary for labor and delivery as well as to the production of milk by the breast tissues. Suckling by infants also increases oxytocin production. In both women and men, oxytocin and vasopressin appear to dampen stress by regulating the neuroendocrine components of the body that control stress-related hormones and enhancing the function of the parasympathetic nervous system that physiologically soothes the body (e.g., slow heart rate, lower blood pressure). Neural receptors for oxytocin are highly concentrated in

the parts of the brain associated with parenting behavior, emotional bonding between people, sexual behavior, and the capacity to form social attachments. Oxytocin and vasopressin are essential to a series of critical attachment behaviors in both women and men, including social recognition memory (learning the identity of the infant or adult partner), recognition of social and emotional facial cues (critical to successful nurturance), and trust (critical to the security of the relationship). Higher levels of oxytocin during and after pregnancy are associated with better maternal bonding behaviors in women including affectionate touch and warm thoughts about the baby. Experimental studies with men have found that the inhalation of oxytocin is linked to increased trust and enhanced ability to read facial emotional cues. These neuropeptides play a role in social attachment, and the lack of social attachment may affect the development of offspring. For example, orphans raised in aberrantly low caregiving and neglectful environments exhibited lower than normal levels of oxytocin in response to their adoptive mothers' physical contact. These orphans also exhibited abnormally low levels of vasopressin.

Dopamine, a hormone linked to addiction and the reward centers of the brain, also plays a role in attachment. The release of oxytocin and vasopressin during bonding behaviors is associated with the stimulation of the reward centers of the brain and the secretion of dopamine, leading some scientists to conclude that attachment is addictive and that neurohormonal pathways associated with addiction evolved to facilitate social attachment, rather than drug abuse.

Romantic Attachment

Attachment with an adult partner displays many of the same patterns found between adult caregivers and infants. Oxytocin, vasopressin, and dopamine are found in higher concentrations during the early phases of intense romantic attachment and bonding. The concomitant increases of oxytocin and vasopressin with dopamine during the initial phases of romantic attachment (and stimulations of the reward centers of the brain) are consistent with couples' experience of euphoria and may be why individuals feel "addicted" to the person they love. Research indicates men and women who feel greater support from their partners also exhibit higher levels of oxytocin than do those individuals who do not feel as supported by their partners. The ability to recognize and remember the person one is romantically attracted to is enhanced by the presence of oxytocin and vasopressin (paralleling what happens in the association between these hormones and social recognition memory between mothers and their infants). The human capacity for trusting loved ones is also linked to oxytocin.

Several other hormones are linked to falling in love, including an increase in testosterone in women but a reduction in testosterone among men. The stress hormone cortisol is found to be higher in couples during the initial phases of falling in love. An interesting sex difference associated with social attachment is that vasopressin in men tends to heighten bond formation with both infants and adult partners and increases aggressive behaviors toward others. In mammalian animals, increased levels of vasopressin in the males are linked to territoriality and guarding—all behaviors that could be associated with protecting female partners or offspring.

There is little research on hormones associated with other kinds of social attachment beyond parents and their infants or romantic bonds between adults. However, what the field knows about the complex relationship between hormones and love suggests that the formation and maintenance of social attachment is rewarding and is enhanced because of the action of hormones.

Sexual Behaviors

Love and sex are frequently considered two sides of the same coin; however, the hormonal substrate of relationships highlights the different (if overlapping) roles these two kinds of behaviors play in relationships. As indicated, attachment and love are most frequently linked to oxytocin and vasopressin. Sex-related behaviors are more closely associated with the sex hormones (also called sex steroids).

The origins of sex begin during fetal development when all humans have a female structure. During the second trimester of pregnancy, for males, the influx of fetal testosterone induces masculinization of the brain. The hormonal changes

that lead to the masculine brain are different than those testosterone-associated triggers that result in the distinct male body and gonads. Puberty occurs when circulating sex hormones reach adult levels and children become biologically and sexually mature. For men, with adult levels of testosterone and sexual maturity comes sexual desires and what is termed *mating effort*—a heightened amount of competitive aggression toward other men and an increased interest in sexual consummation. When adult men have suppressed or low levels of testosterone their sexual appetite declines. High levels of testosterone in men is linked to aggression and greater effort to exert dominance in their interactions with women partners. This dominating behavior by high-testosterone men is associated with more aggressive relationship conflict, poorer relationship quality, and a greater rate of divorce.

The contributing roles of testosterone and oxytocin in men's sexual behavior is linked to the nature of their relationship (or lack of relationship) with women. Men may form more permanent bonds with women because of the unique character of women's sexual receptiveness. Unlike other mammals, human females are sexually receptive not just when they are at peak fertility, but throughout their monthly cycle, leading theorists to suggest that this "hidden" ovulation may result in human males investing more time in forming a permanent bond to achieve reproductive success (i.e., having children who live to have their own offspring). This bonding behavior (attachment) in men appears to be associated with greater levels of oxytocin and lower levels of testosterone. There is a drop in testosterone in men when they are falling in love, when they are in committed romantic relationships, and when they make the transition to fatherhood. There is an increase in testosterone in men around the time of divorce but a decrease in testosterone again once they remarry. Men who are sexually attracted to only their wives have lower levels of testosterone than do married men sexually attracted to women outside their marriage. Fathers with lower levels of testosterone are more responsive to the cries of newborn babies. Thus, heightened levels of testosterone appear to be associated with men's pursuit of sexual relationships and lower levels of testosterone (in combination with increased levels of oxytocin) are linked to social bonds with a mate and paternal behaviors.

Female sexual desires in humans are more complex than for males and not as well understood. There are conflicting research findings about whether sexual desires for women peak around the time of ovulation when estradiol (an estrogen) and testosterone levels are highest. Some evidence suggests that testosterone levels in women are high before, and after, sexual intercourse and during physical cuddling. Research also indicates that oxytocin may play a significant part in women's sexual desire and sexual pleasure, perhaps more of a part than oxytocin plays in men's sexual desire and pleasure. Given the strong association between oxytocin and attachment, this increased role for oxytocin in women's sexual behavior is consistent with evolutionary theories that suggest attachment has a more important role in women's reproductive success.

The source of these differences in sexual desire between men and women is thought to be partly the result of contrasts in the organization and structure of male and female brains. For example, in some female mammals, such as rats, the infusion of oxytocin into sectors of the brain with oxytocin neuroreceptors increases sexual behavior, but only if these females have higher levels of circulating estrogens. However, more sophisticated ways of measuring neurohormonal activity in the brain are needed to provide fuller understanding of the interaction between hormones in women's and men's sexual desire.

One of the unique qualities of humans, noted by virtually all scientists when discussing the nature of hormonal influences on relationships, is that attraction, attachment, and sexual desire cannot be simply explained by the biochemical interactions of these chemical messengers in the brain and body. Hormones may be necessary for building human relationships, but they are not sufficient for such bonds to be created. The interaction between higher cortical processes of the brain, emotions, cultural context, and developmental experience most likely play the greatest role in our choice of whom to build relationships with and the strengths of those relationships. Nonetheless, hormones help facilitate or damage our connection to other people.

Sybil Carrère

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HOSTILITY

Individual differences in anger, hostility, and aggressiveness have always been of interest to basic and applied behavioral scientists, given the importance of these aspects of emotion and social behavior in many different domains—including personal relationships. Much of the recent interest in this topic stems from findings that these personality traits are associated with reduced longevity, increased risk of death, and the leading cause of death in industrialized societies—cardiovascular diseases such as coronary heart disease and stroke. The health consequences of hostility may involve the fact that these personality traits are also associated with difficulties in personal relationships, such as low social support, marital strain, and risk for divorce. Strain, disruption, and low support in personal relationships, in turn, confer increased risk of premature mortality and specific serious health problems such as cardiovascular disease. This entry discusses the association of hostility with health, mechanisms underlying this association, and the potential health benefits of interventions that modify this trait.

The term *hostility* has both a general and a specific use in this literature. In the specific sense, it refers to a collection of cognitive characteristics involving negative attitudes toward others, primarily consisting of ill will, a tendency to denigrate others, and enmity. Closely related traits include cynicism, mistrust, and a hostile attributional style. *Cynicism* refers to the belief that people are generally motivated by selfish concerns rather than by genuine concern for others, and *mistrust* is the expectation that other people are likely to be sources of mistreatment. A hostile attributional style involves the tendency to view the actions of others as reflecting aggressive intentions. Hence, as a cognitive trait, hostility involves the a desire to inflict harm or see others harmed, a relational view of being in opposition to others, the expectation that other people are likely sources of wrongdoing, and a tendency to devalue their motives and worth.

These cognitive or attitudinal traits often co-occur with affective and behavioral characteristics, consistent with the use of hostility in the more general sense. For example, *trait anger* refers to the tendency to experience anger frequently and intensely, often with little provocation and for a prolonged period. Related emotional traits are the tendency to experience resentment and contempt for others. Aggressiveness refers to the tendency toward verbally or even physically hurtful, attacking, or destructive actions. Although *hostility* refers most precisely to the cognitive facet of this interrelated set of traits, the term is sometimes used to refer to the overall set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics.

For centuries, medical writers have speculated that hostile personality traits contribute to the development and often lethal outcome of cardiovascular disease. The earliest descriptions of coronary syndromes in the medical literature also contained speculations that psychological stress and strong negative emotions such as anger contributed to the disease. Current interest in this hypothesis began when researchers attempted to identify specific unhealthy elements within the broad and multifaceted Type A coronary-prone behavior pattern, comprising achievement-striving, competitiveness, impatience and time-urgency, excessive job involvement, as well as easily provoked hostility. Decades of subsequent research have produced mixed but generally converging evidence that hostility, anger, and related traits are associated with reduced longevity, atherosclerosis,

incident coronary heart disease, recurrent coronary events, stroke, and death from cardiovascular disease.

These statistical associations raise questions about underlying mechanisms. Genetic factors and unhealthy behavioral lifestyles (e.g., smoking, physical inactivity, imprudent diet) likely contribute to the health consequences of hostility. However, the nature and impact of personal relationships also seem to be involved. For example, hostile persons report that they experience less social support than less quarrelsome persons report, and low social support is a well-established risk factor for poor health. Further, hostile people report more conflict in close relationships, and behavioral observation studies of marital interactions confirm that trait hostility is associated with greater levels of negative behavior during the discussion of areas of disagreement between spouses. Longitudinal studies demonstrate that these personality traits are associated with increases in conflict and strain in marriage over time. Hence, hostility is not simply a reaction to difficulty in close relationships; it also seems to be a contributing cause.

Psychophysiological research indicates that hostility and related personality traits are associated with cardiovascular, neuroendocrine, and immunologic responses to social situations that could contribute to poor health. For example, unlike more agreeable people, hostile individuals benefit less from social support provided during psychologically stressful situations. Such social support typically reduces physiological stress responses, but hostile persons do not demonstrate this protective effect, perhaps because of their suspicious and mistrusting view of personal relationships. Similarly, hostile persons respond to conflicts with family members such as spouses with enhanced physiological stress responses. Dissipation of these stress responses seems to require more time for hostile persons, and they may also be more prone to display physiological reactivity when they recall and ruminate or brood about prior episodes of conflict and perceived mistreatment. Hence, a general pattern of reduced positivity in social relationships, increased exposure and reactivity to negative interpersonal interactions, delayed recovery from these episodes, and more frequent psychological re-experiencing could combine to produce a generally greater level of chronic physiological activation and strain on body systems. Repeated over years, this hostile psychophysiology of daily life could contribute to many different serious health problems. However, no studies to date have tested this full mediational account of how personality traits such as anger and hostility lead to poor health.

Psychological interventions intended to reduce stress and related negative traits such as anger and hostility have been found to have health benefits among persons with established heart disease. These interventions teach skills for the reduction of emotional and physiological arousal, modification of attitudes and appraisals of others that otherwise promote anger and other negative emotions, and the development of more constructive skills in managing interpersonal conflicts. Although no studies have tested the hypothesis that interventions designed to reduce anger and hostility can prevent the initial occurrence of cardiovascular disease, there is growing evidence that such treatments can facilitate recovery after coronary events and reduce the risk of recurrent coronary events. Research demonstrating that hostility is associated with increased difficulties in close relationships such as marriage suggests another potentially important application of this research. There is considerable empirical support for several interventions intended to reduce marital distress and improve relationship functioning. Although anger and hostility are often included as targets in such interventions, these are typically not a main focus. Hence, techniques specifically designed to modify individual differences in anger and hostility may be useful additions to relationship therapies.

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See also Agreeableness; Anger in Relationships; Couple Therapy; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Social Support and Health; Stress and Relationships; Trust; Warmth, Interpersonal

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HURT FEELINGS

Whoever said, "stick and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you," never interacted with other people. In one of the first studies to explore hurt feelings, people describing how it felt to have their feelings hurt often used terms such as *stung* and *crushed,* or they said they felt their heart break. Although some people seem more prone than others to getting their feelings hurt, no one is immune to the emotional and physical pain that often accompanies a critical remark, a forgotten birthday or anniversary, a broken promise, an unreturned phone call, or a betrayal, such as infidelity. Despite the pervasiveness of hurt feelings, surprisingly little research has been devoted to the topic. Only within the last decade have researchers begun to investigate hurt feelings, and these studies have been limited primarily to Western cultures. Unlike some other emotions, hurt is an interpersonal emotion that arises in every relationship, although it is more likely in close relationships than in relationships with strangers. This entry provides an overview of what is currently known about this painful yet pervasive phenomenon, with particular attention to the conceptualization of, responses to, and consequences of hurt feelings.

Conceptualizing Hurt Feelings

People know what it *feels* like to have their feelings hurt, but what are hurt feelings? Depending on the behavior eliciting them, hurt feelings can be either short-term or long-term. Short-term hurt feelings, resulting from behaviors such as negative comments, inattentiveness, or interpersonal conflict, make the person who is hurt feel bad but are unlikely to have lasting effects on a relationship unless the slights are repeated. Long-term hurt feelings, on the other hand, such as those resulting from infidelity or a related type of betrayal, make the target feel bad and have more negative effects on relationships than do short-term hurt feelings, in some instances leading to the dissolution of those relationships.

Conceptually, hurt feelings seem similar to a number of other types of emotions and, indeed, are often accompanied by other emotions, such as anger, guilt, fear, anxiety, and sadness. However, the appraisals that produce these other emotions differ from those that produce hurt feelings. Furthermore, when participants are asked to write about the experience of having their feelings hurt, they have no trouble distinguishing hurt feelings from other emotional states.

The defining feature of hurt feelings is perceived relational devaluation, the perception that other people do not value their relationship with the target as much as they once did or as much as the target would like them to. A critical comment, for example, suggests that the person making the remark does not view the target as favorably as he or she once did. Similarly, partners who are unfaithful send a clear message that they do not value their relationship with the target as much as they once did. Researchers have found that the amount of hurt people report experiencing varies directly with the degree to which they feel relationally devalued.

Not surprisingly, then, people's feelings are hurt most often by those closest to them. In an adaptation of the old adage that "we only hurt the ones we love," researchers have found that hurt feelings are perpetrated *most often* by close friends and romantic partners. Rarely is a stranger the source of hurt feelings. On those rare occasions when our feelings are hurt by strangers or acquaintances, the hurt stems from the fact that rejection by a stranger implies an immediate negative evaluation that signals a high degree of relational devaluation. In addition, at times, the closeness and familiarity of close relationships may help inoculate against the sting of hurt feelings. A tendency to give the benefit of the doubt may be present in close, *satisfying* relationships, which attenuates the sort of malicious

attributions that might otherwise trigger perceptions of relational devaluation.

Although most people think of hurt feelings as resulting from direct emotional injury by another person, people may also experience *empathic hurt feelings,* feeling hurt because someone close to them has been hurt. Parents, for example, may feel the gut-wrenching pain of hurt feelings when their child is rejected or emotionally hurt by someone. Empathic hurt feelings are similar to but distinct from compassion. A parent may feel compassion for a friend's child whose feelings are hurt. Yet, the feeling is far different from that accompanying the experience of empathic hurt feelings when their own child is hurt. In addition, the pain people associate with empathic hurt feelings is often worse than that experienced when their own feelings are directly hurt. When another's feelings are hurt, there is often little people can do to help alleviate another's pain. People do not have the ability to soften another person's hurt feelings by reassessing the situation, as they do with their own hurt feelings.

Variations in Hurt Feelings

To experience hurt feelings, something has to happen that is appraised as a sign of relational devaluation. The range of comments and behaviors, however, that can be appraised as relationally devaluing and emotionally painful is virtually limitless. A leading researcher in the area of hurt feelings found the most common types of hurtful messages to be accusations ("You're such a hypocrite"), evaluations ("Going out with him was the biggest mistake of my life"), and informative statements ("You aren't a priority in my life"). The hurt associated with each of these types of messages is not difficult to imagine; however, some messages and behaviors are more hurtful than others. People who have their feelings hurt by accusations or evaluations can at least respond to those accusations and evaluations by refuting the claim or by asking the accuser for specific examples or explanations. At minimum, the target can "save face" by defending himself or herself. When people's feelings are hurt by informative statements, however, such as "I'm attracted to someone else," there is little that people can do to defend themselves. Thus, not surprisingly, research

has found informative statements to be perceived as more hurtful than accusations or evaluations.

In addition, some people are more likely to experience hurt feelings than others are. Although a number of individual difference variables may predict the proneness to experience hurt feelings, a key variable is rejection sensitivity. Individuals high in rejection sensitivity expect that others will devalue and reject them, and, consequently, are more likely to perceive rejection and relational devaluation even when it is not actually present. Thus, they are more inclined to have their feelings hurt than are people lower in rejection sensitivity. Furthermore, relative to people low in rejection sensitivity, people high in rejection sensitivity are more likely to respond with anger and retaliation to the perpetrator, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy by eliciting the very rejection they thought they perceived initially. Interestingly, in some cases, rejection sensitive individuals will preemptively avoid establishing close relationships with others or withdraw from existing relationships to avoid any chance of being hurt in those relationships.

Responses to and Consequences of Hurt Feelings

People react to having their feelings hurt in a number of different ways. Some people blame themselves, wondering what they did to make another person devalue their relationship with them. Not surprisingly, these individuals are likely to experience feelings of low self-worth as they wrestle with feeling rejected and betrayed by others. Others lash out in anger at the individual who hurt them, challenging the other to account for his or her hurtful behavior. Still others more calmly ask for an explanation of the hurtful behavior and may, in turn, forgive the perpetrator. Yet, other individuals acquiesce. Forgiveness is more likely if the perpetrator offers a genuine apology for his or her behavior, if the hurtful behavior is relatively minor, if the issue is of little importance to the target, and if the target does not respond with anger. Despite the variability in responses to hurt feelings, most hurt individuals respond actively, either expressing anger, countering with a hurtful comment, or telling the perpetrator that he or she had hurt their feelings.

The type of response offered varies largely with the perceived intent behind the perpetrator's behavior. Individuals who perceive that the slight was unintentional, the result of an oversight, absent-mindedness, or forgetfulness, are likely to respond by forgiving the perpetrator. On the other hand, people who perceive that the perpetrator intended to hurt them tend to respond by either blaming themselves or, more likely, actively retaliating against the perpetrator. Not surprisingly, compared with those in less satisfying relationships, people in satisfying relationships report being hurt to a lesser degree (e.g., perceive lesser intentionality by the perpetrator) and indicate that hurtful events have less of a negative effect on the relationship. People in satisfying relationships are also more likely to respond in actively constructive ways when their feelings are hurt, suggesting that members of the dyad discuss and work through hurtful exchanges.

Importantly, however, victims and perpetrators of hurt feelings, as with many other emotions, often differ in the perceived intent behind behavior. Victims evaluate hurtful experiences more negatively than perpetrators do and impute more negative intent and less remorse to the perpetrators than the perpetrators assign to themselves. Perpetrators, conversely, surprisingly evaluate the long-term effects of hurtful events on the victim as more severe then victims perceive them to be. Thus, many people who experience hurt feelings because they perceive that another intentionally did something to hurt them may actually be misperceiving the actual motives of the perpetrator.

The consequences that follow hurt feelings also vary with the type of response offered. People who internalize hurt feelings and the cause of the hurt ("what did I do wrong?") often experience emotional difficulties, such as depression and lower self-esteem. Alternatively, people who respond in anger are less likely to experience depression because they are venting their negative feelings. However, because they direct their negative feelings at the individual who hurt them, they more often experience relational distance and irreparably damaged relationships. If forgiveness follows, damage to the relationship may be minimized.

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See also Attribution Processes in Relationships; Betrayal; Dark Side of Relationships; Empathy; Forgiveness; Guilt and Shame; Rejection; Rejection Sensitivity

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I

IDEALIZATION

Sara met Burke 2 months ago, but already her head is swimming with thoughts of marriage. They met at a party and immediately "hit it off." She feels as if they had known each other their whole life, and she believes that they agree on everything because they have so much in common. After only 2 months, she is convinced that he really loves her for the person she is, and that he is the perfect man for her, the type of guy she always wanted. Like Sara, people who are enthralled with a person tend to bend reality and *idealize* their partner. It is not uncommon to hear from a person who is immersed in the waters of romantic love, "He/She is the most wonderful person I have ever met!" Although this statement might be true, it might also indicate that they have not been dating for long. This possibly myopic view of a romantic partner's strengths or attributes can lead to what was first called *idealization* by social scientist Willard Waller. What is idealization? How has it been conceptualized and assessed? What is the theory behind idealization and its effects on relationships? These questions are the focus of this entry.

Conceptualization and Assessment

Idealization has been defined and assessed in a variety of ways. Two research teams, headed, respectively, by Blaine Fowers and Laura Stafford, have focused on descriptions of partners or relationships that are laced with unlikely positivity. Thus, individuals may describe their relationship as perfect (e.g., "Our relationship is a perfect success") and refer to their partner as someone who completely understands them (e.g., "My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood"). Both groups of researchers assessed idealization with *The Idealistic Distortion* scale.

In contrast, Susan Sprecher and Sandra Metts describe idealization as romantic beliefs individuals may have about a potential partner. These beliefs entail unrealistic expectations about liking everything about the partner, being in the perfect relationship, and having a perfect partner who will completely accept, love, and understand one. Sprecher and Metts measure idealization with a three-item subscale of their *Romantic Beliefs Scale*. Their scale is grounded in the idea that people enter relationships with a set of beliefs or schemas about how a relationship should be. The three items making up the idealization subscale are: "The person I love will make a perfect romantic partner; for example, he/she will be completely accepting, loving, and understanding"; "I'm sure that every new thing I learn about the person I choose for a long-term commitment will please me"; and "The relationship I will have with my 'true love' will be nearly perfect." Individuals who agree with these statements display idealistic beliefs because it is naïve to think that a partner will be able to meet one's *every* need, please one in *every* way, and be *always* loving.

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Other researchers have taken a different approach. Yumi Endo, Steven Heine, and Darrin Lehman have compared perceptions of partners with perceptions of the "typical" or median partner. Thus, idealizations (or positive illusions) are defined as occurring when the majority of people rate their partner's qualities more favorably than the qualities of the typical or median partner. This definition of idealization is based on the idea that it is logically impossible for the majority of partners to be better than the "typical" or median partner for a given quality or set of qualities.

This approach differs from the one taken by Sandra Murray, John Holmes, and their colleagues. These scientists assess idealization by comparing people's ratings of themselves with their partner's ratings of them. Here, *idealization* is defined as the partner rating qualities of the target individual more favorably than does the target person him- or herself. Their definition is based on research indicating that ratings tend to be positively biased. That is, people rate their own qualities more favorably than the qualities of the "typical" or median person. Because self-ratings are positively biased to begin with, they represent a conservative standard against which to evaluate a partner's perceptions for signs of positive bias. They found that idealization positively affected relationship well-being and had a self-fulfilling effect: Idealized individuals also behaved more positively in their relationship.

Finally, Paul Miller, John Caughlin, and Ted Huston distinguish between positive illusions as a cognitive process, in which people interpret their partner's behavior charitably, and behavioral processes, in which people form an overly positive image of their partner because the partner behaves more positively in the relationship (i.e., puts his or her best foot forward) than with other people. In the latter case, partners may not be around each other enough to view their partner's undesirable attributes and characteristics in other settings, thus contributing to potentially skewed illusions of their partner in the absence of contradicting evidence. In a recent study, Miller, Sylvia Niehuis, and Huston have separated out these two processes by using people's perceptions of their partner's behavior as a standard against which to assess perceptions of their partner's personality for signs of an interpretive bias. In their 13-year study of newlywed couples, the authors found that when partners idealized each other, it often promoted more love in their relationship, and there was some evidence that their positive illusions provided a safeguard against further declines in love later on. Nevertheless, further analysis revealed that if partners entered the marriage idealizing their partner, they were not less likely to divorce. Thus, although idealizing the partner may have a positive influence on the relationship, it may not create a high enough barrier to ward off relationship dissolution.

Theory on Idealization

In his classic paper on "The Dating and Rating Complex," Waller argued that a natural byproduct of courtship behavior is the process of idealization. He defined *idealization* as the process by which a person creates a mental image of the dating partner that has less to do with reality and more to do with the person's feelings for the dating partner. According to Waller, early in the dating relationship, partners see each other fairly realistically. As the relationship develops and feelings of love for the partner deepen, however, both partners "put their best foot forward," displaying only some aspects of their personality in an effort to live up to the image they think their partner has of them. It is this "interaction of idealizations" that leads to the "cumulative idealization of the courtship period," carrying romantic partners further and further from reality. Waller maintained that idealizing partners increasingly lose their ability to make objective, rational, and realistic assessments of each other's character and personality traits. He warned that marriages formed at the height of idealization may be at risk for later disillusionment because, once married, spouses may be less motivated to continue to engage in impression management. Moreover, with increasing interdependence, evidence of the spouse's shortcomings inevitably begins to emerge. This lack of congruence between previous perceptions and new evidence may be experienced as threatening because it has the potential to undermine the belief that the partner truly is the "right person." Some researchers have argued that this is the point at which positive illusions may begin to unravel, leading to later disappointment and disillusionment. Others,

however, suggest that emerging evidence of imperfections may actually fuel the idealization process. That is, people may interpret evidence of shortcomings in a way that helps them maintain a positive image of their partner. To this end, they may use a variety of cognitive strategies, such as exaggerating the importance of their partner's strengths in order to downplay their partner's weaknesses. For example, Sara might embellish Burke's intelligence and writing ability because of his inability to verbally express himself. Another cognitive strategy often utilized is finding evidence of strengths in the partner's weaknesses. For example, Sara might assuage her disappointment in her partner's communication deficiency by attributing it to his strong and stoic nature. Finally, individuals might create "yes, but . . ." refutations that link shortcomings in their partner to greater virtues. For example, Burke's friends might point out that Sara is lazy, whereas Burke might say, "Yes, she is lazy sometimes, but it's nice that she is so laid back."

Is Idealization Helpful or Harmful to Romantic Relationships?

Does idealization early in marriage set up spouses for disappointment, as some scientists have suggested, or does it help protect people from becoming disillusioned? Although research on positive illusions generally finds that dating partners and spouses tend to be happier in their relationships the more they are idealized by their partners, some research suggests that idealization may be associated with greater decline in affection and love early in marriage and later divorce. For instance, research by Niehuis, Linda Skogrant, and Huston suggests that two different illusion processes during courtship may set up spouses for disillusionment early in marriage. The first is characterized by deep romantic feelings for the partner, quickly intensifying intimacy behaviors, and rapidly developing commitment to marriage over the course of relatively short courtships. It is more likely experienced by young couples, in which the female partner becomes pregnant before marriage. Perhaps not surprisingly, these couples' commitment to becoming married wavers relatively often, suggesting that these individuals may have rushed into marriage without carefully evaluating how well suited they really are to each other. Dating partners who experience this type of idealization likely become disillusioned early in marriage because of their discoveries about their partner and the quality of their relationship. Although deep feelings for each other may protect them early in their marriage, they are likely to divorce later on.

The second type of illusion process is characterized by relationship problems and a hesitancy to commit to marriage. Although partners in these relationships also love each other, their feelings for each other are less deep. Partners in these relationships often take longer before they say "I love you" and before they have sexual intercourse for the first time. They tend to have extraordinarily long courtships, and, unlike most couples who quickly enter into a regular dating relationship, they often date each other casually for a long period of time. Their commitment to marriage tends to waver, and their accounts of how their courtship developed over time often differ vastly. At the same time, many of these couples "test" their relationship by cohabiting before marriage, and they work hard at improving the quality of their relationship. Thus, partners in this type of relationship seem to be acutely aware of relationship problems, but they marry anyway, failing to recognize the implications of these problems for the quality and stability of their marriage later on. Unfortunately, these couples likely become divorced within the first 7 years of their marriage.

Stafford and Andy Merolla also found evidence that idealization may have a negative effect on relationship stability. Although individuals in long-distance dating relationships idealized their partner more, were more satisfied with their interpersonal communication, and evidenced greater relationship stability than individuals in geographically close dating relationships, they were also more likely to dissolve their dating relationship once they were no longer geographically separated. Together with the finding that idealization was also greater when partners had less frequent face-to-face communication, these findings suggest that idealization may be fueled by lack of accurate knowledge of the partner in day-to-day interactions and may have negative consequences for relationship stability.

How do these latter findings fit with research that shows that people who idealize their partner are more likely to establish satisfying premarital and marital relationships, experience more love as newlyweds, and are better able to sustain feelings of love in marriage over time, compared with people who do not idealize their partner? It is not clear yet under which circumstances idealization has a positive or negative effect on relationship stability, but Niehuis and her colleagues have speculated that the association between idealization during courtship and relationship stability may be curvilinear, such that low levels of idealization may be insufficient to weather significant relationship problems, whereas high levels of idealization may reflect lack of accurate information about the partner. Similarly, Lisa Neff and Benjamin Karney have argued that, although most newlyweds idealize each other on a global level (e.g., "I feel positively about my spouse"), they differ in terms of how much their global idealizations are based on accurate, specific perceptions of one another (e.g., the extent to which both partners *agree* on the target person's intellectual capability, social skills, or physical attractiveness). In other words, idealization grounded in accurate perception of the partner's specific qualities (i.e., agreement with the partner's assessment of his or her own qualities) is associated with greater relationship well-being and stability than idealization based on less accurate partner perception.

Sylvia Niehuis and Jeremy Boden

See also Disillusionment in Marriage; Predicting Success or Failure of Marital Relationships; Processes of Adaptation in Intimate Relationships (PAIR) Project; Romanticism

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IDEALS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

How do people know whether they are in a good or a bad romantic relationship? How do people decide whether to go on a date, live together, get married, or look for another mate? One answer to such questions is that individuals' judgments about a particular person or relationship are based on the consistency between ideal standards, on the one hand, and perceptions of the current partner or relationship, on the other hand. This entry describes findings and research that suggest that, from the beginning to the end of romantic relationships, ideal standards play a crucial role.

Origin and Nature of Ideal Standards

In New Zealand, Australia, the United States, hunter-gatherer cultures in Africa, and in many other countries and cultures, the same factors are important in mate selection: personality factors such as warmth and intelligence, attractiveness and health, and the possession of status and resources or the ability to gain them (e.g., ambitiousness). Moreover, there is remarkable agreement across both genders and cultures about which factors are more important in selecting mates for long-term relationships. Warmth and trustworthiness is rated number one, with physical attractiveness, good health, and status and resources typically coming in a close second.

But why are these particular kinds of mate standards universally important? One standard explanation is that they represent biological evolutionary adaptations, which implies that their presence confers reproductive advantages. A warm and sensitive partner is likely to be a supportive mate and a good parent. A partner with plenty of money and status (or with the ability and drive to attain such assets) will also have the means to look after the partner and the children. These two sets of qualities

signal that the partner can offer good levels of investment for the family over long periods of time. Attractiveness, in contrast, is generally thought to signal good health, physical strength, and so forth (a good-genes factor).

Men and women have somewhat different standards in long-term relationships. Men give more importance to attractiveness and vitality than women; whereas women tend to give more weight to warmth, trustworthiness, status, and resources than men. These findings have been replicated consistently within Western cultures by research using standard rating scales or by analyzing the contents of personal advertisements, and these specific gender differences are widespread across cultures.

These gender differences are explained by evolutionary psychologists using parental investment theory (originally developed by Robert Trivers in the early 1970s). Mothers typically invest more time, energy, and resources in their children than men and are capable of having fewer children than men. Thus, the male's propensity and ability to invest in the children should matter more to women than vice versa. However, culture also plays an important role. Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood, for example, found that as women's empowerment (indexed by their earnings, their representation in legislative government, and their involvement in professional positions) increased relative to men across cultures, women placed less value on the status and earnings of a mate.

However, there also exist large individual differences that operate within gender. This means that, although there are mean differences according to gender in the importance attached to such standards, there also exists considerable overlap in responses. Thus, many women strongly desire a hot, passionate relationship, and many men are preoccupied with the search for intimacy and commitment. Both men and women will also trade off traits in different ways. Some will be happy to accept an individual who lacks ambition and drive if he or she is kind and supportive. Others may be willing to strike up a sexual relationship with someone who is less than honest if he or she happens to be strikingly beautiful. Of course, people have idiosyncratic standards as well, such as the expectation that their future partner will like the Rolling Stones or have an interest in stamp collecting. However, research shows that the standards

held most firmly almost always fall into the three categories just mentioned.

What explains these strong individual (within-gender) differences? Perhaps the major factor causing individuals to attach different amounts of importance to specific ideal categories is how they rate their own mate value. Research shows that these two kinds of ratings (self-perceptions of mate value and the importance given to mate standards) are moderately positively correlated. For example, more attractive people (who also perceive themselves as more attractive) give more importance to the goal of choosing an attractive mate. In contrast, those who tend to see themselves as sensitive and warm give more importance to the goal of finding a mate with similar qualities.

Why then do people not want a perfect 10? Imagine that Mary is assiduously on the lookout for someone who is handsome, remarkably fit with a wonderful body, and rich. First, there are not a lot of people who fit this description. So, Mary is likely to remain single for a long time waiting for Mr. Right. Second, when Mary does meet Mr. Right, he is unlikely to reciprocate her interest because Mary is not a perfect 10. Third, if Mary does form a relationship with such a person, it is likely to be a high-maintenance affair, making Mary feel insecure and inferior, and involving high levels of vigilance to ward off mate-poaching efforts by other women. In short, for Mary to set her standards at such a rarified level is unrealistic and likely to leave her on the shelf, miserable, or both.

Thus, the name of the mating game is to obtain the best deal available given the prevailing circumstances, especially taking into account what the individual has to offer. This process is one principal cause for assortative mating—the tendency for people in existing relationships to be similar to one another in many ways, including physical attractiveness.

Ideal Standards Never Sleep

The role of ideal standards does not stop after a mate has been selected and a relationship is underway. As knowledge of the partner develops and individuals and perceptions change, people continue to evaluate their partners and relationships in terms of how they meet expectations and standards.

The discrepancies between expectations or standards and perceptions of reality are then used to accomplish three key goals in intimate relationships: evaluation, prediction, and control.

Taking the evaluation goal first, research has consistently found that the more closely people perceive their partners to fit their ideal standards, the happier they are. A study by Garth Fletcher and colleagues traced a sample of 100 individuals over the first year of their dating relationships (none had been dating for more than 1 month at the beginning point). Not surprisingly, 50 percent of the sample had broken up after 3 months, but the entire sample evaluated their partners and relationships, right from the beginning, according to the perceived gap between standards and perceptions. The smaller the discrepancy, the happier people were and the less likely they were to break up.

However, individuals who stayed together also tended to adjust their standards to fit their perceptions more closely over time, a finding that has been reported in other research by Sandra Murray following dating couples over time. This kind of process may reflect unconscious rationalizing or what is termed *motivated cognition.* Murray has also reported with longitudinal research that holding biased idealized beliefs of the partner actually become more accurate over time, apparently by encouraging the partner to move closer to those ideals, such as becoming more sensitive and warm. Such processes tend to produce more relationship satisfaction over time for both partners.

Ideal standards are thus not set in concrete, but are flexible entities prone to change over time. They are also applied differently according to the situational context and the goals of the individual. For example, several studies have found that men express much more modest requirements than women on factors like warmth, loyalty, intelligence, and status, specifically in short-term mating contexts. Given that men are more open to casual sex than women, women can afford to be much choosier than men in such a context. However, women as well as men give less weight to qualities that signal good investment in the relationship (e.g., status and kindness) in short-term liaisons.

Overall, there is one quality that neither men nor women will happily compromise on when shifting from a long-term to a short-term sexual relationship—namely, physical attractiveness. This finding is consistent with the theory that physical attractiveness and good health form the primary "good genes" factor. In a short-term relationship, all one is getting out of the deal (reproductively speaking) are (potentially) the other person's genes; thus, this finding provides good support for an evolutionary take in the underlying causes for mating preferences.

Relationships are composed of two interdependent individuals. Thus, understanding how ideal standards work needs to go beyond perceptions and standards focused on the self. Mary's behavior and happiness is not only dependent on the gap between her own standards and perceptions, but is also a function of how she thinks her partner sees her (so-called reflected appraisals). Reflected appraisals exert enormous influence in relationships. If Mary thinks she falls far short of her partner's standards, this is a recipe for unhappiness and disillusionment. Not that such perceptions are disconnected from reality. Research shows that people are biased to some extent, but that they are also accurately attuned into both what their partners are like and to how they are perceived by their partners in reality (as measured by the self-reports of their partners or observers).

In short, provided prior pivotal expectations are reasonably met in close relationships, the conditions are set for love and commitment to flourish. If reality falls well short of expectations, however, people will experience strong emotional reactions. When people perceive that they fall well short of their partners' standards, they experience emotions like sadness and guilt. In contrast, if individuals perceive their partners as the locus of the problem, they are more likely to experience anger and resentment. The emotions that people experience when perceptions and standards drift apart also bring the control function into play. Nickola Overall and colleagues found that people are motivated to try and change features of their partners to the extent that they perceive them as failing to meet their own standards.

People use a variety of tactics when trying to change their partners, including nagging, diplomatic suggestions, team approaches (such as going on joint diets), and subtle ploys (buying a get-rich-quick book for the partner's birthday). Unfortunately, people report poor success rates when trying to make their partners more attractive, sensitive, or

ambitious. This is perhaps not surprising given the difficulty of changing such traits, but relationship satisfaction is enhanced when change attempts are seen as successful. Generally, however, the more strenuously people try to regulate their partner, the unhappier they seem to become. The reason seems to be that when people try to change their partner on central traits, like sensitivity or attractiveness, they also communicate powerful and corrosive messages (reflected appraisals) that their partner is just not good enough.

Garth J. O. Fletcher

See also Attraction, Sexual; Courtship, Models and Processes of; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Expectations About Relationships; Idealization; Mate Preferences; Mate Selection

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ILLNESS, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Illness can have many effects on relationships, from contributing to their deterioration to strengthening them. The extent to which illness impacts relationships depends on the duration and severity of the illness, the characteristics of the ill persons and their partners prior to and during the illness, and the quality of the relationship and other social networks. This entry describes the differential impact of acute and chronic illness on relationships, caregiver burden and coping, the impact of illness on adults and children, and the ways in which illness may affect communication and sexuality.

Acute Versus Chronic Illness

During times of acute illness, relationship members may adapt to the illness by rearranging schedules to provide care or make hospital visits. These changes are often short term, and the relationship roles usually return to the pre-illness state, especially in long-term relationships such as marriage. However, this pattern may not be the case during a severe or life-threatening condition. In these cases, the illness may have a long-term impact even after it has resolved. In the aftermath of a life-threatening illness, one's mortality becomes more salient, and there may be greater incentive to pursue activities that give meaning to life. Thus, one may have an increased motivation to pursue relationships that maximize positive affect and minimize negative affect. Relationship partners may reevaluate the importance of the relationship and other activities given life's finite timeframe. In some cases, partners will take greater appreciation in the time they spend together or may make decisions aimed at enhancing the relationship. In other cases, a life-threatening illness may cause partners to decide to end an unsatisfactory relationship and find new relationship partners that can satisfy their needs for positive affect and intimacy.

In chronic benign illnesses (e.g., chronic musculoskeletal pain), partners often report reduced marital satisfaction after the onset of the illness. Chronic illness may also contribute to caregiver burden experienced by those who provide informal unpaid care, including spouses, adult children, or other family members and friends. Caregiver burden can consist of physical caretaking and financial responsibilities that exceed one's ability to manage within the context of one's own life. Social burden may include limiting or eliminating social activities to care for the loved one. Emotional

burden, including feelings of sadness, anger, and resentment about having to provide care, is also possible. Although not all caretakers experience burden, it can have a negative impact on mental and physical health, the quality of the relationship, and the quality of care. For instance, greater burden is related to an increased likelihood of abuse of the ill person. Although not studied as thoroughly, patients' perceived self-burden on others may also occur. This type of burden consists of guilt or resentment about receiving care from others and may relate to psychological distress and social withdrawal. Burden is reduced when coping skills appropriate to the situation are used.

Coping Skills

Coping skills are generally classified into two types. Problem-solving coping strategies are typically effective in situations amenable to change (e.g., acute illness) and include gathering information about the illness and seeking social support. Emotion-focused coping strategies such as venting distress, putting the problem into perspective, and active acceptance may be better for situations that are chronic and unchangeable. Active acceptance is characterized by a willingness to experience the illness and a realization that the illness does not have to interfere with one's activities. Contrast this type of acceptance with a passive acceptance in which one gives up pleasurable activities because of feelings of helplessness and lack of control over illness. Therefore, one way to counteract burden is to teach patients and family members coping skills directed toward facing the illness.

Several interventions have been developed to improve coping skills among couples and families dealing with illness. When spouses participate in coping skills treatment programs, chronically ill patients experience significant improvements in coping skills and psychological distress. Furthermore, improvements in marital satisfaction during treatment are related to improvements in mental health, which suggests that coping skills not only affect one's ability to cope with illness, but also one's relationships. Family-based interventions may also help children cope with their illness. Children and parents can learn together appropriate coping skills for dealing with different aspects of the illness.

Children and Adolescents

Chronic illness also impacts the relationships of ill children and adolescents. In children and adolescents, parents may take more control of the relationship and the child's behavior in an effort to facilitate healing or management of the disease. Chronically ill adolescents tend to perceive their parents and siblings as being more positive or caring toward them during the illness. The positive changes in the relationship that adolescents perceive include the parents being nicer, friendlier, and more helpful. Greater paternal involvement has also been shown to lead to more favorable outcomes in maternal functioning, marital satisfaction, and family functioning.

Children's illness can also affect the physical and mental health of their families. For example, parents may feel strain from meeting the demands of caregiving and other roles (e.g., paid employment), and this strain may lead to psychological distress and marital discord. Parents may also suffer from feelings of guilt, worry, and helplessness because they may feel at fault for a genetically related disease or because they are unable to take away discomfort or illness. Further, parents may experience fear of their child's mortality.

Illness in parents may also affect the relationship between parents and their children, although many parents report that their illness increased intimacy in the family relationships. Children may be particularly frightened or upset upon hearing about a parent's illness, especially if the illness is life threatening or disfiguring. Hence, parents need to take into account their child's developmental stage when discussing symptoms and prognosis. For example, parents of young children may use simple terms to describe the illness (e.g., *sick, tired*), rather than complex diagnostic terms (e.g., *multiple sclerosis*). Parents of older children may wish to discuss the illness in more detail (e.g., "cancer makes some cells grow too fast and they crowd out my healthy cells").

Finally, chronic illnesses in children may also impact friendships. For instance, it may be difficult for children to find peers who can share concerns about the illness, bring normalcy to everyday routines, and tolerate the uncertainty of illness outcomes. Illness in the parent can also impact children's relationships with friends. Children may be embarrassed

by their parent's illness, may be reluctant to bring friends home, or may become more isolated from their friends because of the time and money that is invested in care for the parent.

Impact on Communication

The impact of illness on relationships is greater when individuals feel stigmatized about their illness. Stigmatization may involve fear of contracting the illness as in infectious diseases (e.g., HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B) or fear of encountering negative feedback from others by associating with people who have visible disabilities (e.g., physical disabilities). It is difficult for persons with illness to communicate about their pain if they believe that their loved ones are afraid of or embarrassed by them. Without communication, it becomes more difficult to cope with the illness, including seeking and evaluating appropriate treatments. Family members and friends, in turn, may avoid talking about the illness or providing support because openly talking about the illness is uncomfortable or distressing.

Persons with nonstigmatizing illnesses also experience communication difficulties because of fears of how other people will react to the information. Individuals may try to protect close loved ones from negative emotions or sadness by limiting the amount of illness-related information they divulge. In addition, people may wish to avoid communicating about the illness because they believe that talking will make them feel worse emotionally. In less close relationships, many people prefer not to let friends and acquaintances know about the details of their illness because it will upset the balance in these relationships.

However, many people, including those in a long-term romantic relationship, approach illness directly as a team and openly communicate about treatment options. This communication has the potential to enhance the relationship even in the midst of negative emotions such as fear. In addition, there may be less conflict about other issues (e.g., parenting, finances) during the illness, which helps couples focus on treating the illness. In these cases, the illness enhances intimacy and helps families find meaning in the illness. However, in other cases, the illness can disturb communication. For instance, if other aspects of the relationship are neglected and the sole focus is on the illness, there may be deterioration in intimacy and well-being. Well family members may also withdraw from the sick person to avoid negative feelings or to avoid having to engage in caregiving behaviors. Interactions between ill persons and their partners may also become strained if the patient begins to catastrophize or verbalize helplessness about symptoms because family members often judge these emotional responses as aversive.

Even without direct communication about illness, family members and close friends may still be able to infer the effects of illness on the patient based on the behaviors of patients and the personal characteristics of the observers. Inferences can be made based on patients' behaviors such as limping, rubbing the affected area, or facial expressions of pain. The observers' own personal experience with illness may also enhance their ability to detect pain or discomfort in their family members. Observed behaviors and personal experience may contribute to the observers' understanding of the family members' illness and affect the extent to which they engage in empathic responses or instrumental support behaviors aimed at reducing distress in the patient. Thus, intimacy-building behaviors can still take place between the ill person and his or her relational partners even if the patient avoids verbally communicating about the illness so long as the observer is able to infer the patient's experiences.

Impact on Sexuality

Chronic illnesses may also impact sexuality. For instance, disease- or treatment-related fatigue, pain, and treatment (e.g., chemotherapy, antidepressants) can interfere with the sexual response cycle (e.g., desire, arousal, orgasm). Anxiety and depression, including rumination about the illness, may also impact sexual response. Therefore, chronic illness has the potential to negatively affect the frequency and quality of sexual activity for both partners. This negative impact is more likely among couples with poor relationship quality prior to the illness or couples not accustomed to communicating about sex. Health care professionals have the potential to enhance relationships by introducing the subject of sexuality as a valid

concern. Couples may minimize the negative impact on sexuality by openly discussing the impact of illness or finding different sexual positions to accommodate illness-related pain. In fact, many couples report that sex is a source of comfort and intimacy, as well as an affirmation of gender when other gender roles have been stripped away by illness.

Annmarie Cano and Lisa Miller

See also Caregiver Role; Disabilities, Chronic Illness, and Relationship Functioning; Families, Coping With Cancer; Marriage and Health; Similarity Principle of Attraction; Social Support and Health

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IMAGINARY COMPANIONS

Imaginary companions refers to relationships with nonexistent beings created primarily by children. Three phenomena have been described with respect to this term, two of which constitute imaginary relationships: *invisible companions* and *personified objects.* Invisible companions have no tangible basis, although they may be based on fictional characters or real people; some are completely invented. Personified objects are objects that the child animates, attributes personality to, and generally treats as alive. Some researchers also consider *pretend identities,* or roles that children adopt for extended periods of time (i.e., months), as the creation of an imaginary companion. This form, however, is a role taken on by the child, and thus may not function as a relationship in the same manner as an invisible companion or a personified object. Relationships researchers are interested in imaginary companions because they provide some of the same social benefits to their creators that real relationships do, such as companionship and validation. They also resemble real relationships, in that children claim a sense of interdependence with their imaginary companions and pretend to interact with them frequently, over months or years.

Imaginary companions come in all shapes and sizes. Invisible companions typically take the form of humans (e.g., babies, children, and, less frequently, adults), animals, or monsters, and personified objects run the gamut from common versions, such as stuffed animals and dolls, to more esoteric objects, such as toy trains or a small can of tomato paste. Children sometimes have whole gangs of invisible friends or a family of animated stuffed animals. Pretend identities may be simple, such as an imaginary child, or fantastical, such as Superman. A few sex differences have emerged in the creation of imaginary companions: Boys may be more likely to create pretend identities and girls to create invisible companions. In addition, whereas girls create male and female companions relatively evenly, most boys' imaginary companions are male.

Imaginary companions are described by children as young as age 2 and as old as age 7 and may exist even later in childhood. Although these companions probably vary substantially in sophistication, using the broadest definition of the phenomenon (all three types), approximately two thirds of young children report creating an imaginary companion at some point in early childhood. Some of these children share information about their imaginary companions with others, particularly parents, but the tendency to do so wanes with age.

In general, children with and without imaginary companions do not differ much, even on variables related to relationships, such as the size or makeup

of the children's social networks, number of friends, or family composition. Children who create imaginary companions are slightly more likely than their peers to be firstborn or only children and to have fewer siblings. Some empirical evidence suggests that children with imaginary companions have a penchant for fantasy more so than children without such companions, and the two groups may also differ on sociability. Contrary to media representations of children with imaginary companions, they tend to be less shy and more sociable than others—if personality differences are found at all.

Although precipitating events, such as moving to a new home or the birth of a sibling, are sometimes cited by parents as causing the appearance or disappearance of an imaginary companion, most companions appear and disappear without an apparent trigger. Once created, the ways in which they are manifest in children's lives may be related to their form. Personified objects are often known to many people in the child's life, including family, teachers, and peers, and often accompany the child everywhere she or he goes. Invisible companions, in contrast, are often known only to family members and associated with home.

In addition to the connection between form and manifestation, whether a companion is invisible or personified may also be related to the kind of relationship the companion provides. Invisible companions, for example, often function as friends for children. In other words, these relationships are typically egalitarian, with the child and the imaginary companion providing companionship and intimacy for each other, as well as help and validation. Relationships with personified objects, in contrast, are often hierarchical in nature. In these relationships, children characteristically provide caregiving and nurturance to the object, and it is treated as less competent and knowledgeable than the child. Interestingly, although pretend identities do not provide relationships in the same way that the other imaginary companions do, their form may also dictate their status relative to the child. These identities, especially when created by boys, tend to be powerful and exciting, exuding competence and capabilities that surpass the child's.

Children create imaginary companions for many reasons, and indeed these reasons probably vary quite a bit depending on the child's age and gender. Still, suggestions have been made in the literature to explain the functions of imaginary companions. First and foremost, imaginary companions are an exciting form of pretend play. Especially for children who enjoy fantasy and who crave social interaction, an imaginary companion might be the perfect way to always have an available playmate. Second, imaginary companions provide a safe and consequence-free forum for practicing social interactions and understanding social situations. Children sometimes imagine conflict with their pretend friends, and some go so far as to invent imaginary enemies. These creations may be efforts on the child's part to understand and manage the difficulties inherent in social relationships or the potentially unpleasant side of interacting with others. Regardless, the empirical evidence is unequivocal in establishing that the creation of an imaginary companion is neither a sign of psychopathology nor an indication that the child is confused about the difference between fantasy and reality. Children readily admit, and sometimes spontaneously volunteer, that their imaginary companions are not real.

Tracy Gleason

See also Children's Peer Groups; Egalitarian Relationships; Friendships in Childhood; Need Fulfillment in Relationships; Sex Differences in Relationships

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INCEST

The term *incest* refers to the marriage and/or sexual intercourse between two individuals considered

to be close kin according to local cultural norms. Although incest typically applies to cases when couples are in fact genetic relatives, it can also apply when couples are genetically unrelated, yet are categorized as kin according to local customs. In one sense, then, rules against incest can be seen as a way to regulate who one marries (and has sex with) within a particular culture. Although *incest* is typically a term used to understand norms relating to marriage patterns, the related term *inbreeding* is used to mark the degree of genetic relatedness between mating partners. Both incest and inbreeding are used interchangeably, yet they refer to slightly different concepts, with incest being a topic of greater interest in anthropology and cultural psychology and inbreeding a topic of greater interest in biology and cognitive science. This entry focuses on the aspect of incest that overlaps with inbreeding: the mating of individuals who are genetically related by virtue of sharing a recent common ancestor.

Why Is Incest Bad?

There are sound biological reasons that natural selection would have led to the evolution of mechanisms to reduce the probability of mating with a close genetic relative. Throughout the evolutionary history of our species, the selection pressures posed by harmful genetic mutations and disease-causing organisms would have severely negatively affected the health and viability of offspring of close genetic relatives. All else being equal, individuals who avoided mating with a close genetic relative and instead mated with someone who did not share an immediate common ancestor would have left a greater number of healthier offspring. Importantly, the negative consequences of incest are enhanced the more closely related two individuals are, with the most severe consequences occurring between individuals who have a probability of .5 of sharing particular genes (i.e., brother and sister, mother and son, or father and daughter). The deleterious effects drop off as two partners become less closely related. Interestingly, in most (if not all) societies, incest between nuclear family members is forbidden or simply absent. In the United States, incest laws vary by state, but most have sanctions targeting marriage and sexual

intercourse with a parent, child, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, niece, nephew, uncle, and aunt. Although some states even sanction first-cousin marriage, none sanctions second-cousin marriage.

A variety of studies have documented the negative fitness consequences associated with incest. For instance, in both humans and nonhuman animal species, incest is associated with an increased risk of mortality, mental deficiencies, congenital malformations, and disease. Given these negative consequences, it is likely that evolution engineered mechanisms to prevent individuals from choosing close relatives as sexual partners. But what might such mechanisms look like?

How Do Humans Avoid Incest?

To avoid close genetic relatives as sexual partners, a well-designed mechanism would require (at least) two types of procedures: (1) procedures that categorize individuals according to their probability of relatedness (i.e., procedures for detecting kin), and (2) procedures that use information regarding kinship to regulate sexual attraction. With respect to kin detection, what cues do humans use? Because we cannot see another person's DNA, the best evolution could do is to use cues that were reliably correlated with genetic relatedness in the ancestral past to compute a probability of relatedness. To the extent that different cues identified different categories of kin (e.g., mother, father, sibling, offspring), different detection mechanisms likely exist.

One cue found to mediate the detection of a particular type of relative, siblings, is childhood coresidence duration. The longer one lives with another person starting from birth, the greater the sexual aversion that develops toward that individual later during adulthood. Furthermore, longer periods of childhood coresidence are associated with lower incidents of adult sexual behavior and greater moral opposition to sibling incest. The effect of childhood coresidence on sexual attraction is known as the Westermarck Effect after the 19th-century Finnish social scientist, Edward Westermarck, who first proposed that early childhood association leads to the development of a sexual aversion later during adulthood.

Two well-known natural experiments provide compelling evidence for the Westermarck Effect.

The first is the communal childrearing practices of the Israeli kibbutzim, where unrelated children were put into children's houses starting from a few weeks after birth and raised together under sibling-like conditions. In these communities, individuals raised together in the same children's house rarely married one another despite the absence of any rules forbidding such unions. This pattern suggests that early childhood exposure influences later sexual attraction.

The second natural experiment testing the Westermarck Effect is the case of Tawainese minor marriages. In this form of marriage, a young bride is adopted into her future husband's family as a newborn and raised alongside him until one day, during adulthood, the parents determine it is time for them to marry. Compared with marriages in which the husband and wife met for the first time as adults, in minor marriages, there were lower rates of fertility and greater rates of divorces and extramarital affairs.

These two experiments point to childhood coresidence duration as one cue that the human mind uses to detect kin and mediate incest-avoidance behaviors. As they suggest, individuals do not have to be genetically related to develop a sexual aversion toward one another. This can be seen in coreared adopted and stepsiblings who also develop intense sexual aversions toward one another despite knowing they are not genetic relatives.

But cues other than childhood coresidence might also play a role in incest avoidance. For instance, seeing one's mother caring for (e.g., breastfeeding) a newborn might serve as a potent cue to kinship. This cue would have only been available for older siblings already present in the social environment and would have been reliable regardless of coresidence duration. But younger children, who are not around to see their mother pregnant and caring for a newborn, might rely on coresidence duration or other possible cues such as facial similarity or olfactory recognition.

Future Directions

Certainly there is much to be learned about the processes mediating how humans avoid incest. The prior discussion illustrates that particular social cues might govern kin detection and the development of sexual aversions. But many questions remain. For instance, what cues do humans use to detect other types of close genetic relatives: Are they the same as those found for siblings or do they differ? What emotions regulate incest avoidance? What contextual factors influence opinions about incest? How can scholarly understanding of incest-avoidance mechanisms inform the field of child abuse and neglect? If kinship cues are required to activate sexual aversions toward close genetic relatives, it is important to identify which cues operate for each type of family member. Circumstances in which the evolved cues indicating relatedness are absent might lead to greater risks of incestuous unions (e.g., as can occur when brothers and sisters are reared separately or when men marry women with children from another marriage). Last, how does our evolved psychology influence legal codes related to incest? The next few decades promise to shed light on this culturally universal yet underexplored behavior.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Evolutionary Perspectives on Women's Romantic Interests; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Fictive Kinship; Interpersonal Attraction; Kin Relationships; Kin Selection; Mate Preferences

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INDIVIDUATION

Individuation refers generally to the process by which people render themselves as separate and distinct from others. Researchers of human relationships

have studied individuation from a variety of perspectives, three of which appear to be central in the literature. First, individuation can represent an aspect of a child's separation from and waning dependence on his or her parents. Early theorists asserted the importance of individuation in infancy and during adolescence, and recent research suggests that the failure to successfully individuate is associated with a variety of negative psychological outcomes. Second, individuation describes behaviors that distinguish an individual from his or her surroundings. These behaviors can be reflexive, such as when we are outspoken in front of others, or can be directed toward others, such as when we call someone by name in a crowd. Third, the concept of individuation is closely tied to that of deindividuation. Deindividuation is a process, often induced in groups, through which people feel indistinguishable from others. Feeling deindividuated leads people to exhibit different behaviors than they normally would in social situations, including anger, violence, and lowered self-restraint. Although the subject of individuation has been viewed in several different ways, the study of these domains have implications for the understanding of all kinds of human relationships, from families to large groups. This entry describes the concept of individuation in depth as it pertains to these three perspectives.

Individuation in Development

In 1953, Carl Jung proposed individuation as an important part of normal human development. Later, Hungarian physician and psychoanalyst Margaret Mahler drew on Jung's work to develop a sequence of phases, now referred to collectively as the Separation-Individuation Theory, that guides children's psychological development from birth to age 3. The third phase, called the separation-individuation phase, begins at 4 or 5 months of age. The early part of this phase is marked by gradual sensory development, known as hatching, which gives rise to increased alertness and goal-directed awareness. Infants venture farther from their mothers as their mobility increases, and they begin to experience great joy in performing autonomous tasks while still keeping mother within sight. The child begins to share these new discoveries with mother and seeks social interaction with her and others. Infants first experience stranger anxiety during this stage, indicating internal conflict between curiosity about new sources of stimuli and the need to check back to mother for security. Love and emotional availability of the mother are key at this stage as the concept of separateness becomes more salient for the child. Late in the separation-individuation phase, the child develops a definite sense of individuality, self-boundaries, and gender identity.

Individuation is also an important goal of late adolescence. Peter Blos claims that a second and higher level process of individuation takes place during adolescence. Like Mahler's conception of early individuation, this second phase is characterized by weakening dependency on and disengagement from family, which allows for the possibility of extrafamilial love and relationships within a broader social framework. At the same time, physical maturation demands the acceptance of an adult sex role. The goal of this process, achieved in normal development at the end of adolescence, is to obtain a clear, stable sense of the self. For some adolescents, failure to achieve successful individuation can result in learning disorders, lack of purpose, procrastination, and emotional shallowness. These psychologically unindividuated adolescents may seek to distance themselves physically from their families, which helps them to avoid confronting their failure to achieve this necessary goal. This represents an unhealthy regression toward the early childhood separation-individuation phase that Mahler described.

An age-appropriate level of individuation is also necessary for normal development of a mature, adult identity, which in turn is requisite for an individual to take on normal adult roles and responsibilities. Parents may resist the attempts of their children to individuate and to progressively take on more adult roles and authority. This kind of parental intrusiveness can stymie normal adolescent development and produce conflict, and the resulting developmental delays can in turn produce more intrusiveness and escalate conflict between parents and teens. In its most extreme form, called *enmeshment,* parental intrusiveness causes for the adolescent a blurring of boundaries between self and other and a preoccupation with parents' satisfaction. Outcomes for enmeshed adolescents include low self-esteem and difficulty forming friendships

and romantic partnerships. Problems with separation and individuation are also shown to be risk factors for eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa and bulimia, mediated by poorly developed senses of self-esteem, autonomy, and control.

In addition to relationships within the family, individuation plays an important role in the development of any close relationship. Successful individuation helps to maintain a balance between the individuality and the connectedness of the partners in a dyadic relationship. Individuality represents self-assertion and separateness, both of which enable people to express unique opinions and assume responsibility for them. Connectedness encompasses mutuality and permeability. Mutuality is important for developing empathy and feeling respected for one's own beliefs, whereas permeability, one's openness to the ideas of others, is important for perspective-taking. Thus, individuation is essential for adjustment within families and continues to have effects for close relationships throughout the life course.

Individuating Behaviors in a Social Context

Individuation is also viewed as a social phenomenon exhibited by people throughout the life course. In this sense, it encompasses a set of behaviors that make a person feel distinguished from his or her surroundings. Social psychologists study such behaviors and their implications in social contexts. For example, Christina Maslach examined situational cues that encourage individuating behaviors. Individuating behaviors can be self-directed (e.g., raising one's hand to ask a question, publicly challenging a speaker, dressing unusually) or can be other-imposed/situation-driven (e.g., being identified by name, being invited to express an opinion). People individuate when they anticipate a reward or support from their social group, but tend not to individuate when they anticipate punishment. Individuating behaviors do not always manifest themselves in isolation, but rather may be part of a group's collective effort at individuation, such as the case with groups ranging from Greenpeace and the Veterans of Foreign Wars to more countercultural groups including the Hell's Angels and the "Jesus freaks" of the 1960s and 1970s.

Individuation requires both social awareness and self-monitoring. Individuating behaviors are not always successful, as is the case when other group members follow suit. To determine how to differentiate oneself from the norm, one must be able to perceive both oneself and the social environment accurately and compare the two. Once the norm has been accurately perceived, individuation also requires deviance from it. This would suggest that nonconformity, willingness to violate authority, and even exhibitionism may also be related to individuation. This connection could bring with it implications for socially mediated behaviors, such as aggression and altruism.

Research conducted with North American and European samples has shown that individuation in social situations can yield positive social outcomes, such as increased social impact and leadership. However, the evidence suggests that the relationship between individuation and leadership is culturally bound. The primary goals of socialization in individualistic cultures (e.g., the United States) are independence and autonomy, whereas the preservation of harmony and "fitting in" are the primary socialization goals of collectivistic cultures (e.g., East Asian countries). A popular saying in the United States illustrates this phenomenon: "The squeaky wheel gets the grease." In Japan, rather, an analogous saying goes, "The nail that stands out gets pounded down."

The same individuating behaviors that reap benefits for people in individualistic cultures sometimes bring about negative consequences for those in collectivistic cultures. One key difference between these two results lies in whether the behavior is seen to reflect leadership qualities or as seeking attention for self-promotion. Certain individuating behaviors have different meanings in collectivistic cultures than they do in individualistic cultures. In the United States, for example, individuating behaviors, such as performing on stage in front of a large audience or giving one's unsolicited opinion on a controversial issue, are interpreted as signs of leadership. In China, however, some behaviors are interpreted as indicators of leadership (e.g., performing on stage), whereas others are interpreted negatively as attention-seeking (e.g., giving an unsolicited opinion).

What can we learn from cross-cultural studies about individuation? Contrary to popular views in

the West, it is not always outstanding to be standing out! It is important to be sensitive to cultural differences in perceptions of individuating behaviors. What would be perceived by someone from an individualistic culture as displaying leadership could be interpreted by someone from a collectivistic culture as attention-seeking. For example, many courses taught in American schools and universities require students to actively and spontaneously participate in class discussions by volunteering one's own opinions. This sort of policy may be biased against students whose culture tells them that individuating oneself in this way is socially undesirable.

The Flip Side of Individuation: Deindividuating Behaviors

Leon Festinger, with colleagues Albert Pepitone and Theodore Newcomb, published the first article on the subject of deindividuation in 1952. The authors used the term *deindividuation* to describe a state in which individuals behave differently in groups, and particularly in crowds, than they do when they are alone. When groups afford individuals some degree of anonymity, they tend to be less restrained and inhibited, and they allow themselves to indulge in behaviors in which they would not otherwise indulge. For example, people are more likely to speak openly about their feelings of anger when their identity is anonymous. Further, people are more satisfied with groups that offer a reduction in restraint, suggesting that such groups satisfy needs normally inhibited by those socially imposed restraints.

Philip Zimbardo highlighted an important distinction between the concepts of individuation and deindividuation. He claimed that individuation comes about merely by making choices, by exercising free will. These choices create a social contract through which the decision makers are held responsible for the consequences of their choices. In so doing, the decision makers become distinct from, and in some cases set themselves up in opposition to, those in their social groups who deindividuate by following along with the group's actions.

Although exercising free will may entail individuation, succumbing to the power of the situation can give rise to deindividuation. Zimbardo's 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment provides a startling example of how a given situation can lead normal, psychologically healthy individuals to deindividuate and engage in unusual behaviors. The experiment required volunteers to play the randomly assigned roles of either prisoners or guards in a make-believe prison for two weeks on the Stanford University campus. Both prisoners and guards were given uniforms to deindividuate them. Prisoners wore matching smocks, hats, and flip-flops and were identified only by number. Guards wore matching uniforms, whistles, and dark sunglasses. Subjected to this situation, both prisoners and guards soon became violent toward each other. During the first few days, prisoners rioted, guards began tormenting the prisoners by spraying them with fire extinguishers, and prisoners chided each other for complaining. Participants began to show signs of severe emotional distress, and within 6 days, the experiment was called off. The deindividuating effects of the situation were so powerful that Zimbardo had to remind some prisoners of their true identities.

Zimbardo also sought to find evidence of deindividuation that would distinguish it from related patterns of behavior driven merely by phenomena such as contagion, aggression, and disinhibition. To do this, Zimbardo conducted a follow-up study to Stanley Milgram's earlier experiments on obedience, this time adding the variable of deindividuation. As a group, female students who were all wearing hoods in order to deindividuate them were willing to deliver twice the intensity of electric shock to the ostensible "victims" as women in groups who were wearing name tags and no hoods. From this and other experiments, Zimbardo concluded that any situation that deindividuates people and provides any sort of permission for aggression can enable otherwise moral, rational people to commit acts that they would never expect of themselves.

More recently, Zimbardo and others have applied the concepts of individuation and deindividuation to a vast range of examples of human maltreatment, including historical acts of the Ku Klux Klan and, more recently, the abuse of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. In the military, both the requisite wearing of uniforms by soldiers and the intentional depersonalization of the enemy are both acts of deindividuation designed for specific results.

Combining stressful, fear-inspiring situations with these purposeful traditions of deindividuation can produce tragic results.

However, the effects of deindividuation are not restricted to extreme cases. Other-imposed or situation-dependent deindividuation can set the stage for trick-or-treaters to cause mischief on Halloween, Mardi Gras revelers to behave wildly, and Internet chatroom users to be dishonest and vulgar in their "chats." In all of these cases, everyday and extreme, normal people engage in personality-atypical behaviors without noticing the power of the situation.

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See also Aggressive Communication; Attachment Theory; Caregiver Role; Culture and Relationships; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Family Relationships in Childhood; Public Policy and Relationships; Self-Concept and Relationships

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INFANT–CAREGIVER COMMUNICATION

Before infants use words, they engage in rich communication with their caregivers through gestures, vocalizations, emotional expressions, and in other ways. This entry describes the development of infant–caregiver communication during the first 2 years of life, including the baby's grasp of interactive practices, and how developing communication is influenced by the child's growing awareness of the adult as a psychological being who communicates and receives communication from the baby.

Sally, 3 months old, is strapped into her bouncy seat, and her mother is sitting across from her. Sally coos and smiles at her mother, and her mother responds with a wide-eyed smile and a responsive coo as Sally bounces. Her mother laughs and brings her head closer, saying, "You like that!" Then the telephone rings. Sally's mom answers and begins to talk. Sally makes another squeal, but her mom says, "Shh. Shh." and pats Sally's belly, then moves her hand away and starts writing on a pad of paper. Sally kicks her feet again and smiles at her mom, but gets no response. After a few more attempts, Sally turns away with a sober expression and brings her fist up to her mouth. A few moments later, Sally's mother hangs up the phone. "Where were we, little one?" she says to Sally, but Sally keeps her head turned away. Her mother starts singing a soft song, and after a few moments Sally turns toward her mom's voice. Sally smiles and kicks her feet when the song is over. Sally's mother responds with a smile.

This example of face-to-face interaction is characteristic of 3- to 6-month-old infants and their caregivers. At this early age, infants are in tune with the social world and are practicing the rules of social interaction that include their growing abilities to take turns and engage others in positive interactions through these simple forms of play. Through these interactions, infants also start to develop a psychological awareness of others that will blossom at the end of the first year and throughout the second year. It is partly through the infant's developing psychological awareness that others are communicative partners and recipients of the infant's communicative efforts that caregiver–infant communication develops and takes new forms.

The First Six Months:
Face-to-Face Interaction

Infants enter the world primed for social interaction. Shortly after birth, infants show preferences for faces over other visual stimuli, for their mothers' faces over other faces, and for their mothers' voices. In addition, newborns are already engaging the social world by expressing needs through crying and other affective cues. Despite this, the sensory world of the infant is characterized by a lack of visual acuity and perceptual organization. Add a lack of mobility, rapidly changing behavioral states, and long hours spent sleeping each day, and it is not surprising that infants are not capable of engaging others in coordinated interactions until weeks of physical and sensory development take place.

As infants enter the third month, they begin to distinguish facial features more clearly and can recognize familiar faces based on these refined perceptions, and they are prone to longer periods of attentive wakefulness. At this age, caregivers and infants begin to engage in coordinated face-to-face play. This type of interaction is characterized by periods when the caregiver and infant interact in close proximity with few outside distractions. Face-to-face interaction provides unique opportunities for infants to learn about turn taking, emotions, emotion regulation, and trust in important adults through the caregiver's responsiveness.

The opening vignette is a characteristic example of face-to-face play. Through such interactions, Sally was learning to take turns during communication, a common characteristic of verbal exchanges, as well as learning about emotions. For example, Sally's positive expressions were followed immediately by her mother's positivity. If Sally had expressed negative affect during their bouncy game, her mother likely would have responded with surprise or she would have ignored Sally's affect to keep the interaction going, sending Sally an implicit (and perhaps unintentional) message that negative affect is not appropriate at that time. Researchers have found these to be prototypical responses of mothers toward their infants' emotions during face-to-face play, evidencing the role of mothers in regulating their infants' emotions at this young age. Researchers have found that infants' emotional expressions become more positive through these repeated interactions in which mothers' affective responses

contingently guide their infants' emotions and engage their babies in emotional reciprocity.

Face-to-face play is often described as an exquisite dance characterized by synchronized coordination between mother and infant. By contrast, careful studies have shown that much of the time, mother–infant face-to-face interaction is characterized by miscoordinated states, when the infant and mother are not making eye contact or positively interacting. As long as this miscoordinated interaction is repaired through each partner's contribution to sensitive reengagement (such as the reengagement between Sally and her mother), infants will learn trust in their caregivers and will also learn that the self is an effective agent in social interaction. Miscoordinated interactions can be caused by external (such as a phone call or an interruption by a sibling) or internal (such as an infant's overarousal or a mother's intrusiveness) occurrences and can last for as little as a few seconds.

Researchers have manipulated mother–infant face-to-face interactions with the "still-face procedure." In the still-face procedure, mothers pose an expressionless, nonresponsive face in the middle of a typical face-to-face interaction. Researchers have been interested in the infant's behaviors during the mother's still face, as well as the mother's and infant's behaviors during the reparation period after the mother resumes typical interaction. Findings from the still-face procedure have shown that infants express decreased positive affect and more negative affect, more self-focused behaviors, and withdrawal behaviors during the unresponsive period. Some infants at first try to positively engage the still-faced partner through smiles and behaviors that previously elicited positive interaction (e.g., reaching, vocalizing, leaning toward the partner), but these behaviors are short-lived when they fail to achieve a response. Upon reparation, infants become more positive, but continue to express subdued affect in comparison with their earlier typical behavior. These findings provide evidence that infants have social expectations from as young as 2 months of age. Like Sally in the vignette, infants expect responsivity from social partners and continue to represent the dysfunctional interaction after it occurs (as evidenced through their continuing expressions of subdued affect), showing that infants are not acting solely on the basis of present stimuli in their immediate perceptual world.

Thus, both infants and caregivers are social agents with social expectations of their partners in interactions during the first 6 months of life. Infants are early aware that interactions are dynamic and require shifts in behavior to alter the behavior of the adult. The caregiver acts in ways that respond to and shape the infant's behavior, and the infant similarly responds to and shapes the caregiver's behavior. Through these reciprocal interactions, infants develop the foundations for a sense of self and other, as well as an awareness of others' emotions and social initiatives and their own self-regulatory behaviors.

The Second Six Months: Communication Across a Distance

As infants near the end of the first year, the onset of locomotion shapes how they interact with others. The face-to-face interactions of early infancy are replaced by faster negotiations involving facial and bodily expressions and verbalizations that must be communicated over a distance. With the onset of mobility, infants must negotiate a constantly changing world with new physical obstacles, perceptual cues, and potential threats to the infant and challenges to the caregiver–child relationship. These advances are accompanied by several changes in infant–caregiver communication and in infants' psychological awareness of others. Specifically, infants begin to guide both the behavior and the knowledge of others through pointing out referents to social partners, and infants begin to use the emotional communications of others to guide their own actions through social referencing.

As infants begin to crawl, they become more independent and agentic, with firm goals guiding their behaviors. Simultaneously, they use emotional information to infer the goals and intentions of others. If an adult positively emotes while looking at an object, the infant infers that the adult likes the object and expects the adult to take it, comment positively about it, or act in other consistent ways. Research on pointing behaviors also evidences infants' understanding of others' mental states. If an adult is unable to find a desired object, 12-month-olds will point out the correct location of the object, showing that they understand that others have specific goals underlying their behavior.

Infants use pointing for a variety of social purposes (as do adults). They may point to provide information for another, known as protodeclarative pointing. Protodeclarative pointing may be used to identify any event of interest to either the adult or the infant. For example, an infant sees a bird in the tree and points at it. His grandmother sees the infant point and says, "Wow, look at that bird!" In essence, this pointing is used to create joint attention around a common object or event of interest. In contrast, protoimperative pointing is used by the infant to gain an object or item. For example, an infant wants the banana but cannot reach it so he points to the banana. His grandmother sees this and retrieves the banana. In essence, the infant uses this pointing to create shared intentionality—in this case, using the adult as a social tool for gaining objects or items. With both types of pointing, infants are actively changing the adult's knowledge and motivation, creating shared goals and intentions between the child and adult.

Research has shown that 12-month-olds point to share attention and an affective or intentional attitude about objects and events. If an adult does not attend to an event of obvious interest, the infant will point to the event for the adult. In addition, 12-month-old infants point out novel objects to adults based on what is novel to the adult rather than to the infant. This behavior requires an understanding that the adult has different perceptions than the self and that expressions of surprise are often directed toward novel objects. Through pointing, therefore, infants actively enter the intentional states of adults as well as engage adults in their own intentional states, creating shared intentionality. It is evident that this is a nonegocentric social capability in 1-year-olds.

Like pointing, social referencing appears in the second half of the first year, but is not measurably robust until approximately 12 months of age. Social referencing describes how, when they are faced with an ambiguous or uncertain situation, infants look to adults' emotional expressions and use these expressions to guide their response. For example, when a stranger approaches, a 12-month-old might look to his mother's reaction before deciding whether to approach the stranger. If the mother expresses concern or fear, the infant would likely avoid the stranger, but if the mother expresses happiness or reassurance, he might instead approach

the stranger. Social referencing thus requires some knowledge of others' attention, emotion, and mental states and the association among them.

Although social referencing does not appear robustly across all types of situations, it is a crucial tool for communication in situations of uncertainty. The same infant might reference the mother in an ambiguous physical situation, such as using an unstable stool to pull to standing. Needless to say, the development of infant mobility is also characterized by increases in caregiver prohibitions on infant behaviors in ways unencountered earlier in infancy and that also heighten infants' sensitivity to distal emotional cues. The new demands on infant–caregiver communication created by the infant's developing capabilities are accompanied by a new awareness of others' mental states and important achievements in creating shared intentionality.

The Second Year: Sharing Others' Intentions and Goals

The second year is characterized by immense changes in the infant's social and emotional capabilities. Communication expands from the nonverbal referencing of objects and events to verbalizing nouns, actions, and emotions by the end of the second year. As in the first year, advances in infant–caregiver communication transform social interaction, and they derive in part from growth in the child's understanding of others' intentions and goals, as well as the developing capacity to create shared intentionality with the adult.

The rudiments of shared intentionality emerge with pointing behaviors during the first year, and they develop into new and more complicated behaviors as infants enter into others' goal states during the first half of the second year. Infants begin to imitate adults' acts with no apparent purpose other than imitation, and they will imitate arbitrary behaviors that they have seen days earlier. More important, infants begin to imitate adults' *intended* actions even if the adult did not succeed in what they intended (e.g., putting a ball in a basket that the adult had tossed but missed). Another indication of growth in shared intentionality is the emergence of helping behavior. By 14 months, infants help others with basic tasks, such as handing an adult something that was dropped; by 18 months, infants help in a wider variety of tasks, such as opening a cabinet for an adult whose hands are full. Taken together, these behaviors indicate that infants are able to infer others' intentions and enter into another's intentional state, creating shared intentionality around a common goal.

Development in shared intentionality is the means for two further advances in infant–caregiver communication later in the second year. First, pretend play appears in infant–parent interaction close to the second birthday as a shared social activity. Two-year-olds rarely engage in pretend by themselves, but they will share an adult's pretense with smiles and knowing looks, showing that they are entering into the adult's imaginative activity when they stir a bowl with a banana or use the banana as a telephone.

Second, language ability also flourishes during the second year and also as the result of shared intentionality. A toddler's ability to understand and use words derives in large measure from comprehending the intentional state of the adult they overhear using those words. When father says "Look at the cute kitten!" in the presence of a stray cat, an 18-month-old can understand the referential intent of the word *kitten* only by astutely interpreting the adult's gaze direction, emotion, and intentional behavior to deduce that the word refers to the animal before them, rather than to the sidewalk, the grass, or even the kitten's size or color. The toddler's later use of the same word to refer to another kitten when she is with her mother reflects another example of imitation—and another illustration of the capacity for shared intentionality in the second year.

Conclusion

Infants' understanding of the emotions and information contained in others' minds shapes developmental changes in caregiver–infant prelinguistic communication. Over the first few months of development, infant–caregiver communication is characterized by need-based interactions. As infants enter the third month, their longer periods of wakefulness and newfound perceptual abilities allow for coordinated interactions, but they are also marked by periods of miscoordinated communication and

recovery. During these interactions, infants learn communicative tools and important information about others' emotional states. Both infants and caregivers are active agents in these interactions, mutually acting to shape the emotions and behavior of the other. These face-to-face interactions wane as infants become more mobile and require communication across larger spaces regarding more complex situations. Infants use pointing to create joint attention, and they combine pointing and other gestures to create shared intentionality with others around interesting and desired objects and events. In addition, infants use others' emotional expressions to guide their behavior in ambiguous situations, evidencing an understanding that others have important information to convey in their assessments of such a complex world. During the second year of life, infants develop a more sophisticated understanding of others' goals and intentions, allowing for action-based communication around the intentions of others. These provide the avenue for more complex imitation and helping behavior, shared pretense, and the development of language.

Infants are thus capable of much more than we once thought in their ability to understand the emotions and information provided by their caregivers through both direct and indirect communicative acts. These communications provide the foundation for psychological growth as infants approach the development of linguistic communication and develop an even more complex understanding of others.

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See also Mother–Child Relationships in Early Childhood; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenting

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INFATUATION

Infatuation is a state characterized by intense feelings of passion toward a specific individual. The term *infatuation* typically refers to the early stages of romantic love, before the infatuated individual has had a chance to get to know or develop an intimate relationship with the love object. Colloquially, infatuation is frequently associated with youth and suggests an irrational, capricious approach to love. Although some consider infatuation to be a special, perhaps early or intense form of passionate love, researchers often use the term *infatuation* interchangeably with *passion, passionate love, limerence,* or being *in love*. Therefore, this entry reviews research and theory on infatuation and these associated terms.

Features of Infatuation

When individuals are infatuated with a potential or current romantic partner, they frequently exhibit any or all of an assortment of features. For one, infatuation is often characterized by persistent, intrusive thoughts about the love object. These thoughts may take on a fantasy-like quality, or, alternatively, they can be anxious ruminations that are distracting and distressing to the infatuated

individual. Frequently, the character of these intrusive thoughts will ebb and flow, focusing at one moment on the possibility that one's feelings are reciprocated and the next moment on the possibility that they are not. This volatility contributes to the emotional turbulence experienced by infatuated individuals, who tend toward euphoria when the love object demonstrates romantic interest in them and toward despair when the love object is insufficiently responsive. Infatuated individuals also commonly idealize the love object, worshipping his or her positive qualities while only indifferently acknowledging his or her negative qualities. Finally, infatuated individuals direct their passions toward only one potential partner. Only rarely do individuals experience strong infatuation toward multiple individuals, and, consequently, they yearn for their love object to reciprocate this exclusive desire. Although not all of these features are necessarily present in every infatuation, the more acute the infatuation, the more likely it is that these features will be present and pronounced.

Another important component of infatuation is sexual desire. In most cases, individuals become infatuated with potential romantic partners who are of the sex that they prefer romantically, and sexual fantasies are often present in infatuated individuals' persistent thoughts about their love object. (Exceptions to these rules are also important in understanding the nature of infatuation and are reviewed later.) In one study, participants named people with whom they were currently "in love" and reported that, in 87 percent of the cases, they also experienced sexual desire for these same individuals. However, sexual contact is rarely the central stated goal of an infatuation. Instead, infatuated individuals long for moments of emotional union with the love object; sexual encounters do not necessarily lead to emotional unions, and emotional connections can frequently be achieved through nonsexual means. Also, given that people can feel sexual desire (but not infatuation) for a number of different individuals at the same time, sexual desire alone is insufficient to generate or sustain an infatuation.

Infatuation is more likely to emerge during the early stages of a romantic or potentially romantic relationship. But infatuation is unlikely to last forever: Such intense passion has a tendency to fade over time in most romantic relationships. There are several reasons for this decline. For one, relationships are initially exciting because people's self-concepts expand to incorporate their romantic partners, but this excitement fades once the self-expansion process runs to completion. In addition, it takes a certain measure of anxiety and uncertainty to maintain the infatuated state, and as time passes, people typically accrue enough evidence to confirm or refute the possibility that a love object desires the self in return. Tumultuous, off-again/on-again relationships that perpetuate confusion about romantic partners' feelings and intentions probably have the best likelihood of sustaining infatuation. (Of course, such relationships probably do a poor job of sustaining interpersonal trust and security!)

Conceptual Frameworks

Many social-psychological theories have explored infatuation and related constructs. One relevant and well-known theory of love is Sternberg's triangular theory. Sternberg proposes that love has three components: passion, intimacy, and decision/commitment. The passion component refers to the experience of arousal and sexual desire; the intimacy component refers to feelings that promote closeness, bonding, and connectedness; and the decision/commitment component refers to the decision to love a particular individual and the commitment to maintain that love. Different types of love emerge from different mixtures of any or all of these components, and each component may be present in varying degrees. Sternberg suggests that infatuation is a kind of love that exists when only the passion component is present. That is, individuals are infatuated when they experience sexual desire and arousal for a particular romantic interest, but they do not feel bonded to and have not yet committed to the romantic interest. That infatuation is derived mainly from passion is consistent with the characterization of infatuation as an immature kind of love that emerges early in a relationship, before any real intimacy or commitment has been achieved.

In contrast to Sternberg's model, other theoretical perspectives suggest that the complete experience of infatuation or passion does not emerge if sexual desire is the only active motivation.

Attachment theorists posit that the typical experience of passionate love results from the activation of both the sexual system and the attachment system. Although sexual desire frequently accompanies infatuation, as noted earlier, passion can emerge without sexual desire. For example, prepubescent children experience infatuations that evidence all of the adult features of passionate love, minus the sexual component. Attachment theorists propose that many features that are characteristic of infatuation, such as the desire for emotional closeness and concerns about reciprocation, stem from the activation of the attachment system. Just as infants wish to be physically and emotionally close to an attachment figure, infatuated romantic partners want to be physically and emotionally close to each other. Some recent empirical findings have suggested that the attachment system is an integral part of the passionate experience; manipulations designed to activate the attachment system (by triggering the experience of attachment anxiety) with respect to a particular romantic interest have the effect of boosting participants' passionate love for that romantic interest. Given the centrality of pair bonding as a mating strategy among humans, it makes evolutionary sense that initial romantic attraction would emerge at the intersection of the sexual system, which governs the reproductive act, and the attachment system, which bonds reproductive partners together for childrearing purposes.

Although attachment theory and the triangular theory have somewhat conflicting perspectives, there are explanations for the existence of infatuation that draw from both theories. In the early stages of romantic relationships, infatuation is pronounced, and romantic partners typically have not yet developed the intimacy and closeness that they later achieve as the relationship matures. At the same time, the *desire* to achieve a state of bondedness and intimacy may emerge early in a relationship. It is this desire for a bond with a particular partner that indicates the activation of the attachment system and is central to the experience of infatuation. If the sexual system (i.e., the passion component of the triangular theory) is activated without this desire for an emotional bond (i.e., desire for the intimacy component of the triangular theory), this will probably emerge as raw sexual attraction, not infatuation or passionate love per se.

Empirical and theoretical work that has explored the association between passion and intimacy also sheds light on the nature of infatuation. Some theorists have suggested that as romantic partners accumulate knowledge about one another, passion emerges as a result of such increases in intimacy. (In mathematical terms, passion is the first derivative of intimacy over time.) A wide array of research findings lends support to this hypothesis. For example, studies conducted by Arthur Aron and his colleagues have demonstrated that romantic partners experience an exhilarating expansion of the self as they become more intimate, and this self-expansion process generates greater feelings of romantic passion. As a second example, one study required opposite-sex strangers to stare into each other's eyes for 2 minutes—an intimacy-promoting activity. After the staring task, these strangers reported greater affection and passionate love for each another than did control participants who stared at each other's hands. Finally, research on individual differences has found that extraverts tend to disclose more (compared with introverts) about themselves and therefore quickly develop intimacy with potential romantic partners. Not surprisingly, then, extraverts also report greater passionate feelings on average. All of these findings support the idea that passion may emerge as intimacy increases.

Taken together, the theoretical perspectives reviewed earlier paint a coherent picture of the time course of infatuation. First, infatuation is most likely to emerge early in a romantic relationship, as intimacy is just beginning to increase. Soon thereafter, attachment theory predicts that infatuated individuals will start to desire more intimacy and want to feel bonded to the love object. In cases where both partners experience these feelings for each other, this will likely lead to a continued increase in intimacy, which in turn generates greater passion. As intimacy starts to reach an upper limit (once romantic partners have gotten to know one another extremely well), then passion is likely to decline.

Role of Arousal

Some of the best empirical work on the experience of infatuation has demonstrated the importance of physiological arousal in stimulating passion.

Berscheid and Walster's two-factor theory of romantic love predicts that passion is generated or intensified when people (1) are aroused physiologically, and (2) believe that another person is the cause of this arousal. The classic "love on a bridge" study is the most vivid demonstration of this point. In this study, male participants crossed either a frightening, narrow bridge or a wide, stable bridge and were greeted by an attractive female experimenter on the other side. Men who had just crossed the scary bridge (compared with men who had crossed the stable bridge) were more likely to call the experimenter in the ensuing days. In other words, as predicted by the Excitation Transfer Theory, the men misattributed the source of their physiological arousal: They believed it was the attractive female experimenter who caused them to feel excited, and they experienced greater attraction to her as a result.

Other experimental research has revealed similar results. For example, participants who were anticipating a shock or who just finished exercising reported greater attraction to an attractive romantic target than did control participants. In fact, the valence of the arousal seems to matter little because both positively (e.g., comedy) and negatively (e.g., horror) arousing material can increase passion for an attractive other. In the course of everyday life, the arousal that one believes to be caused by a potential romantic partner typically really is caused by that partner, and thus the romantic attraction that follows is the result of an appropriate attribution. Nevertheless, these experimental misattribution studies were essential to demonstrate the causal role that arousal plays in the passionate experience.

In summary, infatuation is a common experience in the opening stages of potential romantic relationships, one that frequently proves both exciting and terrifying. Infatuation has an important role in the psychological study of attraction as its features, time course, and theoretical underpinnings reveal much about the nature of human mating.

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See also Arousal and Attraction; Attachment Theory; Attraction, Sexual; Excitation Transfer Theory; Falling in Love; Initiation of Relationships; Interpersonal Attraction; Intimacy; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Misattribution of Arousal; Self-Expansion Model

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INFORMATION SEEKING

Researchers generally agree that individuals have a large appetite for information. Not surprisingly, that appetite is often fed by information about others with whom they have close relationships. This entry begins with a summary of the breadth of relational contexts in which information is sought, discusses predictors of the information-seeking process in close relationships, addresses biases that guide the search for information, discusses consequences of the decision to seek information, and ends with a technological development that is changing the landscape of information seeking in close relationships.

Contexts of Information Seeking in Close Relationships

Gaining knowledge about someone is a necessary component of initiating a relationship with him or

her. At the most basic level, individuals interested in developing a romantic relationship seek to discover whether there is a fit in attitudes and beliefs, and whether the person is available for, and interested in, such a relationship. Although there are many strategies that people use to discover whether someone is attracted to them, it is interesting to note that the most efficient form of information seeking in this case (e.g., "ask her or him if she or he liked me") is also typically rated the least appropriate. That generally sums up the dilemma inherent to information seeking—be direct, but risk being inappropriate, or be indirect, but risk misunderstanding. Most studies show that individuals typically choose the latter. A whole host of other informational unknowns are tackled in this manner, among them the information exchange that contributes to sexual decisions. One would expect that a central feature of that exchange would be a sexual health discussion between partners. Yet considerable research suggests that such a discussion is relatively rare; if it does occur, it often comes *after* the first sexual encounter. Preliminary information about a partner's sexual health seems to often come from assumptions about physical appearance or, curiously, from discussions with friends who are believed to know the partner's past sexual history. This aversion to direct information seeking is also evident in that individuals often rely on "secret tests" of their partner to gain information about his or her level of commitment. For example, studies have shown that people sometimes choose to test their partner by acting in really negative ways (to see with how much they will "put up") or by asking a friend to flirt with their partner and watching the partner's reaction to the flirtation. These forms of indirect information seeking wane across a relationship's life cycle. Yet indirectness remains a popular method of seeking information about a partner and reemerges as the primary method of gaining information during the dissolution and postdissolution phase of relationships, where inquiries about the partner's motivations and behaviors are either avoided entirely or are tackled gently.

Of course, romantic relationships are not the only close relationships in which considerable information is sought. The parent–child relationship is another that involves its share of information-seeking decisions. Two periods in the life cycle of this relationship are especially prone to such episodes—when children are in their adolescence and when parents are in or approaching old age. When children go through adolescence and young adulthood, they often engage in independence-seeking behaviors that place their parents in a precarious dilemma: seek information about suspicious behaviors and potentially violate their child's privacy, or turn a blind eye and hope for the best? Although violating privacy brings with it distrust and the potential for further rebellion, ignoring signs of dangerous activity may end with disastrous consequences for the family. A somewhat similar spike in information-seeking decisions comes near the end of life, but this time it is the adult child who faces the dilemma. Seek information about the parent's eldercare wishes and needs, or assume that she or he will reveal them when comfortable doing so? Unfortunately, studies suggest that people all too often choose the latter strategy and do not receive the information in time.

Predictors of Information Seeking in Close Relationships

The decision to seek information in close relationships or avoid doing so is a difficult one. As such, it is not surprising that several programs of research have tried to better understand the factors that predict the outcome of that decision. This literature can generally be separated into two approaches: one that focuses on features of the individuals' personality and one that focuses on features of the situation.

Personality

Several scholars have shown that individuals differ in their desire for information. Suzanne Miller's work on information seeking in health contexts has been able to separate people as either *monitors* (i.e., information seekers) or *blunters* (i.e., information avoiders) based on their responses to hypothetical scenarios. Similarly, Richard Sorrentino and his colleagues have shown that people differ on their orientation toward uncertainty and, by extension, information seeking in close relationships. Most recently, Bill Ickes and his colleagues have been able to show personality differences in the motivation to acquire relationship-threatening information. Other personality differences have been shown to have a less direct, but still important, association with

information-seeking decisions. For example, individuals' style of attachment, as well as their affinity for risky and novel situations, has been shown to influence the sort of information that individuals' seek about their (potential) partner. Specifically, anxiously attached individuals seek information about partners that confirms their fears (i.e., partner shortcomings), and sensation seekers (those with affinity to risky and novel situations) pursue more information about potential partners than do risk-avoidant individuals. There is also evidence that self-esteem, along with the Big Five personality dimensions (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Competitiveness, and Conscientiousness) all impact information-seeking choices in a variety of ways.

Situation

Other approaches have focused on situationally specific conditions that impact individuals' information behavior in close relationships. Walid Afifi and colleagues' Theory of Motivated Information Management argues that individuals go through a three-phase process in deciding whether to seek information in interpersonal encounters. The first phase involves an assessment about whether their actual and desired levels of uncertainty about an issue match. If not, the theory argues that people first determine the costs and benefits of seeking information about the issue from a particular target (e.g., their romantic partner) and then decide whether they are able to effectively seek information about that issue from that person. A combination of those assessments then leads to a decision to either seek or avoid information. All these assessments are impacted by situational features such as mood, feedback from the target person, or target issue, among others. As a general rule, perceptions that the outcome will be positive and that one is able to effectively seek information leads to direct searches for information. The theory has been successfully applied to information-seeking decisions in both romantic relationships and parent–child pairs.

Information-Seeking Biases in Close Relationships

Although knowing whether someone will seek information is an important step to understanding the information-management process, it does not deal with the biases that guide individuals' search for information. There is no doubt that individuals rarely, if ever, seek information in an objective manner. Instead, people's needs and motivations guide the sort of information that they gather and the way in which they interpret what they find. The research literature in this domain is vast. One motivational aspect that seems to play a strong role in the sort of information sought and its interpretation is the need for consistency. Decades of research has shown that individuals typically seek information that supports preexisting attitudes and beliefs. In relational contexts, this translates to a selective search for information that supports either preexisting or desired biases toward the person. For example, studies have shown the many ways in which people's positive impressions of their romantic partner allows them to overlook negative traits and glorify positive ones. In a similar vein, the research has revealed that people often look for information that supports preexisting hopes or fears.

Emotion is another biasing factor in the search for information. Individuals' mood strongly influences how much and what sort of information they seek, both generally and in relationships. Specifically, individuals in happy moods tend to seek more information, but focus on abstract-level information that is likely to maintain that mood. In contrast, those in sad moods take on a much more cautious approach to their information search and, within that selective approach, typically look for detailed information. It is also worth noting that emotions often combine with the bias toward consistency to influence the information sought. Moreover, neuroscientific studies have shown that different regions of the brain become activated during information-processing tasks depending on the emotion being experienced. So, not only does mood influence what information is sought, but how it is then processed and interpreted.

Consequences of Information Seeking

The general belief among both researchers and health practitioners is that information seeking is generally beneficial. After all, it seems better to make an informed decision than an uninformed one. But is it? In all likelihood, it is. However,

growing evidence suggests that information seeking sometimes leads to worse outcomes (at least in the short run) than information avoidance. For example, research that has compared health outcomes for monitors and blunters has consistently shown that monitors (i.e., information seekers) do more poorly on health measures than do blunters (i.e., information avoiders)—they report greater depression, visit physicians more often, are more anxious, and improve less rapidly following medical procedures. In a related vein, Sorrentino and colleagues' work on uncertainty orientation has shown that avid information seekers generally report lower relational trust and satisfaction than information avoiders. Finally, information seeking has the potential to lead individuals toward poor decisions. For instance, one study showed that college students were woefully misinformed about whether their sexual partner had a sexually transmitted infection (STI), but were *certain* about the accuracy of their information. Why? Because that certainty was reached through considerable information seeking. The result may be that information seekers are less likely to practice safe sex and be more susceptive to STIs than information avoiders. The latter group may be more cautious in their approach to safe-sex decisions precisely because they do not have the false security gained by those who sought information. This is one area of research that is sorely in need of additional attention.

Impact of Social Networking Sites

The spread of online social networking sites has important implications for information seeking in close relationships. In the past 3 to 4 years, sites such as *Facebook* and *MySpace* have become online hosts to millions of individual profiles across the globe and a rich source of information for those seeking it. Indeed, recent studies have shown that individuals' primary use of these sites is to gather information about people who they have recently met. The effort is made easy by the fact that people often leave their profiles open to the public, with information ranging from contact information to likes and dislikes to photographs, and well beyond. Unfortunately, the scholarship in this area has not kept pace with the speed in which this phenomenon has spread. This new mode of

information seeking in close relationships, however, has significant potential to dramatically change both what information is discovered and the way in which it is done.

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See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Computer-Mediated Communication; Internet and Social Connectedness; Secret Tests of Relationship Status; Uncertainty Reduction Theory

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INGRATIATION

Ingratiation is a form of self-presentation or impression management, with the specific goal of enhancing one's likability. Any behavior that potentially

has the effect of increasing liking for the actor and that is enacted for this reason can be seen as an instance of ingratiation. This does not mean that all likable behaviors are examples of ingratiation; the crucial point is the motive for the behavior. For example, if an employee supports his or her boss in a meeting because the employee agrees with the boss, or if someone helps a friend for truly altruistic reasons, the behavior is not ingratiating. Of course, the boundary is quite fuzzy because people are not always aware of their true motives. They may consciously think they really agree or wish to be genuinely altruistic, whereas their unconscious motives may be ingratiating. Many instances of ingratiation are unconscious, so ingratiation occurs more often than people generally assume. This entry discusses the different strategies that ingratiators use and the motives and goals that ingratiation can serve.

Ingratiation Strategies

Different research paradigms have been used to study how people ingratiate themselves and what the effects are. When looking at the ingratiator's part, the researcher may instruct participants interacting with someone to make the other person like them and then examine how they behave. Looking at the target's end—the person being ingratiated—the researcher can expose participants to an ingratiating actor and examine whether they like this person or are easily influenced by him or her, compared with control conditions (e.g., a noningratiating actor or participants observing the same behavioral episode directed at someone else).

On the part of the actor, studies show that getting people to like oneself (ingratiation) is easier than getting them to think that one is smart and capable (self-promotion, another form of self-presentation). A common ingratiation strategy is to show interest, ask questions, pay attention, and single out the other person to make him or her feel special. A second strategy is to do favors, buy presents, or to help or assist a person. Third, people may show support and loyalty (e.g., support their supervisor during a meeting). A fourth way to be liked is simply to smile and be friendly, cheerful, and positive. Fifth, people can directly express admiration by flattering people and telling them what they like or admire about them. Sixth, people can create sympathy by talking about things they have in common with someone or expressing agreement in attitudes, values, or interests because similarity produces attraction.

On the part of the target, ingratiation is not always recognized. Uninvolved observers tend to quickly notice when ingratiation occurs, whereas targets of ingratiation are less suspicious. Thus, the behavior is generally quite effective precisely with respect to the person for whom it is intended, the target. So, when a student flatters a teacher or offers assistance, fellow students who see this may immediately suspect the student's motives, but the teacher may simply appreciate the help or the excellent judgment of character and like the student as a result. Similarly, in a dating context, people can get away with quite blatant flattery unless it becomes unequivocally clear that they make the exact same compliments to other potential dating candidates.

One reason that targets may be relatively gullible is that most people aim to have a positive view of themselves (called the self-enhancement motive), and when they are ingratiated, their self-esteem is bolstered. This makes them feel good even if they might not entirely trust the ingratiator's motives. Importantly, there is a difference between cognitive and affective responses to ingratiation. Cognitively, the target may suspect someone's motives, especially if the flattery concerns qualities that the target is not sure she or he has. Affectively, however, it feels good to be the object of interest, compliments, and support. Many people say that they do not care for this, but unconsciously all people like to feel good about themselves, and they feel good most of all when they feel valued by others. This is a central tenet of Mark Leary's Sociometer Theory.

As a consequence, ingratiation can be a powerful tool in social influence. In his seminal book on ingratiation, Edward Jones noted that the goal of ingratiation is typically instrumental: People ingratiate others because they want to influence their behavior in some way (e.g., get a date, borrow money, get a raise, get a good grade). Thus, ingratiation is a strategy for social influence and it is, in fact, used quite a lot by sales people. People buy more from someone who flatters them. For

instance, if a sales person compliments a shopper on his or her figure and excellent taste in clothes, the shopper is more likely to buy the shirt. In part, this happens because people like the person who ingratiates them. Also, being ingratiated enhances their mood, which in turn may affect their behavior in desired ways. Another reason that ingratiation works is the reciprocity principle: If someone does something good for you, you want to do something in return.

So, the effects of ingratiation are generally as intended: The target likes the ingratiator and is more inclined to do favors to the ingratiator. The ingratiator may not be aware of his or her own insincerity and may come away feeling that she or he and the target get along well. Jones called this the *autistic conspiracy:* Both ingratiator and target are not fully aware of the hidden agenda in their interaction (the ingratiator who wants something, the target who is happy to be flattered) and simply feel good because they both attain something desired. Neither person is motivated to look at the interaction more critically.

Motives Underlying Ingratiation

A strong motive for ingratiation, then, is simply that people can affect others' behavior with it. But there are other motives as well. For one, ingratiation is the lubricating oil of social traffic. If a waiter asks about a meal or if a friend has a new hairdo, most people will say something nice even if they don't entirely mean it. Saying exactly what one thinks can make people feel awkward and uncomfortable. A related motive for ingratiation is that people who get along well with others will be liked and responded to favorably, which in turn benefits their self-esteem. In effect, then, ingratiation can be seen as a social skill.

As noted, targets of ingratiation typically like the ingratiator. Observers are in a different position, and they may give quite harsh judgments of ingratiators. The strongest cue for detecting ingratiation is dependence: When a person is likable toward someone with higher status or power, people instantly become suspicious of ulterior motives. At this point, their judgments are not yet quite negative because they cannot be certain: For all they know, the person might simply be likable. But

once they notice that a person behaves less friendly toward those with less power, they immediately identify the person as a brownnoser and judge the person negatively—in fact, just as negatively as someone who is dislikable toward everybody. This is called the "Slime Effect" because it was first reported in the Netherlands, where people are more wary of ingratiation than in the United States and where the common word for ingratiation is *slime.*

Ingratiation and ulterior motives are identified more easily when the ingratiator depends on the target in some way. This can occur in hierarchical relationships in organizations, but in many other settings as well (e.g., when the ingratiator is a single man out to find a date and the target is a beautiful woman, when the ingratiator is a child or adolescent and the target is a parent or teacher, or when the target is a powerful person in a company or in politics). Because such asymmetry in power makes it more likely that friendly behavior by the lower status person is seen as ingratiating, this presents the ingratiator with a dilemma: When it matters most (i.e., when one depends strongly on someone), ingratiation is most likely to backfire because people will easily see through the ingratiator's hidden agenda, so that credibility is strongly reduced. This problem is called the ingratiator's dilemma.

Conversely, it is relatively easy for powerful people to ingratiate lower status persons without being suspected of insincerity, but the incentives for doing so are also smaller because high-status persons usually do not need favors from those with less power. This dependence is likely underestimated by lower status persons because ingratiation is less easily noticed in these cases. Ingratiation by powerful people may actually be more common than is often assumed.

Fortunately for the low-status ingratiator, several psychological mechanisms may come to the rescue. People in powerful positions typically do not see how their subordinates behave toward others, so the slimy subordinate may easily get away with it. Leaders in organizations usually have multiple subordinates to whom they must attend, so they do not keep track of how everyone behaves toward everyone else. Also, leaders are typically high in self-esteem, so excessive flattery may simply confirm what they already know, and they are not likely to question the ingratiator's motives. Moreover, people

generally attach more weight to how a person behaves toward them than toward others, another reason that flattery toward powerful people will usually have the intended effect. As a result, powerful people rarely find out what others really think of them and may end up with a rather inflated and unrealistically favorable image of themselves.

In addition, according to Jones, ingratiators can use several strategies to resolve the ingratiator's dilemma—that is, to make themselves more credible when flattering someone on whom they depend. The first is to build a power bank by starting the flattery long before a favor is needed. By ingratiating oneself for a longer period, one builds up credit, which can later be withdrawn.

A second strategy is to find a setting in which the power imbalance is less salient. For instance, subordinates may take their supervisor out for dinner, thus creating a setting in which it is less obvious who is in charge and who is not.

Third, people sometimes obscure their behavior—for instance, by disagreeing with their supervisor on trivial matters. This way they won't look as if they blindly follow and support their supervisor, and they convey the impression that they are independent.

Finally, it is a good idea to flatter via a third party. For example, one may tell the boss's secretary that one has never had a better supervisor than this one. With a little luck, the secretary will pass the compliment on to the boss, and the flattery will have a great deal of impact because the flatterer is not suspected of ulterior motives.

The examples used here are prototypical instances of ingratiation, in which the ingratiator is not sincere. It is important to realize that, in everyday life, there is a large fuzzy area between not saying exactly what one thinks and blatantly deceiving people to accomplish one's goals. In everyday social interaction, ingratiation has many advantages. Most people do not know the truth of what others really think of them, and they might be a lot less happy if they did. This creates the window of opportunity in which ingratiation is effective.

Roos Vonk

See also Interpersonal Influence; Reciprocity of Liking; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Self-Presentation; Similarity Principle of Attraction; Sociometer Theory

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INITIATION OF RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships go through many stages of development, but the first stage is always initiation. Although people (and scientists) do not usually refer to an initiation stage for family relationships, this stage is particularly relevant for voluntary relationships, such as romantic relationships and friendships. People select their friends and lovers, and therefore such relationships need to be initiated in order to exist. This entry summarizes several important aspects of the initiation stage of relationships, including the meaning of relationship initiation; how common relationship initiation is; diverse settings in which relationship initiation may occur; involvement of the social network in relationship initiation; the emotions, beliefs, and behaviors associated with relationship initiation; and the negative side to relationship initiation.

What Does Relationship Initiation Look Like?

Generally, relationship initiation refers to the beginning period of relationship development for voluntary relationships such as romantic relationships and friendships. Some theorists, such as George Levinger and Mark Knapp, have developed stage models of relationship development and argue that the first stage of the relationship includes such phases as first awareness of each other, first superficial contact, and the first communication behaviors, which express that the two are developing a connection or potential for a relationship. The relationship initiation stage is probably more distinct as well as more clearly

recalled later for those whose relationships blossom quickly. For example, consider one hypothetical couple: Abby and Alex meet in a bar, e-mail and phone for a week after this brief meeting, and then begin dating. For them, first awareness, first superficial contact, and first communication of a connection occurred quickly and without too much time between each phase. Another hypothetical couple, Kate and Samuel, were in a class together their freshman year in college and talked occasionally, but then forgot about each other until they frequented the same coffee shop their senior year. It was months of running into each other at the coffee shop and chatting briefly before they realized their attraction for each other; another month passed before one suggested to the other that they should go to dinner. When was their relationship initiated? Months and even years spanned between their first awareness, first superficial contact, and the early communicative behaviors that expressed a desire to begin a relationship. Relationship initiation refers not only to the first time two people meet, but can also refer to the process of the relationship transitioning from one type of relationship (casual friendship) to another type (romantic). Laypeople, as well as experts on relationships, would likely consider the time period in which a pair transitions from casual acquaintances to dating partners as the initiation of the relationship.

In defining relationship initiation, Dan Perlman distinguished between "initiating interactions" and "initiating relationships." As he notes, "initiating interactions" may lead to a relationship, but in many cases may fail to do so. Many pairs experience attraction for each other and initiate interactions that never develop into a relationship. More research is needed to explore why some initiating interactions lead to a relationship and others do not.

How Common Is Relationship Initiation?

Compared with the time that people spend maintaining and nurturing their existing relationships (including family relationships), the time spent engaged in relationship initiation is relatively brief. Because there is a norm of exclusivity and monogamy associated with romantic relationships, most adults have only one such relationship at a time. Therefore, people who stay in a romantic relationship for a long period generally do not enter the initiation stage of a romantic relationship again unless their long-term romantic relationship comes to an end, either through dissolution or death of the other. Adolescence and young adulthood, however, is a time of experimentation with short-lived romantic relationships, and therefore relationship initiation behaviors are quite common at that time.

In contrast to the limited number of romantic relationships that may develop over a lifetime, friendships may begin at any time regardless of how many friends one already has. Friendship generally has a less clearly defined initiation stage compared with romantic relationships. Two people may move slowly from nodding acquaintances to casual acquaintances to good friends, and possibly on to best friends. Friendship initiation may be more common when there are life transitions or changes, such as in geographical location, job, or marital status. The number of new friendships that are initiated is also influenced by the desire for and capacity (e.g., resources) to have a large social network. Some people prefer to have many friends and are often expanding their social network (although perhaps at the same time allowing friendships at the periphery of their social network to fade away). Others may prefer only a few close friends.

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, developed by Laura Carstensen, states that the desire to initiate new friendships varies across the life course. This theory argues that as people approach the end of their life, they become more selective in regard to with whom they spend time. When time is running out, resources (including time) are devoted to intimate others, rather than to developing new relationships. At younger ages, however, when focusing on the future and when new contacts are important, relationship initiation is likely to be much more common.

Where Does Relationship Initiation Occur?

There are a variety of settings in which relationships begin, including bars, classes, work, parties, church, and on the Internet. Although the most common settings for meeting potential partners vary somewhat as a function of age, according to

several studies, the most common locations for meeting romantic partners are parties, classes or work, and settings centered around hobbies or sports. Many years ago, social psychologist Bernard Murstein distinguished among settings in which people meet others by the degree to which they involve different degrees of voluntariness of interaction. A *closed field* (e.g., a small college seminar) is characterized by the presence of a small group of people who are all likely to interact with one another. In contrast, in an *open field* (e.g., a singles bar), there is no structured interaction and therefore more choice about one's interactions. Some have speculated that the factors that lead to attraction and the desire to initiate relationships differ in these two types of settings. For example, physically attractive people are more likely to be noticed in an open-field setting. In closed fields, however, attraction to others can be influenced by less superficial characteristics, such as the person's honesty, integrity, or sense of humor.

Regardless of the particular setting in which two people meet, one of the major predictors of the likelihood of two people initiating a relationship is physical proximity. Physical proximity increases the likelihood that two people will be in the same setting at the same time. Furthermore, within a particular setting (e.g., an apartment, a classroom, a workplace), two people are more likely to initiate interaction the closer in proximity they are. Proximity contributes to the initiation of a relationship for a number of reasons, including the high rewards and low costs associated with interacting with someone who is near (relative to those who are at a distance) and the familiarity that derives from "mere exposure" to the other (such as seeing that person in class repeatedly). Another type of proximity, social proximity, also influences the likelihood of two people initiating a relationship. As noted by Malcolm Parks and other experts of social networks, the closer two people are in a network of relationships (e.g., if they have mutual friends), the greater their likelihood of meeting.

Advances in communication technologies have reduced at least somewhat the importance of physical proximity for initiating interaction with others. Although there has been considerable media attention given to online relationship initiation, recent studies with representative samples indicate that only a small proportion of committed, romantic relationships began online (3 percent according to one study, 6 percent according to another). Nonetheless, this translates to millions of relationships, and most experts agree that online relationship initiation is here to stay and is likely to become more common.

Although online dating is generally a homogeneous concept to the general public, differences exist among types of Internet relationship initiation. Katelyn McKenna, a pioneer in the study of relationship initiation on the Internet, has distinguished among three types of online relationship initiation: *naturally forming relationships, networked relationships,* and *targeted relationships.* Naturally forming relationships occur in those venues in which people congregate online because of an interest or hobby. For example, although the goal for participating in newsgroups and interactive online games is not relational, relationships can form from interaction on these sites. Networked relationships may also be initiated online through social network sites such as *Facebook, Friendster,* and *MySpace.* These social network sites provide opportunities to meet others who are linked to one's friends and acquaintances.

Targeted relationships are those that develop from interactions in online dating sites. People go to dating Web sites (e.g., *eHarmony*) for the specific purpose of initiating a romantic relationship with a compatible match. Such sites can facilitate relationship initiation by offering a large pool of potential partners, an easy way to search for compatible others who are interested in starting a relationship, and a legitimate and relatively safe format for initiating communication, such as by sending anonymous preprogrammed messages. Individuals meeting on the Internet often disclose personal information sooner and deeper than they might in face-to-face conversation.

Long before the Internet, there were newspaper personal want ads, video-dating services, singles functions, and professional matchmakers. These services, along with Internet dating sites, have been described as *commercial marriage market intermediaries.* Another recent type of commercial service to assist in relationship initiation is speed-dating. These are events that often occur in bars and involve brief "dates," 3 to 8 minutes long, for participants who attend for the purpose of meeting a date.

Self-Initiation Versus a Little Help From Friends and Family

The first meeting or superficial contact between two people is a big step in the relationship initiation process and is sometimes planned and schemed even if only in the minutes after first awareness of the other. According to research on dating relationships conducted by Charles Berger, people use any of three general techniques to meet another person, particularly in open fields. One way is to introduce oneself to the other. A second technique is to give nonverbal cues and wait for the other to introduce him or herself. Third, one could have a mutual friend make the introduction. Berger found that men were more likely to engage in the first strategy, whereas women were more likely to engage in the other two strategies.

The strategy of friends facilitating the initiation of relationships is common. Many relationships begin through an introduction by a friend or through other types of assistances from the social network. Research conducted with college students and with national, representative, samples of adults indicates that 25 to 50 percent of people meet their current partner through another person. Most often this is a friend, but family members, coworkers, and others also make introductions. Besides assisting in first meetings, friends and family members contribute to the relationship initiation process through supportive behaviors, such as inviting the two to social gatherings and encouraging the relationship. Research indicates that these supportive behaviors from the social network have a positive effect on the likelihood that the relationship develops.

In some cultures, traditionally, parents were instrumental in orchestrating the relationship initiation process through arranged marriages. This still occurs in some areas of the world, such as in subcultures in India.

Emotions, Beliefs, and Behaviors Associated With Relationship Initiation

Regardless of the type of relationship, the setting in which the relationship begins, relationship initiation consists of many specific emotions, behaviors, and beliefs.

Attraction

Attraction is the emotion or catalyst behind relationship initiation in most voluntary relationships. People initiate relationships with others because they are attracted to them. Considerable research beginning in the 1960s examined the factors that lead to attraction. These include proximity, perceived similarity, reciprocity of liking, and the degree to which the other person is physically attractive. In addition, a host of other desirable characteristics—including wealth, status, sense of humor, and warmth/kindness—can lead to attraction primarily by increasing the perceived probability of having rewarding experiences. Although people may be attracted to those who have desirable characteristics, in real life, matching often occurs by the pairing of individuals with equally desirable characteristics.

Behaviors to Demonstrate Interest

In open fields (such as single functions), people can send nonverbal signals to show their interest in developing a relationship, which can have a significant impact on the likelihood that other(s) will return relationship-initiating-type behaviors. Observational studies of men and women flirting in singles bars suggest that successful flirtation involves one person approaching the other. In a unique observational study, Monica Moore recorded the nonverbal acts that women engage in that seemed to result in a man's attention within a few seconds after the behavior. Some of the more common flirting behaviors were the smile, laugh, room-encompassing glance, short darting glance, head nod, primp, lean, and solitary dance. In follow-up research, she found that the average number of flirting acts engaged in by women was much greater in singles bars than in other settings, such as a snack bar or library, suggesting that women strategically use flirting behaviors in settings in which the behaviors may have an effect on attraction. Of course, heterosexual men (and homosexual men and women) are likely do the same, but the focus of the research has been on women as flirters and men as onlookers.

The first communication in an open setting is often called "the opening line." Three types of opening lines have been identified: *direct* (a direct statement of interest), *innocuous* (a pleasant statement, such as

about the setting), and *cute-flippant* (humor, often with sexual overtones). Although all three types of opening lines may be used in the get-acquainted process, cute-flippant lines (e.g., "Your place or mine?") are rated as least desirable, especially by women.

Beliefs

There are various beliefs that can influence the relationship-initiation process, for example, by influencing the information to which a person attends and how that information is processed. Some general schemas and beliefs that people bring to a relationship come from the larger culture, including the family, peer group, and the media. Romanticism (or romantic attitudes) is a general focus on relationships that emphasizes love as a basis for entering a relationship. People who have strong romantic beliefs are likely to approach relationship initiation in different ways than those who endorse romantic beliefs to a lesser degree. For example, in a study by Sandra Metts, a belief in love at first sight was associated positively with commitment to one's partner following first intercourse. In addition, greater romanticism was associated with recalling that one was more in love sooner in the relationship. Another example of a general belief that influences relationship initiation is relational ideals, which are beliefs about what makes a good relationship and an ideal partner. For example, a person may believe humor is important in an ideal partner, and therefore may be drawn to partners who make them laugh. These relational ideals will influence the type of partner sought and how one approaches a potential relationship.

People also develop specific beliefs about the person or the relationship, which can influence the initiation process. First impressions can be based on the other's appearance, demographic characteristics (e.g., age), and their initial communication. These first impressions can, in turn, influence behavior toward the other, which may create a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, the other can become more like the person we think they are based on our first impressions.

The Negative Side of Relationship Initiation

If a person desires to enter a new romantic relationship or a friendship, has the requisite social skills to engage in relationship initiating behaviors, and the other person is also interested and responds with his or her own initiating behaviors, the result can be an exciting and positive event. The successful start to a new relationship is associated with enhanced positive mood and self-esteem. However, the initiation stage of relationships, as is true of all stages of relationships, also has a dark side. Even in the most successful initiation attempts, there are times of awkwardness, embarrassment, and miscommunication.

Beyond the typical awkwardness of two strangers meeting for the first time, interest in developing a relationship is not always mutual. Although the disinterested partner may be flattered, he or she is likely to reject the attempt to initiate the relationship. Rejection, even mild rejection, feels bad and has potentially important emotional consequences. The person being sought may, in some cases, be exposed to unwanted and unrelenting relationship pursuit, such as stalking in extreme cases. The person who does not want the relationship, who is the victim of unwanted relational pursuit, can experience anger, guilt, and perhaps some fear.

Another negative experience of relationship initiation occurs when a person desires to enter a relationship, but fails to do so because of fear of rejection, social anxiety, or a lack of social skills (i.e., not knowing how to communicate with the potential target). People who have an insecure attachment style find it more difficult to initiate and maintain close relationships. Another negative experience is loneliness, which is a discrepancy between the number of relationships one initiates and maintains and the number that is desired.

In summary, the initiation stage is an essential stage of the voluntary relationship. It has been a relatively neglected topic of study in the field of personal relationships. The *how, where,* and *when* are equally important as the *who* is when it comes to relationship initiation. The manner and the setting in which an initiation takes place often influences the relationship's potential to prosper.

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See also Acquaintance Process; Affiliation; Courtship, Models and Processes of; Dating, First Date; First Impressions; Speed Dating

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IN-LAWS, RELATIONSHIPS WITH

When one marries, the new partner becomes an "in-law" to all family members related to his or her spouse. The marriage ceremony creates a family out of relative strangers. No other family relationship has generated so much negative attention. The first mother-in-law joke was recorded in Roman times. In-law relationships, especially those related to the mother-in-law, have led to the creation of "mother-in-law" languages and taboos. Many entering the in-law domain still do so with negative expectations and anxiety about these new family relationships. This entry explores the nature of in-law relationships, their psychological dynamics, and research findings.

Nature of In-Law Relationships

The term *in-laws* often conjures images of an intergenerational family represented by mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, fathers-in-law, and sons-in-law. Most commonly, one thinks of the mother-in-law–daughter-in-law or son-in-law relationship when reflecting on in-laws. However, the in-law network also extends to fathers, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents.

Changes in family life, such as divorce and remarriage, have increased the convolution of these connections. For example, divorce and remarriage increase the number of mothers-in-law or fathers-in-law in a marriage network. The wife of a man whose parents have both divorced and remarried might have two or more mothers-in-law. A remarried woman with children likely retains her relationship with her previous mother-in-law, for a potential total of three or more mothers-in-law.

Although expectations are common, especially ones that suggest intrusiveness and negativity, there are few established norms for in-law roles. The extended family models once prevalent in an agrarian society have vanished in a more mobile, egalitarian society. Women in the workforce, geographic separation, and later ages at marriage have increased the complexity of in-law relations. The increasing independence and cultural diversity of marriage partners leads them to establish isolated nuclear families with fewer face-to-face connections with the extended family network.

Psychological Dimensions

In-law relationships are perhaps the most complicated in the family system. This relationship is a secondary rather than a primary relationship created through the choice of one family member. Due to their intergenerational nature, in-law relations are influenced by differences in developmental stages and generational differences.

In-law relationships are transformed across time by others in the family network. For example, the openness and vulnerability of a daughter-in-law's

relationship with her mother-in-law is often related to the nature of her relationship with her own mother. On the one hand, if she has a close tie with her own mother, she might view a mother-in-law who is different or expresses different values from her own mother as not fitting within her family, despite the fact that she is her husband's mother. On the other hand, a daughter-in-law who has a distant, formal relationship with her mother may appreciate her mother-in-law's hugs and expressions of affection as providing a sense of connection she has missed with her own mother. How the husband describes and expresses his feelings about his mother, both pre- and postmarriage, can influence his wife's perception of her mother-in-law. The birth of a child/grandchild also changes the dynamics because the two women now have a mutual focus they can celebrate together.

Power and control are persistent issues among in-law relations. While remaining asymmetrical, in-law interactions face constant power shifts across time. At the beginning, when the child-in-law-to-be is first introduced, most of the power resides with the parents-in-law. Once the wedding occurs, the power differential shifts to give the child-in-law more power. Once a child is born, the child-in-law, specifically the daughter-in-law, holds the majority of the power. She becomes the gatekeeper controlling access to her parents-in-law's grandchildren.

Although both research and popular culture focus on the mother-in-law–daughter-in-law or son-in-law relationships, the interactions of siblings-in-law and fathers-in-law also play an important role in family functioning. For example, research indicates that, among rural farm families, fathers-in-law can create more strain on young marriages than any other in-law relationship. At times of family or health crises, parents- and children-in-law often receive the support they need to survive the crisis from their in-laws. Female in-laws might provide the emotional support that male kin struggle to adequately provide. A sister-in-law who views her brother's wife as the sister she never had can influence her mother's perception of her brother's wife, positively impacting that relationship's quality. Likewise, a hostile relationship with a father-in-law might contribute to negative perceptions by the mother-in-law of her daughter's husband. The ambiguity experienced by both generations about

what the relationship "should be" increases the fragility of in-law relationships.

The rules for appropriate interactions become more ambiguous as the number of generations increases. The ambivalence often found in adult parent–child relationships is intensified in the parent-in-law–child-in-law relationship. One of the most ambiguous roles in the extended family network is that of the father-in-law. For example, the matriarchal nature of the African-American family contributes to a sense of ambiguity for the father-in-law as to how he should act in his role in the family. Ambivalence can add stress that weakens the kinship network.

Research on In-Law Relations

Due to the multifaceted, dynamic nature of in-law relationships, little research has explored them. Most of the research focuses on women's roles in the extended family and the role of children-in-law in caring for aging parents-in-law. Within the family network, women fulfill the role of kinkeepers. They are expected to maintain the connections, rituals, traditions, and histories for both sides of the family.

Intergenerational exchanges occur across the family life cycle. In the early years of family life, support often originates from the older generation and passes to the younger (i.e., providing child care, financial assistance, and advice). As the parents age, they depend on younger family members to provide the support needed to remain independent. Research suggests that, in the absence of a spouse or daughter, the responsibility for caring for aging parents falls to the son(s). Typically, the son provides instrumental care, like home repair. When personal care is needed, sons depend on their wives to assist with bathing, feeding, and so on. When the primary caregiver is a daughter, her husband, the son-in-law, often assists by providing instrumental care. Thus, the daughter-in-law and son-in-law are central in the caregiving network supporting parents-in-law. The only factor consistently found to be related to children-in-law's willingness to provide assistance is the strength of the emotional tie between the son- or daughter-in-law and the parent-in-law. Yet the complexity of in-law relationships, the in-law's lack of choice in

selecting this family member, and the impact of other individuals on relationship quality combine to make building positive in-law relationships challenging.

In-law relationships are a central core of extended family relationships. The impact of each generation on the other continues throughout the family life cycle. The dynamic nature of these relationships provides the opportunity for the best of relationships or the worst of relationships. The dynamic interaction across multiple generations opens the opportunity for building unique family relationships like no other in the kinship network.

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See also Caregiving Across the Life Span; Extended Families; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Kinkeeping; Kin Relationships

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INSIGHT-ORIENTED COUPLE THERAPY

Insight-oriented couple therapy (IOCT) emphasizes the interpretation of recurrent maladaptive relationship patterns from a developmental perspective. IOCT helps partners develop more satisfying ways of interacting by coming to understand and modify enduring dysfunctional patterns of emotional and behavioral responses linked to unmet needs and unresolved anxieties rooted in prior relationships. This entry describes the historical and theoretical underpinnings of IOCT, the sequence of interventions through which partners gain a new understanding of dysfunctional relationship themes and modify maladaptive interpersonal exchanges, and empirical findings regarding this treatment approach.

Historical and Theoretical Underpinnings

Insight-oriented approaches to couple therapy vary in the extent to which they emphasize the unconscious nature of relational patterns, the developmental period during which these maladaptive patterns are acquired, and the extent to which interpersonal anxieties derive from frustration of innate drives. However, a shared focus of insight-oriented strategies are previous relationship injuries resulting in sustained interpersonal vulnerabilities and related defensive strategies interfering with emotional intimacy, many of which operate beyond partners' conscious awareness. Consequently, insight-oriented approaches to couple therapy emphasize that partners' maladaptive relationship patterns are likely to continue until they are understood in a developmental context. This new understanding serves to reduce partners' exaggerated emotional and behavioral reactivity and permits them to develop alternative, healthier relationship patterns.

Couple interventions emphasizing the interpretation of maladaptive relationship themes derive from diverse theoretical approaches that can be placed on a continuum from traditional psychoanalytic techniques rooted primarily in object relations theory to schema-based interventions derived from more traditional cognitive theory. In its most orthodox formulation, IOCT derives from object relations theory (developed by Melanie Klein, Ronald Fairbairn, and others) and its central tenet that the primary drive in infants is to secure attachment to the mother. From interactions primarily with the mother, infants develop internalized images (or "introjects") of the self, significant others, and transactions connecting these images. From an object relations perspective, maladaptive relationship patterns of adults reflect enduring, unhealthy introjects that give rise to inevitable frustration when these are projected onto

relationships with significant others. In a distressed marriage, partners' dysfunctional mental representations of significant others interact in an unconscious, complementary manner, resulting in repeated disappointments and persistent conflict. Consequently, the goal of psychoanalytically oriented couple therapy is helping partners to modify each other's projections, distinguish these from objective aspects of their own self, and assume ownership of their own projections.

Evolving from object relations theory, attachment theory (developed by John Bowlby) emphasizes the importance of emotional closeness to others as an innate survival function from which infants develop information-processing capabilities and emotional responses intended to foster secure emotional bonds. From an attachment perspective, difficulties in intimate adult relationships stem from underlying insecure or anxious models of attachment. Susan Johnson and Leslie Greenberg developed emotionally focused couple therapy (EFT) from an attachment theory perspective. EFT is different; EFT is how this is known by the field.

Interpersonal role theory (developed by Jack Anchin and Donald Kiesler) regards the persistence of maladaptive interpersonal patterns as resulting from their reinforcement by the responses of significant others. Rather than stressing dysfunctional mental representations, interpersonal theory emphasizes the unconscious assignment of specific roles to oneself and others in which feared relational events are elicited and enacted by the individual in his or her interactions with others.

Schema theory (developed by Mardi Jon Horowitz and expanded by Jeffrey Young) emphasizes relationship schemas extending beyond attachment to the mother (object relations theory) or significant others (attachment theory) to consider more generally how early relationship experiences influence adult intimate relationships. Schema-based approaches to couple therapy overlap with IOCT in their emphasis on interpretation of interpersonal exchanges within the therapy session as a vehicle for change, attention to affect during the processing of schema-related events, and their emphasis on the childhood origins of maladaptive schemas and the emotional reworking of these early experiences.

Drawing on earlier psychodynamic formulations, Douglas Snyder and colleagues described an insight-oriented approach to couple therapy emphasizing affective reconstruction of previous relationship injuries. In affective reconstruction, developmental origins of interpersonal themes and their expression in a couple's relationship are explored using techniques roughly akin to traditional interpretive strategies promoting insight, but emphasizing interpersonal schemas and relationship dispositions rather than instinctual impulses or drive derivatives. Previous relationships, their affective components, and strategies for emotional gratification and anxiety containment are identified to highlight each partner's consistencies in their interpersonal conflicts and coping styles across relationships. In addition, ways in which previous coping strategies represent distortions or inappropriate solutions for emotional intimacy and satisfaction in the current relationship are articulated.

Treatment Components

Understanding of maladaptive relationship patterns begins with identifying exaggerated emotional responses to current situations—for example, intense hurt or anger in response to modest disapproval from one's partner. Both partners are encouraged to explore early relationship experiences that evoked similar feelings and to consider how these emotional responses may have originally developed as protective coping strategies or tactics for satisfying interpersonal needs.

Initially, previous relationships are explored without explicit linkage to current relational difficulties to reduce anxiety and resistance during this exploration phase. Both partners are encouraged to remain "intently curious" about their own and each other's relational history. Gradually, as the couple continues to explore tensions and unsatisfying patterns in their own relationship, both partners are encouraged to examine ways in which exaggerated emotional responses to current situations have at least partial basis in affective dispositions and related coping styles acquired in earlier relationships. Developing a shared formulation of core relationship themes is vital before linking these themes to current relationship exchanges. Both individuals can be helped to understand that, whereas certain relational coping strategies may

have been adaptive or even essential in previous relationships, the same interpersonal strategies interfere with emotional intimacy and satisfaction in the present relationship.

In IOCT, the therapist's direct access to exchanges between partners affords a unique opportunity for linking enduring relationship themes to current relationship events. Rather than interpreting exaggerated responses that distort exchanges between the partner and the therapist, the focus is on partners' exchanges in the immediate moment. Interpretations emphasize linking each partner's exaggerated affect and maladaptive responses to his or her own relationship history, emphasizing the repetition of relationship patterns and their maintaining factors in the present context. In linking the couple's current struggles to enduring relationship patterns, the therapist encourages attention to the following questions: How does the immediate conflict between partners relate to core relationship themes explored earlier in the therapy? What are each person's feelings toward the other and their desired response? What impact do they wish to have on the other in this moment? How do their perceptions regarding their partner's inner experience relate to their attitudes toward themselves? What fantasies do they have regarding their partner's possible responses? What kinds of responses from their partner would they anticipate being helpful in modifying their core beliefs about their partner, themselves, and this relationship?

In IOCT, cognitive linkage of relational themes from early development to the current context is frequently insufficient for reconstructing or modifying these interpersonal patterns. The affective component of interpretation is seen in the reconstruction of these critical emotional experiences in the immediate context; new understanding by both partners often promotes more empathic responses toward themselves and each other, facilitating more satisfactory resolutions to conflict. Often the individuals must be encouraged to work through previous relationship injuries (e.g., with parents or intimate partners), grieving losses and unmet needs, expressing ambivalence or anger, and acquiring increased differentiation of prior relationships from the present one.

Partners' insight into enduring maladaptive relationship themes makes possible but does not inevitably lead to changes in their own relationship. In addition to interpretive strategies, IOCT promotes interactions that counteract early maladaptive schemas. Thus, the couple therapist allows partners' maladaptive patterns to be enacted within limits, but then assists both partners in examining exaggerated emotions in their present exchange. Partners' exaggerated responses are framed as acquired coping strategies that interfere with higher relationship values such as intimacy, trust, altruism, and compassion. Interpretations about prior relationship experiences underlying the current unsatisfactory exchange help both partners to depersonalize the noxious effects of the other's behavior, to feel less wounded, and consequently to be less reactive in a reciprocally negative manner.

Both individuals are encouraged to be less anxious and less condemning of their own and their partner's emotions, and they are helped to explore and then express their own feelings in a less aggressive or antagonistic fashion. Throughout this process, each individual plays a vital therapeutic role by learning to offer a secure context that facilitates their partner's affective self-disclosures in a softened, more vulnerable manner. The couple therapist models empathic understanding for both partners and encourages new patterns of responding that enhance relationship intimacy. That is, by facilitating the nonoccurrence of expected traumatic experiences in the couple's relationship, both individuals are able to challenge assumptions and expectations comprising underlying maladaptive schemas. Thus, therapeutic change results from the experiential learning in which both partners encounter relationship outcomes different from those expected or feared. In response, partners' interactions become more adaptive and flexible in matching the objective reality of current conflicts and realizing opportunities for satisfying more of each other's needs.

Supporting Evidence

Douglas Snyder and Robert Wills compared their insight-oriented approach emphasizing affective reconstruction with a traditional behavioral couple therapy emphasizing communication skills training and behavior exchange techniques. Thirty couples were randomly assigned to each of these two treatment conditions, and 20 couples were assigned to

a wait-list control group. At termination after approximately 20 sessions, couples in both treatment modalities showed significant gains in relationship satisfaction compared with the control group; specifically, 73 percent of couples receiving the insight-oriented therapy and 62 percent of couples receiving the behavioral therapy experienced significant improvement, in contrast to only 15 percent of the control couples. In addition, couples in both treatment conditions generally maintained their therapeutic gains at 6 months following termination.

However, Snyder and colleagues followed up couples in their treatment study 4 years later and found striking differences between couples treated with insight-oriented versus traditional behavioral therapy. Four years following treatment, 38 percent of the behavioral couples had experienced divorce, in contrast to only 3 percent of couples treated in the insight-oriented condition. Based on these findings, Snyder and colleagues argued that spouses' negative views toward their partner's behavior are modified to a greater degree and in a more persistent manner once individuals come to understand and resolve emotional conflicts they bring to the marriage from their own family and relationship histories.

New Directions

Recent developments regarding IOCT have emphasized assimilation of this approach within multitheoretical integrative couple treatments. Snyder has emphasized an integrative approach for treating difficult couples in which exploration of developmental sources of relationship distress using IOCT follows more behavioral and cognitive techniques for strengthening the couple dyad and promoting relevant relationship skills. Snyder and colleagues (Donald Baucom and Kristina Gordon) have also developed an integrative approach to treating couples struggling with extramarital affairs, in which interventions derived from IOCT play a central role in examining factors contributing to a partner's affair.

Douglas K. Snyder

See also Attachment Theory; Couple Therapy; Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy; Psychodynamic Theories of Relationships

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INTEGRATIVE BEHAVIORAL COUPLE THERAPY

Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy (IBCT), developed by Andrew Christensen and Neil S. Jacobson, is part of what Steve Hayes has called the third wave of behavior therapy. The first wave of behavioral approaches, derived from operant and classical conditioning, sought to create change directly by altering observable antecedent or consequent stimuli such as rewarding desirable behavior. The second wave, coming on the heels of the

cognitive revolution in psychology, emphasized interpretations of behavior in addition to the overt behavior. The third wave emphasizes acceptance, mindful awareness, and direct experience. Rather than trying to control internal negative experiences, third-wave approaches emphasize greater awareness of those experiences, direct exposure to them, and acceptance of them. This entry reviews IBCT and applies its central concepts to interpersonal relationships.

IBCT begins with an evaluation or assessment phase that normally consists of three sessions—a joint session with both partners and an individual session with each partner in which the couple's presenting problems, a brief history of their relationship, and a brief history of each partner's family background are obtained. Following this evaluation period is a feedback session, in which IBCT therapists provide the couple with an overview of their understanding of the couple and recommendations for treatment. The key feature of this feedback is a dyadic conceptualization of the couple's difficulties, emphasizing the key interaction cycles in which the couple gets stuck and the differences between partners and their individual vulnerabilities that fuel this cycle. For example, partners may be locked in a cyclical pattern of demand–withdraw interaction, in which one partner seeks discussion of the relationship while the other avoids those discussions. The "demander" may seek greater closeness in the relationship, fueled in part by a fear of abandonment by the other, whereas the "withdrawer" seeks greater autonomy, fueled in part by a fear of being controlled.

In the research protocol for IBCT, the feedback session is followed by about 20 sessions, typically once a week, of active treatment intervention. These treatment sessions normally involve both members of the couple and are directed at emotionally salient events and issues in the couple's relationships, such as recent examples of their interaction cycle. In the previous example, the therapist and couple might address recent incidents of the demand–withdraw pattern between the couple as they dealt with a situation in which the demander wanted more closeness or the withdrawer was seeking greater independence.

In IBCT, there are three major strategies designed to foster greater awareness and emotional acceptance between partners—*empathic joining, unified detachment,* and *tolerance building*—and three

major strategies for fostering deliberate change in partners—*behavioral exchange, communication training,* and *problem-solving training.* To promote empathic joining, IBCT therapists try to create a safe environment in which they can elicit partners' unexpressed, or rarely expressed, vulnerable emotional reactions. These reactions may in turn elicit more sympathetic responding by the partner. To promote the joint mindfulness of unified detachment, IBCT therapists have partners step back from their interactions and look at them more objectively, engaging the couple in a joint effort to describe nonjudgmentally the major moves that each partner makes that serve as triggers for the behavior of the other. Partners may have difficulty being empathic with one another or taking a nonjudgmental approach to the other's behavior, but the IBCT therapist maintains a consistent nonjudgmental and empathic approach to both. A variety of strategies are incorporated in tolerance building, such as a discussion of the positive and negative consequences of each partner's characteristics that are upsetting to the other. During behavioral exchange, partners are encouraged to define specific actions each could take that would better the relationship and are encouraged to engage in those behaviors, and the impact is then debriefed. Communication training involves active instruction and practice in speaker skills, such as nonblaming description of problems, and listener skills, such as active listening strategies of paraphrasing and reflection. During problem-solving training, partners are given instruction and practice in defining problems, brainstorming potential solutions, and negotiating agreements. Typically in IBCT, the strategies for promoting emotional acceptance are initiated prior to the strategies for fostering direct change. Often the strategies for promoting emotional acceptance provide the necessary improvement for the couple. As couples near the end of their treatment, sessions may be spaced at greater lengths such as every 2 to 4 weeks to see how couples manage without regular contact with the therapist. A final session involves a review of treatment progress, often centered around the formulation provided in the feedback session.

Three studies have provided evidence for the efficacy of IBCT. A small study showed that a couple group treatment using IBCT was better

than a wait-list control group; another small study showed that, in the short-term, IBCT produced as good or better outcomes than traditional behavioral couple therapy, a well-researched treatment; finally, in the largest clinical trial to date of couple therapy, evidence indicated that IBCT created clinically significant improvement over a 2-year follow-up period in more than two thirds of a sample of seriously and chronically distressed couples. A study of mechanisms of change in treatment showed that IBCT worked by creating change in both the frequency of partners' behaviors, as well as their emotional acceptance of those behaviors (see work by Andrew Christensen, Jennifer G. Wheeler, and Neil S. Jacobson for a review and citations to this research).

Andrew Christensen and Katherine J. Williams

See also Assessment of Couples; Behavioral Couple Therapy; Conflict, Marital; Conflict Patterns; Couple Therapy

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INTERACTION ANALYSIS

The term *interaction analysis* is used in a broad sense to refer to a large body of research and theory concerned with understanding how conversation works. Interaction analysis researchers look for systematic devices of discourse used by communicators as they take part in conversation. Interaction analysis is largely concerned with verbal communication as opposed to nonverbal communication, although nonverbal communication is not excluded in principle, especially nonphonemic properties of speech, such as speaking tempo, silence, vocal pitch, and intonational contours. Research on interaction analysis pays attention to discursive devices related to turn taking, topic selection, purposes of individuals' utterances, interruptions, structure of conversation, relationship between utterances, alignment between communicators, indirectness, metamessages, social actions, frames, background knowledge, context, identities, face, roles, and the relationship between properties of talk and outcomes. This entry addresses key concepts that arise as we develop an understanding of how social interaction works.

Research on conversation tries to understand how individuals coordinate their behavior, and it examines how people create their relationships with one another by talking. Conversation can be seen as a cooperative and collusive activity that is sensitive to reducing the risks to communicators. By risks what is meant are things like being seen in a poor light, as insulting someone when that is not intended or appearing ungrateful or critical. Most of this relational work is done as communicators talk to one another not about their relationship or who they are, but about other things. Conversation is improvisational theater. Utterances, not sentences, are the units of talk; utterances occur at particular points in time and place, and they are intended for particular recipients. Sentences are grammatical units that occur in writing. Utterances may consist of a sound, "uhuh," word, "yes," phrase, "I will," and sometimes a full grammatical sentence, "He did come home." One popular metaphor that has been used to describe conversation is *game,* with moves, rules, goals, and strategies. Another metaphor is *dance,* with one partner taking the lead while being responsive to his or her partner.

As a broadly applied label, interaction analysis covers a number of overlapping approaches, including conversation analysis (with an emphasis on the structure of conversation; e.g., greeting-greeting or summons-response), pragmatics (the principles and mechanisms that allow us to communicate more than is actually said), ethnomethodology (the appropriateness of linguistic behavior), rules theory (the implicit rules communicators follow), and

discourse analysis (a wide-ranging, interdisciplinary study of how people make sense of what they hear and read).

Interaction Analysis: A Specific Method

In its more specific sense, interaction analysis refers to one particular approach to studying conversation, describing discourse by mapping the frequency of occurrence of units of speech in relation to one another, the regular sequences of events (such as a greeting following a greeting or an answer following a request for clarification), and the functions served by those sequences. It is a quantitative approach as opposed to the qualitative approaches of conversation analysis, pragmatics, ethnomethodology, rules theory, and discourse analysis. It is concerned with the temporal sequencing of messages, not the individuals speaking to one another. Interaction analysis as a specific method or approach to studying conversation will take a set of categories to code the talk. For instance, research might look at the occurrence of ambiguous statements followed by requests for clarification. The research is concerned with identifying structures that consist of statements—requests for clarification—statements (called *interacts*). One such study showed that more interacts correlated with greater ambiguity in proposals made at meetings of university faculty senators. Interaction analysis attempts to capture communication process by making use of Markov chain analysis, a mathematical system for assessing the probability of occurrence of sequential events. How often is a greeting followed by a greeting? How often is a highly ambiguous term followed by a message that seeks clarification? Clearly this is an approach to describing discourse that makes use of frequency of occurrence and what sort of utterance is next to what other sort of utterance, usually by using structured, predetermined observational schemes. To understand just how quantitative interaction analysis fits into the larger picture of studying discourse, it is necessary to consider interaction analysis in its broader sense. The next section reviews the questions that have been raised by researchers, some devices that have been posited, and how researchers go about the study of conversation. The entry returns to the approach of quantitative interaction analysis later.

Transmission Model of Communication

A popular conception of communication or social interaction—although an inadequate one—is to picture two people talking to each other and sending or exchanging information. Attached to this imagery is the purpose of the encounter, to transfer or to share information. According to this model of communication, the speaker sends a message to the receiver. The message is sent along auditory and/or visual channels in verbal and/or nonverbal form. Implicit in such definitions are concepts such as two people, message, channel or medium, intent, information, knowledge, meaning, as well as the idea that the message goes in a straight line from one person to another, it starts at one point and ends up at another point. It follows naturally enough that the accuracy and efficiency of the transfer is a measure of the success of the event. This view does not encourage us to stop and think about what goes on when people communicate with one another, how it works, how meaning is assigned to utterances, and what kinds of meaning may be communicated in an utterance.

Many scholars have emphasized the communication of information or propositional meaning in their study of conversation, especially linguists, philosophers of language, and psycholinguists. They have tended to concentrate on the message or the intentional transmission of propositional information, the facts stated, *transactional meaning*. They have tried to understand how this process works. Attention has been paid to syntax, retrieval of stored information, information processing, pattern recognition, and other measurable variables.

More Than Propositional Information

Other scholars have concentrated on social or relational messages communicated in addition to the factual (propositional) messages communicated. They have attended to what sorts of knowledge, beliefs, intentions, assumptions, norms, and relational history must be taken into account in arriving at the meanings communicated. Imagine that, in my telling you that it is raining, I intend for you to know, in addition to the fact that it is raining, that you are forgetting to take your umbrella, that you are forgetful, and that we probably won't be

playing golf later. Moreover, I may communicate in that same utterance that I am pleased by this state of affairs. I am implying that I have a right to communicate those messages to you. I am assuming that we share knowledge. I am assuming that you will know what I am hinting at and that you will be able to apply that knowledge to understand what I am implying. We can refer to this as *interactional meaning,* or meaning that goes beyond the linguistic meaning of my utterance. In other words, you won't find the full meaning(s) of my utterance in the dictionary (i.e., what the utterance would mean to people in everyday life). Hence, scholars of interactional meaning have needed to discuss social variables, pragmatics of everyday life, norms of society, and social actions not required for understanding transactional meaning. By social actions what is meant is what social purposes are served by speaking, such as promising, criticizing, demanding, and threatening. Another way to make the distinction is to refer to language as an abstract, decontextualized system versus language in use. Interactional meaning is language in use.

The study of humans talking to one another and communicating both propositional meaning *and* relational meaning, following the interactional view, has received attention from a variety of theoretical and methodological traditions, including discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and interaction analysis. Researchers have noted that language not only points to a world outside the speaker, it also points to who the speaker is and who the hearer is. A major insight of interaction analysis is that utterances take on meaning against a background of invisible framing, a body of ideas that are used in making sense out of talk but are not visible to communicators. When a young couple was putting away groceries after the young woman had returned from shopping, the young man said, "We need peanut butter." The utterance served not only to state a need, it served to direct the woman to buy peanut butter the next time she goes shopping because it was understood between the two of them that she does the shopping.

The idea that saying something to another person is primarily to inform him or her begins to lose its force when one thinks of those many times when people say something to one another that really does not offer information or does more

than offer information. Telling the person who does the grocery shopping that "we need peanut butter" does more than inform him or her of a state of affairs. Telling someone how cold it is on a brutally cold day does not offer much information; or on a day when you planned to play golf with your roommate and you find there is a snow storm blowing outside your window, saying "what a nice day for golf" does not offer information in any simple, factual sense.

Findings from interaction analysis have added to our understanding of doctor–patient interviews; job interviews; mother–daughter relationships; control tower–pilot exchanges; or the interpersonal effects of gender, social class, ethnicity, culture, and region. For instance, research findings from interaction analysis have shown that just how group members respond to attempts at persuading affects the degree to which a group shifts its attitude in one direction. Supportive reactions to minority arguments in a group were found to result in the group shifting less toward a more extreme final decision. This helps to explain how group dynamics work and suggests how to influence a healthy climate within a group discussion.

Research on conversation has uncovered what men talk about and what women talk about (topics); how messages best provide comforting; how talk both reflects and makes use of "who we are," our identity; how turn taking is managed and what variables affect the perception of being interrupted; how messages are effective in compliance-gaining; and how conflict is managed. One study of job interviews found that successful candidates handled turn taking by giving longer answers to questions than unsuccessful candidates and sometimes taking the role of a storyteller. Research on gender and social interaction shows how varying styles of interacting can produce varied interpretations of social actions. Deborah Tannen has done extensive research on friendship and marital relationships, with special attention to gender styles, regional differences, and relational connections. Studies have found that speakers adjust their accent and rate of speech and their pausing patterns in relation to their conversational partner. This sort of accommodation is found in sales and political speeches. Sometimes the opposite to accommodation occurs when we wish to distance ourselves from our hearer. Some researchers have argued that the

expression of solidarity and power in talk is tied to how we think about these two dimensions—use of frameworks—and thus how we interpret what is said. Many variables influence how people talk to each other and how they understand exchanges. Satisfaction with doctor consultations was found to be more highly correlated with the degree to which doctors asked questions seeking patients' opinions, leaving opportunity for patients to say what they wish to say, as opposed to closed-ended questions, ones seeking information.

Philosophers J. L. Austin and John Searle developed the idea that utterances can communicate social action meaning, which they organized under speech act theory.

According to speech act theory, utterances have, in addition to linguistic meaning or transactional meaning, social action meaning. Under the right circumstances, say at lunch break with a friend, to utter "my sandwich is huge, I couldn't possibly eat it all" could easily serve to indirectly offer some of the speaker's sandwich to his or her friend. The act of offering was referred to as a speech act, and the act was a social action, not just an utterance with linguistic or literal meaning—it did something social. It had meaning as a social action.

From the perspective of conversation analysis, speech acts can be organized into adjacency pairs, where a first pair part is closely related to a second pair part. For instance, a request for information is followed by giving information, an offer is followed by an acceptance or rejection, and a greeting is followed by a greeting. Of course, deciding on just what speech act has been produced is always a question. Was the utterance an insult or a compliment, a claim about the state of the world or a criticism, or a request for information or a reminder that you did not do what you had promised? Just how we make this judgment is by interpreting what an utterance might mean given the relational history between the communicators, frameworks for interpreting, which are based on gender, region, social class and other variables, the immediate conversation, and, most generally, our knowledge of the world.

Complicating speech act theory is the larger context in which utterances are spoken. If the recipient of an utterance is to interpret just what speech act was produced and that interpretation takes into account intentions of the speaker, then a larger context than the utterance would play a role in the interpretation. Yet speech act theory does not have anything to say about such a larger context. Telling your friend, "Your glass is empty," may serve as an offer, a criticism, or a description. In short, utterances are subject to interpretation.

Quantitative Interaction Analysis

Most approaches to studying conversation tape record and transcribe the talk. Most of the research is nonexperimental and usually does not use interviews. Philosophers and linguists have tended to use hypothetical utterances and constrain their analyses to abstract principles of language. The research done in conversation analysis, discourse analysis, ethnomethodology, and pragmatics has collected naturally occurring, spontaneous speech. Quantitative interaction analysis has more often been used with experimental design or quasi-experimental design. Joseph Capella, well known for his work on quantitative interaction analysis, argued against the limitations of qualitative analyses, pointing to what he called proof by example (i.e., finding examples or excerpts within the data that exemplify various organizing principles).

In contrast to proof by example, Capella argues for proof by data obtained with objective methods of sampling and conclusions reached with statistical testing. Capella argued that proof by example is subject to many alternative explanations in establishing regularity. It is also subject to selection bias on the part of the researcher. In other words, the bias of even the most well-intentioned researcher may influence the results. Accordingly, the quantitative approach buys the researcher some degree of objectivity.

Pulling It All Together

Studies of social interaction under the broader view have suggested that simply looking at sequential order of units omits variables that influence meaning and structure. Hence, interaction analysis researchers have had to find ways to incorporate factors such as who is speaking, the duration of the units, and the latency of pauses. Although mathematical accommodations may be made to integrate additional factors, one is still left wanting to understand what

resides behind such parsimonious equations describing the event (i.e., why did these values occur in this conversation?). The explanatory power of mechanisms that produce regularities in talk push the descriptive Markovian models. For instance, Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson suggested the transition-relevance place (TRP) as a *potential* point in the talk where turn change can occur. Such mechanisms are powerful and help to explain structure in conversation. The TRP functions as a highly variable unit that operates on a semantic base. Participants project to the endpoint of a semantic unit, which could be a nonverbal sound, word, clause, or longer. Just which TRP serves to change turns may depend on social and psychological variables, relationship, knowledge, motivation, and more. To map only the actual point of turn change is to miss the potential points of change and the power of the TRP to explain turn change. In other words, potential points of change are not captured by quantitative interaction analysis. Likewise, often what is not said carries more meaning than what is said.

Finally, it should be said that qualitative and quantitative analyses of conversation complement one another. Qualitative analysis of interaction suggests a rich underworld of explanation for what goes on in conversation. Quantitative interaction analysis codifies actual observational categories of speech in relation to one another. If the meaning of a communication event could be captured with just the surface structure, then there would be little need to look further, but that is unlikely.

Leonard Shedletsky

See also Coding Systems for Observing Interaction; Communication Processes, Verbal; Discourse Analysis; Dyadic Data Analysis; Social Identity Theory; Understanding

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Interdependence Theory

Interdependence Theory is one of the few extant theories to provide a comprehensive analysis of interpersonal phenomena. The theory analyzes *interdependence structure,* describing the character of the interpersonal world by identifying crucial properties of interactions and relationships. The theory also analyzes *interdependence processes,* explaining how structure influences emotion, cognition, motivation, and behavior. Harold Kelley and John Thibaut developed interdependence theory over the course of four decades, beginning in the 1950s. Its initial formulation was contemporaneous with early social exchange and game theories, with which it shares some postulates. This entry reviews key concepts and principles of the theory.

Interdependence Structure

Interdependence Theory presents a formal analysis of the abstract properties of social situations. Rather than examining concrete social elements such as "professor threatens student" or "woman argues with man," the theory identifies abstract

elements such as "dependence is nonmutual" or "partners' interests conflict." Hence, the theory allows scientists to understand situations that might differ in their superficial character, but that share crucial abstract properties. These abstract features of a situation constitute its "interpersonal reality"—a reality that causes people to think, feel, and behave in predictable ways.

The basic unit of interpersonal experience is an *interaction:* Each of two or more people can enact any of two or more behaviors. As a result of their choices, each person experiences good versus poor *outcomes*—consequences that are more versus less satisfying or pleasurable. The outcome of an interaction is satisfying to the extent that it gratifies (vs. frustrates) the individual's important needs, such as companionship, belongingness, and exploration.

Interdependence Theory analyzes the ways in which people affect their own and each other's outcomes, describing social situations in terms of six structural dimensions (see below). Most situations are defined by two or more dimensions, such that the key dimensions of interdependence are the building blocks of structure. Specific structural patterns are meaningful in that they activate specific sorts of goals and motives, influence cognition and emotion, and thereby shape behavior. As such, situations also determine what people can learn about and communicate to one another. The concept of *affordance* describes the implications of a specific situation for specific types of cognition, emotion, and motivation, identifying that which a situation makes possible or may activate in interaction partners.

Dimensions of Interdependence Structure

Level of dependence describes the degree to which an individual's outcomes are influenced by the partner's actions. John is more dependent when Mary—through her actions—can cause John to experience good versus poor outcomes. He is independent when her actions do not affect his well-being. Dependence is the converse of partner power—when John is dependent on Mary, Mary holds power over John. Although dependence causes people to persist in relationships, it also makes people vulnerable and exposes them to possible exploitation. Therefore, dependence affords people's

thoughts and motives about trusting and depending on others versus remaining independent of others.

Mutuality of dependence describes the degree to which partners are equally dependent. Mutual dependence exists when Mary is as dependent on John as he is on her. Unilateral dependence exists when Mary is more dependent on John than John is on her, such that John holds greater power than Mary. Mutual dependence constitutes balance of power and tends to yield more stable and secure interaction. Situations with unilateral dependence entail risk, in that unilaterally powerful partners may behave as they wish without concern for others' well-being—unilaterally dependent partners are vulnerable to possible exploitation or abandonment. Thus, situations with unilateral dependence afford thoughts and motives about vulnerability (for the more dependent partner) and responsibility (for the less dependent partner) and give the less dependent partner the opportunity to behave in a generous or heroic manner.

Basis of dependence describes the manner in which partners influence one another's outcomes. Dependence may rest on partner control, where John's outcomes are governed by Mary's unilateral actions, versus joint control, where John's outcomes are governed by their joint actions. Partner control is absolute and externally controlled, in that John's outcomes are entirely governed by Mary's behavior; such situations tend to promote exchange-based interaction (trading favors) and are governed by morality norms. Joint control is contingent, in that John's outcomes rest on coordination with Mary (if he can predict her actions, he can modify his behavior and achieve good outcomes); such situations tend to promote simple coordination and are governed by norms of "good sense." Thus, the basis of dependence affords the expression of dominance and assertiveness (vs. submissiveness or passivity; e.g., suggesting a pattern of fair exchange, taking the lead in coordinating action).

Covariation of interests describes the degree to which partners' outcomes correspond—whether events that benefit John are similarly beneficial for Mary. Covariation ranges from correspondent situations (what is good for John is also good for Mary) through mixed-motive situations to

situations with conflicting interests ("zero sum"; what is good for John is bad for Mary). Interaction is simple when interests correspond—John can simply pursue his interests, knowing that doing so will also yield good outcomes for Mary. Interaction is simple when interests conflict—one person must lose if the other is to gain, so each person tries to "come out on top." Mixed-motive situations are more complex, pitting impulses to benefit the other against temptation to exploit, thereby affording the expression of cooperation and trust (vs. competition or mistrust).

Temporal structure describes the fact that interactions are dynamic and evolve over time. Interaction must be understood not only in terms of the immediate outcomes produced by partners' choices, but also in terms of the future behaviors and outcomes that are made available versus eliminated as a result of interaction. For example, John and Mary may make an extended series of investments to develop a committed relationship. For example, by behaving in a particular manner today, they may proceed down a path where only poor outcomes are available for one or both partners. Temporally extended situations afford the expression of dependability versus unreliability and loyalty versus disloyalty.

Availability of information is the sixth dimension. John and Mary may possess complete versus incomplete information about their own or the other's outcomes for various combinations of behavior ("How does Mary feel about marriage?"), the partner's motives ("Will Mary use her power benevolently?"), or future interaction possibilities ("If we do this now, where will it take us?"). Information is especially critical in novel or risky situations and in interactions with unfamiliar partners. Inadequate information gives rise to ambiguity and misunderstanding, thereby challenging interaction. Thus, incomplete information affords the expression of optimism versus pessimism, as well as tolerance for ambiguity versus the need for certainty.

Interdependence Processes

Human cognition is inherently interpersonal—humans are well prepared to recognize key properties of interdependence situations. Indeed,

interactions are shaped not only by interdependence structure, but also by partners' needs, thoughts, and motives in relation to one another in the context of the situation in which the interaction takes place. Thus, it is important to understand how situation structure affords specific sorts of affect, cognition, and motivation.

Transformation. To describe the interface between interdependence structure and process, interdependence theory distinguishes between: (a) the *given situation,* or behavioral preferences based on the reality of self-interest as represented in situation structure; and (b) the *effective situation,* or preferences based on broader psychological considerations. *Transformation* is the motivational process whereby people depart from situation-based self-interest, instead reacting on the basis of broader considerations, such as long-term goals, the well-being of a partner, or stable traits or motives. The transformation process may rest on systematic thought or automatic habits. It is through this process that an individual's unique "self" is revealed. For example, if Mary decides to take care of John when he is ill rather than going out with her friends, she reveals her concern for him. Because Mary departs from that which is dictated by the given situation (her desire to go out with her friends), her unique traits and motives become visible (i.e., her compassion, feeling of responsibility for John's well-being).

Attribution process and self-presentation. People engage in *attribution processes* to understand the implications of their partners' behavior in specific situations. During the attribution process, people seek to explain prior behavior and predict future behavior via an analysis of the meaning of behavior in light of specific patterns of interdependence structure ("Is John concerned about my needs?"). In like manner, through *self-presentation* people attempt to communicate the implications of their own actions via deviations from the dictates of self-interest ("See, you can trust me"). Of course, people cannot communicate or discern all motives in all situations, in that specific motives are relevant to specific types of situation. For example, in situations with perfectly corresponding interests, John cannot display trustworthiness—if he behaves in ways that benefit Mary, he is likewise benefited, such that it is impossible

to determine whether he is driven by self-interest or prosocial motives.

Adaptation. Where do the motives that guide the transformation process come from? In a novel situation, John may treat the situation as a unique problem, carefully examining his options; alternatively, he may react impulsively. In either event, he acquires experience: If his reaction yields poor outcomes, he may behave differently in future, parallel situations; if his reaction yields good outcomes, he is more likely to react similarly in future, parallel situations. *Adaptation* describes the processes whereby repeated experience in situations with similar structure give rise to stable transformation tendencies that on average yield good outcomes. Stable adaptations may reside within persons, relationships, or groups (see below).

Interpersonal dispositions are actor-specific inclinations to respond to specific situations in a specific manner across numerous partners. Over the course of development, people undergo different experiences with kin and peers. As a result, people acquire dispositions to perceive situations in specific ways, anticipate specific motives from others, and transform situations in predictable ways. In short, the "self" is the sum of one's adaptations to previous inter–dependence problems. For example, if John benefited from good caregiving as a child, he is likely to feel more comfortable with dependence, which may cause him to behave in a more trusting manner in situations involving high dependence and conflicting interests.

Relationship-specific motives are inclinations to respond to situations in a specific manner with specific partners. For example, Mary's trust reflects her confidence in John's benevolence. Mary develops trust when John enacts a prosocial behavior, departing from his self-interest to promote her welfare. His actions communicate responsiveness to her needs, thereby enhancing Mary's trust in his motives, causing her to feel less fearful in situations involving conflicting interests, encouraging prosocial transformation, and thereby enhancing the probability of reciprocal benevolence. This form of trust is relationship-specific and exists above and beyond generalized tendencies people possess based on their longstanding dispositions.

Social norms are rule-based, socially transmitted inclinations to respond to particular situations in a specific manner. For example, societies develop rules regarding the expression of anger; such rules help groups avoid the chaos that would ensue if people were to freely express hostility. Likewise, dyads may also develop relationship-specific norms that promote harmonious day-to-day interaction (e.g., agreements about the fair division of household chores).

Conclusion

Interdependence Theory provides unique and necessary tools for analyzing *inter*personal phenomena. Whereas most psychological theories focus on the individual, suggesting that people behave as they do because of their unique traits or cognitions, in interdependence theory, the relationships *between* people are as important as the people. Thus, the theory represents an elegant, functional model of the nature and implications of interdependence. It is a truly *social* psychological theory.

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See also Comparison Levels; Conflict Resolution; Dependence; Motivation and Relationships; Power, Predictors of; Rewards and Costs in Relationships; Social Exchange Theory; Transformation of Motivation

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INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Ties between the generations have been of great interest throughout recorded history, as demonstrated by

the central role of these relationships in popular works of fiction as varied as Shakespeare's plays in the 16th century and Bernhard Schlink's novel *Homecoming* and the television series *Everybody Loves Raymond* in the 21st century. Not surprisingly, both clinicians and scholars have devoted substantial effort to describing and explaining relations among family members in different generations. This high level of professional and popular attention is consistent with the importance that individuals place on their family relationships. Indeed, given high rates of divorce and geographic mobility in contemporary society, relationships between parents and children are likely to be the most stable and long-term ties that people experience. Further, research has shown that both parents' and children's well-being is affected by the quality of their relationship and by the problems they each experience. Thus, there is ample evidence to demonstrate the centrality of this intergenerational tie.

This entry begins by describing historical and demographic trends in intergenerational relationships, followed by discussion of the factors that characterize parent–child relationships that are the most satisfying and stable. The entry then turns to two issues of concern to aging families: caregiving to frail parents and elder maltreatment. Finally, the entry describes trends in grandparent–grandchild relations, a tie that has become increasingly complex in recent decades due to increased life expectancy and increasing rates of difficulties in the lives of many adult children.

Historical and Demographic Trends

Several trends over the last century have affected intergenerational relationships. The trend that has had the greatest impact is the dramatically lengthened life span; for a child born in 1900, life expectancy was 48 years; by 2005, it had increased to nearly 78 years. Perhaps even more important, for individuals who are now about 50 years of age, the life expectancy for women is 33 additional years and for men it is 29 years. Thus, family members now spend more time occupying intergenerational family roles as adult children, parents, and grandparents than did any earlier cohorts.

The second major demographic change is a decline in parent–adult child coresidence. Coresidence with adult children when parents entered their later years was common in earlier historical periods; however, there was a dramatic decline in this pattern across the 20th century in the United States. Nevertheless, many parents and adult children still coreside, although more recently coresidence typically involves the adult child living in the parents' home rather than the reverse. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2006, 22 percent of householders 65 and older had an adult child living with them, whereas only 3 percent of householders ages 25 to 54 had an older family member coresiding.

The third important change involves women's increased participation in the labor force, reducing the time and energy devoted to "kinkeeping." In fact, married women's labor force participation has increased from 30 to 60 percent since 1970 alone. Although one might expect that this demographic change would lead to women doing markedly less caregiving, in most cases, women instead expand their responsibilities to meet their older parents' need for assistance.

Finally, the paths that current middle-age Americans (referred to as the "baby boomers") have followed differ from earlier cohorts in ways that affect kin relations. Compared with earlier cohorts, baby boomers have been more likely to remain unmarried, have lower birth rates, and become divorced, each of which tends to weaken intergenerational ties, particularly for men.

Although these sociodemographic transitions have changed the face of family life in the past several decades, research has shown that none has reduced the importance of the parent–child relationship in adulthood. Both high levels of contact and mutually supportive exchanges are reported by parents and their adult children despite the presence of conflict and ambivalence common to intimate interpersonal relations. Further, at the end of parents' lives, adult children often provide care and support, particularly when a parent is widowed.

Closeness and Contact Between Parents and Adult Children

In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars expressed concern that intergenerational contact and support were increasingly threatened by industrialized societies. However, research has demonstrated these concerns were unfounded. Most parents and

adult children have relatively frequent and regular contact with parents despite that adult children are more likely to live farther away from their families of origin than were previous cohorts. Further, studies of the quality of relations between the generations find consistent evidence that the emotional ties between parents and adult children remain strong, particularly between women in the family. Recent investigations have revealed that conflict and ambivalence are more common characteristics of intergenerational relations than previously thought; nevertheless, the most prominent pattern of parent–adult child relations continues to be positive and supportive.

Exchange of Support, Parental Dependency, and Family Caregiving

Most families are characterized by mutual exchange between the generations, typically following a pattern reflecting the life course stages of parents and adult children. When offspring are young adults, support tends to flow from parent to child in the form of assistance in establishing independent lives. As children leave young adulthood, support still generally flows from parent to child, but usually diminishes somewhat. It is typically only in the late stages of the parents' life that the direction of support flows more heavily from child to parent.

Most assistance provided to parents is routine and produces little strain; however, as parents age and experience declines in health and income, adult children are increasingly likely to assume the role of family caregiver. This represents a major life-course transition for adult children that typically has far-reaching consequences for the caregiver's physical, mental, and social well-being. This is particularly the case if the parent has developed Alzheimer's disease or some other form of irreversible dementia.

Studies have focused primarily on the difficulties that adult children experience when they begin caring for older parents. This line of research has shown that parents' increased dependence on their adult children often reduces positive feelings between the generations while increasing children's difficulty managing the competing roles of spouse, parent, and worker. Not surprisingly, caregiving is often associated with increases in adult children's physical and emotional stress.

However, the effects of caregiving are not uniformly bleak. First, studies have found that many caregivers identify positive consequences of caregiving, such as feelings of gratification derived from helping someone they love and fulfilling expectations of filial responsibility. Second, several circumstances affect the consequences of caregiving on adult children. For example, caregiving is associated with fewer negative and more positive outcomes when the parent and child have a history of closeness and support and when there is little conflict among siblings regarding parent care. Further, among married adult daughters, those whose husbands are supportive of the daughters' caregiving efforts experience more positive outcomes. Recent studies have shown that parents have specific expectations and preferences regarding which of their children take primary responsibility for caregiving. Future research may reveal that caregiving outcomes are better for both parents and children when those preferences and expectations are met. Understanding the factors that improve the quality of the caregiving experience may also be an important key to reducing the risk of elder maltreatment because individuals most likely to need assistance—those with physical and psychological impairments—are at a higher risk of becoming victims of such maltreatment than are more healthy persons.

Determinants of the Quality of Parent–Child Relationships

Understanding the quality of parent–adult child relations has been of great interest to scholars and clinicians. The most consistent finding in studies of intergenerational relations is the primacy of the bond between mothers and daughters, which is stronger than that of any other gender combination in the family. Children's transitions into adult social statuses also typically improve relations between the generations. For example, the parent–child tie becomes more harmonious as adolescents move into adulthood, and it continues to strengthen as both children and parents move across the life course. Further, there is generally increased closeness when children begin to share a large number of adult statuses with their parents, such as employment, marriage, and parenthood. However, the trend toward greater closeness when children attain

adult status is not always straightforward because some adult transitions (such as becoming a parent) also increase competition for scarce time and energy, leaving fewer resources for intergenerational relationships. Nevertheless, children's transitions into adult status increase the similarity of values and interests between parents and children, which enhance closeness and reduce conflict.

Recent studies have shown that parents often differentiate among their adult children in terms of emotional closeness, preferences for support, and provision of support to the younger generation. The factors just discussed are the best predictors of which children are most likely to be favored—daughters and children who are more similar to the parents in terms of values and social structural positions. In addition, parents favor children who live nearby.

Major problems in adult children's lives have been shown to have detrimental effects on parent–child relationships. For example, parents are likely to experience poorer relationships with children who have mental, physical, substance abuse, or stress-related problems. Such problems have stronger effects on parent–child conflict and ambivalence than parents' feelings of emotional closeness toward their children. Not surprisingly, problems for which children are perceived as not responsible, such as illness, have fewer negative effects than those for which they are perceived as responsible, such as substance abuse or trouble with the law. Regardless of whether the problem is voluntary, children's difficulties have been found to affect their parents' physical and psychological well-being.

Adult children's problems also increase the risk of elder maltreatment. In fact, children's problems are a better predictor of elder maltreatment than parents' dependency. Abusive adult children are likely to be financially dependent, live with their parent(s), have problems related to alcohol and drugs, and have some indication of socioemotional maladjustment.

Diversity and Older Parent–Adult Child Relations

Studies have revealed both similarities and differences in intergenerational relationships among racial and ethnic groups. Both parents and children of all racial and ethnic groups appear to place substantial importance on both the emotional and instrumental aspects of intergenerational relations, reporting high levels of closeness, as well as regular contact and a history of exchange. However, research has revealed notable racial and ethnic variations in these relationships. African Americans and Hispanics appear to have stronger ideals regarding filial obligations than do their White Anglo counterparts, and they are more likely to exchange support. Further, older African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to live with their adult children. Both African-American parents and adult children report higher levels of closeness and lower levels of conflict than do Whites; however, such differences are not found between Whites and Hispanics. Comparisons reveal greater filial responsibility, exchange of support, and intergenerational coresidence among Asian Americans than Anglos, but substantial diversity among Asian subgroups regarding intergenerational support. Rapidly expanding diversity in the United States makes it increasingly important to understand patterns and consequences of racial and ethnic variations in older parent–adult child relations.

Grandparents and Grandchildren

In recent years, popular and scholarly interest in relationships between grandchildren and grandparents has grown. This can, in part, be attributed to the historical and demographic changes outlined earlier, each of which has influenced the role of grandparenting as well as parenting. First, due to increasing life expectancy, most parents of adult children will occupy the role of grandparent for nearly one third of their lives. Second, the effects of high rates of divorce extend to ties between grandparents and grandchildren. Adult children's divorces often reduce contact and closeness between grandparents and grandchildren—particularly on the father's side of the family. Third, although intergenerational coresidence has declined overall across the past century, such residential arrangements remain common in Black and Hispanic families, thus providing higher levels of grandchild–grandparent contact in these groups than that found in White families.

Grandparents often play a major role in raising their grandchildren. In coresidential families in which parents are present, grandparents are less

burdened by parenting stress, and can serve primarily as a source of support; however, when grandparents serve as sole guardians of grandchildren, they are more likely to experience decreased well-being—particularly greater depression and lower life satisfaction.

Predictors of the quality of grandparent–grandchild relations are well documented. Closeness and contact are greater when the generations live near each other and when grandparents are better educated, healthy, have fewer grandchildren, and are married. Families living in rural areas also have stronger intergenerational links. Other relations in the family also affect the quality of the grandparent–grandchild tie. For example, grandparents are likely to be more supportive and attentive to grandchildren if they had positive childhood experiences with their own grandparents. Also, grandparent–grandchild ties depend heavily on relationships with the parent generation. If there is high affectional solidarity and support between the grandparents and parents, the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren will also tend to be strong.

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See also Caregiving Across the Life Span; Elder Abuse and Neglect; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship; Kinkeeping; Mother–Child Relationship in Adolescence and Adulthood; Multigenerational Households; Parent–Child Relationships

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INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF ABUSE

Most people believe that most or all abusive adults must have been exposed to abuse as children. Professionals have labeled this phenomenon "the cycle of violence" or "the intergenerational transmission of violence," and it is the most heavily researched phenomenon within family maltreatment. Is there merit to these assumptions? If so, how strong is the effect? This entry reviews what has been learned, focusing on conceptualization of the phenomenon, extent of transmission, and possible mechanisms by which transmission may occur.

Conceptualization

One might think that intergenerational transmission of abuse would be a relatively straightforward concept; however, this is not the case. Children can be direct victims of maltreatment, they can be exposed to interparental violence, or both. As adults, they can maltreat their own children, they can perpetrate or be victimized by partner violence, or both. Maltreatment can be further subdivided into physical, emotional, sexual, and/or neglect subtypes.

In research, the definitions of maltreatment vary widely. Many studies follow children who were substantiated by local Child Protective Services (CPS) as being maltreated. However, state statutes vary widely, as do local CPS' de facto standards for what is substantiated as maltreatment. In studies that rely on self- or parent reports of maltreatment, researchers frequently rely on reports of behaviors (e.g., being struck by a parent) without requiring impact on the victim (e.g., bruises) or extreme danger, as CPS investigations would. Furthermore, victims often experience more than one subtype of abuse (e.g., both physical and emotional), and child and partner maltreatment often co-occur in the same homes. With such variety in what can be and has been examined, interpretation and comparison of abuse research findings is often difficult. This entry is as specific as space will allow; interested readers will find more detailed information in the supplementary readings.

Extent of Transmission

What effect does the presence of violence or abuse in a childhood home (i.e., "family of origin" [FOO]) have on the probability that a particular type of abuse will be present in the adult homes of

former victims? The scientific research literature is summarized later, broken down by type of abuse (i.e., physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect). Overall, the effects found have been statistically significant, but only small to medium in size. There is evidence that risk of transmission may increase (a) with frequency or severity of abuse, and/or (b) when exposure to multiple types of abuse has occurred.

Physical Abuse

The vast majority of research on the intergenerational transmission of abuse has been conducted regarding physical abuse. There are two primary lines of inquiry: transmission of child physical abuse and transmission of intimate partner violence (IPV).

Child physical abuse. Most studies of the transmission of physical violence toward children have focused on mothers', rather than fathers', FOO histories. Parents who were physically punished as children—particularly during adolescence—are at higher risk of perpetrating both minor and severe violence toward their own children; for mothers, the effect is stronger if it was their own mothers who abused them. Witnessing IPV during childhood also increases risk of child physical abuse perpetration in adulthood.

IPV. Research has shown that children who are physically, sexually, or emotionally abused—or witness either parent being physically or emotionally aggressive toward someone else—are at increased risk of perpetrating and/or experiencing IPV as adults. Although the risk of both perpetration and victimization is amplified for all children who grow up in violent homes, boys appear to be at more greatly increased risk than girls for becoming IPV perpetrators, whereas girls are at more greatly increased risk than boys of becoming IPV victims.

Emotional Abuse

Little research has been done on the transmission of emotional abuse; the few studies that do exist are difficult to interpret and compare because (a) definitions of emotional abuse vary dramatically, and (b) emotional abuse is usually

not considered in isolation, but combined with other types of abuse. It does appear that experiencing or witnessing physical or emotional violence on the part of either parent places a child at increased risk of perpetrating and/or experiencing emotional violence in later romantic relationships, although the effects found so far have been small.

Sexual Abuse

Gauging the extent of intergenerational transmission of sexual abuse is difficult because most child sexual abuse studies do not distinguish between extra- and intrafamilial perpetrators. The vast majority of rapes and sexual abuse incidents are perpetrated by males; however, there is some evidence that a history of childhood sexual victimization may increase the risk of child sexual abuse perpetration for both men and women. In fact, parents who were sexually abused as children are at greatly increased risk of having a sexually abused child even if they themselves are not the perpetrators.

Neglect

Child neglect is by far the most common form of child maltreatment in the United States, but has received relatively little research attention, particularly in terms of intergenerational transmission. This is likely due to difficulty and wide variability in operationalizing neglect. There is some evidence that parents neglected as children may be at increased risk of neglecting their own children, but the transmission effect, if it indeed exists, appears to be weak.

Possible Mechanisms of Transmission

Studies have begun to illuminate how the cycle of family violence may operate. Some of the mechanisms of transmission that have received the most research support include modeling, poor parenting, and transmission of risk.

Modeling

Modeling, or observational learning, is considered to be a primary cause of the intergenerational transmission of abuse. Behavioral modeling generally refers to the tendency for someone who notices the success of others' behavior to imitate it, hoping for a

similar outcome. If the imitated behavior does indeed obtain the desired result, the probability that the behavior will be repeated increases (i.e., operant conditioning). Thus, children see that violence against themselves or loved ones works in getting something that the perpetrator wants. When they later want something themselves, they imitate what they have observed and use violence to obtain it; thus, victimized children learn to victimize others.

Poor Parenting

Not surprisingly, parents who abuse each other and/or their children also tend to be poor parents who have less-than-diligent monitoring habits and utilize ineffective discipline strategies that are overly harsh and coercive. Moreover, children of ineffective parents are at increased risk for a host of negative outcomes, including failure in school, work, and interpersonal relationships; anxiety, depression, and personality problems; association with deviant peers; substance abuse and conduct problems; and problems with anger control and interpersonal violence. The increased risk occurs even if parents cannot be termed abusive; thus, it appears likely that poor parenting is the driving factor, rather than abuse as such.

Transmission of Other Factors That Increase Risk

It should also be noted that troubled children tend to form romantic relationships with each other (i.e., assortative mating); any children born to such a couple are likely to receive a "double dose" of risk. Risk factors for abuse that may be passed on from one or both parents may be biological, cognitive, emotional, or environmental. For example:

- Genetic factors that predispose one generation toward violence may be passed on to the next.
- Abusive parents tend to attribute their children's undesirable behavior to negative personality traits and hostile intent, and children whose parents make such attributions about them tend to make such attributions about others.
- Children of parents who habitually and rapidly escalate when they get angry tend to develop similarly poor emotion-regulation skills.
- Children who grow up in poverty-stricken, high-crime neighborhoods tend to remain in them as adults.

In part because risk factors for abuse can be passed on from generation to generation, abuse can even be transmitted in a seemingly indirect way. For example, children (particularly girls) whose mothers have a history of childhood sexual victimization are three or more times more likely than other children to be sexually victimized themselves, although it is virtually never the former victim (i.e., the mother) who perpetrates the abuse. This is most likely because former sexual abuse victims have higher rates of several maternal characteristics that are known to place children at increased risk of being sexually abused—for example, mental illness, substance abuse, and becoming romantically involved with violent men.

Conclusions

Despite definitional and methodological inconsistencies within the literature, there is support for the hypothesis that intergenerational transmission of family maltreatment does occur. However, contrary to popular belief, the effects of childhood exposure are nowhere near universal. For children of former child abuse victims, the best estimates available predict about a one in three probability of exposure to abuse. Sobering as this forecast is, it should be noted that there is also hope, in that the majority of children of former victims will seemingly grow up without being abused, neglected, or in a relationship characterized by intimate partner violence. Unfortunately, relatively little research has been conducted into possible reasons, causes, or mechanisms for nontransmission of abuse. Quite often, it appears, the apple does indeed travel far from the tree, but the field does not yet know why most seeds of family violence, planted during childhood, never sprout.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Child Abuse and Neglect; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenting; Relational Aggression

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INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF DIVORCE

The intergenerational transmission of divorce (alternately, the divorce cycle) refers to the propensity for people to end their own marriages as a result of growing up in a divorced family. Social scientists first suggested that divorce might run in families in the 1930s. Since then, more than 25 studies have confirmed that the adult children of divorce dissolve their own marriages with disproportionate frequency. This entry provides a brief overview of the intergenerational transmission of divorce.

For the social scientist, divorce provides a fabulous independent variable: It has strong and generally negative effects on almost every aspect of people's economic, social, and psychological lives. Compared with their married counterparts, divorcées generally are poorer, more depressed, and less physically healthy. Marital disruption has similarly wide-ranging negative effects on offspring. Compared with youth in intact families, the children of divorce do worse in school, are more likely to be substance abusers, are less happy, and as adults have worse jobs and less money. Few social scientists question these findings. There is even evidence that, all else being equal, people from divorced families do not live as long as people who grew up with two biological parents.

Parental divorce has implications for almost every aspect of children's behavior in romantic relationships. Teenagers from divorced families date more, have sex earlier, and, if women, are disproportionately likely to get pregnant out of wedlock. Teenage girls from divorced families even have their periods earlier than do their counterparts from intact families. People from divorced families also think about intimate relationships differently. Compared with their peers from intact families, the adult children of divorce view marriage less favorably and divorce less unfavorably.

Parental Divorce and Offspring Marital Behavior

Given the differences between people from divorced and intact families, it should come as little surprise that the children of divorce have distinctive marital behavior. This behavior is important for understanding why divorce rates are higher for people from nonintact families.

For many years, social scientists were divided as to whether parental divorce made marriage more or less likely among adult offspring. The answer is both. The children of divorce have disproportionately high marriage rates through age 20. However, if they remain single past that point, they are about one third less likely to ever get married, compared with their peers from intact families.

How can this pattern be explained? The children of divorce sometimes wed in order to escape unpleasant home lives; this is particularly true for

youth living in stepfamilies. As previously noted, parental divorce increases the incidence of teen sexual activity and, for women, nonmarital births. Early sex and pregnancy may in turn lead to early marriage. Past age 20, there are several reasons that the children of divorce have lower marriage rates than do their counterparts from intact families. First, marriage may simply seem unappealing to some people who grew up in divorced families. Perhaps fearful of repeating their parents' experience, living with a partner out of wedlock may seem preferable; indeed, the children of divorce have high rates of nonmarital cohabitation and are more inclined to view cohabitation favorably. Half of the disparity in marriage rates between people from divorced and intact families can in fact be explained by the former's propensity to cohabit. Second, past age 20, the children of divorce may avoid marriage for the same reasons they have high divorce rates. As is shown, people who grew up in divorced families often have trouble in their own marriages because they evince problematic interpersonal behaviors. Assuming these behaviors are present prior to marriage, they may interfere with the formation of lasting relationships.

Parental divorce also influences how people go about picking spouses. In particular, people from divorced families often marry other people from divorced families. This proclivity, which has been called *family structure homogamy*, goes a long way toward explaining why the children of divorce have high divorce rates. How can family structure homogamy be explained? Parental divorce provides a broad common ground of painful and poignant experiences. As children grow up, these experiences may become ingrained, making it harder to relate to people who feel differently about intimate relationships. A prospective mate from a divorced family has had a wealth of similar experiences. He or she may be able to empathize with the anguish, anxiety, and anger of parental divorce, whereas someone from an intact family might not be able to do so.

Explaining Divorce Transmission

Although the divorce cycle has been studied for many years, it is only in the last two decades that multivariate analysis has enabled scholars to pinpoint the reasons that parental divorce increases the likelihood of dissolving one's own marriage. The first task was to rule out the confounding influences of race, education, marriage timing, and other demographic differences between people from married and divorced families. For instance, African Americans have traditionally had higher divorce rates than Whites. It is also known that parental divorce reduces offspring educational attainment and increases the odds of a teenage marriage. Race, low educational attainment, and youthful marriage are all noteworthy predictors of divorce. Perhaps these differences, not the effects of parental divorce per se, are responsible for the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. These factors all make a difference, but collectively they can account for at most one third of the divorce cycle.

With one caveat, the rest is directly attributable to the experience of parental divorce. Thanks in large part to the research of Paul Amato, two psychological mechanisms for divorce transmission have been identified. The first is problematic interpersonal skills. Adult children of divorce often engage in behaviors that are not conducive to maintaining a lasting interpersonal relationship. A long list of these behaviors has been proposed; examples include anger, jealousy, submissiveness, poor conflict resolution skills, and distrustfulness. Statistically controlling for these and other behaviors can account for the relationship between growing up in a nonintact family and the likelihood of dissolving one's own marriage. Note that this finding precludes many traditional explanations for the intergenerational transmission of divorce, including role modeling—parental divorce instills offspring with prodivorce attitudes that ultimately engender divorce transmission—and the notion that the divorce cycle is entirely attributable to the social and demographic correlates of marital instability.

The second explanation for the intergenerational transmission of divorce concerns marital commitment. Social science has repeatedly shown that parental conflict is bad for offspring; the more conflict, the worse children do across a variety of social and psychological outcomes. However, parental conflict does appear to have one benefit for offspring. Divorce transmission is weaker for offspring who endured high-conflict parental divorces. Conversely, adults from divorced families

have the highest divorce rates when their parents' marriages ended after virtually no acrimony. Parental conflict teaches children to remain in their own marriages no matter what happens. When parents divorce after virtually no conflict, children may not learn the persistence that a successful marriage ultimately requires.

The exception to these explanations for the divorce cycle is the role played by genetics. In research based on twins, researchers have shown that a portion of the intergenerational transmission of divorce can be attributed to genetics rather than behavior. The reasoning is this: Some people are innately difficult, and their problematic interpersonal behaviors are conferred genetically as well as socially. Recipients of this "difficult gene" often have trouble in their own marriages; thus, their troubles may have a purely biological component. The scholars who conducted this research concluded that genetics only play a partial role in explaining divorce. Genetics cannot account for why the divorce rate skyrocketed between 1965 and 1985, or why the divorce cycle has weakened over time, as discussed next.

How Strong Is the Divorce Cycle?

The strength of the divorce cycle varies according to the historical period the divorce data were collected in, how parental divorce is measured, and whether the analysis controls for social and demographic differences between respondents. Irrespective of these factors, parental divorce increases the likelihood that adult offspring will dissolve their own marriages by at least 40 percent. Under some conditions, the children of divorce are three times as likely to get divorced as are their peers from intact families.

The most important predictor of divorce transmission is the extent of a couple's exposure to parental divorce. Each spouse's experience with parental divorce contributes separately and additively to the probability that their own marriage will dissolve. Thus, marriages between people from intact families have the lowest divorce rates, unions containing one child of divorce are in the middle, and marriages between people from divorced families have the highest chances of dissolution. Furthermore, the odds of divorce transmission are

the same whether it is the husband or the wife who hails from a divorced family. People from divorced families exhibit behaviors not conducive to maintaining happy marriages; family structure homogamy compounds these problems by uniting two people who are ill disposed to marital success.

Multiple family disruptions while growing up incrementally increase the likelihood of dissolving one's own marriage. People whose divorced parents remarry are more likely to dissolve their own marriages than are their peers experiencing parental divorce but not remarriage; multiple parental divorces produce even higher divorce rates in offspring. Also, people experiencing multiple family structure transitions while growing up are more likely to dissolve multiple marriages as adults; the divorce cycle holds for second and third marriages as well as initial unions. People often repeat the patterns of marital behavior they learned growing up.

Trends in Divorce Transmission

Divorce in America has changed substantially over the past 50 years. Concomitant with increases in the divorce rate has been a sea change in how people view ending a marriage. In 1952, voters were more concerned about Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson's divorce than they were about the threat of domestic communism. Less than 30 years later, Ronald Reagan's divorce was the nonevent of his successful presidential campaign in 1980. This comparison of two presidential hopefuls shows how divorce went from stigma to commonplace in a relatively short period of time.

The result has been a dramatic change in the divorce cycle. Survey respondents who grew up in divorced (but not remarried) families that were polled in 1973 were 126 percent more likely to have dissolved their own marriages than were otherwise comparable individuals from intact families. By 1994, the disparity had declined to 45 percent. Thus, the intergenerational transmission of divorce weakened over the same years that the divorce rate in America increased. At least in this one respect, divorce no longer appears to hurt offspring as much as it once did. There has been no change in the divorce cycle for offspring experiencing both parental divorce and remarriage.

The declining marriage rate for people from divorced families has played a small role in the weakening divorce cycle, but a larger part is directly attributable to the changing message (Note missing letter) children receive when their parents get divorced. Recall that the divorce cycle can be attributed to the reduced commitment to marriage that results from growing up in a divorced family. The message that children received about commitment was doubtless much stronger in the days when almost nobody got divorced because it stood out more starkly against the experiences of one's peers (few of whom likely came from divorced families). Under these conditions, children learned that it might be preferable not to stay in a marriage that had turned sour. These lessons were doubtless reinforced by the stigma and shame of life in a single-parent family. In contrast, no matter how painful it is at the time, a modern divorce does not stand out against the experiences of one's peers and therefore does not send nearly as strong a message to children. This is the most likely reason that the divorce cycle weakened during the latter third of the 20th century. Declining stigma may have also affected rates of divorce transmission.

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See also Divorce, Children and; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Marriage, Transition to; Mate Selection

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INTERNET, ATTRACTION ON

What is the basis of attraction? In not very scientific terms, attraction—whether on the Internet or in person—remains largely a mystery. Do opposites attract or is it the case that birds of a feather flock together? In recent decades, many theories have been developed about what attracts people to one another, when, and why. Although much remains unknown about the dynamics of attraction, some critical factors have been identified. This entry distinguishes factors involved in attraction on the Internet in different kinds of online venues and as compared with face-to-face social settings. It examines the causes and correlates, explores the consequences of attraction for potential and ongoing romantic and platonic virtually formed relationships, and examines the technology and social changes that affect attraction online.

Attraction, Lack of Attraction, and Physical Appearance

In face-to-face interactions, physical appearance has been found to be perhaps the most influential factor in initial attraction. Physical appearance plays an essential role in the attraction process and creates the primary initial "gate" that determines who an individual will approach when in a crowded room of strangers, the friends who will be made, and especially the people who will be approached in hopes of developing a romantic relationship.

Without being aware that they are doing so, people habitually and automatically categorize others by physical features such as ethnicity, style of dressing, and level of physical attractiveness. Research has shown that, based on only seeing a photograph of an individual, there is extremely high consensus about the judgments most people tend to make about the person, across a wide variety of personality measurements, based only on physical appearance. Based solely on facial features, people draw strong conclusions about the other person's levels of intelligence, kindness, sense of humor, motivation, ability to succeed, and other personality traits. The adage "What is beautiful is good" applies to the judgments that people tend to make about others because people tend to assume that those who are more physically attractive also have more positive personality characteristics and are more interesting and attractive in other ways.

Research has shown that first impressions also tend to be lasting impressions and bear on attraction to others over time. First impressions tend to

become enduring because people selectively focus on information that confirms rather than disconfirms their initial judgment as they interact with the other person or meet him or her again at a later time. Furthermore, the expectations others form based on their first impression may actually elicit confirmatory behavior from the other person.

Features that are readily perceived, such as physical appearance (attractiveness), an apparent stigma (e.g., obesity), or apparent shyness, thus often serve as gates in face-to-face interactions. These gates often open to admit those who are physically attractive and outgoing, but also often bar the way when the person is less physically attractive or less socially skilled. Attraction on the Internet can have different bases, however. Katelyn McKenna conducted a study that examined determinants of attraction in face-to-face interactions and in Internet interactions by comparing randomly paired participants who interacted face to face to those who interacted via text-only chat on the Internet. The study found that when people interacted on the Internet, in the absence of physical appearance, the quality of the interaction, especially the feelings of similarity, intimacy, and closeness attained, determined liking and attraction. In the face-to-face meetings, however, the quality of the conversation or the similarity of views, interests, and values did not matter to judgments of liking at all, suggesting that physical appearance dominates liking and overwhelms other interpersonally important factors for attraction. Not surprisingly, when participants were asked to freely describe the characteristics of their interaction partner, online partners focused on personality traits, whereas those who met face to face focused largely on physical characteristics, using descriptors such as *tall, blonde,* and *well dressed.*

When interactions take place with new online acquaintances in venues where physical appearance is not apparent, such as common interest groups, instant messages (IMs), chat rooms, or the comment sections of blogs, the way an individual looks does not become a barrier to potential relationships. Participants in such venues typically only exchange photographs or get together in person once they have already developed an interest in one another based on their text-based interactions. When a relationship is formed in this way, the level of physical attractiveness does not carry as much

weight when the individuals do finally meet in person. Physical attractiveness, at that point, plays a less influential role in attraction than it would had the participants known immediately what the other looked like when they first became acquainted. Research has also found that the emphasis on physical aspects of self and other is much less when individuals engage in romantic cyberflirting in chat rooms than when flirting in person. Instead, the opinions expressed, and the information about the self that is revealed, form the basis of attraction in such online venues, rather than more superficial features, such as appearance, that drive attraction in face-to-face interactions.

When physical appearance is immediately in evidence on the Internet (such as in dating sites, social networking sites like *MySpace,* and blogs), then the same biases that operate when people meet in person also operate online. As in face-to-face social settings, in online dating venues, when it comes to initial attraction, similarity plays only a minor role compared with the powerful role of physical appearance. Participants in online dating sites use the physical appearance of potential partners as the first criteria and only examine the profiles of those who pass the physical appearance test to discover the potential partner's interests, values, and goals. Indeed, Monica Whitty and Adrian Carr conducted a study that found that more than 85 percent of dating site users would not even consider examining profiles that did not contain a photograph. Other studies have shown that, even after discovering more about the person from the available profile, it is the attraction to the photo that is the deciding motivator to contact or bypass the person. Andrew Fiore and Judith Donath used the number of messages expressing interest that online daters received as a measure of attractiveness and found that men who were older and more educated received the greatest number of responses. For women, however, it was the attractiveness of the photograph along with self-descriptions that did not describe their body type as being "heavy" that received the most responses, regardless of the other information provided in their profiles.

Similarity and Attraction

The Internet has exponentially expanded the potential for individuals to meet others with

important similarities. Common interest groups of every description can be easily found on the Internet where individuals can meet others who share their hobbies, political and religious beliefs, lifestyle preferences, and specific combinations of all these. The Internet can be particularly useful for locating others who share specialized interests (such as an interest in medieval history), who are experiencing similar health or emotional difficulties, or who share aspects of identity that are socially sanctioned and thus are often not readily identifiable in one's physical community. In a longitudinal study of participants taking part in common interest groups online, McKenna found that the relationships, including the romantic relationships formed among members of those groups, were more stable and durable over a 2-year period of time than comparable relationships formed through traditional means. Studies using the same 2-year timeframe, as well as relationships at the same developmental stage at the start of the study (couples who had been "in love" for 3–6 months), have found that the most commonly given reason for the dissolution of romantic relationships formed in traditional settings is that the couples discovered that they did not, after all, share the same interests and values. In contrast, those who met their partner through a common interest group online noted the common interests and values they shared as an important component in the continuation and closeness of their relationship.

Mutual Self-Disclosure and Attraction

It has been well established that people tend to more readily engage in acts of self-disclosure on the Internet than they do in person. Both on the Internet and in person, situation-appropriate self-disclosure fosters feelings of liking and attraction between people. There is a strong tendency for individuals to like and feel attracted to those to whom they self-disclose, to like those who disclose to them, and to disclose more to those they like. Self-disclosure is important to the development of intimacy because it entails being able to express and have accepted one's true personality and inner feelings.

Self-disclosure also has implications for maintaining levels of attraction. In promising relationships in which the partners do not get beyond superficial levels of self-disclosure, the parties tend to lose the attraction they feel toward one another relatively quickly. When a strong foundation of mutual self-disclosure has been laid, the parties tend to continue to feel deep levels of attraction for one another and to be motivated to maintain the relationship. The tendency to disclose more about oneself, and sooner, to others on the Internet has been linked with feelings of attraction developing more quickly between the parties than typically occurs when new acquaintanceships begin in person. Even with long-standing relationships with family and friends, the heightened self-disclosure that frequently occurs between them through e-mail and IMs has been shown to increase feelings of closeness and to deepen the relationships.

Technological and Social Changes Affecting Attraction on the Internet

When the Internet was in its infancy, the information available and the interactions between individuals were completely textual in nature. Interpersonal attraction at that time was wholly founded on the power of words: through the ideas and thoughts expressed, self-disclosures and aspects of the self that were revealed, and similarities discovered between the writers. It was perceived as being risky to provide identifying information about oneself in any sort of public forum, and thus the majority of users cloaked themselves in anonymity by using nicknames in their interactions online. This anonymity allowed users to be bolder in their self-disclosures than they would be were they identifiable.

Despite that society viewed Internet-initiated relationships with skepticism and, to some extent, disapproval, friendships and romantic relationships between users flourished in this text-only medium. Because of fears surrounding meeting someone only known through the anonymous environment of the Internet and because of forging a relationship entirely through written form, users typically corresponded for an average of 3 months prior to taking the step of meeting one another in person. Internet-initiated relationships became increasingly common and thus increasingly accepted in society.

Technological advances changed the Internet from a text-only media to one that commonly

includes pictures and prerecorded videos, voice chat, and live video feeds. Each of these technological advances has affected attraction processes on the Internet. When pictures and video are initially available, then attraction on the Internet is based on the same determinants of attraction as occurs outside of the Internet.

The technological advances have kept step with the social acceptance of the Internet as a venue for forging and maintaining relationships. Social acceptance and the accompanying reduction in fears surrounding the Internet have decreased the tendency for users to interact anonymously. As users become increasingly identifiable, there is a corresponding chilling effect on the self-disclosures they make with others through the Internet. Social acceptance has also encouraged Internet users to meet one another much more quickly than they did in the past. Dating-site participants exchange an average of only two e-mails before arranging a meeting, for instance. When time and effort have been invested in a relationship (along with an exchange of intimate disclosures), people tend to be more motivated to maintain a positive opinion of the other and to wish to continue that relationship even if, upon meeting, the other's physical and personality attributes are less than expected or optimally desired. Research suggests that the more quickly a new or potential relationship is moved offline, the less chance it stands of the attraction between the parties continuing or the relationship developing further. As the Internet increasingly mirrors communication in the physical world, so too will the patterns and bases of attraction on the Internet.

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See also Communication, Instant Messaging and Other New Media; Computer Matching Services; Computer-Mediated Communication; Internet Dating; Interpersonal Attraction; Technology and Relationships

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Internet and Social Connectedness

When Internet-based communication technologies, such as e-mail and chat, became available to the general public in the 1990s, it was widely assumed in both academic and popular literature that these technologies would reduce people's social connectedness. Social connectedness refers to the relationships that people have with others in their environment (e.g., friends, family members, and neighbors). This reduction hypothesis rested on three assumptions: (1) the Internet motivates people to form superficial online relationships with strangers, which are less beneficial than existing, offline relationships; (2) time spent with online strangers occurs at the expense of time spent with existing friends and relationships; and (3) strong, close offline relationships are replaced by weak, distant online relationships, so that the overall quality of people's relationships is reduced.

The reduction hypothesis received considerable empirical support at the early stages of Internet adoption. Several studies conducted in the second

half of the 1990s demonstrated that Internet use significantly reduced people's social connectedness. However, the size of these negative effects was usually small. In such Internet effects studies, social connectedness was operationalized as, for example, the size of people's local network; the time they spent with family members, friends, and neighbors; their perceived social support; or the perceived quality of their relationships with family members and friends.

However, although these reduction effects were demonstrated consistently in the second half of the 1990s, at least two changes in the use of the Internet may render such effects less plausible at the current stage of Internet adoption. First, at the early stages of the Internet, it was hardly possible to maintain one's existing social network on the Internet because the greater part of this network was not yet online. At the time, online contacts were inherently separated from offline contacts. Currently, however, the majority of people in Western countries have access to the Internet. At such high Internet access rates, a reduction effect is less plausible because people have more opportunity to maintain their existing relationships through the Internet than at the early stages of the Internet.

Second, in the past few years, several communication technologies (e.g., IMing and social networking sites) have been developed that encourage users to communicate with existing contacts. Earlier Internet-based communication technologies, such as Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs) and public chat rooms, were primarily used for communication between strangers around certain topics or activities. However, more recent technologies distinguish themselves from previous ones by people's predominant communication with existing relationships.

Against this backdrop, reductive effects of the Internet on people's social connectedness have become less likely. It is no surprise, therefore, that the majority of studies that appeared in the new millennium have found positive effects of different types of online communication on social connectedness. To explain these positive results, scholars have put forward the *stimulation* hypothesis. This hypothesis attributes the positive effects of online communication on social connectedness to enhanced intimate self-disclosure. It is assumed that the reduced auditory and visual cues in online communication serve as facilitators of intimate online self-disclosure. This Internet-enhanced self-disclosure seems to occur during communication with existing friends, as well as with newly formed relationships. In fact, the stimulation hypothesis is based on three assumptions. First, the Internet's reduced auditory and visual cues encourage people to disclose their inner feelings more easily than in real-life interactions. Second, intimate self-disclosure is an important predictor of reciprocal liking, caring, trust, and, thereby, of the quality of relationships. Third, this Internet-enhanced intimate self-disclosure stimulates relationship formation and maintenance.

Several studies have indeed shown that online communication stimulates intimate online self-disclosure. These studies have also demonstrated that this intimate online self-disclosure promotes online friendship formation, as well as the quality of existing relationships. As a result, the stimulation hypothesis can currently be considered a valid description of the impact of Internet communication on people's social connectedness.

Shortcomings and Future Research

Existing research on the relation between Internet use and social connectedness suffers from several shortcomings. First, in several Internet effects studies, Internet use has often been treated as a one-dimensional concept. These studies only employed a measure of daily or weekly time spent on the Internet and did not distinguish among different types of Internet use, let alone among different types of Internet communication. However, it is widely understood in the media effects literature that different types of media use may result in different outcomes. If the Internet is to influence social connectedness, it will be through its potential to alter the nature of communication when being online. Consequently, not Internet use per se, but specific types of Internet *communication* should be the focus when investigating Internet effects on social connectedness. Some types of online communication technologies (i.e., IMing and e-mail)—in fact those that are predominantly used to maintain one's social network—seem to increase social connectedness. However, communication technologies that are predominantly used

to communicate with strangers (e.g., chat in a public chat room) or more solitary forms of Internet use may have no or even negative effects on social connectedness. Future research should differentiate between types of Internet use and formulate effects hypotheses that are related to the functions that these particular technologies have for their users.

A second shortcoming of earlier research is that most studies have investigated direct linear relationships between Internet use and social connectedness. There is hardly any research that has studied the mechanisms that underlie the relationship between Internet use and social connectedness. In other words, little research has hypothesized about possible variables that may explain a stimulating effect of Internet communication on social connectedness. As discussed previously, there is growing evidence that intimate online self-disclosure may account for a positive relationship between online communication and social connectedness. However, it is possible that other communication or psychological processes, such as uncertainty management, breadth of interaction, and perceived similarity, shape or account for potential social effects of the Internet. Future research should identify and hypothesize on potential mechanisms that underlie the effects of Internet use. We need to know not only that Internet use affects social connectedness, but also more precisely how this influence works.

A final shortcoming of existing research refers to the fact that most conclusions about the effects of online communication on the quality of friendships are based on correlational studies. These studies cannot give a decisive answer about the direction of the relationship between online communication and social connectedness. It may be that Internet use indeed increases social connectedness. However, research has not decisively refuted the causally reversed hypothesis that people who are socially more connected more often turn to the Internet. Future research needs to invest in designs that allow more rigorous causal explanations. Only if we address this issue can we assess the role of Internet use for people's social connectedness in an encompassing fashion.

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See also Communication, Instant Messaging, and Other New Media; Computer-Mediated Communication; Internet, Attraction on; Technology and Relationships

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INTERNET DATING

The term *online dating* is a slight misnomer because this term actually refers to the formal process of matchmaking via the Internet. Online sites have been set up where individuals locate a potential partner and then the dating process takes places offline. This entry examines the process of online dating and the reasons that people elect to use this matchmaking method. In addition, it considers the best types of presentations of self on these sites and the future of online dating.

During the early days of the Internet, given the restricted technology capabilities and bandwidth, online dating sites looked more like newspaper personal ads. Individuals would read a profile and contact people on the site to learn more about them and to gauge whether the other person was also interested. Men were much more likely to subscribe to these sites than women, and companies allowed women onto these sites for free to ensure men had an adequate selection. Compared with the early days of the Internet, today the amount of information and detail people can add to their profile is obviously less restrictive due to increased bandwidth. Most sites attract about equal numbers of

men and women. Online dating sites across the globe continue to increase in popularity.

Given the number of people seeking others online for love and sex, it is little wonder that companies have tried to formalize this process, as well as to make money from people who are prepared to seek out romance on the Internet. These sites are typically set up to have their users construct a personal ad for themselves. Clients can, and generally do, show at least one photograph of themselves and can also add video and voice to their profiles. Online daters can rate themselves or check boxes indicating attributes such as their age, gender, location, job, and physique (e.g., a choice ranging from slim to overweight). In addition, clients are usually given an opportunity to add to and expand on this information. For example, they may elaborate on their hobbies and musical interests or the type of person they are attempting to attract.

Some sites do the matching for the client. For example, some online dating sites ask the client to fill out descriptive details and a personality scale. The site then applies a formula to match like-minded individuals and presents their clients with options from which to select. In contrast, other sites provide a more flexible approach, whereby clients can opt to fill out such tests and be presented with profiles of clients deduced to be suitable matches, or instead the client can wade through the sea of possibilities and select for themselves (i.e., a profile-searching approach).

Once a potential match is identified on the site, individuals make contact. This might be via a subtle flirtatious note or via a more detailed e-mail. Individuals might elect to get to know one another via e-mail or an instant message (IM) program. If all goes well, then a face-to-face meeting is organized. Typically this meeting is organized within a couple of weeks of initial contact via the site.

In addition to the general online dating sites such as eHarmony, True.com, Match.com, and so forth, there are also more specialized online dating sites that gather like-minded individuals together. For example, there are sites designed specifically for Christians, Jews, Vegans, Goths, or spiritual people.

Motivations for Using the Sites

Research has reported social and personality reasons for choosing online dating as a way to find a match:

- Given that career and time pressures are increasing, people are looking for more efficient ways of meeting others for intimate relationships;
- Single people are more mobile due to demands of the job market, so it is more difficult for them to meet people face to face for dating;
- Workplace romance is on the decline due to growing sensitivity about sexual harassment—hence, alternative dating approaches are needed; and
- Shy people and people over the age of 35 (compared with non-shy people and those under the age of 35) are more likely to have tried online dating and consider using it in the future.

Successful Presentation Strategies

Researchers have begun to consider, at least qualitatively, the types of profiles individuals are more attracted to and are more likely to lead to successful budding relationships. Many people lie or exaggerate aspects about themselves in their profiles (e.g., some men lie about their height, whereas women lie more about their body shape). These people are usually judged as untrustworthy and do not usually get a second date. The Balance Between Attractive and Real Self theory argues that a more successful profile is one that presents a balance between an attractive presentation of self and a "real" depiction of self (i.e., a presentation that individuals can match up to during the first face-to-face date).

Future of Online Dating

Online dating sites are here to stay; however, their structure and form will change as the technology becomes more sophisticated and companies find ways to deal with some of the problems that online daters encounter with using these sites. For example, the sites' and clients' trustworthiness need to be strengthened. Perhaps also adding more playful applications, such as those used in social networking sites, will make the online dating experience more playful and flirtatious.

Monica T. Whitty

See also Commercial Channels for Mate Seeking; Computer Matching Services; Internet, Attraction on; Mate Selection

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INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

Interpersonal attraction is the broad process by which we come to prefer some potential relationship partners to others. It involves all of the influences in the initial stages of a relationship that lead us to notice particular people, consider them appealing, prioritize our interest in them, and to wish to approach them. Attraction to others is obviously influenced by their personal characteristics; some people are appealing to almost anyone they meet. However, attraction also depends on the aims and goals of the perceiver and the idiosyncratic pairing of the two people involved. It also emerges from impersonal influences that—because they are frequently overlooked—can be surprisingly potent. That is where this entry's survey of various determinants of attraction begins.

Impersonal Influences

Attraction depends in part on one's current desire to affiliate with others, and potential partners who would ordinarily be desirable may seem less appealing when one wishes to be alone. Alternatively, *any* partner is sometimes better than no partner at all, and we may occasionally pursue the company of others who would not be highly sought after in better circumstances.

Adverse conditions that induce confusion or fear make the presence of others more comforting, whereas embarrassing circumstances have the opposite effect—and any of us may encounter such conditions from time to time.

In fact, any event that gets a rise out of us may influence our attraction to others. Anything that "turns us on"—that is, that causes physical activation and arousal—seems to intensify our evaluative reactions to the people we encounter. When our hearts are racing and we are breathing hard, whether as a result of robust laughter, strong trepidation, or simply strenuous exercise, we find lovely people to be more desirable than they seem when we are at rest. Unattractive people seem more *un*desirable when we are aroused, as well. Thus, diverse experiences that have nothing to do with a particular partner can influence our attraction to him or her.

One of the most striking examples of impersonal influences on attraction, however, is the role of physical proximity in encouraging new relationships. Obviously, in order to be attracted to others, we have to meet them, and that is more likely to happen if they are often nearby. Various Web sites may provide ways of making contact with others in remote locations, but—everything else being equal—we tend to like those who live and work near us more than those who are larger distances away. This pattern is so striking that when college students are assigned seats in their classrooms, they are much more likely to become friends with the people who end up sitting near them than with others sitting just a few feet farther away.

There appear to be two major reasons that proximity is important: *familiarity* and *convenience.* The more often we encounter others, the more familiar they become, and that usually leads us to like them better. If they are pleasant people, familiarity does *not* breed contempt; people we recognize trigger fonder feelings than strangers do. Partners who are close at hand are also more convenient than are those who are far away, offering richer rewards that are more easily obtained. Long-distance relationships are typically less rewarding than they would be closer to home, so absence does *not* ordinarily make the heart grow fonder.

Finally, the number of potential partners we have available to us also influences our attraction to them. People become less picky when partners

become scarce. Thus, when closing time approaches, bar patrons who are still looking for a date come to consider the other people remaining in the bar to be more attractive than they seemed to be when the night was young. (This does not occur when people are not seeking a partner, so such attraction is multifaceted, depending both on the goals of the patrons and the situation they face.)

Others' Personal Characteristics

Still, no matter the circumstances, some people are more attractive than others. Everybody likes warmth, loyalty, kindness, and trustworthiness in a potential partner—including women, who prefer men who are both assertive *and* tender to those who are stonily macho—but personality traits like these are less evident than is one's appearance. When interaction begins, looks count. Many people hold the stereotype that *what is beautiful is good:* They assume that people who are physically attractive also possess desirable personalities. People also sometimes confuse beauty with talent: Good-looking professors get better teaching evaluations, and physically attractive employees receive higher salaries than less attractive people do.

Judgments of physical beauty carry special weight because we all tend to agree on who's hot and who's not. There is some idiosyncrasy in judgments of beauty—for instance, some of us prefer blondes to brunettes, whereas others do not—but beauty is "in the eye of the beholder" only to a limited extent. Instead, there is remarkable consensus around the world about the facial and physical features that make someone attractive. Appealing faces tend to be *symmetrical,* with the left and right sides of the face being mirror images of one another—so, the cheeks are the same width, the eyes the same size, and so on. Gorgeous faces also have *average* proportions that do not much differ in any dimension from human norms. This does not mean that they are ordinary or mundane. To the contrary, they are beautiful because there is nothing about them that is odd or exaggerated; their noses and chins are neither too big nor too small, their lips neither too full nor too thin. Remarkably, we seem to be born liking such lovely faces: Babies exhibit visual preferences for the same faces that adults consider to be attractive.

There is also notable agreement around the world regarding the shapes of attractive bodies. Women are most attractive when they are of average weight and have curvy figures in which their waists are noticeably narrower than their hips. A waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) of 0.7, in which the circumference of a woman's waist is only 70 percent of that of her hips and buttocks, is ideal. In fact, *Playboy* Playmates and Miss America beauty pageant contestants are now thinner, on average, than they used to be, but their typical WHRs—which hover around .67—have not changed over the last 50 years.

Men are more attractive with WHRs around 0.9. These patterns are noteworthy because the distribution of fat in the body is influenced by sex hormones, and an appropriate WHR is associated with better health in both sexes. Women with curvy shapes also get pregnant more easily than stocky women do. Thus, both sexes are attracted to the physical shapes in the other sex that suggest one is healthy and fit.

Indeed, all of these standards of beauty—symmetrical faces with average dimensions and bodies of the proper shape—are associated with healthy well-being (and the absence of harmful mutations). The cross-cultural appeal of these features leads some theorists to assert that our desires for them are evolved inclinations; they have become universal preferences because the early humans who pursued them obtained healthier mates and thereby reproduced more successfully than did those with other tastes.

Norms of fashion do vary from culture to culture. In particular, heavier weights tend to be attractive when a culture is going through hard times, but thinner bodies are more desirable when a culture is prosperous. Nevertheless, the same facial and bodily features are attractive around the world, and it is possible that these fundamental preferences are not just norms that are learned in each culture. Despite some idiosyncrasy here and there, we may have all inherited the same basic tastes.

In any case, when they are pursuing new romances, both men and women say that they want partners who have good earning prospects and who are physically attractive, warm, personable, and loyal. In practice, however, one of these characteristics clearly matters more than the rest. When they are choosing among several potential partners—as in a "speed-dating" situation, in which they have

brief conversations with 10 to 20 different possible dates—both men and women are influenced more by physical attractiveness than by anything else. If they stay together, people usually value dependability and agreeableness in their partners to a greater extent as time goes by. At first meeting, however, it is looks that count.

Aims and Goals of the Perceiver

Men and women generally seek the same attributes in a potential partner, but when they are seeking a lover for an enduring romance, their preferences differ in two particulars: looks and money. Men value physical attractiveness more than women do; they consider a moderate level of good looks to be indispensable in a mate. Women want handsome partners, too, but they first insist that their mates have acceptable prospects and incomes. Most women will be less interested in a potential husband who is handsome but poor than in one who is only moderately good looking but well to do. Men care less about a potential mate's money.

This pattern is also found around the world, and some theorists suggest that it, too, fits an evolutionary perspective. Our female forebears may have reproduced more successfully if they sought mates who could provide resources to shelter and protect their fragile children than if they were heedless of such concerns. In contrast, our male ancestors may have had more children if they pursued young, physically attractive—and therefore fertile—mates. Men's greater interest in looks and women's greater interest in resources in potential mates may thus be evolved motivations that have more to do with human nature than with our cultural heritage. (Not all relationship scientists agree with this conclusion, but it has been widely influential, stimulating a great deal of research.)

What we want in a partner also depends on whether we are seeking a lasting commitment or a short-term fling. When men want a one-night stand or a brief affair, they eagerly pursue promiscuous partners who will allow them such liaisons. However, they want potential wives to be more monogamous. When women seek a short-term fling, they prefer charismatic, masculine, physically attractive men who—because they are less likely to settle down—are less desirable as husbands.

Remarkably, women's specific tastes also fluctuate with their menstrual cycles. Women become fertile for the few days just before they ovulate each month, and during that period, their inclinations shift. Compared to the friendly, baby-faced features they typically like during the rest of the month, they prefer more masculine faces; they also become more partial to the cocky arrogance of dominant men, deeper voices, and the scents of men with more symmetrical bodies. They also dress to impress, choosing more provocative clothing, and are more flirtatious. If they already have long-term partners, they are also more likely to have affairs. None of this is necessarily intentional; indeed, most women have no idea when they are about to ovulate. Nevertheless, it is clear that many women who usually prefer kind, committed, nice men may find charismatic, untrustworthy "bad boys" to be strangely alluring when they are fertile each month.

Pair Influences

Other important influences on attraction emerge from processes that make some people more attractive to particular perceivers than to others. For one thing, the old saying that "birds of a feather flock together" is true; we do tend to like those who have similar personalities and who share our backgrounds, interests, attitudes, and values. The more similar to us others are, the more we tend to like them.

This pattern is plain in established friendships and romances; for example, in general, spouses who have a lot in common are happier with each other than are spouses who are less similar. However, there are various subtleties in the way similarity operates in beginning relationships that may mislead people into sometimes thinking, wrongly, that "opposites attract." When we are attracted to others for any reason (such as their good looks), we tend to assume that we have much in common with them; thus, not only does similarity lead to attraction, but attraction leads to (assumed) similarity. People often think that they are more similar to the others they meet than they really are. Then discovering the truth can take time. The partners' assumed similarity may keep them together for a while until they recognize their differences—and during that

period it may superficially seem to outside observers that opposites attract. Moreover, the longer the partners stay together, sharing formative experiences, the more similar they may actually become. So, similarity is more attractive than opposition is, but opposites may take time to detect, and they may gradually fade if a couple stays together for some other reason.

We also generally like those who like us in return. Rejection is painful, but acceptance is pleasing, so—everything else being equal—we are attracted to others who reciprocate our interest. In fact, most people preferentially pursue potential partners from whom they expect a welcome, and they do not approach others whose acceptance is improbable. As a result, we tend to pair off with others of similar levels of *mate value* or global desirability as romantic partners.

This is a phenomenon called *matching,* and it seems to occur because people typically want the most desirable partners who will have them in return. Following such a rule, we may all want gorgeous mates, but (unless there are other potent attractions at work) only those of us who are also physically attractive will get them. In practice, beautiful people do tend to pair off with others of similar beauty, moderately attractive people end up with partners like them, and so on. Matching can be a broad process that includes other assets such as wealth, power, and fame, so that rich people with ordinary looks sometimes acquire "trophy" partners much more becoming than they. However, for most of us, the major attribute with which we find our match is physical attractiveness.

The Fundamental Basis of Attraction

Collectively, the various topics we have covered in this entry may have their effects on attraction in several different ways. For instance, finding that someone shares our attitudes and values may be reassuring, making the world seem a more coherent and predictable place. Similar partners may simply be more fun, happily encouraging us to do the things we like to do. A number of specific mechanisms are possible. At bottom, however, attraction seems to boil down to a matter of rewards and costs: We are attracted to those whose companionship promises to be rewarding to us.

We may not always be conscious of just what it is about someone that we find appealing, and we may not notice when our tastes shift over time. We may also make mistakes, thinking that something about a potential partner will be gratifying when in fact it will not; in quite a few relationships, a characteristic of a new partner that initially seems attractive proves, with time, familiarity, and experience, to be one of the most annoying and frustrating things about him or her. Researchers call such characteristics *fatal attractions,* and their prevalence demonstrates that attraction is sometimes complex and perplexing. Nevertheless, from the moment they begin (as well as thereafter), relationships hinge on what is, and what we think will be, rewarding to us.

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See also Affiliation; Arousal and Attraction; Fatal Attraction; Matching Hypothesis; Mate Preferences; Physical Attractiveness, Defining Characteristics; Physical Attractiveness Stereotype; Proximity and Attraction; Similarity Principle of Attraction; Waist-to-Hip Ratio and Attraction

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INTERPERSONAL DEPENDENCY

Interpersonal dependency—the tendency to rely on other people for nurturance, guidance, protection, and support even in situations where autonomous functioning is possible—is one of the more widely studied personality traits in the field of human relationships. Individual differences in interpersonal dependency not only predict important features of social behavior (e.g., help-seeking, conformity, compliance, and suggestibility), but also have implications for illness risk, health service use, compliance with medical and psychotherapeutic regimens, and success in adjusting to the physical and emotional challenges of aging. Because dependent people are typically insecure and clingy, and have difficulty reaching decisions without a great deal of advice and reassurance from others, high levels of interpersonal dependency can have a significant negative impact on friendships, romantic relationships, and work relationships.

This entry discusses the role of interpersonal dependency in human relationships. As the ensuing review shows, this trait is more complex than psychologists initially thought. Consistent with the beliefs of many mental health professionals, dependent adults often exhibit acquiescent, compliant behavior in social situations. However, contrary to expectations, studies suggest that in certain contexts dependent people may actually behave quite actively—even downright aggressively. Moreover,

although high levels of interpersonal dependency are associated with social and psychological impairment in a variety of contexts, in certain settings, high levels of dependency may actually enhance adjustment and functioning.

Conceptualizing Dependency

The first influential theoretical model of interpersonal dependency came from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, wherein a dependent personality orientation was conceptualized as the product of "oral fixation"—continued preoccupation during adulthood with the events and developmental challenges of the infantile, oral stage. Thus, classical psychoanalytic theory postulated that the orally fixated (or *oral dependent*) person would: (a) continue to rely on others for nurturance, protection, and support; and (b) exhibit behaviors in adulthood that mirror those of the oral stage (e.g., preoccupation with activities of the mouth, reliance on food and eating as a strategy for coping with anxiety).

Over the years, empirical support for Freud's classical psychoanalytic model of dependency was mixed, and gradually this perspective was supplanted by an *object relations model,* wherein dependency is conceptualized as resulting from the internalization of a mental image (sometimes called a *mental representation* or *schema*) of the self as weak and ineffectual. Retrospective and prospective studies of parent–child interactions confirm that overprotective and authoritarian parenting, alone or in combination, are associated with the development of a dependent personality in part because of the impact these two parenting styles have on the child's sense of self. Overprotective parenting teaches children that they are fragile and weak, and that they must look outward to others for protection from a harsh and threatening environment. Authoritarian (i.e., rigid, inflexible) parenting teaches children that the way to get by in life is to accede passively to others' demands and expectations. Both lead to the construction of a "helpless self-concept," which is the core element of a dependent personality style.

During the 1960s and 1970s, behavioral and social learning models called psychologists' attention to the role that learning—including observational

learning—may play in the etiology and dynamics of dependency. As social learning theorists noted, intermittent reinforcement of dependency-related behavior will propagate this behavior over time and across situation, and modeling—including symbolic modeling—can facilitate this learning/reinforcement process. Building on these initial social learning models, later researchers showed that traditional gender role socialization practices may help account for the higher levels of overt dependent behavior exhibited by women relative to men insofar as dependent responding is discouraged more strongly in boys than in girls in most Western societies. In both women and men, high levels of femininity are associated with elevated levels of self-reported interpersonal dependency, whereas high levels of masculinity are linked with low scores on a broad array of self-report dependency measures.

Analyses of cultural variations in dependency supported the hypothesis that gender role norms help shape the expression of underlying dependency needs and further indicated that traditionally *sociocentric cultures* (e.g., India, Japan) tend to be more tolerant of dependency in adults than are more *individualistic cultures* (e.g., America, Great Britain), wherein dependency is associated with immaturity, frailty, and dysfunction. Not surprisingly, adults raised in sociocentric societies report higher levels of interpersonal dependency than do adults raised in more individualistic societies. When traditionally sociocentric cultures begin to adopt Western norms and values, members of those cultures show a decrease in self-report dependency scores.

Today researchers conceptualize dependency in terms of four primary components: (1) *cognitive* (i.e., a perception of oneself as powerless and ineffectual coupled with the belief that others are comparatively powerful and potent), (2) *motivational* (i.e., a strong desire to obtain and maintain relationships with potential protectors and caregivers), (3) *affective* (i.e., fear of abandonment, fear of negative evaluation by figures of authority), and (4) *behavioral* (i.e., use of relationship-facilitating self-presentation strategies to strengthen ties to others and preclude abandonment and rejection). The cognitive component of dependency—the "helpless self-concept" discussed earlier—is the linchpin of a dependent personality orientation and the psychological mechanism from which all

other manifestations of dependency originate via a predictable sequence of steps. First, a perception of oneself as powerless and ineffectual helps create the motivational component of dependency: If one views oneself as weak and ineffectual, then one's desire to curry favor with potential caregivers and protectors will increase. These dependency-related motivations in turn give rise to dependency-related behaviors (e.g., ingratiation and supplication) designed to strengthen ties to others, especially potential nurturers and caregivers. These dependency-related motivations also give rise to affective responses (e.g., fear of abandonment and fear of negative evaluation), which reflect the dependent person's core beliefs and anxiety regarding the possibility that they might have to fend for themselves without the protection of a powerful other.

Dependency as a Social Construct: From Passivity to Activity, From Deficit to Strength

Early psychiatric diagnosticians such as Emil Kraepelin and Kurt Schneider were among the first to discuss the link between dependency and passivity, but the notion that high levels of dependency are associated with a compliant, acquiescent stance in interpersonal interactions was popularized primarily by psychoanalytic theorists such as Karl Abraham and Karen Horney, who wrote extensively on this topic during the 1920s and 1930s. Given this historical context, it is not surprising that, throughout much of the 20th century, social research emphasized the passive aspects of dependency, documenting links among dependency and suggestibility, conformity, help-seeking, interpersonal yielding, and compliance with the perceived expectations of others.

In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in identifying contextual cues that help shape dependency-related behavior, and studies confirm that observed variability in dependency-related responding is largely a function of the dependent person's perceptions of interpersonal risks and opportunities. Typically (and quite understandably), dependent people tend to focus their efforts on currying favor with the person best able to offer protection and support over the long term. Thus, they will work harder to please a professor than a peer and, when forced to choose between

the two, may actually attempt to undermine the peer to impress the professor (e.g., competing aggressively, denigrating the peer's competence and commitment). Dependent college students put forth greater effort than do nondependent students when offered an opportunity to meet with a professor whom they believe can offer future help and support. However, when told that the professor will soon be leaving the university (and therefore will not be available in the future), dependent–nondependent differences in behavior disappear.

These and other findings confirm that dependency-related responding is proactive, goal-driven, and guided by beliefs and expectations regarding the self, other people, and self–other interactions. Although the behavior of dependent persons varies considerably from situation to situation, the dependent person's underlying cognitions (a perception of oneself as powerless and ineffectual) and motives (a desire to obtain and maintain relationships with potential protectors and caregivers) remain constant.

Other examples of goal-driven "active dependency" emerge in the medical and academic arenas. For example, studies indicate that dependent women show shorter latencies than nondependent women in seeking medical help following detection of a serious medical symptom (e.g., a possible lump in the breast) in part because dependent women are more comfortable than nondependent women seeking help from physicians. Dependent patients also adhere more conscientiously than nondependent patients to medical and psychotherapeutic treatment regimens. Other investigations indicate that dependent college students are more willing than nondependent students to seek advice from professors and advisors when they are having difficulty with class material; as a result, dependent college students have significantly higher grade-point averages than nondependent college students with similar demographic backgrounds and comparable Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. All these examples not only represent active dependency-related behavior, but also represent instances of *adaptive dependency* (sometimes called *healthy dependency*)—dependency-related responding that enhances health, academic achievement, and social adjustment.

These findings should not be taken to suggest that all active manifestations of dependency lead to positive outcomes. On the contrary, dependent elementary school students who make frequent contact with the teacher are perceived by classmates as being clingy and demanding, and these students tend to score low on peer ratings of sociometric status and high on self-report measures of loneliness. Other studies suggest that dependency-related insecurity can lead to difficulties in romantic relationships and increased conflict with college roommates. Dependent psychiatric patients tend to have a higher number of "pseudo-emergencies" than nondependent patients with similar diagnostic profiles and to overuse medical and consultative services when hospitalized, a pattern also displayed by dependent nursing home residents.

In addition—and perhaps most surprisingly—studies consistently show that highly dependent men are at significantly increased risk for perpetrating domestic partner abuse in part because these men are extremely fearful of being abandoned by their partner. As a result, they become hypervigilant, overperceiving abandonment risk and becoming jealous of even casual contacts between their partner and other men. When more appropriate and adaptive social influence strategies (e.g., ingratiation, flattery) are ineffective in drawing the partner closer and persuading her to sever ties with potential rivals, some dependent men may, as a last resort, become emotionally and physically abusive.

Conclusion

In certain ways, the evolution of research on interpersonal dependency has paralleled the broader changes taking place in the study of human relationships during the past 80 years. What was once conceptualized as a personality pattern that manifested itself consistently across contexts and settings has come to be seen in a more nuanced way as a set of beliefs and behavioral predispositions that may be expressed differently depending on the opportunities and constraints characterizing different situations. What was once conceptualized primarily in terms of expressed behavior has come to be understood in terms of the complex interplay of underlying cognitive, motivational, and affective processes. Like many personality traits that were initially conceptualized as reflecting flaws or deficits in functioning, interpersonal

dependency has come to be seen as a personality style that can impair adjustment in certain ways, but enhance it in others.

Robert F. Bornstein

See also Emotion in Relationships; Interdependence Theory; Investment Model; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Self-Concept and Relationships

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INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCE

Interpersonal influence (also known as social influence) has occurred whenever the actions of one or more individuals influence the behavior or beliefs of one or more other individuals. Relationships thrive or decay according to how well the participants agree with one another about important decisions. Some agreements just luckily happen, but many of them are the result of the participants influencing one another. Knowing the principles described next will make one a better practitioner of influence and also more aware of how one is being influenced. This entry discusses the two major forms of interpersonal influence, followed by an examination of tactics used by compliance professions, such as salespeople.

Informational and Normative Influence

Imagine a long line of people walking down a road toward a crossroad where they must go either left or right. You are standing on a hill watching as every single person goes to the left. You can see no reason for this because the road to the left does not look any more promising than the road to the right. You would probably assume that all these people had information that you didn't have—perhaps a concert is to take place on the road to the left. If you joined the line of people, you would probably also go to the left, making you the target of an instance of interpersonal influence known as *informational social influence.* In this type of social influence, you assume that the behaviors, beliefs, and opinions of others are based on some sort of correct information, and so you go along unless you have information to the contrary or some reason to doubt the motives of the other people. This type of influence is pervasive and is necessary for survival. To not take cues from others would be to ignore much of the information that is available about the world. When you seek the views of experts, such as movie critics or religious leaders, you are also seeking informational social influence, as you are when asking the advice of a trusted friend.

Sometimes, however, there is a conflict between what other people do or believe and what we see as correct or appropriate for ourselves. In the example of the crossroad, you may discover that the group playing the concert is one you don't like very much, and you start to turn right to look for a restaurant rather than go to the concert. Your friends, however, urge you to join them at the concert, implying that they may not value you as a friend as much if you don't go with them. If you go along with them to maintain the friendship, you have been the target of *normative social influence,* or conforming to the expectations of others in

order to be socially accepted. As the late Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Sam Rayburn, used to tell new members of the House, you have to "go along to get along."

Influence Tactics of Compliance Professionals

Robert Cialdini, a social psychologist, immersed himself for nearly 3 years in the world of compliance professionals, such as salespeople, fundraisers, and advertisers to discover what they were taught to do to influence people. He found that the majority of tactics fall into six categories, each governed by a psychological principle. Each of these principles—reciprocation, consistency and commitment, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity—is discussed in the following sections.

Reciprocation

We are taught from childhood that we should give something back to people who give us something. This rule of reciprocation is important for society because it allows us to help people who need it and to expect that they will help us when we need it. However, the rule also permits deliberate interpersonal influence. For example, if a husband wants his wife to do something for him, he can give her a small gift or a compliment, or he can perform some task that is normally her responsibility. Before she has forgotten his benevolence, he can ask her whether she would mind cooking dinner for his poker group. The favor makes it more likely that she will acquiesce.

Reciprocation can also apply to concessions. If a wife refuses to cook dinner for her husband's poker group, he can gracefully accept this refusal. This is his concession, and now she owes him one. When the husband asks whether she will serve drinks and appetizers, she is more likely to concede to this request. Not only did she "owe" him a concession, but the serving of drinks and appetizers is a small effort compared with serving dinner. Salespeople will often offer their most expensive model first to make the other models seem less expensive.

Consistency and Commitment

People want to be consistent from one time to another and from one situation to another. Thus, if a person agrees to a small request to pick up a friend's mother from the airport, that person is subsequently more likely to agree to a larger request to provide housing for the mother for a month. Agreeing to the small request has caused the person to change her self-image to that of a person who takes care of the mothers of friends. This is known as the "foot-in-the-door technique" (after which the door can be opened all the way). The initial commitment will have a greater effect if it is public, effortful, and freely chosen. If it is public, a person needs to prove to the world that he is consistent; if it is effortful, a person needs to justify that effort by believing that being nice to mothers is important; if it is freely chosen, a person must have been committed all along to motherhood.

Salespeople sometimes use a technique called "throwing a low-ball," in which they agree to sell a product such as a car for an excellent low price. After forms are signed and financing is arranged, someone discovers that a mistake has been made and that the cost is actually several hundred dollars more than agreed. The buyer has become sufficiently committed to buying the car that he usually will pay the extra money to complete the purchase.

Social Proof

This is the same as the informational social influence discussed earlier—the tendency to see a behavior in a particular situation as the best behavior if we see other people performing it. People turn left at the crossroad because they assume that other people turning left know what they are doing. This is most likely to occur when these other people are similar and when the situation is ambiguous. A particularly interesting example of this is bystander intervention in emergencies. Suppose that you are turning left at the crossroad when someone in front of you suddenly slumps to the side of the road. It isn't clear whether the person is resting, slightly ill, or seriously in trouble. Because it is ambiguous, you look to the other people to determine the appropriate course of action, just as they are looking at you for cues about what to do. If nobody moves to help the person, a belief grows that the person doesn't need help, and thus no one helps. If you were alone on the road and saw the

person slump down, you would probably at least ask him whether he needed help. The presence of other people has actually made it less likely that anyone will help.

Liking

People are more likely to be influenced by others they know and like, and there are several factors that help determine liking for another person. People like those who are physically attractive. They imbue attractive people with all sorts of positive traits, from intelligence to morality, that make them seem trustworthy, and in addition they want to please attractive people. People like those who are similar to them in any possible way, whether it is having the same birthday, voting for the same political party, or rooting for the same sports team. People like those who compliment them or say they like them. People like others more as they become more familiar perhaps just because they ride the same bus. People like those with whom they have to cooperate with to get a job done. Of course people also like others for their particular personal qualities, such as having a good sense of humor, a questing mind, or a kind disposition.

Regardless of the basis of liking, individuals are more likely to go along with others they like (in order to get along), and they are more likely to trust these liked others' view of the world. In short, those who are liked can exert both more normative and more informational social influence.

Authority

In one of the most dramatic experiments in psychology, conducted by Stanley Milgram, participants were told that they were the teachers in a learning experiment and that they had to deliver what they were told were increasingly painful electrical shocks to the learner whenever he made a mistake. As the shocks grew more and more dangerous, the learner (actually a confederate) screamed with apparent pain, complained of a heart condition, and finally stopped responding altogether. If the "teacher" protested and tried to stop delivering the shock, he was told by the experimenter in a white lab coat that he had no choice; he had to continue administering the shocks. Astonishingly, many of the teachers continued to administer shocks on command even after the learner had apparently passed out or had a heart attack. Actually there was nothing to stop the teacher from simply walking away, except the great power that apparent authority has on us. There are many real-life examples of destructive obedience to authority. Nurses will sometimes give what they know to be a dangerous dose of a drug if so ordered by a doctor, soldiers will kill innocent women and children, and individuals will even kill themselves when ordered to by a charismatic cult leader.

Yet society values obedience. Obedience keeps society running smoothly, with drivers staying within the speed limit, not taking the belongings of others, and doing all the other orderly things that society expects people to do. Children are praised for being obedient, but seldom are praised for disobeying destructive authority, creating a dangerous tendency not to question authority at all.

Scarcity

This principle is that opportunities seem more valuable when they are less available. To persuade shoppers to buy now, retailers will limit the apparent number of units available for sale or limit the amount of time a sale will go on. People will pay vast amounts of money for objects that are rare. Jack Brehm's theory of psychological reactance states that when people's free choice to do something is threatened, they react against this by trying to exercise their choice or increasing their desire for the threatened object. For example, Romeo and Juliet's love was doomed and therefore more intense because of the feud between their families. Riots and civil disturbances often occur when a group's position is improving but suffers a momentary reversal; the improvement makes the reversal more painful because of the loss of freedom. The singer Mickey Gilley wrote that "all the girls get prettier at closing time" because time is running out and freedom to make a connection is threatened. When a book or movie is censored, demand rises because the freedom to read the book or see the movie is being threatened. An interesting exercise for the reader would be to think of an influence situation in which all of these six compliance tactics could be used in combination. Is there an order in which they would work best?

Ladd Wheeler

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INTERPERSONAL PROCESS MODEL OF INTIMACY

The Interpersonal process model of intimacy, initially proposed by Harry Reis and Phillip Shaver, describes the transactional process by which intimacy between two individuals is developed and maintained over the course of interactions. The interpretation, assimilation, and expectation of repeated intimate interactions give rise to more global judgments about the relationship, such as satisfaction, commitment, and trust. The model conceptualizes intimacy as a personal, subjective (and often momentary) sense of connectedness that is the outcome of a dynamic, interpersonal process. This entry first provides a description of the specific components of the Interpersonal process model of intimacy, describes factors that may interact with the various components, and then briefly discusses the benefits of thinking of intimacy in this way.

Components of the Interpersonal Process Model

Self-disclosure, partner responsiveness, and perceived partner responsiveness are the key elements that foster the development of intimacy. According to this model, the intimacy process is typically initiated with *self-disclosure,* whereby one partner, "the discloser," shares personal information

that reveals core aspects of the self to their partner, "the listener." This information can be verbal or nonverbal and affective/evaluative (e.g., "When we spend time together, I feel more and more connected to you") or more factual (e.g., "My longest lasting relationship was 2 years") in nature. Research suggests that disclosures of emotional information lead to greater feelings of intimacy than disclosures of factual information. This could be because emotional information serves to communicate specific needs and vulnerabilities to one's partner, and by revealing this information, those needs and vulnerabilities are more likely to be perceived, acknowledged, and/or met. The process of self-disclosure is an integral part of the intimacy process because it provides an opportunity for one's partner to respond and convey caring and understanding.

The second part of the model, in which the listener responds to the self-disclosure, is termed *partner responsiveness.* Once the discloser has revealed personal information, the listener then addresses the communications of the discloser. For the intimacy process to continue, the listener must emit behaviors and expressions that convey acceptance, understanding, validation, and caring toward his or her partner. Partner responses are most effective in contributing to intimacy when they are sincere and immediate and show a genuine understanding of and respect for the discloser's needs. These partner behaviors and expressions are attempts at responsiveness.

An important element in the development of intimacy depends on the disclosure's perception of responsiveness from their partner. In the ideal case, the discloser will interpret his or her partner as responsive and feel that his or her needs have been met. Judgments about the degree of understanding, validation, and care in a partner's response constitute the discloser's view of *perceived partner responsiveness.* It is possible that, although the listener may intend to be responsive, the discloser may not feel like the partner was responsive to him or her. The disclosure's interpretation of their partner's response is therefore a critical component in the development of intimacy. Occasionally the reverse—the listener's response is not intended to be responsive, yet is perceived as such—may be true as well, although this is less common. The perception of partner responsiveness acts as a

mediating variable by which self-disclosure and partner responsiveness influence intimacy. Perceived partner responsiveness is theorized to be a central component both among interpersonal relational processes (e.g., trust, love, commitment) and intrapersonal processes (e.g., self-esteem, personal goal pursuit).

Individual and Contextual Factors

Each step of the Interpersonal process model is affected by a variety of individual and contextual factors. For example, individual differences, such as personality traits, goals, needs, and fears, may influence the degree to which one chooses to self-disclose, as well as how much and what type of information an individual chooses to share. Similarly, partner responsiveness has been shown to be influenced by extraversion, as well as the degree of motivation in developing intimacy with one's partner. In addition, the extent to which one construes one's partner's response as appropriately meeting one's needs and reflecting the disclosed information will vary from person to person. Individuals high in rejection sensitivity anxiously expect and readily perceive rejection from their partners, leading them to perceive unresponsiveness from their partners in interactions where a more objective observer may detect responsiveness. The attachment style of the discloser will also affect whether the listener's response is interpreted as responsive to his or her needs. For example, individuals with an insecure attachment style, particularly those high in anxiety and avoidance, have been found to interpret responses from their partner as more negative than would be judged by objective observers.

There are selected gender differences in intimacy across types of personal relationships. Some studies show that, although men and women tend to agree that conversations including personal self-disclosure lead to intimacy in same-sex friendships, men enact these behaviors less often than women. Other studies have found that gender differences do exist in the way intimacy is thought of by men and women in romantic relationships. When describing intimate experiences, men more often report sex or physical contact as a key feature of intimacy. Women tend not to refer to sex in describing their intimate experiences, and, in fact, some report the absence of sex as contributing to an intimate interaction. The magnitude of identified gender differences tend to be small to moderate, suggesting that there may be more overlap than difference between men and women when it comes to intimacy and its related component processes.

There are also cultural variations in defining and operationalizing intimacy based on differences in constructions of self and social realities. The interpersonal process model of intimacy, which primarily assumes a Western cultural context for intimacy, emphasizes the self and describes the key ingredient of intimacy development as an individual being understood, validated, and cared for by his or her partner. Other cultures that focus less on independent, individual identities and more on interdependent, communal identities may consider relationship- or group-fulfilling obligations to be linked to intimacy, rather than perceived partner responsiveness. For example, partners in West African communities emphasize fulfilling mutual familial obligations and deemphasize individual romantic intimacy. However, the divide between individualistic and communal societies in relational intimacy is not always clear cut; in some individualistic cultures, individualism may not be conducive to building intimacy in romantic relationships. Russian entrepreneurs, who were characterized as individualistic, reported sex and love as being taboo topics of discussion even within the context of romantic relationships.

The Interpersonal process model provides several benefits for understanding intimacy in personal relationships. Rather than conceptualizing intimacy as a unitary construct, the Interpersonal process model breaks down the various components that lead to intimacy. This is particularly useful because it allows for intimacy to be examined as a process and not simply as an outcome. Understanding the process that leads to the development of intimacy enables researchers to view this interpersonal experience as it unfolds over time. The process model also allows intimacy to be distinguished from related but different constructs, such as satisfaction and love. By examining the individual components of intimacy development, not only can the field gain a better understanding of the process, but, by breaking it down, researchers and clinicians are also better

able to locate problems or collapses in the process and attend to them. Although there are other ways of conceptualizing intimacy, the Interpersonal process model offers a unique window into the underlying process by which relationship partners feel connected.

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See also Closeness; Intimacy; Intimacy, Individual Differences Related to; Responsiveness; Self-Disclosure

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INTERPERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

Interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) is a time-limited, structured psychotherapy originally developed by Gerald Klerman and colleagues in the 1970s for the treatment of depression. IPT aims to reduce patients' psychological distress and symptoms by improving their interpersonal functioning. This entry provides an overview of IPT, a description of the treatment structure, and a review of the clinical populations that appear to benefit from interpersonally focused treatment.

IPT's Fundamental Premise

IPT is based on a biopsychosocial model of psychiatric illness. The biopsychosocial model identifies converging biological, psychological, and social factors that over time have contributed to the patient's current functioning and distress. Although IPT acknowledges the influence of the biological and psychological domains, the primary focus of IPT is on identifying the patient's current interpersonal difficulties. The basic premise underlying IPT is that there is a bidirectional association between an individual's interpersonal functioning and his or her psychological well-being. For example, when individuals become depressed, they may have feelings of low self-worth and may isolate themselves from others. This social withdrawal, in turn, can have negative effects on their mood. The IPT therapist helps patients to break out of this cycle by reconnecting with others and effectively communicating their interpersonal needs.

IPT Treatment Structure

IPT consists, on average, of 12 to 16 weekly 1-hour sessions. Typically, IPT is conducted in outpatient settings with individuals. However, IPT may also be conducted with couples and groups. The primary objectives of IPT sessions are to improve patients' interpersonal functioning and alleviate their symptoms. The treatment consists of various phases, including an *assessment phase* (that determines whether IPT is appropriate for the patient), an *initial phase* (that focuses on identifying the patient's interpersonal landscape and primary problem area), a *working phase* (that employs therapeutic strategies directly related to the identified problem area), and a *concluding phase* (in which the patient's treatment progress is reviewed and plans are made for coping with future problems that may arise). At the conclusion of treatment, the patient and therapist discuss whether a *maintenance phase* of IPT would be beneficial.

Assessment Phase

In the *assessment phase,* the therapist conducts a thorough diagnostic interview, identifies the patient's current interpersonal relationships, and

explores the degree to which the patient perceives a connection between his or her interpersonal functioning and psychological problems. The assessment phase concludes when the therapist and patient agree to proceed with a specified course of IPT.

Initial Phase

The initial phase of IPT usually occurs during the first three sessions. In this phase, the therapist gathers specific information about the patient's interpersonal landscape by conducting an Interpersonal Inventory. The Interpersonal Inventory includes a detailed review of the patient's key relationships and the strengths and shortcomings of those relationships from the patient's perspective. Using this information, the patient and therapist determine which of the patient's current interpersonal problems appear to be most relevant to the patient's current psychological problems.

The Four IPT Problem Areas

IPT encourages the selection of one treatment target from among four interpersonal problem areas: role transition, interpersonal conflict, loss/grief, and interpersonal sensitivity. When *role transition* is selected, the therapist helps the patient to identify the changing social role, such as parenthood or retirement; acknowledges the distress that can accompany the transition, and problem solves strategies to increase the patient's likelihood of success in adopting the new role. When the therapeutic focus is on *interpersonal conflicts,* the therapist uses IPT techniques, such as role-play and communication analysis, to facilitate the patient's understanding of how his or her communication patterns may contribute to his or her relationship difficulties. Once maladaptive patterns have been identified, the therapist helps the patient to resolve his or her interpersonal disputes by clearly expressing his or her interpersonal needs to others and responding productively to significant others' unmet needs in return. *Loss and grief* are also salient problem areas. Identifying and addressing losses in treatment reduce the likelihood that they will serve as triggers for a psychiatric relapse. Finally, some patients suffer from *interpersonal sensitivity,* or chronic problems relating to others, that can hinder

their interpersonal functioning and lay the foundation for pervasive relationship difficulties. When interpersonal sensitivity is selected, the therapist's main objectives are to modify the patient's dysfunctional expectations about relationships, establish and maintain close relationships with others, and develop a network of support that can adequately address the patient's interpersonal needs.

Working Phase

The selected IPT problem area focuses the treatment during the working phase. In the working phase (Sessions 4–12), the therapist and patient work collaboratively to improve the patient's ability to communicate his or her needs to others, modify distorted relationship expectations, and build or better utilize social supports.

Concluding Phase

During the *concluding or termination phase* of IPT (Sessions 13–16), the focus is on preventing relapse of the patient's psychiatric symptoms by maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. In these final sessions, the therapist reinforces the skills acquired during treatment and discusses a relapse plan that highlights how interpersonal crises and insufficient social support can trigger relapse.

Maintenance Phase

When a *maintenance phase* is indicated, the patient and therapist contract for an additional series of IPT sessions that focus on the patient's original problem area or that identify a new interpersonal problem that the patient wants to address in therapy.

Applications

IPT is a well-established treatment for depression with a strong body of evidence spanning decades of research. Findings from controlled clinical trials suggest that IPT is an effective treatment for individuals with major depression, postpartum depression, dysthymia, and bulimia. Perhaps one of IPT's most notable strengths has been its adaptability across a wide range of ages (from adolescence to

later life) and psychiatric disorders. In recent years, IPT has been modified to treat bipolar disorder, social anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Although additional research is required to establish IPT's efficacy with these diverse disorders, findings to date have been promising. In contrast, preliminary investigations indicate that IPT may not be as effective as traditional substance abuse treatment for patients with cocaine or opiate dependence. Further studies are needed to establish for whom and in what settings IPT is most appropriate.

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See also Conflict Patterns; Depression and Relationships; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Mood and Relationships

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INTERPERSONAL SENSITIVITY

Interpersonal sensitivity (IS) can refer to both how well one "reads" other people and how appropriately one responds. Thus, it might be said that it is interpersonally sensitive to both recognize when one's spouse is sad and respond sympathetically. This entry, however, limits the definition to the "reading" aspect—in other words, accuracy in processing or decoding another's behavior or appearance. IS has been studied for many years in a variety of different ways. This entry describes different kinds of IS, how IS is measured, and how IS correlates with other variables, especially those that are relevant to interpersonal relationships.

Definition and Measurement of IS

In daily life, people constantly notice the behavior and appearance of others. Behaviors may be verbal or nonverbal. Nonverbal behaviors include facial expressions, direction of gaze, head shaking and nodding, body movements and postures, hand and arm gestures, vocal qualities (such as pitch or rhythm), and interpersonal distance, among others. Appearance can refer to physiognomic features, such as facial features or body shape, or to details of dress, hair, jewelry, and so forth. As examples of this kind of accuracy, one might notice that one's spouse is not speaking much at breakfast, one might recognize an acquaintance at a distance from the way he walks, or one might remember that a particular friend likes to wear hoop earrings. This kind of IS is typically measured by having the test taker interact with someone or watch a videotape of people interacting and then testing the accuracy (without forewarning) of what he or she recalls about the others' behaviors or appearance.

Of course, people also draw conclusions based on what they have noticed, and they do this countless times per day, often without much conscious awareness. Is this car salesman telling the truth? Does my mother really like her Christmas gift? Is that stranger going to attack me? Is that cute person across the room interested in me? Inferences based on the cues a person perceives might or might not be correct. Most research on IS is concerned with accuracy in recognizing emotions or other affective states, accuracy in judging personality, and accuracy in distinguishing truth from deception. Accuracy for judging many other kinds of content has been, or could be, measured as well, including status and dominance, intelligence, mental and physical health, age, geographic origin, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Accuracy of interpersonal judgment is measured by researchers in a variety of ways, but all methods have in common that they require a criterion against which judgments can be scored as right or wrong. Thus, for example, on a test of judging the extraversion of a set of persons (targets) shown on videotape, the researcher must have a good measure of the targets' actual extraversion. IS tests vary in how many target persons are shown, how many different kinds of content are represented, and what cue channels are included. As an example, such a test might present six targets, each expressing four different emotions using facial expressions, for a total of 24 test items. On some IS tests

perceivers judge a full audiovisual stimulus, whereas on others they judge single channels such as face only or voice only. IS test stimuli are typically short, ranging from less than a second to a few minutes in duration. Sometimes accuracy can be high, even when exposure to the stimulus is brief, although this depends on what is being judged. Accuracy levels depend on many factors and are notably low for judging deceptiveness and high for judging prototypical facial expressions of emotion (e.g., happy, sad, fearful).

Most IS research is based on administering tests using recorded stimuli such as described earlier, but some research is based on judgments made during or right after a live interaction. In one such method, known as the empathic accuracy paradigm, a person watches a video replay of one's interaction with a partner and makes inferences about the partner's thoughts and feelings, which are scored against the partner's self-described thoughts and feelings. Partners may be previously unacquainted or acquainted. Some research has examined accuracy of husbands' and wives' perceptions of each other while deliberately trying to convey different emotions. However, this research paradigm is often complicated by the fact that a person's decoding ability is often confounded with his or her partner's encoding (expression) ability. Going back to the spouse scenario, if you notice that your spouse is sad when he or she comes home from work, it could be for one of three possible reasons: (1) you have high IS and accurately picked up on your spouse's nonverbal cues even if they were subtle; (2) your spouse's cues were obvious and easy to interpret, so credit for your accuracy goes to the expression, not to your skill in decoding; or (3) some combination of skilled encoding and decoding. For this reason, most IS tests are standardized to solely focus on the decoding portion of IS.

Although in daily life people often exercise their IS with others whom they already know, in the testing literature, perceivers are typically unfamiliar with the targets, and therefore the research literature is mainly concerned with accuracy of drawing first impressions of strangers. However, to the extent that IS is a skill possessed by an individual, it is likely that skill in judging strangers is related to skill in judging people with whom one has a relationship. Some research suggests that IS may be slightly enhanced by greater familiarity with the person being judged.

Psychosocial Correlates of IS

Researchers have generally considered IS to be a valuable skill and have hypothesized that the ability to make accurate inferences about other people based on minimal information is advantageous. What does research tell us about other traits and attributes that are correlated with IS? The following summary is based on meta-analyses as well as individual studies.

Personality Correlates

Research shows IS to be positively associated with a number of personality traits, some of which have clear implications for interpersonal relationships—empathy, affiliation, extraversion, dominance, conscientiousness, openness, tolerance for ambiguity, need to belong, and internal locus of control. IS is negatively related to the personality traits of neuroticism, shyness, depression, and an insecure attachment style. Individuals high in IS are also less likely to be prejudiced against minority groups. The high-IS individual thus possesses personality characteristics suggestive of healthy intra- and interpersonal functioning.

Social Competencies

IS is also connected to various social competencies that would assumedly lead individuals to develop and maintain healthy relationships with others. IS seems to be apparent to others in one's environment because individuals higher in IS are rated by acquaintances as more interpersonally sensitive. Higher IS also is associated with a better ability to judge the IS of a friend. Higher self- and acquaintance ratings of social and emotional competence are also positively related to IS, and IS predicts competence in workplace and clinical settings.

Relationship-Specific Correlates

There has also been research that specifically examines the relation between IS and relationship quality. Individuals higher in IS report having

higher relationship well-being, more positive relations with their roommate(s), better marital adjustment (especially among men), and an overall more positive rating of the quality and quantity of their same- and other-sex relationships. In all likelihood, failures of IS contribute to problems between relationship partners.

Gender, Knowledge, and Motivation

Many studies have found that women are better at judging the meanings of interpersonal cues than men are, especially when the test measures accuracy in recognizing emotions and other affective cues. Women are also better at remembering another person's appearance and nonverbal behavior, and they possess more explicit knowledge about the meanings of nonverbal cues, as measured with a paper-and-pencil test. These findings have implications for relationships, although further research is needed to understand the impact of these sex differences on communication processes and relationship outcomes. The sex differences in IS, and one's level of IS in general, could be related to both motivation (how hard one tries when taking an IS test) and knowledge (how much one knows about the meanings of cues). It is not yet clear what the relative contributions of these factors are.

Ambiguities About Causation

The literature reviewed previously confirms the hypothesis that IS is associated with valuable aspects of personality and social functioning. However, because the research is based on correlations, it is not clear what theoretical account should be made. So, for example, the finding that high-IS people tend to choose more people-oriented careers could mean that IS leads a person to choose such a career or that experience in such a career improves a person's IS, or both. Furthermore, a third variable that is correlated with both variables could account for such a correlation. For example, if extraverted people score higher on IS and also choose more people-oriented careers, then controlling for it might eliminate the association between IS and career choice. Such a demonstration would not, however, settle questions about causation; it would merely add insight into possible processes.

The possibility that experiences influence the development of IS is suggested by studies showing higher IS in individuals who have a prelinguistic toddler (compared with matched individuals without such a toddler) are athletes or dancers, have prior musical training, come from less emotionally expressive families, and have traveled abroad more. A longitudinal study by Holly Hodgins and Richard Koestner suggests that optimal development of IS may depend on a combination of both the temperament of an individual as well as the situation, or environment, to which the person is exposed.

The possibility that a person's level of IS may produce consequences in addition to being a consequence of earlier experiences is suggested by research showing that individuals higher in IS receive higher salary raises due to salesmanship, receive higher evaluations by superiors in several different occupations, learn nonsense words faster from a partner, achieve more advantageous negotiation outcomes, earn higher satisfaction ratings from patients (among physicians), and experience better adjustment to U.S. culture (among foreign students).

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See also Accuracy in Communication; Communication, Gender Differences in; Communication Skills; Deception and Lying; Dyssemia; Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy

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INTERRACIAL AND INTERETHNIC RELATIONSHIPS

An interethnic relationship is a relationship in which the partners differ in their presumed biological and/or cultural heritage. An interracial relationship is a relationship in which the partners differ specifically in their presumed biological heritage. Thus, an interracial relationship is one type of interethnic relationship. Other types of interethnic relationships include, but are not necessarily limited to, interreligious and international relationships.

Like many other topics within the field of personal relationships, the topic of interethnic relationships has been researched most heavily within the United States. Given the problematic nature of race relations throughout the history of the United States, it may not be surprising that interracial relationships have received far more coverage in the field of personal relationships than have interreligious or international relationships. This disparity of coverage is all the more evident when one considers that, among all interethnic marriages in the United States, interracial marriages are least frequent.

Among the general public in America, romantic interethnic relationships tend to be stigmatized to a greater extent than do platonic interethnic relationships. In turn, romantic interracial relationships tend to be stigmatized to a greater extent than do romantic interreligious relationships or romantic international relationships. At one time in their histories, three quarters of all American states enacted laws banning interracial marriage. It was not until 1967, in *Loving v. Virginia,* that the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all remaining state anti miscegenation or anti-"race-mixing" laws as unconstitutional.

From 1970 to 2000, the percentage of interracial marriages in the United States rose from 1 to 5 percent. Despite the increase in the proportion of interracial marriages, the fact remains that, as a whole, individuals overwhelmingly marry within their racial groups. The only major racial group among whom a majority of persons intermarry is Native Americans (among both sexes, more than 55 percent of Native Americans intermarry).

Popular and academic discussions of interracial marriage often focus on African American–European American intermarriage, especially African American male–European American female intermarriage. However, the most common type of interracial marriage is European American–Asian American (and especially European American male–Asian American female) intermarriage. In fact, European American–Asian American intermarriages outnumber African American–European American marriages by nearly a 2:1 ratio (14 percent vs. 8 percent). The prevalence of European American–Asian American marriages over African American–European American marriages has been consistent since the 1970s.

Despite the attention that scholars and laypersons alike have given to African American male–European American female marriages, African American female–European American male marriages outnumbered African American male–European American female marriages until the 1960s. Prior to the civil rights movement, anti-miscegenation laws tended to be enforced more rigorously against African American male–European American female unions than against African American female–European American male unions, especially in the South. It was not until the 1970s that African American male–European American female marriages outnumbered African American female–European American male marriages.

The best-known studies of interracial marriage in the United States are (a) a study of approximately 40 African American–European American couples in Chicago by Ernest Porterfield during the 1970s, and (b) a study of approximately 20 African American–European American couples in Minneapolis by Paul Rosenblatt, Terri Karis, and Richard Powell during the 1990s. Results of both studies contradicted the once-dominant view, expressed by Robert Merton in the 1940s, that exchanges involving different types of social status

accounts for patterns of African American–European American marriage (e.g., affluent African-American men are in a position to exchange their high-achieved status with European American women's high ascribed status). Instead, results of the Porterfield and Rosenblatt et al. studies indicates that exchanges involving the same type of love (i.e., romantic love) account for patterns of African American–European American intermarriage.

The studies by Porterfield and by Rosenblatt et al. were primarily qualitative and involved relatively small samples, whereas a subsequent study by Stanley Gaines and his colleagues during the 1990s was primarily quantitative and involved a relatively large sample of approximately 100 couples (roughly half of which involved African American–European American pairs) from the United States and beyond. Three quarters of the Gaines et al. sample consisted of interracial cohabiting (and primarily married) couples. Results of the Gaines et al. research suggested that exchanges involving love, as well as exchanges involving esteem, promote the maintenance of interracial relationships. Moreover, results of the Gaines et al. research contradict popular and academic stereotypes concerning relationship dynamics among interracial couples (e.g., interracial couples are stereotyped as involving a one-way flow of esteem from wives to husbands).

Despite the stereotype-challenging results reported by Porterfield, by Rosenblatt et al., and by Gaines et al. regarding relatively happy interracial couples, a glance at divorce statistics (i.e., 50 percent divorce rate for couples in general vs. 67 percent divorce rate for interracial couples in particular) indicates that interracial couples face special struggles in trying to maintain their relationships. With regard to African American–European American marriages, parents of European American wives are especially likely to ostracize the wives, husbands, and offspring alike. This hostility from family members often occurs in addition to hostility from friends, acquaintances, and strangers. In some instances, interracially married spouses have only each other as support persons; and if spouses fail to support each other, then the marriages may be left in a precarious position.

One confound regarding the link between interracial marriage and increased likelihood of divorce is that interracial marriages are more likely to be second marriages than are intraracial marriages. Regardless of racial pairing, second marriages are more likely to end in divorce than are first marriages. It is not clear whether interracial marriages would remain at higher risk for divorce if spouses' number of previous marriages were taken into account.

Lost in the discourse regarding divorce statistics is the fact that many interracial marriages persist over time; the field of personal relationships could benefit from more systematic study of the factors that distinguish successful from unsuccessful interracial marriages. Published studies of interracial marriages have not tended to follow couples across time; longitudinal research is needed for relationship scholars to understand how interracial couples can defy the odds and maintain stable and satisfying marriages. The number of relationships studies on interracial marriages has not kept pace with the incidence of interracial marriages.

Just as the question "Would you want your daughter to marry one?" (typically limited to African American male–European American female relationships) implicitly suggests that parents of European American women should not encourage their daughters to marry African-American men, so too does the question "But what about the children?" implicitly suggests that interracially married spouses should not have children of their own. Unfortunately, the few studies that have examined relationship processes between interracially married spouses rarely, if ever, have examined relationship processes between the spouses and their offspring. Mixed-race children have long been stereotyped as biologically, socially, and psychologically ill adapted. However, virtually no evidence exists to support those stereotypes, and virtually nothing is known about the ways that parents can or do help mixed-race offspring cope with the often hostile society in which they live.

Throughout the present entry, the term *race* has been used uncritically. However, early in the 20th century, anthropologists had begun to question the utility of race as a social-scientific construct. By the end of the 20th century, psychologists similarly had begun to question the utility of race. For example, in a series of papers during the 1990s, Halford Fairchild and his colleagues called for an end to the use of the term *race* in psychology. Although the details of the controversy over the

utility of race are beyond the scope of the present entry, it is nonetheless worth noting that scholars' and laypersons' casual use of the term *race* has not helped (and, one might argue, has inhibited) academic and popular understanding of the dynamics regarding interracial relationships. Biological differences in spouses' skin color, hair color, and/or facial features, in and of themselves, do not explain the difficulties that interracial couples experience in trying to survive in the post–Civil Rights Era United States.

More research is needed regarding interracial relationships outside the United States. For example, even in the post–Civil Rights Era, the United States has posted some of the lowest interracial marriage rates among Western nations. It is not clear whether interracial marriages are more likely to survive in those Western nations whose histories of race relations have been less problematic than in the United States.

Also, more research is needed regarding interethnic relationships in general, within as well as outside the United States. For example, within the United States, Kozue Shibazaki and Kelly Brennan found that individuals who were in interethnic (and not necessarily interracial) dating relationships scored lower on self-esteem and ethnic identity than did individuals who were in intraethnic relationships; yet individuals in interethnic relationships scored as high on relationship expectations and relationship satisfaction as did individuals in intraethnic relationships. In a separate study within the United States, Regan Gurung and Tenor Duong found that individuals who were in interethnic (and, again, not necessarily interracial) dating relationships scored as high on self-esteem, ethnic identity, relationship expectations, and relationship satisfaction as did individuals in intraethnic relationships. The dissimilar results with regard to certain personality variables, in contrast to the similar results with regard to certain relationship variables, warrant further examination.

Finally, more research is needed on the prevalence of dating, as distinct from marital, interethnic relationships. Data from the 2000 U.S. Census reveal that approximately 10 percent of all unmarried cohabiting couples are interracial. Given that interracial couples constitute a higher proportion of unmarried cohabiting couples than of married couples, one might reasonably assume that interracial couples constitute a still higher proportion of dating couples than of married couples. However, definitive statistics regarding the prevalence of interracial and other interethnic dating relationships are not readily available.

In conclusion, as interracial and other interethnic relationships continue to grow at a faster rate than do intraethnic and other intraracial relationships (at least in the United States), the quantity and quality of research on interethnic relationships ideally will grow as well. The theoretical fragmentation and, in some instances, lack of theory that characterizes research on interethnic relationships might contribute to the marginalized status of interethnic relationships within the larger field of personal relationships. Clearly, the ethnic diversity that is part and parcel of research on interethnic relationships is valuable in its own right. By the same token, a coherent theoretical foundation is likely to enhance the value of research on interethnic relationships.

Stanley O. Gaines, Jr.

See also Affection and Affectionate Behavior; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends; Mate Selection; Prejudice

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Interracial Friendships in Adolescence

Scholars have long viewed contact (or lack thereof) between different groups as an indicator of the social and geographic distance between them. They have also considered contact between different groups to be an important source of influence on attitudes and behavior. *Brown v. Board of Education,* which ended the legal segregation of schools, was based on the assumption that interracial contact is beneficial to the self-esteem and achievement of Black youth. This 1954 Supreme Court decision, and the decline in school and residential segregation that followed it, have motivated a number of studies on the causes and consequences of interracial friendship in adolescence. This entry summarizes the findings of recent studies on this topic and points to important directions for future research.

Adults and adolescents alike tend to befriend same-race others due to opportunities for same-race contact (propinquity) and preferences for contact with those who are similar to them (homophily). Studies typically assess preferences for same-race contact indirectly by examining patterns of interracial friendship after taking into account propinquity. Such an approach requires researchers to have information on the race of individuals who befriend each other, in addition to the racial composition of their social contexts, such as schools and workplaces.

Research focusing on friendships between adolescents of different racial groups has proliferated in the past decade largely due to the advent of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). Add Health is an ongoing school-based study that was initiated by affiliates of the Carolina Population Center in the mid-1990s; the project has already interviewed a subset of respondents from its original sampling frame at three different points in time and is currently in the field collecting a fourth wave of data. Many of the Add Health studies on interracial friendship (and interracial romantic relationships) were conducted by Grace Kao and her colleagues with funding from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Importantly, Add Health administered a questionnaire to the student bodies of more than 100 schools in the United States. Including school rosters, the questionnaire asked students to identify their five best friends of each sex and to distinguish their very best friend. This design allows researchers to identify the characteristics of any friends nominated who attended the same school and also completed the questionnaire. Specifically, they can compare the self-reported race and ethnicity of students in friendship dyads. Surveys like Add Health offer more realistic estimates of interracial friendship than ones that simply ask respondents whether they have any friends of a different race.

Patterns of interracial friendship differ considerably according to race. Using data from Add Health, Ted Mouw and Barbara Entwisle find that 14.9 percent of friendships identified by Whites are interracial, whereas the comparable estimates for Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians are 28.6, 66.5, and 57.7 percent, respectively. These dramatic racial differences are partly a reflection of the relative sizes of different racial groups within schools. Whites, for instance, have fewer opportunities and need for interracial contact than minorities because they typically attend schools in which they are the majority rather than the minority. At the same time, adolescents' actual likelihood of interracial friendship falls considerably below their expected likelihood on the basis of opportunities for contact, regardless of their race.

Many studies of interracial friendship among youth identify all potential friendship dyads in a school and examine the likelihood of actual friendship as a function of their similarity on several characteristics, including race, socioeconomic background, and academic orientation. Taking into account school-level propinquity, these studies demonstrate that the actual likelihood of a friendship among potential dyad pairs is significantly greater if they include students of the same race, even after taking into account similarity on other characteristics. They also suggest that the line dividing Blacks and non-Blacks is especially difficult to cross. Studies that additionally include measures of opportunity structure for friendship formation within a school, such as residential segregation and tracking, also find evidence of same-race bias.

Social science studies in general have relied on a measure of race that divides respondents into mutually exclusive categories on the basis of their racial

and Hispanic identification: White, Black, Hispanic (regardless of race), Asian, and Native American. More recently, studies have moved beyond conventional measures of race, acknowledging the fact that Hispanic is not really a separate racial category, that racial groups are comprised of several different ethnic groups, and that a growing number of individuals identify with more than one racial group. Studies exploring the intersection between race and ethnicity in adolescent friendship find that White Hispanics are more likely to nominate Whites and White Hispanics as friends than Blacks and Black Hispanics and, similarly, that Black Hispanics are more likely to befriend Blacks and Black Hispanics than Whites and White Hispanics.

There is also evidence that Hispanic and Asian adolescents show a preference for same-ethnic peers over different-ethnic (same-race) peers and a preference for different-ethnic (same-race) peers over different-race peers. For instance, a Chinese adolescent has a greater chance of befriending a Chinese peer than a Korean peer, but they have a greater chance of befriending a Korean peer than a White peer. Patterns of friendship for multiracial adolescents differ according to racial background and are quite complex.

A smaller number of studies have examined the dynamics of interracial friendships in adolescence. These studies suggest that, in comparison to same-race relationships, interracial relationships are lower quality, as evidenced by their number of activities, stability, and reciprocation. Using data from Add Health, Elizabeth Vaquera and Grace Kao find that 54 percent of interracial friendships are reciprocated, in comparison with 66 percent of same-race relationships. Differences between same-ethnic friendships and different-ethnic (same-race) friendships are less pronounced and less consistent. Studies have yet to examine the sources of differences in the dynamics of interracial and interethnic friendships. For instance, interracial relationships may have lower rates of reciprocation than same-race relationships because they receive less support from families or friends.

A handful of studies have used Add Health data to examine interracial romantic relationships in adolescence. These studies suggest that, among students who are romantically involved, the likelihood of having an interracial relationship declines considerably during the course of adolescence. Studies also find evidence that interracial romantic relationships are slightly less stable than same-race romantic relationships, and that they involve fewer public and private displays of affection (e.g., meeting a partner's parent or thinking they were part of a couple). However, interracial relationships fail to differ from same-race relationships in terms of intimate displays of affection (e.g., kissing).

Despite the considerable evidence that interracial contact increases racial tolerance, little research has been conducted on the consequences of interracial friendship for attitudes and behavior. This could reflect the fact that it is difficult to determine whether associations between interracial friendship and subsequent outcomes are due to the selection of individuals who form these relationships or their actual influence.

Kara Joyner

See also Friendships in Adolescence; Interracial and Interethnic Relationships

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INTERRUPTIONS, CONVERSATIONAL

An interruption is a speech behavior that occurs when one person begins talking when another person is already talking and the original speaker stops talking. Interruptions can have implications for relationships depending on how they are interpreted. Interruptions may be interpreted as either

positive or negative depending on the personalities and backgrounds of the individuals involved, the nature of their relationship, and the content and context of the interaction. This entry describes how interruptions occur, who interrupts, how interruptions can be interpreted, and the implications of interruptions for relationships.

Dominance Perspective

Conversational interruptions have been framed in two ways in the literature. One view is that interruptions are violations of turn-taking rules. Many people accept that during conversations speakers should take turns and one person should speak at a time. Within this perspective, an interruption breaks these rules and violates another's right to continue speaking. Thus, individuals who interrupt are seen as dominating others.

Considerable evidence was garnered for this argument during the 1970s and 1980s from research on interactions involving individuals who differ in levels of perceived social power. This research showed that more powerful individuals tend to interrupt more often than less influential individuals. For example, doctors tend to interrupt more than patients, and employers tend to interrupt more than employees. In terms of close relationships, research has shown that parents tend to interrupt more than young children, but adolescents tend to interrupt more than their parents. Interpreted from the dominance perspective, this latter finding suggests that as children age, they attempt to gain more power or influence in the family by interrupting their parents.

The most controversial area of research has been the study of conversations between men and women. Early naturalistic studies showed that in cross-gender conversations, men tended to interrupt almost twice as much as did women. This finding was interpreted as confirming the assumption that men hold more social power than women. However, beginning in the 1990s, this conclusion was challenged by critical reviews of previous research, which revealed that whether men or women interrupt depends on the individuals involved and the context of the conversations. For example, in controlled studies in which men and women had equal expertise and social power, men and women initiated equal numbers of interruptions.

Conversational Style Perspective

Interruptions can also be interpreted within the larger social context of conversational behaviors. Interpersonal communication consists of the coordination and interpretation of subtle nonverbal cues, including voice quality, rhythm, volume, patterns of turn taking, and the use of overlapping speech, including interruptions. These nonverbal behaviors provide listeners with cues that signal how a speaker intends his or her words to be interpreted. Habitual use of particular nonverbal cues makes up a person's conversational style. One's particular conversational style depends in part on individual personality characteristics, but also on learning that comes from repeated social experiences. Members of specific cultural or social groups, or even families, learn to use similar patterns of nonverbal cues to signal certain intentions. Thus, individuals from different social backgrounds can have quite different, and often incompatible, conversational styles. If these individuals interact, their utterances can be misinterpreted due to different understandings about the meanings of nonverbal cues. For example, some speakers interject with comments such as "Right" or "I know" while others are speaking. These short utterances can be interpreted as attempts to take over conversations by those who strictly adhere to turn-taking rules or as encouraging listener responses by those who prefer more collaborative conversation. In other words, the former would view these interjections as interruptions, whereas the latter would view them as noninterruptive, simultaneous speech.

According to Deborah Tannen, who popularized the idea of conversational styles, interruptions occur when speakers use incompatible habits for turn taking and simultaneous speech. She claims that in many cases simultaneous speech can be initiated with the intention of being supportive, and whether the initiation of simultaneous speech ends up causing an interruption depends on whether the other individual stops talking. Thus, an interruption occurs because of the behaviors of both speakers, not because one speaker is trying to dominate the other speaker.

Two conversational styles that include different habits with regard to the use of simultaneous speech and interruptions have been studied. A

high-involvement style is characterized by a fast rate of speech, fast turn taking, short pausing, and frequent initiations of simultaneous speech. Speakers who use a high-considerateness style talk more slowly, use slower turn taking and longer pausing, and avoid simultaneous speech. High-involvement speakers use simultaneous speech to build rapport and signal involvement, whereas high-considerateness speakers avoid simultaneous speech to honor the principle of not imposing. The use of similar styles enhances involvement in the conversation; opposing styles may lead to interruptions. For example, when a high-considerateness speaker pauses within her turn, the high-involvement speaker will start talking because she believes that silence signals a lack of rapport, and because the high-considerateness speaker believes that overlapping speech is imposing, she will stop talking. Therefore, an interruption occurs because of the conversational habits and intentions of both speakers. This interpretation of interruptions has been supported by the finding that adolescents use a high-involvement style, whereas parents use a high-considerateness style; therefore, adolescents tend to interrupt their parents, and this difference in conversational styles often leads to negative feelings.

In conclusion, interruptions occur frequently in conversations for complex reasons involving the coordination of the communication habits of two or more speakers. Conversational interruptions can be interpreted as either affiliative or dominating depending on the nature of the relationships and the social background and intentions of the relationship partners. Whether interruptions are viewed as having positive or negative impact on a relationship depends on the compatibility and/or mutual understanding of the individuals having a conversation.

Sherry L. Beaumont

See also Communication, Gender Differences in; Communication, Norms and Rules; Communication Processes, Verbal; Communication Skills; Rapport

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Intervention Programs, Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pervasive social problem that has devastating effects on all members of the family, as well as the larger society. Domestic violence includes physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual abuse perpetrated by one intimate partner against another partner. Rates of physical violence vary according to the sample from which they are calculated. The 1995 National Violence Against Women Survey, which measures violence as a criminal behavior, indicated that 22 percent of women and 7 percent of men reported being victimized by an intimate partner at some time in their lives. This entry discusses the history of intervention programs with domestic violence offenders, reviewes the current state of offender treatment, and discusses current issues and challenges in the field.

Prior to the feminist movement in the 1970s, violence in the home was considered largely a private matter. In the 1970s, a group of feminist activists, led by individuals like Erin Pizzey and Susan Schecter, worked to develop a grassroots movement to change the acceptability of wife beating and to provide safety and shelter for female victims of violence. The shelter movement was successful in bringing the issue of male partner violence into the public dialogue and began offering a safe but temporary respite for victims of this violence. Eventually it became clear that simply providing a safe haven for victims was not enough. The work needed to focus not only on providing safety for victims, but also on getting men to stop being violent. Only recently have researchers recognized that women are also violent in relationships and that

intervention programs need to be developed to address female violence.

Most of the beginning work developing specialized treatment for domestic violence offenders grew out of the same feminist movement that developed shelters for victims. Advocates used what they learned working with victims to develop treatment for offenders. An emphasis that began in the early days of offender treatment and continues today is on requiring that offenders assume responsibility for their violence and that they are held accountable for the abuse they perpetrate, rather than allowing them to blame the abuse on their partner's behavior, their childhood experiences, or their drinking or drug use. Much of the early work, based on feminist principles, also emphasized changing men's sexist beliefs, which allowed them to believe that they are entitled to control their partner's behavior and to use whatever force is necessary to maintain their role as head of the household. The emphasis on accountability (and punishment) and the belief that men assault women because of patriarchal norms that support male dominance lead to an admonition against using any type of mental health treatment in response to male violence. The belief was that men hit because it works to control women, not because they have any mental illness that could be treated using a mental health perspective.

Current State of Domestic Violence Offender Treatment

Although the emphasis on accountability remains prominent in most offender intervention programs, most programs tend to use an eclectic set of interventions. Many programs still focus on teaching men about the negative effects of constricted male roles through sex-role resocialization and increasing men's awareness of control tactics so that they will be more aware of their abusive behaviors and will have increased empathy for victims. However, other programs have expanded their focus and teach offenders skills to replace destructive behaviors, work to help men change faulty patterns of thinking that lead to negative feelings and abusive behaviors, or help men deal with childhood experiences, attachment injuries, and shame through trauma-based approaches.

Controlled studies of the effectiveness of these programs began in the 1980s. Currently, more than 30 studies on program effectiveness exist. Many challenges face these analyses. Some studies rely on formal reports to the police. However, only a small percentage of reoffenses are reported to the police. When studies rely on victim reports (which are considered the gold standard), there are still difficulties. For example, follow-up is difficult. Many studies have a high level of attrition from pretest to follow-up. Several meta-analyses have been conducted that combine the effects found in each individual study and compare men who have received treatment with men who have not received treatment. These meta-analyses have consistently found that, although some men change after completing an offender program, men who are arrested for domestic violence but do not complete a program may also change. The amount of change attributed to completing treatment over and above the amount of change attributed to being arrested is small. Julia Babcock, in her meta-analysis, reported that treated batterers have a 40 percent chance of becoming nonviolent, and without treatment they have a 35 percent chance of becoming nonviolent. Thus, in her study, which compared the effect from all controlled studies of offender treatment with the effect found in the nontreated samples in each study, she found a 5 percent increase in success rate attributable to treatment.

State Standards for Domestic Violence Perpetrator Treatment

To ensure the quality of intervention programs provided to offenders, Roland Maiuro reported that in 2007 more than 90 percent of all states had developed standards for domestic violence offender intervention. These standards reflect the prevailing state of offender treatment. Almost all current state standards recommend or require that offenders be treated in groups. A variety of reasons are offered for requiring group treatment, including the idea that men will feel less isolated when confronting their problems, that they can participate in role-plays when learning new behaviors, and that they can give each other feedback. However, there is currently no empirical support for the value of group treatment over individual treatment.

In fact, some concern has begun to be raised that the group format can lead to negative male bonding. For example, a wife in one group reported that her husband came home and told her she had it easy and that he was much less violent than the other men in his group. Concern has also been expressed that group treatments may not address the specific factors leading an individual to become violent.

State standards also recommend or prescribe the focus of treatment. Although most states allow providers to address both male power and control and other social psychological concepts, 27 percent of the states in Maiuro's survey required that the only focus of treatment be on power and control; however, models that emphasize power and control as the only cause of domestic violence have not been shown to be more effective than other treatment models.

The length of the groups required by state standards also varies. Some states require as few as 12 weeks of treatment, whereas others require as many as 52 weeks. Most research finds little difference in outcome based on length of treatment in part because the dropout rate is higher in longer programs. Some studies find that men who complete the longer programs are more likely to end their violence than are men who complete shorter programs. However, overall, the 50 percent dropout rate for domestic violence offender treatment is a serious problem impacting the effectiveness of these programs and is higher than the dropout rate in general mental health treatment.

Current Issues and Challenges in the Field

Reducing Attrition

Although the field currently knows little about what is effective in treating abusive men, some interesting work has begun to examine ways to decrease dropout rates. For example, one study found that attendance monitoring and mandatory monthly court reviews decreased attrition from 52 to 36 percent. Another study found that a marathon group in which men attended 12 hours on Friday night and all day Saturday, in comparison with a standard 2-hour orientation group, reduced attrition from 45 to 25 percent in the first four sessions. Another study found that supportive telephone calls and

hand-written letters to men who missed a session reduced attrition. Finally, one study found that African-American men with high cultural identification had lower dropout rates in a group for African-American men only than they did in a heterogeneous group. Further work is needed in this area.

Couples Treatment

Although only 30 percent of state standards allow couple sessions to be used in addition to male-only groups, research is beginning to suggest that, with carefully screened couples, couples treatment, and especially multicouple group treatment has been shown to be as effective as male-only treatment groups. These groups generally exclude couples if a victim is fearful of her partner and if the abuser is not prepared to take responsibility for the abuse. Couples treatment may be especially useful if a couple chooses to stay together after the abuser has completed a gender-specific group and/or if the couple has not been court ordered to treatment, but both or either partner is using low-level violence in their relationship. Although couples treatment for violent couples remains controversial, a variety of rationales have been offered for couples treatment, including the fact that different types of abuse needs different types of treatment, and that relationship conflict is a strong predictor of domestic violence and couples who choose to stay together often need help resolving conflict. Finally, there is evidence that in many relationships, both partners use violence, and violence by the female partner is a strong predictor of violence by the male partner and of increasing levels of injury for the female partner. If the male is the only partner who learns nonviolent ways of resolving conflict, the violence in the relationship is not likely to end.

Making Distinctions Among Types of Abuse

Another important issue that faces professionals attempting to treat domestic violence is the fact that not all violence is the same. Although Maiuro's review of state standards found that 91 percent of these standards do not make distinctions between types of violence, research is clear that there are different types of violence. Different labels have been used to describe different types of violence,

yet most researchers at least distinguish the terroristic or characterological type of offender from the situational type of offender. Situational offenders become violent in response to a specific situation in the home. Often times both partners are aggressive. There is generally no personality disorder present. In contrast, the terroristic offender is much more likely to have a psychopathic personality disorder and to use coercive control in his everyday relationship with his partner. Most domestic violence researchers recommend that providers carefully screen offenders and offer treatment based on the characteristics of the offender, rather than the one-size-fits-all treatment offered by most certified programs. While most programs use the same approach with all men referred to the program, research is clear that all offenders are not the same. Further work needs to be done to determine which programs are most effective with which offenders.

Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence

Other distinctions that need to be addressed in treatment include distinct treatment needs presented by individual offenders, such as substance abuse. There is considerable overlap between battering and problems with alcohol or other drugs. Although most treatment programs offer only substance abuse or batterer treatment, there is growing support for integrated treatment. The standard belief in the domestic violence field is that treating substance abuse without specifically providing domestic violence offender treatment will not lead to cessation of violence. However, a group of substance abuse treatment researchers, including Tim O'Farrell and Bill Fals Stewart, have demonstrated that behavioral couples treatment for substance abuse is more effective in reducing domestic violence among participants than is individual substance abuse treatment.

Treatment for Female Offenders and Same-Sex Offenders

Finally, not only do gaps exist in treating different types of violence and co-occurring conditions (e.g., substance abuse), gaps also exist in targeting treatment to special populations. In particular, the field knows little about treating same-sex couples

or violent females. All of the published randomized trials have been conducted with violent heterosexual men. However, as indicated earlier, both males and females use violence in relationships. Violence also occurs in same-sex relationships. As a result of mandatory arrest laws, increasing numbers of heterosexual women are being arrested for domestic violence. There is a growing body of research seeking to understand these women. Most of this research points to the high levels of victimization and trauma that many violent women have experienced and suggest that treatment for these women needs to include an effort, not only to help them reduce their violence, but also to address earlier trauma. The largest gaps exist in understanding and intervening in violence between same-sex partners.

Sandra Stith

See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Abused Women Remaining in Relationships; Batterers; Relational Aggression; Substance Use and Abuse in Relationships

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INTERVENTION PROGRAMS, SATISFACTION AND STABILITY

Partners committing to lifelong partnerships often hope for at least two favorable outcomes: to have a happy relationship and for the relationship to remain intact. However, longitudinal studies demonstrate dramatic declines in marital satisfaction across the first 10 years of marriage, and about half of American marriages end in divorce. Chronic dissatisfaction and relationship instability are associated with an increased risk for psychopathology in partners, compromised physical health, and less adaptive developmental outcomes in children. Satisfaction and stability are threatened by a variety of factors that can be thought of at three broad levels of analysis: relational, social environment, and physical environment factors. Relational factors are defined by the interactions between partners and include problems such as poor communication, power struggles, and low levels of intimacy. The social environment includes unsupportive communities and social networks, whereas the physical environment refers to factors such as economic hardship or stressful working conditions. Although existing data clearly suggest that many couples at risk for dissatisfaction and instability often experience problems at more than one level, few couples receive comprehensive intervention programs that address needs at multiple levels.

This entry reviews intervention programs for satisfaction and stability across these three levels of analysis: relational environment, social environment, and physical environment. The review begins with when and why couples seek treatment and the tendency for couples to focus on relational factors while overlooking problems in the social and physical environments. Couple therapies are reviewed to illustrate interventions focused on relational factors, premarital programs as interventions from the social environment, and government programs as interventions intended to reduce stressors in the physical environment.

When and Why Do Couples Seek Interventions?

Data suggest that only 25 percent of marriages can be characterized as both satisfying and stable, but only about 10 percent of married couples ever seek premarital or couple therapy. Furthermore, the average married couple waits approximately 6 years after the onset of serious problems before entering couple therapy. Studies suggest that couples seeking treatment report several common problems including emotional dissatisfaction, communication problems, sexual problems, conflicts regarding money, and fears about separating or divorcing. It is also important to note that couples report seeking interventions not only to *decrease negative* aspects of the relationship, but also in hopes of *increasing positive* aspects of the relationship—that is, because of their love for their partner, wanting to save the good parts of the marriage, or a general desire to improve the relationship. Many of the presenting problems identified by couples seeking treatment are at the relational level of analysis. However, highly prevalent problems stemming from the social or physical environment, such as unsupportive communities or economic conditions, tend to be given lower priority or are entirely overlooked by couples and can even escape the attention of therapists. Interventions focused primarily on relational factors can be beneficial, but failure to address possible stressors from the social and physical environments can ultimately undermine intervention efforts.

Intervening at the Relational Level: Couple Therapy Interventions

The three therapies reviewed here are selected because their approaches embody some of the general principles of effective interventions for behavior, emotion, and cognition. These treatments have also been designated as "Empirically Supported Treatments" by the Society of Clinical

Psychology, one of the American Psychological Association's largest groups of psychologists specializing in interventions. Empirically supported treatments are based on randomized controlled trials demonstrating the benefits of a specific type of therapy, tested in more than one scientific study, and in which the group receiving treatment benefits significantly more than a control group that did not receive treatment.

Behavioral Couple Therapy

Behavioral Couple Therapy views dissatisfaction and instability as arising from a decrease in positive behaviors and an increase in the prevalence of negative behaviors. Behavioral Couple Therapy interventions can be broadly categorized into guided behavior change and skill-based interventions. Guided behavior change helps couples decrease negative behaviors (e.g., being late) in the interest of helping partners change more pervasive behavioral patterns (e.g., being disrespectful). Positive behaviors are increased through behavioral activation intervention components that encourage couples to engage in new sets of positive behaviors (e.g., leaving a kind note). Skill-based training focuses on coaching partners through specific methods for improving specific relational skills, such as how they communicate information and understand communication from their partner. Successful Behavioral Couple Therapy results in a more favorable ratio of positive to negative behaviors during interaction and increased levels of skill to cope with relational challenges.

Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy

The intimate bond between once loving partners can be torn apart by negative experiences that are driven by misinterpreted emotions and overly negative emotional reactions. Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy draws heavily on Adult Attachment Theory, providing a rich theoretical basis for understanding how current attachment styles between each partner govern the type of bond between partners. Anxious or avoidant attachment styles of partners often foster negative emotional reactions in a relationship and misinterpretations of partner's emotions. These factors can trigger a vicious cycle of negative feelings (e.g., fear and anger) that create insecurity and a feeling of disconnect between partners.

The aim of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy is to re-create an intimate bond between partners by changing the present insecure bond to a secure one, signified by security, safety, emotional accessibility, and responsiveness. Therapists do little to direct the client toward a specific goal; partners are provided a safe environment to express their hidden needs and wants, resulting in a deeper mutual understanding between partners, more positive experiences, and a secure, emotional connection. When successful, Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy results in a renewed secure attachment between partners, satisfying the need for close, secure relationships with others.

Insight-Oriented Couple Therapy

Dissatisfaction and instability, from an Insight-Oriented Therapy perspective, stem from individuals' lack of insight into underlying needs, automatic emotional reactions, and patterns of thinking about relationships from their early experiences. These early experiences can lead to relational thoughts and behaviors that are incongruent with the demands of current relational experiences. Insight-oriented therapy has three basic phases. First, therapists help each partner understand his or her own and his or her partner's relationship histories with family members and caregivers that have shaped current beliefs and behaviors regarding relationships. The therapist then helps couples link these insights to current relationship beliefs and behaviors. More adaptive relational outcomes follow when couples come to understand how their present emotions and behaviors are rooted in earlier core relationship themes that may be maladaptive in the context of the current relationship.

Is Couple Therapy Effective?

Couple interventions across most modalities, including Behavioral Couple Therapy, Emotion-Focused Couple Therapy, and Insight-Oriented Therapy, are generally effective in improving and maintaining relationship satisfaction and stability. Across clinical trials, an average 80 percent of couples report higher levels of satisfaction at termination than couples not receiving any therapy

at all. Interestingly, clinical trials reveal that beneficial effects are not limited to relationship satisfaction. Couples interventions are also effective in treating other types of comorbid disorders, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress.

Data supporting the durability of treatment over time provide a more mixed picture. What is robust at long-term follow-up assessments is that treatment is better than no treatment, and in many cases long-term treatment fares better than short-term treatment. However, relapse rates can vary across modalities and across the few studies with follow-ups assessed more than 1 year after the end of therapy. For example, in a clinical trial comparing Behavioral Couple Therapy and Insight-Oriented Couple Therapy, a 4-year follow-up found that about 50 percent of couples in Behavioral Couple Therapy reported being satisfied, compared with about 70 percent in Insight-Oriented Couple Therapy. Of course, higher satisfaction does not guarantee increased stability. Stability results at the 4-year follow-up found that 38 percent of Behavioral Couple Therapy patients had divorced, compared with only 3 percent in Insight-Oriented Therapy. There are also groups of individuals who show little or no gains during therapy or at follow-up assessments, and these couples are classified as "unresponsive." This sizable minority of couples not maintaining gains in satisfaction, who eventually divorce or who are unresponsive, has led researchers to look beyond interventions at the relational level.

Intervening with already distressed couples, in the confines of a therapist's office, for 50 minutes a week, is prototypical of couple therapy intervention approaches. The limited scope and dose of this intervention approach has led some researchers and practitioners to think in different ways about the timing and breadth of interventions. Regarding timing, longitudinal studies demonstrate that maladaptive relational behaviors, emotional instability arising from insecure attachment styles, and poor insight into unrealistic expectations are often present before a couple marries. A number of environmental factors such as unsupportive social networks or economic stress are also identifiable before marriage. Increasing recognition that threats to marital satisfaction and stability exist at multiple levels before marriage has led researchers to consider a broader range of premarital intervention approaches. Premarital interventions incorporate Behavioral, Emotion-Focused, and Insight-Oriented Couple therapy principles through relational-level interventions, but unlike the therapeutic context, premarital interventions tend to be proactively delivered within a couple's social environment.

Interventions from the Social Environment: Premarital Interventions

For centuries, in many Western countries, marriage was the gateway to economic stability, mating, and parenthood. Today, it is increasingly possible to be economically self-sufficient, over half of those in the United States will cohabitate, and it is relatively common to rear children without marriage. These dramatic changes in the social environment have coincided with a view of marriage primarily as an instrument for personal happiness, as less binding, and as relatively independent of one's community standing. Premarital interventions are often delivered by religious organizations and increasingly by government-sponsored programs. In an era in which social environments place less value on marriage and are less supportive of marriage, social institutions strongly encouraging participation in premarital interventions may convey cultural value regarding the importance of marriage and may also provide opportunities to build social support from other couples or mentors.

Premarital interventions educate and counsel couples in ways similar to the couples therapies reviewed earlier. Most premarital intervention programs share three common intervention components: behavioral interventions focused on building relationship skills, fostering insight into trait-like differences between partners (e.g., attachment styles), and bolstering positive aspects of the relationship. A recent study applying the criteria for Empirically Supported Treatments found evidence for four different premarital programs: Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), Relationship Enhancement, Couple Communication Program, and Strategic Hope-Focused Enrichment. Meta-analyses of effectiveness studies have generally found large effects on satisfaction immediately following participation. Couples that participated in premarital programs

were more satisfied than 79 percent of couples that did not participate. It is also important to note that there is encouraging evidence for the mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of premarital interventions on satisfaction. Participants in standardized (e.g., PREP) and nonstandardized (e.g., Catholic Church) premarital programs are less likely to resort to domestic violence and also demonstrate improvement in interpersonal skills (e.g., communication, empathy), which are associated with higher levels of satisfaction.

Although immediate results are an important component regarding effectiveness of premarital interventions, how well these results are sustained throughout the course of marriage is an equally important aspect of evaluating premarital intervention effectiveness. Follow-up studies conducted 6 months after initial interventions demonstrate that couples maintain the positive effects of their participation. This is seemingly true until the 1-year mark after marriage, at which point longitudinal findings for the effectiveness of treatment begin to differ across studies. Some researchers argue that the high levels of satisfaction experienced after participation in premarital programs is sustained for 3 years, whereas others argue that effects on satisfaction only last through the first year of marriage. Although more long-term clinical trials of premarital interventions are needed, current findings generally suggest that premarital interventions stemming from the social environment can be protective of satisfaction and stability.

Policy Interventions for the Physical Environment

A stressful physical environmental is a powerful threat to satisfaction and stability and a potential impediment to successfully implementing interventions at the relational level or from the social environment. A couple besieged by financial burden, multiple work stressors, living in a crime-ridden neighborhood, or living in neighborhoods with high rates of drug and alcohol abuse may not be able to devote time and attention to seeking out or successfully implementing interventions of the sort described earlier. For example, during the first 5 years of marriage, men's unemployment doubles the risk of divorce. Other studies find that perceived stress at the workplace is associated

with increased marital conflict. Numerous studies link stressful physical environments to decreased satisfaction and stability, which suggests that, for couple therapies or premarital interventions to be effective, interventions aimed at relieving environmental stress is often necessary.

Public policy decisions to fund intervention programs for marriage at both the federal and state levels have focused on encouraging marriage, providing premarital interventions to prevent instability, and relieving economic pressure. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is the primary federal program for policy interventions for protecting marital satisfaction and stability. The program delivers $16.6 billion to states each year. States match the federal funds and are free to structure public policy programs to encourage the formation and maintenance of marriage. Some states choose intervention programs that provide financial incentives for low-income couples to enroll in premarital intervention programs before marriage; others choose job training, child care, or cash assistance to families.

Effectiveness studies are underway in many states, but thus far there are no longitudinal follow-ups of randomized clinical trials to show whether these policy interventions are successful. The most encouraging data to date suggest that there are relatively high rates of participation and retention in some TANF-sponsored programs. Furthermore, well-trained professionals without an extensive psychological educational background can deliver the programs effectively. Although there is an intuitive appeal to interventions from the social environment or interventions that lessen stress from the physical environment, it is important to remember that in practice both couples and interventionists often overlook the influence of environmental factors and the need to intervene directly on environmental factors. It is likely that a combination of effective policies targeting couples' social and physical environments, combined with effective relational-level interventions, is ultimately needed to protect or enhance a couple's satisfaction and stability.

Future Directions for Satisfaction and Stability Interventions

Despite tremendous advances in developing intervention programs, there are still many areas for

improvement in research and practice. One important task will involve experimental tests of which components in intervention programs have the strongest causal effects on outcomes. In addition, little is known about which components are more helpful for increasing satisfaction and which are more helpful for protecting relationship stability. For example, it may be that premarital interventions aimed at communication skills are particularly protective of satisfaction, whereas interventions aimed at sustainable employment may be especially protective of stability.

Another pressing question is how interventions at the couple, social, and physical environment levels interact to promote healthy relationships. Arriving at more precise estimates of the "dose" of intervention needed at the three levels discussed in this entry is important because it would allow interventionists to find the right balance between efficiency and thoroughness of intervention. Given limited financial and human resources when intervening with couples, this increased precision would allow more couples to receive interventions.

Despite the need for further improvements, it is important to remember that most couples benefit from current intervention programs. Effective interventions come from interventionists incorporating best practices, from communities that are supportive of couples, and from polices that alleviate stressors in the physical environment. Increased collaborative efforts across these three levels will likely be integral to ensuring that couples receive a combination of interventions that facilitate their hopes for a happy and stable relationship.

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See also Contextual Influences on Relationships; Couple Therapy; Economic Pressures, Effects on Relationships; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Physical Environment and Relationships; Prevention and Enrichment Programs for Couples

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INTIMACY

Intimate relationships enrich our lives with meaning and pleasure. Confiding in close relationship partners provides significant benefits to physical and mental health, distinguishes more rewarding from less rewarding relationships, and contributes to relationship satisfaction. Human beings have a *need for intimacy* that, when unfulfilled, leaves them feeling lonely and depressed. This entry defines intimate interactions and relationships, discusses three specific forms of intimacy (emotional support, expressions of positive regard, and sexuality), and addresses intimacy within friendships and romantic relationships. It concludes with discussions of intimacy changes over time, how people cope with the psychological risks of intimacy, and how individual differences in intimacy needs affect close relationships.

Three Defining Characteristics of Intimate Interactions

Karen Prager and Linda Roberts distinguished intimate interaction from other kinds of interactions by three necessary and sufficient conditions: self-revealing behavior, positive involvement with the other, and shared understandings.

Self-Revealing Behavior

Self-revealing behaviors are those that reveal personal, private aspects of the self to another. Self-revealing

behavior, or self-disclosure, is related to greater emotional involvement, fulfillment of needs, and relationship satisfaction. Self-disclosure facilitates the development of new intimate relationships and helps to maintain ongoing ones. Self-revealing behavior and accompanying emotional support are the *sine qua non* of intimate interactions for men and women.

Both verbal and nonverbal behavior can be self-revealing. Deeply self-revealing behavior usually involves the expression of "vulnerable emotions," such as hurt or sadness that expose the "innermost self." When interaction participants reveal more personal, vulnerable aspects of themselves through self-disclosure, and when they express feelings about what they have disclosed, they perceive their interactions to be more intimate.

Self-revealing behavior is that aspect of intimacy that has been most closely associated with higher levels of well-being; however, the mechanism by which it benefits the individual has not yet been determined. One study tested the hypothesis that changes in hormone levels, specifically salivary testosterone levels, would account for some of self-disclosure's health benefits. The study found that higher self-disclosure moderated short-term testosterone changes in men who interacted with a female peer versus sat alone for 15 minutes.

Positive Involvement

Positive involvement refers to the individual's devotion of full attention to the partner during an interaction. It also refers to positive regard for the other that is communicated through nonverbal and verbal cues. Some behaviors that signify positive involvement convey *immediacy*, defined as the directness and intensity of interaction. Decreased distance, increased gaze, and greater facial expressiveness create immediacy, as does verbal "tracking" of the partner's communication and use of present-tense verbs. Interactions characterized by immediacy are associated with positive affect.

Partner responsiveness refers to behavior that conveys attention, interest, understanding, and empathy for the other's perspective. In Harry Reis and Philip Shaver's interpersonal process model of intimate interactions, intimacy is a process that begins with one person's self-revealing behavior and continues with the other person's display of understanding, validation, and caring toward the discloser.

Research supports the contention that responsive behavior contributes to daily experiences of intimacy in romantic couple relationships, over and above effects of self-disclosure. In both college-age dating couples and married couples, interactions are not as intimate when partners are perceived to be insensitive or unresponsive to the other's self-disclosure. Responsiveness is also important in helping relationships. Early research by Carl Rogers identified therapist acceptance, warmth, and caring as critical conditions for therapeutic change. A recent study found that rape victims disclose less about their experiences when counselors are less responsive.

Mutual Understanding

The third condition for an interaction to be intimate is that it results in shared understandings between partners. Through intimate interaction, both partners understand (or come to understand) an aspect of the other's inner self. This intimate knowledge endures beyond the interaction and becomes a distinguishing feature of relational intimacy.

Partners who believe they are understood accurately are more satisfied with their relationships, as when partners read their thoughts accurately during an interaction. One study compared interaction partners' ability to guess what the other was thinking in pairs of strangers, casual acquaintances, friends, and dating partners, assessing the influence of intimacy and gender in each group. Partners with higher perceived levels of relational intimacy were better able to guess the other's thoughts than less intimate dyads. Female partners were more perceptive than males regardless of the level of relational intimacy.

Forms of Intimate Expression

Several areas of research have shed light on specific types of intimate interactions. These include research on reassurance and emotional support, communication of positive regard, and sexuality.

Reassurance and Emotional Support

Some intimate interactions are characterized by *emotional support*, in which one partner shares a

difficulty and the other offers comfort, reassurance, confidence building, and more benign perspectives for thinking about the problem. Adults who perceive that others, especially their spouses, are available to provide emotional support when they need it enjoy positive outcomes, including better mental health and immune functioning and less marital distress.

Recent research indicates that it is just as important for partners to share one another's joys as it is for them to provide sympathy for their sorrows. Shelly Gable, Gian Gonzaga, and Amy Strachman videotaped young dating couples while they talked with each other about a positive event and a negative event, and then they asked them to report on how understood, validated, and cared for they felt during the interaction. The listening partner's responses to disclosures of positive events, more than his or her responses to negative event disclosures, predicted the disclosing partner's feelings of well-being and relationship satisfaction 2 months later.

Expressions of Positive Regard

Communicating positive, loving feelings toward a partner is an important aspect of intimate communication, both as a disclosure and as a response to disclosure. Perceiving one's partner as having a positive view of oneself, especially a partner who knows one very well, helps partners maintain high self-esteem.

Partners who communicate positive regard to one another may be in a better position to sustain intimacy in their relationship. Work by Sandra Murray and her colleagues suggests that people determine how much vulnerability they will risk with their partners, in part, on the basis of how positively they believe their partner regards them. Expressions of positive feelings contribute uniquely to couple relationship partners' daily experiences of intimacy.

Sexuality

Heterosexual couples that remain married report that their sexual relationships are better after marriage, whereas those that divorce report, in retrospect, that theirs were worse. Whether they engage in more kissing and affectionate touching or more frequent sexual contact or both, sexuality both signals and maintains relationship satisfaction. Although satisfied partners engage in more frequent sexual relations than less satisfied partners, frequency varies as a function of partners' age, sex, sexual orientation, and length of time together.

Desire or lack thereof is a more significant indicator of a relationship's functioning than coital frequency. Pamela Regan found that sexual desire is more closely associated with feelings of love than sexual behavior in the minds of college students, although passion may better reflect a developing intimate relationship than one that is stable and ongoing. Couples that present to therapists with sexual desire problems have a poorer prognosis than those whose problems are centered on a lack of shared gratification. Although satisfaction with the sexual relationship correlates positively with romantic partners' overall relationship satisfaction, the presence of sexual contact does not guarantee that partners are emotionally intimate.

Intimate Relationships

The defining characteristics of intimate interactions—self-revealing behavior, positive involvement, and mutual understanding—provide the basic elements for defining an intimate relationship. Intimate relationship partners have shared multiple intimate interactions that, over time, distinguish an intimate relationship from a casual or nonintimate one by virtue of accumulated knowledge or understandings of the other.

Intimate Friendships

As people get to know one another, the intimacy in their interactions increases. Among teenagers and adults, the breadth and depth of self-disclosure and emotional support increases as relationships progress from casual acquaintances to close friendships. As relationship satisfaction, love, and feelings of security increase, so too does intimacy. This pattern of increasing intimacy with acquaintance is discernable in face-to-face contact between college friends and, as more recently demonstrated, in teenagers' online relationships. More intimate friendships have more staying power, as a recent 19-year longitudinal study of intimate friendships from college to middle adulthood demonstrated.

From their first contact with a new acquaintance, girls and women on average communicate more intimately than men do and continue to do so once they become friends. This gender-related pattern replicates in Western cultures outside the United States, but is less evident in non-Westernized countries. Maria Cancian suggests that Western men have less intimate friendships than women do because Western cultures have linked intimacy with femininity. Gender differences are not due to different conceptions of intimacy held by women and men, however. Rather, they reflect the fact that men, relative to women, describe themselves as less concerned with meeting emotional intimacy needs within their same-sex friendships.

Sex differences in friendship intimacy seem to reflect traditional norms for masculine and feminine behavior in the United States. In gay communities, some men may actively reject traditional norms for masculine behavior, and intimacy in their friendship pairs resembles that for female pairs. Similarly, androgynous boys (i.e., those who have incorporated feminine traits into their personalities) are more likely to have intimate male friendships than masculine sex-typed boys. In contrast to men, women are believed to be "relationship experts" and are encouraged—even pressured—to place more emphasis on becoming skillful at relating intimately. This expectation is reflected in women's ability to communicate their emotions effectively to their spouses. Excessive concern about intimacy on the part of women may have a downside, however. In their zeal to maintain a high level of openness, warmth, and emotional support in their friendships, women may fail to deal constructively with anger and competitiveness, occasionally leading to inappropriate aggressive behavior against their closest friends.

Intimacy and the Romantic Relationship

Intimacy is a central desire and expectation that most romantic partners bring to their relationships. More intimate couples are happier couples; partners who self-disclose more to one another, who have more frequent sexual contact, who are emotionally responsive, and who perceive each other as each perceives him or herself are more satisfied and stable couples.

Mutual understanding assumes special significance in the context of an ongoing couple relationship because the personal knowledge that is obtained through intimate interactions endures and accumulates. Over time, understandings of the other extend beyond the experiences contained within any particular interaction. These understandings, or *intimacy schemas*, mediate the impact of individual interactions. Intimacy schemas guide future relationship behavior and elicit emotional reactions to specific partner behaviors. When frequent intimate interactions result in partners feeling understood, other potentially volatile differences, including religious and ethnic differences, are less likely to contribute to relationship problems.

Intimacy schemas, if they represent mostly positive experience, can result in a backdrop of loving, positive feelings about the partner that buffer the relationship from negative emotions that arise. This *positive sentiment override* can sustain the relationship even when shared intimate experiences are not immediately forthcoming. A similar pattern exists with perceptions of support availability, which may persist during times when the partners are not seeking support from each other. Positive expectations of support availability reliably distinguish between more and less satisfied couples. Conversely, when partners hold negative perceptions of the relationship, those perceptions predict divorce with more than 80 percent accuracy.

More relational intimacy is usually associated with more satisfaction; however, some couples have less intimacy than others, but are satisfied because their level of relational intimacy fulfills their lower needs for intimacy. Partners whose needs are not met may argue about intimacy-related issues, such as how much each should express to the other about his or her private feelings and thoughts, how often partners should have sexual relations, and so forth. Partners who argue about intimacy report higher levels of marital distress than those who have other kinds of incompatibilities.

Because romantic relationships typically involve intense emotions, both positive and negative, the skillfulness with which partners handle and communicate their emotions contributes to both relational intimacy and relationship satisfaction. Partners who not only manage their own emotions skillfully, but are able to respond skillfully to the other partner's emotional expressions, create an

atmosphere of *intimacy safety* in their relationship, which enhances intimacy and thereby enhances marital satisfaction.

Relational Intimacy Over Time

In romantic relationships, on average, intimate interactions decline in frequency over time. Sexual intimacy declines most precipitously within the first 1 to 2 years. There are also documented declines in affectionate expression, in the number of pleasing things partners do for each other, and in the time partners spend in joint leisure activities. These changes do not necessarily create dissatisfaction for the partners, however.

In established, long-term relationships, partners' level of mutual understanding may mitigate the need for frequent intimate interactions. Even in the absence of explicit self-disclosure, close friends are better able to infer each other's thoughts and feelings during an interaction than are pairs of strangers. Research suggests that long-standing friends and romantic partners may not need to self-disclose in order to know what the other needs in the way of support, acknowledgment, or validation. Possibly, relational intimacy is an overriding knowledge and familiarity with the partner that may reduce the need for frequent self-disclosure.

Regulating Intimacy: Intimacy's Risks and Joys

In the best relationships, the possibility of a joyful and meaningful intimate encounter coexists with the risk of hurt. In an intimate relationship, partners maintain a delicate balance between openness and unguardedness, on the one hand, and self-protection and concealment, on the other hand.

Relationship partners are well aware that they can be hurt in the context of an intimate relationship. Partners who feel less secure may inhibit their levels of self-disclosure or distance themselves for the sake of self-protection. Disclosure regarding taboo topics (e.g., extrarelationship activity) is avoided in college student dating relationships because some topics are perceived as threatening to the relationship. Secrecy is sometimes used to prevent rejection or breaking up.

Sex differences in self-disclosure are mitigated in heterosexual romantic relationships where women and men report similar patterns of self-disclosure. Despite these similarities in disclosure levels, women are lonelier in their romantic relationships than are men, initiate more separations, and report more problems. Women and men have similar standards for their romantic relationships, although women are more likely to report that their standards are not being met. Either women's socialization to be relationship experts causes them to be more aware of relationship problems or more willing to report them or women are more effective relationship partners than are men, resulting in men who are less likely to be lonely.

Individual Differences and Intimacy

Some people appear to be content with much less openness, emotional support, sexual contact, and/or affectionate expression than others. Dan McAdams's research on intimacy motivation has supported the notion that some people desire and seek out opportunities for intimate interaction more frequently than others. High-intimacy motivation may be an advantage because individuals whose intimacy needs are stronger put more effort into their intimate relationships and engage in intimate and problem-solving communication more frequently. Perhaps as a result, individuals with strong intimacy needs have more satisfying relationships. Further, they prefer partners who are warm and open and have similar interests. Partners whose needs are met more frequently have more intimate contact and less conflict.

Individual differences in working models of attachment (i.e., secure vs. insecure working models) are also associated with variations in intimacy needs and preferences. People with certain insecure attachment expectations (e.g., those who dismiss their need for a close and secure relationship) have little tolerance for the risks of intimacy and are more likely than others to maintain multiple and superficial sexual relationships. In contrast, secure individuals are more often sexually exclusive and least likely to engage in behavior destructive to their relationships. Individual differences in intimacy-related needs and fears appear to be systematically associated with attachment expectations.

Karen J. Prager

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INTIMACY, INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES RELATED TO

Close relationships are commonly seen as providing opportunities for individuals to engage in intimacy, including self-disclosure, interdependence, and trust, with a single partner. Moreover, relationships with high levels of intimacy experience greater relationship satisfaction and longer relationship longevity. Although the presence of intimacy plays an important role in predicting satisfaction in close relationships, as well as in maintaining these relationships over time, individuals differ not only in how interested they are in the pursuit of intimacy, but also in their ability to engage in such a pursuit. This entry reviews prevailing theoretical models that describe individual differences related to intimacy, as well as the measurement of these differences.

Erikson's Life-Span Approach to Intimacy

According to Erik Erikson's life-span model of psychosocial development, individuals go through a series of eight stages during their lives, each of which is marked by a conflict that must be resolved. Successful resolution of each stage leads to a positive outcome, whereas unsuccessful resolution leads to ongoing challenges with that particular task (e.g., trust vs. mistrust).

Considerable research on Erikson's life-span model has focused on the two key tasks worked on during adolescence: forming a stable identity (Stage 5 in Erikson's model) and, subsequently, forming intimate relationships (Stage 6). During early adolescence, individuals face the task of Ego Identity versus Role Confusion, in which they must develop a sense of individual identity or remain confused about defining themselves. Only those who have successfully developed a sense of identity are able to move on and effectively pursue the task as the next stage: Intimacy versus Isolation. In this stage, individuals evaluate potential romantic partners and whether they are interested in settling down. Because the theory of life stages proposes that an individual's capacity for intimacy depends at least partially on successful resolution of tasks from earlier stages, including identity, individuals who have

not yet reached closure in identity formation, meaning they have not successfully resolved their identities, may not be ready to merge their evolving identities with another. In line with this view, research indicates that those who form stable identities in adolescence are also most likely to form intimate attachments in early adulthood.

Erikson's view that individuals must form stable identities prior to attempting to merge those identities with another person in their pursuit of intimacy has received some criticism. In particular, some researchers believe that this model appropriately describes the connection between identity and intimacy for men, but believe it is less appropriate for describing how women work on these tasks. For example, Carol Gilligan theorizes that women are more likely to work on intimacy prior to forming a stable identity, and that this work on intimacy may even help women define themselves.

Successful resolution of both the Ego Identity versus Role Confusion and the Intimacy versus Isolation tasks can be measured using either a semistructured interview or a self-report questionnaire. The semistructured interview examines individuals' attitudes and behaviors toward intimate relationships. The self-report questionnaire consists of 12 items assessing each of the stages and assesses whether individuals have successfully resolved a given task.

Intimacy Goals

In an extension of Erikson's life-span approach to personality, Nancy Cantor and colleagues' work has focused on how individuals within a given group or culture may all take on a given task during a particular life period, but will do so in distinct ways. According to this approach, both situational and personal factors influence how individuals approach or "take on" these tasks. For example, following the dissolution of a close relationship (e.g., through divorce or death of a spouse), an individual may be more interested in self-reliance than in interdependence. In turn, whereas one person may see a close relationship as an opportunity to become interdependent with another person, another may see it as an opportunity to explore a new identity and/or achieve independence from one's family of origin.

Although the prevailing cultural meaning for relationships emphasizes the pursuit of intimacy, not all individuals are ready or able to exclusively or even predominantly focus on merging with another and sharing emotional intimacy. Moreover, although committed to pursuing relationships, individuals are likely to vary widely in their actual skill at creating and maintaining intimacy. In turn, individuals differ systematically in the extent to which they pursue intimacy goals within their relationships.

Individuals' general orientation toward the pursuit of intimacy goals in romantic relationships is measured using the Social Dating Goals Scale, a 13-item self-report scale assessing individuals' focus on self-disclosure, interdependence, and reliance in a dating relationship. Scores on this scale are positively correlated with ego achievement and negatively correlated with interpersonal ego diffusion, indicating that those with a strong focus on intimacy goals have successfully resolved their identity issues. Interestingly, and in line with previously described models of individual differences in intimacy, those who have not yet resolved their identity issues are more likely to pursue self-focused goals in their close relationships than intimacy-focused goals. Scores on the intimacy goals scale are also positively correlated with secure attachment and negatively correlated with anxious attachment. There is no association between strength of intimacy goals and avoidant attachment, suggesting that people with a strong focus on intimacy goals in their relationships are not particularly fearful of or uninterested in such relationships—they simply have other goals to pursue.

McAdams's Intimacy Motivation

According to Dan McAdams and colleagues, an individual's motivation affects how he or she interacts with others, as well as the types of behavior he or she is able to evoke from others. These motives are characterized by specific thought and affect patterns, and they influence interpersonal behavior. Specifically, this model proposes that motives lead to particular expectations and behavior, which in turn affect others' behavior, as well as one's perception of the others' behavior.

One such motive, intimacy motive, describes the extent to which an individual experiences the

need for close, warm interpersonal relationships. McAdams differentiates the intimacy motive from other interpersonal motives, such as the need for affiliation and the need for power. Those who are high in intimacy motivation spend more time thinking about and interacting with people and in interpersonal relationships, feel more friendly and connected to others during social interaction, and appraise social situations as more desirable and appealing than those with weak intimacy motivation. For example, compared with those who are low on intimacy motivation, individuals who are high on intimacy motivation are more likely to engage in conversation and write personal letters. Individuals who are high in intimacy motivation are also more likely to adopt a communal, listening role in interactions, as well as to report more episodes involving self-disclosure.

According to this model, intimacy motives are linked to personality dispositions and are measured by the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). The TAT is a widely used projective test within personality psychology in which people see a standard series of ambiguous pictures and must tell a story about each picture, including the event shown in the picture, what has led up to it, what the characters in the picture are feeling and thinking, and the outcome of the event. Researchers then analyze the stories to uncover underlying needs, attitudes, and motives. For example, one picture shows two people sitting on a park bench near a river. Themes related to concern, communication, and positive affect would be scored as reflecting a high intimacy motive.

Individual Differences in Attachment

In the late 1980s, researchers Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver extended classic theory and research on attachment between children and their caregivers (developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth) to adult romantic relationships. In particular, these researchers noticed that interactions between adult romantic partners shared similarities to interactions between children and caregivers, including a desire to be close to each other, a feeling of comfort when their partners are present, and a tendency to use partners as a secure base when encountering various surprises, threats, and challenges that life presents. These similarities

led Hazan and Shaver to extend attachment theory to adult romantic relationships and to see the principles of attachment between children and caregivers as fundamentally the same as the principles of attachment between adult romantic partners.

Individuals' attachment styles in their adult romantic relationships are associated with particular patterns of interactions, beliefs, attitudes, and strategies of conflict resolution. Individuals who have developed secure attachment models in early childhood are the most likely to succeed at creating intimacy in close relationships because they have a secure base on which to build communion. However, individuals who have developed insecure models of attachment in early childhood may be reluctant or even unable to pursue intimacy in romantic relationships because they lack a secure base on which to build such interactions.

Researchers typically assess attachment styles in adulthood using self-report measures. The most commonly used approach is the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) scale, a 36-item self-report measure that assesses individuals' scores on two subscales, Avoidance (or Discomfort With Closeness and Depending on Others) and Anxiety (or Fear of Rejection and Abandonment).

Other Models Assessing Intimacy

Although the models described previously have received considerable attention in the literature on individual differences in intimacy, other researchers have developed different approaches to conceptualizing and measuring intimacy in close relationships. Karen Prager, for example, defines *intimacy* in terms of intimate behavior (such as self-disclosure), affective tone (such as positive feelings), and listening and understanding (such as feeling understood by one's partner). Her diary method of assessing intimacy, the Interaction Record Form for Intimacy, asks participants to rate daily interactions on 17 items, which are then grouped into three categories that define intimacy.

Another way of conceptualizing intimacy is by assessing the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of their close relationships, which is called *relationship self-construal*. This approach is taken by Susan Cross and her colleagues, who describe people who are high on

relationship self-construal as thinking and acting in ways that develop and enhance their close relationships, and using such relationships for self-definition, self-enhancement, and self-expression. (In contrast, people who are high on independent self-construal view the self as independent and separated from others.) Relationship self-construal is assessed using a brief self-report questionnaire that assesses the extent to which people think about their close friends and family when they think about themselves and whether they feel that close others are a part of who they are.

Conclusions

Although this summary of individual differences in how intimacy is conceptualized and measured has presented these different models of intimacy as distinct from one another, it is likely that these measures are related in multiple ways. For example, the extent to which someone pursues intimacy goals in close relationships depends on how effectively he or she has resolved identity issues. Similarly, attachment security is related to both intimacy goals and intimacy motivation. Future research is needed to examine how these distinct individual differences in intimacy work together to predict feelings, thoughts, and behaviors in close relationships.

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See also Attachment Theory; Intimacy; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Love, Prototype Approach; Love, Typologies; Motivation and Relationships; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Trust

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INVESTMENT MODEL

Relationship scientists have exerted considerable effort toward understanding why some relationships persist over time, whereas others wither and die. Many researchers focus on the determinants and consequences of positive affect—attraction, satisfaction, or love. The implicit or explicit assumption is that if partners love each other and feel happy with their relationship, they will be more likely to persist. In some respects, this point of view makes good sense: All things considered, it is easier to stick with a happy relationship than a miserable one. Although satisfaction is certainly important, it is only part of the picture in understanding persistence.

The Investment Model was developed to explain why satisfaction is not enough to sustain long-term involvement—why some relationships persist despite dissatisfaction, why some people abandon relatively happy relationships to pursue desirable alternative partners, and why relationships persist despite day-to-day fluctuations in satisfaction. According to the Investment Model, commitment is the key to understanding tendencies to remain in relationships. This entry describes the Investment Model, outlining the primary causes of commitment, discussing some of the more important consequences of commitment, and illustrating the utility of this model for understanding "unjustified persistence," such as persistence in an abusive relationship.

Determinants of Dependence and Commitment

The Investment Model is based on the principles of interdependence theory, which argues that dependence is a central structural property of relationships—a property that is particularly relevant to understanding persistence. Dependence describes the extent to which a person literally "needs" a given relationship or relies uniquely on the relationship for attaining desired outcomes. How do people become dependent? Interdependence theory identifies two main processes through which dependence grows. First, people become more dependent to the extent that they experience high satisfaction. *Satisfaction level* describes the degree to which an individual experiences positive versus negative affect as a result of involvement. Satisfaction grows to the extent that a relationship gratifies the individual's most important needs (e.g., companionship, intimacy, sexuality, and belongingness), as well as to the extent that obtained outcomes exceed comparison level or the individual's generalized expectations regarding the quality of a relationship (i.e., expectations based on previous experience or social comparison). Dependence is also influenced by the quality of available alternatives. *Quality of alternatives* describes the perceived desirability of the best available alternative to a relationship. Quality of alternatives increases to the extent that a person's most important needs could be fulfilled independent of the current relationship (e.g., by a specific alternative partner, the general field of eligible others, or on one's own).

Thus, interdependence theory suggests that dependence is greater when an individual wants to persist in a given relationship (satisfaction is high) and when he or she has no choice but to persist (alternatives are poor). The Investment Model extends these claims in two respects. First, the model suggests that satisfaction and alternatives do not fully explain dependence. If dependence were based merely on the satisfactions derived from a current relationship in comparison to those anticipated elsewhere, few relationships would endure. Many relationships survive periods during which they are not satisfying, even when attractive alternatives are available. The Investment Model therefore asserts that a third factor explains persistence. *Investment size* describes the magnitude and importance of the resources that become attached to a relationship—resources that would decline in value or be lost if the relationship were to end. People may invest directly or indirectly: Direct investments are those resources that are put directly into a relationship, such as time, self-disclosure, and emotional energy. Indirect investments occur when initially extraneous resources become inextricably connected to the relationship, such as children, mutual friends, or shared possessions. Both types of investments enhance dependence by increasing the costs of ending a relationship—to abandon a relationship is to sacrifice invested resources.

The Investment Model further extends interdependence theory by suggesting that commitment emerges as a consequence of increasing dependence. *Commitment level* describes the intent to persist in a relationship, including long-term orientation toward the involvement, as well as feelings of psychological attachment to it. How does commitment differ from dependence? Dependence is a structural property of relationships—dependence describes the addictive effect of wanting to persist (feeling satisfied), having no choice but to persist (possessing poor alternatives), and needing to persist (high investments). As people become more dependent, they tend to develop strong commitment. Commitment is the sense of allegiance that is established with regard to the source of one's dependence. Because John is dependent on Mary, he develops an inclination to persist with her, comes to think of himself as part of "JohnandMary," and tends to consider the broader implications of his actions, such as implications for his partner or long-term goals for the relationship. As such, the psychological experience of commitment reflects more than the bases of dependence out of which it arises. Commitment is the psychological construct that directly influences everyday behavior, including relationship maintenance mechanisms and decisions to persist in versus leave a relationship.

Consequences of Commitment

The empirical literature provides consistent support for Investment Model predictions. Commitment is positively associated with satisfaction and

investment size and is negatively associated with quality of alternatives. Each of these variables makes a unique contribution to predicting commitment. Also, (a) compared to less committed people, highly committed people are substantially more likely to persist in their relationship, and (b) commitment level mediates the associations of satisfaction, alternatives, and investments with persistence.

Of course, strong commitment does not magically cause relationships to persist. Rather, commitment promotes adaptive relationship-relevant acts, which in turn cause relationships to persist. Researchers frequently label these adaptive acts *relationship maintenance mechanisms,* defined as the specific means by which partners manage to maintain long-term, well-functioning relationships. Why should commitment promote prorelationship behaviors? As noted earlier, committed individuals experience high satisfaction, perceive their alternatives to be poor, and have invested heavily. They are psychologically attached to their relationships, and they think about their relationship over the long run, rather than merely in the here and now. The implications should be clear. First, committed individuals literally need their relationships; the more one has to lose, the more effort one exerts to hold onto what one has. Second, committed individuals are oriented toward long-term outcomes and typically recognize that it is in their long-term interest to develop patterns of reciprocal prorelationship behavior. Third, because committed individuals are psychologically attached to their relationships, they may experience themselves and their partners as merged into a single entity, such that self-interest and partner interests become blurred. Finally, strong commitment may yield communal orientation, including inclinations to respond to the partner's needs in a relatively unconditional manner.

Numerous maintenance mechanisms have been identified, including both behavioral maintenance acts (changes in behavior) and cognitive maintenance acts (cognitive restructuring). The behavioral maintenance acts include: (a) *accommodation,* or the willingness, when a partner enacts a potentially destructive behavior, to inhibit the impulse to retaliate and instead react in a constructive manner; (b) *willingness to sacrifice,* or the tendency to forgo immediate self-interest so as to promote the well-being of the partner and relationship; and

(c) *forgiveness of betrayal,* or the victim's willingness to forgo desire for retribution and demands for atonement, instead reacting in a less judgmental, more constructive manner. The cognitive maintenance acts include: (a) *cognitive interdependence,* or the tendency to think in terms of "we, us, and our" rather than "I, me, and mine"; (b) *positive illusion,* or the tendency toward relationship-enhancing illusion—the inclination to perceive one's relationship as both better and not as bad as other relationships; and (c) *derogation of alternatives,* or the tendency to disparage tempting alternative partners, minimizing the attractiveness of their abilities or attributes. Each of these maintenance mechanisms has been shown to be promoted by strong commitment and in turn to promote couple well-being and longevity.

Unjustified Persistence: Remaining in an Abusive Relationship

As noted earlier, simple positivity of affect (e.g., attraction, satisfaction, and love) is not enough to predict stay/leave behavior. Sometimes people persist in completely unsatisfying relationships. Continued involvement in an abusive relationship serves as a good illustration of this phenomenon. Why do people who have been physically battered sometimes choose to stay with their partners? Why would someone remain in a relationship that carries a real risk of serious injury or death? Explanations that emphasize personal dispositions— such as low self-esteem or learned helplessness— tell only part of the story. Through its emphasis on dependence as the structural basis for commitment, the Investment Model helps us understand why abused individuals may sometimes feel that they have no choice but to remain with their partners—because their alternatives are poor and/ or because they have invested a good deal in their relationships.

Indeed, the Investment Model has been employed to predict and understand the conditions under which people are likely to remain in abusive relationships. Such research reveals that the decision to persist typically is only minimally related to how dissatisfied the victim is with the relationship. Rather, persistence is first of all predicted by quality of alternatives, in particular by

the quality of the victim's economic alternatives—victims are more likely to persist when they have poor alternatives due to limited education or low personal income. As such, they are constrained from developing a life independent of the abuser. In addition, persistence is predicted by investment size—victims are more likely to persist when they are married to their partners, have been involved for a longer period of time, and have children with their partners. Thus, the Investment Model can fruitfully be used to understand "inexplicable" persistence: People often persist with unjustified, unsatisfying courses of action—unprofitable enterprises, insupportable wars, and unwinnable arms races—because they have nowhere else to go and/or have invested too much to quit.

Conclusions

It is noteworthy that the Investment Model has been shown to predict feelings of commitment, decisions to persist, and diverse relationship maintenance mechanisms not only in young adults' dating relationships, but also in marital relationships, and not only in heterosexual relationships, but also in gay and lesbian relationships. Moreover, the model has been tested in diverse cultures—in the United States, the Netherlands, and Taiwan. Finally, the model has been used not only to understand commitment in romantic contexts, but also to understand commitment to friendships, commitment to diverse formal and informal groups, commitment to consumer products, and commitment to jobs and organizations. Thus, the investment model is a powerful means of understanding how and why people become committed to a given course of action, choose to persist at it, and become motivated to engage in benevolent maintenance behaviors that serve to support continued involvement.

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See also Abused Women Remaining in Relationships; Accommodation; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Commitment, Theories and Typologies; Forgiveness; Interdependence Theory; Maintaining Relationships; Mutual Cyclical Growth; Willingness to Sacrifice

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IOWA FAMILY TRANSITIONS PROJECT

This program of research was initiated in rural Iowa in 1989 and has continued since that time for almost 20 years. The study began as an investigation of a cohort of more than 500 early adolescents in two-parent (the Iowa Youth and Families Project) and single-parent (the Iowa Single Parent Project) families. During the adolescent years, the study focused on the development of these focal adolescents (G2) and their relationships with their parents (G1), their siblings, and their close friends. Because the current phase of the research involves the transition of cohort members from their families of origin to a second generation of families, it is now called the Family Transitions Project (FTP).

As the G2s have moved from adolescence to adulthood, the project has added new relationships to the study involving adult friends, romantic

partners, and their G3 children. Retention of G2s in the study has been excellent: 95 percent of the original cohort members have participated in at least one annual assessment during the past 4 years. Each generation in the study has been assessed over a several year period of time using a measurement strategy that is both extensive (i.e., covers multiple domains of personal and social characteristics) and intensive (i.e., employs a multi-informant approach that includes self-reports, other family member reports, teacher reports, ratings by trained observers, school records, and public records). This review discusses findings from this research on the quality of these different types of relationships over time.

Parent–Child Relationships

Research on the parent–child relationship has focused particularly on reciprocal processes in this intergenerational union. An important initial publication in this domain showed that disruptive behavior by the adolescent during a problem-solving task was positively related to harsh and inconsistent parenting over time in a reciprocal process; that is, the more disruptive the adolescent, the more harsh the parent and vice versa. Disruptive adolescent behavior also reduced nurturing and involved parenting over time while such parenting also seemed to reduce disruptive behavior. Cooperative adolescent behavior had no influence on positive parenting; however, nurturing and involved parenting appeared to promote cooperative adolescent behavior. These findings were extended by research showing that parental and adolescent negative affect in general, not just related to problem solving, were reciprocally interrelated across the years from early to late adolescence. When parents and adolescents demonstrated high levels of negative affect toward each other during early adolescence, their expression of negative affect toward each other continued to increase across adolescence, but slowed slightly during late adolescence. The basic message from this program of work on parent–child relationships is that patterns of negative reciprocity are robust and developmentally damaging when they occur by early adolescence.

Sibling Relationships and Friendships

In an important demonstration of how perceptions of quality (i.e., happiness and satisfaction) develop in sibling relationships, the project drew on the behavioral model of romantic relationships to propose that greater observed hostility and lower observed warmth in sibling interactions would reduce perceived quality over time during the adolescent years. Findings were consistent with these predictions. Moreover, perceived relationship quality had no impact on the style of sibling interactions. This analysis supported the view that it is interactional quality in close relationships that either fosters or reduces a positive evaluation of the relationship. A similar analysis focusing on adolescent friendships showed that G2 hostility toward a friend diminished the quality of their relationship, whereas supportive behaviors enhanced it. These results replicated the findings related to siblings. In addition, this study showed that the behaviors that G2 demonstrated toward friends were strongly influenced by the same types of behaviors by G1 parents toward G2.

Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships of both the G1 and G2 generations have also been studied. Findings for the G1 generation include the following: (a) conflicts about work and family life diminish marital quality, (b) economic pressures and couple psychopathology increase marital problems but supportiveness and effective problem solving between couples help buffer these stress effects, (c) supportiveness in social networks enhances relationship quality but conflicts can diminish it, (d) negative cognitive biases and neuroticism exacerbate negative behavioral interactions that increase the likelihood of marital instability, and (e) satisfaction with sexual relationships enhances marital quality and reduces marital instability.

Research on the adult romantic relationships of the G2 generation show that G1 parenting characterized by nurturance, involvement, and effective childrearing practices predicts G2 interactions with a romantic partner that are high in warmth and low in hostility. This interactional style promotes greater relationship quality. This program

of research also has shown that positive G2 personality attributes like optimism and positive emotions promote success in romantic relationships, whereas negative personality characteristics like neuroticism intensify instability and conflict. In addition, nurturing interactions in the family of origin have been shown to promote G2's secure romantic relationship style and relationship success during the adult years.

Future Directions

In the coming years, the Iowa Family Transitions Project will continue to conduct research on relationships in these three-generation families, including relationships between the G1 grandparents and G3 grandchildren. The project is unique in several respects. It provides a rare opportunity to study relationship initiation, development and termination across many years and multiple generations, and does so with a rural population that is largely ignored in the social science literature.

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See also Developing Relationships; Economic Pressures, Effects on Relationships; Family Functioning; Friendships in Young Adulthood; Parent–Child Relationships; Work–Family Conflict

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ISOLATION, HEALTH EFFECTS

Social epidemiologists have traditionally defined *social isolation* as low levels of social integration, indexed by fewer and less diverse social connections with others. Conversely, higher levels of social integration are evidenced by increased numbers of various social ties, including ties with family, friends, religions, clubs, and other group memberships that create social relations with others. Importantly, evidence supports a profound effect of social isolation on physical health, including increased risk for disease and mortality. The health risks of poor social integration underscore the substantial biological implications of human relationships. Notably, even individuals with seemingly ample numbers of social ties (e.g., are married, have an extensive family network, have work relationships) report feelings of isolation and loneliness, and such perceptions may carry health risks as well. As such, both structural determinants and perceptions of isolation are receiving current empirical attention in order to understand how social connections relate to physical well-being. After presenting evidence for social isolation's effects on mortality and morbidity, this entry describes plausible mechanisms linking social isolation to physical health, including contemporary thinking about these important associations between human relationships and health.

Isolation and Mortality

The notion that social isolation has powerful effects on well-being and mortality was proposed in social theory over a century ago. In his sociological study of social regulation in the late 1800s, Émile Durkheim concluded that low levels of social attachment led to a higher likelihood of suicide, highlighting the pivotal role of social bonding in individual and societal survival. More than a half-century later, epidemiological studies began to confirm the impact of social isolation on mortality. Common among these and more current studies has been the extensive measurement of family ties, friendships, marital status, and group memberships in order to characterize individuals' social integration. Provocative evidence

has accumulated that having fewer social ties is as good a predictor of earlier death as are substantial biomedical risks like cigarette smoking and sedentary lifestyle. In their seminal study of almost 7,000 residents of Alameda County, California, Lisa Berkman and S. Leonard Syme found that individuals who reported the fewest social ties were significantly more likely to die over a 9-year period compared with those having the highest levels of social connections, even after controlling for well-established biomedical risk factors. A later reanalysis of the Alameda County study data by Teresa Seeman and her colleagues suggested that the importance of various social ties changes for survival as people age. Although being unmarried related more strongly to earlier death than ties with family and friends for residents below age 60, among those older than 60, having fewer than five contacts per month with close friends and/or family was a better predictor of mortality than marital status. Notably, social isolation among those older than 60 related to a 17 percent higher risk of death, compared with older adults with 5 or more family or friend contacts per month.

Since the 1970s, associations between isolation and mortality have been widely replicated with residents from Tecumseh, Michigan; Durham County, North Carolina; Evans County, Georgia; Sweden; and Finland, among various samples. In some studies, the effects of isolation on survival have been stronger for men than women, and racial differences have also been found, but more research is needed to determine the nuances of the isolation and health link. In all, supported by strong evidence from these large-scale, general population-based studies, the association between isolation and mortality has gained a foothold in the biomedical and behavioral science literatures, substantiating long-held beliefs about the role of social relationships to human survival.

Disease Development, Progression, and Survival

Sparked by the early research on survival, the effect of social isolation on disease onset and course gained empirical attention in the 1980s. Research to date has focused primarily on cardiovascular disease (CVD), including risk for heart disease development (incidence) as well as survival after heart disease onset. Some studies indicate that after controlling for important biomedical risk factors, social isolation indeed increases risk for cardiac disease incidence. More consistent evidence exists for the effect of isolation on cardiac disease-related mortality and all-cause mortality among patients with existing heart disease. In a comprehensive study of ischemic heart disease, stroke, and cancer incidence and survival, Thomas Vogt and collaborators assessed social connections of CVD- and cancer-free health maintenance organization members and found that reduced network size and scope (when social ties are limited to one domain, such as the family, with few ties across various other domains, such as social clubs, church, or the workplace) increased the risk of all-cause mortality across a 15-year period. Reduced network scope also increased the risk of developing ischemic heart disease, but was unrelated to cancer or stroke incidence. In a study of 763 Swedish men without CVD at baseline, Kristina Orth-Gomer and colleagues found that lower social integration was related to almost four times the risk of developing heart disease across a 6-year period compared with higher social integration. Beverly Brummett and colleagues examined *supportive* social contacts among more than 400 patients with existing coronary artery disease. Social support network size was based on responses to several questions that asked the patient to identify persons with whom they liked to talk and do things and who provided emotional and tangible resources during stressful times. Over a 5-year period, patients with three or fewer supportive social contacts had twice the risk for mortality due to both cardiac-related mortality and all-cause mortality, compared with those with greater than three socially supportive contacts. This effect of isolation was independent of age and, notably, disease severity.

Some studies also point to a possible association between social isolation and cancer mortality. For example, among Alameda County study residents, George Kaplan and Peggy Reynolds found that women who had no or few social contacts were twice as likely to die across a 17-year period from all cancer types compared with women with many social contacts. However, other studies have failed to find a relationship between isolation and cancer

mortality, and only a few among studies of cancer *development* suggest social isolation as a risk factor. Thus, the role of social isolation in cancer incidence and survival remains uncertain.

Aside from its relationship to chronic disease, social isolation also appears to influence the course of acute illness. In a well-controlled study by Sheldon Cohen and colleagues of psychological and social factors related to the development of the common cold, health study volunteers reported on their social connections and were later exposed to varying doses of a cold virus. After viral exposure, individuals characterized by lower levels of social integration were 4.2 times more likely to develop an upper respiratory infection compared with those more socially integrated. Taken together, evidence has accumulated linking a deficit in social connections to the increased risk of both disease and mortality. What is less understood are the pathways leading to social isolation's deleterious health effects.

How Does Isolation Impact Physical Health?

The challenge for contemporary researchers is to identify the mechanisms that contribute to the increased health risk experienced by socially isolated individuals. Various avenues for explaining isolation's effects on health have been proposed and evidence suggests important interactions among psychological, social, and biological factors that confer risk to persons without significant social ties. Socially isolated individuals evidence heightened biological markers of risk, including higher levels of stress hormones, higher resting blood pressure, and weaker immune responses compared with those with more social ties. Such evidence provides one potential physiological explanation for subsequent health risks of isolation, but the origin of these biological risk factors among the socially isolated remains unknown. A better understanding of behavioral and psychosocial factors that contribute to physiological dysfunction will help shed light on the complex relationship between social isolation and health.

One behavioral pathway linking social relationships to health might be the influence that significant others have on one's enactment of healthy behaviors. For instance, a spouse can remind a pain patient to take required medication, friends encourage continued exercise when it becomes a

social activity, and children may serve as caretakers for elderly parents. Alternatively, others can discourage unhealthy behaviors like smoking or excessive alcohol use. With few social ties, there exists little or no external influence on decisions about health behaviors. Greater attention to the ways that social isolation relates to decisions and enactment of health behaviors is needed.

Social support, considered to be the emotional, physical, and informational resources provided by others, especially during stressful times, has been suggested as a key factor in the link between social integration and health. According to the direct effects model, social support is proposed to exert effects on health by bolstering people's sense of belonging, purpose, and control. Thus, social ties are integral to emotional and psychological well-being, which also relate strongly to physical health. The buffering model suggests that social support can buffer the harmful effects of stress on the body; as such, the socially isolated may be at risk for exacerbated and potentially harmful physiological stress effects. Indeed, evidence exists for both models. Importantly, studies also indicate that lower levels of social support can explain why fewer social ties relate to poor health. Understanding how various supportive aspects of social relationships influence physiological function and health outcomes is helping to clarify important associations among social isolation, integration, and physical health.

Finally, other psychological factors associated with social isolation likely influence physical health as well. The socially isolated have higher rates of depression and anxiety, both of which can exacerbate and be exacerbated by poor health. More recent evidence suggests that the psychological experience of loneliness, apart from objective indicators of social integration (i.e., numbers of social ties), has unique effects on the body and may too be a pathway contributing to the health effects of social isolation. The psychological concomitants of social isolation have yet to be fully revealed, and doing so will provide additional elements to the complex picture concerning the health effects of isolation.

Conclusion

In general, a significant lack of social contacts appears to have important effects on our physical

health. The socially isolated have higher rates of mortality as well as physiological and biological profiles indicative of health risk. There also exists some evidence that social isolation is related to increased risk for disease, especially coronary heart disease, and acute illnesses, such as the common cold. There is considerable current interest in understanding the mechanisms linking isolation to health. There also remains a question concerning whether there exists a linear or threshold effect in the social tie and health relationship: Do those with moderate to high levels of social contacts benefit from the addition of more social ties, suggesting an ever-increasing, linear contribution of integration to health, or does the health benefit of increasing one's social network only befall the socially isolated? There is evidence for both a linear and threshold model, and further examination in this area is necessary. In all, continued attention to the interplay among biological, psychological, and social factors that tie social isolation to increased morbidity and mortality will promote further understanding about the crucial role of social relationships to health.

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See also Loneliness; Marriage and Health; Social Isolation; Social Support, Nature of; Social Support and Health; Stress and Relationships

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J

JEALOUSY

Jealousy is an unpleasant emotion that arises when one perceives that an important relationship with another, or some aspect of that relationship, is threatened by a third party (a rival). It can have powerful personal and social impact. On the one hand, jealousy may lead to desirable outcomes: redirecting a loved one's attention to the self and reestablishing bonds. On the other hand, it also can have serious negative consequences. For example, jealousy is often implicated as a cause of spousal abuse and is the third or fourth most common motive in nonaccidental homicides across cultures. Romantic relationships provide particularly fertile ground for the elicitation of jealousy. However, jealous feelings also occur across a variety of interpersonal relationships. For example, jealousy can be experienced by children when their parents shower attention and affection on a sibling, or by a person who feels upset over being excluded by friends who are socializing together. Thus, jealousy requires the involvement of three individuals (the self, the partner, and the rival), which is sometimes referred to as a *love triangle*. This entry covers theories of jealousy, including conceptual debates about its origin and definition, presents empirical work on the ontogeny of jealousy as well as work on individual differences in jealousy, and discusses empirical challenges faced in the field.

Definitions and Theory

Although everyone would agree that jealousy involves unpleasant feelings, there is no unanimity on the exact nature of the distress. The feelings we call jealousy may be a blend of affective reactions that arise from more basic emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness. One possibility is that all of these emotions may be experienced simultaneously by a person during a jealous episode. A second possibility is that an individual does not feel several emotions at once, but rather experiences a series of different emotions over the course of a single jealousy episode. Which emotion is felt at any given time would depend on the exact aspect of the situation on which the person is focused. For example, contemplating future loneliness when the relationship is over might elicit sadness, whereas focusing on the partner's dishonesty might elicit anger. A final possibility is that jealousy is a unique emotional state that produces its own distinct feelings and behaviors that differ from other emotions such as fear and anger. In any case, it is generally assumed that the function of jealousy is to motivate behaviors that will break up the threatening liaison between the partner and rival and maintain the relationship between the self and the partner.

Close personal relationships provide individuals with an abundance of physical and psychological benefits. Therefore, it is probable that people have a variety of psychological predispositions toward maintaining relationships. In human phylogenetic

history, it is likely that people who established and protected relationships usually left more offspring. Thus, whatever psychological dispositions helped maintain relationships would have been selected for and passed down to us through our genes. Jealousy is likely to be one such evolved psychological trait. It may even have originally evolved as a response to competition among siblings who compete for a parent's resources, attention, and care. However, once jealousy evolved to protect one particular type of relationship, it likely became useful in protecting other important relationships such as friendships and romantic relationships from interlopers.

In everyday conversations, the term *jealousy* is frequently used to refer not only to feelings that arise in a love triangle, but also to feelings that are based on longing for or desiring what another person has. For example, someone might exclaim, "I'm so jealous of your good grades!" Although the same word might be used in these different contexts, many researchers would argue that the underlying emotional state is probably different. Wanting what another has is more aptly described as envy, whereas jealousy occurs over the potential loss of an existing relationship to another person. Rejection, or fear thereof, also can be an important part of jealousy. However, the rejection that triggers jealousy is generally seen as different from some other types of rejection in that one's interpersonal loss involves another's gain.

Jealousy is also sometimes categorized into two subtypes—"suspicious jealousy" versus "fait accompli jealousy." Suspicious jealousy occurs when one fears that there is a potential, but uncertain, threat to the relationship. Fait accompli jealousy is a response to a betrayal that is certain or has already occurred.

Development of Jealousy

Signs of jealousy have been found in young children. Some research has shown that a parent's attention merely being directed toward another child is enough to elicit jealousy in infants as young as 6 months. These infants exhibited more negative emotion when their mothers interacted with a lifelike baby doll, relative to when their mothers played with a nonsocial toy (i.e., a book

that made sounds). This suggests that at least some primitive forms of jealousy can be elicited without complex thoughts. However, with additional cognitive development, the triggers for jealousy become more sophisticated. For example, by preschool age, the specifics of a social triangle affect whether jealousy arises. One study found that 4-year-old children showed more jealousy when their mothers interacted with a similar-age peer than when she interacted with an infant. Jealousy in younger infants was not affected by the rival's age. Thus, it appears that, over the course of development, an individual's social and cognitive appraisals of the exact nature and meaning of the interactions between the rival and the loved one become increasingly important in determining whether jealousy is experienced.

Research approaching jealousy from a social-cognitive perspective has focused primarily on two general factors that cause a loved one's involvement with another to be particularly threatening: (1) when it reduces relationship rewards that are derived from the primary relationship, and (2) when it challenges some aspect of a person's self-concept, self-regard, or other self-representations. Thus, people ponder the meaning and ramifications of their loved one's relationship to the rival: "Will this rival relationship reduce the important things I get from my relationship with my partner such as attention, affection, and support?" and "What does this mean about me? Am I unlovable, unattractive, unworthy?" The answers to these questions generally affect the intensity and nature of the jealousy that is experienced.

Individual Differences

Attachment Styles

Research suggests that differences in attachment style may play an important role in jealous reactions. According to attachment theory, people's experiences, starting in infancy, lead them to form internal working mental models of relationships that include beliefs about others and the self. Some research categorizes attachment styles into three types: (1) secure people feel comfortable being interdependent and intimate with an attachment figure, (2) anxious-ambivalent people want closeness but fear abandonment and worry that their

attachment figure may not truly love them, and (3) avoidant people are uncomfortable with too much intimacy and have difficulty in completely trusting the attachment figure. Research suggests that the anxious-ambivalent attachment style is associated with a propensity toward perceiving a greater number of relationship threats, which may lead to more frequent and/or more intense bouts of suspicious jealousy. Individuals with a secure attachment style are less prone to experience jealousy over an ambiguous threat. Some studies suggest that attachment style also may be associated with how people choose to express their jealousy. Securely attached individuals report that they are more likely to express, in constructive ways, their jealous anger toward their partner while attempting to maintain the relationship. Avoidant individuals report expressing more jealous anger toward the rival and are likely to create distance in the relationship, whereas people with anxious attachment attempt to suppress overt acts of jealous anger.

Gender

Some studies find women to be more jealous than men, whereas other studies find the reverse. Overall, however, there seems to be no major consistent differences in the intensity of jealousy in the two genders. Early work suggested that jealousy in men was a stronger motive for murder than in women. However, careful analyses of murder motives, taking into account men's overall greater tendency to commit extreme violent acts, show that a woman who commits murder is as likely to be motivated by jealousy as a man who commits murder. Some research even suggests that women murderers may be relatively more motivated by jealousy than male murderers (albeit the difference is slight).

A controversial topic that has been the focus of much research is whether men and women are jealous over different forms of infidelity. One theory, which is sometimes referred to as the Jealousy as a Specific Innate Module (JSIM) view, hypothesizes that gender differences should exist in jealousy over a romantic partner's infidelity: Men should feel relatively more upset over sexual betrayal and women over emotional betrayal. This view proposes that historically men and women have faced different threats to their rates of producing viable offspring (inclusive fitness). Because fertilization

occurs internally within women, a man could never know with 100 percent certainty that an offspring was his own. Therefore, the problem faced by ancestral man was to ensure that he spent his resources (food, time) only on children that were genetically his. Supporting nongenetically related children would not only decrease the number of biological children that he had, but would also help pass another man's genes on in place of his own. Hence, the JSIM theory proposes that men who were particularly vigilant to sexual infidelity could prevent this from happening. Thus, modern men should be particularly jealous of sexual infidelity. A woman, in contrast, always knows that an offspring is her own, and therefore a mate's sexual infidelity per se would not pose as large of a threat as it would to a man. Instead, an ancestral woman had to guard against her mate giving his resources to other women and their children, which would decrease the likelihood of the woman's own children surviving and reproducing. Thus, present-day women should be particularly jealous over emotional infidelity. Inherent in this is the assumption that a man's emotional involvement is a proxy for his spending resources on another.

Some support for gender differences consistent with this view came from early studies that reported that when people were forced to predict whether a partner's sexual or emotional infidelity would be more upsetting, relatively more women than men picked emotional infidelity. However, several lines of new research with other types of measures and with participants who have actually experienced a loved one's betrayal have not found consistent gender differences in reactions to sexual and emotional infidelity. One study with adults of a wide age range found that men and women, regardless of sexual orientation, focused more on the emotional aspects of their partner's actual betrayal relative to the sexual aspects.

This raises the interesting question of why evolution would have failed to produce gender differences. One possibility is that there may have been no need for sexually dimorphic jealousy mechanisms—a more general jealousy process may have addressed the inclusive fitness risks faced by either gender. Perhaps the most successful way for both sexes to prevent a partner's infidelity would be to be watchful of the common early warning signs of either form of infidelity. People usually display

flirting behaviors such as increased eye contact and smiling well before they have sex or fall in love. This occurs in modern times and presumably in the ancestral past. Because the same behaviors can signal the beginnings of emotional interest, sexual interest, or both, attunement to these common early warning signals would enable both men and women to prevent their partners from engaging in either form of infidelity. This hypothesis is consistent with the emerging evidence that men and women show similar reactions to sexual and emotional infidelity.

Pathological or Morbid Jealousy

Sometimes jealousy takes such extreme characteristics that clinicians will diagnosis it as *pathological jealousy* (also called *morbid jealousy*). This disorder involves intense negative feelings, frequently produces strong urges to spy and check on a partner, and can motivate violent behaviors. Patients suffering from pathological jealousy often have delusions that their romantic partner is cheating on them. Before giving a diagnosis of pathological jealousy, clinicians must believe that the patient has weak and implausible evidence of betrayal or is responding to a betrayal with an overly intense or exaggerated reaction. Of interest, there are gender differences in the prevalence of pathological jealousy, with approximately 64 percent of the cases occurring in men and 36 percent of the cases occurring in women. Recent research suggests that at least some cases of pathological jealousy are a form of obsessive-compulsive disorder, and the disorder is sometimes treated with the antidepressant medication, fluoxetine.

New Methodologies for Studying Jealousy

Several paradigms have been created in the developmental arena to actively elicit jealousy over a parent's attention to a sibling or other child, including the one described earlier. In adults, paradigms that induce jealousy in live interactions are far more scarce (less than a handful of studies). Recently, several researchers have begun grappling with this issue by designing studies that involve interpersonal interactions that produce jealousy in controlled and ethical ways. David DeSteno and colleagues have designed an orchestrated social encounter in which one person (a confederate of the experiment) rejects the actual participant in favor of a third person. As predicted by social-cognitive theories of jealousy, this work found that threatened self-esteem plays an important role in the elicitation of jealousy and provided further evidence for the link between jealousy and interpersonal aggression. Eddie Harmon-Jones and associates also have employed a rejection scenario in which participants play with two computer-generated players. This study is one of the first to look at brain activity during jealous experiences and found that greater jealousy is associated with increased activity in the left frontal cortex. Research on other emotions suggests that the brain's left hemisphere may play a particularly strong role in emotions that lead to approach behaviors, such as occur during anger or pleasant emotions. This can be contrasted with emotions associated with withdrawal behaviors such as fear or sadness. These data are consistent with the hypothesis that jealousy, at least initially, is an emotion that inclines one to engage in approach behaviors, which may include active attempts at breaking up the threatening liaison or maintaining the relationship.

Examination of jealousy in established romantic relationships can be particularly challenging ethically. The researcher must be concerned about the potential damage to the romantic relationship that might occur as a result of any jealousy manipulation. For this reason, the vast majority of research on romantic jealousy has relied either on hypothetical scenarios in which participants try to imagine themselves in situations and then attempt to predict how they might feel or react or on retrospective recall of jealous experiences. Such approaches clearly offer important insights about jealousy. However, they also have limitations. People often are not good at accurately predicting how they will feel about something that is not currently happening, especially when they have had no actual past experiences with the emotional situation. For example, if one has never had the experience of a partner cheating, then it is difficult to know how one would react when actually confronted with such a situation. Recall of past jealousy experiences may be a better measure of jealous feelings. Yet, it too has limitations, such as potential recall bias or memory omissions.

A new paradigm, created in Christine Harris's lab, helps overcome some of the ethical obstacles of actively eliciting jealousy in couples. A participant is shown a flirtatious computer dialogue that is purportedly between the participant's partner and a rival. In actuality, there is no rival, and the partner is told exactly what to enter into the computer. This has the advantage that jealousy is actually elicited, but any potential harm to the primary relationship can be completely eliminated at the end of the experiment by revealing that there was no real third person and that the partner did not actually engage in flirtatious behaviors. (Follow-up phone interviews conducted after the experiment also confirmed the lack of relationship harm.) This experimental work has documented that physiological arousal increases during jealousy and has also shown that jealousy can be expressed through derogation of the rival.

Conclusion

In summary, there is no doubt that jealousy can have negative ramifications as discussed previously. However, jealousy also can have positive effects for the individual and for the relationship. For one, it alerts one to potential relationship threats, which can promote behaviors that help to maintain the relationship (such as discussing the threat or encouraging the partner to take steps to avoid potential temptation). For example, a 7-year longitudinal study found that individuals who were high in jealousy were more likely to have successful relationships than individuals who were low in jealousy. Other work suggests that jealousy may have differential relationship impact depending on one's attachment style. Securely attached individuals reported that a past jealousy experience brought them closer to their partners—an effect not experienced by anxious-ambivalent or avoidant individuals.

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See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Attachment Theory; Dark Side of Relationships; Envy; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Stalking

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JOB STRESS, RELATIONSHIP EFFECTS

Research on the association of job stress with the health and functioning of personal relationships, particularly relationships outside of work, has a long history. Most of this research has focused on the impact of job stress on family relationships, exemplified by research on *work–family conflict* and (more currently) *work–family balance*. A persistent assumption in research is that the impact of job stress is assumed to be more significant for women than for men. There exists, however, considerable evidence that job stress also affects men's relationships. Job stress, moreover, may affect relationships beyond those in the worker's household, although this possibility is much less commonly examined in the literature. In addition, job stress may not necessarily have deleterious

effects on family or other relationships. Individual workers and families develop successful ways of coping to mitigate the negative impacts of job stress on their relationships.

Contemporary research on the relationship effects of job stress is a multidisciplinary endeavor, encompassing social psychology, sociology, organizational behavior, and policy research. Research has evolved in response to social trends, especially the increasing labor force participation of mothers in the last 40 years and the increase in dual-earner families. The first section of this entry reviews major terms and theoretical approaches used in this research area. The second section examines the specific types of job stress that are believed to affect relationships. The third section reviews gaps in the literature on relationship effects.

Theoretical Approaches

There is abundant evidence that chronic job stress (including interpersonal conflict at work) is related to poorer physical and mental well-being. Since 1980, researchers have paid increasing attention to how the contagion of stress from the workplace to personal relationships may reduce well-being. Stress contagion from the job to other settings is generally classified into two types: *spillover* and *crossover*. *Work spillover* is defined as job stress that crosses the boundary from work into another area of life. Spillover can be either behavioral (paying less attention to a spouse or child) or affective (feeling more impatient with them). Crossover occurs when stressors experienced on the job have an impact on the behavior or mood of a significant other person, such as a spouse or child.

Researchers from many disciplines have contributed to the study of work spillover and crossover. For example, social and gender role theories in sociology have long influenced research on the relationship effects of job stress. Psychological and organizational research on spillover has applied the sociological definition of social role, which is the set of normative expectations for behavior in an important domain of life. Gender roles are defined as expectations for appropriate masculine and feminine behavior. From these definitions of social and gender roles emerged the ideas that conflict can develop between job duties and family

relationships, and that women are more likely to experience significant relationship effects from job stress because of social expectations that women rear children and defer their own careers to accommodate their husbands.

Studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, when fewer mothers participated in the paid labor force, started with the premise that work–family conflict was primarily a problem for working mothers. Changes in women's employment patterns, however, have led to shifts in both the definition of work–family conflict and in the focus of research. The majority of married women in the United States and other developed nations now are cobreadwinners for their households, and their contributions have helped raise family living standards. Research has also established that men are contributing more time to household work and to child care. A more contemporary view of work–family conflict is that it is experienced when household breadwinners do not have enough time to fulfill their joint work and family commitments. Work–family conflict is viewed as the result of having too few hours in the day. This evolving view about the cause of work–family conflict also strongly suggests that men as well as women experience its effects.

The shift in explanation about what causes work–family conflict has also led to the introduction of more eclectic theoretical perspectives into the study of job stress spillover and crossover. Specifically, studies of spillover and crossover have been greatly influenced by theories about stress exposure. Chronic job stress is believed to cause fatigue, exhaustion, anger, or withdrawal from household responsibilities and relationships, and it affects both men and women.

Stress exposure theories emphasize not only exposure to job demands, but also situational and personal factors that influence how workers perceive and cope with those demands. For example, Robert Karasek's influential demand-control model includes predictions about how job demands and worker control over the pace and number of those demands influence other areas of life. High demand–high control jobs encourage workers to become active problem solvers, low demand–low control jobs encourage workers to be passive copers, and high demand–low control jobs (high-stress jobs) produce exhaustion, fatigue, and social withdrawal. A modification of the Karasek model

to include social support also suggests that positive social relationships can protect workers from the negative health effects of excessive job demands.

Job Stress and Family Relationships

The application of stress exposure theories to research on relationship effects of job stress has led to several advances over empirical findings predicted by traditional social and gender roles theories. First, long work hours and the combination of a couple's work hours are associated with experiencing more job demands and more spillover and crossover of job stress into family relationships. Spillover from work to family is particularly acute in single-parent families. Second, and contrary to the predictions of traditional role theory, men's and women's relationships are both affected by job stress. The impacts, however, differ. Women are more likely than men to take preventive actions against bringing job stress home, such as by working fewer hours and avoiding more demanding jobs. Men are more likely than women to expect family members to adjust to their job stress. Third, interpersonal conflict at work, job insecurity, lack of control over work demands, and insufficient rewards relative to efforts can affect a worker's family. Daily job stressors of all types are associated with marital arguments and withdrawal. Job stress may affect the quality of relationships with children negatively by decreasing time spent with children and increasing arguments. Fourth, there are individual and between-family differences in how job stress affects family relationships. Families with a history of conflict are particularly vulnerable to tensions associated with job stress. Workers who have a history of psychological distress or neuroticism are more likely to report spillover of job stress into their family relationships.

Researchers have also examined positive, problem-focused coping strategies that mitigate the impact of job stress on family relationships. Supportive spouses respond to each other's job stress and mitigate the impact on their children. In related research on the work–family interface, the term *work–family balance* has shifted the focus away from a wholly negative view of how work influences family life. Empirical studies have found that dual-earner couples typically develop successful (or at least good enough) collaborative strategies to perform major household tasks, rear and monitor children, maintain rewarding household relationships, and stay employed. Parents also actively negotiate arrangements with their employers to make it possible to fulfill work and family commitments, both over the short and long term. Although some of these strategies may involve juggling too many demands and lead to the perception that life is stressful, the aim of the strategies is to keep family relationships healthy in the long run.

Underexplored Areas in Job Stress Relationship Effects

The study of the relationship effects of job stress has been shaped by changing experiences among workers in developed nations (the United States, Europe, and Asia). Less attention has been paid to equally important changes in family relationships that may complicate the picture, such as the increase in the number of single-parent families, stepfamilies, and parental cohabitation in lieu of remarriage.

Several studies in the last decade have focused on job stress effects on relationships in single-parent families. As mentioned, single parents are more likely to report frequent spillover between job stress and home life, particularly in low-income families where parents lack adequate resources for child care.

Few studies have explicitly considered work spillover and crossover effects in families led by remarried parents or cohabiting partners. Cohabitation has become common in the United States and Europe, and many children spend several years of their childhood with a cohabiting parent. This is a critical gap in research because step and cohabiting families tend to report more family conflict and less cohesion. As described previously, research on job stress spillover and crossover has shown that the impacts on relationships vary depending on the degree of conflict and supportive interactions in households.

The impact of parental job stress on children also deserves fuller exploration, particularly in single-parent families. There is considerable research indicating that mothers and fathers withdraw from

interacting with children or experience tension with them after a bad day at work. National data on time use, however, suggest that long work hours (and maternal employment) have not reduced the number of hours, on average, that married parents spend with their children. Both mothers and fathers in two-parent families spend more time with their children than they did 30 years ago and have increasingly spent that time on activities that contribute to their children's cognitive and social development. (Employed single mothers spend about the same amount of time with their children as they did 30 years ago, but are also increasing time spent on child developmental activities.) One possible explanation of these trends is that working parents perceive a greater need to invest in their children to ensure educational and future occupational success. Parents spend less time on housework, leisure pursuits, and (if married) with each other.

Finally, job stress may have an impact on overall levels of social integration in a society. The impact of job stress on the transition to marriage and parenthood is rarely studied. It is well-known that men and women in economically developed nations are marrying later, and the reasons are not entirely clear. In Europe, several theorists have raised the possibility that job stress and long work hours among early career men and women delay marriage and discourage childbearing within marriage, causing startling declines in overall fertility. Even fewer theorists have considered the impact of job stress on the formation of friendships. A recently published study suggests that job demands and stress among recent cohorts in the United States are responsible for the decreasing size of social networks, with perhaps lasting consequences on social integration and well-being.

Elaine Wethington

See also Conflict, Family; Conflict, Marital; Contextual Influences on Relationships; Dual-Earner Couples; Employment Effects on Relationships; Role Theory and Relationships; Stress and Relationships

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Justice Norms Applied to Relationships

In relationships, members exchange resources (i.e., each member makes contributions to the relationship and receives benefits from the relationship). Researchers have long been interested in the rules and norms that govern these exchanges. Although several *justice norms* have been postulated, scientists have tended to focus on three of these rules: the equity rule (rewards are distributed in proportion to the contributions made by each individual), the need-based rule (rewards are distributed in response to the needs of each individual regardless of his or her contributions), and the equality rule (everyone receives similar rewards regardless of needs or contributions). Many different resources can be exchanged in relationships. Resources can be both tangible (e.g., money, material goods) and intangible (e.g., affection, love, time, effort) and vary depending on the relational setting. This entry discusses the three justice norms that people may use when distributing resources in their relationships.

Equity, Need, and Equality

The rule that has received most attention in research is the *equity rule.* John Stacy Adams originally formulated Equity Theory in the 1960s to explain employees' job satisfaction and motivation, but he postulated that the equity rule would be relevant in all human relationships in which exchanges of resources take place, including close relationships such as relationships between romantic partners or close friends. According to Equity Theory, a distribution is equitable when the ratio between contributions and rewards of each individual to an exchange is equal. Imagine a situation in which two friends take on a job to paint someone's house for a certain amount of money. When the job is done, the two friends have to divide the money between them. All else being equal, if one friend has spent twice as many hours on the job, then, according to Equity Theory, the money should be divided accordingly (i.e., that friend should receive two thirds of the money and the other friend one third). The ratio becomes unequal whenever either member is receiving too much or too little, relative to what they are contributing. Equity Theory proposes that individuals who perceive themselves as either overbenefited (receiving more than a fair share) or underbenefited (receiving less than a fair share) will become distressed, but that underbenefit is more distressing than overbenefit. Equity Theory further predicts that the distress leads to efforts to either restore actual equity (by changing one's own contributions or by convincing the other individual to change theirs) or psychological equity (by changing one's perceptions and expectations of each individual's contributions and rewards). If this fails, individuals may end the relationship or disengage from it.

The idea that equity applies to all human relationships has been challenged by researchers who postulate that the justice norm used will depend on the type of relationship. According to these researchers, the equity rule is the typical justice norm in exchange relationships (business relationships and relationships between strangers), but not in communal relationships (relationships among romantic partners, friends, and family members). An important feature of communal relationships is that people are concerned with the other person's welfare and well-being. In such relationships, people are thought to use a *need-based rule:* They are responsive to the other person's needs without expecting or wanting a benefit in return. Also, receiving a benefit does not create a debt that has to be reciprocated at a later time. The responsiveness to needs is expected to be mutual: Each member will try to accommodate the other person's needs to the best of his or her ability. Going back to the example of the friends painting the house: Suppose these are close friends and the friend who spent fewer hours on the job really needs the money, but was unable to put in the hours because he got sick. In that situation, the other friend might very well go 50:50 on the money. He might even give the whole amount to his friend if the friend's needs are pressing (e.g., the friend is otherwise unable to pay the rent) and he does not desperately need the money at present.

Still other researchers have suggested that, particularly in close relationships, people use an *equality rule,* that is, they split benefits (and sometimes costs) evenly among members regardless of each member's contributions. In the prior example, friends using an equality rule would split the money evenly regardless of the fact that one friend spent more hours on the job than the other and regardless of differences in needs. Although the equality rule has been distinguished as a separate rule, it has been argued that dividing benefits (or costs) evenly can be consistent with both an equity rule and a need-based rule and is therefore difficult to test in research. A situation in which resources are divided equally is equitable when both members contribute the same. In a situation where both members have equal needs, an even split is consistent with following a need-based rule. In the remainder of this entry, we therefore focus on research examining the equity rule and the need-based rule.

Research

Equity

Whether one feels equitably treated in a relationship is a subjective experience. Therefore, researchers generally measure perceived equity with self-report methods. In many studies, a global measure of equity is used. Respondents are typically asked to think about everything that is exchanged in their relationship with a specific other person

(e.g., a romantic partner, friend, or coworker) and provide an overall assessment of the equity or inequity of the relationship. Other studies use detailed or domain-specific measures of equity. For example, romantic partners might be asked to rate their own contributions, their partner's contributions, their own outcomes, and their partner's outcomes in a number of areas (e.g., love, status, money, goods, services, and sex). A formula is then used to compute the (in)equity in the relationship.

Research indicates that in a wide variety of interpersonal relationships, including romantic relationships (dating, engaged, married, couples facing a serious illness, older people), friendships, and relationships at work (with coworkers, clients, supervisors), individuals who feel equitably treated score higher on indices of well-being such as (marital) satisfaction and lower on measures such as negative feelings about the exchange (e.g., anger, sadness, guilt), loneliness, depression, burnout, and absenteeism, compared with individuals who feel inequitably treated, particularly underbenefited. A limitation of the research in this area is that many studies are cross-sectional, which means that perceptions of equity and the proposed outcome variables are measured at the same time. This precludes statements about causality, that is, it is impossible to tell whether inequity leads to distress, as is postulated by Equity Theory, or that distress leads to inequity. In longitudinal studies, support for both causal pathways has been found. Several authors now suggest that the relationship between perceived equity and other variables such as satisfaction and commitment may be circular and that perceived equity can be both a cause and a consequence.

Need

Support in favor of the use of a need-based rule in close relationships stems mostly from laboratory studies. These studies have shown that participants are more responsive to another person's needs when they are in an existing communal relationship with this other person as opposed to an exchange relationship (e.g., close friends compared with casual acquaintances) or are led to desire a communal relationship as opposed to an exchange relationship with this other person. Research conducted with married couples has shown that people

consider the need-based rule to be more ideal in marital relationships and that spouses try to follow that rule to a greater extent in their relationships than the equity rule or the equality rule. There is also some evidence that, at least for women, the perception that communal rules are followed in the relationship is associated with increased perceptions of fairness.

Equity and/or Need in Close Relationships?

With respect to relationships among strangers, acquaintances, and other less intimate relationships, there is considerable agreement among scientists that the equity rule is an important justice norm in these relationships. With respect to close relationships, scientists advocating the equity rule and the need-based rule have been on opposite sides for many years. As discussed previously, there is empirical support for both rules in close relationships. How can these research findings be reconciled? Some authors have argued that both rules are not as different from one another as they appear at first sight. Researchers advocating a need-based rule maintain that in close relationships members should be mutually responsive to each other's needs. If both parties adhere to this rule, then in the long run such an exchange would be equitable. It has been argued that an immediate reciprocity ("tit for tat") strategy is indeed maladaptive for ongoing close relationships, but that people do strive for reciprocity or equity in the long run. Other researchers postulate that, although many people would consider the need-based rule ideal and worth striving for in close intimate relationships, people don't always live up to this rule. It has been suggested that people may change to an equity rule when their needs are not met or when they are under stress. Thus, according to these researchers, both rules apply to close relationships; however, they clearly maintain that the need-based rule is the ideal rule and that people strive toward using this rule.

Scientists have also examined the possibility that some people are more likely to use a certain norm than other people and that there might be individual differences in people's sensitivity to violation of these norms. Research has shown that people differ in how exchange-oriented

(a tendency to seek immediate reciprocity) or communally oriented (a tendency to respond to other people's needs) they are in their relationships. Although some research shows that people high in exchange orientation or low in communal orientation are more sensitive (i.e., experience more negative outcomes) to inequity, these findings are not entirely consistent over studies. Other individual difference variables that have been examined are attachment style and self-esteem. There is some evidence that suggests that securely attached individuals (who generally believe that others are trustworthy) are more likely to perceive equity in their romantic relationship, whereas individuals with an anxious attachment style (a tendency to worry about abandonment and not being loved enough) are more likely to feel underbenefited. It has also been suggested that individuals with a secure attachment style might be more likely to follow a need-based rule in their relationship compared with people with an anxious or avoidant style. However, this assumption has not been empirically tested yet. With respect to self-esteem, some research suggests that individuals with low self-esteem are more negatively affected by feeling underbenefited in a romantic relationship than are individuals with high self-esteem.

One other factor that has been studied in equity research is gender. Research generally shows that men are more likely to report feeling overbenefited in their romantic relationships, whereas women are more likely to report feeling underbenefited. There is also evidence that women are more negatively affected by perceptions of inequity, overbenefit, and underbenefit than are men.

Roeline Kuijer

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K

KINKEEPING

Kinkeeping, in most of the related research, has been defined as keeping in touch with family members and/or keeping family members in touch with one another. Occasionally, kinkeeping has been more broadly defined to include providing tangible assistance to family members (e.g., helping with tasks such as household chores), but this definition seems too broad. Some researchers include emotional support as part of kinkeeping work, while others see the provision of emotional support as a specialized role. In this entry, the definition of kinkeeping is restricted to activities related to communication and contact, activities that promote a sense of continuity and solidarity in families.

This entry discusses the need for kinkeeping, the activities and impact of kinkeeping, and the presence in many families of the position of family kinkeeper. Consideration is given, as well, to kinkeeping in the context of transnational immigration and in the Internet age.

Why Is Kinkeeping Necessary?

In contemporary society, maintaining solidarity and continuity in families may become problematic as families experience disruption stemming from, for example, death, geographical and social mobility, immigration, and life-course transitions such as marriage and divorce. These and other factors may pose a challenge to maintaining kin relationships. If family members do not make an effort to keep in touch, kin ties may become attenuated. Kinkeeping in families seeks to ensure this does not happen.

Structure of Kinship in Adult Life

In North America and Europe, the basic family unit is the nuclear family, that is, parent(s) and children. Living arrangements reflect this emphasis in that most households consist of nuclear families (with some variation due to marital status, childlessness, sexual orientation, and ethnicity). Over time, as children grow up, marry, and have children of their own, several nuclear families result; these remain connected through social and emotional ties. This broader network, consisting of older parents and their adult children and grandchildren, has been characterized as a modified extended family. Although large family reunions involving the wider extended family may occur from time to time, the modified extended family, involving adult siblings and their parents and children, comprise the family ties that seem most important to individuals in our society. Much of the work of kinkeeping involves maintaining ties between members of the modified extended family.

The Work of Kinkeeping

Kinkeeping work may include activities such as hosting or arranging family gatherings; transmitting

family news among family members; keeping in touch by phone, mail, or electronic means; creating and maintaining a family genealogy; and recognizing special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries. Another kinkeeping activity is maintaining family harmony, for example, by acting as a mediator or peacemaker to resolve family disputes.

Some researchers have included preserving traditions as kinkeeping. These traditions may be religious, ethnocultural, or special ways of celebrating holidays that seem unique to a family's members. Preserving these traditions often provides a sense of family identity and gives meaning to family relationships. Preserving traditions may be particularly important to older family members who are immigrants, but assimilation of younger family members into the ways of the host country may result in the loss of traditions. Some research has pointed to the important role older immigrants play in preserving traditions, thereby enhancing feelings of family solidarity and continuity. Researchers have termed this symbolic kinkeeping, referring to activities that go beyond activities such as hosting or arranging family gatherings to include activities that reinforce a sense of meaning and importance of family. Examples of such activities include passing on ethnic culture, religious values, family stories, and special family recipes.

Transnational Kinkeeping

Immigration and emigration pose a multifaceted challenge to family ties. One of the challenges is maintaining family bonds across vast distances and in the face of cultural change. Some research has shown that older immigrants act as links between kin in different countries through sharing news and photographs and other such activities. As is discussed below, the Internet and cell phones have no doubt made transnational communication much easier than it was in the past. In addition, affordable air travel has enabled older immigrants to make visits back to the country of origin, adding to the opportunity to maintain their own personal ties and to nurture those between family members in the old and new countries, for example, by keeping everyone up to date on family news.

Family Kinkeeper: A Specialized Role

Whereas kinkeeping is performed informally by several family members in many or most families, a Canadian study found that in many families there is someone who is perceived to perform the specialized role of kinkeeper. In that study, just over half the participants said there was a person in their family who works harder than others at keeping family members in touch with one another. The researchers conceptualized this person as occupying a position in a familial division of labor and called this position the kinkeeper.

Kinkeeping is mainly a female activity (although it is important to note that men do kinkeeping work as well and occupy the position of kinkeeper in a minority of families). It is not surprising that kinkeeping is gendered in this way since much research has found that relationships between women are key linkages in kinship relations in North America. The mother–daughter tie has been found to be the strongest of all kin ties among adult kin and daughters to be the most common providers of help to aging parents.

The position of family kinkeeper is most commonly passed from mother to daughter. One of the main reasons for kinkeeping appears to be challenges to maintaining sibling ties over the adult life course, first as siblings have children and second as they have grandchildren. The death of parents seems to bring this challenge into focus as middle-aged women come to perceive that their family and their siblings' families will drift apart unless conscious kinkeeping efforts are made. There is some overlap as age-related changes lead mothers to begin to decrease their kinkeeping activities and adult daughters to begin to increase their efforts; in time, however, a new family kinkeeper moves fully into the position.

Although there is little recent research on kinkeeping, future research might test the hypothesis that as gender roles in general have become less traditional, men's involvement in kinkeeping may have increased. More men may be doing kinkeeping work and occupying the position of family kinkeeper.

The Impact of Kinkeeping

Having a family kinkeeper is associated with greater extended family interaction and a greater

emphasis on family ritual. Kinkeeping may also have an impact on individual well-being. Among today's older women, performing kinkeeping activities is positively associated with reported happiness. This may be a cohort effect in that these women were socialized to traditional gender role expectations and experience satisfaction when they fulfill these expectations. Today's younger and middle-aged adults are less traditional about gender roles and show no association between kinkeeping activities and reported happiness.

Kinkeeping and the Internet

There is little research on how the Internet has enhanced kinkeeping. It is very likely, however, that the Internet is used for kinkeeping activities in many families and that it will be used even more in the future as computer-savvy cohorts age. It is easy to see how the Internet could be used for virtual family reunions, maintaining family trees, maintaining a family photo album, having family chat rooms, locating distant relatives, and so on. Documenting these possibilities, however, remains a task for future research.

Although the methods by which kinkeeping occurs may change in the future, as families themselves continue to change, the prevalence of kinkeeping activities attests to the importance individuals attribute—and no doubt will continue to attribute—to maintaining family relationships and to a sense of family identity and continuity.

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See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Extended Families; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Kin Relationships; Sibling Relationships

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KIN RELATIONSHIPS

Kin relationships are traditionally defined as ties based on blood and marriage. They include lineal generational bonds (children, parents, grandparents, and great grandparents), collateral bonds (siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews, and aunts and uncles), and ties with in-laws. An often made distinction is between primary kin (members of the families of origin and procreation) and secondary kin (other family members). The former are what people generally refer to as immediate family, and the latter are generally labeled extended family. Marriage, as a principle of kinship, differs from blood in that it can be terminated. Given the potential for marital breakup, blood is recognized as the more important principle of kinship. This entry questions the appropriateness of traditional definitions of kinship for new family forms, describes distinctive features of kin relationships, and explores varying perspectives on the functions of kin relationships.

Questions About Definition

Changes over the last 30 years in patterns of family formation and dissolution have given rise to questions about the definition of kin relationships. Guises of kinship have emerged to which the criteria of blood and marriage do not apply. Assisted reproduction is a first example. Births resulting from infertility treatments such as gestational surrogacy and in vitro fertilization with ovum donation challenge the biogenetic basis for kinship. A similar question pertains to adoption, which has a history going back to antiquity. Partnerships formed outside of marriage are a second example. Strictly speaking, the family ties of nonmarried cohabitees do not fall into the category of kin, notwithstanding the greater acceptance over time of consensual unions both formally and informally. Broken and reconstituted families are a third example. The growth in divorce, remarriage, and the formation of stepfamilies has created complex kin networks in which relationships between people who have blood ties are not sustained, and kinlike relationships exist between people who have no blood ties. The chosen families of gays and lesbians are a fourth example.

Their extended family networks, often including former lovers, former spouses, friends, children from heterosexual marriages, and children acquired through adoption or the use of birth technologies, are personally constructed rather than governed by rules of blood and marriage.

The diversity in networks of kin relationships is relatively new, and scientific and lay vocabularies have difficulty keeping pace with social reality. The field does not have the terminology for new and complex kin relationships. The term ex-grand-daughter-in-law, introduced by Gunhild Hagestad, serves as an example: Not only do scholars need to get used to the idea that grandchildren can be middle-aged adults with families of their own, but the field lacks the words for relationships shaped by divorce and remarriage.

In scientific texts, the terms *quasi* or *fictive* kin are often used to denote relationships where the traditional rules of kin membership do not apply. These terms carry the connotation that there are real family relationships (defined by blood and marriage) and other family relationships. There is a need to rework the definition of kin relationships to take better account of social reality. Insight can be gained from the practice of law, where regulations regarding adoption, guardianship, gay marriage, registered partnership, inheritance, visiting rights, and maintenance obligations are being developed. Increasingly, conceptualizations of kin relationships need to consider construction and flux rather than take an assumed established structure as their point of departure.

Characteristics of Kin Relationships

An essential difference between kin relationships (other than the marital tie) and nonkin relationships is that the former are given whereas the latter are made. The family of origin forms a constellation of relationships into which a child is born and that exists independently of that individual. This constellation of relationships is, however, very dynamic. It changes as new generations are born and old generations die. Positions within intergenerational chains shift as children become parents and parents become grandparents.

Endurance is another distinctive quality of kin ties: They continue to exist even if left dormant.

Nevertheless, as research on the consequences of divorce for intergenerational family ties shows, they are not inalienable.

Though one's family of origin is "in no sense chosen" (1993, p. 167), to use the words of Janet Finch and Jennifer Mason, there is an element of choice regarding which kin ties are honored. Research findings show that these choices are guided by, among other factors, kinship norms. In most Western societies, the normative obligation to provide support is weaker for genetically more distant family members. Norms are also weaker for ascendant (up lineal lines) than descendent (down lineal lines) kin. The strongest kinship norm is the obligation toward children, followed by that toward parents. Cross-cultural research finds variations in the prioritization of kin relationships. An emphasis on lineal bonds is more typical of Caucasian and Asian families, whereas an emphasis on collateral bonds is more typical of Black families.

Kinship norms do not form a set of preordained rules. As Graham Allan states, kin solidarity in Western societies is permissive rather than obligatory. The norms do not require mutual aid, and under specific circumstances (e.g., poor relationship quality, large geographic distance), it is socially acceptable to deviate from them. A strong theme in research on practices of support and care is that kin responsibilities are negotiated interactively. Sometimes negotiations are overt and explicit, but more often they are implicit. Important elements in the negotiations are shared histories, relationship quality, conflicting commitments, and the personalities of those involved.

The negotiation of kin responsibilities is more likely in individualistic (Euro American) cultures, which stress independence, self-sufficiency, and the pursuit of personal goals, than in collectivistic (Islamic or Confucian) cultures, which stress kin-group membership and the submission of individual goals to the needs and wishes of the family. Ethnic minorities and lower-income groups in Western societies also tend to have collectivistic kin orientations. In collectivistic cultures, the family is seen as defending its members against social and economic hardship. The avoidance of disgrace is a strong motivator to comply with kin-group demands.

Kinship relationships do not exist in isolation. They form a network of bonds of varying intensity

across time and across members. The interdependencies between kin network members are crucial to understanding kinship behavior. The concept of linked lives is often invoked to describe the ways in which decisions taken by a kin network member or events taking place in the life of a kin network member have repercussions for others. Grandparenting research, for example, has documented the consequences of middle-generation divorce for contacts with grandchildren. Contacts might improve, worsen, or remain unchanged, depending on the quality of ties with the parents of the grandchild. Sibling research has shown that the decision to provide help and companionship to parents is structured by expectations about what siblings will do. Those who have a sibling who is emotionally closer or lives nearer to the parent are less inclined to step in and help. Kinkeeping is another concept that captures how kinship operates as a network. Specific family members, often women, fulfill the role of keeping others informed about what is happening in the family, organizing get-togethers, and encouraging direct interactions. Kinkeeping serves to facilitate access to others.

Perspectives on Kin Relationships

Research on kin relationships is more readily associated with anthropology than with sociology and psychology. Literature searches using the word *kin* produce many more references to anthropological work than to studies conducted in sociology and social psychology. Typical for anthropology is that kin relationships are studied as a system that is crucial to the organization of society. In an attempt to understand the orderly functioning of small-scale societies in the absence of state or governmental institutions, anthropologists tend to view kinship as providing a stable political structure and a basis for social continuity. Classic anthropological studies focused on the way in which political groupings, which were recruited through kinship, protected their economic interests and passed their property on. Kin-group membership, marriage rules, and matrilineal versus patrilineal succession are central to these studies.

Research on kin relationships in sociology and psychology is scattered throughout the literature, appearing under headings such as intergenerational relationships, sibling relationships, and grandparenthood. The adult parent–child bond has been studied more extensively than any other kin relationship. Research on extended kin such as aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, and cousins is sparse. Information on these sets of relationships most often comes from studies of childless older adults. A consistent finding is that extended kin figure more prominently in the social networks of childless older persons than in those of aging parents. Although primary kin (parents, children, siblings) generally remain significant throughout life, qualitative studies show that, for some, extended kin fulfill unique supplementary functions—as family historians, mediators, mentors, and buffers in conflict. Given the dominant research focus on the nuclear family, little is known about the conditions under which special bonds between extended family members are developed.

Though the research on kin relationships conducted by sociologists and psychologists is generally not framed as research into the organization of Western societies, it does provide insight into their structural and institutional characteristics. First, this field of research contributes to an understanding of sources of social inequality. Work on intergenerational transmission, for example, reveals the ways in which advantages and disadvantages are passed on from generation to generation. Transmitted resources are both material (gifts, inheritances, financial support) and nonmaterial (cultural and social capital, norms and values, educational and professional opportunities). Studies using kin network characteristics as determinants of life chances form another example. Findings consistently show that kin support has a positive impact on health independent of potentially confounded factors such as socioeconomic status, health-risk behaviors, use of health services, and personality.

Second, research on kin relationships is informative about mechanisms underlying social cohesion. Part of this research is based on the premise that kin relationships serve as bridges between social groups. For example, families are one of the few contexts where people of different ages meet and interact. Analyses of marriage patterns reveal whether people marry in or outside their social circle. Another strand of research focuses on kin relationships as a critical basis of social

control. Strong interdependencies imply that the behavior of fellow family members can be called into question. Given increasingly egalitarian relationships, the direction of social control is not only from the old to the young but also the other way around.

Third, research on kin relationships provides insight into processes of modernity. This is achieved by examining the changes in kin relationships that accompany changes in economic conditions, labor market arrangements, government provisions, laws, and cultural climate. A leading question is whether given economic and social circumstances facilitate or require particular kinship patterns. Family sociologists writing in the 1950s argued, for example, that a nuclear family system with its self-contained units was best suited to meet the mobility requirements of industrialized societies. More recently, migration scholars have attributed the rise in transnational families, where members live across national borders, to the growing wage gap between poor and rich countries and the increased demand for care services in developed countries.

Pearl A. Dykstra

See also Aunts and Uncles, Relationships With; Extended Families; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Families, Demographic Trends; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Fictive Kinship; Kinkeeping; Sibling Relationships

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KIN SELECTION

Kin selection refers to the evolutionary process leading to adaptations that promote altruism among close genetic relatives. Also known as Inclusive Fitness Theory, Kin Selection Theory was first described by William Hamilton in 1964 and is perhaps the most significant addition to Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection in the 20th century. At the time of Hamilton's publication, altruism had been a biological mystery; there was no cogent account for why evolution would select for altruistic behaviors that reduced one's own chances of surviving and reproducing and enhanced the survival and reproduction of another. After all, natural selection was thought to produce solely selfish behaviors—a "nature red in tooth and claw." Hamilton's elegant theory provided the missing logic for how altruism could have evolved. This entry discusses the logic of kin selection and provides examples of the kinds of questions Kin Selection Theory can address.

The Logic of Kin Selection

The key to understanding kin selection is to take a gene's-eye view. A gene, unlike an individual, can propagate in two different ways. The first is by promoting the survival and reproduction of the body in which it resides. The second is by promoting the survival and reproduction of other bodies that have a high probability of possessing an identical copy. Who is likely to share a copy of the same genes? By virtue of sharing common ancestors, close biological relatives have a greater than average chance of sharing genes. The more closely related kin are to one another, the greater the likelihood they will share genes. For instance, nuclear family members (mother, father, children,

and siblings) on average have a probability of .5 of sharing a particular gene in common. The probability of sharing a particular gene in common with a grandparent, niece, nephew, aunt, uncle, or half sibling drops to .25; a first cousin drops to .125, and so on. This probability describes the degree of relatedness between two individuals and is a crucial component of Kin Selection Theory. An example is provided for how to compute degree of relatedness at the end of this entry.

Hamilton proposed a set of mathematical equations that captures the rules evolution might have approximated to shape a system producing kin-directed altruism. In its most basic form, kin selection can be represented by the equation $r_iC_i < r_jB_j$. This states that selection will tend to favor altruistic motivations when the costs associated with individual i performing an altruistic act (C_i) weighted by individual i's degree of relatedness to himself (r_i) are less than the benefits bestowed on recipient j (B_j) discounted by the i's degree of relatedness to j (r_j). Since r_i equals 1 (people have a probability of 1 of having the same genes as themselves), the equation is typically written $C < rB$, where it is understood that the person performing the altruistic deed is oneself and another person is the beneficiary.

Questions Addressed by Hamilton's Equation

Hamilton's equation is a powerful tool for investigating when it pays to behave altruistically (or selfishly) toward another and when one should want others to behave altruistically (or selfishly) toward oneself or related others. It also provides a means of examining conflicts of interest. For instance, since Bart is more closely related to himself, he may want to be selfish and not share his Butterfinger with his sister Lisa (maybe just a crumb), but his mother Marge likely sees the world differently and would want Bart to share right down the middle since she is equally related to Bart and Lisa.

When To Be Altruistic?

Hamilton's equation can be used to compute when it pays to be altruistic to another individual. For instance, from Bart's perspective, when should he help Lisa? Starting with Hamilton's equation: $r_iC_i < r_jB_j$, it is possible to substitute in the degrees of relatedness. Bart is the one incurring the costs of helping (C_i), and since he is 100% related to himself, $r_i = 1$. In this example, Lisa is the one who benefits (B_j). Last, r_j is Bart's degree of relatedness to Lisa, which is ½ (see below for how to compute this probability). Hamilton's equation becomes $C < ½ B$ or $2 C < B$. In words, this means that it would pay for Bart to help Lisa when the benefits to her are greater than twice the costs to him. Lisa needs to really benefit from an altruistic act for it to be worth Bart's while to help her. If she were a half sister with a degree of relatedness of ¼, Lisa would have to really really benefit, greater than four times the costs Bart incurs for being helpful ($4 C < B$).

Of course, Hamilton's equations are simplified and do not take into account the many other variables selection weighs when shaping altruistic motivations. For instance, age, context, and the benefits of reciprocated altruism are not considered yet are known to play an important role when individuals decide when and whom to help. Nevertheless, they provide a good first approximation of the patterns of altruism one might expect. Additionally, Hamilton's equations may be most likely to apply to acts that carried fitness consequences generation after generation in ancestral environments. In particular, Hamilton's equation is expected to operate when resources are scarce and decisions about altruistic effort have large fitness consequences (e.g., risking one's life to save someone, sharing food when one is hungry or during famine, etc.).

When Will a Person Believe That Another Should Behave Altruistically?

In addition to computing when Bart would likely help Lisa, Hamilton's equation enables computations about when Bart should want Lisa to help him. Starting with Hamilton's equation, $r_iC_i < r_jB_j$, it is important to consider who is incurring the cost and who is benefiting. In this example, Lisa is incurring the cost to be altruistic to Bart, and Bart is reaping the benefits. Because Bart is interested in his perspective in this decision, it is necessary to indicate his degree of relatedness to the individual incurring the costs (Lisa) and his degree of relatedness to the individual receiving

the benefits (himself). Hamilton's equation thus becomes ½ C < 1 B. This is because Lisa is incurring the costs, and Bart's degree of relatedness to her is ½. Bart is getting the benefits, and his degree of relatedness to himself is 1. Restated conceptually, while Bart cares that Lisa is incurring some costs to help him out, he is only half as sensitive to her costs as he is to his own gains. This is because Lisa only has a .5 probability of sharing Bart's genes. So from Bart's perspective, Lisa should help whenever the benefits to Bart are at least half the costs to her.

Conflicts of Interest

Hamilton's equations can also be used to identify points of conflict. Each person sits at the center of a unique web of familial relationships (e.g., one's sister is someone else's daughter, granddaughter, niece, mother). This means that tradeoffs optimal to oneself may not be viewed as optimal by others with different degrees of relatedness to the actors involved. As the above examples show, it is possible to calculate the answer to the question "When should Lisa help Bart?" from both Lisa's and Bart's perspective. For Lisa, the answer is whenever the benefits to Bart are greater than twice the costs to her, or B > 2C. For Bart, the answer is whenever the benefits to himself are greater than only half the costs to Lisa, or B > ½C. Thus Lisa and Bart will not see eye-to-eye whenever ½C < B < 2C. This range of costs defines the scope of conflict. Although much of the research on genetic conflicts of interest has been done in nonhuman species, researchers have identified conflicts of interest during human pregnancy where offspring attempt to extract more resources (e.g., blood glucose) than is optimal for the mother to give.

In general, what this exercise shows is that from a gene's-eye perspective two people are unlikely to share the same view about who should be delivering benefits of what magnitude to whom. This has implications for understanding socialization concerning altruism. Who would teach Bart to share with his sister when C < 2B? Not his mom. She would urge him to share whenever C < B because from her perspective she is equally related to Bart (r = ½) and Lisa (r = ½), cancelling both degrees of

relatedness from the equation. If it were left to Lisa, she would teach Bart to share whenever 2C < B. So to a certain extent, children might have decision rules that are resistant to certain types of socialization, particularly processes that do not match the cost-benefit outcomes that would have maximized their own inclusive fitness. This possibility has not been fully explored, and future research is needed to determine the extent to which Hamilton's equation explains modern-day human behavior.

It is worth keeping in mind that individuals do not consciously calculate Hamilton's rule to decide when to share or be selfish. Rather, these rules are likely to be integrated into a variety of motivational and cognitive processes in a manner that causes some acts of altruism to seem minor and others more laborious. Additionally, kin selection is only one route to altruism based solely on probabilities of relatedness. Certainly, kin share with and help each other due to principles of reciprocal altruism and mutual valuation. These are likely very strong factors involved in generating altruistic behaviors among close genetic relatives. A complete understanding of the relationships among family members requires consideration of all sources of altruistic motivations.

Cognitive Architecture of Kin Selection

Hamilton's theory of inclusive fitness and the associated equations have helped propel the field's understanding of human social relationships. Nevertheless, almost 50 years after its publication, the field has only just begun to explore the psychological mechanisms mediating kin-directed altruism. For instance, according to Hamilton's equation, a key variable is degree of relatedness, r. But how does the mind approximate r? Certainly people can make the calculations explicitly, but this probably is not how daily decisions are made.

Since people cannot see another person's genes directly, the best evolution could do is to design a mechanism that uses cues that were reliably correlated with genetic relatedness in the ancestral past to compute an internal index of relatedness. One cue that has been investigated as an indicator of siblingship is childhood coresidence duration. Ancestrally, childhood coresidence would have been a good indicator that another individual was

a sibling because children being cared for by the same mother (and father) would have remained in close physical proximity. If childhood coresidence does indeed serve as a cue to siblingship, then it should influence the computed internal index of relatedness, which in turn should regulate levels of altruism. Indeed, the longer two individuals coresided during childhood, the greater the level of altruism between the pair. Certainly, cues other than coresidence duration might govern assessments of kinship such as seeing one's mother caring for a newborn, facial resemblance, and olfactory recognition. Because any cue to kinship should affect the calculation of one's degree of relatedness to another, a good litmus test for a potential kinship cue would be to see whether it does indeed predict levels of altruism in the manner predicted by Hamilton's theory.

How to Compute Degree of Relatedness (r): What Is the Probability You Share a Gene With Your Full Sister?

The answer is .5, and here is how this is computed. People can share a gene with their sister either because their mother gave each of them the same gene or because their father did. When computing *r,* each possible route of transmission needs to be considered separately. Starting with the mother, the probability she is the source of the shared gene equals the probability a gene in the child came from the mother X the probability she gave the sister the same gene (both events need to occur, and in logic this requires multiplying the probabilities). Because people are a diploid species, receiving half of their genes from each parent, this translates into 0.5 X 0.5, which equals .25. So the probability of sharing the same genes with a sister via a mother is .25. Following the same logic, the probability of sharing a gene with a sister via a father is also .25. This means that the probability of sharing the same gene with a sibling through either your mother or father is .25 + .25, or .5.

Debra Lieberman, Martie Haselton, and Bill von Hippel

See also Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Fictive Kinship; Kin Relationships

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KISSING

Kissing is a highly species-typical instance of human behavior. Why do people kiss? Does kissing have important consequences? Do men and women use kissing to achieve different objectives? What about kissing technique? Why are males more likely to attempt to initiate open mouth kissing with tongue contact?

The origin of kissing behavior is a good place to start. Long before the invention of blenders and baby food, mothers probably chewed up food and then transferred small portions of the food from their mouth to their baby's mouth to introduce solid food into the baby's diet. Some people theorize that kissing is an evolved derivative of this primitive feeding gesture between mother and child.

There are at least three different types of kisses. Kissing can be used as a ritualized symbolic greeting gesture, as when people meet and kiss each other on the cheek or hand. Kissing on the face but rarely the lips also occurs among family members as a gesture of affection and caring between close relatives. Romantic kissing, on the other hand, is more likely to involve kissing on the lips and often has mating or sexual overtones.

Romantic kissing occurs in over 90 percent of human cultures. Even among those cultures where kissing is absent, courtship often involves face touching, face licking, face rubbing, and nose-to-nose contact, which like kissing brings the participants into close intimate facial contact. Some of humans' closest living relatives, chimpanzees and bonobos, appear to engage in kissing behaviors as well.

Kissing may be part of an evolved courtship ritual. Based on a recent study of 1,041 college students all but five had experienced romantic kissing, and over 20 percent estimated kissing more than 20 partners. When two people kiss, there is a rich and complicated exchange of information involving chemical (smell and taste), tactile, and postural cues. Kissing can have profound consequences for romantic relationships. A kiss will not necessarily make a relationship, but the evidence shows that it can break or kill a relationship. Most students who were surveyed report having found themselves attracted to someone in one or more instances, only to discover after they kissed him or her for the first time that they were no longer interested. It would appear, therefore, that kissing may activate evolved, hardwired unconscious mechanisms that function to assess the genetic compatibility, reproductive viability, and health of a prospective partner.

Evolution is not about survival, it is about reproduction. When it comes to competition for passing genes on to subsequent generations, insemination is the name of the game for males. For females, however, insemination is the mere beginning of the reproductive process that includes pregnancy, childbirth, breast feeding, and extended periods of childcare that can span many years. The costs and consequences of reproduction are dramatically different for females than for males. Because females bear the burden of the reproductive costs, females have been selected to put a lot of emphasis on making careful, judicious mate choices. Since females pick up the tab when it comes to reproduction, females have a vested interest in the other 50 percent of the genes being carried by each of their children. Clearly, females that not only mated preferentially with high-quality males but also picked mating partners who were likely to enter into a long-term committed relationship that involved providing for and protecting her and her dependent children would have had an adaptive advantage.

As a consequence, men and women often kiss for different reasons. Although both sexes rate kissing as a highly romantic act, women consistently rate kissing as more important at all stages of the relationship than do men. Not only do females place more emphasis on kissing, but they are more likely than males to insist on kissing before a sexual encounter and more likely to emphasize the importance of kissing during and after sex as well. Most females would never dream of having sex with someone they never kissed. By comparison, many of the males in this survey said they would be happy to have sex without kissing, and males were far more likely than females to agree to have sex with someone who was not a good kisser.

Males tend to kiss as a means to an end—to gain sexual favors or to reconcile. Far more men than women think kissing can end a fight, and there is evidence that conflict resolution is facilitated by increasing amounts of kissing. In contrast, females kiss to establish and then monitor the status of their relationship. Among those in committed relationships, women continue to use kissing to assess and periodically update the level of commitment on the part of their partner. There is also evidence that the amount of reported kissing between partners is directly related to relationship satisfaction.

There are also differences in kissing technique. Males are more likely than females to initiate open mouth kissing and kissing with tongue contact. It is possible that the exchange of saliva during kissing may have biological consequences. Male saliva contains small amounts of the sex hormone testosterone, which if administered over sufficiently long period of time could affect a female's libido.

Suffice it to say that there is growing evidence that romantic kissing evolved as an adaptive courtship strategy that functions as a mate-assessment technique, a means of initiating sexual arousal and receptivity, and a way of maintaining and monitoring the status of a bonded relationship.

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See also Affection and Affectionate Behavior; Evolutionary Perspectives on Women's Romantic Interests; Sexuality

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L

LANGUAGE USAGE IN RELATIONSHIPS

The words that people use in conversation convey information about who they are, their motives, their audience, and their situations. Findings from laboratory and naturalistic studies over the past decade suggest that the words people use can yield clues about the quality of their relationships. This entry discusses the role of language usage in romantic relationships, focusing specifically on issues of analysis, the types of words that are important in relationships, data collection, and clinical implications.

Language serves a variety of functions in relationships. It can be an index of relationship status, an instrument of relationship maintenance or change, or the embodiment of essential relationship characteristics such as autonomy and interdependence. Some have gone as far as to say that relationships are simply language games that change as language changes. In this view, a couple's language *is* the relationship. However, theorists in this area more often view language patterns and relationship beliefs as distinct phenomena that are intimately associated—seeing relationships as both a function of the words that couples use and a framework for future word use.

Analysis of Language Usage

There are three main quantitative approaches to linguistic analysis that have emerged over the past half-century. The first is judge-based thematic content analysis, which uses human judges to identify the presence of various thematic references (e.g., love, anxiety, and motivation) on the basis of empirically developed coding systems. The second is latent semantic analysis (LSA), a bottom-up approach to language analysis that examines patterns of how words covary across large samples of text, akin to a factor analysis of individual words. LSA can be used, for example, to examine patterns of word use among satisfied couples compared with those who are dissatisfied. The third is word count analysis, which examines the relative frequency of words in a given text or speech sample. Word count programs vary in their designed purposes and complexity of analyses. For example, the General Inquirer, which arose out of the psychoanalytic and need-based traditions in psychology, uses complex decision rules to clarify the meaning of ambiguous words that are used in multiple contexts. Researchers studying language use in politics (e.g., speeches, political advertising, and media coverage) often use Diction, a word count program that characterizes texts by the extent to which they reflect optimism, activity, certainty, realism, and commonality.

One of the most often employed word count programs is Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), which was developed by social psychologists to investigate the words that people use when they write about emotional experiences. LIWC works by searching for words in a given text file that have been previously categorized into more than 70 linguistic dimensions, including standard

language categories (e.g., articles, prepositions, and pronouns), psychological processes (e.g., positive and negative emotion words), and traditional content dimensions (e.g., sex, death, home, and occupation). Research using computer programs such as the General Inquirer, Diction, and LIWC has provided substantial evidence of the social and psychological importance of word use. Of particular relevance for intimate relationships are personal pronouns and emotion words. These two broad categories of words and their significance for relationships are described in turn next.

Personal Pronouns

Much of the interest in the role of language in relationships has focused on pronouns, in particular first-person plural or *we* words (*we, us,* and *our*) because they appear to be markers of shared identity and affiliative motivation. It has been argued that the extent to which couple members think of themselves as part of a unit or larger group reflects cognitive interdependence and commitment, often termed *we*-ness. For instance, people increase their use of first-person plural pronouns after a large-scale collective trauma or a home football team victory. Among those in romantic relationships, highly committed partners use *we* pronouns more frequently when talking about their relationships (e.g., *We really have fun together*), compared with less committed ones (e.g., *She's really a lot of fun*). Thus, the use of *we* may capture important ways that couples think about their relationships. However, in the published studies that have examined language use during interactions between romantic partners (as opposed to when people are describing their relationships to outsiders), *we* use is surprisingly unrelated to either relationship quality or stability. Why might this be the case? One possible explanation is that *we* use during couples' interactions does not directly tap how they think of themselves as one unit, that couples' feelings of interdependence simply are not reflected in their everyday use of *we*. Alternatively, contextual effects may be at work. Although *we* use during problem-solving interactions and naturalistic daily conversations seem unrelated to relationship quality, *we* use during other types of interactions, such as those discussions specifically

geared toward positive aspects of relationships or discussions about the future, may tap aspects of interdependence.

Second-person pronouns (*you* and *your*) have been interpreted as indicative of other-focused attention. For example, high self-monitors—people highly concerned with how they are perceived by others—use *you* at higher rates than low self-monitors. Similarly, individuals high in trait anger use *you* at higher rates than those low in trait anger. With regard to romantic relationships, *you* use during problem-solving discussions has been found to be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction and positively correlated with negative relationship behaviors. Couples' use of *you* may be more important in the context of problem-solving discussions compared with everyday conversations. For example, *you* use in discussions about daily events (e.g., *Are you going to the basketball game tonight?*) may be quite different from *you* use during conflict (e.g., *You can be really difficult sometimes!*).

Clinical researchers have argued that *you* statements are indicative of blaming or psychological distancing, whereas *I* statements reflect healthy communication patterns, such as self-disclosure and verbal immediacy. There are a couple of possible reasons that higher *I* use may indicate better relationship quality. Some have speculated that *I* use reflects higher levels of self-disclosure, promoting intimacy and closeness. *I* use also may reflect positive aspects of autonomy within a relationship. Although experiencing interdependence or relatedness is one key to relationship closeness, managing a sense of independence or autonomy within a relationship also is important. From an interactionist perspective, autonomy and interdependence are two separate constructs, with autonomy and interdependence at a balance in which each allows or enables the other.

In contrast to *I,* use of *me* appears to be linked to relationship dysfunction. For example, previous studies have shown *me* use to be positively related to negative interaction behaviors and negatively related to relationship satisfaction. Although the frequency of *I* use reflects self-disclosure and perspective taking, frequency of *me* use may reflect passive strivings or victimization narratives that are characteristic of poor-quality interactions and less-satisfying relationships.

Emotion Words

The other broad category of words linked to relationship quality is emotion words. In everyday life, when we want to know how a person is feeling, we usually just ask him or her. The specific words that the person uses to respond—words such as *happy, sad, angry,* and *nervous*—often indicate his or her emotional state. Emotion words measured by word count programs such as LIWC appear to generally reflect people's underlying emotions. Preliminary evidence suggests that they may play a key role in romantic relationships.

Although one would expect greater use of positive emotion words and lower use of negative emotion words to be related to relationship quality, there are a number of contextual issues to consider when taking a word count approach. The first issue relates to the person at whom emotion words are directed (e.g., *I am so angry with Sally* vs. *I am so angry with you*); emotion words can have different meanings depending on their targets. The second issue relates to when an emotion word is preceded by a negation (e.g., *I am not mad at you* vs. *I am mad at you*). Although studies show that variations in emotion word use are positively associated with variations in trait-level emotional expressivity, even when not taking negations into account, separating emotion words into separate categories based on co-occurrences with negations is useful in disentangling associations between emotion word use and relationship quality. The third issue relates to sarcasm (e.g., *Oh, great*). Word count approaches typically are unable to distinguish between emotion words that are used to express genuine emotion from those laced with sarcasm. By first identifying when emotion words are used in the context of couples' interactions and then coding them for relational context, co-occurrences with negations and sarcasm, a clearer picture of the relevance of emotion words for relationships is possible.

Emotion words that couples use in everyday conversations with each other are associated with relationship satisfaction and stability in a variety of ways, with important distinctions depending on whether these words are used genuinely, preceded by negations or used sarcastically. Genuinely expressed positive emotion words are positively related to people's own and their partners' satisfaction. Perhaps surprisingly, preliminary evidence suggests that genuinely expressed negative emotion words are unrelated to satisfaction or stability. However, positive emotion words preceded by negations are negatively associated with relationship satisfaction. Further, both positive and negative emotion words used sarcastically are negatively related to satisfaction and stability. Thus, the current evidence suggests that associations between negative emotion words and relationship health may be obscured unless contextual issues of language such as sarcastic tone and co-occurrence with negations are taken into account.

Collection of Language Data

There are a number of sources of language data in the context of relationships. Most previous research has assessed word use during laboratory problem-solving discussions, but there are a wide variety of contexts in which word use during couples' interactions can be assessed. These include other types of laboratory interactions such as those geared toward eliciting social support, naturalistic conversations recorded at home, phone calls, and e-mails. One relatively new technology—instant message (IM)—has recently been used to measure couples' everyday language use. Unlike e-mail, IM allows its users to chat with each other in real time so that a conversation can unfold much in the same way that spoken conversation does. With regard to studying language use in relationships, IM provides an opportunity to examine the associations between word use and relationship quality in the absence of nonverbal cues. During IM conversations, the attributions that couple members make about each other are based solely on the words that they use and offer an exciting new approach to studying the words that couples use in their everyday lives—across conflicts as well as more positive moments.

Obviously, the language that couples use in their IMs represents only a fraction of the words that most couples—even frequent IM users—likely exchange with each other. It is unknown to what extent couples' IM conversations mirror their face-to-face interactions. Although some have suggested that online communication may be more disclosing and emotionally expressive than spoken communication, no

studies have directly compared the association between online communication and face-to-face communication in naturalistic settings. It may be that certain words that couples use are more salient in IM communication than in spoken communication, and vice versa. Other new technologies, such as the Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR)—a microrecorder that samples people's acoustic social environments—offer relationship researchers exciting new possibilities to study couples' word use as it naturally unfolds each day. Initial evidence suggests that the words people use in their relationships have different meanings depending on the context (e.g., during conflictual vs. supportive interactions). It seems essential that word use be examined across a variety of settings and situations before we can fully understand how and under what conditions word use is linked to relationship functioning.

Clinical Implications of Language Use in Relationships

There may be important clinical implications for the types of words that people use in their relationships. For example, in Behavioral Couple Therapy, couples often are encouraged to use more *I* statements when discussing problems in their relationship. Investigations of the role of word use in relationships present the possibility that encouraging couples' use of other types of words during therapy—such as positive emotion words—may be beneficial as well. Although therapists may not be able to readily change how happy people are in their relationships, they may be able to effect subtle changes in the words that couples use. This is in line with current cognitive and behavioral approaches to therapy, which are geared toward enhancing relationship functioning through the modification of couples' behaviors. Promising findings from experimental laboratory studies of unacquainted individuals show that manipulating word use can indeed lead to changes in perceptions of closeness. Additional experimental research and studies that assess changes in relationship quality and word use over time are still needed to elucidate the causal direction of these associations and, in turn, their clinical relevance. Such research would help clarify whether a couple's word use merely reflects their underlying thoughts and feelings about their relationship or actively shapes the future course of that relationship.

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See also Communication, Instant Messaging and Other New Media; Communication Processes, Verbal; Communication Skills; Computer-Mediated Communication; Interaction Analysis; Maintaining Relationships

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LEADERSHIP

Leadership is "a process of social influence in which an individual, a leader, is able to enlist the support of other individuals, the followers, in the accomplishment of a task or mission." One important concept in this definition is that leadership is a *social* process. Without groups, there would be no leaders and no need for leaders. The primary function of leadership is to coordinate the efforts of others to accomplish something that cannot be done by one individual alone. A second noteworthy concept is that leadership is based on influence (i.e., persuasion), not power. No leader can force group members to give their highest level of effort regardless of the amount of power in the position. Finally, leadership is about accomplishing a task or achieving a successful mission. An effective leader, then, is one who is able to motivate followers to give

high effort, help them achieve needed competency, and coordinate their efforts to attain the group's goals. How leaders effectively accomplish these three functions has been the subject of study since the turn of the 20th century.

It should be noted that the discussion of leadership given here applies to small groups or teams, in which leaders are in close contact with followers.

Research and Theory

Leadership is a multifaceted phenomenon involving interactions among multiple individuals in complex and dynamic environments. There have been many false starts and dead ends in the development of a scientific understanding of this phenomenon. An examination of how research and theory have developed over time provides a basis for synthesis and integration.

Traits

Early studies of leadership viewed effective leadership as dependent on characteristics of the individuals who occupied the leadership role. A wide variety of traits have been studied by contrasting leaders and nonleaders or effective leaders and ineffective leaders in corporations, military organizations, sports teams, and other settings. Traits studied for their relationship to leadership include intelligence, cognitive complexity, need for power, need for affiliation, physical appearance, energy, verbal fluency, originality, dominance, social skills, and many more. However, the findings of this approach were disappointing. A few leader characteristics (most particularly intelligence) bore a modest relationship to leadership status or effectiveness, but no single trait or combination of traits was sufficiently predictive to provide a basis for leadership selection, training, or explanation.

Behaviors

The failure of research on personality and other traits led to research on specific behaviors that might characterize effective leadership. One set of studies interviewed industrial workers about the behavior of their supervisors. Two types of supervisors were found frequently. One type, termed *production-oriented supervisors,* spent most of their time structuring the work, assigning tasks, and monitoring for performance. A second type, termed *employee-oriented supervisors,* were more concerned with making sure that morale was high and that workers felt represented and protected.

In another research program, college students were placed in groups and given tasks (such as discussing a social problem or writing a witty essay), and the behavior of group members was observed and categorized. It was found that some students spoke more than others, and the talkative ones fell into two categories. Some, who were labeled *task specialists,* displayed behaviors that emphasized accomplishing the assigned task, such as offering ideas or asking task-relevant questions. Others, labeled *socioemotional specialists,* focused on making sure that every group member had a chance to speak or that tension was relieved by jokes and friendly comments.

An extensive examination of the behavior of military officers resulted in the development of questionnaires for reporting on leader behavior by subordinates, peers, or observers. The two major categories in these questionnaires were called *Initiation of Structure,* which included behaviors like assigning tasks, judging work output, and encouraging high performance. The other category, *Consideration,* included behaviors related to mutual trust and respect between leaders and followers.

Although all of these studies seemed to indicate that some leaders emphasize the task side of leadership and others the social or emotional side, no category of behavior was clearly related to leadership effectiveness. So, as was the case with the search for leadership traits, behavioral research found no simple answers to the complex questions of leadership.

Contingency Theories

In the 1960s and 1970s, progress toward understanding leadership was made by researchers who tried to relate characteristics of leaders with aspects of the leadership situation, such as follower support, task clarity, and formal authority. By and large, these studies indicated that the success of a leadership behavioral style or decision-making process depended on (i.e., was contingent on) the

nature of the situation. Directive, authoritative, and task-focused leaders were most effective when supportive followers and clearly understood tasks allowed the leader to direct the work group with confidence. However, situations that were more ambiguous, due to interpersonal tensions or vaguely define tasks, required leaders to be more open to influence and garner advice from followers.

Studies of follower motivation and satisfaction revealed that the effectiveness of a leader's coaching and counseling behavior depended on the personality of the follower and the nature of the task. Giving subordinates a lot of specific direction was most motivating when followers did not clearly understand their task and wanted the structure provided by the leader. However, when tasks became simpler or when followers were independent, the best leaders were those who were considerate and supportive, rather than demanding and directive.

Information-Processing Approaches

Leadership depends on perception and judgment. Leaders try to assess follower interests and capabilities, and followers evaluate leaders and potential leaders to decide how to react to their influence. Social psychologists have long known that perceptions and judgments are not simple and straightforward. Research on leadership shows the same pattern. What an observer (e.g., a follower or boss) sees in a leader's behavior is strongly dependent on what the observer expects to see. Once observers decide that a leader is effective or appropriate, they tend to also see behaviors that they think are characteristic of a good leader, even when those behaviors may be absent.

Similarly, leaders' judgments about followers are often oversimplified or self-serving to the leader. In other words, when a problem arises with a subordinate or group, a leader's desire to take credit for good outcomes and avoid responsibility for failure can cloud judgment.

Transformational Leadership

A long-standing subject of interest has been *charismatic* leaders like Alexander the Great, Mahatma Gandhi, or Martin Luther King, Jr. Such leaders are defined by their unusually great influence over subordinates. Projecting an image of almost super-human ability, combined with a transcendent vision, charismatic leaders evince very high levels of confidence in themselves and their followers. Charismatic leadership is sometimes referred to as *transformational* leadership because it transforms the leadership relationship from a quid pro quo contractual relationship into one in which leader and followers become totally dedicated to the collective mission.

Modern research on transformational leadership in groups and organizations reveals that followers respond enthusiastically to leaders who (a) show high task-related competence, (b) articulate a compelling vision, (c) treat each subordinate as a unique individual, and (d) challenge subordinates to explore new ideas and develop new competencies.

The Dark Side of Leadership

Recently, research has focused on some of the less attractive features that leaders may demonstrate. When leaders accumulate great power, they may (a) become disdainful and remote from followers, (b) develop a strong compulsion for taking action even when they aren't sure what action to take, and (c) begin to believe that the norms and rules followed by "ordinary" people don't apply to them.

Synthesis and Integration

Careful examination of the most empirically supported findings among these disparate perspectives provides a basis for a synthesis and integration. That integration indicates that successful leaders must establish a basis for influencing followers, building relationships that enable and motivate followers, and coordinating a group's resources for mission accomplishment.

Establishing Legitimacy as a Basis for Influence

Influential communicators must be seen as competent and trustworthy to be credible. Potential followers decide that a leader is competent by observing behaviors that match the followers' expectations for how a competent leader should behave. These expectations may not be explicit, but they affect judgments. Leaders who fit the "leadership

prototype" are deemed to have the necessary qualities to gain influence.

In the early stages of leader–follower interactions, judgments of a leader's trustworthiness or honesty are again based on our expectations—for example, how an honest person behaves (e.g., makes eye contact, speaks in a sincere tone of voice). After followers have had a chance to interact with a leader over time, judgments are based on actual evidence of competency (e.g., moving the group toward its goals) and honesty (e.g., following through on promises and not making contradictory statements to different followers).

Building Relationships That Empower, Enable, and Motivate Followers

Once a leader has gained influence by establishing credibility, she or he must guide followers in the accomplishment of their tasks and motivate them to make the greatest contribution possible. Motivation and guidance depend heavily on good coaching. As a leader interacts and observes each follower, the leader begins to understand the follower's skills, knowledge, and motivation. If those capabilities are not sufficient for successful completion of the follower's responsibilities, the leader may intervene by explaining or teaching the follower. Effective coaching requires more than identifying a follower's strengths and weaknesses. A leader must also be sensitive to a follower's personality and values. People respond differently to instruction depending on how much they perceive that they need it. One follower might be comfortable with some level of task or role ambiguity because that makes the task a more interesting and satisfying arena for learning, growth, and achievement. Another follower might be upset by that ambiguity and greatly desire more structure and clarity in the job. Highly effective team leaders relate to each follower as an individual, understanding and responding to each in a way that helps the follower to stay interested and motivated by his or her responsibilities. That level of understanding is sometimes difficult for a leader to achieve because the leader's own sense of self-esteem may interfere with accurate and unbiased judgments.

Another important aspect of the leader–follower relationship is that it is an interpersonal exchange.

Leaders give followers protection, help them to achieve their personal goals, and respect them as individuals. In exchange, followers give leaders loyalty, effort, and deference. As in other relationships, when the exchange is perceived as fair, both parties are motivated to make the highest contribution possible to their common goals. Fairness is often based on the way that a leader makes decisions. Leaders who listen to followers before making a decision (giving voice) and explain the reasoning behind the decision after it is made (justification) communicate respect for followers, and that respect enhances the quality the exchange relationship.

Deploying the Group's Resources to Achieve Mission Accomplishment

The effective coordination of collective efforts requires a match between the nature of the task environment and the procedures used for group communication and decision making. When the goals and methods for accomplishing a mission are clear and well understood, as they would be for a highly experienced group, greatest efficiency of effort is achieved when leaders take authority and provide clear direction. However, when the exact nature of the goal or the best way to achieve it is unclear, as it might be in novel or highly complex situations, the most effective leadership is highly democratic and participative, which allows the knowledge and expertise of every group member to be applied to achieving the goal.

Even when all the procedures described earlier are followed, groups can encounter daunting situations because of physical danger, overwhelming task complexity, or extreme importance of succeeding. Under these circumstances, groups that have confidence in their own capability and believe strongly in the group's ability to accomplish the mission can overcome even the most threatening situations. Leaders who are highly confident are calmer, less defensive, and more resilient—qualities that enhance their ability to understand the environment and the needs of their followers. Highly confident leaders instill confidence of the group in itself. Collective confidence is associated with high goals, perseverance, and the ability to cope with adversity.

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See also Cooperation and Competition; Group Dynamics; Interpersonal Influence; Persuasion

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Leisure Activity

Leisure is generally seen as one of the most valued areas of our everyday lives. Many people are impatient to retire from work to pursue those activities that they enjoy the most—for example, traveling, visiting family members, going to museums, and so forth—and thus live a "life of leisure." The importance that we attach to "leisure," then, only makes sense when we contrast it with "work," and this comparison is a relatively recent phenomenon. This entry discusses the emergence of leisure as a distinct component of everyday life and its importance as a context for interactions among family members.

Historical Background

In western Europe, as Geoffrey Godbey and Stanley Parker observed, time spent at work consistently increased from the Middle Ages until the middle of the 19th century, whereas in America, the work week averaged at least 70 hours for factory workers by 1850; in other words, work increased and leisure declined from the end of the Middle Ages until the height of the Industrial Revolution in the mid- to late 19th century. This reduction in leisure was not only mirrored in longer work hours, but, more generally, by perhaps the single most conspicuous characteristic of industrialization: the spatial segregation of daily life, wherein work came to be done in a specialized place (at work) at a certain time and under particular conditions, and leisure (and family life, generally) tended to occur somewhere else (at home). Although the average work week in western Europe has diminished to less than 40 hours during the past century, it would be fair to say that industrialization created leisure the way we know it, as a distinct and largely residual sphere of life, as the time left over after work.

Family as a Context for Leisure

So how do modern Americans—and modern American families—"spend" all of this "extra" time? Questions regarding family leisure are complicated. For example, people define leisure activities differently, and one person's leisure is another person's work (hobbies and volunteer activities are good examples of this principle). Moreover, social scientists know considerably more about how families work than how they play, although we have long believed that "the family that plays together, stays together." It is fairly easy, however, to make the case that leisure behavior is an especially useful lens through which to view family behavior. Leisure behavior is discretionary behavior and lends itself well to questions about what families do in the way of leisure activities, and with whom family members undertake these activities, when they do not have to do anything at all?

Family members face several issues if they decide to participate in a leisure activity together. Leisure involving more than one person, in general, can be difficult to coordinate due to a handful of reasons. For one, parents and children may not enjoy the same leisure activities, and children may not be inclined to pursue the same activities. It is also the case that marked differences in family members' physical abilities and maturational levels can be a deterrent to joint leisure, both in terms of parents and children, as well as between siblings who are separated by several years. Along the same line, leisure activities hold different possibilities for interaction, some necessitating coordination among several people (e.g., playing cards) and others being essentially solitary activities that

provide restricted opportunities for interaction (e.g., reading). Further, leisure activities that may be undertaken by more than one person are still subject to the interactional preferences of those involved. For example, research shows that those who "specialize" in activities (i.e., become devoted to certain leisure activities and become quite skilled at them) tend to avoid participation with nonspecialists, and this is one way that companionate family leisure may be deterred (e.g., all family members enjoy playing tennis, but the husband played collegiate tennis, is a specialist, and is uninterested in pursuing that particular activity with others who cannot play tennis at his level). Research also shows that wider social network factors may bear on the extent to which family members participate in the same activities; for example, a wife may like going to garage sales and, further, may enjoy going to sales with her husband, but be disinclined to do so when her husband's friends and/or relatives are also involved. It should also be recognized that differences between family members in the simple structural characteristics of everyday life—such as work and school schedules—can deter joint leisure regardless of activity and interactional preferences.

Marital Leisure

As a subset of family leisure, marital leisure is especially intriguing for those interested in the dynamics of married life for several reasons. Marital leisure underscores the importance of interpersonal compatibility, in that couples who generally like (and dislike) the same activities tend to pursue more leisure together and spend less time apart from one another. This fact is important because the extent to which wives and husbands pursue leisure activities together has long been one of the best predictors of their marital happiness. The strength of this association may not be as strong as is commonly assumed, however, and depends more on whether spouses are undertaking leisure activities that they both like versus those that only one of them enjoys. In fact, there is some evidence suggesting that leisure companionship is most closely linked with marital satisfaction only if it involves activities that both spouses like, whereas couples' joint involvement in leisure that only the

husband enjoys is a source of dissatisfaction among wives. (The reverse, predicting husbands' satisfaction from joint involvement in leisure the wife enjoys, was not found in this study.)

Finally, a developmental perspective on marriage observes that there are some fairly predictable changes in marital leisure over time. Leisure for most couples is largely couple-centered early in marriage, a pattern that changes with the arrival of the first child and the resulting restriction in their opportunity to pursue leisure as a couple alone, although parenthood may serve to reintegrate couples with their friends and extended families. Little is known about patterns of marital leisure further down the family life course in terms of what effects, if any, are seen in marital leisure as the last child leaves home (the "empty nest" phase) and as couples enter retirement, a stage wherein many retired couples paradoxically report that they feel too "rushed" to engage in much leisure, although, objectively, they actually have little to do.

Duane W. Crawford

See also Compatibility; Marriage, Benefits of; Parenthood, Transition to; Shared Activities

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LESSER INTEREST, PRINCIPLE OF

The *Principle of Lesser Interest,* also called the *principle of least interest,* is a theoretical principle suggesting that, in romantic partnerships, when one partner is more emotionally involved than the other, the less emotionally involved partner can

exploit the more involved partner in various ways. This entry explores the origins of this principle, empirical findings, and related research.

Commonly discussed in the social-psychology literature on dating relationships, the Principle of Lesser Interest is usually attributed to Willard Waller, who observed in the 1930s that romantic partners often proceeded at different paces in their emotional involvement with one another. In Waller's view, large differences in emotional involvement put the less interested partner in a position to exploit the more interested party because the less-interested party could dictate the conditions of association.

Although Waller is widely credited with developing the Principle of Lesser Interest, he acknowledged other important sources for the principle, including a popular French epigram and sociologist Edward Ross. Ross had written (some 17 years earlier) in his sociology textbook that, in a variety of social relationships, the person who cared less could exploit the person who cared more. Ross went beyond romantic relationships in his thinking to consider parent–child relationships as well, but Waller's coining of the term focused primarily on premarital dating relationships.

Although there is not a large body of research on the Principle of Lesser Interest, several studies show support for the principle and related ideas. Perceptions of unequal emotional involvement are common among contemporary dating couples, and men are more likely than women to be perceived as the partners with less interest in their relationships. Less-interested partners are seen as having more control over the continuation of their relationships, and couples with unequal emotional involvement tend to have lower satisfaction than couples with equal involvement. Some studies have found that unequally involved relationships are more likely to break up than those with equal emotional involvement. Closely related studies show positive outcomes from equal emotional involvement between dating pairs; equal levels of dependence and commitment have been associated with positive emotions and relationship satisfaction.

Waller would likely not be surprised at any of these findings. He found evidence of the Principle of Lesser Interest in his 1930s observations of college students in prestigious fraternities and sororities. He also observed gender differences in these relationships, noticing that women seemed more astute in relationship processes, and that their perceptions of relative involvement were particularly predictive of breakup. Although it does not appear that he tracked relationships across time, he would most likely have expected a higher breakup rate among unequally interested couples and seen their breakups as preferable to long-term emotionally unequal partnerships.

Contemporary research on the Principle of Lesser Interest is sparse and limited by its predominant use of quantitative methods and a focus on White, heterosexual college youth. Yet a broader view of the related literature reveals great interest in this general area of inquiry, if not in the Principle of Lesser Interest specifically. In recent years, for example, many researchers have explored power relations between couples (both heterosexual and same sex), searching for the practices that go along with contemporary egalitarian ideals. Interview studies of American couples reveal that relationship dynamics consistent with the Principle of Lesser Interest are common. Yet unequal interest and power can erode the strength of relationships over time, leading prominent relationship researchers such as Pepper Schwartz to promote the benefits of "love between equals." Peer marriage, she argues, is conducive to longevity and staying in sync with one's partner. Schwartz's position is in line with Willard Waller's own conclusions. In 1938, he described lesser interest relationships as being unhealthy in the long term due to the potential for extreme exploitation. He suggested that it might be better if these relationships dissolved before getting to the point of marriage.

Finally, it is useful to remember that the Principle of Lesser Interest may have wider application than just romantic relationships, as Edward Ross suggested in 1921 in his sociology textbook. Parent–child relationships are another potentially important type of relationship in which to explore the lesser interest dynamic. Although not drawing on the same theoretical origins, research on the "intergenerational stake hypothesis" has revealed a tendency for parents to report more emotional investment in their children than their children report about them across the life course. This research could be taken a step further to explore the extent to which children exploit this unequal emotional involvement coming from their parents.

There could be consequences for relationship satisfaction, exchange, and even continuity. Research of this type could be seen as a modified example of Willard Waller's principle of lesser interest, and an application of this concept many decades after it was first conceived.

Maria Schmeeckle

See also American Couples Study; Boston Couples Study; Egalitarian Relationships; Fairness in Relationships; Power, Predictors of; Power Distribution in Relationships; Satisfaction in Relationships

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LIES IN CLOSE AND CASUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Lying—defined as intentionally deceiving another individual in a relationship—is ubiquitous in social relationships. Lies may take the form of either withholding information (lies of omission) or overtly communicating information that one knows to be false (lies of commission).

Both retrospective diary studies and experiments that take more contemporaneous measures of deception confirm that lying is a consistent part of social life. In fact, a number of studies show deception in face-to-face conversations with rates as high as three lies per 10-minute period. Lies are also prevalent in virtual communication, both in e-mailed messages and instant messages (IMs). The nature of the deceptions and the motivation behind them occurring in relationships vary significantly. Some lies are other oriented, such as lies meant to make recipients feel better about themselves. Other lies are self-oriented, designed to self-aggrandize, promote oneself, or hide information in an effort to gain an advantage over a recipient.

Deception is found in two main types of relationships: close romantic relationships and more casual friendship/acquaintance relationships. Not only do lies occur with considerable frequency, but the lies may have significant consequences for relationships. This entry describes current findings concerning lying to close and casual others, as well as the methodological challenges in conducting research on lying in relationships.

Lying in Romantic Relationships

According to self-reports, lying is present in some degree in most romantic relationships. In one survey, almost all individuals (92 percent) admitted to having been deceptive toward a romantic partner. Although the number of self-described minor lies decreases in interactions involving a close relationship partner, the lies that do occur tend to represent more serious breaches of trust. In fact, almost two thirds of lies involving serious betrayals of trust involve people's closest relationship partner.

People reserve their most severe lies for those with whom they are romantically involved. Not surprisingly, diary study participants cite a wide variety of reasons for lying. Primary motivations for lying include attempting to get something someone feels entitled to, avoiding conflict, and efforts to present oneself in a favorable light.

Although lie tellers in romantic relationships often report that their deceptive behavior is driven by altruistic goals, such as to spare a partner's feelings, recipients of lies generally do not share the perspective that kindness and concern are the motivating factors of their partner. However, when the same individuals who report unhappiness at being the recipient of lies are placed in the position of being a "lie teller" as opposed to a "lie receiver," they view their deceptive statements as

altruistically motivated, justified, and induced by the lie receiver. Such research highlights that it is the social context surrounding a deceptive statement that gives the deceptive interaction its particular significance.

When explicitly seeking a dating partner or potential mate, deception is sometimes utilized as a strategy for attracting a potential companion. Social assets are exaggerated, and faults are hidden. Furthermore, men and women differ in their deceptive mate-seeking strategies. Consistent with widely held gender stereotypes, men are most likely to lie about their wealth and level of commitment, whereas women attempt to deceive men in regards to their physical appearance by using aids such as cosmetics. Additionally, although a significant degree of deception exists in the mate-selection process, most people are aware of and even expect deception as part of the courting process.

Such findings are consistent with evolutionary approaches to deception. For example, many non-human species use deceptive strategies, in terms of appearing bigger, stronger, or more sexually alluring, to attract a mate. Male green frogs lower the tone of their croak to sound larger and to ward off other potential competing males; female fireflies of certain species lure unsuspecting males by signaling a readiness to mate, only to eat their suitors upon arrival. Similarly, from an evolutionary perspective, humans may utilize their more sophisticated cognitive abilities to deceive in order to reflect wealth, fertility, or youth.

One of the reasons that lying may be so common within romantic relationships may be that lie tellers feel generally confident in their ability to deceive their partner. Not only do those people who lie to their partners feel that they are generally successful in not being detected in their lies, but they also believe that they are more successful in deceiving their partners than their partners are in lying to them.

The use of lies in relationships is not without costs, however. For example, a willingness to accept the presence of lies seen as altruistic, or "white lies," is associated with less relationship satisfaction. Specifically, appearing to tell the truth in a relationship predicts greater relationship satisfaction and positive illusions about the relationship. It may be that deception early on is predictive of the future

erosion of integral components of the relationship, such as trust, intimacy, and commitment. Furthermore, individuals in failed romances may blame some other component of their interactions for their lack of positivity toward the relationship, when in fact the relationship failure may have been fostered by the false pretenses under which the relationship began.

Research explicitly examining the consequences of the use of deception in romantic couples finds that, although lies may have negative outcomes for the lie teller, there is actually a modest positive impact on the lie receiver—as long as he or she does not discover the deception. That said, although individuals tend to assume that their partners are more honest than themselves, if there is suspicion of lying, the consequences are negative for both parties. In the case of deception suspicion, even a small suspicion that one's partner is lying has significant consequences on relationship satisfaction.

Although research consistently shows that deception is common in relationships, little work has examined individual differences in expressing and reacting to relational deception. One possibility that is receiving increasing attention is the connection between deception and attachment theory. Studies that directly examine the connection between adult attachment and deception find that people higher in attachment anxiety or avoidance are more likely to report deception in their romantic relationships, expect to be lied to more often, and show less authenticity in communicating with their partner. Furthermore, attachment security is connected to greater openness and more constructive patterns of communication. Given that one aspect of deception involves withholding particular types of communication, different working models of attachment are likely to predict the degree to which people engage in deception and the type of deception in which they engage.

Lying in Casual Relationships

Deception also plays a significant role in more casual relationships and, at least in terms of the frequency of deception, is likely even more ubiquitous than in romantic relationships. But deception does not always have negative consequences

for the functioning of relationships. For instance, deception skills are positively related to social competence. As one example of this phenomenon, adolescents who are best at deceiving others are also higher in social competence. Effective lying appears to serve as a social skill in which popularity is a consequence of the ability to both provide information to others that is socially desirable, as well as withholding information that might potentially hurt a recipient.

However, when someone is exposed as lying in casual relationships, the consequences are generally harmful. Liars who are found out are disliked by those to whom they lied even if the lies have no direct or significant impact on the recipient of the lies. Perhaps more important, those who learn that they have been lied to by a particular individual increase the level of their own lies to the liar. Consequently, the overall number of lies in an interaction increases significantly.

Furthermore, when lying to someone with whom one has only a casual relationship, or one with whom future interaction is unlikely, norms regarding deception seem to change. People appear to realize that the chance of their deception being discovered is lower and the lack of any bond with the receiver leaves people feeling less uncomfortable telling lies to strangers. Consistent with this view, lies that are told to strangers also tend to be less altruistic (in the sense of bolstering the recipient).

Certain situational factors also increase the use of deception. For instance, when one is confronted with the success of a partner, thereby threatening one's self-esteem, deception increases in an effort to improve one's social standing. Deception may thus be used as a means of improving mood and self-esteem when a threat is presented in the form of social comparison information.

There are also gender differences in deception in casual relationships. Overall, men and women generally lie the same amount, and the frequency of lies is similar whether the targets of the lies are male or female. However, although the frequency of deception may be approximately the same, the content of the lies told by men and women differ. Men's lies tend to be more self-oriented, motivated by a desire to enhance their self-image. In contrast, women's lies are more often intended to make the recipient of the lie feel more positively about him- or herself.

Methodological Issues

Researchers face several methodological hurdles in studying deception. For example, one common technique involves having experimental participants keep a retrospective diary of any and all lies told. The problem with this methodology is that one cannot be sure that every lie is remembered and recorded accurately. Another problem is that self-reports may be colored by self-presentation motives.

A second popular method in deception research asks participants to review a video or transcript of statements made recently to a partner and to indicate their accuracy. Although there is evidence that people will reveal lies when the subject matter is benign and there is no chance of punitive consequences, this method still relies on self-report and is therefore not a fully adequate solution. Deception researchers continue in their efforts to create a methodology that can accurately measure deception while avoiding reliance on self-reports.

The most recent efforts to find accurate measures of deception involve neuroimaging techniques, such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imagery (fMRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) scans. Results are promising, although as yet hardly definitive. For instance, there is evidence for increased brain activity in particular areas of the prefrontal cortex (involved in the coordination of thoughts and behaviors) and the amygdala (involved in processing and memory of emotional stimuli) while making deceptive responses. However, the results of such studies remain in their early stages.

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See also Deception and Lying; Openness and Honesty; Self-Disclosure; Self-Presentation

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LIFE REVIEW, ROLE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Humans are as much biographical as biological beings. Just as individuals may be understood in terms of cells and species, so too may they be characterized, in an equally fundamental sense, as storytellers considering and understanding themselves and their lives through the narrative terms of plots, events, and scripts of life; the characters, heroes, and villains; and the themes and settings in which events and interactions take place. Life review is the centerpiece of the life story.

Life review may be defined as the relatively systematic reflection on one's personal history, an elaborate form of reminiscence and retrospection. Robert Butler, a geropsychiatrist, coined this term and considered life review a normative developmental task of (although not restricted to) the later years, brought about by an awareness of life's end and/or critical life markers. The life review also holds a prominent place in the final stage of Erik Erikson's often cited life-span developmental theory. The life review serves both intra- and interpersonal functions and is believed to be most effective in social settings (i.e., in interaction with and in the presence of others); these personal and relational functions are described in this entry, particularly highlighting the social and group processes of the life review.

Personal Functions of Life Review

The personal functions realized by the life review range from the mundane and neutral (e.g., including reflective personal distractions during idle moments) to the profound and positive (e.g., clarifying problems and choosing courses of actions based on successful previous decisions; boosting self-confidence and morale based on the reflection on previous accomplishments). Some negative consequences of reviewing one's life have been noted, often attributed to rumination or perseverance on failures and associated with lowered self-esteem. The sharing of stories with others is believed to mitigate these potential negative consequences. The act of sharing is fundamentally a positive process and further enhances morale and self-esteem in this context through the role others might play in the process of reviewing a life, such as redirecting attention toward a more affirmative course and/or offering different and more encouraging interpretations of events and circumstances.

Relational Functions of Life Review

The relational functions of life review similarly range from the mundane to the profound. For example, life review may serve a purpose as basic as initiating conversations; individuals, in the company of others, may recall incidents, times, and circumstances as a means to "break the ice" or begin some dialogue. Life review may also serve to nurture or deepen relationships. Such effects have been noted in the Guided Autobiography, the group-based, thematic and semistructured approach to the life review developed by James Birren, a prominent gerontologist. In the structured setting of the Guided Autobiography, small groups (e.g., typically six persons) of women and men of various ages collectively review their lives according to a set of themes. This group process provides a cohesive setting for reflection and discussion—a process Birren calls the *developmental exchange,* in which trust in the group and intimate sharing are incrementally and mutually enhanced. Comparisons and contrasts may be observed, and individuals may see themselves and their lives reflected in the stories of others, removing perceived stigma and fostering

connections often across societal divides of age, gender, race, and other social categories.

Research also has found that individuals offer explicit prosocial and generative motives for telling their life story. Many individuals report that they want to share their stories with relatives and others, thereby providing a legacy and preserving the history of a family so that younger generations may come to know their elders and ancestors and hence their own family histories—their own stories. This teaching/informing function has been well established in life review research and appears to be a motive most significantly found among older adults.

Relatedly, the personalization and validation of a historical record is reported among the reasons for the telling and sharing of the life stories, most notably revealed in research with Holocaust survivors. Several international projects have been developed to capture these life stories as "living" and permanent records of the now elderly survivors of one of the world's greatest atrocities. Survivors report their willingness to retell (or sometimes tell for the first time) their experiences so that such horror might never happen again—a way of giving to and protecting subsequent generations. Research has also found that it is important for individuals, such as these survivors, to have their stories witnessed. Reviewing these experiences in the presence of others claims, for the teller, the authority and the truth of the events; witnesses to these stories learn this truth and connect with the storyteller and his or her circumstances in a way that words on a page cannot.

These life lesson gifts, framed in the language of life review, have also found explicit expression in Ethical Wills, a way of sharing values, lessons, hopes, and dreams of an individual's life with roots in the Hebrew Bible. Authors in this recently rediscovered field comment on the surprising imbalance in the efforts expended by individuals to bequeath and distribute the physical possessions acquired throughout life (by way of wills and other legal documents) relative to the dispossession of priceless nonmaterial assets: life's meanings, personal goals, spiritual values, blessings, and forgiveness. The modern version of this formerly oral cultural practice is typically a written document, frequently in the form of a letter, and is often shared with others both prior to and following the death of the author. An Ethical Will is a spiritual and narrative counterpart to the more familiar legal documents and recognizes that which is relationally and socially important in life.

Notwithstanding the prominent role of the "self" in these accounts, several researchers have proposed that the life review and other such stories are essentially coauthored by and with the significant others in an individual's life. For example, in studies with women and men in later life, it was found that the events of others (e.g., birth of a grandchild, retirement of spouse) claim a significant place in an individual's life review. Furthermore, the story is often adapted and shaped by the reports of another (e.g., when and how couples met), and a mutually consistent story emerges. Culture, too, plays a role in identifying the sorts of markers and events that an individual is likely to include in a life review and the ways in which such events are interpreted.

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See also Group Dynamics; Listening; Nostalgia; Self-Disclosure; Storytelling

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LIFE-SPAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS

All relationships develop over time, from the first interaction to the last one. This can take only a short time, as in dating relationships, or it can take a lifetime, as in sibling relationships. The development of one relationship can be viewed, in turn, within the broader perspective of the development of an individual who is involved in many different

relationships. Each relationship changes over time due to developmental changes of the two individuals involved in the relationship (they "grow together") and as some relationships are dissolved and new ones are established. For example, the mother–child relationship likely changes if the mother takes a full-time job and thereby has less flexible time; also, the mother's relationships with friends may change, and new ones with coworkers will be established. The metaphor of a *social convoy* over the life course nicely describes the flux and flow of these relationship changes: Individuals move through their lives surrounded by social partners to whom they maintain ever-changing relationships, as in a convoy of vehicles. This entry provides an overview of relationships from such a developmental psychology perspective.

Long-Term Stability of Relationships and Their Quality

The *long-term stability* of relationships and their quality follows three principles. First, relationships are the result of the continual interaction between two individuals. Thus, the quality of their relationship is influenced by their personalities (characteristic traits such as extraversion, neuroticism, etc.) and the history of their interaction. Therefore, the long-term stability of their relationship depends on the long-term stability of the two personalities involved. Also, their relationship is often affected by relationships with other people in their social network (external relationships). Therefore, any change of the personality of any of the people involved in these interactions limits the continuation of the relationship and can affect its quality (e.g., changes in satisfaction with the relationship, commitment, and attachment to the partner). The complex interactions between the involved personalities and relationships impose additional constraints on stability. Therefore, the stability of relationships is likely to be less than the stability of personality.

Second, human societies are characterized by continuous social and cultural change, such as economic or political change. As detailed analyses during the American Great Depression and the German Reunification have shown, such changes may have a strong impact on relationships. For

example, marriage, divorce, and birth rates dropped considerably in former Eastern Germany during the reunification. Third, individual development is organized in most cultures around *life-course transitions,* that is, age-graded, socially expected changes such as leaving the parental home, graduating from college, and beginning first full-time job, which, in turn, affect the relationships of the individuals in transition.

Although quantitative reviews of the stability and change in the number and quality of relationships have not yet been published, the few longitudinal studies that have compared relationship stability with the stability of individual personality traits consistently show that relationship quality is less stable than personality, particularly during life-course transitions, and that relationship stability is more challenged by societal change than personality stability.

Personality–Relationship Transactions

If relationships are less stable than personality, the chances are higher for personality to influence relationships rather than vice versa. Indeed, longitudinal studies have found more evidence for personality effects on relationships than vice versa. For example, sociability increases the probability of making new friends, shyness and social anxiety decrease this probability, neuroticism increases the probability of divorce, agreeableness decreases conflict in relationships, and conscientiousness increases involvement in family relationships. Among the few effects of relationships on personality that have been consistently found are effects of attachment security in infants on their later social competence, effects of friendships with antisocial peers on adolescents' antisocial tendencies, and effects of the first stable romantic relationship on neuroticism and shyness (decreases). Thus, there is evidence for both directions of influences, but personality to relationship influences seem to be more frequent than relationship to personality influences.

However, these effects are often smaller than the correlations between personality change and simultaneous relationship change; in other words, relationships and personality often codevelop in a corresponding way. The main reason for this correspondence seems to be that people select and

evoke relationship experiences that deepen or accentuate their personality traits. For example, liberal students make friends more often with, and are more likely to marry, other liberal college students, which increases their liberal attitudes; aggressive children engage in vicious cycles of aggression with peers and family members, which increases their aggressiveness; antisocial adolescents join deviant cliques consisting of similarly minded peers, which increases their antisocial tendencies; and intellectually or physically competent students are more challenged by their mentors or trainers than less competent ones, which increases their competence.

Life-Course Perspective

Many of the relationship changes occurring over developmental time are due to age-graded, socially expected changes, often called *normative life-course transitions*. For example, moving out of the parental home changes the relationships with one's parents and siblings, but also with peers, who become more important. The term *norm* here refers to a social expectation rather than to a statistical norm (it is expected that young adults do not continue to live in their parents' home, although some do). In addition, non-normative life events may affect the relationships of an individual (e.g., a mother's separation from the father may also affect the mother–child relationship). A life-course perspective on relationships considers both normative and non-normative changes as they occur between birth and death, classifies these changes in ways that are meaningful for the given culture, and tries to understand how and why people master the challenges entailed by these changes more or less successfully.

The ways in which people master these challenges can also affect relationships. To consider again the example of a mother entering her first job, she likely would ask more household duties from her husband, has to find daycare for her children, pursues new friends at the workplace, and has less time for former friends. These relationship changes result from the mother's active efforts at coping with the transition to a full-time job by trying to adjust her social environment to her needs and life goals.

Thus, two different kinds of relationship changes over the life course can be distinguished. Life-course transitions and life events push people toward normative relationship change, whereas their regulatory efforts pull their relationships to fit their needs and goals, resulting in regulatory relationship change. For example, entering a university pushes freshmen to establish new relationships with their roommates and other students, and their regulatory efforts pull these new relationships to fit their needs for social interaction. Because the needs and goals vary across people according to their personality, and regulation is more or less successful according to personal competencies, regulatory relationship change is personality-dependent. Some freshmen spend more time getting to know other students in cafes, clubs, and at social events, whereas others spend more time lonely in their room and in the library. These two kinds of changes appear to be the main reasons that personality effects on relationships are more easily observed during life transitions, such as the transition to university, work, or retirement, and during adaptation to life events, such as divorce or unemployment, rather than during periods of high environmental stability.

Normative Life-Course Transitions

Normative life-course transitions are experienced by most people at certain ages and are guided by culturally shared expectations about when and how a transition should occur. For example, even within Western cultures, it is expected that a man will leave his family of origin at a certain age that differs across cultures (e.g., around age 20 in Denmark, but in the late 20s in Italy). All life-course transitions involve changes in relationships that present several challenges. They threaten to limit the continuity of certain relationships (e.g., with classmates after graduation), transform the quality of important relationships (e.g., with parents after leaving home), draw on the individual's social resources (e.g., by a status loss after retirement), and often dispose the individual to an ambiguous, less predictable future of relationships.

In Western cultures, the most important life-course transitions relate to changes in family, education, and work. The most important family

transitions are the birth of a sibling, leaving the parental home, first marriage, first parenthood, and the last child moving away from home (the so-called *empty nest*). In contrast, transitions that are less age-graded or less common are life events such as divorce and widowhood. The most important transitions related to education and work are school entry, school-to-school transitions, entry into the labor market, and retirement. Again, unemployment is rather considered a life event. This section deals with normative and regulatory relationship changes during these transitions at a more general level; other entries in this encyclopedia discuss these specific transitions.

All transitions involve significant changes in the social environment. An important insight from studies of transitions is that changes in relationships during a transition are not only caused by the transition, but are rather *proactive*. People and their close social network partners anticipate many of these changes and react in advance to this anticipation, not only when the transition has occurred. For example, parents may prepare their first child for the birth of the second child to minimize envy; classmates who know that they will soon attend different schools will often deemphasize their relationship, whereas those who expect to continue in the same school will deepen their relationship; and couples often try to coordinate their retirement years before.

Also, although some relationship changes during the transition are directly due to the transition, others are regulatory changes. For example, new siblinghood implies a new sibling relationship, but new siblinghood often also affects relationships with parents and other siblings because of a new rival family member, and sometimes also with peers due to increased social competence developed as families manage these changes. Similarly, the loss of school friends after the transition to a university is a direct consequence of the transition, but it is more or less quickly compensated for by new peer relationships at college, including roommates; and retirement is experienced more often positively than negatively partly because of the new freedom to keep liked former colleagues in one's social network and to rid oneself of obligatory relationships with disliked colleagues.

Non-Normative Life Events

For a long time, psychologists have studied adaptations to positive relationship-related life events, such as falling in love, and to negative relationship-related life events, such as parental death, separation, divorce, and widowhood. Overall, the effects of such events seemed rather short lived. Data from a large representative German longitudinal study where year-to-year changes in life satisfaction were obtained from 5 years before the event until 5 years after the event revised this picture. Although married people reported overall slightly higher life satisfaction than nonmarried people, this effect was largely due to the fact that even 5 years before marriage, people who eventually married were happier than nonmarried people. Thus, happier people more often tend to marry than less happy people (partly because happier people are more attractive to others than less happy people). Marriage had only a slight additional effect that showed up mainly during the year of marriage and the year before and after; 5 years after marriage, married people were exactly as happy as 5 years before marriage.

In contrast, divorced people were already considerably less happy than married people 5 years before divorce; happiness was lowest 1 year before divorce and then increased but stabilized 4 years after divorce at a level that was clearly lower than the initial level 5 years before divorce. Thus, whereas the effect of marriage was only transitory, the effect of divorce was long lasting. Also, this study showed large differences in how people reacted to marriage and divorce; some became quite unhappy already in the year after marriage, and some became much happier directly after divorce. Similar, although less marked, changes in life satisfaction were found for unemployment.

These recent studies of life events suggest that cross-sectional studies comparing people who recently experienced a particular event with a control group that did not experience this event, and longitudinal studies beginning in the year of the event or shortly before, may lead to misleading conclusions because they ignore preselection into these groups or changes occurring years before the event. That is, cross-sectional studies may seem to show the effects of an event when these results more appropriately are due to differences between

people. Also, they raise questions about the rosy common belief that marriage makes people happier in the long run. More important than the event seems to be who is experiencing the event (*selection effect*) and how individuals master the event (*regulatory effect*).

Because of the preselection effects, critical life events often cannot be considered random events that are unrelated to the individual experiencing the event. Even becoming a lottery winner is not independent of one's personality because not everybody risks losing money in lotteries. Becoming incarcerated, married, or HIV positive are different life events that nevertheless are similar in the fact that all may to some degree be predictable from personality.

Life-Course Management

Theories of *life-course management* and *developmental regulation* address the ways in which individuals master the challenges entailed in normative life-course transitions and non-normative life events, including how people deal with these challenges (regulatory change). Socioemotional selectivity theory suggests that people adapt their social motives over the life course according to their perception of how much time they have left in life. Such motives also involve existing or future relationships. When people perceive time as expansive, they pursue future-oriented goals and motives, such as seeking new relationships with friends and colleagues or striving to establish a stable partnership. In contrast, when they perceive time as limited, such as in older age or when they confront a life-threatening illness, they tend to pay less attention to less meaningful and distant relationships and focus instead on close relationships that help fulfill belongingness and generativity needs, such as relationships with their partner, their children, and closer friends and relatives. These predictions have been well confirmed in research on age-related changes in social networks; whereas aging people by and large preserve the "core" of their social network, the overall size of the network shrinks due to the loss of less close, peripheral relationships.

Most theories of life-course management distinguish between two groups of strategies that people use when they adapt to life-course transitions and non-normative life events: changing or stabilizing the external world versus changing or protecting the own internal states. For example, the *life-course theory of control* distinguishes *primary* and *secondary control strategies*. These control strategies operate in tandem when people try to master life-course transitions or critical life events that threaten valued relationships. For example, after moving into a new town, people may look for new local friends to compensate for the loss of friends at the earlier place. Also, they may intensify communication with close friends and relatives, particularly those who live in or close to the new town. Both are instances of primary control. In addition, people may invest less time in nonsocial leisure activities such as watching TV alone, try to cope with feelings of loneliness, and lower their standards for time spent with friends (e.g., by convincing themselves that, although present circumstances are difficult, the future will be better). These are secondary control strategies.

Studies of aging suggest that as people move into later adulthood, they shift from an *activation mode* focusing on building new relationships to a *protection mode* aimed at preserving existing relationships and from an other focus to a self-focus. For example, many studies with married couples in middle and later adulthood found that older couples were better at expressing mutual affection and avoiding conflictual issues.

Conclusion

A life-span perspective on relationships views relationship changes over individual development as a function of normative life-course transitions, non-normative life events, and individuals' attempts to master the relationship changes due to these transitions and events by both primary and secondary control strategies. In doing so, such a life-span perspective stresses the active role of individuals in controlling their own relationship development. Combined with a personality differences perspective, it appears that relationship changes in response to life-course transitions and life events may considerably vary according to individual control beliefs and competencies.

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See also Contextual Influences on Relationships; Convoy Model of Social Relations; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Resilience; Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model

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LIKING

Individuals express liking for a variety of phenomena. They can like an action enacted or planned ("I like volunteering"), an inanimate object ("I like my car"), an experience ("I like thinking about the future"), or another individual ("I like my friend"). These varied forms of liking involve positivity toward the liked object, but what differentiates interpersonal liking from other types of liking? In other words, what does it mean to like another person? This entry explores definitions of *interpersonal liking,* its development, and individual differences in this process.

Definitions of Interpersonal Liking

One conceptualization of liking comes from social learning theory. In this perspective, liking another individual does not differ from liking an activity, object, or experience. Social learning theory states that all behaviors result from the pursuit of a "reward" or some positive outcome. Thus, just as one might pursue an action because it feels good, one likes another person because being with that person provides benefits of some sort. Individuals differ in their perceptions of the benefits offered by another person (i.e., what is rewarding to some may not be rewarding to others) and can feel rewarded by numerous properties related to the other, such as the person's characteristics (sense of humor, physical attractiveness, status, or warmth), feeling liked in return, companionship, or access to tangible rewards or opportunities (money, transportation, networking). These rewards make the relationship appealing, and the individual comes to associate the other with positive feelings.

A second conceptualization of liking distinguishes liking from loving. Zick Rubin theorized that, although liking and loving are both attitudes toward another person involving positive emotions and positivity about that partner, liking does not involve physical attraction and desire, whereas love does. Rubin developed questionnaires to measure liking (e.g., "My partner is the sort of person that I would like to be") and loving (e.g., "If I could never be with my partner, I would be miserable"), and researchers administer these items to determine an individual's feelings toward another person. It is clear from such items that Rubin considers liking to be a less complex attitude than loving, one that does not involve the same degree of investment in the relationship.

Other theorists categorize liking as one form of love. For example, Robert Sternberg describes three components of love: passion—arousal and physical attraction; commitment—devotion to and faith in the relationship; and intimacy—feelings of warmth, understanding, and connection to another person. These components, alone and in combination (e.g., the presence of passion vs. the presence of passion *and* intimacy), produce seven types of love. One of these types of love, referred to as liking, occurs when individuals experience intimacy without passion or commitment. In this instance, people positively regard each other and feel close without necessarily experiencing attraction or feeling committed. Another type of love in Sternberg's model is companionate love. As with liking, companionate love involves the intimacy component, whereby an individual feels close to another person without experiencing passion, but companionate love also includes commitment. Companionate love, then, is a stronger form of liking involving a desire to continue the relationship long term.

As a whole, theories of interpersonal liking suggest that it is a state of pleasant feelings and connectedness directed toward another person perhaps because that individual offers something desirable. Thus, interpersonal liking bears some similarity to other forms of liking given that both involve rewarding experiences, but interpersonal liking goes beyond general liking—that is, a positive attitude toward something—in that it involves intimacy and closeness with another person.

Development of Liking

How do individuals come to like others around them? What factors draw people together? After an initial encounter, there must be qualities that attract one individual to another that help transform a one-time meeting into a potential relationship. In essence, the initial interaction must be positive and must foster the expectation of future rewarding interactions. Existing research has identified four principles of attraction that contribute to liking: similarity, proximity, physical attractiveness, and reciprocity of liking.

Similarity

On the whole, people tend to like those who are similar to them: people who have similar backgrounds, similar interests, similar values and attitudes, and similar dispositions. Why are such similarities attractive? Research suggests that sharing common interests and beliefs with another person is associated with the expectation of being liked by the other, which in turn suggests that interactions will be smooth and enjoyable. If Matt, who strongly identifies with his religion, meets Eric, who faithfully follows the same religion, it is easier for Matt to anticipate being accepted by Eric. Expecting to be liked, Matt will feel more comfortable with Eric, treating him in a sociable, friendly manner, making it easier for Eric to respond likewise. Thus, knowledge of similarity is likely to help interactions go well, and such pleasant interactions lead people to experience greater liking.

Similarity is also validating. Many values and interests can be ambiguous; individuals are often unsure whether the things that matter the most to them are acceptable or worthwhile. According to social comparison theory, people obtain information about the validity of their beliefs and opinions by comparing them with the beliefs and opinions of others, particularly similar and highly regarded others. Thus, being around others who hold similar positions can help people feel positively about themselves, and such rewarding interactions lead to liking.

Proximity and Familiarity

Proximity, or the physical presence of others, attracts people to one another and can contribute to greater liking. One study, examining friendships among individuals living in a college dormitory, found that those who lived next door to one another were more likely to become friends than those who lived on the same floor, but farther away. The principle of proximity suggests that when another person is frequently nearby, there are more opportunities to observe and interact with the individual. Proximity has its effect, therefore, by establishing familiarity. Merely being exposed to another person leads to a sense that the other is likable. For instance, research assistants in another study sat in on a large lecture class 0, 5,

10, or 15 times throughout one semester. Students in the class rated the research assistants who attended the most classes more positively and more desirable as friends presumably because they were more familiar with these assistants. Essentially, proximity gives individuals the opportunity to become familiar with others; as long as that familiarity occurs in a positive context (i.e., the individuals have reasonably common interests and values and their interactions are pleasant), feelings of comfort and liking are likely to result.

Although proximity and familiarity may increase liking, regular interaction is needed to maintain liking. Stated differently, in general, absence may *not* make the heart grow fonder. If two individuals do not spend time together, they lack the enjoyable interactions that foster liking. Another qualification is that proximity and familiarity do contribute to greater liking, but only if two individuals are initially favorably disposed toward each other. More time spent with partners who are experienced as unpleasant or with whom there is outright competition and hostility is likely to contribute to further dislike. Social psychologists explain this qualification by arguing that proximity makes the "dominant response"—that is, the most likely response in that situation—even more likely.

Physical Attractiveness

Physical attractiveness is a valued trait in a romantic partner. What may be more surprising is that physical attractiveness can also foster attraction among nonromantic friends. One reason is that good looks often lead to the impression that a person has other desirable qualities. Research on the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype suggests that people presume that attractive individuals are more socially competent, intelligent, moral, selfless, and successful. Given this expectation that beauty is linked to positive qualities, it is clear why people would want to develop relationships with attractive others—they anticipate satisfying and rewarding interactions.

Several studies suggest that in the social domain, attractive people may indeed possess more positive qualities such as greater social skills. It may be that the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype operates in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy: People's expectations that an attractive person has good social skills may evoke exactly the positive characteristics that they expect. In one influential study, men were shown a photograph of either an attractive or unattractive woman and were led to believe they would interact with that woman over an intercom system. Although the photograph was not actually of their partner, men who saw the attractive photograph were more friendly, warm, outgoing, and funny in their conversations with the woman than men who expected to interact with the unattractive woman. It may be, then, that attractive individuals exhibit positive qualities because others give them opportunity after opportunity to do so.

Although physical attractiveness is associated with characteristics that benefit social interactions, the appeal of attractiveness may go beyond this, especially when selecting a romantic partner. A primary goal of any living organism is to pass on its genes. In sexually reproducing species, individuals have choice when selecting mating partners. Reproductive success can be maximized by choosing partners with the highest quality genes. Some theorists suggest that the physical attractiveness is an indication of a potential partner's "good genes." According to this hypothesis, attractiveness provides a cue to an individual's genetic fitness because poor genes show themselves in deformities and poor health, which are considered unattractive. Attractiveness, therefore, may be an advertisement of an individual's genetic quality.

Finally, beauty may also contribute to liking because it is valued in most cultures. In part, individuals like attractive people because they are seen positively by society, and associating with valued others may allow individuals to bask in reflected positivity.

Reciprocity of Liking

As mentioned earlier, awareness of being liked by another person often leads to liking. In one dating study, only 3 percent of men reported a willingness to ask out an attractive woman if they did not know what her response would be, preferring instead to wait for indications that the attraction was mutual. Researchers, led by Mark Leary and Roy Baumeister, have theorized that humans have a need to belong—a desire to be included and valued by others. Perceiving that another person likes

the self connotes an opportunity to be included, which is desirable and leads the individual to reciprocate liking. According to this theory, because relationships are tied to feelings of self-worth, individuals are motivated to participate in satisfying close relationships that bring about positive self-evaluations. However, initiating and participating in relationships always carries some risk of rejection. New acquaintances may be rejecting, and friends may behave in ways that foster hurt feelings, intentionally or unintentionally. The pain of such negative interpersonal experiences, which in one important study was linked to activation in the same neural regions as physical pain, may induce people to distance themselves from the situation and seek out supportive others. Knowing that one is liked and accepted by others suggests that they will be attentive to one's needs, interested in one's experiences and perspectives, and willing to make the relationship a priority. Further, interacting with others who express liking for the self is enjoyable and thus positively reinforcing. Essentially, confidence about another person's liking creates expectations of gratifying future interactions, providing an incentive to like that individual in return.

These principles of attraction describe several common processes that contribute to the development of liking. Of course, they also suggest that there are individual differences in who is liked. Interactions that are experienced as rewarding by one individual may be viewed by another as dull or frustrating. People are motivated to self-enhance, to see the self positively. As a result, individuals want to associate with those who validate the self because such interactions make people feel good about themselves. Of course, validating interactions are also inherently pleasurable. Thus, although the processes associated with attraction and liking unfold in all relationships, the specific content of similarity, proximity and familiarity, physical attractiveness, and reciprocity of liking are unique to each dyad.

A Social Relations Analysis of Liking

David Kenny's Social Relations Model attempts to distinguish between the various contributors to liking—the actor, the target, and the relationship. When considering an individual's liking of another, the actor effect refers to how much the individual likes all interaction partners (i.e., how much does Theresa like all people with whom she interacts?). The target effect assesses how likable the interaction partner is to people in general (i.e., how much is Andrew liked by all people with whom he interacts?). The relationship effect represents how much a partner is liked over and above these general tendencies, presumably reflecting the dyad's distinctive manner of relating to each other (i.e., over and above Theresa's liking for people in general and Andrew's likability, how much does Theresa like Andrew?). Kenny's research suggests that, although actor and target effects have some impact on liking, to a great extent, liking is due to characteristics unique to a given relationship. That is, although an individual may believe that he or she likes another because of that person's qualities or because he or she likes most people, liking is more attributable to a pair's characteristic pattern of interacting.

One of the more interesting questions to emerge from the Social Relations Model analysis of liking is whether people are aware of how much others like them. Several studies have shown that perceptions of liking are attributable to the different components of this model. That is, in terms of target effects, people do seem to have a reasonably accurate sense of how much others like them in general. But in terms of relationship effects—knowing how much a particular person likes the self—people tend to be much less accurate.

Liking and Self-Disclosure

When two people self-disclose to each other, they like each other more as personal disclosures communicate trust and interest in the other person. In addition, self-disclosure is also used by those who like each other to share information about the self and thereby draw closer. Although self-disclosure does strengthen closeness and intimacy, this process must be gradual, or at least proceed at a pace acceptable to both members of the dyad. If either individual discloses too much too soon, the other person is likely to feel that the disclosure is excessive and inappropriate, inhibiting the developing closeness. Similarly, if either individual discloses too little, the other individual may feel a lack of trust or interest in forming a relationship, which also diminishes liking.

Liking in Long-Term Romantic Relationships

Some basic form of liking is necessary for the formation of any type of relationship. Acquaintance and friendship relationships are based primarily on liking, whereas intimate romantic relationships are initially characterized by a great deal of passionate love and physical attraction. However, passionate love generally wanes as time passes, and couples' needs become sated and the partners habituate to each other. If romantic relationships are based only on arousal and desire, they are likely to deteriorate alongside the decreasing passion. In more successful romantic relationships, as passionate love peaks and begins to taper, companionate love tends to grow. Companionate love, which goes beyond the warmth, positivity, and caring associated with liking to also include commitment, is associated with long-term well-being in romantic relationships, including marriage. Although passionate love is a mechanism to get two romantic partners together, it is the affection and dedication associated with companionate love that keeps romantic relationships going long term.

Conclusion

The social world is replete with opportunities for interaction. However, given limited time and energy, individuals prefer others with whom they anticipate fulfilling experiences. The processes associated with liking allow individuals to differentiate between rewarding interaction partners and those who are less interesting or who are disliked. In effect, then, liking is the gatekeeper to forming and maintaining relationships.

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See also Belonging, Need for; Familiarity Principle of Attraction; Love, Typologies; Physical Attractiveness, Role in Relationships; Reciprocity of Liking; Similarity Principle of Attraction; Social Relations Model

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LISTENING

The average person does not actually speak for long periods in each day, and listening is the predominant interpersonal activity. It is crucially important in the formation, development, and maintenance of relationships. The child learns to listen before learning to speak, learns to speak before learning to read, and learns to read before learning to write. Listening is therefore a fundamental prerequisite skill on which other skills are predicated. Yet many relationship problems are caused by ineffective listening. Reading and writing skills have a low correlation, and the same probably holds for speaking and listening skills.

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Indeed, we often listen with the intention of responding rather than with the intention of understanding. To respond appropriately, we need to give concerted attention to the speaker's communications. It is through listening that we accumulate the information and insights required for effective relational decision making. This entry examines listening in terms of its conceptualization, measurement, typologies, behavioral manifestations, and covert techniques.

Conceptualization and Measurement

The term *listen* is derived from two Anglo-Saxon words: *hylstan* (hearing) and *hlosnian* (wait in suspense). However, there is considerable debate about the exact meaning of the term. Different definitions emphasize either the covert cognitive aspect, or the overt behavioral dimension, associated with listening. Thus, some definitions focus on the cognitive auditory processes involved in sensing, storing, and interpreting oral messages. This perspective distinguishes hearing from listening. Hearing is perceived as a physical activity, whereas listening is a mental process. Just as most of us use our visual pathways to see but read with our brains, so we use our aural pathways to hear but listen with our brains. Similarly, although we do not have to learn how to see but have to learn to read, so too we do not need to learn how to hear but need to learn to listen. But cognitive understandings of aural information ignore nonverbal cues, which contribute significantly to the actual meaning of a message. For this reason, broader definitions conceptualize listening as an inclusive relational process in which the listener attempts to assimilate, understand, and retain both the verbal and nonverbal signals emitted by the speaker.

Listening begins when our senses register incoming stimuli. Our sensory register receives a large volume of data but holds this for a short time. Auditory data are held for up to 4 seconds, whereas visual data are held for just a few hundred milliseconds. For information to be retained, it has to be transferred to memory. Social data can be coded and stored in both episodic memory (remembering what people did) and semantic memory (remembering what they said). In working memory

(WM), both the memory/storage and attentional/processing functions combine to create meaning. People with greater WM capacities are better listeners because they can assimilate and process information swiftly and respond more appropriately. Research has shown a link between capacity for short-term listening (STL) and listening success. Good short-term listeners give more effective oral presentations, ask more questions in interviews, are more likely to secure promotion, and are rated as being better managers. However, although the importance of short-term memory for listening has been demonstrated, the exact nature of any causal relationship among listening ability, overt listening behavior, and STL is unclear. It is evident that there is more to listening than simply recall and more to recall than just listening. Further research is needed to tease out the exact nature of these relationships.

There are two broad categories of instruments used to measure listening: recall tests and perceptual instruments. Recall tests measure effectiveness based on the accuracy of message recall or comprehension. They involve presenting subjects with a filmed or audio sequence and requiring them to answer fixed-choice questions based on what has occurred. Although these tests may have high face validity, they have been criticized on four main grounds. First, they tend to measure retention or basic comprehension, rather than listening per se. Second, they conceptualize listening as a passive process in that, unlike actual social encounters, in these tests the listener is an observer who does not actively engage in the interaction. Third, they have been found to have low validity, with factor analysis tending to reveal that the only common factor is indeed memory. Fourth, these tests also to some extent measure literacy skills because they rely on reading and writing abilities.

Perceptual instruments involve either the completion of self-reports that measure one's perceptions of oneself or another as a listener or tests of ability to decode meaning from vocal or visual messages. Again, however, these are at least one step removed from real interactions. The former, self-report measures, offer a subjective insight into how respondents perceive themselves or others to have acted, as opposed to an objective record of how they actually performed. A problem with this type of measure is that self-report instruments

often have low reliability. Tests of decoding ability tend to focus on either vocalic messages (intonation, pitch, volume, etc.) or visual cues (facial expression, posture, etc.). These reveal that visual cues are more accurately decoded than aural ones, and that females are better at decoding nonverbal information than males. A difficulty in extrapolating these findings to human relationships is that, although there are instances in which single-system decoding may be required (e.g., the telephone), in most circumstances these cues are combined during listening.

Thus, there are difficulties with both types of measurement. To compound matters, correlations between different types of assessment have been low, indicating that these may assess different aspects of the listening process.

Typologies, Behavioral Manifestations, and Covert Techniques

There are five main types of listening. *Appreciative listening* occurs when we select messages from which we will gain pleasure, such as when attending a concert. *Comprehension listening* involves attempting to understand what others are telling us. *Evaluative listening* moves beyond comprehension to delineate the central propositions being put forward and assess the supporting evidence. *Empathic listening* occurs when we listen to someone who needs to talk and be understood and involves trying to see the world from the frame of the speaker. It is therefore at the heart of helping or counseling contexts. Finally, in *dialogic listening,* meaning is jointly generated and shaped through interaction, and for this reason it is also known as relational listening. The term *dialogue* is a combination of the Greek words *dia* ("through") and *logos* ("meaning" or "understanding"). Here, listening is transactional because those involved search for mutually agreed understandings that are beneficial for both parties. This is crucial in negotiations of all types, where for effective outcomes the goals and needs of each side must be jointly explored.

A distinction is also made between *active* and *passive* listening. It is possible to listen passively without indicating that we are paying attention. In contrast, active listening involves responding in such a way as to show that we are attending. In terms of interpersonal relationships, it is important to listen actively. Although verbal responses are the acid test of successful listening, if accompanying nonverbal behaviors are not displayed by the listener, the speaker will infer a lack of interest.

A central verbal indicator of active listening is response development, where the listener follows on and builds on what the speaker has said. Although basic reinforcers (e.g., "That's excellent") can be useful in the short term, these are often employed in pseudolistening, where the listener is not really paying attention, and so can quickly lose value. For reinforcers to be fully effective, reasons should be given ("That's excellent. You have shown real courage in confronting him . . ."). Two other potent forms of verbal following are, first, probing questions, which follow up specific issues raised by the speaker with related questions, and, second, reflecting, where the listener summarizes in his or her own words the essence of what the speaker has just said. It is difficult to listen, assimilate what is being said, and immediately reflect this back using different terminology. The ability to do so is evidence of careful listening. Another listening indicator is reference to past statements made by the speaker, and in particular intermittent summaries of the main issues raised. During discussion, the speaker should avoid noncoherent topic shifts, which are abrupt changes of conversation that are not explained. Rather, coherent topic shifts should be negotiated, with disjunct markers used to signal the topic change (e.g., "That has been useful. . . . Can we now move on to discuss . . .").

The two most prevalent manifestations of active nonverbal listening are head nods and guggles ("Mmm-hmm," "Uh-huh"). This is well-known by TV producers, who cut separately recorded interviewer nods and guggles into interviewee responses to portray a natural conversation. Another crucial nonverbal listening indicator is eye contact, which conveys a desire to attend and participate. However, cultural expertise is required here because, although in Western society listeners look more at speakers than vice versa, in some cultures, this is not the pattern, and direct gaze may be viewed as disrespectful or challenging. Other nonverbal listening indicators are relevant facial expressions (e.g., showing concern), appropriate paralanguage (e.g., interested tone of voice), attentive posture (e.g., forward lean

on a chair), and sympathetic communication (e.g., mirroring the speaker's posture, facial expressions, and paralanguage).

Although the average speech rate is between 125 and 175 words per minute, the average thought rate (for processing information) is between 400 and 800 words per minute. This means that when listening, we have spare thought capacity, which needs to be used positively or unrelated mental processes can intervene (e.g., daydreaming). Because there are simply too many stimuli to attend to in any situation, we are equipped with a selective perception filter, so that certain information is consciously perceived and other material ignored. Thus, we usually filter out stimuli such as the ticking of a clock, hum of air conditioning, or weight of our arms on the chair. Effective listeners actively scan for important information, whereas poor listeners filter much of it out. Indeed, on average, we have forgotten about half of what we hear immediately after hearing it. This is because we are busy doing other things. When we listen, we not only evaluate the speaker's message, but plan a response, rehearse, and then execute it. It is important to ensure that the evaluating, planning, and rehearsing processes, which mediate between listening and speaking, do not actually interfere with the listening process. For example, we may decide what we are going to say before the speaker has finished and so stop listening.

A range of techniques can be employed to heighten receptivity. Information received may be organized into main themes and a chronological sequence. It can also be visualized by creating mental pictures of what the speaker is saying. Intrapersonal dialogue, or self-talk, also facilitates listening. This encompasses perspective taking (attempting to see the world as the speaker sees it), covert self-coaching ("My mind is beginning to wander. I must concentrate more"), self-reinforcement ("I'm listening well and understand her position"), and self-questions ("How does this relate to what she said earlier?").

Another problem in listening is that we assimilate information so as to make it fit with our mental set. Our previous experiences, attitudes, and values influence our expectations. We also evaluate others based on their appearance, initial statements, or their responses during previous encounters. These influence the way the speaker is heard, in that statements may be interpreted in such a way as to fit with prior expectations. When attempting to interpret the motives and goals of the speaker, listeners need to be cognizant of their own possible preconceptions and biases.

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See also Communication, Nonverbal; Communication Skills; Empathy; Perspective Taking; Rapport; Responsiveness

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LONELINESS

The most broadly accepted definition of *loneliness* is the distress that results from discrepancies between ideal and perceived social relationships. This so-called cognitive discrepancy perspective makes it clear that loneliness is not synonymous with being alone, nor does being with others guarantee protection from feelings of loneliness. Rather, loneliness is the distressing feeling that occurs when one's social relationships are perceived as being less satisfying than what is desired. This entry describes how loneliness is conceived and measured; how loneliness is mentally represented;

how loneliness influences thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; and the consequences of loneliness for health and well-being.

Conceptualizations

Despite general agreement over its definition, loneliness is conceived in a number of ways. One theory of loneliness holds that deficiencies in specific provisions of social relationships contribute to specific types of lonely feelings. For instance, lack of engagement in a social network is associated with feelings of social loneliness such as aimlessness, boredom, and exclusion. In contrast, the absence of a reliable attachment figure (e.g., spouse) is associated with feelings of emotional loneliness, such as anxiety, desolation, and insecurity. More recent studies have shown that these types of lonely feelings are not uniquely associated with certain relationships, however. Marriage, for example, serves a broad social integrative function that diminishes feelings of both social and emotional loneliness, especially for women.

Another theory holds that loneliness arises from social skill deficits and personality traits that impair the formation and maintenance of social relationships. Social skills research has shown that loneliness is associated with more self-focus, poorer partner attention skills, a lack of self-disclosure to friends (especially among females), and less participation in organized groups (especially among males). Personality research has shown that loneliness is associated with shyness, neuroticism, and depressive symptoms, as well as low self-esteem, pessimism, low conscientiousness, and disagreeableness. Associations among these characteristics have sometimes led to conceptual confusion between loneliness and depressed affect, poor social support, introversion, and/or neuroticism. Research indicates, however, that loneliness, although related, is independent of these characteristics both conceptually and operationally (i.e., the measurement tools for each of these characteristics are relatively specific for the corresponding traits). Moreover, the effects of loneliness on physical health and physiology are generally not explained by the behavioral and personality characteristics with which loneliness is associated, indicating that loneliness may be a unique psychosocial risk factor whose effects are distinguishable from some combination of poor social support, depression, and personality traits.

Loneliness is aversive, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. An evolutionary conceptualization of loneliness holds that the aversive feelings are adaptive because they motivate the repair or replacement of social connections. Human offspring are born to the longest period of near total dependency of any species. Simple reproduction, therefore, is not sufficient to ensure that one's genes make it into the gene pool. For one's genes to make it to the gene pool, these offspring must survive to reproduce. Social connections and the behaviors they engender (e.g., cooperation, altruism, alliances) enhance the survival of the parents; consequently, their children are more likely to survive to reproduce.

In early human history, hunter-gatherers whose genetic predisposition encouraged social/family "togetherness" and the offering of food and protection to mother and child would have increased offspring survival odds, whereas hunter-gatherers who felt no compunction about ignoring social/family bonds would have reduced the survival odds of their offspring. The latter may have survived to have another family, however, suggesting that no single genetic predisposition is superior. The consequences of such an evolutionary scenario would be heritable individual differences in loneliness, and adoption and twin studies among children and adults support this view. Approximately 48 percent of the variability in loneliness levels can be explained by inherited tendencies to experience loneliness.

The genes underlying loneliness do not act alone. Interactions with the environment bring the expression of an individual's genes to the fore. The genetic biases that account for people's differing sensitivity to the social pain of isolation or rejection, and/or their differing propensity to extract social "nutrients" from the environment, help to determine whether a given social context will dampen or intensify a tendency to feel lonely.

Some social circumstances are fairly uniformly associated with an increased tendency toward loneliness. Marriage is associated with the lowest levels of loneliness; loneliness is greater among those who have experienced divorce and widowhood. Situational factors that influence the availability of social opportunities are also associated

with loneliness (e.g., geographic relocation). Social relationship quality is a more potent predictor of loneliness than the existence or quantity of social contacts, however. Relationships that offer security, comfort, trust, and pleasure, even if interactions are relatively infrequent, are much more effective at preventing feelings of loneliness than are more friends or more frequent interactions that fail to meet these standards. Even in marriage, the quality of the relationship determines the degree of protection against loneliness.

Measurement

Lonely feelings are typically measured using a variety of items that assess the degree to which respondents endorse thoughts and feelings characteristic of loneliness (e.g., "I feel alone," "I lack companionship," "I do not feel part of a group of friends"). The result is a continuum in which the intensity and/or frequency of lonely feelings can range from very low (i.e., equivalent to feelings of social connectedness) to very high. On average, lonely feelings are low to moderate in the general population, with only a relatively small percentage of individuals experiencing intense lonely feelings at any given time. When asked simply whether they are currently feeling lonely, approximately 20 percent of the population will respond affirmatively.

Social Cognition

Mental Representations

An axiom in the study of human relationships is that we are highly social animals. A sense of social connectedness is as vital to our survival as food and drink, yet is so taken for granted that only the absence of that sense has been assigned a unique term. This suggests that "not lonely" is the normal or default state required to maintain a healthy and balanced life and that loneliness is the problematic state. Indeed, people's mental representations of their sociality conform to the importance of social bonds at every level of human endeavor.

Studies of loneliness have shown that mental representations of our connections with others are characterized by individual, relational, and collective dimensions. These dimensions correspond to individual, relational, and collective selves posited by theories of the self. At the individual level, feelings of isolation and low self-worth are precluded when people feel comfortable with themselves and their fit in a social world. At the relational level, feelings of interpersonal connectedness are fostered in close dyadic relationships. At the collective level, feelings of group identification and cohesion satisfy a need for belonging. This three-dimensional representation of loneliness holds in young adults and across gender and racial/ethnic lines in middle-age adults, suggesting a universality to this representational structure of the social self.

Mental Processes and Behaviors

Loneliness can be experienced acutely, as a temporary state that resolves when life circumstances resolve (e.g., new friends are made in a new community), and chronically, as a trait-like characteristic that results from an interaction between life circumstances and a genetic bias to experience feelings of isolation. Once loneliness is triggered, it generates a defensive form of thinking—a "lonely" social cognition—that can make every social molehill look like a mountain. Lonely people tend to be more anxious, pessimistic, and fearful of negative evaluation than people who feel good about their social lives, and they are therefore more likely to act and relate to others in ways that are anxious, negative, and self-protective, which leads paradoxically to self-defeating behaviors. For instance, lonely and nonlonely individuals were equally likely to cooperate with a stranger at the outset and during the early trials of a prisoner's dilemma game in which the stranger was playing a tit-for-tat strategy (i.e., cooperation met with cooperation, betrayal with betrayal). This strategy resulted in increased cooperation across trials among nonlonely subjects, but not among lonely subjects. Similarly, self-reports showed that, relative to nonlonely individuals, lonely individuals were less trusting of others and believed that they were less trusted by others. In essence, lonely individuals exercised self-protective behaviors that prevented them from enjoying the positive, cooperative interactions that were theirs to be had.

Not only do the lonely contribute to their own negative reality, but others begin to view them

more negatively and begin to act accordingly. One study showed that individuals told that an opposite gender partner they were about to meet was lonely subsequently rated that partner as being less sociable. The individuals primed to have these expectations also behaved toward their partners in a less sociable manner than they did toward partners whom they expected to be nonlonely. Once this negative feedback loop starts rolling, the cycle of defensive behavior and negative social results spins even further downhill. The lonely not only react more intensely to everyday hassles (e.g., misplacing or losing things), they experience less of an uplift from everyday perks (e.g., meeting one's responsibilities) than the nonlonely. In essence, lonely individuals inhabit an inhospitable social orbit that repels others or elicits their negative responses. Even when they succeed in eliciting nurturing support from a friend or loved one, they tend to perceive the exchange as less than fulfilling.

Social rejection is a potent cause of loneliness, and the lonely tend to have a heightened sensitivity to cues of social rejection and acceptance in their environment. For instance, after being presented with autobiographical information (i.e., ostensible diary entries) about a number of individuals, lonely participants remembered a greater proportion of information related to interpersonal or collective social ties than did nonlonely participants. It made no difference whether the detail was emotionally positive or negative. In another study, participants asked to "relive" a rejection experience, a procedure that increases feelings of loneliness, showed greater attention to emotional vocal tone (i.e., a cue for social rejection or acceptance) in a subsequent task than did participants asked to relive more neutral experiences.

Greater attention to social cues does not ensure greater social skills, however. Lonely individuals are less accurate than nonlonely people at decoding facial and postural expressions of emotion, for instance. A lack of correspondence between attention and accuracy in responses to social cues has also been demonstrated in a brain-imaging study of lonely and nonlonely young adults. When presented with equally arousing positive and negative pictures of scenes and objects (nonsocial stimuli) and people (social stimuli), activation in a set of brain regions often associated with visual attention and perspective taking varied in response to

negative social (in contrast to matched nonsocial) pictures. Relative to the nonlonely, lonely individuals showed greater visual cortical activation (consistent with greater attention to the negative social than nonsocial pictures) and less activation of the temporo-parietal junction (consistent with less attention devoted to the other person's perspective). Another set of brain regions, associated with reward systems (i.e., ventral striatum), was found to be down-regulated in lonely, compared with nonlonely individuals when viewing positive social (in contrast to matched nonsocial) pictures—results consistent with the idea that lonely individuals derive less pleasure than nonlonely individuals from viewing positive social circumstances. This latter result may bear on the finding that lonely individuals find positive social interactions during the course of a normal day less satisfying than nonlonely individuals.

So although people may become lonely because of a genetic disposition coupled with an unfortunate situation, they remain lonely because of the manner in which they and others think. One might expect that a lonely person, hungry to fulfill unmet social needs, would be accepting of a new acquaintance. However, when confronted with an opportunity to form a social connection, studies show that the lonely are actually far less accepting of potential new friends than are the nonlonely. Similarly, in other studies, lonely students were less responsive to their classmates during class discussions and provided less appropriate and less effective feedback than nonlonely students. Lonely undergraduates also held more negative perceptions of their roommates than did the nonlonely, and this perceptual divide widened as one moved from roommates to suite mates to floor mates to dorm mates.

Time also plays a role in constructing negative "realities." Researchers asked participants to interact with a friend, and to rate the quality of the relationship and the communication (a) immediately, (b) after watching a videotape of the same social exchange, (c) a few weeks later after being reminded of the interaction, and (d) after again watching the videotape. At all four measurement points, lonely individuals rated relationship quality more negatively than did nonlonely individuals. Interestingly, the further in time they were removed from the social exchange, the more negatively they

rated it. Thus, the more time that passed, the more the objective reality succumbed to the "reality" constructed by the lonely individual's negative social cognition.

The Loneliness Continuum Revisited

When loneliness is considered on a continuum that ranges from *not at all* to *very,* it is easy to assume that social cognitive and behavioral characteristics differ in degree commensurate with the degree of loneliness. However, individuals who experience few or no feelings of loneliness are characterized by a unique and adaptive profile that is not simply the opposite of the profile of highly lonely individuals. This was evident in a study of three groups of young adults selected from a sample of more than 2,500 undergraduate students to represent loneliness scores in the bottom 20 percent (low loneliness), middle 20 percent (average loneliness), and top 20 percent (high loneliness). Individuals low in loneliness differed from individuals average or high in loneliness on four of five personality dimensions (more outgoing, agreeable, conscientious, and non-neurotic) and scored higher in optimism, positive mood, social skills, self-esteem, and social support and lower in anger, anxiety, shyness, fear of negative evaluation, and negativity. However, individuals average or high in loneliness were indistinguishable on these scales.

These results do not mean that those who are low in loneliness possess characteristics that render them immune to ever feeling lonely. Rather, when individuals feel socially connected, they express a constellation of states and dispositions that enriches their lives not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively relative to individuals who are average or high in loneliness. That is, there seems to be something special about being and feeling socially connected. This interpretation is supported by data from a hypnosis study in which young adults were made to feel lonely and then socially connected (or vice versa, in a counterbalanced order) by recalling a time when they felt rejected and as if they didn't belong, or accepted and as if they did belong. Measures of affect, social factors, and even personality traits mirrored and tracked the acute changes in loneliness induced by the hypnotic manipulation.

Participants induced to feel socially connected, compared with lonely, reported significantly less negative mood; higher self-esteem and optimism; better social skills, social support, and sociability; greater extraversion and agreeableness; and less shyness, anxiety, anger, fear of negative evaluation, and neuroticism. This experimental study suggests that loneliness has features of a central trait—central in the sense that it influences how individuals construe themselves and others, and, by extension, how others view and act toward these individuals. Thus, although objective social circumstances (e.g., bereavement, ostracism) can modify feelings of loneliness, subjective social factors operate to keep people in a lonely or socially connected state of being. Whereas lonely individuals think about and behave toward others in a way that tends to reinforce a isolated existence, socially connected individuals hold a more favorable view of others that in turn tends to reinforce their being perceived and treated positively.

Health Consequences

As this profile reveals, when loneliness takes over someone's life, they become trapped in a feedback loop of negative expectations, interpretations, and interactions. The challenge is reframing and redirecting social perceptions so that a sense of meaningful social connectedness can be established or recovered. Fortunately, the same feedback loop that allows individuals to construct a negative, subjective reality can be redirected to construct a better objective reality. This could be particularly important given the health consequences of loneliness.

Loneliness has been associated with alterations in the functioning of the cardiovascular, endocrine, and immune systems. A recent theoretical model of the correlates and consequences of loneliness posits that age-related declines in physiological resilience are accelerated by chronic loneliness. Accordingly, in younger adults, loneliness has been associated with early markers of disease processes (e.g., subtle alterations in blood pressure control mechanisms), whereas in older adults, loneliness has been associated with frank disease (e.g., elevated blood pressure) and dysregulation across multiple physiological systems (e.g., impaired immune functioning and

elevated levels of stress hormones). Clearly, the costs of loneliness are too great to ignore.

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See also Attachment Theory; Belonging, Need for; Self-Monitoring and Relationships; Social Isolation; Trust

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LONELINESS, CHILDREN

Researchers generally agree that loneliness involves an awareness that one's social and personal relationships are deficient and that this awareness is accompanied by emotions of sadness, emptiness, or longing. In the 1980s, researchers became interested in studying children's cognitive representations of their peer relations and their emotional reactions to relationship difficulties. For example, scholars examined whether children who have difficulty with peers as indicated by objective markers, such as how well liked they are, come to hold negative expectations of others and come to feel lonely, socially anxious, or depressed. Because loneliness stems from dissatisfaction with social relationships, the study of loneliness was a natural line of inquiry. This entry focuses on how children understand and experience loneliness, the influence of family and peer relationships on loneliness, and the role of social-cognitive factors in children's experience of loneliness.

Children's Experiences of Loneliness

When elementary school-age children are asked about their experiences of loneliness, they describe it as "feeling left out," "feeling unneeded," "being sad," and feeling "like you don't have any friends." Interestingly, even children as young as 5 to 7 years old can report feeling lonely and think of loneliness as consisting of being alone and feeling sad. Still, at this age level, children's understanding of loneliness is considered rudimentary because when asked whether it is possible to be lonely when playing with others, only a small percentage of children this young report that it is possible.

With regard to the formal measurement of loneliness, there is general consensus that loneliness is a subjective, personal experience that is best measured by self-report, rather than by inference from observational or psychophysiological measures. Accordingly, researchers have used questionnaires (multi-item formal scales with excellent internal reliability) to measure loneliness. Most measures contain some items that ask directly about loneliness, but the content of scales is often diverse, with many items assessing perceptions of social support,

self-efficacy, perceived acceptance by peers, or perceived participation in friendship, rather than loneliness per se. New efforts are being made to create highly reliable measures for children that restrict item content to feelings of loneliness. This solves the problem of overlapping content that can result when loneliness is studied in relation to factors such as social support or participation in friendship.

There is evidence that children's feelings of loneliness are moderately stable even over a fairly extended time period (e.g., correlations of .55 over 1 year). Although there is a need for more cross-sectional and longitudinal research, it appears that youth experience more loneliness during middle school than during the elementary school years. Furthermore, there are marked differences in loneliness as a function of developmental problems. Children who suffer from developmental disabilities, such as mental retardation, learning disabilities, or autism, generally report higher levels of loneliness than regular-education students. However, with regard to gender, studies of children in kindergarten through the sixth grade do not show reliable gender differences in rates of loneliness.

Associations Between Loneliness and Children's Family Relationships

Children's relationships with their family may affect how often and how intensely children feel lonely. Research in this area has mainly focused on parent–child interaction style. Degree of maternal warmth and degree of interpersonal control appear to be important predictors of children's loneliness. For example, mothers who tend to give advice about problems to their children in a controlling way and with little warmth have children with increased levels of loneliness.

Insecure attachment to parents early in life may be a risk factor for future loneliness. Longitudinal research has compared the loneliness of children who had different types of attachment patterns during infancy. Attachment was assessed using the Strange Situation, a laboratory paradigm in which the infant's reaction is observed when separated from the mother, when reunited with the mother, and when a stranger appears. Attachment theorists believe that infants who are securely attached to their mothers explore the environment when their mothers are present, show signs of distress when separated from their mothers, and are comforted on the return of their mothers. Research has found that the loneliest children are those who had insecure-ambivalent attachments to their mother in infancy, meaning that they showed distress when separated from their mother, but were not comforted on reunion. This research suggests that early family relationships may provide an important foundation for how children feel later on in other types of relationships.

Associations Between Loneliness and Children's Peer Relations

Most research on children's loneliness has focused on the association between peer relations and feelings of loneliness at school. The aspects of children's peer relations most widely studied are: (a) peer acceptance, (b) peer victimization, and (c) friendship. Although these constructs are intercorrelated, research has demonstrated that they are distinct dimensions. For example, approximately 30 percent of children who are well liked by their peer group do not have a friend, and, conversely, approximately 50 percent of children who are poorly accepted by their peers have at least one friend. This kind of distinctiveness makes it possible to study the separate contributions of peer acceptance, peer victimization, and friendship to loneliness.

Peer Acceptance

Peer acceptance is the degree to which children are liked by their peer group as a whole. This is typically measured by using either a rating-scale sociometric measure on which children rate how much they like to play with each of their classmates or positive and negative sociometric nomination measures on which children indicate their three most-liked and three least-liked classmates. Research has consistently shown that children who are sociometrically rejected by their classmates report higher levels of loneliness than youth who are better accepted. This finding holds from preschool through high school and is seen in both Eastern and Western cultures. Short-term longitudinal research suggests that peer rejection leads to loneliness, not the other way around.

Of note, there is considerable variability in how much loneliness low-accepted children report. This variability is partially associated with differences in behavioral style. Whereas some peer-rejected youth exhibit aggressive behavior, others tend to exhibit a more withdrawn or submissive style. In elementary school, aggressive-rejected children report increased levels of loneliness compared with average-accepted children, but in middle school they do not. Submissive-rejected children, by contrast, consistently report feeling more lonely than their better-accepted peers. Submissive-rejected children may be at particular risk for loneliness because they receive more overt negative treatment from peers than do aggressive-rejected children. Although peers may not like aggressive-rejected children, they may be too intimidated by them to give these youth negative feedback about their behavior or how they are viewed. Furthermore, aggressive-rejected children are less likely to notice the negative feedback they receive from peers, a kind of self-protective bias that could guard against loneliness. Finally, aggressive-rejected children may feel less lonely in middle school because changing classes each hour makes for a larger pool of available peers and thereby affords them a greater opportunity to affiliate with similarly aggressive schoolmates.

Peer Victimization

Peer victimization can be assessed through direct observation, self-report, peer report, or teacher report. Victimization can take several forms, including verbal insults, social exclusion, negative gossiping, and physical aggression. Approximately 1 in 10 children are repeatedly victimized by their peers. Children who are the chronic targets of peer victimization experience increased levels of loneliness. As with peer rejection, it appears that peer victimization leads to loneliness, not the reverse. More important, once peer harassment stops, feelings of loneliness decrease.

Peer victimization is linked with loneliness in both Western and Eastern cultures. Interestingly, when investigating ethnic group differences within ethnically diverse schools, victimized children who are members of the ethnic majority at their school have been found to report the highest levels of loneliness, victimized children who are members of the ethnic minority report the second highest levels of loneliness, and nonvictimized children report the least loneliness. One reason that victimized children who are members of the ethnic majority might report the most loneliness is that the victimization may lead them to feel disconnected from their own ethnic group.

Normative perceptions of a child's ethnic group also appear to be important to consider. For example, research has shown that when a victimized child is a member of an ethnic group that is perceived to be aggressive, that child experiences elevated levels of loneliness. It has been proposed that these youth are seen as "social misfits" by other members of their ethnic group and that perhaps these victimized children blame themselves for not fitting in better, an attribution that leads to poor adjustment.

Friendship

Friendship is defined as a close dyadic relationship in which there is a high degree of mutual liking and attachment, as well as a shared history. Loneliness has been studied in relation to two aspects of children's friendships: number of friends (e.g., mutual sociometric friendship nominations) and quality of their best friendships (e.g., reports by the child's best friend about specific qualitative features of the friendship). Children with friends experience less loneliness than children without friends, but the sheer number of friends does not typically make a significant difference. Interestingly, even children whose friends participate in delinquent behavior, such as stealing and drug use, experience less loneliness than children who are friendless. Furthermore, there is evidence that children who cycle through making and losing friends are as lonely as children who make no friends.

Children who are rejected by their peers and who do not have any friends experience significantly more loneliness than children who are rejected by their peers but have a friend. This finding has important implications for intervention work with children who have peer difficulties. If a child can develop a friendship with just one other child, his or her level of loneliness will likely decrease even if the child continues to be disliked by the broader peer group.

The quality of children's friendships is also related to loneliness. Features such as companionship, helping, validation and caring, intimate disclosure, conflict, and ease of conflict resolution predict loneliness above and beyond the prediction that can be made from overall peer acceptance. Children with higher quality friendships report significantly less loneliness than children with poorer quality friendships. The degree of association between specific friendship features and loneliness has been found to be similar for boys and girls, suggesting that boys and girls may have fairly similar needs with regard to what they look for in a friendship.

Social-Cognitive Factors Associated With Children's Loneliness

A small but growing body of literature exists on lonely children's social-cognitive processes. Research on locus of control has focused on the types of attributions that children make for their successes and failures in social situations, and particularly whether they blame themselves or others for social difficulties. Although lonely children are more likely to view their social successes as due to unstable factors that are outside of their control, they tend to perceive their social failures as due to stable characteristics of themselves, such as seeing themselves as difficult for others to get along with and acting in ways that bother other children.

Rejection sensitivity is another type of social-cognitive process that has been explored in relation to children's loneliness. Rejection sensitivity is the tendency to anxiously or angrily expect rejection by others. Youth who are highly rejection sensitive are not only more likely to behave in hostile ways toward their social partners, but are also at increased risk for internalizing problems, including loneliness.

Further research on the social-cognitive processes associated with loneliness may help to explain why some children who are well liked by their peers and have friends nonetheless feel lonely. It may be that children who hold stringent expectations of their social partners are especially susceptible to experiencing high degrees of loneliness. Conflicts and disappointments in relationships are virtually inevitable; as a result, children who believe that friends should never break commitments or in other ways let each other down may be at increased risk for loneliness.

Julie Paquette MacEvoy and Steven R. Asher

See also Belonging, Need for; Children's Peer Groups; Friendships in Childhood; Loneliness; Need Fulfillment in Relationships

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LONELINESS, INTERVENTIONS

Loneliness is a subjective, negative, and unwelcome feeling of not having a close companion, desirable friends, or social contacts. It is characterized by negative feelings such as not belonging, being left out, boredom, sadness, depression, and anxiety.

Loneliness and social isolation are closely associated but also distinct, with *social isolation* defined as an objective state that can be measured by the number of contacts and interactions between individuals and their wider social network. This entry focuses on loneliness and the types of interventions that are known to be effective in preventing and alleviating loneliness. Because of the close relationship between loneliness and social isolation, some of the interventions will, by default, target both.

Conceptualization of Loneliness

Humans are inherently social beings, needing both supportive social networks and intimate social relationships. Most people have an intuitive notion of loneliness and describe it in different ways. Common to all such descriptions is the subjectivity of the feeling and that it is for the most part an unpleasant and distressing experience. The determining factor is how people feel about or respond to loneliness, rather than in the physical sense of the experience.

An important distinction with regards to the development of interventions is the duration of the experience. Transient loneliness relates to the common everyday swings of mood, which are unlikely to require intervention. Situational loneliness follows a change in life circumstances, such as becoming widowed or moving to an unfamiliar area. Interventions at this stage can be effective in both preventing and alleviating loneliness. Chronic loneliness is an ongoing enduring experience of loneliness, where the nature and quality of the individual's social networks affect their ability to deal with their loneliness. Finally, the term *aloneness* is sometimes used to express a serious, long-term, chronic experience of loneliness associated with long spells of lack of any meaningful contact with the external environment. Interventions targeting these two chronic conditions are essential to ensure people's health, quality of life, and life satisfaction.

Factors Associated With Loneliness

For the purpose of developing effective interventions, several aspects of loneliness need to be considered: demographic characteristics such as age, gender, culture, and living alone; people's perceptions of personal control, coping, and feelings of dependency; the experience of major life events, such as job loss or retirement, loss of friends, relatives and companions, change of residence, and health problems; and personal resources, such as mental health (particularly depression), disability, and decreased mobility. Finally, the stigma of loneliness leads to underreporting of loneliness. Men and older people, in particular, are reluctant to admit feelings of loneliness because of the stigma of what is seen as a social failure and not being able to cope.

Interventions to Alleviate and Prevent Loneliness

A vast array of interventions has been developed over time to alleviate and prevent loneliness in vulnerable groups, ranging from hi-tech Internet or phone-based services to small low-cost self-help groups. Some of these activities and services are theory- and/or evidence-based, whereas others have evolved through practitioners' experience and local knowledge. Interventions intended to alleviate loneliness could be said to have three broad goals: to help lonely individuals establish satisfying interpersonal relationships; to prevent loneliness from evolving into more serious health problems, such as depression or suicide; and to prevent loneliness from occurring in the first place. The majority of these interventions fall into four, sometimes overlapping categories: social support/social activity; education; service provision; and problem solving, as either group or one-to-one interventions.

Social Support and Social Activity

Research has demonstrated that the quality rather than the quantity of social support is of greater importance in alleviating loneliness and reducing social isolation. For example, older people may have frequent contact with family, but the family is not, contrary to what many services seem to assume, the main source of emotional support. However, contacts with adult children are frequently the main source of instrumental support. Long-term, old friends provide support in times of transition (e.g., retirement and bereavement by

providing continuity and an acceptance of aging). New friends, in contrast, are frequently sought through group activities, with the emphasis on shared enjoyable activity rather than on reciprocal support.

Education and Problem Solving

Group-based social support interventions for older people with mental health problems, widows, women living alone, and caregivers are often effective in reducing social isolation and loneliness and in increasing self-esteem and morale. Most interventions include some form of structured activity, such as peer- and professionally led educational programs, self-help support, directed group discussion, or supported social activation (e.g., providing widows with skills to adjust to an independent life and improve their life skills competencies). Groups meet a variety of needs such as enjoyment, activity, and social integration. Membership in a group is a strategy for dealing with loneliness. Participant-planned and participant-led activities seem to improve effectiveness. Some interventions are intended to help the individual identify activities and tasks that can be enjoyed alone. Older men are more likely to participate in task-focused activities than in what they perceive as social support or social network activities. Many interventions use indirect approaches, which are not perceived as social network activities or intended to reduce social isolation and loneliness. Walking and exercise groups are known to improve physical and mental health and reduce loneliness, and there is some evidence to suggest that activities such as gardening projects, healthy eating groups, art, music, and dance are effective, although further evaluation is still required.

It is frequently assumed that if people participate in an activity, it demonstrates that it is acceptable and attractive to them. However, research shows that some older people will make do with activities and services that do not meet their social activity or social support needs simply because there are no other options. Expectations of services and activities vary among individuals, but also among socioeconomic groups, cultures, genders, and generations. It is well known that in all age groups people from higher socioeconomic groups have better access to and participate to a greater degree in relevant services and activities.

Ironically, those who are truly isolated and lonely are the least likely to join a social support or activity group.

Similar activities have been proposed for school children, young people at high risk of dropout, violence, drug and alcohol use, bullying, and other health risk behaviors and first-year college students. In a review of school-based activities to reduce loneliness among children, Evangelia Galanaki and Helen Vassilopoulou identified seven categories of interventions that would help children to deal with their loneliness: (1) identification, understanding, acceptance, and expression of loneliness; (2) social skills training and social problem solving; (3) creating a positive social environment in the classroom and the playground by, for example, changing the physical layout of the environment or establishing buddy and peer support; (4) enhancement of self-esteem; (5) cognitive-behavioral modification; (6) development of coping strategies; and (7) development of solitude skills.

For college students coping with transition and loss, relationship support and friendship development have been suggested as ways of reducing loneliness, especially in the first year. Research has shown an association among loneliness, mental health, and resilience in young people, particularly in vulnerable groups such as the homeless, same-sex attracted young people, young parents, and obese children. However, little is currently known about the effectiveness of interventions intended to enhance resilience in preventing or alleviating loneliness. Preconditions for successful social network and social support development are that the activity is provided regularly, that participants wish to socialize and participate, and that there is someone who leads and takes responsibility.

Use of Technology

The use of technology, such as the Internet or telephone networks to reduce social isolation and loneliness across age groups, has increasingly been shown to be effective. There are indications that telephone and Internet support groups may be effective in reducing loneliness among housebound older people, caregivers, older people living with HIV/AIDS, and people in congregate housing. Research has shown that e-mail and the Internet are used for different purposes: E-mail is mostly

used for social contact, and thereby to reduce loneliness, whereas the Internet is used for practical purposes, such as information and simply to pass the time. It would also seem that mobile technology such as cell phones or social networking sites might help to decrease individuals' feelings of loneliness. However, little is currently known about *how* different groups utilize cell phones or Web sites for this purpose (e.g., texting vs. voice calls, perceptions of purpose of Internet communication). The impact and effectiveness of telephone buddy services and telephone support groups are ambiguous.

For older isolated and housebound older people, telephone befriending and support groups provide the means to have social contacts and to reduce their isolation and loneliness. Some research has also shown that people who choose not to join groups like the anonymity of the telephone group. However, the association between loneliness and telephone interventions remains unclear.

Volunteering

Volunteering is frequently put forward as an effective way of increasing socialization and maintaining mental well-being in later life. Volunteering undoubtedly has beneficial effects mainly because of the social aspects of the activity and because it can give a sense of worth. It may also be that the reciprocity of volunteering adds to a sense of well-being, in that the mutual benefits of providing and receiving support are effective in giving a sense of social support. Intergenerational activities and home visiting have been mentioned specifically in relation to older people, but other voluntary activities may have similar effects.

Qualitative research has shown that older people respond favorably to home visiting because it provides someone with whom to share interests and worries, as well as practical help, social support, and companionship. The importance of reciprocity is emphasized, which may be more likely when the visitor/caller and the recipient are of the same generation, share a common culture and social background, and have common interests. Befriending is therefore of value to both the (older) volunteer and the older person receiving the service.

Indirect Activities

Many widely provided services and activities that are not directly intended to affect loneliness have not been evaluated or evaluated adequately despite anecdotal evidence of their effectiveness in alleviating loneliness. For example, results from research regarding the influence of companion animals have to date been inconclusive mainly due to flaws in the research. Likewise, the impact of the physical and social external environments in terms of interventions has not been evaluated. For example it has been suggested that the provision of adequate public transport and accessible, safe social venues (parks, libraries, Internet cafes, garden centers, and shopping malls) would reduce social isolation and loneliness. It has even been suggested that hairdressers could provide lay support for socially isolated people who might not access other services.

Finally, not everyone wants to participate in groups or have a large social network. Some people choose to be alone and to live alone. It is important for others, including service providers, to recognize and accept the individual's right to this decision because, although they are alone, they are not necessarily lonely.

Mima Cattan

See also Loneliness; Loneliness, Children; Loss; Resilience; Social Isolation; Social Support, Nature of; Social Support Interventions

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LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIPS

Long-distance relationships (LDRs) are defined here as occurring among individuals who have an expectation for a continued close connection and their communication opportunities are limited, in the views of the relational participants, due to geographic separation. Long-distance (LD) status has been ascribed based on relational participants' reports of the miles between them, of their residence in different cities, of the number of nights a week they spend apart, their inability to see each other every day if they so desire, or simply if they consider themselves to be in an LDR. LDRs are of interest because they exist and generally thrive in contradiction to assumptions concerning necessity of frequent face-to-face interaction for the maintenance of close relational bonds. Although a large body of research exists on noncustodial fathers and the effects of parental absence on children, such parent–child LDRs will not be covered within this entry. This entry concerns the types of and reasons for LDRs, as well as interaction opportunities, societal support, maintenance, and reunions.

Types of LDRs and Reasons for Their Occurrence

LDRs may occur between marital partners, committed nonmarital partners, the children of such partners (or ex-partners), extended family members, and friends. The number of LD marriages (or families) is unknown; outside of the military, LD families are not officially recognized.

LD marital relationships occur primarily due to educational or career pursuits, employment demands, military deployment, or incarceration. Military deployment and incarceration account for most LD romantic involvements. In 2005, approximately 60 percent of deployed military personal were married and/or had children. As of 2000, federal, state, and local prisons held approximately 2 million individuals, the majority of which had children and/or romantic partners.

A distinction is often made between dual-career, dual-residence (DCDR) LD couples and single-career, single-residence LD couples. DCDR couples live apart due to difficulty finding career opportunities in the same location. Estimates indicate that about 1 million married couples are DCDR couples. The number of academics and corporate executives in LDRs is estimated to be higher than that of the general population. An LD, yet single residence, couple or family occurs when one member of the couple (usually the male) is away for extended periods of time due to his work demands, but a separate residence is not maintained. Rather, the traveling individual generally stays in hotels, barracks, company quarters, and the like. Separations might be for routine, relatively short durations, such as weekly travel for business purposes, or for months or years, such as off-shore oil workers.

Nonmarital romantic LDRs exist and occur for the same reasons. Estimates indicate that up to 50 percent of college students will be involved in an LDR. Committed nonmarital LDRs exist beyond college students. Two, committed, career-oriented individuals may cohabitate and then become LD for career reasons.

Although most romantic partners share the expectation that they will share a residence, Irene Levine and Jan Trost have identified a couple type labeled *living apart together* (LATs) who are romantically involved, might be heterosexual or homosexual, might or might not be married, might or might not have children, expect a continued romantic involvement, and have no desire to share a residence or necessarily live in the same city. These individuals are sometimes apart due to the same reasons listed previously. Some such couples

are formed later in life and desire to retain two residences in order to maintain proximity to children or grandchildren.

LDRs occur in other forms. They often occur between friends. Laura Stafford has coined the term *cross-residential relationships* to reflect nonromantic family relationships as a type of LDR because a lack of shared residence places restrictions on interaction. Noncustodial parents have more restrictions on their interactions than do custodial parents. When including friendships and cross-residential relationships as forms of LDRs, it is likely that nearly everyone in the United States is in at least one.

Societal Support, Interaction Opportunities, Maintenance, and Reunions

Friendships, Sibships, and Extended Family

Some types of LDRs are expected in Western cultures. It is normative for adult children and their parents, extended family members (e.g., grandparents), adult friends, and adult siblings not to share a residence, and they are sometimes questioned if they do. Nor are they expected to live in geographic proximity. Among nonromantically involved family members and friends, research has largely addressed the strength of ties or the ability of the relationship to meet needs because it is assumed that family or friends who live apart and do not interact frequently cannot be as close as those who do. Participants in such relationships have been found to maintain close relational bonds and positive affect and to meet emotional needs regardless of frequency of interaction or geographic proximity, although proximity is linked to the ability to meet some instrumental needs.

Although LD friendships do not seem to be contingent on frequency of interaction, the type of interaction engaged with proximal friends is different than that of distal friends, but the emotional closeness appears to be similar. As individuals become older, close friendship is defined less by interaction and more by the feeling that the other would "be there" if needed. Mary Rholfing found that LD friendships may remain dormant for many years. Nonetheless, the individuals feel close, and if they do interact, they often seem to be able to simply pick up where they left off.

As siblings become adults, they typically engage in less contact with each other than during their childhood. Adult sibships share similarities with adult friendships. Some become dormant. Into middle age and especially as individuals become elderly, siblings take on increased meaning regardless of proximity and contact. Feelings of attachment and the perception of the willingness of a sibling to mobilize during a time of need seem to define successful adult sibships.

Grandparents who live in proximity of their adult grandchildren engage in more frequent interaction than those who do not, yet there is no association between feelings of emotional closeness or personal involvement and frequency of contact between young adults and their grandparents. To what extent this might hold true for younger children is unknown.

Romantic LDRs

The assumption is that a marital couple (and their young children) should live together. Recognized exceptions include the male's career or military deployment or divorce. Other reasons for cross-residential or LDRs among family members are often met with skepticism.

Scholarly study of military LDRs began with WWII. At that time, interaction opportunities meant the often delayed exchange of letters. Similar to early research, recent research has found that vague positive and supportive letters help maintain ties. Interaction opportunities have increased with the advancement of new communication technologies. However, whether such contact is beneficial for the relationship or for the military operation is undetermined. Concerns that a soldier's contact with family members might distract her or him from the task at hand have been raised. Individuals sometimes report feeling more depressed, lonely, or helpless after interactions. For the family members at home, stressors include managing the day-to-day roles that the deployed individuals filled, concerns for safety, and difficulty gaining access to information about deployed family members. Economic impact often occurs when reservists are called into duty, leaving a more lucrative financial situation. Military families do have institutionalized support unavailable to most other LDR forms. Societal support is generally

high for military families, although the popularity of a particular war seems to be associated to some degree with support.

Partners must cope with not only the separation, but also the reunion (and often another separation). The most successful families fill in the missing partners' roles during the absence and retain the missing member psychologically and symbolically. Upon reunion, the roles filled by other family members or friends are returned to the previously absent partner. On departure, the family restructures again. Preparing returning military personnel for potential issues encountered with reunion seems helpful. Divorce appears somewhat more likely for military personal returning from deployment as compared with the general population; this is more so the case for individuals who have seen active combat.

Families separated due to the incarceration of one or more members face perhaps the most stressors and challenges; they encounter extremely limited communication of any form. Some families forbid children from seeing an imprisoned parent. Relationships that are maintained are often done so through few, if any, letters or phone calls. Relationships are maintained cognitively as individuals reminisce about relational partners or family members and look forward to reunions. Sometimes pictures or other reminders play a role in these cognitions. Family members are often stigmatized, invoke little sympathy or societal support, share concerns for safety, have difficulty gaining access to information, and have few resources. Families of incarcerated individuals no longer receive any financial support from the absent member, who was often the primary monetary earner. Pending many factors, marriages and other romantic involvements, and often times active child relationships, do deteriorate during this time. The maintenance of family relationships and successful reunions with those families on release appears to aid in rehabilitation and reintegration into society and decreases recidivism.

The 1970s saw the rise of DCDR marriages or "commuter couples." Their interaction opportunities are likely the greatest of all other romantic LDR types. Flexible work schedules and monetary resources contribute to the success of the LD arrangement. If children are involved, the parent with the children sometimes feels stressed and overwhelmed, whereas the parent living apart from the child reports missing the day-to-day interaction. DCDR couples report some benefits of the arrangement, such as the ability to segment work and family and higher quality time when they are together. Participants indicate that their relationships are sometimes met with skepticism as to their commitment to the marriage. Research has not examined the long-term viability of such relationships or permanent reunions.

LD dating relationships have been found to be as or more stable than proximal dating relationships. It is this point that most relational scholars have found the most puzzling. LDRs have less face-to-face time. New technologies and unlimited cell phone plans allow students the opportunity for virtually unlimited mediated interaction. Yet they do not seem to engage in more mediated communication than proximal partners. LDRs have been argued to be maintained in part through idealization. A large proportion of everyday talk appears to be intimacy focused.

Student LDRs are thought to be stressful. The extent to which this is the case has been questioned. Like DCDR married couples, LDRs have reported some benefits of an LDR, including the ability to segment work (or school) and the relationship, enjoyment of autonomy, and feeling that their limited time together is qualitatively better. Generally, college student LDRs have less monetary support than DCDR couples. When LDR partners relocate to permanent geographic proximity, the probability of relational dissolution increases; extreme idealization during separation is associated with relational demise upon reunion. Of course, some report few, if any, difficulties moving to the same location.

Conclusion

Most types of LDRs are successful at maintaining close positive bonds during separation (with the exception of incarceration). Relational maintenance mechanisms other than interaction occur. LDRs may supplement their lack of face-to-face maintenance with cognitive maintenance efforts, such as idealization, romanticized beliefs, positive ruminations, anticipation of future meetings,

imagined interactions, and symbolic or ritualistic inclusion. The strength of the relationship prior to separation, the length of time separated, the time between face-to-face visits, and many other factors that vary even within the same type of LDRs surely impact these relationships; however, little research exists. Despite maintenance during separation, reunions bring more questions about relational stability. Although not studied among DCDR couples, military personnel college dating relationships and relationships that survive incarceration are at risk on reunion.

Many forms of LD families (e.g., relationships among immigrants or migrant workers and their families) have yet to be the focus of significant study. Although the violation of norms for living arrangements and interactions may be the primary reason for study among Western relational scholars, LD family relationships are not considered atypical for many cultures.

Laura Stafford

See also Adulthood, Sibling Relationships in; Extended Families; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Families, Demographic Trends; Friendships in Late Adulthood; Maintaining Relationships; Military and Relationships; Single-Parent Families; Stress and Relationships

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LONGITUDINAL STUDIES OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AND DISSOLUTION

More than 90 percent of Americans marry at least once. Although the divorce rate has been slowing since the early 1980s, nearly half of all marriages end in divorce or permanent separation—and many people remain in unhappy marriages. Understanding how marriages evolve from the optimistic "I do" to the disillusioned "I want a divorce" is important because marital distress and divorce are associated with significant economic, mental health, and physical health problems among adults and with emotional and behavioral problems among children.

For more than 70 years, scientists have sought to explain why some marriages are more satisfying than others and why some marriages dissolve. Marital satisfaction is a spouse's appraisal of how happy he or she is in the marriage. Marital dissolution refers to whether the couple remains married versus gets separated or divorced. The majority of studies in this field is cross-sectional or conducted at a single point in time. Cross-sectional studies are limited in explaining variability in marital satisfaction and dissolution because they cannot identify factors that cause marital decline. For example, when marital satisfaction is measured at the same time as poor communication, it is not possible to say which is the cause and which is the consequence—or whether a third variable, such as stressful events outside the marriage, caused both.

Longitudinal studies, which assess marriages two or more times, are therefore necessary to identify how marriages change and deteriorate. Longitudinal studies are valuable for addressing a fascinating puzzle about human social behavior, and they are critical for informing interventions that can prevent adverse marital and family outcomes.

Conceptual Approaches to the Study of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution

To understand how different marriages result in different outcomes, scientists from diverse disciplines have focused on a variety of hypothesized causes, from the broad social and political structure (macroanalytic perspective) to the specific individual characteristics of a spouse (microanalytic perspective). For example, demographers focused on social and political forces have examined divorce rates in relation to World War II, no-fault divorce laws, women's workforce participation, and gender imbalance in the population. To examine marital satisfaction and divorce, sociologists have examined spouses' sociodemographic characteristics such as age at marriage, race, income, education, premarital cohabitation, gender roles, and attitudes toward divorce. Psychologists focused on spouses' behaviors and thoughts have examined communication skills, cognitive appraisals of relationship events, commitment, spouses' personality characteristics and family background, relationship violence, alcohol consumption, the transition to parenthood, and depressive symptoms.

The different disciplines that examine marriage all have theories—that is, reasoned explanations—for why marriages succeed or fail. This entry highlights psychological theories because they focus on behavioral and cognitive components of marriage that can be changed or improved through intervention to relieve marital distress, a significant source of human suffering. There are various psychological theories of marriage; the three theories highlighted here get at the diverse factors that impinge on marriage—behavior in the here and now, family relationships in the past, and stressors outside the marriage. Behavioral models focus on how spouses talk to each other (i.e., the content of their words and the emotional tone with which they are

delivered) when trying to resolve a marital problem (e.g., money, household management) or providing support to one another. Attachment theory focuses on how adult romantic relationships are affected by relationships in childhood, such as the emotional connection with a mother or the quality of the parents' marriage. Crisis theory focuses on how marital outcomes result from a stressful event outside of the marriage, perceptions of the crisis, resources, and coping responses. Each of these perspectives specifies what is likely to be an important aspect of how marriages succeed or fail. Yet there is a growing realization that marital outcomes are multiply determined, suggesting that the most comprehensive approach to understanding marital success or failure will result from examining the interplay among multiple aspects of marriage, rather than just one domain or a string of variables examined in isolation. Thus, informative longitudinal studies will be those recognizing that the outcome of a given marriage is the dynamic product of individual characteristics of the spouse (e.g., history of parental divorce, personality)—how spouses interact with each other (e.g., how they express understanding, resolve disagreements, and allocate chores) as they encounter a broader context of stressful circumstances (e.g., illness, job lay off, dangerous neighborhoods), all within a particular historical cohort. For some couples, the seeds of marital demise will be present in the early months of marriage, even during the newlywed period when satisfaction is at its highest point, whereas for other couples problems emerge later as the product of individual vulnerabilities (e.g., depressed mood, parental divorce), interpersonal deficits (e.g., poor communication skills), and contextual influences (e.g., stressful circumstances).

Factors That Predict Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution

Although numerous variables have been used in longitudinal studies to predict changes in marriage, only a subset of these have replicated across studies. Based on Benjamin Karney and Thomas Bradbury's review of 115 longitudinal studies of marriage that were conducted from the 1940s to the 1990s, two broad observations summarize this subset of replicated variables. First, a given variable

(e.g., expressions of strong negative emotion) typically has the same effect on dissatisfaction as it does on dissolution, with one notable exception: The presence of children tends to increase dissatisfaction while reducing the likelihood of dissolution. Second, interpersonal variables—that is, the interactions between spouses, such as conflict resolution behavior and sexual satisfaction—are stronger predictors of change in satisfaction and stability than external stressors, spouses' psychological characteristics, and spouses' demographic characteristics. Based on similar results across a number of studies, we can be reasonably certain that spouses' marital satisfaction is higher and divorce is less likely when spouses evidence the following: display more positive and less negative behavior when resolving marital conflicts, are sexually satisfied, are older at the time of marriage (ages 25 and up), have more education, did not cohabit before marriage, had a happy childhood, exhibit less neuroticism, are not depressed, report less stress, and do not live in poverty. It should be noted that these results are based primarily on studies of White middle-class spouses and may not hold for more diverse populations.

More compelling is research that captures generative processes in more complex ways. For example, evidence suggests that newlyweds go on to achieve higher marital adjustment (i.e., higher marital satisfaction, fewer depressive symptoms) when spouses report more negative life events *and* have more adaptive communication skills, but adjustment declines when more negative events are combined with poorer communication skills. Thus, negative events are not uniformly damaging to marriage, but their effect depends on the skill with which couples communicate or approach conflict resolution. Studies suggest that newlyweds' physical aggression predicts divorce 4 years later, whereas poorer conflict-resolution skills predict lower satisfaction. Thus, some variables have a stronger effect on divorce, and some have a stronger effect on marital satisfaction. Last, John Gottman showed that, over 14 years of marriage, higher rates of negative emotional expressions during conflict resolution predict divorce in the first 7 years of the study, but lower rates of positive emotional expressions predict divorce in subsequent 7 years. It appears that heated fighting corrodes marriages quickly and that emotional detachment becomes

more salient and damaging after marriages pass through the intense early childrearing years.

Karney and Bradbury's review of 115 longitudinal studies of marriage yielded a long list of variables, studied largely in isolation from each other, that predict satisfaction and stability. These studies give us limited information on how marriages are transformed over time. They also yield important lessons about how the next generation of longitudinal studies can be more effective. The typical longitudinal study of marriage samples a heterogeneous group of 500 to 600 spouses two times and examines a circumscribed set of predictors as main effects. A number of changes can yield stronger research designs to yield more comprehensive information about how marriages evolve.

Longitudinal Studies of Marriage: The Next Generation

If the goal is to understand how marriages change, both gradually and abruptly, then the "perfect" study would be to follow thousands of couples over 25 years with daily measures. Clearly, the perfect study is not so perfect in terms of the burden on the participants, the burden on the researcher, and the expense. Short of perching in a couple's living room observing them day in and day out, there are ways that longitudinal studies of marriage can be improved conceptually and methodologically to capture more of the complexity of marital development. We have already noted the importance of comprehensive, theory-driven research as a strategy for refining future studies. Moreover, studies that use two times of measurement to assess couples with varying lengths of marriage and have a limited focus on a single arena are of limited value. The following three suggestions for improving longitudinal research on marriage represent an illustrative, but not exhaustive, list of tactics likely to achieve greater precision in predicting when and explaining how marriages develop and deteriorate.

First, comprehensive understanding of marriage will be achieved by integrating multiple arenas relevant to both spouses, including marital communication skills, individual characteristics the spouse brings to the marriage, and stressful events and circumstances outside the marriage. Considering

that communication is the route through which most marital experiences unfold, and through which most couples will try to improve their relationship, a strong theoretical case can be made for assigning communication a central role. However, contrary to some claims made in the literature, simple models ascribing primary importance to communication processes are unlikely to be particularly powerful if only because communication is shaped by characteristics of the individual spouses and their development through adulthood, by their prior history together, and by the environments that couples inhabit.

Second, basic demographic characteristics about marriage tell us which couples we should study to maximize the probability of observing variability in adverse marital outcomes. Half of couples divorce within the first 7 years of marriage, and a significant proportion of those divorces occur in the first 4 years. By the 10th anniversary, marital satisfaction is fairly stable, and the risk of divorce is relatively low. Because a greater risk in divorce occurs in the early years of marriage, there is unique value to beginning a longitudinal study of divorce with newlywed couples to observe how couples go from being satisfied to dissatisfied. Studies that include couples with heterogeneous lengths of marriage run the risk of not observing change because satisfaction fluctuates less as marriages progress. Also, studies that examine couples with longer marriages will miss couples who already divorced. Whereas studying newlyweds increases the likelihood of capturing changes in marital satisfaction and divorce, studying other key marital transitions will also likely capture changes in satisfaction. For example, a replicated finding is that the transition to parenthood shows declines in marital satisfaction during that time. Investigation of other transitions, such as the transition of children to school, to the empty nest, and to retirement, are also likely to capture changes in marital dynamics and satisfaction and will fulfill the need to study marriages in different contexts.

Third, understanding different patterns of marital satisfaction over time requires more than two assessments, which yield an oversimplified linear view of change in marital satisfaction. Two assessments of marital satisfaction only allow researchers to say that a given marriage improved, declined, or stayed the same. Three or more assessments, say

every 4 to 6 months, can begin to capture the arc of, and fluctuations in, marital satisfaction that cannot be estimated with two measurements. More assessments also mean that researchers can ask interesting questions about what variables predict initial levels of satisfaction versus the rate of change over time. For example, one replicated finding is that the personality characteristic of neuroticism is related to overall levels of satisfaction, but not to change of marital satisfaction over time, whereas marital problem-solving skills are related to change in satisfaction over time, but not to initial levels.

Understanding marriage requires research designs that capture the core phenomena of two people, over time, responding to one another and their circumstances and personal histories. Research designs have evolved greatly and away from looking at one spouse at a single point in time without regard to context. The newest era of longitudinal designs is helping us to see and represent the complexity in marriage, and no doubt that continued refinement of longitudinal designs will allow us to penetrate this important relationship even further still.

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See also Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Early Years of Marriage Project; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Processes of Adaptation in Intimate Relationships (PAIR) Project

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LOSS

Loss is a central concept in the social and behavioral sciences and is relevant to a vast array of phenomena, including chronic illness, death and dying, relationship dissolution, injuries of various types, and assaults on the self (e.g., rape). Loss is a general concept that subsumes more specific concepts such as trauma and stress. Trauma refers to extreme psychological and physiological reactions to loss situations, such as those involving violence or the death of close others. Stress refers to an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological arousal that people experience in situations that they perceive as dangerous or threatening to their well-being. Loss or anticipated loss of something valuable is the key underlying condition in the experience both of trauma and stress.

Loss may be defined first as a reduction in a person's resources that involves a degree of emotional involvement. For example, people may not feel loss when they lose a drinking buddy with whom they talk about sports. However, the loss of a drinking buddy with whom they discuss intimate aspects of their marriage may be perceived as emotionally debilitating and as a major loss. In addition to the reduction of resources, a second and perhaps more basic part of the experience of loss is that of missing something. For example, a high school girl falls madly in love with a popular male classmate, only to discover within a few months that he has many girlfriends who he is attempting to juggle. The girl may feel that something that was a part of her life is gone. Her great expectations are dashed, her hopes are lost, and her plans are ruined. Loss is a central, common experience in all human relationships. The present entry discusses characteristics of loss and its relevance to relationships.

Objective and Subjective Qualities

Loss may have both a subjective and an objective quality. Subjectively, a person's own attribution of meaning to a situation is critical to her or his response to the situation and coping with negative consequences. For example, some people may minimize the loss of a home to a tornado, focusing on the fact that no people were killed or hurt. Others may stress the importance of this loss, considering practical hassles, the loss of keepsakes, and the loss of a place containing many positive memories. These are subjective features of the experience of loss.

There also are important objective aspects to the experience of loss. When a person has lost mental functions in a brain injury or disease, including memory, the person may not necessarily perceive her or his situation as a major loss. An outsider, such as a neuropsychologist, however, may readily conclude that a major loss has occurred. Thus, it is essential to consider both subjective and possible objective markers of loss when considering whether a person has experienced a loss of some magnitude.

Fields Involved in the Study of Loss

The study of loss usually flows from work in many other subfields in the social and behavioral sciences, including: death and dying, traumatology, suicidology, dissolution and divorce, stress and coping, aging, violence and war, chronic disease, life-threatening accidents and injuries, homelessness, and economic hardship. Within these subfields, the concept of loss often is treated as an implicit underlying condition for the phenomenon under study. As an illustration, mental illness and substance abuse often are cited as central factors in a person's progression toward homelessness.

However, the earlier causal condition in that progression may have been the person's reactions to a divorce and romantic loss, and loss experiences in the family of origin and in the process of growing up and forming relationship bonds.

Loss and Adaptation

One of the most important concepts in the study of loss pertains to how people cope, and a key approach to coping is that of account-making, which often involves storytelling to a trusted confidant about one's loss and its implications, or emotional expression. Behind these approaches are ideas that emphasize the feelings of control, acceptance, and hope that are engendered by forming and expressing aspects of one's account, and the notion that the expression of pain nullifies the inability to take some constructive action associated with the loss that has led to the pain. By "opening up," whether sharing directly with others or simply writing in a diary, individuals can start the process of allaying the pain. In addition, creating an account may also start the process of doing something effective about the pain, such as seeking the advice or support of a caring other.

A popular but perhaps dubious idea is that in adjusting to loss it is important to achieve "closure." Closure does not occur in the sense that people stop thinking about, feeling about, or behaving in reference to major losses. People would have to lose their memory for closure to be a reality. Instead, a more effective perspective about loss and closure is to recognize, respond to (including learning the lessons of a loss), and remember losses. The goal of these activities is to achieve an acceptance of the loss and of the new realities for which adaptation is required. Survivors of loss need to adjust and continue on with life's important tasks while incorporating major losses into their identities and honoring and respecting the lessons of loss.

This active approach to grieving and adjustment may be stymied by a tendency to ruminate excessively about the loss and its consequences. Rumination, in the form of persistent commentary about the loss, also may cause supportive others to withdraw. Grieving people need to recognize what these untoward social effects of rumination may be and work toward a settled acceptance of the loss.

Research on people's ranking of types of losses suggests that major losses are perceived as relative. They are relative to other losses that a person has experienced and to losses experienced by others. By viewing losses on relative continua, people are better able to attribute meaning to them and adjust. As an example, a young person experiencing the end of a first love may feel suicidal in the wake of this loss. Later, when encountering another loss in love, this same person, now with more relationship experience, may be better able to handle the pain and know how to grieve and find support from caring others. Critical to long-term adjustment is learning the lessons of major losses. What, for example, has a person learned about how to make future close relationships stronger or be more careful before entering into them?

Relativity also occurs as people learn to view their losses in the context of human loss and that many types of loss (e.g., the sudden unexpected death of a child) are more devastating than others in their impact on our coping and meaning-making.

Major losses have cumulative effects. Whether in terms of psychology, physiology, or sociology, the impacts of major losses tend to accumulate over time. As with the prior example of relativity and relationship loss, a person may become cynical after several big disappointments in his or her love life. The person may turn to drinking or other forms of substance abuse. As a further consequence of this chain of events, the person may lose a good job, become financially destitute, and have to rely on family for help in future difficult circumstances. All told, the impacts over time may pile up and affect numerous dimensions of an individual's life. The idea of a pile up of losses is related to the cumulative impact principle. It is not uncommon in studying the ingredients of suicide to find that, just before committing suicide, a person may have experienced multiple major losses (e.g., the loss of a relationship, the loss of a job, a pet's death, a loss of health, an insult by a coworker). Learning to deal with each major loss separately and effectively, and recognizing that there will be relief at some point, is part of the developmental progression in becoming a thoughtful, mature person.

Major losses often contribute to new aspects of identity. When a couple has been married many years and one member dies, the surviving spouse

may have a major adjustment to make in terms of her or his identity because that person is no longer the husband or wife of a cherished partner. Rather, the person's identity is now that of a widow or widower, maybe reaching out as a single person searching for some new sanctuary for heart and mind. Developing an approach that both recognizes (and memorializes) the value of a past loved one, but that also recognizes the imperative to form a new identity and new relationships, seems to be central to effective adjustment.

Major losses involve adaptations related to a sense of control. Just as the idea of "missing something" is a core feature of loss, the perception of a loss of control is critical to most loss situations. Whether a person loses a relationship, a valued possession, an athletic skill, or an optimistic attitude about life, each loss reflects a feeling that he or she cannot control some part of life that previously was under control. People want and need a sense of control, and major loss reduces the feeling of control.

Loss in Relationships

Loss in the domain of relationships concerns dissolution and divorce, death of close others, and various forms of psychological injury, especially including infidelity and sexual assault. With the latter types of psychological injury, a person may feel that there has been a significant loss of trust in another person and possibly in people whom that person represents. All of the ideas and principles that have been discussed as germane to the general sense of loss also pertain to loss in the arena of close, personal relationships, both romantic and familial. People sometimes experience pileups of these losses (e.g., the death of a close other, such as a child, followed closely a divorce), the loss of control over key features of their lives (e.g., the marital or parental identity around which much life activity is structured), and the need to create new identities. If a person lives a long life, he or she may even have a history of these loss sequences in the realm of close relationships. People also usually cope best with relationship loss by developing accounts, confiding, and being open about their feelings of loss and pain.

A particularly important area of work that links loss and the endings of close relationships is referred to as "children of divorce." This vibrant area of work focuses on both negative and positive effects for a child (including adolescents and people in their 20s) being in a family that experiences one or more divorces. Negative effects may include difficulties in interpersonal relations, schoolwork, employment, psychological and physical health issues, and confidence and trust in others. Positive effects may include growth as a person and in a family situation, becoming more mature and responsible about life's important missions, and gaining valuable perspective about the vices and virtues of close, romantic relationships. Although the negative effects of divorce are major and daunting for most children, research suggests that young people are better off when parents in highly conflicted or cold marriages end the marriages and do their best to take care of their children in their postdivorce, binuclear families.

Study of Loss as a Valuable Perspective

As has been documented in many literatures in the social and behavioral sciences, the effects of loss are pervasive. They occur in the dissolutions of or difficulties in close relationships, in post-traumatic stress disorders, in chronic grief reactions, in the loss of valued possessions, in becoming unemployed, in becoming homeless, in the loss of bodily functions after injuries or disease, and in aging.

A better appreciation of the aspects and dynamics of loss will continue to be one of the most important steps in the understanding of the human condition, both by the general public and by scholars of the social and behavioral sciences.

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See also Attribution Processes in Relationships; Closeness; Depression and Relationships; Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Divorce, Children and; Divorce, Effects on Adults

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LOVE, COMPANIONATE AND PASSIONATE

Most people eagerly seek out love and believe that forming a successful love relationship is essential for their personal happiness. Although each individual is likely to experience various types of love and enter into a number of different kinds of love relationship over the course of his or her lifetime, scientists have tended to focus on two varieties of love that commonly occur in long-term romantic relationships. These two important types of love—stable, affectionate, *companionate love* and exciting, intense, *passionate love*—are linked with several significant personal, interpersonal, and societal outcomes, including marriage and long-term pair bonding, sex and reproduction, and social support. This entry discusses how companionate and passionate love are commonly defined and measured, reviews existing research about each type of love, and explores current steps scientists are taking to further our understanding of both love varieties.

Companionate Love

Definition and Measurement

Companionate love refers to a variety of love that is durable, fairly slow to develop, and characterized by interdependence and feelings of affection, intimacy, and commitment. Variously described as affectionate love, friendship-based love, attachment, and conjugal love, companionate love reflects the abiding affection, trust, and tenderness we feel for people with whom our lives are deeply interwoven and connected. Because it requires time to develop fully, this kind of love is often seen between close friends or romantic partners who have been together for a long time.

To study any variety of love, scientists must have a way of accurately measuring it. Researchers typically measure companionate love using self-report methods, which involve asking people to respond to questions about their feelings for a specific other person (e.g., a friend, dating partner, or spouse). There are two basic self-report methods available to scientists—single-item measures and multi-item scales. Single-item measures typically ask respondents to report on the amount of companionate love they experience for their partner ("How much warm, caring, affectionate love do you feel for your partner?"). These kinds of global single-item measures are easy to use and appear to be relatively valid. However, many researchers choose to use multi-item scales that have been developed specifically to measure the various elements of companionate love. On these scales, people answer a series of questions about how much intimacy, affection, respect, trust, commitment, and so on that they feel for their partner, and the researcher sums up their responses and calculates a total companionate love score.

Research

Research provides evidence that companionate love is an almost uniformly positive experience. For example, when people are asked to think about companionate love and identify its important features, they specify positive feelings like "trust," "caring," "respect," "tolerance," "loyalty," "supportiveness," and "friendship." In addition, most men and women mention "trust," "mutual respect," "communication," "sharing," "honesty," "affection," and other positive emotions and experiences when describing the qualities and characteristics that they believe are important in a companionate love relationship. Similarly, when asked how they can tell the difference between loving (as opposed

to being in love with or merely liking) someone, the majority of people point to deeper levels of trust and tolerance as being characteristic of the state of loving another.

Research conducted with dating couples substantiates these findings and reveals that positive emotions are strongly associated with the amount of companionate love that the couples experience. Specifically, the greater the amount of companionate love that partners feel for each other, the more trust, liking, and respect they have for each other, the more contented they are with each other and with their relationship, and the more satisfying they find their relationship to be. In addition, companionate lovers tend to feel high degrees of emotional intimacy and warmth. They also report stronger feelings of sexual intimacy than do people who love less companionately; that is, the higher a couple's companionate love scores, the more the partners indicate being able to communicate openly and honestly with each other about sexuality. Thus, feelings of intimacy—emotional and sexual—are a hallmark of the companionate love experience.

Scientists also have found evidence that companionate love is strong and durable. Not only do companionate lovers report feeling extremely committed to each other and desirous of maintaining their relationships, but levels of companionate love tend to remain stable over time. In other words, it often makes no difference how long a couple has been together—the partners generally continue to report feeling the same high level of affectionate, companionate love for each other. Thus, companionate love appears to be relatively impervious to the effects of time. Indeed, companionate love may even grow stronger over time because it is based on intimacy processes (such as caring and attachment) that require time to develop fully. The ability to withstand—and perhaps grow stronger over—the passage of time is one feature that distinguishes companionate love from other, more fragile varieties of love, including passionate love.

Current Directions

Recently, researchers have begun to explore the biochemistry of companionate love. Two peptide hormones have come under scrutiny—oxytocin and vasopressin. These substances are released as neurotransmitters (peptides) in the brain and as hormones from the pituitary gland, and they have multiple biological functions involving the kidneys and the cardiovascular and reproductive systems. For example, vasopressin increases blood pressure and facilitates the flow of blood through the kidneys, and oxytocin acts on smooth muscle cells and stimulates uterine contractions during childbirth and the release of milk during lactation. These hormones are associated with reproductive and caregiving behavior in nonhuman mammals. In addition, decreased oxytocin levels (along with other alterations in the endocrine oxytocin and vasopressin systems) have been observed in children diagnosed with autism, a developmental disorder characterized by severe social impairment and the inability to form interpersonal connections and lasting emotional attachments. Based on these two lines of evidence, some scientists have hypothesized that oxytocin and vasopressin are involved in the ability to form deep attachments to others and to experience feelings of affection, intimacy, and companionate love. As of yet, however, this supposition has not been thoroughly tested and therefore remains speculative.

Passionate Love

Definition and Measurement

Passionate love (also known as erotic love, romantic love, or the state of being "in love with" another person) is a much more fragile, sexualized, and emotionally intense experience than companionate love. In addition, passionate love tends to occur fairly rapidly (people can and do fall in love "at first sight"), and people who are passionately in love often idealize the loved one and become mentally preoccupied with thoughts of the partner and the relationship. Physiological arousal and its associated bodily sensations (such as racing pulse, heightened breathing, and "butterflies" in the stomach) represent another feature of passionate love. This variety of love also generally produces an exclusive focus on one particular individual; that is, it is unusual (although not impossible) for someone to fall in love with two people at once.

Passionate love has received much more scientific attention than have other varieties of love, including companionate love, for a number of reasons. First, passionate love appears to be a universal—and

universally sought-after—human experience. By young adulthood, most men and women report having been in love at least once, and researchers have found evidence that passionate love is actively sought and experienced by people living in all cultures all around the world. Second, passionate love has become an essential part of marriage in many human societies. Most people say they will not get married if they are not in love with their intended partner. Third, the absence or loss of passionate love seems to be a factor in relationship termination. Many people end their marriages or leave their romantic relationships when they fall "out of love" with their partners.

Like companionate love, passionate love can be measured using global, single-item, self-report measures ("How deeply are you in love with your partner?" or "How much passionate love do you currently feel for your partner?") or multi-item scales that are designed to capture the important emotional, behavioral, and cognitive or mental features of the passionate love experience. A number of multi-item scales have been developed. The Passionate Love Scale constructed by social scientists Elaine Hatfield and Susan Sprecher represents one of the most complete and commonly used measures of passionate love currently available. The items were developed based on a review of previous theory about love, existing measurement scales, and in-depth personal interviews with couples, and they reflect the various components of the passionate love experience, including physiological arousal ("Sometimes my body trembles with excitement at the sight of _____"), emotional intensity and turbulence ("Since I've been involved with _____, my emotions have been on a roller coaster"), idealization of the beloved ("For me, _____ is the perfect romantic partner"), cognitive preoccupation ("_____ always seems to be on my mind"), and sexual attraction ("I possess a powerful attraction for _____").

Research

Research reveals that passionate love is a highly emotional experience. However, whether the emotions associated with it are positive or negative depends to some extent on whether the love is reciprocated. *Requited* (reciprocated) passionate love is an almost uniformly positive experience.

Men and women who are asked to identify the essential features of passionate love tend to cite many more positive emotional experiences—including happiness, joy or rapture, closeness, warmth, giddiness, and tenderness—than negative ones. Similarly, partners who are in love with one another report feeling positive emotions to a greater degree than negative emotions. In fact, jealousy appears to be the only negative emotion that is consistently associated with the experience of requited passionate love; most people believe that jealousy is a natural part of being in love, and people who are passionately in love also tend to report feeling or having felt jealous at one time or another in their relationships. *Unrequited* or unreciprocated passionate love has many of the same positive emotional features as requited passionate love, but at the same time it is a much more intensely negative experience. For example, people who have been in love with someone who did not return their affection generally report that the experience was emotionally painful and that it caused them to feel disappointment, suffering, jealousy, anger (usually directed at the loved one's chosen partner), and a sense of frustration. In addition to these unpleasant feelings, however, unrequited lovers also tend to experience many pleasant emotions, including happiness, excitement, the blissful anticipation of seeing the beloved, and sheer elation at the state of being in love. Thus, passionate love—regardless of whether it is requited—is a deeply emotional kind of love.

Scientists also have found evidence that passionate love has a relatively brief life span. Although feelings of passionate love initially may increase as a couple progresses from earlier to later courtship stages (e.g., as they move from casual dating to steady dating or engagement), research generally reveals that passionate love declines over longer periods of time in most romantic relationships. In fact, several investigations have found a strong negative correlation between the number of months that a couple has been dating and the amount of passionate love they report feeling for one another; specifically, the longer a couple has been together, the lower their passionate love scores. Among married couples, levels of passionate love tend to decline both over time and after major relationship transitions. For example, couples who make the transition from being childless to becoming parents

may experience a decrease in their levels of passionate love (although levels may rise once children leave home). Although passionate love is clearly more fragile than companionate love, it is important to keep in mind that these results do not imply that passionate love is completely lacking between partners involved in long-term romantic relationships. Rather, these findings simply provide evidence that the intense feelings and sensations characteristic of the first stages of "falling in love" tend to gradually stabilize over time.

Passionate love is also a more sexual kind of love than is companionate love. In fact, sexuality appears to be one of the hallmarks of the passionate love experience. People who are more passionately in love report experiencing higher levels of sexual excitement when thinking about their partners and also engaging in more frequent sexual activities with those partners than do people who are less passionately in love. In addition, interviews conducted with couples who are in love reveal that sexual activities, including hugging, "petting," and "making love" or engaging in intercourse, represent one of the primary ways in which many of them express and communicate their feelings of passionate love. The motivational component of sexuality—sexual desire or sexual attraction—has a particularly strong association with passionate love. Research indicates that people consider sexual desire to be one of the essential features of passionate love; moreover, they believe that dating partners who are very sexually attracted to one another are more likely to be passionately in love than are dating partners who do not desire each other sexually. This belief appears to be accurate. Most men and women report experiencing sexual desire for the people with whom they are passionately in love, and the more passionately in love they are, the greater their feelings of sexual attraction. In summary, there is solid evidence that passionate love is a sexualized experience that is strongly associated with feelings of sexual desire or attraction for the partner, tends to result in the occurrence of sexual activity, and appears to be linked with sexual excitement.

Current Directions

Just as they have with companionate love, scientists have begun to explore the biochemistry of passion with a particular emphasis on neurotransmitters (electrochemical messages released by neurons or the cells of the nervous system). Although a number of different types of neurotransmitters exist, the monoamines (in particular, serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine) have received the most attention due to their strong relationship with mood and generalized arousal. Several scholars have speculated that passionate love is associated with high levels of dopamine and norepinephrine and low levels of serotonin because of similarities between the experience of being in love and the action of those particular monoamines. For example, people who are passionately in love often report feelings of euphoria and exhilaration coupled with heightened energy, loss of appetite, and sleeplessness. These same experiences are associated with increased concentrations of dopamine in the brain. Similarly, people who are in love report focusing on specific events or objects associated with the beloved and remembering and musing over things that the beloved said or did. Increased levels of dopamine are associated with heightened attention, and increased levels of norepinephrine are associated with enhanced memory for new stimuli. In addition, people in the throes of passionate love often report thinking about the loved one obsessively, and low levels of serotonin are implicated in the type of intrusive thinking that is associated with obsessive-compulsive disorder.

The similarities between the experience of being in love and the psychophysiological effects of dopamine and the other monoamines may be coincidental. However, one research study demonstrated that a group of healthy people who were in the early phases of "falling in love" had approximately the same level of serotonin as did a group of people who had been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder. In addition, the serotonin levels of both of these groups of people were significantly lower than those of a control group of healthy individuals who were not currently in love. Researchers also have discovered that people who are passionately in love show increased activity in dopamine-rich areas of their brains when they gaze at a photo of their beloved. Although additional research is needed, these findings certainly suggest that the experience of passionate love may be associated with brain neurochemistry.

Conclusion

Virtually all theorists who have written about the topic of love agree that love is intricately associated with the quality of human life, that different varieties of love exist, and that at a minimum there are two commonly experienced types of love—a passionate variety that is intense, emotional, fragile, and sexually charged, and a companionate variety that is durable, stable, and infused with warmth, intimacy, affection, and trust. These theoretical suppositions are largely supported by empirical research on people's beliefs and conceptions of love and their reports of their ongoing experiences in romantic relationships. Of course, it is important to recognize that other types of love also exist and are experienced by men and women over the course of their lifetimes, ranging from the vague liking felt for casual acquaintances to the intense devotion often experienced for family members, children, and beloved pets. An important task for future researchers is to determine the unique features and consequences of these other important varieties of love.

Pamela C. Regan

See also Biological Systems for Courtship, Mating, Reproduction, and Parenting; Compassionate Love; Falling in Love; Intimacy; Love, Typologies; Lust; Marriage, Expectations About; Romanticism

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LOVE, PROTOTYPE APPROACH

What is love? This question, posed in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night,* is one that also has intrigued social scientists. In recent decades, many definitions and theories of love have been generated. In addition, research has been conducted to illuminate how ordinary people understand this concept. The purpose of this entry is to describe how ordinary people think about love (in general, as well as specific kinds of love), address whether women and men hold different views of love, and briefly discuss relationship implications of people's conceptions of love.

Most of the research on ordinary people's conceptions of love has been conducted from a prototype perspective. According to Eleanor Rosch, the founder of prototype theory, many of the concepts that are used in everyday language lack explicit, precise definitions. Instead, such concepts are

organized around their clearest cases, or best examples, which Rosch referred to as *prototypes*. For example, when asked to list types of fruit, most people mention apples and oranges—these are the prototypical cases. Figs and papayas are considered less prototypical. Tomatoes and avocadoes lie at the periphery of the concept and shade into the neighboring category of vegetables. Rosch demonstrated that the organization of concepts in terms of prototypes influences how people process information. For example, people are faster to confirm that a robin is a kind of bird than that a chicken is a kind of bird.

Other researchers subsequently explored whether more abstract concepts, such as love, might also be structured as prototypes, such that some kinds of love are seen as more representative of the concept than others. In one series of studies, people were asked to list the attributes or features of the concept of love. Features such as honesty, trust, and caring were listed with the highest frequency. Characteristics such as dependency, sexual passion, and physical attraction were listed relatively infrequently. In all, there were 68 features listed by more than one participant, suggesting that ordinary people have rich, complex knowledge of this concept. In follow-up research, other people rated these features in terms of prototypicality (goodness of example). Features such as trust, caring, and intimacy were considered central to love. These features map onto what social psychologists refer to as companionate love—a kind of love characterized by friendly affection and deep attachment to someone. Features such as sexual passion, gazing at the other, and heart rate increases received the lowest ratings. These features map onto social psychologists' definitions of passionate love. This prototype structure was confirmed using a variety of methods. For example, there was evidence that prototypical features of love, such as trust and caring, were more likely to be recalled in memory tests than were nonprototypical features, such as physical attraction and sexual passion.

The initial studies on the prototype of love were conducted in British Columbia, Canada. In subsequent studies, other researchers tested whether similar findings would be obtained on the East Coast of Canada and on the West Coast of the United States, using university students and members of the public as participants. There was a remarkable degree of consistency across studies. Five features of love were listed frequently and received the highest prototypicality ratings in each of these data sets: trust, caring, honesty, friendship, and respect. The feature, intimacy, also received high ratings in each data set. Thus, at least within North America, among university students and nonstudents alike, there appears to be consensus that it is the companionate features of love that are seen as capturing the true meaning of the concept. Passionate features are seen as part of the concept, but on the periphery.

Prototypes of Specific Types of Love

The next development in prototype analyses of love was to focus on types of love, rather than the concept of love in general. The most extensive prototype analyses have been conducted on romantic love, "being in love," and compassionate (altruistic) love. Other varieties of love, such as familial kinds of love (e.g., maternal love, brotherly love), friendship love, platonic love, and sexual love, have received more limited attention. These investigations have revealed that the features of the different varieties of love tend to overlap with the features listed for the concept of love in general. More specifically, features that are prototypical of love also are generated for specific kinds of love and rated as high in prototypicality. For example, features such as trust, caring, and honesty—which are central to love in general—are also rated as highly prototypical of romantic love. In addition, people list features such as candlelit dinners, going for walks, and kissing, but these are considered nonprototypical. Similarly, for the concept of compassionate love, features such as trust, caring, and honesty are regarded as prototypical. People also generate features such as make sacrifices for the other and put the other ahead of self, but these are regarded as nonprototypical.

Other research in this vein has examined which kinds of love are considered most prototypical of the concept of love in general and which are considered nonprototypical. Similar to the findings for features of love (discussed earlier), companionate kinds of love, such as familial love and friendship love, receive the highest prototypicality

ratings. Passionate kinds of love, such as romantic love, passionate love, and sexual love, are considered nonprototypical. Thus, research on the features of love and research on types of love point to the same conclusion—namely, that ordinary people regard companionate love as the essence of love; passionate love is considered less central.

Gender Differences/Similarities in Prototypes of Love

Do women and men hold different conceptions of love? Research has been conducted in which women and men are presented with descriptions of various prototypes of love (portraying companionate and passionate kinds of love) and are asked to rate how well these prototypes reflect their own view of love. Consistent with research on love experiences, men are more likely to think about love in terms of passion and romance than are women. Women are more likely to think about love in terms of its companionate varieties (e.g., familial love, friendship love, affection). However, these gender differences are not large—both women and men rate the companionate love prototypes highest (although women's ratings are higher than men's), and both women and men rate the passionate love prototypes the lowest (although men's ratings are higher than women's). Based on these findings, it has been concluded that women and men actually are more similar in their conceptions of love.

Relational Implications

So far, the relational implications of people's conceptions of love have not received extensive attention. However, the limited research to date suggests that people who conceptualize love in terms of its prototypical cases (i.e., a companionate conception of love) report greater relationship satisfaction as well as greater love and liking for their partner than those who think about love in terms of its nonprototypical cases (i.e., a passionate conception of love). Further, thinking about love in terms of its prototypical, rather than nonprototypical, cases is associated with relationship longevity.

In conclusion, the answer to the question "What is love?" is that, in the minds of ordinary people, love is a multifaceted, complex concept. At its core are companionate features such as trust, caring, and honesty. Passionate features such as romance and sexual attraction also are part of the concept, but reside on the periphery.

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See also Falling in Love; Ideals About Relationships; Intimacy; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Love, Typologies; Sex and Love

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LOVE, TYPOLOGIES

If one or more types of love or any similar construct can be described in a systematic way, we can say that it forms a *typology* or categorization. In fact, there are many types of love, and this entry deals with how these various types are organized into typologies, primarily typologies of romantic love. A typology of romantic love is a description that divides love into two or more qualitative categories. Each category of a typology has its own verbal description, and the category may have properties that can be measured. The differences between the categories can in most cases not only be given verbal descriptions, but also quantitative descriptions. Thus, categories within a typology may be discriminated from one another and therefore compared with each other. Further, typologies may be compared with other typologies.

During the past few decades, several typologies of romantic love have been developed. The first relevant social-psychological scientific work distinguished loving from liking. The next approach proposed two types of romantic love: passionate and companionate. From the 1970s to the present, typologies in most cases became more complex, with each new one generally proposing several categories.

It may be helpful to contrast a typology of love with a process theory of love. As an example of the latter, Arthur and Elaine Aron proposed that people have a basic need to grow or expand the self. As life's journey proceeds, self-expansion may include such things as obtaining physical possessions, attaining occupational success, and forming close relationships. For example, falling in love provides a pleasurable, rapid expansion of the boundaries of self. As two people fall in love, they each metaphorically expand the self to include the other, creating a new entity called "us." The self-expansion theory, as applied to romantic love, is quite versatile in generating testable predictions. It is a theory about the process of change in the self in response to love or how love *proceeds*. A typology of love is rather about types or categories of love or what love *is*.

The following are some of the most researched typologies of love. The concluding section of the entry provides some comparisons of the typologies, as well as a few applications of the typologies to couples in real life.

Passionate and Companionate Love

Most people can relate to the idea of falling head over heels in love. In this state, the lover is at first totally absorbed with the loved one. Thoughts of the beloved intrude frequently, the heart may race at the sight of the loved one, and the couple attempts to be together as much as possible. This describes in capsule form the concept of passionate love. Additionally, there is usually sexual desire and perhaps intense love-making. However, it is possible to fall passionately in love with and have sexual desire for someone without the other person's awareness. Such a state is called *unrequited love*. A passionate love affair requires some reciprocity on the part of both persons. Lust is a

strong sexual "wanting," but it is typically not equated with love, even passionate love.

The first flush of falling in love cannot endure forever. Eventually the intensity must cool because other areas of life require attention. It is common for a relationship to evolve into companionate love, the type of love that involves strong affection, trust, and closeness. This state is also called *friendship love*.

Both types of love are readily recognized within our cultures. Early theorizing viewed passionate love as coming first. If a relationship endured, passionate love evolved into companionate love. More recent thinking and research has shown that one type of love does not have to succeed another; couples can have both types of love at the same time. There are research data indicating that young couples want friendship with their partner as well as strong passion. Relatively strong passion may be maintained indefinitely for many couples across the years.

A balanced mix of friendship and passion appears to be the modern ideal. People want to "love" their partners (friendship) and be "in love" with them at the same time (passion). Theorists now agree that the early hot embers of passion need not inevitably cool into quiet, unexciting companionate love. It is possible to have both passion and friendship and maintain both over time.

Love Styles

At first thought, the passionate/companionate typology appears to exhaust the possibilities for romantic love. Such is not the case. One typology proposed six different types (or styles) of romantic love. These love styles may be considered as attitudinal categories of romantic love. The Love Attitudes Scales developed by Clyde and Susan Hendrick measure how much of each love style a person possesses, and each person is given a score on all six styles. Usually, one or two styles will be dominant, so that person can be assigned to one or two love categories.

The six love styles have interesting names and characteristics. The *eros* style is similar to passionate love. An eros lover has definite preferences for a partner's physical characteristics and may fall in love at first sight. Eros desires deep and rapid intimacy,

both emotional and physical. In contrast, the *ludus* style treats love as a game to be played for fun, preferably with more than one partner at a time. Commitment and deep intimacy are avoided. Ludus has no preferred physical type. At its best, ludus is a playful love style with no intent to harm a partner emotionally. The *storge* style is closest to companionate love. Storge is friendship love: steady, reliable, and trustworthy. The intensity of eros and the detachment of ludus are missing from storgic love. The *pragma* style is practical love. A pragma lover looks for a desired list of traits in a partner and is content when a match is found. Perhaps computer dating and mating (with a shopping list of qualities desired in a partner) most aptly describes pragmatic love. The *mania* style encompasses both possessiveness and dependence. The manic lover alternates between emotional highs and lows and is possessive, jealous, and prone to dramatic breakups and reconciliations. Manic love is both ecstatic and painful. The *agape* style represents "gift" love. Agapic love is freely bestowed and asks nothing in return. The agapic lover is focused on the welfare of the partner. In the real world, there are few pure cases of agape because enduring love between partners depends strongly on reciprocity in word and deed, rather than love flowing in just one direction. However, our last typology will be an enlarged version of agape named compassionate love. It includes both romantic love and love of "humanity."

Much research supports the validity of the typology as a set of six different approaches to romantic love. There are gender differences in some of the styles. Men typically score higher on both ludic and agapic love than women, and women score higher than men on storgic and pragmatic love. Eros is associated positively with relationship satisfaction, and ludus is negatively associated with relationship satisfaction.

Prototypes of Love

A prototype is the best example or best set of defining features of some concept. A prototype is not rigidly fixed in definition and will usually have fuzzy boundaries. This approach examines people's mental *representations* of an object, such as love, instead of studying the object directly. Several researchers have taken a prototype approach to the study of love. Early work attempted to distinguish between features of love and features of commitment. This research tradition has people list the characteristics of love that occur to them. Results have revealed features of both passionate and companionate love, and companionate love was clearly rated as most typical of the meaning of love. Features named consistently included caring, trust, respect, honesty, and friendship. In fact, passion and sexuality were ranked quite low on the list of defining features.

This research concerned "love in general." Later research explored a prototype analysis of romantic love. Results showed that passion and sexual attraction were now listed as central features, but these features still ranked below such features as trust, happiness, and honesty, along with the companionate features.

Why does passion seem relatively less central in prototype research? More than 60 attributes of love have been named with some frequency. Other researchers performed a complex statistical analysis of these many features and discovered the 60-plus attributes could be sorted into three dimensions: passion, intimacy, and commitment. However, the features that defined intimacy were rated as more central to the meaning of love than the features that defined passion or commitment. The research suggests that intimacy is intrinsically more important than passion in defining love.

The methods used to study prototypes of love consistently show that companionate love is the most general type of love. This outcome makes sense because companionate love applies to all sorts of relationships (e.g., parents, children, friends). However, this approach basically reduces romantic love to companionship plus passion. There may be something about the method used in these studies that reduces the apparent power and importance of passion. Other theorists have argued that passionate love is universal across all cultures. It may be that when people are asked to make a list of the features of love, they are reluctant to list passion or lust at the top, although these might on occasion occur to them right away. It is clear that companionship is also a central component of romantic love, and it may be universal as well. In fact, throughout history, people in some cultures have gone through a betrothal period during which a couple becomes acquainted, perhaps developing

some companionate/friendship features before physically consummating their marriage. Prototype research reduces the relative importance of passionate love. The relative importance of passionate and companionate love features will be clarified by further research.

Love Triangles

The previous section noted that the prototypes research approach uncovered three basic components of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment. Another researcher, Robert Sternberg, working independently of the prototype tradition, proposed the same three components. If one visualizes a triangle with the three vertices labeled intimacy, passion, and commitment, one can immediately visualize a "triangular theory of love." One interesting aspect of this approach is that the three dimensions can be mixed in different amounts, and each mixture yields a different type of love.

This conception can best be understood by assuming that a given component is either completely present or completely absent. The mix of present/absent yields a typology of eight kinds of love:

1. Nonlove: absence of all three components

2. Liking: intimacy without passion or commitment

3. Infatuated love: passion without intimacy or commitment

4. Empty love: commitment without intimacy or passion

5. Fatuous love: passion and commitment (no intimacy)

6. Companionate love: intimacy and commitment (no passion)

7. Romantic love: intimacy and passion (no commitment)

8. Consummate love: presence of all three components

Perhaps most people would say that only the last three types (6, 7, and 8) represent "real love." Further, when companionate love overlaps romantic love, all three components occur, yielding consummate love. As noted earlier, there is evidence that couples want both friendship and passion (or companionate and romantic love, in the terminology of the triangular typology). Thus, most serious couples want consummate love. Because intimacy is high for liking (type 2) and for the three types of "real love," it is easy to see that intimacy underlies a wide range of close relationships. The prototype research tradition suggested that intimacy and commitment may be more important than passion for a loving relationship. A *romantic* loving relationship is incomplete without passion, but passion alone is only infatuation. Even passion with commitment but no intimacy is merely "fatuous love" (type 5). In this way, the seemingly simple eightfold typology, composed of three basic elements, can account for a wide range of the types of love relationships.

Compassionate Love

Compassionate love is a single type of love. It is most similar to the love style of agape, but is much broader in scope. The scholars who proposed this type of love viewed it as an attitude toward several types of other people: a romantic partner or friend, close others generally (e.g., family), and strangers or all of humanity. Compassionate love is focused on care and concern for another and is oriented toward empathic understanding, supporting, and helping the other, especially in times of need.

The broad range of persons encompassed by this type of love required three slightly different types of rating scales: one for close others, another for strangers or humanity in general, and the third specifically for friends or a romantic partner.

Research showed that compassionate love is a viable category of love. This type of love was related positively to empathy, helpfulness, social support, volunteer activities, and religiosity, depending on who was rated. For example, when a specific romantic partner or friend was the focus, only social support was associated with compassionate love. When the focus was close others or strangers/humanity, social support, volunteerism, and religiosity were all related to this type of love.

Other interesting results were found. Women were higher than men on compassionate love. The average love ratings were higher for close others and romantic partner/friends than for strangers humanity, and the highest compassion score was for a romantic partner.

As the world moves toward becoming a "global village," the concept of compassionate love acquires an urgency for full understanding and implementation. The research data indicate that people show more compassion for specific and close others than for strangers. Much more research is needed, but one application is clear. Somehow, people must learn to extend compassionate love more fully to strangers and humanity generally. Quite simply, human survival may depend on it.

Typologies in Real Life

The typologies described in this entry offer several different ways to view romantic love. Love may be companionate, passionate, or both. Or love styles may be passionate, companionate, game-playing, practical, possessive and dependent, or giving. The prototypic kind of love may be companionate, with passion included when love is of the romantic variety. Love may be composed of intimacy, passion, and commitment and may reveal itself in eight different guises. Or love may be an outpouring of attention and support to a romantic partner, close others, or humanity as a whole.

These different views of love are really more similar than they are different. Two guiding themes that appear in most of the love typologies are "passion" and "companionship." Research has shown that young couples in the Western world describe their love partner as their "best friend" and that for older couples both passionate and companionate love are highly related to satisfaction with their relationships. Other research that compared several of the most frequently used measures of love found that, indeed, when these measures were analyzed together, the most dominant themes that emerged were passion (accompanied by intimacy and similar constructs) and caring (also accompanied by intimacy and an absence of negativity).

Does this mean that there are really only two types of love after all, passionate and companionate? Probably not! Given the complexity of our human species, and the many ways in which such factors as gender, age, race/ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, and a myriad of other factors affect the emotions, thoughts, and actions of a romantic couple, it is unlikely that one or two or six or eight types of love could capture love's infinite variety.

For example, suppose that a married couple has young children, and both parents have demanding jobs. These parents want to work hard and parent well, and they view themselves as a team. They are each other's best friends, and they both participate wholeheartedly in their companionate marriage. Two other people, each reconciled to being alone because they had not yet found the "right person," find themselves together in the most emotionally intense and physically exciting relationship they have ever experienced. They thought passion would forever elude them, but it did not. Yet another couple has experienced both passionate and companionate love in their few years together, but a life-threatening illness in one of the partners has required them to reach into their deepest reserves of caring and compassion so as to comfort and console each other as they face the biggest obstacle their relationship has ever encountered. Their evident agapic love for each other inspires the people who know them. Another couple, older and partners for many years, decide that they will no longer buy presents for each other except under unusual circumstances. They both dislike shopping and don't want to distress themselves or each other by doing that. They have also agreed to take the money they would have spent on presents and contribute it to a charity they both regard highly. Are these partners companionate, agapic, compassionate, or some combination of these or other types of love? Each couple portrays a somewhat different picture of love, yet each set of partners is connected by a bond that can best be called love.

The love typologies presented are representative of ideas about love, but are certainly not exhaustive of the ways in which love may be expressed. At some level, love is shown by what is *not* expressed as much as by what *is* expressed. For example, closeness without negativity, as noted previously, is important in love. So also is the absence of game-playing, exploitation, and disrespect. Indeed, love and respect have been put forth as key qualities that romantic partners seek from one another. Love may be necessary but not sufficient for a romantic relationship to endure, yet few of us would want to be in such a relationship without love. Humans seek connection, and love is one of connection's most profound forms.

Susan S. Hendrick and Clyde Hendrick

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LOVE, UNRECIPROCATED

Most people believe that love is one of the most significant events that a human being can experience. Thus, it is not surprising that the majority of men and women spend a good portion of their adolescence and adulthood seeking a partner with whom to fall in love and form a long-term, committed relationship. The eagerness with which many people search for love is certainly understandable when one considers the growing amount of scientific evidence indicating that love is associated with a variety of positive outcomes. For example, partners in love relationships report feeling intimacy, contentment, and satisfaction; experiencing passion, joy, and excitement; and providing and receiving significant levels of emotional and social support from one another. All of these experiences, in turn, can enhance and promote the partners' psychological and physical well-being. Love between two people whose feelings are mutual and reciprocated—that is, who love or are in love with each other—can be a fulfilling and rewarding experience. But what if one person loves another who does not return his or her feelings? What if the object of one's affection spurns one's romantic overtures? This entry considers the topic of *unreciprocated love,* with an emphasis on defining the experience and considering its frequency and consequences.

Definition

Unreciprocated love (also known as *unrequited love*) refers to romantic love that is not mutual or shared by two people; it is defined as the experience of loving or feeling strong romantic attraction toward another person who does not return that particular feeling. Scholars who study this phenomenon point out that it is not necessary for people who are the objects of unreciprocated love to be actively hostile toward or openly rejecting of their lovelorn admirers; sometimes they may feel quite affectionate toward those individuals or the two may share a long history of friendship. The objects of affection may even have experienced some initial attraction to their admirers or were involved in a romantic relationship with them; however, at some point, their feelings changed or failed to develop into the deeper passion felt by their would-be suitors. The key issue is that, regardless of their personal history or the current state of their relationship, the objects of unreciprocated love do not feel the way their admirers do—they do not feel the same kind of passionate attraction, longing, and intense desire for intimacy that their admirers feel for them.

How Common Is Unreciprocated Love?

There is little research that can provide a definitive answer to the question of how often unreciprocated love occurs. This is partly due to the fact that some people are likely to experience unreciprocated love fairly frequently, whereas others may never experience it at all. However, studies generally indicate that most men and women (close to 95 percent) have found themselves on both sides of unreciprocated love—that is, they have loved in

vain and have been loved in vain by another—by the time they reach their late teens or early 20s. Thus, unreciprocated love appears to be a common life event. Interestingly, women report having been in the "rejector" role more often than men, and men report having been in the "would-be lover" role more often than women. Some researchers speculate that this may stem from the fact that men tend to fall in love more readily than women (and therefore find themselves more frequently in the position of would-be lover), whereas women tend to fall out of love more readily than men (and consequently find themselves more often in the role of rejector).

Consequences of Unreciprocated Love

Although folk wisdom (actually, Victorian poet Alfred Tennyson) tells us that "it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all," the reality is that unreciprocated love can be, and often is, an extremely unpleasant experience for both the unrequited lover and the object of his or her affection. Autobiographical accounts provided by would-be lovers and rejectors reveal that negative emotion is the most common consequence of unreciprocated love. For example, would-be lovers often report that their unreciprocated passion caused them to feel intense pain, suffering, heartbreak, and disappointment. Additionally, they report having experienced extreme bouts of jealousy and anger, which were often directed at their beloved's chosen partner. Frustration and fears of rejection are also common consequences of loving another person in vain. However, unreciprocated love is not an entirely unpleasant experience for the lovelorn suitor. In addition to the unpleasant emotions they experience, unrequited lovers also report a variety of pleasant emotional outcomes. For example, happiness, excitement, the blissful anticipation of seeing the beloved, sheer elation at the state of being in love, and other positive emotions are commonly reported by most would-be suitors. Many also look back on their unreciprocated love experiences with fondness and an appreciation for the opportunity they had to experience passion and other intense emotions.

Rejectors, however, do not usually experience positive outcomes. Although some rejectors report

feeling flattered by the attention of their admirers, most report feeling annoyance at having to endure unwanted advances, discomfort and guilt at having to deliver rejection messages, and a host of other negative emotions, including anger, frustration, and resentment. The intensity of these negative reactions depends in part on the behavior of the would-be lover. For example, a person dealing with an extremely persistent suitor who continues in his or her pursuit despite repeated requests to cease is far more likely to experience rage, hostility, disgust, and other strong negative emotions than is a person whose unwanted suitor is content to love unobtrusively from afar.

In summary, unreciprocated love is a common occurrence that primarily produces emotional distress. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to recover quickly from the experience of unreciprocated love. Time is perhaps the only cure.

Pamela C. Regan

See also Attraction, Sexual; Falling in Love; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Lust

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LUST

Lust (also called *sexual desire, sexual interest,* or *sexual attraction*) is the motivational component of human sexuality. Lust is experienced as an interest in sexual activities, a drive to seek out sexual objects, or a wish, need, or craving for sexual

contact. Although people can feel and express a variety of sexual responses within their interpersonal relationships, lust appears to play an especially important role in the attraction process and in the early stages of romantic relationships, particularly as people fall in love. This entry distinguishes lust from other related sexual responses, examines its origins and correlates, and explores its consequences in ongoing, romantic relationships.

Conceptualization and Measurement

The experience of lust is presumed to be distinct from other sexual responses, including *sexual arousal* (which involves physiological arousal, genital excitement, and the subjective awareness of genital and physiological arousal), *sexual activity* (which consists of overt sexual behaviors, such as masturbation, "petting," or intercourse), and *sexual feelings* that are associated with these responses (such as satisfaction, fulfillment, and pleasure). Of course, these sexual responses frequently co-occur and thus are experienced relatively simultaneously. For example, the sight of an attractive person may cause an individual to feel an urge to engage in sexual activities with that person and to fantasize about what sex with that person might be like; these lustful feelings may subsequently produce physiological arousal and genital excitement. The subjective awareness of this sexual arousal may, in turn, increase the desire to engage in sex with the other person and may result in actual sexual behavior. After orgasm or sexual satiation, the individual's body will return to its prearoused state, and sexual desire also may decrease. Thus, the interrelationship among desire, arousal, and activity is complex; each response can influence the others, and they may co-occur. Researchers nonetheless consider each experience to be a separate component of the human sexual response cycle.

Lust or sexual desire varies along at least two dimensions. The first dimension is quantitative and concerns the magnitude of the desire that is experienced. Both the intensity and the frequency with which lust is experienced can vary within one individual over time. For example, a person may experience sexual desire on numerous occasions one week, only to feel no desire at all the following

week; similarly, he or she may possess a powerful sexual urge at one point in time and then a much less-intense sexual need at another. In addition, people differ in the chronic amount of lust that they experience; some individuals generally have a low level of sexual appetite, whereas others habitually experience high levels of desire.

The second dimension along which sexual desire varies is qualitative and concerns the specificity of the desired sexual goal and sexual object. A person in the throes of lust may wish to engage in a specific sexual activity (e.g., intercourse) with a specific other individual (e.g., the partner). Alternately, he or she may simply have an urge to engage in some form of sexual activity with an unspecified partner; in this situation, both the sexual goal and the sexual object are diffuse rather than specific.

Because lust is a subjective, internal experience, rather than an overt physical or behavioral event, scientists generally measure it with self-report methods. These involve asking people to respond to questions about their feelings in general or for a specific other person (e.g., a dating partner or spouse). People might rate their overall level or amount of desire ("How much sexual desire or lust do you experience?"), the frequency of their sexual urges ("How often do you experience sexual desire or lust?"), or the intensity or degree of their sexual attraction to their romantic partner ("How intensely do you desire _____ sexually?" or "How sexually attracted are you to _____?").

Causes and Correlates

Research indicates that lust is associated with a variety of factors. Some of these factors involve the partner or the desired object. Certain partner characteristics appear to excite desire more than others. For example, most people consider an attractive appearance, good overall personality, sense of humor, kind disposition, self-confidence, and intelligence to be particularly sexually appealing attributes for someone to possess. In addition, individuals with symmetrical facial features, an average body weight, and a sex-typical distribution of body fat or "shape" (for women, an hourglass shape; for men, a straighter shape) are typically considered sexually desirable.

Although variables associated with the partner are undoubtedly important, the majority of researchers interested in understanding the dynamics of lust have focused on person or individual-level factors. For example, men and women with serious physical illnesses, including cancer, diabetes, and Parkinson's disease, typically report decreases in their overall level of sexual interest following the onset of their illness, and their desire levels are usually lower than those reported by healthy adults. Depression and other forms of major mental illness are also associated with decreased desire, as is excessive and chronic use of alcohol and other recreational drugs. Another person factor that is related to the ability to experience lust is age. Although most healthy older adults continue to experience desire and other sexual responses, research reveals that both men and women report a decline in their level of sexual interest with advancing age.

One of the most important individual-level factors that scientists have identified is the hormone *testosterone* (an androgen, or masculinizing hormone, that is synthesized primarily in the testes and the adrenal cortex, and to a lesser extent in the ovaries). A growing body of research reveals that the ability to experience lust is associated with the action of this particular hormone. For example, levels of testosterone are positively correlated with self-reported levels of sexual desire and frequency of sexual thoughts in healthy adults. That is, the higher the level of active testosterone in a person's bloodstream, the more sexual desire he or she reports experiencing and the more often he or she indicates having sexual thoughts. In addition, people who have undergone surgical procedures (such as removal of the adrenal glands) that result in a sudden decrease in their levels of testosterone report decreased feelings of sexual desire. Similarly, treatment with synthetic steroids that suppress the synthesis of testosterone produces diminished sexual desire. This result has been observed in three groups of individuals: male sex offenders who are treated with the anti-androgenic substances cyproterone acetate or medroxyprogesterone, cancer patients who receive anti-androgenic treatment in combination with surgical castration as part of their therapeutic regimen, and people who are given androgen antagonists to treat androgen-dependent hair and skin problems such as acne,

alopecia, hirsutism, and seborrhea. In all three groups, treatment often is associated with a reduction in sexual desire, fantasies, and urges. Finally, the administration of testosterone has been noted to result in an increase in the strength and frequency of sexual desire among men and women complaining of diminished sexual interest, men with hypogonadism or eugonadism (medical conditions that result in abnormally low levels of testosterone), and women with androgen deficiency syndrome (an androgen deficiency caused by chemotherapy, hysterectomy [removal of the uterus], or oophorectomy [removal of the ovaries]). These findings suggest that some minimum level of testosterone is necessary for the experience of lust.

Are Men or Women More Lustful?

Biological sex or gender is another individual-level factor that appears to be associated with the experience of sexual desire. Certainly the question of whether men or women are the more "lustful" sex has long interested scientists. Current research suggests the following conclusions. First, both sexes, particularly in adolescence and young adulthood, feel sexual desire fairly frequently. Second, men typically report experiencing sexual desire more often than do women. Third, when asked to rate their level or amount (as opposed to frequency) of desire, men tend to report a greater amount than do women. Thus, although lust is a common experience for both sexes, at first glance, men appear to be more lustful than women. However, women experience greater variation in hormone levels than do men and, as a result, are particularly prone to fluctuations in desire. For example, many women report increases and decreases in their feelings of sexual interest as their bodies go through the various phases of the menstrual cycle. Pregnancy, menopause, and other hormonally mediated life events may also alter a woman's levels of sexual desire. Consequently, in any given span of time, there will be occasions when a woman's intensity or frequency of desire exceeds that of her male counterpart. There will also be times when his desire exceeds hers and times when the two experience roughly equal frequencies or levels. Thus, the question of which sex is more lustful is a difficult one and can only be answered by future

research that examines the pattern of men's and women's levels of desire over time.

Relational Consequences

Lust appears to play a key role in the process of romantic attraction and relationship development. Feelings of sexual desire for another individual may propel a person to initiate interpersonal contact, thus leading to the beginning of a romantic relationship. Intense sexual attraction also is associated with, and may even produce, feelings of passionate love. In fact, most people believe that sexual desire is part and parcel of the state of being in love. For example, when asked to describe the difference between "being in love with" and "loving" a romantic partner, the majority of men and women spontaneously mention sexual desire as creating the essential difference between the two experiences (and as being much more reflective of the state of being in love than of loving). Similarly, when asked to identify the basic features or ingredients of passionate love, most people list sexual desire or lust (along with other positive experiences). Moreover, dating partners who report a high level of sexual attraction for each other tend also to report being passionately in love, whereas partners with lower levels of desire for one another are correspondingly less "in love" (although they may like or love each other a great deal).

Although sexual attraction is often present during the initial stages of a romantic relationship, particularly when the partners are falling in love with one another, it may not remain at the same high level throughout the entire relationship. Over time, partners commonly experience decreased sexual desire for each other. Because the ability to experience lustful feelings is associated with the partners' physical and mental health, age, hormonal variations, and other factors (including the loss of novelty that occurs as partners become habituated to each other), a reduction in their sexual desire is to some extent inevitable and does not necessarily mean that their relationship is dysfunctional. However, a sudden dramatic loss of desire or a sustained feeling of sexual repulsion for the partner may sometimes indicate that some degree of emotional conflict or interpersonal difficulty exists in a couple's relationship. If that is the case, treatment administered by a qualified therapist may prove beneficial. Clinical research suggests that the most effective treatment programs for sexual desire problems are those that combine traditional cognitive-behavioral techniques that target the low-desire partner (such as sexual fantasy exercises and cognitive restructuring) with techniques that target the interpersonal dynamics between the partners, including training in verbal communication skills, emotional communication, and sexual intimacy.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Falling in Love; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Marriage and Sex; Sex and Love; Sexual Dysfunctions

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M

MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Scholars often have insights about how people maintain their close relationships, as many entries in this volume indicate. However, the purposeful, direct examination of various factors that specifically address how people maintain their relationships is a recent enterprise. Still, a substantial number of scholars have now converged on behaviors directly relevant to the domain of relationship maintenance.

This entry focuses on research that has directly sought to reveal how people maintain their close relationships—emphasizing both stability and quality. First, *relational maintenance* is defined. Next, two metaphors that several scholars have used to portray maintenance processes—centripetal force and centrifugal force—are described. This entry concludes by observing that maintenance processes occur at several levels, from the individual to the cultural.

Defining Relational Maintenance

Five definitions of *relational maintenance* have been offered in the literature. (1) Perhaps the most obvious definition concerns *stability, or how people keep the relationship intact.* Here, relationship maintenance refers to those behaviors that keep a couple together over time—the longer, the better. (2) A second definition involves sustaining desired features of the relationship. From this view, it is not enough to have a stable relationship; *relationship maintenance means retaining a high-quality involvement.* Accordingly, relational maintenance refers to engaging in actions that promote important relationship features, such as satisfaction, commitment, trust, love, and so forth. (3) Third, relationship maintenance refers to *how people repair their close involvements that have been somehow damaged.* In this sense, maintenance behaviors are reactive; people do not engage in maintenance until the relationship needs repair. (4) Fourth, relational maintenance concerns *keeping a relationship in a specified condition.* That is, a particular type of relationship and level of intimacy are maintained. For instance, platonic friends engage in maintenance behaviors to keep the friendship as nonsexual. (5) Finally, from a dialectical perspective, *relational maintenance refers to how partners adapt to change that is inherent in relationships.* In other words, relationships do not have a static status quo; rather, relational partners experience ebbs and flows of various tensions that need to be managed for the relationship to be sustained.

Researchers tend to adopt one definition in preference to others. However, these definitions are probably more mutually informative than mutually exclusive. That is, relational maintenance most likely occurs in all forms but at different times. At a minimum, people need to keep their relationships in existence, and at times, that is the critical goal. But in addition, people work at maintaining important characteristics of the relationship—as one that involves commitment, trust, and so forth. And when partners have a

falling out, they then need to repair the damage done. During periods when both parties are content, they work at sustaining those times of continuity, although the status quo of relationships is not static but involves change.

Forces That Push and Pull on Relationships

Some people believe that relationships are easy to get into but difficult to get out of, whereas other individuals hold that people must work to maintain their relationships or they will fall apart. The idea that relationships are hard to leave invites a *centripetal* analogy, and the idea that relationships fall apart unless some force holds them together suggests a *centrifugal force* at work. Research shows that both centripetal and centrifugal forces function to maintain close involvements, such that one should leverage the forces that keep relationships intact and combat the forces that pull relationships apart.

Emphasizing Centripetal Forces

One clear centripetal force concerns the barriers that people face when they attempt to dissolve a relationship. Both internal barriers and external barriers have been examined. One internal barrier concerns how individual identities are constructed in the partner's presence. The extent to which one's identity connects to the relationship is a centripetal force that keeps people together. Such personal identities can become so enmeshed that people cannot imagine their lives without their partners, for example, what to do in the evenings or on weekends. Also, external barriers keep partners together; for example, financial interdependence, legal constraints, societal norms, and children represent obstacles to leaving one's partner.

Another centripetal force, communication, maintains relationships. Mundane, predictable, and routine interactions define and perpetuate relationships. According to Steve Duck, talk—in and of itself—conveys a symbolic vision of the relationship that promotes its continuance every time partners engage in it. Accordingly, mundane communication patterns solidify the relational system such that altering communicative patterns requires no small effort. Communication patterns also establish expectations about how each person should behave in relation to the partner. Communication patterns refer to repeated exchanges of messages, for instance, in the ways partners greet each other after a day at work ("Hi Honey, how was your day?" / "Not bad, you know, the usual craziness"). Once patterns establish expectations, alternative behaviors appear unusual and perhaps inappropriate ("Hi Honey, how was your day?" / "Why do you ask?" / "What?").

Combating Centrifugal Forces

Recall that a centrifugal analogy implies that relationships tend to break apart unless people do something to keep the relationship together. In this view, maintenance behaviors represent the "do something" actions that people undertake to keep the relationship intact and of high quality. For example, Laura Stafford and Dan Canary's Relational Maintenance Strategy Measure (RMSM) comprises five strategies that have been found to predict relational stability and quality. First, *Positivity* refers to conscious attempts to make interactions positive and upbeat, including acting cheerful, being spontaneous, performing favors for the partner, and so forth. *Openness* involves direct discussion about the relationship, including talk about its history, rules made, and self-disclosure. *Assurances* concern showing support for the partner, comforting the partner, and stressing one's commitment. *Social Networks* refer to relying on friends and family to support the relationship (e.g., having dinner every Sunday at the in-laws), involving network members to solve relational problems, and the like. Finally, *Sharing Tasks* concern performing one's responsibilities (e.g., doing household chores). Although people can use each strategy alone or in combination with others, these five strategies are moderately and positively associated. For example, positivity might be used to increase partner rewards and one's likability, whereas in a different interaction, openness could be used to increase time spent together. Moreover, researchers have expanded the original five RMSM strategies, including such behaviors as *Joint Activities* (e.g., spend time together) and *Not Flirting* (to maintain a platonic relationship) among others.

In one important program of research, Caryl Rusbult has identified variations in how people

respond to their partners during troubled times, or *tendencies to accommodate*. Tendencies to accommodate are the product of two dimensions: passive versus active and constructive versus destructive. Active and destructive behaviors involve *Exit,* which includes threats to leave the partner or actually leaving. *Voice* is an active and constructive strategy that involves discussing the problem without hostility. *Loyalty* constitutes a passive and constructive tendency that entails acquiescence to the partner; for example, conceding to the partner's point of view. Finally, *Neglect* is a passive and destructive approach that involves indirect and negative behaviors (e.g., no kiss goodnight).

These tendencies to accommodate the partner are predicted by one's personal commitment to the relationship, which is itself constituted of three factors: satisfaction, where one experiences positive outcomes from the relationship and the partner meets or exceeds one's expectations; comparison level of alternatives, where one's partner is seen as superior to other potential partners and activities (including being alone); and investments of time and resources into the relationship. Moreover, the three factors that promote commitment affect the tendencies to accommodate. For instance, voice behaviors most likely occur when satisfaction, investment, and alternatives are high, whereas loyalty is preferred when satisfaction and investments are high, but one has few alternatives.

Combining Centripetal and Centrifugal Analogies

Responding to both centripetal and centrifugal factors helps maintain relationships. Research suggests that centripetal factors and behaviors are more relevant to relational stability, whereas centrifugal forces and behaviors work to maintain the quality and important characteristics of the relationship (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, liking). Stated differently, relationships remain intact when barriers and communication patterns appear consistent and strong. However, maintaining relationship quality requires efforts at being positive, showing one's commitment, engaging in one's fair share of responsibilities, and so on.

As mentioned, several scholars have adopted a dialectical perspective on relational maintenance. This perspective holds that change is inherent in relationships, such that attempts to maintain a stable status quo are impossible. Change occurs because people experience recurring dialectical tensions that result from poles of experience that contradict each other but exist in tandem with each other. Common dialectical poles include *autonomy/connection, openness/closedness,* and *predictability/novelty.* From this perspective, then, to maintain their relationships partners must balance competing forces of wanting to hold an individual identity with wanting to be interdependent with one's partner (autonomy/connection), of desiring to disclose one's concerns and beliefs while retaining privacy boundaries (openness/closedness), and of needing to have a sense of continuity while enjoying new experiences (predictability/novelty).

Adopting a dialectical perspective that attends to both centripetal and centrifugal forces, researchers have reported several responses to dialectical tensions. These responses involve *denial* (reject the existence of a tension), *disorientation* (partners ignore attempts to actively manage tensions), *spiraling inversion* (partners respond to first one, then the other pole), *segmentation* (partitioning the relationship by topic or activity), *balance* (compromise is achieved by partially fulfilling the demands of each pole), *integration* (both poles are responded to simultaneously), *recalibration* (a temporary synthesis of the contradiction such that opposing forces are no longer seen as opposites), and *reaffirmation* (a celebration of the stimulation that contradictory tensions provide). Alternate lists of dialectical responses exist.

Levels of Relational Maintenance Activity

Maintaining relationships occurs at different levels. First, at the individual level, certain cognitions help keep the person in the relationship. Second, at the dyadic level, partners engage in the maintenance routines and strategies that were discussed previously. Next, social networks can promote relational stability and quality. Finally, the broader culture indicates appropriate behavior for people in close involvements.

Individual Level: The Role of Cognitions

How people think about their partners and their relationship can promote relational stability

and quality. Generally speaking, holding positive thoughts about one's partner leads to perceptions of the partner that reinforce one's positive bias. For instance, highly idealized people remain in their relationships through times of trouble more than do people who are less idealized; and over time, idealized partners experience increases in satisfaction and decreases in ambivalence about the relationship. Moreover, individuals sometimes use tactics that increase ambiguity when a potential relational threat arises. For example, when one's partner has a lunch date with a former lover, one would not use the term *date* but instead call it a *meeting* to increase the ambiguity of the event and thereby reduce its relational consequences.

Other specific cognitions serve maintenance functions. For instance, Rusbult has identified cognitions that reflect people's commitment to their partners. The first is *deciding to remain* in the relationship, a fundamental decision that is pivotal to other thoughts and behaviors. Second, *perceived relational superiority* references the belief that one's relationship is better than all other relationships. Third, the *derogation of alternatives* involves devaluating attractive alternatives, thereby promoting the partner's comparative relational worth. Finally, a *willingness to sacrifice* one's personal interests for the relationship involves focusing on the partner's welfare more than on one's own. If one acts on a willingness to sacrifice, then this cognitive maintenance activity becomes behavioral. Regardless, willingness to sacrifice remains an individual level behavior that can be performed independently of the partner.

Dyadic Level: The Role of Maintenance Behaviors

At the dyadic level, people enact routines and strategies with each other to maintain their relationships (as discussed earlier). Researchers have found strong support for the effects of these behaviors. For example, the five RMSM strategies have accounted for as much as 80 percent of the variance in commitment and other indicators of relational quality. Also, people who do not engage in the RMSM behaviors are more likely to terminate their relationships than are people who use maintenance strategies. Moreover, the research shows that these maintenance strategies affect relational outcomes differentially. For example, commitment

to one's partner is most strongly predicted by use of assurances, whereas liking the partner is most strongly predicted by positivity.

Importantly, the effects of maintenance strategies on relational features are short-lived. One panel study found that the strong associations between maintenance behaviors and relational quality have a short half-life. Accordingly, dyadic maintenance behaviors need to be continually used so they will affect relational quality. Cooking dinner or saying "I love you" once a week will not be effective for most people; rather, one needs to engage in maintenance behaviors continually for them to be effective.

Social Network Level: The Relevance of Friends and Family

Social networks play an important role in the stability and quality of romantic relationships. Research indicates that social networks can facilitate *or* inhibit the stability of dating relationships. That is, one's social network system can promote relational stability and satisfaction in intended ways or in ways that boomerang. If the relationship is satisfying, support from network members as well as lack of support from them can each function in different ways to strengthen the relationship. In other words, people interpret both positive and negative evaluations of their relationships in ways that support their selection of partners. However, if the relationship is dissatisfying, then social network disapproval of the relationship works against the stability of the relationship. Research shows that if one is seriously thinking about ending a romantic involvement, then friends and family members who endorse the termination help to speed up the termination.

This research is sometimes counterintuitive. In one study, perceptions of the *partner's* parental support and friendship support of the relationship promoted relational stability, but one's own parental support did not add to relational stability. Instead, friendship support in combination with *disapproval* from one's parents promoted relational stability. Researchers have offered two alternative explanations for this so-called Romeo and Juliet effect: (1) people engage in psychological reactance when a parent disapproves of the relationship; and (2) parental disapproval motivates

partners to discuss relational troubles they have that are raised by family members, and this problem-solving interaction works to strengthen the relationship.

Culture and Relational Maintenance

Relationships do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, the cultural context affects whether and how relationships are maintained. Little research has examined the manner in which culture affects relational maintenance processes. Still, the evidence suggests that maintenance strategies are more salient and important in cultures where people have latitude in selecting mates and where individual expression is valued. When people can determine who their partners are and when the culture endorses the direct expression of ideas, then people assume more responsibility for developing their romantic relationships and maintaining them with explicit and direct messages.

For example, Korean values regarding relationships are largely based on Confucian principles. Koreans have reported less use of explicit and direct relational maintenance behaviors than have U.S. participants. The decreased use of such maintenance behaviors by Koreans probably reflects their cultural values and traditions. For instance, the Confucian concept *eur-ri* (pronounced *oo-ree*) presumes a long-term, obligatory association. As long as people perceive that their partners engage in *eur-ri,* then they should remain in the relationship regardless of their satisfaction levels. Also, Koreans tend to be less direct in attempting to appease their partners. Rather, Koreans prefer the practice of *noon-chi,* which roughly means that one should anticipate what the partner wants and behave accordingly. Instead of asking whether one's partner wants a second cup of coffee, for example, one should pour the second cup when appropriate. Such cultural principles make the use of explicit and direct maintenance behaviors moot and the use of indirect and implicit maintenance behaviors, such as *noon-chi,* important.

In individualistic cultures, people tend to maximize their personal rewards by selecting partners they find rewarding. In such cultures, social exchange factors, such as equity, become salient when deciding how much effort to put into maintaining the relationship. Studies have shown that people in Western cultures engage in more direct efforts to maintain their relationships when they are treated fairly. However, in East Asia, where people do not attempt to maximize their personal rewards, people enact fewer direct maintenance behaviors. Also, maintenance behaviors in East Asia do not depend on how fairly people believe they are treated. Instead, maintenance behaviors tend to be used to the extent one finds the relationship personally rewarding, regardless of fairness.

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See also Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Commitment, Theories and Typologies; Connectedness, Tension With Autonomy; Idealization; Investment Model; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Repairing Relationships

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Marital Satisfaction, Assessment of

During the last 60 years, marital satisfaction—or the related constructs of marital adjustment and marital quality—have been the target outcome variables for almost all marital research and couple therapies. These have been assessed via epidemiological research, treatment outcome research, and basic marital research and are the field's measures of whether couples are happy and whether our couple therapies are working. Marital satisfaction and adjustment are strongly associated with the 50 percent divorce rate in the United States, individual distress (e.g., depression, anxiety, and alcohol abuse), physical health, and children's well-being. This entry reviews various terms used to describe marital satisfaction, examines ways of assessing marital satisfaction and adjustment, reviews the reliability and validity of the most widely used measures, and concludes with an overview of emerging efforts to standardize the assessment of marital satisfaction and related constructs.

Terminology

For as long as marital satisfaction has been assessed, there has also been considerable confusion and controversy regarding the differences among the terms *marital satisfaction, marital adjustment,* and *marital quality.* Marital satisfaction refers to global marital sentiment or marital happiness as a unitary construct. Marital adjustment is broader in scope, and includes a consideration of marital processes such as conflict management skills *and* marital outcomes such as marital satisfaction. Marital quality refers to marital processes alone, such as the quality of a couple's conflict management skills, supportive transactions, sexual relations, or emotional intimacy. Additionally, several terms have been used to describe low marital satisfaction or adjustment, including *marital discord, marital dissatisfaction, marital distress,* and *marital dysfunction.* Low marital satisfaction is also distinguished from marital dissolution, which refers to separation or divorce.

Ways of Assessing Marital Satisfaction and Related Constructs

Historically, marital satisfaction and adjustment have been assessed by administering questionnaires to husbands and wives and then calculating sum scores for spouses (or couples) based on their responses. Scores are typically placed on a continuum from low to high satisfaction. Starting in the 1950s, marital adjustment was assessed with omnibus measures in which spouses evaluated multiple aspects of their marriage, such as the amount of disagreement across different areas of conflict, global evaluations of the marriage, and frequency of sexual relations. Harvey Locke and Karl Wallace's Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) and Graham Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) are two widely used measures of marital adjustment.

In the 1980s, researchers and clinicians also began assessing marital satisfaction with shorter, unidimensional measures of global sentiment toward one's marriage. Robert Norton's Quality of Marriage Index (QMI) and Walter Schumm and colleagues' Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) are widely used measures of global marital satisfaction. Researchers and clinicians also began to assess marital satisfaction using a semantic differential approach, a way of quantifying spouses' evaluations of their marriage by having them rate their perceptions on scales between two opposite

adjectives (e.g., satisfied to dissatisfied, good to bad). Charles Osgood and colleagues, and Ted Huston and Anita Vangelisti, have developed and validated versions of semantic differential measures to assess marital satisfaction.

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a move toward assessing marital satisfaction and adjustment with multidimensional approaches. For example, Frank Fincham and Kenneth Linfield developed the Positive and Negative Quality in Marriage Scale (PANQIMS), on which spouses evaluate the positive and negative qualities of their partner and marriage, yielding scores for two distinct aspects of marital satisfaction. Global measures collapse these two domains, making it impossible to determine whether it is lack of positive or high levels of negative evaluation that reduces marital happiness. Alternatively, the PANQIMS allows spouses to be categorized as happy (high positive and low negative marital quality), distressed (low positive and high negative), ambivalent (high on both positive and negative marital quality), or indifferent (low on both positive and negative marital quality). Douglas Snyder's Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) is a multidimensional measure of marital adjustment that differentiates among levels and sources of distress. Dimensions include assessments of family of origin conflict, sexual satisfaction, and problem-solving communication strategies.

Reliability and Validity of Commonly Used Measures

Marital adjustment. The MAT is a 15-item self-report measure of overall relationship functioning, with questions about couples' relationship satisfaction, activities, and levels of agreement on issues such as demonstrations of affection and philosophy of life. Yielding scores from 2 to 158, the MAT is typically the instrument against which other marital assessments are validated. The MAT demonstrates adequate cross-sectional reliability (split half = .90) and discriminates between non-distressed spouses and spouses with documented marital problems. The DAS is a 32-item self-report measure of relationship distress with a variety of response formats. An overall score of relationship

distress is obtained from items assessing dyadic differences, interpersonal tensions, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and consensus on matters important to dyadic functioning. The DAS is internally consistent and stable over brief intervals, with reliability estimates ranging from .58 to .96. Total DAS scores converge substantially with other marital adjustment measures, discriminate between distressed and nondistressed couples, and identify couples who are likely to divorce.

Marital satisfaction. The KMSS is a 3-item measure of marital satisfaction that demonstrates good concurrent validity, correlating at .83 with the DAS, and good discriminant validity when compared with measures of life satisfaction. The KMSS also demonstrates good criterion validity, distinguishing women living with their partners from women who are separated, and good test-retest reliability and internal consistency. The QMI is a 6-item measure that demonstrates good convergent validity, correlating above .80 with the DAS, good discriminant validity when compared with measures of individual psychopathology, and strong internal consistency, with estimates above .90 across several studies.

Multidimensional measures. The PANQIMS is a 6-item scale with strong internal consistency (estimates above .87) on each dimension. It also demonstrates good convergent validity when compared with the MAT, and good incremental validity, explaining significant variance over the effects of the MAT. The MSI is a 150-item self-report measure with 10 scales assessing specific dimensions of relationship functioning. Internal consistency for the individual scales ranges from .70 to .93, and test-retest reliability coefficients range from .74 to .88. The MSI scales correlate with the MAT and DAS, and with a broad range of affective and behavioral components of marital interaction.

Emerging Efforts to Standardize Assessment

In the last few years, researchers and clinicians have begun to move beyond self-report questionnaires of marital satisfaction, adjustment, or quality. Semistructured interviews have been developed

to conduct multidimensional assessments of these important constructs. For example, Richard Heyman and colleagues developed a structured interview to provide a diagnostic measure of relationship distress. Erika Lawrence and colleagues developed a multidimensional interview to assess marital quality across five key relationship domains, including emotional intimacy, interpartner support, sexual relations, interpartner respect and control, and communication and conflict management. There is also an emerging, conceptually framed, empirically derived, integrated effort to develop a standardized assessment protocol for assessing marital satisfaction and adjustment. This protocol will include assessments of cognitive, affective, behavioral, interpersonal, and structural or developmental domains, and will include self- and partner-report questionnaires, clinical interviews, and analog behavioral observations.

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See also Assessment of Couples; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Questionnaires, Design and Use of, in Relationship Research; Satisfaction in Relationships

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MARITAL SATISFACTION AND QUALITY

Marital satisfaction (also called *marital quality* or *marital happiness*) typically refers to the subjective attitude that individuals have toward their marital relationship. Marital quality may be used synonymously with marital satisfaction, but it also has been used to refer to marital adjustment (see later) or to refer to marital satisfaction in conjunction with marital conflict. Marital happiness is typically used synonymously with marital satisfaction.

The marital relationship occupies a privileged status among adults in our society, and as Peter Berger and Hansfried Kellner noted, it is a primary means through which individuals construct and maintain social reality. Satisfaction in the marital relationship is of interest to those who study interpersonal relationships because of its centrality to the meaning-making process in the lives of many adults and because satisfaction in this key relationship is shaped by and shapes aspects of other human relationships (e.g., parent–child). This entry provides an overview of the debate regarding the conceptualization and measurement of marital satisfaction and a summary of the investigation into causes and correlates of marital satisfaction.

Conceptualization and Measurement

Marital satisfaction is perhaps one of the most frequently studied variables in marital research. Despite the wealth of literature examining this construct, there is a continuing lack of consensus among marital researchers about how to conceptualize and measure marital satisfaction, as well as an absence of a unifying theoretical approach to studying this construct. During the past several decades, scholars have engaged in lively debates about how to conceptualize marital satisfaction. There have been two major approaches: looking at the relationship itself (examining patterns of interaction, such as the amount and type of communication and conflict) and looking at individual feelings of the spouses (subjective judgments of satisfaction or happiness). According to those scholars who focus on the interactions in the relationship, rather than on the subjective evaluations made by individuals in the relationship, marital satisfaction is an interpersonal characteristic. Proponents of this approach treat marital satisfaction as a process, the outcome of which is determined by interaction patterns between spouses. Scholars who take this approach, which was dominant during the 1970s,

generally favor the terms *marital adjustment* or *marital quality,* although some do use the term *marital satisfaction* as well. These scholars also view marital satisfaction as a multidimensional construct. Multidimensional measures of marital satisfaction typically assess a number of specific types of interactions between spouses (e.g., time spent together/companionship, conflict, and communication). In addition to measuring reported behavioral characteristics of the dyad, some multidimensional measures also include global subjective evaluations of the relationship (such as happiness, satisfaction, or distress). These items are then typically summed. Frequently employed multidimensional measures of marital satisfaction are the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (LWMAT), the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI).

During the 1980s, the interpersonal approach to the study of marital satisfaction or marital quality, and the multidimensional measures used by those who adhered to this approach, came under severe attack. Criticisms can be grouped into two general categories. First, many multidimensional measures, such as the LWMAT and the DAS, were criticized for combining scales assessing objective reports of interaction, which are dyadic measures, with subjective evaluations of the relationship, which are individual measures. This is problematic because it combines two different units of analysis. Additionally, it combines two different types of reports (objective and subjective). This presents serious threats to the validity of such scales. Second, multidimensional measures were criticized because the components that are frequently included may actually be determinants of subjective evaluations of marital satisfaction. These factors, such as communication or couple interaction, also could be considered as independent variables that might influence marital satisfaction. Critics pointed out that by including both evaluative judgments about marital quality and reports of specific behaviors and general interaction patterns, multidimensional measures also may inflate associations between marital satisfaction and self-report measures of interpersonal processes in marriage. This is particularly problematic when dealing with cross-sectional data. The criticisms of multidimensional measures raised in the 1970s led many researchers to conclude that scales assessing

different dimensions of marital quality should not be summed up and to develop new measures.

In response to the criticisms of the interpersonal and multidimensional approach to conceptualizing marital satisfaction, scholars began to take an intrapersonal and unidimensional approach in the 1980s. This approach also was prompted by the fact that many of the large nationally representative data sets that were available in the 1980s contained only unidimensional measures of marital quality. According to the intrapersonal approach, marital satisfaction should be conceived of as reflecting a person's subjective evaluation of the marital relationship, rather than the reported quality of interaction between two spouses. Scholars who take this approach typically employ the terms *marital satisfaction, marital happiness,* or *marital quality,* rather than *marital adjustment.*

Scholars who take the intrapersonal approach to marital satisfaction most often use unidimensional, global evaluative assessments of the relationship. Unidimensional measures take the individual (rather than the dyad) as the unit of analysis and are subjective reports of attitudes (rather than objective reports of behaviors). Frequently used unidimensional measures include the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS), the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS), and the Quality of Marriage Index (QMI).

Although unidimensional measures have not suffered the same degree of criticism as multidimensional measures of marital quality, two major shortcomings have been identified. First, unidimensional measures are criticized for being subject to considerable social desirability response bias. There have been some attempts to measure the extent to which these measures are contaminated by social desirability response bias and to control for it, but there is not yet agreement about the best way to do that. A second criticism of global measures is that they tend to be significantly skewed toward a positive evaluation. This makes analysis of the dependent variable difficult because there is often little variance.

During the 1990s, the lack of consensus regarding how to conceptualize and measure marital satisfaction persisted. At this time, many scholars began to employ the term *marital quality.* Some researchers used this term interchangeably with *marital satisfaction* or *marital happiness.* However, other

scholars began to use *marital quality* in a broader sense and included multiple measures (e.g., both marital satisfaction and marital conflict), but treated them as separate dimensions rather than creating a summary index as earlier scholars had done. Frank Fincham and colleagues suggest that marital quality contains separate positive and negative dimensions. Drawing on recent research in the areas of attitudes and affect, they argue that people may feel both positively and negatively about their marriages and that these feelings may change independently over time. These scholars use the terms *positive marital quality* (PMQ) and *negative marital quality* (NMQ) to distinguish between these two dimensions and create a fourfold typology of marital quality: satisfied (high PMQ and low NMQ), ambivalent (high PMQ and high NMQ), indifferent (low PMQ and low NMQ), and distressed or dissatisfied (low PMQ and high NMQ). It remains to be seen whether this two-dimensional approach will be widely adopted by marital researchers, though. The debate regarding how to conceptualize and measure this important construct has not been resolved.

Disagreement regarding how to conceptualize and measure marital quality and the diversity of academic disciplines represented among those who study marital satisfaction, have both contributed to the failure of scholars to develop a guiding theoretical perspective while studying marital satisfaction. Early theoretical attempts consisted primarily of drawing propositions from existing, general theories, such as Attachment, Social Exchange, or Role Theories, or of developing middle-range theories, such as Robert Lewis and Graham Spanier's Exchange Theory of Marital Quality. In the 1980s, marital quality research tended to be atheoretical, as scholars struggled to resolve the controversies surrounding how to measure and conceptualize marital satisfaction. In the 1990s, scholars began to expand their areas of inquiry beyond individual and interpersonal factors that may influence marital satisfaction to take a more ecological approach, considering the contexts in which individual and interpersonal processes occur as well.

Causes and Correlates of Marital Satisfaction

The investigation of determinants of marital satisfaction and marital quality has occupied a central place in marital research for many decades. However, over time, the focus of such research has changed. In the 1940s, much of the work investigated how personality characteristics might influence marital satisfaction. In the 1950s, scholars shifted their attention to interactional styles, which spurred the development of the multidimensional measures of marital satisfaction (or marital adjustment) described earlier. The movement of women out of the home and into the workplace shaped the work of scholars in the 1980s and 1990s, when factors such as role conflict, the division of household labor, women's employment, and power were widely investigated for their relationship to marital satisfaction. Conflict resolution and violence also emerged as factors investigated during this time.

More recently, scholars have begun to take a more complicated approach to understanding the factors that may be related to marital satisfaction by trying to identify both mediating and moderating variables. A moderating variable is a variable upon which a relationship between an independent and dependent variable is contingent. For instance, the link between marital satisfaction and certain factors, such as conflict and sexual satisfaction, appears to be contingent on the gender of the spouse. Other factors, such as race/ethnicity, age, and relationship stage also have been considered as possible moderators. Recent research also has attempted to understand the role of mediating, or intervening variables, on marital satisfaction. For instance, depression may lead to more negativity in relationships (a mediating variable), thereby impacting marital satisfaction indirectly.

Because of the vast number of studies into the causes and correlates of marital satisfaction and marital quality, it is impossible to summarize all their findings. However, several excellent reviews have set out to accomplish this task. Each decade since 1970, the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* has published such a review, offering an overview of findings from the previous decade. This entry offers only a brief introduction to some of the key findings regarding causes and correlates of marital satisfaction.

One of the most intensely studied topics in marital satisfaction research has been the influence of children, family stage, and duration of the marriage on marital satisfaction. In a review of studies

conducted during the 1960s, scholars reported that one of the most surprising findings of that decade was that children appear to detract from the marital quality of their parents. The transition to parenthood continued to be a popular topic of study during the 1970s. Several cross-sectional studies identified a curvilinear relationship between family stage and marital satisfaction, whereby the average quality is higher in the preparental and postparental stages. The most common interpretation of this finding was that it reflected the addition of children to the family, their maturation, and their departure. However, longitudinal studies have suggested that changes often attributed to the transition to parenthood are duration-of-marriage effects instead. Some of these studies suggest that rather than being curvilinear, marital quality declines sharply during the first few years of marriage and then tapers off more slowly. The impact of children on marital satisfaction continues to be a topic of inquiry among scholars. A recent meta-analytic review of research into the link between parenthood and marital satisfaction concluded that parents report lower satisfaction than do nonparents, that the effect of parenthood is stronger for women than for men, that this effect is particularly strong for women with infants, and that the effect is stronger for more recent generations. The number of children and levels of satisfaction were also negatively correlated. This review offered support for the notion that children are linked to lower levels of satisfaction because of role conflict and restricted freedom.

The link between premarital cohabitation and marital satisfaction also has been the subject of a great deal of investigation in recent decades. A negative relationship between cohabitation and marital quality has been established, but it is unclear whether it is the living together or the type of people who tend to live together before marriage that is responsible for this effect. Research on remarriage also has increased sharply in the past 20 years and much of it has focused on marital satisfaction. This research indicates that the average marital satisfaction is slightly greater in first marriages than in remarriages after divorce. It also appears that the average satisfaction in remarriages is somewhat higher for men than for women.

Wives' employment, spouses' gender role attitudes, the division of household labor, and perceived equality also have received a great deal of attention recently. It seems that congruency between spouses' attitudes toward gender roles, as well as congruency between attitudes and behaviors, are related to marital satisfaction. A shared division of household labor and perceived fairness of the division of household labor also seem to enhance marital satisfaction, especially for wives.

Thomas Bradbury and colleagues organized their review of marital quality research conducted in the 1990s around two themes: interpersonal processes and sociocultural contexts within which marriages operate. These authors stated that research conducted during the 1980s and 1990s supported the conclusion that spouses' attributions (or causal statements) for marital events are linked to marital satisfaction. Spouses that employ maladaptive attributions for negative partner behaviors have lower levels of marital satisfaction and use more negative behaviors during marital problem-solving discussions. Maladaptive attributions emphasize stable, internal, global characteristics rather than temporary, situational, specific characteristics. For instance, a wife who attributes her husband's late arrival to dinner as reflective of a stable personality characteristic, such as thoughtlessness or a lack of organization, rather than to a temporary, situational issue, such as heavy traffic or a busy day at work, is more likely to engage in negative behaviors during problem-solving discussions. The 1990s also saw a dramatic surge in research on the affective, or emotional, dimension of marital interaction. Although this research has demonstrated that affect is linked to marital quality, the exact nature of the relationship is not clear yet. For instance, some studies show that negative affect is harmful to marital quality, but other studies suggest that it enhances marital quality. Interaction patterns (especially the demand–withdraw pattern), physiology (e.g., the degree of physical arousal during marital interaction), social support, and violence also were identified as factors that are linked to marital satisfaction. In the latter half of their review, Thomas Bradbury and colleagues focus on contextual factors that are linked to marital quality. In particular, they discuss ways in which children, spouses' background and characteristics, life stressors and transitions, and neighborhood characteristics are related to marital quality.

The importance of understanding and measuring marital satisfaction and its influences stems primarily from the assumption that it is a key determinant of other important marital outcomes, such as marital stability (divorce and separation). Early marital researchers often assumed that marital satisfaction was predictive of marital stability. However, it became clear that given a certain level of marital satisfaction, some marriages would end in divorce and some would not. Spanier and Lewis identified four types of marriages: high quality/high stability, high quality/low stability, low quality/ high stability, and low quality/low stability. Following the work of these scholars, several researchers have tried to identify factors that may moderate the relationship between marital quality and marital stability. External pressures (e.g., social pressure to remain married) and alternative attractions (e.g., availability of other mates) have been the focus of several studies.

Studies also show that marital satisfaction is positively related to other measures of individual well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, physical health). In the 1980s, some studies used marital satisfaction as an independent variable to predict the global well-being of married people, illustrating a strong positive link between the two. Although there has been some debate regarding the causal direction between these two variables, recent longitudinal research suggests that low marital quality is linked with lower levels of overall happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and overall physical health. The authors of these studies suggest that marital satisfaction is a predictor of individual general well-being (rather than the other way around). Additionally, findings indicate that one spouse's marital satisfaction is linked to the well-being of the other spouse as well as the children's well-being.

Finally, in recent years, scholars have begun to examine how the concepts and findings from research on marital satisfaction might relate to the study of satisfaction within nonmarital relationships, such as unmarried heterosexual couples or same-sex couples. Thus far, it seems that many of the concepts and findings derived from studies of marital satisfaction also can be applied to satisfaction within other types of committed sexual relationships.

In conclusion, despite the continuing debate about how to conceptualize and measure marital satisfaction and the difficulties constructing a unifying theory of marital satisfaction, a great deal has been discovered about what factors are linked to marital satisfaction. As scholars continue to explore moderators and mediators of these links, and to engage in longitudinal research identifying the directions of effects, our understanding of this important component of human relationships will become even clearer.

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See also Happiness and Relationships; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Marital Satisfaction, Assessment of; Satisfaction in Relationships

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Marital Stability, Prediction of

Studies predicting marital dissolution generally assess couples within a few months of marriage

and then follow them over the next 2 to 14 years, assessing their relationship status throughout the study. Around the time of marriage, relationship researchers assess many different types of factors, including demographic variables, personality variables, and variables capturing the quality of interaction between the couples in hopes to determine which factors best predict divorce. Because 40 percent of all divorces occur within the first 4 to 5 years of marriage, studies tend to follow couples during this high-risk period to identify the factors predicting divorce. Accurate prediction can identify factors that put couples at risk for divorce and can be used to help target interventions (such as relationship workshops) to the couples that need them most. Although many variables have been assessed for their potential ability to predict divorce, this entry focuses on those factors that have been found to contribute the most to predicting marital separation and divorce as well as the methods researchers use to assess these factors.

Demographic Predictors

One set of factors that researchers have used to predict divorce is demographic variables. Demographic variables categorize individuals into certain groups or populations and include characteristics such as occupation, geographic location, religion, age, and marital status. Researchers have found that race, gender, and levels of education are significant predictors of the risk of divorce over time. Specifically, research has found that African-American couples are more than twice as likely as are Caucasian couples to divorce. In addition, couples with lower levels of education, lower levels of income, couples starting marriage at younger ages, and couples starting marriage with children are also at significantly greater risk for divorce. As these demographic variables often go hand in hand with one another, the results with these various demographic markers highlight the risk associated with general socioeconomic disadvantage.

Personality Traits

Researchers have also focused on how the individual personalities that husbands and wives bring to relationships affect marital outcomes. Studies

have consistently found that husbands and wives who have very negative and irritable personalities (a trait called *neuroticism*) tend to be less happy in their marriages and are more likely to divorce over time. Although neuroticism has shown the strongest long-term effects on relationships, a number of other personality traits have also been linked to relationship outcomes over time. Divorce tends to be slightly more likely for couples who have highly impulsive husbands (husbands who are more likely to act without thinking or are less able to inhibit themselves). Divorce tends to be slightly less likely in couples where spouses are highly agreeable (easy going and amiable) and conscientious. Thus, the personality traits that spouses bring into their relationships can sometimes place those relationships at greater risk for discord and divorce.

Feelings

Researchers have also examined affective factors such as passion, liking, trust, and emotional distress in predicting relationship outcomes. Specifically, high levels of emotional distress (a variable including many areas of psychological health including depression, anxiety, and hostility) around the time of marriage predict separation and divorce. Low levels of liking (positive impressions of a romantic partner) and low levels of trust at the time of marriage also predict more rapid relationship dissolution. Low levels of passion for one's partner at the time of marriage also predict earlier separation, but this result has only been found for women. This gender difference suggests that feeling passionate about one's spouse early in marriage might have different meaning for men and women. Drops in feelings of liking, trust, or love during the first 4 years in marriage also help to predict subsequent separation and divorce. Thus, feelings toward a relationship and toward one's romantic partner early in marriage can help to identify the couples who will separate and even end their relationships.

Communication and Support

Of all the factors examined, the factor most strongly linked to relationship outcomes is spouses'

behavior toward each other—specifically, the quality of their communication skills and the degree to which their discussions of everyday problems either remain constructive and supportive or become negative, hostile, and attacking. Research has consistently shown that high levels of self-reported hostile conflict behavior and frequent conflict in the relationship around the time of marriage are signals that a marriage may be heading toward divorce. Furthermore, husbands feeling validated (feeling listened to and understood by his wife) around the time of marriage is associated with lower risk of divorce. Similarly, spouses being emotionally supportive and compassionate toward each other—particularly during stressful periods—has been linked to better outcomes. Although many studies assess couples' communication using self-report questionnaires, researchers also often assess communication skills by videotaping couples discussing relationship problems in the laboratory. Research teams then code these discussions for the amounts of positive (e.g., warm, affectionate, empathic) and negative (e.g., defensive, angry, critical) behavior exhibited by each spouse. Coding of conflict behavior has been strongly linked to adverse marital outcomes (marital discord and divorce) across a series of studies from a variety of research labs. High levels of angry and hostile emotions during conflict discussions predict divorce during the first 7 years of marriage. In addition, a notable lack of positive emotions during conflict discussions has been found to predict divorce during 14 years of marriage. Both lower levels of positive and higher levels of negative conflict behavior have been linked to significant drops in relationship satisfaction during the first 4 years of marriage. Thus, becoming hostile and attacking when dealing with relationship problems potentially erodes relationships during the early years of marriage.

Physical Aggression

Mild forms of physical aggression (e.g., pushing, slapping, shoving) are known to occur in as many as 35 to 50 percent of all newlywed marriages, and another line of research has examined how such common couple violence is associated with marital outcomes. Physical aggression reported around the

time of marriage is a strong predictor of divorce in the first 4 years of marriage, even after controlling for the effects of hostile conflict behavior. These findings suggest that while both factors erode relationship quality, physical aggression has more immediate effects, eroding relationships more quickly. Researchers have also assessed drinking behaviors and alcohol-related problems in studies looking at relationship aggression, inasmuch as these often co-occur. Alcohol problems and excessive heavy drinking have been found to increase the risk of divorce two to three times during a 5-year period. However, even after taking alcohol problems into account, the presence of physical aggression in the relationship continues to more than double the risk of divorce, demonstrating a strong association with marital outcomes that rivals the prediction demonstrated for communication behavior.

Predicting From Interviews

Although many studies use either coded behavioral observations of conflict discussions (to assess the quality of communication behavior) or self-report questionnaires (assessing a range of factors including relationship communication, personality traits, and feelings about one's partner or relationship), another line of research has used ratings obtained from face-to-face interviews with couples to assess these same constructs. For example, the Oral History Interview asks partners about the history of their relationship, their attitudes toward marriage and the quality of their current relationship. In a series of studies, researchers have demonstrated that interviewer assessments of high husband disappointment (the husband seeming disillusioned about the marriage or seeming to have given up) and low levels of fondness (affection toward a spouse) predicted divorce during a 3-year period. In addition, assessments of poor marital bond (a general sense of closeness and a visible emotional connection between spouses) predicted divorce during a 5-year period even after accounting for self-reported levels of initial relationship happiness.

Retrospective Studies

Other marital researchers have attempted to examine the issue of prediction by collecting large

numbers of successful and failed marriages (after these outcomes have already occurred) and then using archival data collected from those couples just before marriage (obtained in the context of religious marital preparation) to identify differences between the two "outcome" groups. Although the data used for prediction was indeed collected prior to marriage, selecting couples for inclusion based on the ultimate outcome of their marriage differs markedly from including all willing couples and then tracking their outcomes. This sample-selection procedure typically resulted in samples made up of mostly extreme outcomes (very happy marriages vs. very bitter divorces) as the researchers eliminated more typical couples from their studies. This technique also limits the sample to religious couples as well as limiting the study to the religion-based compatibility inventories used to screen couples for marital readiness. Couples are often required to obtain sufficiently high compatibility scores to obtain permission to marry, so there is clear pressure on couples to adjust their responses accordingly—leading one to question the validity of such data. Despite these caveats, such studies have shown that higher levels of similarity on domains such as preferred leisure activities, life style expectations, religious values, and approaches to problem-solving and finances are associated with better marital outcomes.

Predictive Algorithms

In sum, evidence in the current literature points to a diverse group of factors that contribute to the risk of divorce including race, gender, education, aversive personality traits, hostile and attacking communication, social support, physical aggression, and compatibility. The results suggest that these factors can be measured by self-report scales, observational coding of couples' behavior, interviewer ratings, or compatibility inventories without affecting the predictive information they provide. Just over a dozen studies have attempted to examine sets of these factors simultaneously to develop predictive algorithms. Although each of these factors makes a unique contribution to the process of prediction, results suggest that the bulk of the prediction can be achieved by including the factors representing partners' behavior toward

each other—specifically, their communication, social support and aggressive behaviors. The current models can predict between 68 to 84 percent of marital outcomes during the first 3 to 6 years of marriage. This suggests that by simply giving engaged or newlywed couples a short packet of questionnaires to complete, it is possible to accurately predict the outcomes of three or four couples out of every five during the volatile early years of marriage, offering the possibility of targeting couples at the greatest risk for discord and divorce with preventive interventions to improve their interaction and thereby strengthen their relationships. However, it is also apparent from these findings that there is still much to be learned about how marriages succeed and fail. It may be that some factors involved in the dissolution of relationships have yet to be identified or included in prediction studies. It is also possible that marital discord and divorce are such complex, changing, and highly individual phenomena that it may never be possible to achieve perfect prediction.

Janette L. Funk and Ronald D. Rogge

See also Boston Couples Study; Dissolution of Relationships, Breakup Strategies; Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Dissolution of Relationships, Processes; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce; Predicting Success or Failure of Marital Relationships

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Marital Typologies

Marital typologies represent attempts of scholars to simplify the study of marriage by grouping together, and essentially treating as equivalent, those marriages that are similar and to distinguish, and treat separately, those that are different. This entry reviews basic assumptions underlying different marital typologies and their roles in theorizing about interaction processes and outcomes relevant to marriage.

Marital typologies, like other typologies of human relationships, provide a cognitive framework that primarily serves two functions: to organize observations and to systematically relate knowledge to explain and predict behaviors and outcomes. As such, they are the inventions of observers (scholars and laypersons alike) rather than the reflection of an actual or natural state of the marital relationship. Although often related, these two functions are theoretically orthogonal. Typologies that do a good job of fulfilling the first function (i.e., organizing observations) often make intuitive sense and are based on some easily recognizable attribute of the marriage that makes identification of the type easy. However, because marital outcomes usually are dependent on processes and dynamics that are not linked to easily observed attributes, typologies based on such attributes are not necessarily good at explaining and predicting behaviors and outcomes.

Typologies that are good at fulfilling the second function (i.e., explaining and predicting behaviors and outcomes) are frequently based on what scholars and researchers have learned to be relevant and important for the internal processes and dynamics

of marriages that lead to different behaviors and outcomes rather than some easily recognizable attribute. Consequently, it is not easily apparent what type a marriage falls into and, therefore, it is not uncommon to find that typologies of marriages are more meaningful to researchers than to laypersons or even the married couples themselves. Most scholars favor typologies that fulfill the function of explaining and predicting.

Assumptions Underlying Marital Typologies

Determinations about similarities and differences that allow marriages to be assigned a certain type are usually based on assumptions about similarities in experiences and external factors or on assumptions about similarities in internal dynamics and processes of marriages. Examples of the former include typologies based on stability (e.g., enduring vs. divorced), satisfaction and adjustment (e.g., satisfied vs. dissatisfied), or structure (e.g., first vs. second marriage; heterosexual vs. homosexual marriage; intra-ethnic vs. mixed-race). The underlying assumption of these typologies is that the individuals within marriages and the marriage dyads themselves essentially function similarly and that differences between marriages are the result of the different challenges and circumstance that couples confront.

Examples of typologies based on internal dynamics and processes include those based on conflict behaviors (e.g., validating, volatile, and avoiding couples), problem solving (e.g., competitive, collaborative, accommodating, neglecting, and compromising couples), and marriage beliefs (e.g., traditional, independent, and separate couples). The underlying assumption of these typologies is that individuals and couples constitute systems with unique properties who respond to similar challenges and circumstances quite differently, but that among these responses, there are regularities that can be used to classify couples into different types.

Marital Typologies in Social Science

As a consequence of social scientists' concern for explanation and prediction, most marital typologies developed in the social sciences focus not as

much on structural differences or differences in external circumstances as on differences in internal dynamics and processes.

Typologies of Couples in Specific Circumstances

For some typologies, these dynamics and processes are considered in the context of specific external circumstances only, such as newlyweds, couples with young children, or remarried couples. One classic example of such a typology is the work of Lawrence Rosenfeld and his colleagues, who developed a typology of dual-career marriages. Here, couples are classified based on spouses' involvement in family- and work-related activities. Collapsing couples are those in which wives adjust poorly to demands at work and home and husbands adjust poorly to demands at work and only moderately to demands at home. Work-directed couples, as the name implies, are those in which both spouses adjust well to work-related demands, but the wife adjusts only moderately and the husband poorly to demands at home. Finally, traditional-role couples are those in which the wife adjusts well to demands at home but poorly to demands at work, whereas the husband adjusts well to demands in both areas. In terms of satisfaction, wives were most satisfied in work-directed couples, whereas husbands were most satisfied in traditional role marriages, suggesting that challenges of dual careers require some sort of trade off between spouses.

Typologies of Couples Based on Specific Interpersonal Processes

Other typologies are also similarly narrowly focused, but rather than focusing on particular circumstance, they focus on specific processes, such as problem solving or parenting. A good example is John Gottman's seminal work on couple conflict. His typology is based on conflict behaviors and identifies three functional and two dysfunctional types. Of the functional types, the most intuitive is the validating couple. In this type, both partners openly communicate their needs and desires and are receptive of those of the other. They are supportive of one another, engage in collaborative problem solving, and maintain largely positive affect throughout conflict episodes. They are also able to repair any damage caused to their relationship as a result of expressed negative affect by apologizing and expressing positive affect for the other.

Less intuitive is the volatile type. Couples who are volatile are those in which both partners are more competitive rather than collaborative and also freely express their negative affect. These couples, however, are able to compensate for hurt and negative emotions by also expressing a surplus of positive affect that allows them to maintain their relationship. Equally counterintuitive are avoidant couples, in which both partners avoid even acknowledging their divergent interests and, as a result, do not engage in any form of problem solving or openly express their negative affect. Although avoidant couples typically fail to explicitly resolve their differences, partners individually accommodate each other and, because they do not create a lot of hurt feelings, are able to maintain their relationship even in the absence of expressions of positive affect for each other.

Gottman also identified two dysfunctional types, the hostile and the hostile-detached couple. Conflict in these couples is characterized by the open expression of negative affect, often with the intent to hurt or denigrate the other. Because of the significant negative emotional toll that these interactions incur, couples with these conflict styles are unlikely to stay together for very long.

Typologies of Couples Based on Cognitive Representations and Behaviors

There are also a few typologies of marriages that are broader in scope in that they do not focus on marriages in specific circumstances or on only one or two interpersonal processes. Of these typologies, one of the earliest and most influential was developed by Mary Anne Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick's typology categorizes marriages based on how they are represented cognitively by spouses in terms of relevant beliefs about marriage and how these beliefs are expressed through behavior. Specifically, spouses' reports of their marital *ideology* are assessed, including beliefs spouses have about the sex-roles of husbands and wives, whether wives should take husbands' names, and how married couples should relate to their communities. Also measured is the behavioral *interdependence* of couples. Couples report on how they coordinate

their individual schedules and how they share their physical and psychological space, by, for example, having separate bedrooms or offices and maintaining privacy about financial matters and personal correspondence. Finally, *communication* is assessed and, in particular, whether couples engage in or avoid conflict and what they do, say, and feel during conflict interactions.

Based on these three dimensions, individuals can be categorized into one of three marital types: traditional, independent, and separate. Traditionals are very interdependent in their marriages, have conventional ideological values and beliefs about marriage and family life, and report an expressive communication style with their spouses. Independents are moderately interdependent in their marriages, have nonconventional values and beliefs about marriage and family life, and report a very expressive communication style with their spouses. Separates are not very interdependent in their marriages, have conventional ideological values and beliefs about marriage and family life, and report very little expressivity in their marital communication. In about two-thirds of marriages, both spouses have the same marital type; the remaining marriages fall into a mixed type (most frequently a traditional wife and a separate husband).

In addition to being more broadly applicable to investigations of marriage in a number of circumstances and concerns for various interpersonal processes, this typology has several other strengths. First, it is based equally on theory (the three underlying dimensions were identified based on prevailing marital theories) and empirical observation (the three types represent naturally occurring clusters in the conceptual space defined by the three dimensions). This typology also recognizes that different marriages achieve similarly satisfactory or functional outcomes in different ways that produce different sets of advantages and disadvantages for each type. That is, different types of marriages confronting the same set of challenges may respond differently and achieve similar outcomes; by contrast, similar ways of responding may lead to different outcomes based on marriage type. For example, independent and separate spouses both cultivate close relationships outside of marriage that are sources of emotional support for them, whereas traditional spouses and, in particular husbands, focus almost exclusively on the spouse as a source of emotional support, often at the expense of external friendships. Thus, spouses in all marriage types are generally able to receive emotional support in times of need, although the loss of a spouse from death or divorce is more challenging in traditional marriages, whereas the stress of moving to a different town and building a new social network are more challenging in independent and separate marriages.

Despite these obvious strengths, there are also weaknesses in Fitzpatrick's typology. Probably the greatest weakness is that the typology fails to provide a comprehensive account of about a third of all couples (i.e., those that fall into the mixed category). Although there are six different types of mixed couples that likely vary in their communication, researchers usually treat mixed couples as a single group and contrast them to traditional, independent, and separate couples. This is an oversimplification and represents a lost opportunity to study the consequences of divergent perceptions of relationship among married couples.

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See also Conflict, Marital; Dual-Earner Couples; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Parenting; Relationship Types and Taxonomies

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MARKETPLACE APPROACHES TO COURTSHIP, LOVE, AND SEX

Marketplace approaches to romance and sexuality seek to analyze these phenomena using economic concepts and terms. This entry describes how romance and sexuality can be analyzed in economic terms. A marketplace approach involves several basic assumptions, as follows. First, exchange is involved. Second, exchanges are to some extent beneficial to both sellers and buyers, though not necessarily equally beneficial. Third, the transactions of each pair of buyer and seller are intertwined, so that they affect each other, and are in accord with basic economic principles.

Human romantic and sexual relationships can be analyzed in marketplace terms for several reasons. Forming a romantic attachment, whether for one night or a lifetime or something in between, is a kind of exchange in which the two people offer each other something that each wants (though not necessarily the same things). In modern Western cultures, the strong tradition of exclusivity and laws against polygamy entail that these transactions involve two persons. The most common form involves one man and one woman, although same-sex pairings do occur with some regularity and present theoretically interesting variations on the marketplace model.

In psychology, the foundation for marketplace analyses is social exchange theory, which has sought to analyze human interactions in terms of what each person offers the other and what benefits each person gets from it, as well as the costs to each. A basic assumption is that people will only participate in such interactions (and relationships) as long as their benefits outweigh their costs. For example, people may remain in relationships that cause them some degree of pain and distress as long as they derive other, valued benefits from remaining. A social exchange theorist might also consider that the two persons derive different benefits. One may find sexual satisfaction or emotional support to be paramount; the other person may feel that financial support or having a stable family is the main benefit.

Supply and Demand

Marketplaces respond to fluctuations in the relative amounts of supply and demand. This is true for romantic and sexual relationships also. In the market for heterosexual romance, the relative numbers of men and women available are important because an oversupply of either gender relative to the other means that not everyone will be able to find a mate.

In this respect, economic marketplaces are the opposite of democracy. In a democracy, the majority rules and can by its superior voting power insist on having conditions that favor it. In a marketplace, however, the minority has more power than the majority. If your gender is in the minority, then you have many romantic options, and the marketplace is likely to negotiate terms favorable to your gender. If your gender is in the majority, things will go less smoothly. For example, because men tend to die younger than women, elderly widowed men have many more potential romantic partners than do elderly widowed women.

The impact of the sex ratio (i.e., the number of men per hundred women) on sexual and romantic behavior was explored in a classic interdisciplinary book by Marcia Guttentag and Paul Secord called *Too Many Women?* Comparing across different cultures and times, Guttentag and Secord noted that patterns of sexual and romantic behavior fluctuated in step with the sex ratio. When there were more men than women (because more men immigrate to a place, or because selective infanticide or selective abortion reduces the female population), norms tended to conform to what many women prefer. Long-term committed relationships were typical, whereas premarital and extramarital sex were relatively rare. In contrast, when there were more women than men (such as after a major war in which many men have been killed, or today in some low-income minority populations from which many men are killed or arrested), the norms

seemed more suitable to what many men like: less commitment, more turnover in relationships, and much more premarital and extramarital sex.

Sexual Economics

Sexual economics theory was proposed by Roy Baumeister and Kathleen Vohs to analyze sexual interactions in marketplace terms. They invoked another basic principle of social exchange theory, the so-called Principle of Lesser Interest, which suggests that whoever wants something more is at a disadvantage. This principle has often been applied to relationships: Whichever partner is more in love is at a disadvantage because he or she wants the relationship to continue more than the other does, and so this person must typically offer the other extra inducements.

Applied to sex, the Principle of Lesser Interest puts men at a disadvantage because typically men want sex more than women. The greater desire entails that men must typically offer women additional inducements to persuade them to have sex. These may take the form of paying for dates and dinner, giving jewelry and other gifts, making a commitment, giving the woman respect and commitment, or in the case of prostitution, giving her money.

Sexual economics theory is decidedly unromantic, which has created some resistance to it, but it explains a broad variety of findings and observations. It treats sex as a resource that women possess and that men want, and so female sexuality has exchange value whereas male sexuality usually does not. Thus, women have been able to trade sex for career advancement, reduced punishments, privileges, drugs, and money, whereas men usually do not have that option. Among ordinary people, both men and women fantasize about having sex with celebrities, but only women are able to enact these fantasies because a man who offers sex to a celebrity is likely to be rejected whereas comparable offers by women are more likely to be accepted.

One application of sexual economics theory invokes basic economic principles about how monopolies can increase prices by restricting the supply. Many cultures have imposed restrictions on female sexuality. These have sometimes been interpreted as efforts by men to control women, but a large amount of evidence indicates that, on the contrary, restraints on female sexuality are mainly supported and enforced by other women. Even the most extreme of these restraints, namely the female genital surgeries that impair women's sexual responses, are culturally maintained by women who make the decisions, put pressure on each other to continue the practice, and carry out the operations, generally to the complete exclusion of men and in many cases contrary to men's preferences. Women benefit from restrictive sexual norms insofar as the reduced supply of sex makes men willing to offer more (e.g., faithful long-term commitment, respect, financial support) for sex. Cross-cultural evidence indicates that sexual norms are most restrictive when women lack economic and political power, presumably because women need the price of sex to be high. When women have more opportunities, they can allow more sex.

Homosexual Marketplaces

Same-gender romance and sex also have marketplaces, although these differ in important ways from heterosexual marketplaces. Because both persons are of the same gender, the roles (corresponding to buyer and seller) may be less well defined than are gender roles. The minority status of homosexuality means that it is often relatively difficult to find potential partners, and so the prospects of finding an ideally matched partner are lower than for heterosexuals. Homosexuals may find it appealing to relocate to places where there are more potential partners, simply to have more prospects.

Love triangles likewise present additional complications among same-gender couples. In a heterosexual marriage, for example, a man may be upset to learn that his wife is attracted to another man, but he does not usually feel personally offended that the interloper is sexually pursuing his wife rather than himself. In same-gender triangles, any two of the three could potentially form the stable couple.

Roy F. Baumeister

See also Mate Selection; Sex and Love; Sex Ratio; Social Exchange Theory

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Marriage, Benefits of

Given the preponderance of divorce in developed nations, most people realize that a Cinderella wedding does not guarantee living happily ever after. Even so, most couples in the world get married, and many same-sex couples are fighting for the right to get married. For some, marriage is a sacred vow that must be enacted before having sex and children. For many others, it is a voluntary choice, entered into regardless of religious significance. In short, most people want to get married. With the well-known fact that many marriages do not last, one might wonder why people want to get married. Are there real benefits to marriage beyond those imagined through rose-colored glasses? This entry addresses this question. To answer it, the entry will also address two other questions. First, to whom do these benefits go? It can be argued that marriage benefits culture, society, the family, the couple, and the individual. Second, do benefits accrue differently for men and women? Research has shown that, at the individual level, marriage bestows benefits differently to men and women.

All legal marriages impart legal benefits, but other, less visible and direct benefits vary from couple to couple. The preponderance of research demonstrates that the most of the social, physiological, and psychological benefits of marriage accrue to those couples whose marriages are going well.

Culture and Society

It has been argued that marriage provides the best type of family structure within which to raise, nurture, and socialize children to become productive members of society. On the practical side, spouses combining two incomes can, more easily than single parents, maintain a household and raise children. In addition, families are one way in which cultural and religious traditions are transmitted to the young. Being married also gives couples a connection to their community, and are recognized as spouses bound by law. Although our society tolerates and sometimes accepts cohabitation, such an arrangement is not given legal rights or as much legitimacy as marriage. More often, cohabitation is seen as a step toward the goal of getting married.

Family

Marriage creates a bond between one person and his or her spouse's family. Such a connection may be detrimental when, for example, in-laws interfere with the marital relationship or the socialization and discipline of children. However, the benefits that accrue when families are supportive are clear. The family group to which a couple belongs automatically becomes larger when they marry. The spouses are seen as family, and as such, have access to the resources of two families instead of one. Older family members can provide teaching functions for the new couple. Couple that have children also benefit from interactions with other family members, learning to socialize and become members of a larger family unit, not to mention the tangible benefits that other family members can provide.

Couple

Married couples have legal benefits that unmarried couples generally do not have. Legally, a spouse has access to the health insurance of the other and is allowed to make decisions for an ill partner when he or she is unable to make those decisions independently. In many nations, a spouse is also entitled to the retirement benefits of the deceased spouse, and married couples are given tax benefits. Married couples are also seen as more desirable parents to adopt children. In addition, in a court of law, spouses are not required to testify against each other. These benefits of

marriage are not given to unmarried cohabiting couples. Although marriage provides many other benefits, the legal benefits, in large part, are those that same-sex couples are fighting for.

There are other, less tangible benefits to marriage. Marriage gives couples a way to demonstrate their commitment to each other publicly. Being married bestows a sense of legitimacy, recognition as a couple, and inclusion into the larger society, which are other reasons that some same-sex couples want the right to marry.

Although the benefits of raising and nurturing children can far outweigh the costs, the changes children bring a couple's life are daunting at first. Day-to-day routines must change drastically to adjust to a new baby who is dependent on parents for every aspect of living. The joys of raising children, as well as the strains, can be shared by spouses, and may expand their "couple identity" as they become parents. However, if a marriage is troubled, having children usually does not solve problems. Research indicates that couples' interaction patterns generally do not change after having children. For example, spouses who engage in destructive patterns of interaction before having children continue to behave in destructive ways after having children. Research also shows that for most marriages, marital quality declines after having children, but stability increases. This downturn in marital quality occurs especially in younger couples who have children early in marriage. Thus, having children can be a double-edged sword for many couples.

Marriage can also be a source of social support in the sense that spouses help each other in times of need. Marital support is exemplified by having someone to confide in when upset, being taken care of when ill, and being valued as an individual. Marital support engenders the sense that one is not alone when facing stressful situations. One person's problems become *our* problems and can be faced together, fostering the attitude of "you and me against the world." Thus, problems may not seem as bad when someone can be counted on to help and reassure.

Individual Well-Being

U.S. society is considered to be individualistic compared with many Asian countries that are considered to be collective societies. Therefore, it is not surprising that many of the benefits of marriage in Western society accrue to the individual. Individuals who are married are better off in many ways—physically and psychologically—than are people who are not married.

Physical Health

In Western society, married people are healthier than unmarried people. There are two major hypotheses for the health advantage of marriage. The first is selection. That is, healthier people choose (are selected or self-select) to be married. People who choose to be married often have more financial resources, less stress, more social support, and better health habits than do those who choose to be single. These advantages, at first glance, are not benefits to the individual because they exist before marriage. However, when two people with these same advantages combine resources, marriage can enhance their existing healthy lifestyle.

The second hypothesis for the health advantage of marriage is protection from ill health. Protection (as opposed to selection) is a benefit of marriage because it accrues after marriage. Interestingly, the health advantage after marriage is stronger for men than for women. One reason married men are healthier than unmarried men is that women are more likely than men to attempt to influence their partner's health-related behaviors (such as taking medication, visiting doctors, eating healthy foods). As such, wives are more likely than husbands to urge their spouses to seek medical help and even make their appointments with physicians. Further, men are more likely to depend on their wives for social support, whereas women tend to be more integrated into socially supportive networks of friends and family. Thus, in addition to having someone to monitor their health behaviors, men also gain a health benefit by being married to more socially integrated wives. Being integrated into social networks is also a factor that predicts better health.

For men, marital status seems to bestow health benefits upon the married man regardless of how satisfying the marriage is. On the other hand, married women are healthier than single women only when the marriage is satisfying. In other words, unhappy marriages are a greater risk factor for wives than for husbands. There are two

plausible, but not yet empirically established, explanations for the close tie between women's health and the quality of their marriages. Women's self-concept is intertwined with her relationships, so a poor-quality marriage may reflect poorly on the women themselves. Second, because women are also more likely to monitor others' health behaviors in addition to their relationships, they may ignore their own psychological and physiological signs of stress. Thus, women in unhappy marriages are at the same risk of ill health as single women are, and at greater risk of health problems than married men.

In response to acute stressors in laboratory settings (for example, being harassed, public speaking), however, men generally show greater increases in physiological indicators of stress than women do. Although men are affected more acutely by general stressors, research indicates that men's physiological responses to acute stressors tend to be short-lived and dissipate quickly. Conversely, physiological indicators of stress show that women, compared with men, react more strongly to discussions of marital problems. For women, the physiological reactions to the stress of marital conflict appear to last longer and have a longer-term effect than men's reactions do.

As implied earlier, ignoring their own physiological reactions to stress can lead to long-term health problems for women. If women are unaware of their physiological stress, they are unable to reduce it. This phenomenon underscores the point that health benefits of marriage accrue to women only when the marriage is satisfying. Such benefits are more likely to accrue to men regardless of the quality of their marriages.

Psychological Health

Compared with people who are unmarried, married people are also better off in their psychological well-being. That is, married individuals are happier and less depressed. On the one hand, some evidence indicates that happier and less depressed people may be more likely than are unhappy and depressed people to get married. On the other hand, some studies suggest that this greater psychological well-being is the result of the marital relationship rather than the fact that happier people are more likely to marry. It is likely that both

selection and protection play a part in spouses' psychological well-being.

These psychological benefits of marriage have been identified from large research studies comparing survey data from unmarried and married individuals who answered survey questions about life in general. The findings, as such, did not include married participants' own assessment of the benefits of marriage. However, some researchers, in turn, wanted to know whether the individuals themselves were aware of the benefits of being married. To understand whether individuals are aware of the beneficial nature of marriage, Denise Previti and Paul Amato asked a representative sample of married people in the United States open-ended questions about what keeps their marriage together. The most popular answers by far concerned the beneficial or rewarding aspects of marriages (e.g., love) rather than the costs of leaving (e.g., financial interdependence). The next most frequent rewarding aspect of marriage was friendship or companionship. Thus, the rewards most often mentioned (love and friendship) were those that emphasize feelings of connectedness and sharing life with another person.

In a sense, this research indicates that spouses know what their marriage provides for them. They see what marital support can do. Perceiving that such support is available has been shown to benefit individual's mental health in addition to their marital satisfaction. As such, trusting that someone will "be there" in times of trouble fosters a sense of personal security and well-being. People who were insecure in relationships can become more secure over time when they are in a trusting committed relationship. When marital support is consistent, insecure wives, especially during the transition to parenthood, become more secure.

Marriage provides people with someone to count on during times of trouble and provides someone to listen and understand when things go well. Researchers have found that spouses who share day-to-day positive events with each other feel positive emotions and are more satisfied with their relationships. Again, these benefits accrue only to marriages that are satisfying. Dissatisfied spouses do not enjoy these benefits and are likely to suffer significant costs.

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See also Cohabitation; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marriage and Health; Social Support, Nature of; Work–Family Conflict

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Marriage, Expectations About

Although most adults in the United States will marry at some point in their lives, people's expectations about marriage may influence their decisions about when to marry their partners and whether marriage is an appropriate choice for them as individuals. In scholarly research, expectations about marriage have been defined in two primary ways. First, marriage expectations have referred to unmarried people's perceptions of whether they will marry their current partner or anyone else in the future. Second, marriage expectations have referred to unmarried people's perceptions of what marriage will or should be like.

Scholars have been interested in studying expectations in both of these ways to better understand dramatic changes in contemporary marital behavior such as delays in marriage (waiting until later ages to marry), increases in cohabitation (living with a partner outside of marriage), and high rates of divorce. This entry examines what existing research tells us about the expectations people hold about marriage—both whether they think they will marry and what they think marriage will or should be like—and the implications of these expectations for their marital behavior.

Do Unmarried People Think They Will Get Married?

A growing number of adults in the United States are waiting until later ages to marry, consistent with recent trends in Canada and Europe. For example, U.S. Census data from 2006 show the median age of first marriage was 27.5 years for men and 25.5 years for women, representing a 5-year rise for both groups since 1959. At the same time, many adults are choosing to live with a partner before marriage, and a minority will not marry at all. As people spend a larger proportion of their adult lives as single individuals rather than in marital relationships, the chance that they will have a child outside of marriage during this time also increases. Because there are more alternatives to marriage today than in the past, researchers have been particularly interested in examining the marriage expectations of people who have chosen to live with their partners and who have had a child outside of marriage. Much of this research has examined how unmarried people who are already in relationships assess the likelihood of marrying their current partner to understand why delays in marriage are occurring. When people are not in relationships or do not expect to marry their partners, studies have also asked whether they expect to marry anyone else. This question is designed to assess whether people are rejecting marriage altogether rather than simply delaying it.

In general, existing research shows that most unmarried adults expect to marry, even when they have chosen to cohabit or have a nonmarital birth. Studies also suggest that many people who live with their partner view cohabitation as a step

toward marriage. Almost 9 of 10 single women without children expect to marry their partner or someone else in the future, compared with about 7 of 10 single women with children. About three-quarters of cohabitors (or people living with someone) say they expect to marry their current partner. Similarly, most unmarried people who have had a child outside of marriage indicate a "pretty good" or "almost certain" chance of marrying the other parent at the time of their child's birth. Research suggests that most cohabiting partners and unmarried parents also agree with each other about their chances of marriage, with the majority sharing the view that marriage is likely. When partners disagree, men are more likely to expect to marry than are women.

Some people's expectations may be lower than others if they do not want to marry, if they do not perceive themselves to be desirable partners, or if they do not think they have many opportunities to marry. For example, women's opportunities to marry may be lower in low-income, African-American communities, because of high rates of incarceration and mortality among men. Studies suggest that unmarried women are less likely to expect to marry their partner or someone else if they are older, have less education, come from disadvantaged background, or if their partner is of low socioeconomic status. The quality of unmarried couples' relationships, personal problems experienced by either partner, and each partner's beliefs about gender may influence their marriage expectations. In particular, unmarried mothers are more pessimistic about the likelihood they will marry their child's father if there is a high level of conflict in their relationships, if they do not trust members of the opposite sex, or if their partner has drug or alcohol problems or has been violent toward them.

Do unmarried adults' expectations about whether they will marry predict whether they will actually get married? Research shows that people who report high expectations about marriage are much more likely to make this transition than are people who do not think marriage is likely. Although marriage occurs more often when either partner expects to marry, couples are much more likely to formalize their unions when both partners hold similar expectations. When partners disagree, men's expectations about marriage seem to be

more important for making this transition than are women's expectations. At the same time, many unmarried people who say they expect to marry their partner do not follow through on their plans, particularly if they are members of disadvantaged groups. Therefore, policymakers have been interested in understanding how issues disproportionately affecting low-income and minority communities, such as male unemployment and incarceration, may also represent important barriers to marriage.

What Do Unmarried People Think Marriage Will or Should Be Like?

Another way unmarried people's expectations about marriage have been examined is by investigating what they think marriage will or should be like. Sociologist Andrew Cherlin has argued that marriage went through two major transitions in the 20th century that had important implications for what people expected from marriage. In the first half of the century, he suggests that the companionate marriage, in which marriage was based on the emotional satisfaction of spouses who performed certain marital roles, replaced the institutional marriage, in which marriage held a more important place in the extended family and community. In the latter half of the century, the companionate marriage was replaced by a more individualized view of marriage, in which self-development, flexible marital roles, and communication were increasingly expected in marriage. In addition to desiring emotional fulfillment and equality in marriage, Cherlin argues that more unmarried adults are delaying marriage until they have attained particular economic goals or have achieved a certain level of economic stability.

Empirical studies of unmarried adults support this argument. For example, nationally representative surveys have documented greater acceptance of equalitarian attitudes in regard to gender roles between the 1960s and 1990s among both men and women. In studies of college students, also conducted during the 1960s and 1990s, love and affection were emphasized as the most important components of marriage, whereas expectations for moral and religious unity, the maintenance of a home, and achieving a respected

place in the community were considered the least important. During this time, students' expectations that marriage would offer companionship and emotional security also grew while their expectations that marriage should involve children declined.

Other research has focused on how adults perceive the anticipated benefits and costs of marriage. Studies of unmarried adults who do not live with their partners find that most thought their lives would be better or much better if they were married. In particular, they expected their sex lives, overall happiness, standard of living, and emotional security would improve. In contrast, those who did live with their partners usually did not expect their lives to change much. Those who did expect changes, however, also thought marriage would improve their lives, especially their happiness and emotional and economic security. The one area that was not expected to improve—particularly among male respondents—was their freedom to do what they want. Couples who think their lives would be worse by making this transition have also been found to assess their own likelihood of marriage as lower, indicating there is a link between what unmarried people think marriage will be like and whether they think they will marry.

If unmarried adults generally expect their lives to be better if they married, why are they delaying marriage much longer than in previous decades and a small minority are not marrying at all? Historians such as Stephanie Coontz have argued that some of the same factors that have made marriages more satisfying in contemporary society have also made marriage less stable. Although marriages today have a higher risk of dissolution than in the past, most people still expect marriage to be a lifelong commitment. Therefore, they may be thinking more carefully about choosing a partner or a relationship that will not end in divorce. At a time when alternatives to marriage, such as cohabitation and single parenthood, have become more acceptable, interviews with couples in diverse socioeconomic conditions suggest that unmarried partners are waiting until their emotional and economic expectations for marriage are already met before taking this step.

Maureen Waller

See also Beliefs About Relationships; Cohabitation; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Engagement as a Relationship Stage; Expectations About Relationships; Families, Demographic Trends; Goals in Relationships; Ideals About Relationships; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Marriage, Benefits of; Optimism, Effects on Relationships; Single-Parent Families

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MARRIAGE, HISTORICAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL TRENDS

Marriage is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "the formal union of a man and a woman, typically as recognized by law, by which they become husband and wife." Marriage as an institution has existed across the millennia,

although it has often taken different forms. Marriage is usually highly valued by both the couple and the wider society, which tends to see it as an important means of regulating sexual expression within permitted limits. Marriage has also been seen as a "social glue," binding individuals, kin networks, and wider society within a series of prescribed commitments. This entry gives a brief historical perspective on marriage, considers gender roles within marriage, then turns to some notable cross-cultural variations in marriage and patterns of change in different cultures.

Brief Overview of Marriage

For thousands of years, marriage was seen by society as primarily functional, serving political, economic, and social ends, as well as guaranteeing procreation with "approved" partners. For the rich, marriage was important for inheritance and the keeping and consolidating wealth. As a result, strategic alliances were arranged, often with minimal reference to the individuals concerned. For the poor, marriage was a means of bringing in new resources or skills, although a lack of resources meant that social mobility through marriage was relatively rare. Although individuals often fell in love with "inappropriate" others (as in the story of Romeo and Juliet), love was generally seen by families and the wider society as a poor reason for marriage. Instead, the family and wider social network was key in bringing suitable partners together.

The idea that individuals could marry for love, and that there might be a "one and only" irrespective of resources, became more prevalent in Western societies during the 18th and 19th centuries. Industrialization prompted a loosening of social ties, as individuals moved away from their families to the cities and enjoyed liberation from traditional role constraints, more financial independence, and greater opportunities to choose their own partners. At the same time, the economic challenges of these changing societies led individuals to retreat into their partnerships as an escape from a harsh world. This idealization of marriage was propagated through romantic novels of the time, and later through cinema and other media. The "golden age" of Western marriage was arguably in the years immediately after World War II. At this time, marriage rates were higher in the United States than earlier in the century, and the age at which individuals married dropped. This was accompanied by a notable baby boom.

It has been suggested that marriage in Western societies decreased in importance in the 1960s. Increasing individualism in society led people to demand more from their relationships, with growing tensions between the fulfillment of personal desires and the commitments required for a successful marital relationship. Both actual and ideal age at marriage increased, and fertility rates decreased. There was also a decrease in numbers of those marrying. Women's increased participation in the workplace in particular gave them new opportunities to meet potential partners, and their increased economic independence provided them with the means to "go it alone" if their marital relationship was unsatisfactory. New and more liberal divorce laws allowed for no-fault divorces that eased the divorce process and was associated with the marked rise in divorce rates in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Western Europe. In the United States and Canada, divorce rates quadrupled during the last three decades of the 20th century. As individuals lived longer, they were spending a smaller proportion of their lives married, or at least married to their first spouse.

Marriages have become deinstitutionalized with many of the social norms that governed behavior in marriage weakened. Recent decades have also seen a marked growth in cohabitation in Western societies, beginning in most industrialized societies in the 1970s and accelerating in the 1980s and 1990s. In both the United States and Britain, cohabitation was at first more common among divorcees, but later became more popular among those who had yet to marry. Nearly half of U.S. children now expect to spend some time in a nontraditional family, as a result of being born outside marriage, or as a result of divorce.

Although some changes in marriage patterns are indisputable, some scholars have argued that these changes in marriage patterns have been exaggerated. In the United States, the proportion of nonmarried women older than age 18 was actually similar at the beginning and end of the 20th century. The divorce rate was higher in Malaysia in the 1940s than it is in contemporary North

America; cohabitation was relatively common in early 20th century England. Furthermore, despite the changes noted previously, it is not clear whether that there has been any real decline in the esteem in which marriage is held. The percentage of unhappy marriages has not necessarily increased, although leaving such marriages has become more likely. U.S. research shows that mean levels of marital happiness were nearly identical in 1980 and 2000. In the United States, evidence shows strong commitment to the idea of marriage, even among those least likely to marry (for example, African Americans). Most North Americans believe that marriage is for one's lifetime and should only be ended under extreme conditions. Most continue to believe that parenthood is fulfilling and maintain a commitment to the marital ideals of a family with children. Some evidence also indicates a decline of divorce rates in both the United States and the United Kingdom (in England, the divorce rate in 2006 was at its lowest for more than 20 years).

Rates of polygamy worldwide are largely on the decrease, with monogamy increasingly the favored form of marital relationship. This is often as the result of direct governmental intervention (such as the introduction of new marriage laws in the 1950s in Vietnam and Yemen). A decline in polygamy is also associated with increased literacy and educational rates among women. Particular economic stresses, however, can lead to some unofficial polygamous behaviors, such as when migrant workers living away from home for extended periods form second families.

Gender Roles in Marriage

According to prevailing theories, modernization brings predictable changes to gender roles in marriage. In preindustrial marital relationships, couples performed mainly material tasks as part of shared common economic activities. High levels of economic uncertainty tended to reinforce traditional authority patterns, with a strong division in gender roles. Childbearing and childrearing were seen as the major female role. During a later bourgeois family period—when middle-class women stayed at home—couples carried out a mixture of material and socioemotional tasks, with the man having the principal financial responsibility and the woman attending more to childrearing and the socioemotional needs of the family. In a postmodern world, there has been movement toward greater egalitarianism in gender roles in affluent Western societies. Roles have been reevaluated as women work outside the house: Whereas 30 percent of U.S. women worked in 1950, 55 percent did so in 1986. Egalitarian and liberal values are particularly strong among young, women, the well educated, and those who are less religious. Decision making has become more egalitarian between the sexes. However, although women may have become less defined by their family roles, no clear model defines women's life prospects. Indeed, the conflict between work and family remains a significant one for Western women. Although men have changed many of their views on gender roles, they have been slower to change than women in actual practices.

Cross-Cultural Variations

Most of the previous discussion has been framed in the context of Western marriage (primarily U.S. or Western European patterns). Although the patterns of modernization described can be seen as broadly representative of changes across the globe, there are important variations in these configurations and significant resistance to change in some cultures.

Religion

Religion is an important socializer of moral values and normative behaviors within marriage. Postindustrial societies are generally only moderately religious, with the comparatively religious United States a notable exception. In Islam, marriage is often between paternal cousins. Permitted marital age is often younger, as early as 9 in some cultures. Husbands in Islamic societies are more likely to retain authority over their wives and are less likely to encourage equality in decision-making. Unlike elsewhere, young people in Islamic cultures are no less traditional in their attitude toward marriage than do their elder counterparts. Islamic cultures are generally less likely to permit divorce, particularly if the woman wishes to initiate the break. Divorce can also be difficult to

obtain in some traditional Catholic societies, such as Chile.

Migration and Marriage

Around 2 percent of the world's population lives in countries other than those in which they were born. Marriage is now a major basis for migration into Western countries. Migration can both accelerate social factors related to modernization (by, for example, necessitating the employment of women who previously stayed at home). It can also reinforce other aspects of traditional authority (for example, when families encourage individuals to marry kin to allow those kin to migrate). Rather ironically, given that migration is usually aimed at helping the family, migration often exaggerates existing strains and provides new marital problems. For example, migrant workers in Africa are often absent during the critical early years of marriage and childrearing, frequently leading to a decline in marital quality. Life in migrant hostels can often mean the exclusion of spouses, which can create opportunities for infidelity. Unemployment and hunger has led many married women to establish economically supportive "Nyatsi" relationships, in which a married woman takes a male "friend." High levels of out-migration in Botswana have also substantially changed marriage timing, with marriages now delayed until the man is in his 30s and has the financial resources to establish a family home. Studies of male Indian migrants to the Middle East have found that women back home take on new responsibilities, leading to many new adaptations and changes for these women. This may often increase the self-confidence and self-esteem of these women, but lead to potential tensions with the husband on his return.

Marriage in Fast-Changing Societies

Rapid social changes provide new challenges for marital relationships, but can also help cement relationships. The economic pressures that followed the end of Communism in Eastern Europe caused emotional stress between partners, and have been associated with an increase in problems such as drinking and depression. Widespread unemployment in Russia led to government directives that discouraged women from working outside the home. This loss of employment has been related to a decrease in egalitarianism in marriage. However, in the case of some more traditional cultures, such as the Georgian Republic, women were seen as more adaptable to changing market demands, and economic changes provided them new opportunities. Furthermore, although marriage rates decreased in Eastern Europe during this time of transition, numbers of divorces also decreased sharply as couples maintained their relationships to help deal with the difficulties of this time.

In China, the introduction of the one-child policy in 1979 may have had an important impact on family size. This policy also appears to underlie the large sex ratio (1.17:1 male live births to female live births), with some evidence of sex-selective abortion. This has led to concern over a lack of future female partners and national campaigns aimed at increasing the value of women. As family size in general declines, evidence indicates that the intimacy between the couple increased, alongside a strong emotional attachment to the single child. Greater freedom in partner choice and increased education has meant that couples are less keen to live with their parents, but a chronic lack of housing, particularly in large cities, has meant that coresidence patterns have persisted. Often, however, this means residence with the woman's parents, rather than the husband's, as in previous times.

As in the West, divorce rates in Asia have been growing. A failure of partners to "deliver" in the more materialistic 1980s has been seen as a major contributor to the increase, as have the temptations offered by large-scale internal migration (such as among the so-called astronauts who left mainland China to work in Hong Kong in the 1990s). Remarriage rates are high, however: in China 96 percent of divorcees remarry, 83 percent within 5 years. Furthermore, some of those who declared themselves to be single did so to obtain enhanced rations following changes in household registration procedures.

Looking Forward

In the future, marriage is likely to remain of great significance—to both individuals and societies.

Cohabitation rates may continue to increase, although most will still cohabit as a trial period before marriage, and will want to have their children within marriage. Furthermore, although modernization forces may encourage individuals to seek greater independence from their families, and greater equality between the sexes, significant religious and cultural forces will continue to play an important role in influencing marriage patterns and behaviors.

Robin Goodwin

See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Culture and Relationships; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Marriage Markets

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Marriage, Transition to

One of the most significant psychosocial adjustments in adulthood is the transition to marriage. Although most men and women in the United States will marry at some point in their lives and most look forward to this event with anticipation and excitement, the transition to marriage also involves adaptation to a variety of tasks that may fundamentally alter spouses' view of themselves and their alliances. During the first few years of marriage, spouses typically define new roles, which may be less individualistic and more interdependent; alter their social networks; and establish a core alliance with each other rather than with their families of origin. Additionally, more than 33 percent of divorces occur within the first 5 years of marriage. This entry presents theories about why couples succeed or fail in making the transition to a stable, satisfying marriage, identifies behaviors that put couples at risk for marital problems and behaviors that protect them from marital distress and divorce, discusses the impact of external stressors, and identifies the changes that individuals may experience in making the transition to marriage.

Theoretical Models

Several models have been developed to explain distress and divorce during the early years of marriage. The disillusionment model contends that as new marriages progress, spouses become disillusioned by the discontinuity between their idealized expectations before marriage and the actuality of their marital experiences. Before marriage, individuals may actively avoid conflict with their partners, manage impressions of themselves, and view their partners in the best possible light. During the early years of marriage, partners typically perceive a loss of love and affection, experience increased ambivalence about their relationships, and begin to view their partners and relationships in less positive lights. Some empirical evidence supports the disillusionment model because couples who divorce early in their marriage are more ambivalent about their marriages, report falling out of love at higher rates, and perceive their partners as less responsive to their needs.

Most researchers find that in happily married couples, a general decline in marital satisfaction occurs naturally. Therefore, some researchers have argued that disillusionment is an inevitable process as couples begin the transition from dating to newlywed marriage to early marriage, and therefore

cannot be a useful explanatory model because it occurs for distressed as well as happily married couples. The enduring dynamics model, in contrast, postulates that couples enter into marriage with at least some knowledge of the shortcomings of the relationship and their partner. Relationship distress, therefore, arises from interpersonal processes that are already present during courtship and that endure into marriage. This model suggests that differences between partners that are present while the couple is dating erode marital satisfaction over time and may contribute to eventual divorce. Some data support this model because the intensity of newlywed romance and negativity assessed at marriage predicts marital satisfaction 13 years later as well as, for couples who divorced, the length of time married before divorce.

Finally, the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model is an integrated model of marital processes that contends that marital quality is a function of enduring vulnerabilities that the partners bring to the marriage (e.g., attachment style, personality traits, etc.), stressful events experienced by the couple (e.g., relocation, starting a new job, having children, etc.), and the adaptive processes (e.g., social support, positive affective expressions, problem solving, etc.) couples use to contend with vulnerabilities and stressors. Considerable research has supported this model as a useful one in examining marital qualities, particularly marital problem solving, that likely moderate the effect of life events on spousal functioning. A strength of this more comprehensive model is that it reflects the diverse individual, relational, and external variables that contribute to marital quality and stability.

High-Risk Behavior

Research, guided by the theories presented, has identified behaviors in newlywed spouses that predict success in the transition to stable and satisfying marriages. Perhaps the most extensively studied area of marital relationships is communication behavior. Research on the verbal content of communication during problem-solving tasks suggests that negative behaviors distinguish satisfied from dissatisfied couples, especially hostility, stonewalling, and contempt. Rates of negative verbal communication during conflict discussions have been shown to predict declines in satisfaction over time, particularly in the absence of positive affect and when the ratio of negative to positive behaviors is high (stable marriages typically evidence a 5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative exchanges). Growing evidence indicates that the specific emotions displayed in conflict discussions are even more powerful in differentiating distressed from nondistressed couples than is the verbal content of their discussions. For example, negative affect, particularly when it is reciprocated by the partner, appears to be a particularly powerful predictor of marital distress across many studies and has been shown to distinguish happily married from unhappily married couples after 4 years of marriage. Another important maladaptive pattern of communication is the demand–withdraw pattern, in which one member criticizes, nags, and makes demands of the partner (the demander), and the other partner withdraws and attempts to avoid conflict (the withdrawer). This pattern has been well established cross-culturally and is consistently associated with relationship dissatisfaction.

In addition to communication behavior, several studies of newly married couples indicate that the prevalence of intimate partner violence is substantially higher in young, recently married couples. If violence occurs early in the relationship, it is likely to continue, although its frequency may decrease overall. One third of engaged couples and approximately half of recently married couples report physical aggression in their relationship. The presence of physical aggression in a relationship is concurrently and prospectively associated with greater marital dissatisfaction and increases the likelihood of marital dissolution, even after controlling for psychological aggression, relationship length, and prior marital satisfaction. Aggression in newlywed couples reliably distinguishes between couples who remain married and those who become separated or divorced.

Protective Behavior

Supportive behaviors (i.e., empathic responding, constructive interactions, social support) have been associated with higher marital satisfaction, lower stress experience, and better psychological

and physical well-being. Longitudinal research suggests that newlyweds with poor social support skills are at increased risk of distress and divorce 2 years after marriage. Other researchers have expanded the concept of social support to include dyadic coping, which involves both ensuring the partner's well-being and enhancing the marital relationship. Research in this area suggests that more positive and less negative dyadic coping is significantly associated with longitudinal relationship satisfaction.

Positive affect, including expressing positive emotions, constructive engagement in the marriage, and empathic listening, is concurrently and prospectively associated with marital satisfaction. Some data suggest that positive affect can neutralize the effects of detrimental behaviors. That is, for some couples who display low levels of positive communication skills or high negative skills in problem-solving discussions, positive emotions such as humor, affection, and interest seem to diminish the negative effects, to the point where they have little bearing on declines in marital satisfaction. Conversely, the absence of positive affect appears to amplify the effects of unskilled communication patterns. This does not imply that *only* being positive is beneficial; some data suggest that exclusive positivity and excessive repression of negativity by wives is detrimental to marital relationships.

Cross-sectional research also suggests that acknowledgment of a partner's admirable qualities, pleasure derived from the relationship, and time spent with one's spouse are positively related to marital quality. For newlyweds, the relative novelty of the relationship and the excitement in forming a marital bond may also enhance marital quality. Data suggest that couples who maintain a high level of joint novel activities throughout early marriage may maintain higher relationship quality. Finally, relationship self-regulation, or the degree to which partners work at their marital relationship, predicts concurrent and longitudinal marital satisfaction for newlywed couples.

External Stressors

The stressful life events that couples experience in the early years of marriage have been linked to marital quality, in both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. When couples experience acute stress, they tend to report higher levels of problems in the marriage, communication difficulties, and a tendency to blame their partner for negative events. Research has also suggested that marital quality is lower among couples experiencing high levels of chronic stress and that chronic stress predicts more rapid declines in marital satisfaction. However, marital satisfaction is linked most strongly to stress when couples experience *both* chronic and acute stress; that is, negative life events are particularly detrimental when the external context places additional demands on an already strained system. Some evidence also indicates that physical violence is more likely to occur under conditions of high chronic stress combined with acute stress.

The effects of external stress on relationships may be attenuated by appropriate supportive coping responses in spouses. In general, positive responses, such as providing support and making allowances for the partner's aversive behavior, function to reduce the negative impact of stress on the relationship. For example, marital support has been shown to reduce the association between emotional distress and stressful economic events. Further, spouses who make relationship-enhancing attributions about their partner's behavior when under stress tend to fare better than do spouses who make distress-maintaining attributions about their partner's behavior.

Impact on Individuals

In addition to changes in the relationship, the transition to marriage involves changes in a variety of psychological and behavioral patterns for the individual members of the couple. One potential area of change for an individual is attachment style. John Bowlby originally speculated that infants develop working models of themselves (e.g., as lovable) and of others (e.g., as dependable) based on early interactions with caregivers, resulting in attachment styles that are presumed to be fairly stable across time. However, recent research has suggested that these spouses may transfer attachment functions (safe haven, secure base, etc.) from their family of origin to their spouse. The marital relationship, because it creates

a new caregiving environment and provides some psychological and physical distance from the family of origin, may be an opportunity for individuals to transfer their attachment functions to their spouses. Research examining attachment stability during the transition to marriage has confirmed that attachment representations are largely stable for most individuals, particularly for those who were securely attached before marriage. However, newlywed individuals with insecure attachment styles do tend to experience more security (i.e., feel less anxious about abandonment and more comfortable depending on their spouse) than they did before marriage.

A second potential area of change is in social networks. Newlyweds tend to go through a beneficial process of integrating social networks during the early years of marriage, reinforcing the couple identity and providing support for the new relationship. In contrast, newlyweds who continue to maintain predominately separate social networks may undermine the marital relationship and reinforce individuation and personal goals. Indeed, research has demonstrated that higher interdependence of family and friend networks predicts higher marital quality after one year of marriage, particularly for wives. However, these effects are not always positive. Some evidence indicates that maladaptive behaviors, such as drinking, may be fostered by integration of social networks.

Conclusion

Taken together, these data suggest that the transition to marriage is a complex one that involves many systematic and predictable changes at the individual, dyadic, and environmental level. The research has identified several robust correlates and predictors of marital *dissatisfaction,* but has been less systematic in the identification of those variables that contribute to marital *satisfaction.* If one assumes that marital satisfaction is more than just the absence of marital dissatisfaction, as considerable research and theory suggests, the research has less to offer for those facets that contribute to a lasting, fulfilling relationship. Future research is necessary to better elucidate those positive elements that can facilitate the transition in newlyweds and beyond.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Expectations About Relationship; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Predicting Success or Failure of Marital Relationships; Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model

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MARRIAGE AND HEALTH

A key human relationship for most adults is marriage, which confers economic, social, and psychological benefits such as increased earning potential, resources for raising a family, and fulfilling needs for security and belonging. Across a number of surveys, married individuals report greater happiness and life satisfaction and have a lower risk of clinical depression than do their unmarried counterparts. In addition to these benefits, marriage confers benefits for physical health. At the same time, marriages characterized by low marital satisfaction and high conflict have damaging effects on physical health. This entry reviews evidence for

the physical health benefits of marriage, the link between marital quality and health, mechanisms that explain how marriage affects physical health, and the implications of marriage and health for interventions.

Marital Status and Health

Across a number of large-scale epidemiological studies, nonmarried individuals have higher rates of mortality compared with their married counterparts from all causes. In addition, morbidity among married persons is lower compared with unmarried persons across a variety of health conditions, including cancer, heart attacks, and surgery. Across several studies, the health benefits of marriage are also greater for men compared with women, such that the additional risk for mortality in comparing nonmarried men to married men is much larger than in comparing nonmarried to married women.

The two primary explanations for why marital status is related to morbidity and mortality are *selection* and *protection*. According to selection, marriage itself does not cause decreased morbidity and mortality; instead, a selection bias exists such that individuals who are healthier and engage in less health-destructive and more health-protective behaviors are more likely to get married. The protection explanation suggests that regardless of an individual's premarital health or functioning, marriage confers specific economic and psychological benefits, such as increased household income and social support, which contributes to better health. The selection and protection explanations are not mutually exclusive, and epidemiological findings support both explanations. Unfortunately, because relationship scientists cannot experimentally manipulate marital status, definitive resolution of these explanations is unlikely.

Marital Quality and Health

Although marriage on average is related to better overall physical health, people in troubled marriages have worse mental and physical well-being compared with people in satisfactory and happy marriages and, in some studies, nonmarried people. The most dramatic examples of the relationship

between marital *quality* and health come from studies of patients with existing chronic medical conditions. Low marital quality, typically measured through self-report, predicted earlier mortality over long-term follow-up in end-stage renal disease (46 percent increase in risk for mortality over 3-year follow-up) and congestive heart failure patients (65 percent increase in risk for mortality over 4-year follow-up). Beyond mortality, low marital quality is also related to increased risk of coronary events (including cardiac death, acute myocardial infarction, and revascularization procedures) in patients with cardiovascular disease and in a large 9,000-person cohort of British civil servants, increased illness symptoms over longitudinal follow-up (4 years) in healthy married couples, and increased pain flares in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

In contrast to research on gender differences in marital status on health, where men derive greater health benefits from marriage compared with women, research on marital quality and health shows an opposite pattern. Specifically, the effects of marital quality on health are generally stronger for women compared with men. For instance, in a longitudinal study of participants in the Alameda County Study, increased marital strain was related to increased self-reported ulcer symptoms at 8- to 9-year follow-up in women, but not men. In addition, large, prospective longitudinal studies also show that lower marital quality is related to increased risk of disability and mortality over long-term follow-up (6–15 years), again in women, but not men.

How Does Marital Quality Affect Health?

The prevailing framework that explains the health benefits of healthy marriages and the detrimental health consequences of unhealthy marriages is the *stress/social support hypothesis,* originally put forth by Bonnie Burman and Gayla Margolin. The stress/social support hypothesis suggests that stress and support in marriages influences health through a number of pathways, including influences on the individual's cognitions, emotions, health behaviors, coping behaviors, and biological systems. The model was further elaborated on by Janice Kiecolt-Glaser and Tamara Newton, who suggested additional pathways, including mental

health and psychopathology, and individual differences in personality such as hostility. In addition, the pathways that explain relationships between marital quality and health are influenced by gender-related traits, cognitive schemas, and social roles that explain why marital quality has stronger effects on health for women compared with men. A number of entries discuss these mediating pathways and gender-related constructs; this entry focuses on how marriage influences health behaviors and biological systems.

Health Behaviors

Married partners influence each other's behavior across many contexts, including health-promoting behaviors (physical activity, diet, compliance with physician recommendations) and health-compromising behaviors (alcohol use, tobacco use, problematic eating). Indeed, large-scale studies indicate that health behaviors such as diet, physical activity, and smoking are highly correlated between spouses. However, studies that focus on couple-based interventions to increase health-promoting behaviors (notably physical activity and diet) and decrease health-compromising behaviors such as smoking have not shown significant success. In addition, attempts by spouses to control their partners' health behaviors are often ineffective in increasing health-promoting behavior, and may be met with resistance resulting in decreased health-promoting behavior and increased health-compromising behaviors. Thus, although married partners influence each other's health behaviors, the direction of influence may not always be in the direction of promoting healthy behaviors.

Biological Systems

Marital quality can also directly affect biological systems that are involved in psychological responses to stress and physical health. The three biological systems that have received the most attention in studies of marriage and health are the *cardiovascular system,* which is responsible for circulating oxygen, nutrients, and numerous cells throughout the body; the *neuroendocrine system,* which helps the brain regulate such important functions as energy balance and reproduction via

chemical messengers called hormones; and the *immune system,* which defends the body against threats such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Beyond serving a wide range of life-sustaining functions for the body, malfunctions or deficiencies in these systems are involved in most major chronic diseases.

Most studies in this area involve healthy samples that are disease-free and show low incidence of health-compromising behaviors, or samples where health behaviors are statistically controlled. These studies typically involve studying married couples while they interact with each other, usually involving a discussion (e.g., talking about specific problems in the relationship), coupled with measuring activity in one or more of the biological systems. Marital quality is typically operationalized as levels of hostile behavior, such as putdowns and criticism, during marital discussions. Thus, studies of marriage and biological systems have been mostly restricted to interpersonal interactions in laboratory settings.

The main finding across studies in this area is that hostile behaviors during discussions are accompanied by cardiovascular, neuroendocrine, and immune changes. Couples who show greater hostile behavior during marital discussions have more elevated blood pressure and heart rate compared with less hostile couples. Similarly, greater hostile behavior during marital discussions is related to elevated hormones that are involved in regulating energy balance and that mediate the body's response to psychological stress (including catecholamines such as norepinephrine, and hormones of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis such as cortisol). Greater hostile behavior during marital discussions is related to suppression of the immune system's ability to fight off infectious disease and aid wound healing, and exacerbation of the immune system's systemic inflammatory response.

Although couples' behaviors toward each other affect biological systems that affect health, an empirical question is whether behavior in the laboratory actually affects disease-relevant outcomes. Any number of psychological or physical stimuli can cause changes in heart rate, blood pressure, stress hormones, or immune function, without any measurable impact on health or disease. Recent studies have begun to address whether links

between marital functioning and biological systems are relevant for actual disease. For example, coronary artery disease results from the buildup of plaques within the walls of arteries that supply the heart, a process that takes place over several decades before an individual actually experiences a heart attack. A number of studies now suggest that low marital quality and increased hostility within marriages are related to changes in biological measures that reflect the plaque accumulation process (e.g., ultrasound measures of carotid artery thickness, computerized tomography scans of the heart). These studies suggest that being in an unhappy marriage is related to greater accumulation of artery blockage over several years.

Current research has yet to demonstrate whether the link between low marital quality and disease-relevant outcomes is explained by changes in the biological systems described in this entry. For example, one important indicator of hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis function is the slope of change in cortisol secretion from its normal peak in the morning to its low point in the evening. Several studies in independent research groups show that low marital quality is related to flatter slopes (that is, lesser decreases), with levels elevated in the evening hours. Additional studies have linked flat cortisol slopes to disease outcomes including increased coronary artery calcification and fatigue. Thus, although separate lines of evidence suggest that the link between marital quality and coronary artery calcification may be explained by flat cortisol slopes, no studies to date have explicitly tested these links in a single study. Studies of marriage and health are increasingly incorporating assessments of both biological systems and disease-relevant outcomes, and will be able to test links between marital quality, biological systems, and health outcomes in the future.

Clinical Implications of the Links Between Marriage and Health

The importance of marital quality for health suggests that one avenue for improving health outcomes in patients with chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease or cancer is improving relationship functioning. Psychosocial interventions that focus on intimate partners or other family members of chronic illness patients are effective in improving mental health outcomes and, in some limited cases, patient survival. In addition, these interventions also improve the mental health of the partner, particularly interventions that focus on the relationship between the partner and the patient.

Moreover, in some disease contexts, partner and spouse behaviors may play an important role in exacerbating disease symptoms; the most notable context for this is chronic pain. A number of studies show that spouses who respond to their partner's pain behaviors (expressions of pain or limited functioning resulting from pain) with negative or punishing behaviors, or solicitous behaviors (providing assistance, expressing concern) can actually increase their partner's pain severity, limitations resulting from pain, and psychological distress. Thus, interventions that target both relationships between patient and spouse, and the spouse's role in reinforcing their partner's maladaptive pain behaviors would be particularly effective in this context. Overall, links between marriage and health provide additional avenues for psychosocial interventions that may improve mental and physical well-being, primarily by focusing on improving relationships and effective coping with chronic disease.

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See also Anger in Relationships; Conflict, Marital; Emotion in Relationships; Health and Relationships; Health Behaviors, Relationships and Interpersonal Spread of; Marital Satisfaction and Quality

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Marriage and Sex

Marriage is defined as a legal union that typically occurs between a man and a woman. This interpersonal union is usually of an intimate and sexual nature that carries along with it governmental, social, and religious recognition. *Sex* is most frequently thought of as coitus, or vaginal intercourse (penetration of the vagina by the penis). Although coitus is the most common form of sexual expression, the term *sex* can also include many other types of sexual interaction such as anal intercourse (inserting the penis into the anus), oral-genital stimulation (mouth-to-genital contact), and masturbation (self-stimulation of the genitals for sexual pleasure), to name a few.

What is the relationship between *marriage* and *sex?* Why do people marry and what do they expect from their sexual relationship after marriage? This entry examines the relationship between *marriage* and *sex* with a specific focus on expectations of marital sexuality.

When asked about reasons for marriage, U.S. residents most often cite that they marry for love, emotional and economic security, companionship, and their desire to be a parent. Although sexual involvement is commonly experienced in dating relationships, marriage is the most socially accepted context for sexual expression to date. Marriage is the only condition under which the major religions positively sanction sexual interaction between couples. Additionally, marriage remains the primary context for which society approves of the entrance of children into a relationship. The link between *sex* and *marriage* is particularly important because sex is considered an integral part of a marital relationship. Many believe that sex is the glue that holds a relationship together.

What are common expectations for sex after marriage? After reviewing the literature on marital sexuality, a number of expectations come to light. First, it is expected that to have a satisfying marriage, sex with one's spouse should be both pleasurable and sexually satisfying. A second expectation is that in a healthy marriage, sexual interaction will be desired by both partners and should occur on a regular basis. A third expectation is that a marriage shall remain sexually exclusive, meaning that individuals within a marriage are to remain sexually monogamous and refrain from engaging in extramarital sexual involvement. Fourth, a common expectation in marriage is that marital partners should have the ability for successful and problem-free sexual encounters. And a final expectation is that marital partners should be able to have children if desired.

Marital and Sexual Satisfaction

A common expectation of a satisfying marriage is that one's sexual relationship will be both pleasurable and gratifying. In effect, it is expected that marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction share a common bond and that both will be present in a healthy marriage. The association between sexual and marital satisfaction has been a well-studied area of investigation. In fact, a large body of literature documents that satisfaction with one's sex life is tied to the overall satisfaction of the relationship in general, thus supporting the idea that marital and sexual satisfaction are interrelated. The interrelationship of sexual and marital satisfaction has led to much speculation about which comes first. Does a satisfying sexual relationship lead to a satisfying marriage? Or does a satisfying marriage lead to a satisfying sexual relationship? These questions have been long debated in the literature.

Although the interrelationship of sexual and marital satisfaction is supported, the direction of this association is not yet clear. For example, some scholars report that individuals' sexual satisfaction predicts their overall marital satisfaction, whereas

others posit that the opposite is true. For example, following this assumption, as one experiences a decrease in marital satisfaction, one's sexual satisfaction will decline as well. Still other researchers claim that the relationship between sexual and marital satisfaction is reciprocal, meaning the levels of sexual and marital satisfaction jointly affect each other. Collectively, these findings suggest that the association between sexual and marital satisfaction warrant further exploration to better highlight the process in which they occur and contribute to each other. Although the relationship between sexual and marital satisfaction has been well documented, much of the literature on the link between *marriage* and *sex* has focused on coital frequency (how often a couple engages in sexual intercourse).

Sexual Frequency and Marriage

Another common expectation within marriage is that in a healthy marriage, sex will occur on a regular basis and will lead to a more satisfying sexual relationship. Although the data show that married couples have sex one to two times per week on average, it is assumed that the higher the coital frequency, the more satisfying the sex life and marriage will be, and several studies have supported the link between sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, studies have documented that how often a couple engages in sexual activity can be a measure of the level of satisfaction in the sexual relationship. In effect, these findings support the premise that couples who have the most frequent sex are the most sexually satisfied.

Sexual frequency also relates to overall marital satisfaction. For example, findings document that partners who have frequent sex, and are satisfied with their sex life, are more satisfied with their overall marital relationship compared with partners who have less frequent sex and who are less satisfied with their sex life.

Given that data support the notion that sexual frequency can be an indicator of marital satisfaction as well as sexual satisfaction, many investigators use sexual frequency as a barometer of the health of the sexual and marital relationship. However, although sexual frequency can be an indicator of higher satisfaction, many individuals

remain satisfied even after experiencing a decrease in sexual encounters. During the first few years of marriage there is a significant drop in sexual frequency. This drop in frequency tends to slow and level off in the years thereafter. In addition, the presence of children is strongly related to changes in marital and sexual satisfaction over time. In particular, marital satisfaction and sexual frequency tend to decrease after the birth of a child. Moreover, the preferred amount of sexual frequency also undergoes a decline following the transition to parenthood. Furthermore, marital satisfaction is lowest among parents of infants. Although sexual frequency declines after the birth of a child, it appears that couples may begin to experience changes in sexual frequency even before their first child is born. However, even after the decline in sexual frequency, most married couples report being generally satisfied with both their sexual and marital relationship.

In addition to the entry of children, employment demands also have a notable influence on marital sexuality. Specifically, pressure from work can result in a decrease in sexual frequency. For example, in a national survey of U.S. residents, the number of hours worked per week was related to one's sexual relationship. In particular, those individuals who worked 40 hours a week or more had more sexual problems and lower levels of satisfaction than did individuals who worked less than 40 hours per week. Moreover, working different shifts also led to lower sexual frequency, lower sexual satisfaction, and an increase in sexual problems. Thus, it appears that many contextual issues such as the transition to new roles (i.e., parenthood), the presence of and age of children, number of hours worked per week, and work shifts all may influence one's sexual and marital relationship. Considering these findings as a whole, even when coital frequency and marital satisfaction decrease, couples report being largely satisfied with their sexual interactions. Therefore, coital frequency may not be the best indicator of how satisfied couples are with their sexual relationship or marital relationship.

Finally, the quality or satisfaction of a sexual episode may have nothing to do with how frequently a couple engages in sexual activity. For example, partners may have differences in opinion as to how often to engage in sexual relations as well

as differences in which types of interactions are satisfying. Moreover, research documents that couples often have discrepant reports of sexual frequency and different interpretations of what constitutes a satisfying level of frequency in their relationships. Even though a couple may report the same level of sexual frequency, a different interpretation of that frequency may emerge, one believing the frequency is high, and the other believing it is low, thus again highlighting that sexual frequency alone may not be the best indicator of satisfaction.

Extramarital Sexual Involvement

Remaining sexually faithful (monogamous) is commonly held as one of the core assumptions of marital relationships. Moreover, many couples feel that failure to remain sexually faithful is a violation of their marital agreement and can be considered as grounds for marital dissolution. U.S. residents disapprove of extramarital sexual involvement (also known as infidelity), and those in many other cultures disapprove of sexual behavior outside of one's marriage. Although some marriages are open marriages (nonmonogamous), the frequency of this type of marriage is small.

Extramarital involvement, or infidelity, typically includes behaviors ranging from emotional involvement to sexual intercourse. Three classifications of infidelity have emerged in the literature. The categorizations are as follows: primarily sexual (involvement in any sexual intimacy from kissing to sexual intercourse that occurs without a meaningful emotional involvement), primarily emotional (involvement in a moderate-to-deep emotional attachment with negligible physical intimacy), and combined-type (involvement includes sexual intercourse accompanied by a deep emotional attachment). Typically, the data show that women more often report being involved in the combined-type of infidelity, one that involves both a sexual and emotional attachment, whereas men are more likely than women to be involved in a sexual relationship void of meaningful emotional connection.

Rates of extramarital sex vary. Although some studies report rates of infidelity to be as high as 25 percent of wives and 50 percent of husbands, these best estimates to date come from a large scale national survey that reports that approximately 15 percent of wives and 25 percent of husbands had been involved in extramarital sexual involvement including intercourse. Rates of extramarital sexual involvement are much higher when they include emotional affairs and sexual encounters not involving intercourse. The workplace is the most common place to meet extramarital partners. However, with the increase in technology and the popularity of the Internet, online infidelity is becoming a new phenomenon.

Recovering from infidelity can be a difficult task. Results from a large scale survey of marriage and family therapists identified infidelity as the second most damaging problem couples encounter following physical abuse. Moreover, therapists report that infidelity is one of the most difficult problems to treat. Although treating and overcoming the effects of infidelity can be challenging, research reports that most marriages survive infidelity. Additionally, some evidence indicates that couples who weather the impact of the infidelity emerge stronger after working through the trauma in therapy. Although many factors have been linked to infidelity (e.g., fear of intimacy, relationship conflict, life-cycle transitions), the causes are still not clear, for infidelity may be present in both happy and unhappy marriages.

So, does extramarital sexual involvement lead to the end of a marriage? Some research reports that infidelity is involved in 90 percent of first-time divorces. However, decades of research by John Gottman, a marriage researcher at the University of Washington, finds that only 20 percent of divorces are caused by affairs. Though infidelity may be linked with marital dissolution, it is not clear whether infidelity leads to a decline in one's marital quality or whether it is a consequence of a low-quality marriage. Nonetheless, these data highlight the significant impact extramarital involvement can have on a marriage.

Sexual Problems and Marriage

Although most couples expect that they should have a healthy and problem-free sex life once they are married, many couples experience difficulties with sexual functioning, and many couples will seek marital therapy because of problems with

their sex life. Moreover, not all couples with sexual issues enter therapy with sexual problems; many couples present with general relationship issues but have underlying sexual problems present.

Sexual problems typically consist of sexual dysfunctions, or disorders that interfere with a full sexual response cycle, making it difficult for a person to enjoy or to have sexual intercourse. Common sexual problems include premature ejaculation (inability to reasonably control ejaculatory reflex on a regular basis), erectile dysfunction (failure to achieve or maintain an erection), sexual desire disorder (low or high levels of sexual desire), female arousal disorder (inability to attain or maintain typical responses to sexual arousal), orgasmic disorder (inability to reach orgasm), and sexual pain problems (dyspareunia [painful or difficulty during sexual intercourse], vaginismus [involuntary spasms of the muscles surrounding the lower third of the vagina]). National survey estimates indicate that 43 percent of U.S. women and 31 percent U.S. men have experienced problems with sexual functioning.

Research documents that sexual functioning is important to the development of intimate relationships for both men and women. Specifically, poor marital quality is related to the presence of sexual problems for both men and women. Moreover, sexual problems can affect a person's ability to form and sustain romantic relations, including marriage, and difficulties with sexual relations are linked with an increased risk of marital dissolution.

Many psychological factors have been linked with sexual functioning. Included in this class of influential factors is the state of one's mental health. Emotional problems such as depression or anxiety or drug and alcohol use or abuse are also often associated with impaired sexual functioning. Many social and relational factors have also been found to influence sexual functioning. For example, relational dynamics, such as relationship quality and work status variables including number of hours worked a week and education are associated with sexual functioning.

Sexual Reproduction and Marriage

A final assumption of marriage is that many couples expect that they will be able to have children if they so choose. Reproductive difficulty (infertility) is typically defined as the failure to conceive after one year of regular sexual intercourse without contraception, or an inability to carry a pregnancy to live birth. Infertility affects approximately 10 percent of people of reproductive age and approximately 15 percent of married couples.

Infertility is typically equally contributed to problems of the male (40 percent) or female (40 percent). The remaining 20 percent is typically attributed to problems of the couple that can include factors such as not enough sex, too much sex, sex at the wrong times of the month, fatigue, and emotional stress. Individual factors such as the effects of sexually transmitted diseases, poor nutrition, or poor general health may also play a role in difficulty conceiving. For males, the problem is most often linked with low-quality sperm, a blockage somewhere between the testicle and the tip of the penis, or erection and ejaculation problems. For the female, infertility is most often linked with age, and the failure to ovulate. Similar to males, at times there may be a blockage (of the fallopian tube) that leads to the inability to conceive. Another common cause of reproductive difficulties for women is endometriosis, a condition in which some cells of the inner lining of the uterus grow in the pelvic and abdominal cavities. Finally, some women experience an inhospitable environment for sperm, which is an immune response or acidic chemical climate in the vagina that can immobilize sperm. In about 15 percent of cases of infertility, there are no identifiable contributions present.

Infertility may have profound psychological effects. Partners may become more anxious to conceive, which consequently can lead to further problems with sexual functioning. Marital discord often develops in infertile couples. Many couples suffer from high levels of anxiety and disappointment. Moreover, it is not uncommon for women struggling to conceive to experience clinical depression. What's more, the inability to conceive bears a stigma in many cultures. Research documents that even couples who chose to bear no children by choice are viewed negatively, thus highlighting societal values about the expectation that couples reproduce and the stigma and pressure that exists if they do not.

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See also Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Sex and Love; Sex in Established Relationships; Sexual Dysfunctions

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Marriage Markets

Marriage markets refer to the characteristics, composition, and geographic location of dating pools within which people search for intimate partners. Broadly speaking, marriage market research posits that individuals make decisions regarding the formation and dissolution of intimate relationships, as well as decisions about when and where to have children, according to the availability of desirable partners who reside in their marriage market.

Marriage market studies examine both the *quality* and *quantity* of potential partners. Measuring partner *quantity* is straightforward. *Quantity* refers to the numerical availability of potential partners who are of a given age. This is usually measured in terms of the sex ratio, which is the number of males divided by the number of females.

Partner *quality* is not as straightforward. It has been measured in numerous ways by numerous researchers. Perhaps the most common quality measures are socioeconomic attributes such as earned income, labor force participation, and educational attainment, although physical attractiveness is also emphasized by some researchers. Socioeconomic attributes have been particularly useful when examining the quality of males in women's marriage markets. Research demonstrates that men's traditional role as financial provider makes males with high socioeconomic status more desirable marriage and dating partners. These men may provide greater financial security and are able to sustain a household once married.

By focusing on the quality and quantity of potential partners, marriage market research examines how individuals attempt to exchange their own personal assets for a partner with the greatest number of desirable traits. While attempting to maximize one's own personal gains from establishing an intimate relationship, individuals must also compete with others in the marriage market who may posses more desirable traits then one's self. This process produces a counterbalancing mechanism inherent in marriage markets that helps ensure that assortative mating is achieved—meaning that people with similar levels of desirable traits marry one another. However, when the numerical availability of persons with desirable characteristics is low, individuals are forced to settle for a partner with a lower level (or different set) of qualities than they would prefer, delay forming a partnership until a more advantageous match can be formed, or forgo a relationship altogether. In this way, marriage market composition is hypothesized to determine the ease or difficulty of various familial processes. In the remainder of this entry, major theories of marriage markets are presented and selected research findings are discussed.

Leading Marriage Market Theories

Prominent theories of mate selection explicitly emphasize the importance of marriage markets in determining men's and women's dating, marital, divorce, and childbearing behavior. The fundamental tenets of the three leading theories are described.

Specialization and Trading Model

Gary Becker's specialization and trading model adopts a rational-choice perspective that views men and women as attempting to maximize personal gains through marriage. People search for a spouse in the marriage market. Once in the market, individuals exchange their personal assets—be it income, wealth, home production, childrearing skills, or physical attractiveness—for a partner with the highest overall value on a related set of assets. Historically, men have specialized in and traded on their economic production, whereas women have specialized in and traded on their domestic production. This mutual dependence is thought to increase each gender's gains from marriage. Becker argues that women's increasing labor force participation, as well as the separation of sexual expression from marriage, has weakened marriage as an institution by reducing men's and women's gains from marriage.

Career-Entry Theory

Valerie Oppenheimer's Career Entry Theory applies Job Search Theory to the marriage market and the process of partner selection. Job search theory asserts that potential workers look for employment in the labor market until they find a job that satisfies the minimum qualifications necessary for acceptable employment. From the perspective of the worker, the sorting of individuals into jobs is maximized when the number of jobs available in the market increases. According to Oppenheimer, an analogous situation occurs during the process of selecting a partner in the marriage market. A person wishing to establish a relationship searches for a partner in the marriage market. Similar to employment, individuals usually have a predetermined idea of the minimum characteristics necessary before a potential partner is deemed acceptable (parallel to a minimally

acceptable hourly wage). Once in the marriage market individuals compete with others who also wish to find a partner.

Oppenheimer argues that high levels of female human capital delays women's transition to marriage by extending their marital search process and simultaneously raising the minimum characteristics they deem as necessary in a husband. Perhaps more importantly, men's economic volatility also decreases the incidence of marriage by creating long-term financial uncertainty for both partners.

Though Becker and Oppenheimer approach the role of the marriage market from a different perspective, each theory asserts that the probability of finding a desirable partner is the highest when the number of opposite sex persons with desirable characteristics is at its highest. Therefore, an increase in the supply of desirable partners available in the local marriage market is hypothesized to facilitate union formation.

Imbalanced Sex Ratio Theory

Marcia Guttentag and Paul Secord's imbalanced Sex Ratio Theory rests on two important premises: (1) men and women have divergent familial goals, and (2) an imbalance in the marriage market will produce a shift in *dyadic power*. All else being equal, the theory asserts that females prefer to form stable, long-term, secure, monogamous relationships through marriage, whereas males seek more sexually permissive relationships and wish to avert or delay intimate long-term commitments. Furthermore, the gender that is in short supply is assumed to have greater dyadic power within the marriage market because of supply and demand. When the sex ratio is low—a greater supply of females relative to males—*men* enjoy more dyadic power within relationships because they are in high demand. Conversely, when the sex ratio is high—a greater supply of males relative to females—*women* benefit from greater dyadic power because they are in higher demand. Greater male dyadic power is hypothesized to lead to lower levels of legal union formation, and women's greater dyadic power is predicted to result in widespread adoption of traditional family patterns including a relatively early age at first marriage, high rates of marriage, low rates of divorce, and low rates of children born outside of marriage.

Research Findings

Interestingly, divergent marriage market theories predict identical behavior (albeit for different reasons) by women—that is, women will be more likely to form partnerships and less likely to have children outside of marriage when they reside in marriage markets characterized by numerous eligible men with desirable socioeconomic characteristics. This is in fact what studies have shown.

Studies of men's familial behavior, though not as prevalent as studies of women, are conflicting. Some suggest that men display a greater propensity to marry when they reside in marriage markets characterized by numerous potential female partners, but others do not. Research also reveals that both men and women are more likely to divorce when they reside in marriage markets that are characterized by a gender imbalance—specifically, women are more likely to divorce in marriage markets that contain a large proportion of single men, and men are more likely to divorce in marriage markets that contain a large proportion of single women.

Kim M. Lloyd

See also Age at First Marriage; Assortative Mating; Contextual Influences on Relationships; Exchange Processes; Field of Eligibles and Availables; Marriage, Transition to; Mate Selection; Physical Attractiveness, Role in Relationships; Power Distribution in Relationships; Sex Ratio

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MATCHING HYPOTHESIS

A quick glance at couples in public settings will likely lead to the observation that people in a variety of cultures tend to pair up with those who are similar in physical attractiveness. The handsome man and the gorgeous woman date and marry each other, and their more homely counterparts pair up with their plainer counterparts. Similarity in physical attractiveness also occurs in gay and lesbian couples. In everyday language, this is referred to as dating in "one's league"; a person assumed to be unattainable because of being much more physically attractive than oneself is described as "out of one's league." Occasionally, however, one will see a couple that seems mismatched. He may be older and unattractive. She's young and beautiful. What attracted them to each other? This entry discusses the *matching hypothesis,* first introduced in the 1960s, to refer to the tendency for people to pair up with others who are equally physically attractive (unattractive). We also discuss *complex matching,* which occurs when people are able to attract partners far more physically attractive than themselves by offering compensatory assets—say, status, power, or financial standing.

Original Matching Hypothesis and Classic Dance Study

Elaine Hatfield (Walster) and her colleagues proposed the original version of the matching hypothesis. Based on Kurt Lewin's Level of Aspiration Theory, they proposed that in making dating and mating choices, people will tend to choose someone of their own level of social desirability. Theoretically, people should be influenced by both the desirability of the potential match (what they want) and their perception of the probability of obtaining that date (what they think they can get). Social psychologists referred to such mating choices as *realistic choices,* because they are influenced by the chances of having one's affection reciprocated.

The researchers tested the matching hypothesis in a classic dance study. In this study, 752 freshmen at the University of Minnesota were invited to attend a get-acquainted dance. When the participants picked up their free tickets, a panel of judges surreptitiously rated the students' physical attractiveness. Also available from either university records or additional measures completed by the

participants was information on personality, grade point average, and social skills. The freshmen students were randomly matched with partners. The success of these matches was assessed via a survey distributed during the dance's intermission and in a 4- to 6-month follow-up. Before the dance, the more attractive the student, the more attractive they assumed their date would be. Nonetheless, once participants had met their matches, *regardless of their own physical attractiveness,* participants reacted more positively to physically attractive dates and were more likely to try to arrange subsequent dates with the physically attractive. Self-esteem, intelligence, and personality did not affect participants' liking for the dates or subsequent attempts to date them. This study, then, did *not* find any support for the matching hypothesis.

Evidence for the Matching Hypothesis: Follow-Up Experimental Studies

The dance study was criticized as not reflecting the reality of the dating marketplace because in the computer dance setting, there was no or little chance of rejection, at least for the evening of the dance. Follow-up experimental studies were conducted in which college students, in laboratory settings, were asked to react to profile information about "potential dates." The researchers manipulated the dates' physical attractiveness and sometimes presented bogus information about how likely the date would be to enter a relationship with the respondent. Similar to the findings from the classic dance study, most people—regardless of how attractive they were—reacted more positively to profiles of attractive dates than of unattractive dates. Although learning one could be rejected by a potential date had a dampening effect on reactions to the other, overall the physical attractiveness effect (physical attractiveness of the other highly associated with attraction for him or her) predominated over a matching effect or a concern about rejection.

Observations of Actual Couples

Data collected in the real world, however, told another story. In a number of studies, social psychologists measured the attractiveness level of each partner of actual couples. They did this in various ways but tried to be objective as possible, often asking more than one "judge" to provide the ratings and having the ratings of one member of the couple done independently of the ratings of the other member (often through photographs). Here, there was strong evidence found for the matching hypothesis. Similarity has been found between the partners' levels of physical attractiveness in real couples.

Preferences, Realistic Choices, and What Actually Occurs

One explanation for the diverse findings across contexts is that in these disparate studies, scholars are studying different phenomena. Although the *matching hypothesis* is most often referred to as a single hypothesis, there may be at least three separate subhypotheses included within. As noted by S. Michael Kalick, there are distinctions among *preferences, realistic choices,* and what *actually occurs* (i.e., what people will settle for).

1. *Preferences:* In the strongest form of the matching hypothesis, it would be proposed that people prefer to match with partners of their own level of attractiveness. No evidence has been found for this, however. What do people prefer, if issues of possible rejection or competition are not salient? Most people prefer someone who is physically attractive. For those who are physically attractive, what they want and what they can get are identical. For those who are unattractive, however, desire conflicts with reality. In making their choices, they must balance the two.

2. *Realistic choices:* What do people choose under more realistic social situations, where they must approach someone (or wait to be approached), and social rejection is a very real possibility? Under these conditions, Hatfield and her colleagues proposed that—although all prefer an ideal partner—they would be likely to choose to approach someone of approximately their own level of attractiveness. This form of the hypothesis distinguishes between preferences and choices.

3. *Reality:* The reality considers everything—what a person desires, whether the other wants him or her in return, and market considerations (including whether other desirable alternatives come along for one or both of them). In real life, people typically settle for mating within "their league," whether they want to or not.

Of these three forms of the matching hypothesis, the least amount of support has been found for the first version (people yearn for the ideal, regardless of the possibility of attaining it), the most support has been found for the third version.

More Complex Matching

Although the original matching hypothesis proposed that people would pair up with someone as "socially desirable" as themselves—choosing people who are equal in a panoply of assets—over time, the matching hypothesis has come to be associated specifically with matching on *physical attractiveness*. However, people come to a relationship offering many desirable characteristics. A person may compensate for a lack of physical attractiveness with a charming personality, kindness, status, money, and so forth. The notion that individuals can sometimes compensate for their lack of attractiveness by offering other desirable traits has been termed "complex matching." As social psychologists point out, a traditional type of pairing is gender-linked: An older, wealthy, successful man pairs with a younger, attractive woman—known in popular culture as the "trophy wife"—a testament to a businessman's success.

Third-Party Assistance and the Matching Principle

Today, most people make their own dating and mating choices. The original matching hypothesis was proposed as an explanation for individuals' decisions about their own mating and dating choices. Nonetheless, matching is sometimes assisted by third parties—friends, families, and by Internet dating sites. It is likely that friends, families, and matching services also consider physical attractiveness and other desirable traits as they determine who will make suitable matches.

Conclusions

Many years ago, sociologist Erving Goffman observed that in the United States, a proposal of marriage occurred when a man calculated his own social worth and suggested to a woman that her assets weren't so much better as to "preclude a merger." Goffman and social psychologists who proposed and tested the matching hypothesis were keen observers of the dating and mating marketplace. Today, compelling evidence indicates that although men and women may yearn for the ideal mate, when the time comes to make a choice they generally settle for the "art of the possible."

Elaine Hatfield and Susan Sprecher

See also Assortative Mating; Equity Theory; Exchange Processes; Physical Attractiveness, Role in Relationships

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MATE GUARDING AND POACHING

Like most birds and many other species, most people employ a socially monogamous mating strategy. At any given time, a person maintains a romantic relationship with only one other person in which both members of the relationship cooperate to maintain the relationship. This social relationship, however, does not guarantee sexual exclusivity. Although it may be socially undesirable, men and women sometimes engage in sexual behavior with people other than their partners. Keeping one's long-term mate from being sexually unfaithful is as much of a problem for people today as it was for our ancestors hundreds of thousands of years ago. Because this has been such a costly problem throughout human evolutionary

history, people today have evolved a series of cognitive and affective mechanisms that motivate behaviors intended to guard against such infidelities, as well as behaviors intended to circumvent the mate guarding behaviors of a potential mate's current partner. This entry discusses findings from recent research in the area of human romantic relationships suggesting how and why people keep their own mates from being sexually unfaithful and how and why other people evade those attempts.

Having one's mate be unfaithful can be costly for both men and women. Men whose partners are sexually unfaithful run the risk of being cuckolded—unwittingly investing time, energy, and material resources in genetically unrelated offspring. In addition, a man whose partner has been unfaithful also risks permanently losing his partner to another man, effectively losing all previous investment in his partner and in the relationship, as well as all possibility of future reproduction with her. He must then expend effort finding another mate and developing a new relationship. Women, on the other hand, are never at risk for cuckoldry. When a woman has a child, she knows that the child is hers. However, women still are subject to negative consequences of their partner's infidelity. A woman whose partner defects the relationship, even temporarily, risks losing her partner's investment in herself and her offspring. If she is interested in establishing a new romantic relationship, she must expend effort finding another mate who is willing to invest in her and any children she may have. Given the reproductively costly consequences of a partner's infidelity, then, people in romantic relationships perform a variety of behaviors intended to discourage their mates from defecting from the relationship in the form of an infidelity.

Mate Guarding

People use a variety of behaviors to guard their mates and attempt to keep them from being unfaithful. Studies have reported dozens of different behaviors that people use as part of their mate guarding efforts. These behaviors have been categorized into five general tactics: direct guarding, intersexual negative inducements, intrasexual negative inducements, positive inducements, and public signals of possession.

Direct Guarding tactics include some of the more overt forms of mate guarding behaviors—for example, snooping through a partner's personal belongings, insisting that a partner does not go out without oneself, and monopolizing a partner's time to keep him or her from interacting with potential affair partners. Intersexual Negative Inducement tactics focus on the manipulation of one's partner. For instance, a woman may flirt with another man in front of her partner to make him jealous, or a man may yell at or be physically violent toward his partner when he catches her flirting with someone else. Intrasexual Negative Inducements are similar to Intersexual Negative Inducements except that they include behaviors aimed at same-sex rivals rather than one's partner. Instead of hitting one's partner for flirting with another man, for example, a man may hit the man who flirted with his partner. He may also tell other men negative things about his partner to keep them from being interested in her.

Not all mate retention behaviors are negative, however. Some behaviors, such as those tactics categorized within Positive Inducements, are aimed at enticing one's partner to stay in the relationship rather than punishing a partner's defection. These tactics include behaviors such as presenting a partner with gifts, enhancing one's own appearance to look nice for a partner, and offering a partner help, support, and affection. The fifth category of mate retention tactics, Public Signals of Possession, also includes behaviors that amount to bestowing benefits on a partner rather than inflicting costs on a partner. These tactics can include being physically affectionate in public and bragging about one's partner to others. Regardless of which category of tactics is used, and whether or not they are consciously associated with the goal of guarding one's partner, all mate retention behaviors are ostensibly aimed at keeping one's partner invested in the current relationship.

Just as mate guarding tactics differ, people differ in their use of these tactics. For instance, men are more likely than women to attempt to retain partners by displaying their resources, such as by spending a lot of money on their partners. This is not surprising given that women are particularly attracted to men who have resources and are

willing to offer access to those resources. Men are also more likely than women to threaten other men who show interest in their partners. Women, on the other hand, are more likely than men to keep their partners invested in the relationship by enhancing their own appearance, telling other people that their partner is taken, and punishing men's threats to be unfaithful.

In addition to differences between men and women in the use of mate retention behaviors, there are also individual differences that vary from one relationship to another. For example, men perform more mate retention behaviors with younger partners. This is because younger women are perceived to be "higher quality" mates than older women, although there is as yet no research investigating mate guarding by male partners of post-menopausal women. Men's perceptions of their partner's physical attractiveness also influences mate retention behaviors. Men who believe that their partners are more attractive perform more mate retention behaviors than do men who believe their partners are less attractive. Age discrepancy in a relationship is also associated with mate retention behaviors, with men who are significantly older than their partners performing more mate retention behaviors. Mate retention behaviors also increase with the perceived risk of partner infidelity. The more likely a man thinks that his partner will be sexually unfaithful, the more mate retention behaviors he uses, suggesting that mate retention behaviors are indeed enacted to thwart anticipated infidelities.

Not all women perform mate retention behaviors to the same degree either. Younger and more attractive women are more likely than are older and less attractive women to enact mate retention behaviors. Women in general perform more mate retention behaviors with husbands who have higher incomes and who display greater status striving. In contrast to men, women who believe that their partners are more attractive perform fewer mate retention behaviors.

Mate Poaching

Mate guarding behaviors function to keep one's partner from deserting the current relationship. Mate poaching, one reason for leaving an existing relationship, occurs when a person attempts to attract someone who is already involved in a committed relationship with another person. Although the percentages vary across cultures, about 50 percent of men and women report having made at least one attempt at poaching someone from a relationship at some point in their lives. Roughly 70 to 85 percent of men and women report that someone else has tried to poach either themselves or their partner out of a relationship.

The particular tactics that people use to poach potential mates are not unlike the tactics people use to attract and then to guard their own mates against poaching. Women enhance their own physical appearance to attract the attention of an already-mated man and then provide him with easy sexual access. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to display resources and generosity (i.e., a willingness to invest in a woman and any possible offspring) and by making a woman question her current partner's fidelity and commitment to the relationship.

As with mate guarding, all poaching behaviors are not equal. Not all people are poachers, and some people are more likely to receive poaching attention than others. Agreeable and conscientious people are less likely to be poachers than are unreliable and self-described erotophilic people (i.e., people who have positive feelings and responses to sex and sex-related stimuli). Extraverts and those open to new experiences are more likely to receive poaching attempts, whereas neurotic, unloving, and masculine people are more likely to be successfully poached away from an existing relationship. Characteristics of the existing relationship are also important to consider in the use of poaching tactics. Poaching tactics are perceived to be less effective when used on men and women in established, long-term, committed relationships, compared with people who are just starting or just ending a relationship.

The benefits of mate poaching mirror the benefits of nonpoaching relationships: Men gain access to physically and sexually attractive women and women gain access to men who have resources and who display a willingness to invest those resources in her and possibly her children. The potential costs of mate poaching, however, are substantial. A poacher must be concerned with competing against a current partner and with retribution by the

current partner, should he or she discover the poaching. In addition, most relationships include some amount of fidelity uncertainty. In a relationship in which one of the members has been poached from a previously existing relationship, the risk of infidelity is exacerbated. That person might still be sexually involved with the partner from the earlier relationship, and he or she might be susceptible to further poaching from other sources.

Being poached is not a passive process, and some relationships are subject to poaching enticement. Poaching enticement occurs when a person in a relationship encourages poaching by a partner's rivals. Women who desire to be attracted away from their current partners are more likely to display physical beauty and offer sexual access to desirable men other than her current partner. Men who want to be poached are more likely to display resources and dominance behaviors to potential poachers.

Poaching enticement is not without costs, however. A person whose poaching enticement efforts have been detected by his or her current partner may be at risk for more severe and most likely unwanted mate guarding behaviors. Consequently, people who engage in poaching enticement also engage in behaviors intended to disguise such enticement, often by overtly giving their current partners what they want most. For example, women may increase the frequency of sexual activity with their current partners in addition to maintaining their daily routines and keeping atypical behaviors to a minimum. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to display overly pronounced commitment to their current partner.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Jealousy; Mate Preferences; Mate Selection

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Mate Preferences

Romantic relationships are everywhere—people in all cultures engage in various forms of mating, including short-term, casual sexual relationships on the one hand and committed partnerships and marriage on the other. This entry looks at people's mate preferences, including the characteristics that people desire in long- and short-term relationships, how selective people are in choosing a mate, and trade-offs individuals make. Some important ways in which men and women are alike and differ are described; these mate preference phenomena are explained from two major theoretical perspectives.

Short-term relationships, including one-night stands, casual sex, and sexual affairs, tend to lack commitment and revolve around sexual or physical relations. Conversely, long-term relationships, including marriage and exclusive, steady relationships, tend to involve commitment and investment between partners, and endure for a while. Although people may sometimes find themselves in relationships that have characteristics of both types, a general division of relationships as either committed, long-term, or casual, short-term is nonetheless useful in characterizing the various nuances of mate preferences, and is used in this entry.

Valued Characteristics In Mates

Mate preference researchers have found distinct patterns in the characteristics that people desire for short- and long-term relationships. To begin with, many characteristics are important to both men and women for both types of relationships, including kindness, intelligence, physical attractiveness, creativity, an exciting personality, sense of humor, and social status. For short-term mates such as one-night stands, casual sex partners, and affair partners, both sexes place particularly high value on physical attractiveness. Specifically, both men and women consider it necessary for short-term partners to have a minimum level of physical attractiveness. Indeed, when given the opportunity to obtain information on a potential short-term partner, people inquire first about the potential mate's physical attractiveness.

For long-term mates such as marriage partners, mutual attraction and love, dependable character, emotional stability and maturity, pleasing disposition, and education and intelligence were identified as the top five most desired characteristics across three major regions in the United States. Many traits, such as those related to kindness and intelligence, tend to be equally valued by men and women and may be important in demonstrating parenting skills, fidelity, trustworthiness, generosity, and ability to maintain a relationship. Such characteristics tend to be equally valued across cultures and generations. However, some preferences are more prevalent in certain cultures. For instance, when David Buss and colleagues compared 29 cultures from different parts of the world, they found that physical attractiveness was more highly valued in cultures with higher levels of parasites. In addition, some characteristics change over time. For example, in an analysis of more than 50 years of studies on mate preferences in the United States, researchers observed an increase in the importance of love and mutual attraction.

The sexes tend to differ on their preferences for physical attractiveness and social status in a long-term mate. Specifically, men value physical attractiveness more than women do and women value social status (and earning potential) more than men do. These sex differences in preference for social status and physical attractiveness have been studied extensively and have been found across age groups and ethnicities in the United States, across several decades, and across numerous countries around the world.

In particular, men prioritize finding a minimum level of physical attractiveness in long-term mates, whereas women prioritize obtaining a minimum level of social status in their partners. That is, although people would ideally like to have well-rounded mates who are great looking, smart, successful, funny, talented, kind, and virtuous, men want someone who is at least minimally physically attractive and women want a partner who has at least a minimal level of social status.

Explaining Sex Differences in Valued Characteristics

The priorities that men and women place on physical attractiveness and women place on social status can be explained by two major perspectives: sociocultural and evolutionary. Sociocultural theories look to social norms (what is appropriate for people to do in social situations) and the influence of larger groups, including family, religion, and society. From a sociocultural perspective, women in most societies have less access to status, power, and economic resources than men do. To gain stable access to economic resources and achieve upward mobility, women need to select marriage partners who have status and income potential. Men, on the other hand, are in the economic power seat, and thus are free to pursue what society deems as pleasurable, such as a long-term mate's physical attributes. However, if the intended mating duration is short-term, then economic constraints should be less relevant and both sexes should be free to value their mates' physical attractiveness.

Whereas sociocultural theories revolve around societal constraints, evolutionary theories rely on more distal explanations and consider biological constraints and heredibility. Evolutionary theorists maintain that preferences and behaviors may be heritable, and that the psychologies we have today may have been naturally selected during millions of years. Specifically, psychologies that aided ancestral humans in reproducing more successfully are likely to have been passed down over evolutionary history. Because men and women have

different reproductive capacities and constraints, the sexes may have evolved different psychologies relating to mating and reproduction.

Evolutionary theorists note that men vary in their ability to provide resources for offspring. Ancestral men with high social status had good access to resources, whereas ancestral men with low status may have had little or no access to resources. Thus, ancestral women who prioritized having some status in their long-term mates likely secured essential resources for their offspring and outreproduced those who did not and passed this proclivity down through the generations. For short-term mates, resources are less relevant, but a man's heritable traits, including his physical appearance and qualities implied by his appearance, may be passed on to any resultant offspring. Thus, evolutionary psychological theories suggest that women may value physical attractiveness in short-term mates for heritable benefits. This point is elaborated further later.

Men's preference for physical attractiveness may be related to an important constraint in female reproductive capacity. Whereas men's fertility tends to decline slowly over their life spans, women are most fertile in their 20s and decrease in their ability to have children after age 30, until hitting menopause by age 50. Because of this reproductive constraint, ancestral men who were attracted to the most fertile women—more specifically, physical features belonging to the most fertile women—would have outreproduced men who were not. Consequently, attraction toward fertility-related features would have become more prevalent over generations.

Physical Attraction: A Closer Look

The qualities that people list as important in choosing a mate can be further studied to uncover the detailed nature of preferences. Research on what people find physically attractive illuminates the specificity of preferences. Both men and women find physical characteristics that signal good health to be attractive in a mate. Traits such as smooth skin, strong hair, good teeth and gums, and normal gait and movement can provide evidence of good nutrition and healthy development.

Men are additionally attracted to those features in women's physical appearance that indicate fertility. In particular, men tend to be drawn to secondary sexual characteristics and signals of youth, because female fertility varies with age. These characteristics include full lips, soft and lustrous hair, smooth skin, colorful cheeks, good muscle tone, breasts, buttocks, and a low waist-to-hip ratio (the circumference around the thinnest part of the waist divided by the circumference around the thickest part of the hips).

Among the various features, the waist-to-hip ratio is one that has been studied extensively in recent years. Waist-to-hip ratio is a visual cue that is noticeable from a distance and from behind as well as from the front. Although preferred overall female body size tends to vary over time and by culture, male preferences for a low female waist-to-hip ratio (around 0.7) has been found to be stable across time and across various cultures. Research in this area has found that lower waist-to-hip-ratios are associated with both increased fertility and lower health risks in women. A study done at a fertility clinic found that every 0.1 increase in waist-to-hip ratio is associated with a 30 percent decrease in conception probability.

Conversely, women are physically attracted to male features such as facial masculinity, muscularity, and symmetry that may be indicative of good genes. According to proponents of the good genes theory, a healthy set of genes and immune system allow a person to resist pathogens that can adversely affect developmental stability. In addition to having negative health consequences, individuals who are not able to fend off pathogens during development tend to possess a greater degree of bilateral asymmetry (left-side development deviates from being symmetrical to right-side development). Because testosterone suppresses the immune system, only men who have good immunity are able to maintain high levels of testosterone and remain healthy. Thus, testosterone-related physical features, when present with symmetry, advertise that a man's genes are resistant to pathogens.

Indeed, research shows that men who are symmetrical tend also to possess testosterone-mediated secondary sexual characteristics such as muscularity, broad shoulders, and facial masculinity, and they are the men that women tend to consider

sexually attractive. Compared with asymmetrical men, symmetrical and masculine-looking men start having sex at an earlier age, are more desirable as sexual partners, have more sexual partners, and are more likely to bring their partners to orgasm. In ancestral environments, women who were more physically attracted to symmetrical than to asymmetrical men may have passed on good genes to offspring, who then were more likely to be healthy and survive to reproductive age, and, in the case of male offspring, more likely to be attractive to potential mates.

Mate Selectivity

Which mate preferences a person expresses is influenced by a person's inclination to seek and accept mates for particular relationships. For instance, men and women tend to be equally careful and selective when entering a potential long-term relationship. Studies have found that when considering minimum requirements for a marriage partner, both sexes have equally high standards. For example, both men and women indicate that they require above-average intelligence in a marriage partner. Where the sexes differ are short-term relationships: men tend to be much more eager than women for sexual opportunities. In a study done on Florida State University's campus, men and women were approached by an attractive, opposite-sex stranger (actually, a student who was helping to carry out the experiment) who immediately makes an invitation for casual sex. A majority of men—75 percent—said yes, whereas 100 percent of the women said no. Several of the women threatened to call the campus police. In contrast, of the 25 percent of men who declined, many were apologetic and asked to reschedule.

Men are much more willing than women to engage in sexual relations after any length of acquaintance from 1 minute to 5 years. To facilitate sexual relations, men require much less commitment and investment before consenting to sex. Indeed, men report significantly lower standards for short-term relationships, especially for one-night stands. For instance, whereas women's minimum acceptable intelligence for one-night stands is at the same high level that they require for long-term partners, men indicate that they are willing to

accept a one-night stand whose intelligence is far below average (around the 25th percentile).

Explaining Sex Differences in Mate Selectivity

Men's lower short-term mating thresholds and mate preferences in general can be explained by the two major perspectives. According to a sociocultural view, societal norms tend to influence men to be more proactive and women to be more passive across many endeavors, including sexual behaviors. Thus, the difference in whether to enter short-term relationships may be the result of gender role differences, whereby men are socialized to be sexually autonomous and women are socialized to be sexually restrained.

An evolutionary perspective suggests an alternative explanation for this sex difference. A key to understanding this perspective is to consider that in an ancestral environment, long before birth control, pregnancy was always a possible outcome of sex. However, women, not men, are physiologically required to provide substantial resources during and after pregnancy for offspring to survive. Thus, uncommitted, casual sexual encounters present much higher potential reproductive costs to women than to men. As such, short-term sexual relationships are reproductively less favorable to women. On average, those ancestral women with a choosier mating psychology that favored long-term relationships, where partners are more likely to stick around and invest in offspring, likely outreproduced those who were less selective and favored having casual sex, where partners are likely to be absent if offspring show up.

Men, on the other hand, are not physiologically constrained by pregnancy and nursing, and can contribute as little as a few sex cells to a casual sex encounter, even if offspring result. As such, male reproductive success can be more readily increased through openness to casual sex than female reproductive success can. Thus, because of the asymmetry in reproductive costs between men and women, men may have evolved to be more open to casual sex and have lower requirements for potential sex partners than women do.

Whereas only women make a potentially substantial reproductive investment in short-term

relationships, both sexes tend to invest significantly in the relationship and in raising children in long-term relationships. Thus, according to an evolutionary perspective, both sexes may have evolved to be selective about taking on a long-term partner.

An evolutionary perspective further suggests that in addition to selectivity, men and women may also desire characteristics in mates that indicate a willingness to engage in the preferred relationship type. For instance, when men look for short-term mates they may look for a willingness to engage in casual sex. When men and women look for long-term mates, they look for a willingness to commit.

Tradeoffs in Individuals' Mate Preferences

Aside from general sex differences, individuals' own traits affect the type of relationships they pursue and, consequently, the preferences they have in mates. Although women tend to prioritize physical attractiveness in short-term mates and social status in long-term mates, it would be reproductively ideal for women to find mates who can provide both genetic and material benefits to offspring. However, obtaining both sets of features in one male partner is difficult. Such men tend to be in high demand and are targeted by women who are willing to have casual sexual relationships; thus, these men tend to be less committed to any one partner. As such, research suggests that most women may need to make a strategic tradeoff by selecting long-term partners who are higher in investment potential than sexual attractiveness. However, evolutionary-minded researchers also suggest that it may be adaptive for women to seek primary partners who provide investment while obtaining better genes through extra-pair mating (sex with individuals other than one's primary partner).

Evidence for this dual-mating hypothesis comes from studies that examine mate preferences throughout a woman's menstrual cycle. Around the time of ovulation, when pregnancy is most likely, female sexual desire becomes stronger and the frequency of sexual fantasies increases. However, these fantasies are directed not toward primary partners, but toward potential affair partners. This is particularly true if a woman's primary partner is not physically attractive and lacks indicators of genetic fitness, including strength, symmetry, and social dominance. When women are ovulating, they also more strongly prefer masculine faces and symmetrical features in men, and the scent of symmetrical men, compared with when they are not ovulating. Indeed, men who report being chosen for sexual affairs tend also to have symmetrical measurements. Furthermore, self-report research conducted in the United Kingdom indicates that women who are in a steady relationship tend to have sex with their primary partner evenly across the ovulatory cycle. However, if partnered women have sexual affairs, they are more likely to do so around the time of ovulation.

A strategic trade-off that men face involves the allocation of effort to mating versus parenting. The resolution of these trade-offs depends on cues from the environment. When men possess indicators of good genes and are sexually attractive to women, they tend to allocate more effort to mating. When men do not have the attributes that make them sexually attractive or otherwise face limited sexual opportunities, they tend to invest more heavily in a single mate's children. For example, African tribal evidence shows that men of high status have more wives and spend less time on parenting than do men of low status. Thus, men's access to short-term mates is a primary factor in determining the type of relationship that men prefer, which in turn influences what characteristics they value in a mate.

Norman P. Li and Yla R. Tausczik

See also Attraction, Sexual; Evolutionary Perspectives on Women's Romantic Attraction; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Mate Selection; Physical Attractiveness, Defining Characteristics

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MATERIALISM AND RELATIONSHIPS

Human relationships take place in broader cultural contexts that provide the settings and norms governing how people relate to each other. Many contemporary humans live in cultural contexts characterized by capitalism and consumerism, both of which encourage individuals to pursue their own self-interest, to obtain financial wealth, and to acquire many possessions signifying high status and the "right" image. When people believe that money, possessions, image, and status are important goals to strive for in life, they have internalized materialistic values. Although most research on materialism has investigated its negative correlations with indices of personal well-being, a growing number of studies also report that problematic interpersonal relationships are associated with strongly valuing materialism. This entry briefly reviews that literature and describes three possible explanations for these findings.

Materialism and Relationship Quality

Studies with adults and adolescents have shown that the more people endorse materialistic values, the lower the quality of their interpersonal relationships. For example, materialistic values are associated with having relationships characterized by lower trust and acceptance, and by more jealousy and emotional volatility; these findings occur with both self- and peer-reports of relationship quality. Materialism is also associated with lower marital satisfaction among couples and higher conflict among parents and their children. People who strongly value money, image, and status also tend to feel more alienated, detached, and separate from those around them. It may not be surprising, then, that adolescents who put a high priority on "being rich" are more likely to be diagnosed with personality disorders indicative of problematic interpersonal relationships and with disorders involving antisocial activities.

Three Explanations

One explanation for these findings is that when people care a great deal about materialistic pursuits, they tend to care less about close interpersonal relationships and other people in general. Cross-cultural research on values and goals consistently demonstrates that self-interested, materialistic aims typically stand in opposition to the kinds of values that promote good interpersonal relationships. For example, materialistic values tend to oppose benevolence and affiliation values, which concern being "helpful" and "loyal," obtaining "true friendship" and "mature love," and having close, committed relationships. Across various cultures, materialistic values and goals also typically oppose universalism and community feeling aims such as working for "social justice" and "equality," and trying to make the world a better place. Experimental results in the United States even suggest that activating materialistic values by making people think about money and possessions may cause them to orient away from friendly, helpful, cooperative acts.

For example, in one study with 4- and 5-year-olds, children randomly assigned to watch a commercial promoting a fun toy were more likely to decline the opportunity to play with their friends so they could instead play with the toy. These subjects were also more likely to choose to play with a "not so nice" boy who had the toy than with a "nice boy" who did not. In a different series of studies, U.S. college students randomly assigned to create sentences out of money-related words (as opposed to neutral words) later spent less time helping an experimenter pick up pencils that had been dropped and less time helping a confused confederate. They also donated smaller portions of their honorarium to charity. Such results suggest that it is quite difficult for individuals to simultaneously strive for materialistic and relationship goals and that relationships tend to lose out when materialistic goals are activated in people's minds (as happens so often in capitalistic, consumer culture).

A second explanation for the interpersonal problems associated with materialism is that individuals who endorse such values, beliefs, and goals tend to be highly focused on how others view them. Indeed, the materialistic aims of money, image, and status are typically referred to as "extrinsic" because they reflect strong concern with external rewards and the opinions of others. Supporting this label, studies show that materialistic values are associated with thinking more about the impression one is making on others, with fearing the negative evaluations of others, and with feeling pressure to conform to one's peers. Other research suggests that materialism is typically motivated by concerns about looking cool, seeming to be of high status, and demonstrating one's competence to other people. Such concerns and motives are likely to interfere with high-quality relationships, as worries about evaluation or desires to appear certain ways typically are inimical to feeling close and connected to others.

Finally, a strong focus on money and possessions is associated with a tendency to "objectify" other people. That is, materialism apparently increases the likelihood that other people are treated as objects to be manipulated in the pursuit of one's goals, rather than as unique, subjective individuals with their own desires, experiences, and needs. This tendency toward objectification can be seen in some of the attitudes empirically associated with strong materialistic values, including lower empathy, more manipulative tendencies, and a stronger likelihood of being socially dominant and prejudicial. Materialistic individuals also report engaging in fewer prosocial and more antisocial activities, including questionable ethical behaviors in business settings. Finally, a few studies suggest that when placed in resource dilemma games, materialistic values are associated with being less generous and with acting in more competitive and less cooperative ways. None of these qualities are likely to promote healthy, mutually satisfying human interactions.

Conclusion

Although a populace focused on materialistic aims may be beneficial for economic growth, corporate profits and retail sales, existing research suggests that materialism is consistently associated with poorer interpersonal relationships. More studies are necessary to test these associations in a wider array of cultures and with other types of relational outcomes.

Tim Kasser

See also Contextual Influences on Relationships; Cooperation and Competition; Exchange Orientation; Media Influences on Relationships; Money and Couple Relationships; Narcissism, Effects on Relationships; Values and Relationships

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MATE SELECTION

Mate selection refers to the process by which an individual chooses, or is chosen by, a potential partner from the pool of eligibles and the factors that predict the formation, maintenance, escalation, or dissolution of a long-term, romantic relationship over time. As part of the process, each individual is thought to consciously or unconsciously evaluate one's fit with a partner on a wide variety of social, personal, and relationship characteristics. These evaluations of the partner and relationship are thought to be an ongoing process in which an individual considers an array of factors at different stages of the relationship and as new information about the partner is discovered. The importance of a particular characteristic, however, is likely to vary as the stage of involvement in the relationship changes. A woman, for example, may place more importance on physical appearance in her decision about whether to accept a date or give someone her phone number, but may place much less importance on appearance when deciding whether or not to marry a long-term boyfriend who may have other redeeming qualities. When individuals feel their partner and their relationship are a good match for them, they are likely to increase their involvement in the relationship. The process and meaning of mate selection, however, has continued to evolve as demographic trends have influenced the social practices associated with the choosing of a mate. This entry discusses several factors about mate selection, including a historical perspective to mate selection, social and contextual influences on partner selection, an evolutionary perspective to mate selection, and formal intermediaries in mate selection.

Evolution of Mate Selection and Demographic Trends

The evolution of mate selection can be seen throughout the history of the United States. In colonial times, a man who wished to court a woman had to ask for her father's permission, be introduced to the family, and had to have a chaperone for all interactions. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the industrial revolution and changes in the social position of women led to the emergence of dating, as individuals arranged times and places to meet outside of the home. In the middle of the 20th century, dating became formalized with role-based scripts, and relationships generally followed an orderly progression toward marriage.

In early studies on mate selection conducted during the middle of the 20th century, the term *mate selection* was used to describe an individual's selection of the initial marital partner and the progress of a romantic relationship toward marriage. Most of these studies were based on the idea of a courtship continuum that began with the first meeting and advanced through dating, going steady, courtship, and engagement, progressing to marriage.

More recently, however, the term *mate selection* has been broadened in the research to include nonmarital, romantic relationships, such as cohabiting relationships. The focus of research on mate selection has subsequently moved from relationship formation and progress toward marriage to the study of relational characteristics and phenomena in various close and romantic relationships. Although there may be many potential reasons for this shift in the focus of the research, some possibilities include a change in the meaning of marriage and three demographic trends, the delay in marital timing, the growing prevalence of cohabitation, and the increase in nonmarital fertility.

The mate selection process may have evolved because of a change in the societal meaning of marriage. In the past, marriage has been described by some as a social compromise in which men and women exchanged different resources for their mutual benefit. Men provided economic support and protection, whereas women provided childrearing and homemaking. Although this view likely oversimplified and excluded key components of marriage (e.g., love, commitment, attraction), it was believed people primarily chose partners to fulfill socially defined roles. As society has continued to change, however, individuals are thought to see marriage as more of a personal choice with more emphasis on other relational qualities, such as love, rather than as an exchange of resources. Individuals are thought to be seeking their *soul mate* with whom they may have a physical, emotional, and spiritual connection. Finding such a

partner likely requires greater selectivity, self-awareness, and more time, perhaps altering the mate selection process, especially marital timing.

During the last 50 years, there has been a substantial increase in the median age of first marriage, meaning the age at which half of all people born within a 5-year period have entered into their first marriage. In the past, many young adults chose to marry in their early 20s after they finished high school and entered the workforce or college. According to the most recent U.S. Census report, the median age at first marriage has been steadily rising to historically high levels, to 27.1 for men and 25.3 for women, with the greatest increases occurring for women. This rise means more and more individuals are delaying marriage until their later 20s and 30s, perhaps offering opportunities for greater diversity in mate selection activities, including dating, hanging out, hooking up, or sexual encounters. Researchers estimate that more than 90 percent of individuals will eventually marry at some point of their lifetime. Additionally, this marital delay has influenced some individuals' mate selection because they may be choosing marital partners in different social environments because they are older (e.g., workplace or social club rather than college/high school environment), and some may be engaging in mating behaviors before marriage (e.g., cohabitation or nonmarital fertility).

The second demographic trend that may alter mate selection is the increasing prevalence of cohabitation, or individuals living together before marriage. About 50 percent of all individuals who marry have cohabited at some time with a partner before marriage. Researchers have discovered that not all individuals who cohabitate do it for the same reasons and have subsequently identified three groups of cohabitors: those who see cohabitation as a stage in their relationship, those who already have plans to marry, and those who use cohabitation as a replacement for marriage. Cohabitation is likely to alter the mate selection process and social practices for some people because researchers have found that cohabitation may serve as initial screening or trial marriage in which partners test their compatibility and gather more information and determine whether their relationship should progress. Once a couple cohabits, they likely have greater barriers to seeking new

partners and often begin an inertial movement toward marriage. Research on cohabiting couples, however, has suggested cohabitation may have some negative influence on future marital success (e.g., higher divorce rates and lower levels of marital satisfaction for those who have cohabited). The trend of cohabitation is continuing and will influence mate selection.

The mate selection process may have also evolved because of the increase in nonmarital fertility, or the birth of children to unmarried individuals. Recent estimates suggest as many as 33 percent of all births in the United States are to unwed mothers and as high as 66 percent of all births are to unwed African-American women. The separation of fertility from marriage may further influence the mate selection process because social expectations or scripts may be modified, leaving individuals without a socially defined, delineated path for their relationship.

Research on Mate Selection

Although many disciplines have explored mate selection (e.g., anthropology, communication studies, family science, psychology, sociology), this entry concentrates on three prominent approaches in the research on mate selection: (1) the sociological perspective of mate selection, focused on the choosing of and match between partners; (2) an evolutionary psychology viewpoint, concentrated on the genetic and biological influences of attraction and sexual selection; and (3) the interdisciplinary study of close relationships, concerned with the formation, maintenance, and characteristics of romantic and marital relationships.

Sociological Research on Mate Selection

The first approach to mate selection in the research largely focuses on macrocharacteristics from a sociological perspective. Most of this research investigated the social and contextual influences in partner selection. This perspective also examined the social exchange of resources between partners in their attempts to maximize their resources.

A number of important concepts, themes, and theories were formed from this literature. One

central theme regarding mate selection was the ideal of propinquity, or the necessity for potential partners to be close in time and space. This concept simply meant individuals who were not close in age or geographical space likely would not have the opportunity to meet or develop a relationship.

A second major theme in the research was the presence of homogamy, or the tendency for similarity between coupled partners on various characteristics. This research often investigated the similarity of various social characteristics (e.g., age, education, intelligence, occupation, race, religion, and social status) between existing coupled partners compared with random pairings of individuals and demonstrated that individuals were more likely to choose someone similar to them than a random pairing of partners. A related term was developed, *endogamy,* meaning the tendency for a person to select a partner within a particular group (e.g., same race or religious denomination). Later research on similarity suggested similarity of attitudes, values, and behavior was perhaps more important than were social characteristics as the relationship progressed. The explanation for the importance of similarity was called *consensual validation,* or that one's own values, attitudes, and behavior are reinforced when one's partner has similar values, attitudes, and behavior.

Another concurrent theme in the mate selection literature, opposites attract, suggested complementarity of some characteristics would be desirable in potential partners. Although the ideas of similarity and complementarity appear to be contrary and more empirical support existed for similarity, researchers eventually concluded both ideas had merit. A group of theories, called filter theories, suggested that a combination of similarity and complementarity was most ideal. These theories suggested as coupled partners fit well with each other at various levels, they would pass through these filters and progress in their relationship. Researchers found similarity of attraction and social characteristics are important initially in relationships, similarity of values and attitudes become more important when individuals begin dating more seriously, and complementarity of needs and roles become important when individuals are considering a marital relationship.

Sociologists also developed the concept of marriage markets, or local communities defined by geography and other social characteristics. Individuals are often limited in their choices of potential partners to those within their marriage market. Ideally, a marriage market would contain an equal ratio of men and women. The calculation of the number of men divided by women is referred to as the sex ratio. In a well-functioning marriage market, the matching hypothesis suggests those who are most desirable pair off with partners who are equally desirable; those who are less desirable pair off with partners who are also less desirable, and so forth. However, an imbalanced sex ratio places individuals in the larger group in a marriage squeeze because not enough partners exist for them. The most often cited example of a marriage squeeze occurs for African-American women, who have fewer numbers of African-American men from which to select because of their higher rates of unemployment, homicide, incarceration, and participation in interracial relationships.

Although some research continues in this discipline, the focus of mate selection research has shifted more to changes in the courtship continuum and other forms of relationships outside of marriage. New research is needed as the process of mate selection continues to evolve and social practices continue to change.

Evolutionary Psychological Research on Mate Selection

Darwin's theory of evolution posited the survival of the fittest, but did not explain why some species possessed heritable traits that would not necessarily promote their survival (e.g., a male peacock's tail is likely to attract the attention of its predators or the nutrition and effort to grow large antlers each year for deer could reduce its ability to survive the winter). As a result, Darwin developed sexual selection theory to explain the heritable traits and innate preferences possessed by species to help promote their ability to attract a mate, and compete against and fend off potential rivals.

Sexual selection theory was originally rejected by those who studied humans, but during the last 30 years, evolutionary psychology researchers have taken great interest in mate selection. The increase in interest is largely based on Robert Trivers's explanation of sexual selectivity in humans using the idea of parental investment. Because of

the disparity in the level of parental investment and reproductive roles, men and women tend to prefer different characteristics in their mates. Because women have a greater investment in childbearing, they are thought to be more selective in their sexual partners. Men's selectivity, however, tends to increase as the level of involvement increases toward marriage, when their selectivity is similar to that of women.

As predicted by the theory, researchers have found some differences in preferences men and women have for characteristics in their partners. Men are more likely than women to state a preference for characteristics that suggest women are fertile and healthy. Examples of these characteristics include measures of attractiveness, including large eyes, prominent cheekbones, facial symmetry, and a small waist-to-hip ratio, as well as indicators of their ability to care for children. Women tend to report greater preferences for evidence of economic resources to provide for their children (e.g., income), and the ability to provide and protect (e.g., height, strength). The value of these resources, however, may not increase linearly, but may be just to avoid poverty or a short spouse. David Buss and colleagues, as well as others, have shown that these preferences are likely to change as they are a combination of innate mechanisms and societal values. They may also vary as a function of the seriousness of a relationship or when considered simultaneously in a cost-benefit analysis, when actually choosing a partner.

Some researchers have called for the combination of the sociological and evolutionary psychological approaches because they are not inherently incompatible, but may work simultaneously. Social influences, such as the sex ratio, mate value, and cultural norms are likely to influence mate selection and moderate the influence of evolutionary mechanisms involved in sexual selection. Results from several studies appear to indicate that both of these approaches are needed to explain mate selection.

Interdisciplinary Research on Mate Selection

During the last 30 years, researchers from many disciplines have come together in the study of various types of intimate relationships. Rather than a focus on the progress of romantic relationships toward marriage, this interdisciplinary

approach has emphasized universal properties across various types of relationships. Topics in this body of research include topics such as relationship satisfaction and stability, commitment, trust, and interdependence. Emphasis has been placed on various levels of influence, for example, contextual and social network influences (e.g., macrolevel) as well as dyadic and intrapersonal phenomena (e.g., microlevel). Although this approach is interdisciplinary, some have suggested the need for more integration among disciplines to combine the strengths of many approaches.

Formal Intermediaries in Mate Selection

From the ancient use of matchmakers to more modern intermediaries—such as personal ads and dating services—formal intermediaries, or alternative ways of meeting and selecting mates, have influenced the mate selection process. Because the selection process continues to evolve and because of the delay in marital timing, the use of formal intermediaries likely will continue to rise. Additional intermediaries have been created with the proliferation of the Internet, including chat rooms, online dating services (e.g., match.com or eharmony.com), and online communities (e.g., Facebook.com or Myspace.com).

The use of formal intermediaries and technology may help some to overcome issues of propinquity, imbalanced sex ratios, and difficult marriage markets. These intermediaries may first help individuals overcome geographical separation, by letting people meet and interact with potential partners they likely never would have met and allow individuals to find others who have similar interests to their own (e.g., religious beliefs, leisure activities or hobbies, or political orientations). Although these intermediaries may help individuals find potential partners, many feel that they will not fully replace face-to-face interaction in the selection of a marital partner.

Conclusion

Mate selection is a complex and evolving process that will continue to require study by researchers from many disciplines to fully understand it. Although the focus of research on this topic may

have changed over the years, the investigation of how individuals select, form, and maintain marital or long-term, nonmarital unions, should continue to be an important emphasis in the study of close relationships.

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See also Biological Systems for Courtship, Mating, Reproduction, and Parenting

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MEDIA DEPICTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS

Different relational roles such as strangers, acquaintances, coworkers, friends, family members, and romantic partners are depicted through different media channels including television, movies, print, video games, and music. These depictions are presented with regularity to media consumers. In 2006, Americans watched an average of 4 hours 35 minutes of television everyday. The mass media are social agents that shape viewers' attitudes and behaviors such as gender role–related behavior; sexual behavior; conflict; aggression; and privacy, disclosure, and betrayal. This entry discusses how gender roles, sexual attitudes and behaviors, conflict, aggression, and privacy and disclosure are viewed or presented in the media.

Gender Role-Related Behaviors

Television often portrays males and females in stereotyped traditional gender roles. Females are portrayed as youthful and constitute more than half of 18- to 34-year-old prime-time characters, whereas the reverse is true for 35- to 49-year-olds. Marital and parental status is more easily identifiable for female characters. When parental status is known, females are twice as likely to be caregivers. Females are more likely than males to be unemployed. For those who are employed, males have more occupational power and higher salaries. Children's programming often portrays males and females in even more stereotyped roles than prime-time programming does.

Romantic relationships in romance novels generally depict two strong-willed people who initially do not like each other but are nonetheless attracted to

each other. The couples eventually realize their passion for each other (sometimes violently), and the novels often result in a happily-ever-after ending.

In films intended for children, familial relationships are portrayed as a strong priority for their members. Families are generally diverse but the diversity is often simplified. The importance of the paternal role is elevated, whereas the maternal role is marginalized. Also, relationships are created by "love at first sight," are easily maintained, and are often characterized by gender-based power differentials.

Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors

Within the recent phenomenon of reality dating programs, participants often espouse attitudes such as, "Dating is a game," "Women are sex objects," and "Men are sex driven and have trouble being faithful." Frequent viewers of these shows endorse these attitudes personally, but they do not engage more frequently in the behaviors that are portrayed on the shows.

Sexual relationships are frequently portrayed on television, and sexual content has increased throughout the past decade, appearing in almost three-quarters of entertainment programs. The frequency of sexual relations between unmarried couples on television has increased since the late 1990s with just over half occurring between established partners who are in an ongoing relationship. A third of sexual relationships occur between people who have just met, or who have met before but are not in a committed relationship. Depictions of nontraditional sexual relationships, such as homosexual relationships, have also increased on television.

Sexual risk and responsibility messages also increased in programs that feature sexual content. About a quarter of programs depicting intercourse mention sexual risks and responsibility, with about a third of those scenes featuring risk and responsibility as the principal focus of a scene.

Across several film genres, married couples represent less than a fifth of total sexual behavior with unmarried couples composing the majority. The most common sexual behavior among husbands and wives is passionate kissing. Implied intercourse is the most common sexual behavior among unmarried partners.

Sexual content in video games is depicted with increasing frequency. One study of games found that more than a quarter of the games sampled contained sexual content.

Conflict

Very little research has examined conflict on television. The work that has been done found that opposite sex clashes appear to be most prevalent. The most frequent response to conflict is avoidance. Contrary to research with actual couples on the demand–withdraw pattern, which indicates that women are more likely to demand and men are more likely to withdraw, men on television were less likely than women to physically withdraw from an argument. A recent analysis of the top ten shows watched by adolescents, which crossed genres, showed that conflict occurred in less than half of romantic relationships, was most frequently initiated by the female partner attributing the cause to the male partner, and was characterized by distributive conflict resolution (such as patronizing comments and chastisement) by women and integrative conflict resolution (such as apologizing or changing behavior) by men.

In film, stepfamilies are typically portrayed in a negative or mixed way with almost half depicting stepchildren resenting stepparents. The most common type of stepfamily portrayed is mother–stepfather relationship. Within young adult novels, the focus is generally around conflict or dramatic events that a family experiences. Most often, the relationship between mothers and daughters is characterized by conflict or separation because of illness or death or an emotional disconnect. Fathers are generally absent, which is contrary to the finding for children's films, which was that fathers' importance is usually elevated.

Aggression

Much research has focused on televised violence. Overall, more than half of all shows depict violence, and most of it is sanitized, glamorized, trivialized, not chastised, and committed by adult Caucasian males. About half of all victims are acquainted with the perpetrator. Children's shows are the genre most likely to contain violent

content with about 14 violent acts per hour of programming.

Some researchers have claimed that there is a link between violent video game play or television violence and subsequent aggression, but other researchers doubt this claim.

Privacy, Disclosure, and Betrayal

One issue that has been uniquely studied with television talk shows is privacy, disclosure, and betrayal. Television talk shows portray people in controversial and sensationalistic relationships. An analysis of them showed that self-disclosures accounted for less than half of private information revealed about guests on the shows. Hosts and trusted personal relations of the featured guests were revealing the private information most of the time. The guests were victims of public "ambush disclosures." Although the most frequent response to an "ambush disclosure" was a face-saving attempt by the guest, a murder of an acquaintance by the featured guest occurred after one such disclosure by the acquaintance.

Sandi W. Smith, Lauren M. Hamel,
and Edward L. Glazer

See also Aggressive Communication; Conflict, Marital; Gender-Role Attitudes; Gender Roles in Relationships; Sex in Established Relationships

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Media Influences on Relationships

Through their stories, articles, and visual images, media convey cultural messages about relationships, including desirable relationship and relational partner qualities, relationship roles, likelihood of relationship success, and prescriptions for forming and maintaining relationships. This entry specifically addresses the effects of media on viewers' expectations for romantic relationships. Expectations for romantic relationships have implications for real life relationships. Unrealistic expectations have been associated with lower relationship satisfaction and may contribute, in part, to divorce, depression, and abuse. Although expectations for romantic relationships form in a number of ways, media content may contribute to their creation and maintenance.

Theoretical Background

Media's power to influence conceptions of romantic relationships lies firmly in people's consumption of media content and the nature of that content. Nancy Signorelli wrote that television may be the single most common and pervasive influence on perceptions and behaviors related to marriage and romantic relationships. According to Cultivation Theory, television shapes viewers' beliefs about reality. Early cultivation researchers argued that frequency of viewing was more important than the viewing of specific program content because television programs present a uniform message. Though a substantial amount of research has documented the association between heavy viewers' beliefs and predominant television messages, this frequency orientation has been largely replaced by a content-specific approach (i.e., analyzing the frequency of viewing specific genres). Researchers have also investigated media beyond television, such as films, novels, music, and magazines, for their effects on romantic relationships.

Romantic Relationship Expectations

A growing body of work examines how media affect viewers' ideas about romantic relationships. A recent study found that as television viewing increased, never-married viewers' idealistic notions about marriage decreased. Idealistic beliefs included such ideas as expecting one's partner to read one's mind, seeing disagreement as destructive to the relationship, and perceiving

destiny to be a major causal force in relationship development or deterioration. Perhaps television content directly contradicts such idealistic beliefs, but it is more likely the case that messages about marriage and romantic relationships vary by genre. For instance, watching a great deal of romantic movies and television programs, reading appearance-focused magazines, and consuming gender-stereotypic and reality-dating television programming have all been associated with viewers' greater support of idealistic relationship beliefs. Other media-related behaviors that extend beyond viewing frequency may matter as well. The degree of dependency on television for information about relationships, the presence of alternative sources of information, and the belief that television presents accurate information have been important factors identified in past media effects studies. For example, late adolescents who rated themselves as highly influenced by media in early adolescence reported more unrealistic beliefs about romantic relationships.

Another argument is that these associations arise because people with idealistic notions of romance select more idealistic romantic programming. In partial support of that argument, participants who used more romantic media also reported ruminating and fantasizing more about romance. When asked to view a romantic comedy in an experiment, the attitudes of these already romantically minded individuals did not become more accessible (i.e., easily recalled and retrieved). However, another experimental study concluded that viewing a film that emphasized relational destiny (e.g., "fate brought the couple together") strengthened participants' beliefs in relational destiny. Hence, evidence indicates that viewers who take in a great deal of romantic media have more idealistic expectations for romantic relationships. This outcome is attributable partly to media influence and partly to viewer selectivity.

Other viewer characteristics may influence relational expectations. For instance, people may become more realistic as they age or life experiences may counteract media models. Despite higher portrayals of divorce, single parenthood, and pre- and extramarital sex in today's programs, heavy-viewing Generation Xers (children of the 1980s) hold more unrealistic relationship expectations (e.g., believing that partners who care about each other should be able to sense each other's needs and preferences and that one must be a perfect sexual partner) than heavy-viewing Boomers (children of the 1950s). Heavy-viewing Generation Xers also prescribe to gender stereotypic relationship roles. Similarly, heavy-viewing adolescents were found to support traditional gender roles and scored higher on the sexism scale than did light viewers. They endorsed such statements as, "Women are happiest at home raising children" and "Men are born with more ambition than women."

Content analytic studies have indicated that media portrayals are mixed in that spousal relationships are presented as more equal and expressive but men and women are still shown in traditional ways. Men are more likely than women to be shown "on the job," and female characters are more likely to be seen dating, seen talking about romance, or presented as rewards for men who choose the right product. A recent study found that viewing prime-time comedies and dramas is positively correlated with believing that men are sex driven, women are sexual objects, and dating is a game.

Romantic Relationship Success

Media content also sends mixed messages about the likelihood for relationship success. Romantic relationships are highly valued on television and in movies but are often presented as fragile and difficult to maintain. Viewers report corresponding perceptions. Heavy-viewing adolescents saw singlehood more negatively than did light viewers. Heavy-viewing young women in the study conveyed the strongest desire to get married and have many children, and they wanted to engage in these activities at a younger age. Heavy-viewing college students of soap operas more strongly endorsed the belief that marriage is fragile than did their light-viewing counterparts.

Some experimental studies have attempted to clarify the causal relationship between media content and relationship success beliefs. In one study, elementary schoolers who were exposed to heavy doses of soap operas decreased their estimates of the number of happy marriages and increased their estimates of the number of divorces and

extramarital affairs. Similarly, in an experiment with college students, extensive exposure to sexually explicit films led to greater acceptance of sexual infidelity and sexual promiscuity. Being exposed to highly attractive women in magazines may also alter relational outcomes. Males who viewed highly attractive women in magazines lowered their partner's attractiveness ratings and rated themselves as less committed, satisfied, serious, and close to their actual partners.

In sum, research supports that media content can alter people's beliefs about and expectations for relationships. Yet, people may also gravitate toward media presentations that coincide with their belief systems. Ultimately, researchers need to account for these prior belief systems, as well as for the nature of the media content, frequency of viewing, and other viewer characteristics, when studying the influence of media on relationship expectations.

Kelly Albada

See also Expectations About Relationships; Ideals About Relationships; Media Depictions of Relationships; Technology and Relationships

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MEDIATION, MARRIAGE DISSOLUTION

Because divorce is both a legal and an emotional process, these processes interact in ways that create problems for both. This entry briefly explains the legal processes used to divorce and present an influential theoretical model explaining emotional processes of divorcing parents. The goal is to provide a brief review of legal divorce methods while highlighting potential unintended consequences of those processes for couples locked in negative emotional cycles.

Legal Process

The legal process is defined as the entire process and procedures used to obtain a legal divorce. It is a linear process with a set of complicated, rigid rules and procedures that unfolds over months to years. To begin, one spouse must file with the court a set of specific documents detailing how the financial and child-related issues should be settled. There are sets of rigid rules for what documents that must be filed, the wording, and providing the documents to the other spouse. The second spouse then has a particular period to submit his or her own set of documents to be allowed to question any of the positions in the beginning set of documents. From this point forward, the legal process varies widely depending on whether the spouses agree, or can negotiate an agreement over time, or whether additional or alternative procedures need to be used to help the spouses agree.

Litigation

Traditional litigation is not a unitary phenomenon. In its simplest form, using attorneys, or through negotiations on their own, a couple can create an agreement that addresses financial and child-related issues and file it with the court. If the court approves, the agreement will become an order of the court. This process can be lengthy or swift depending on the level of cooperation between the couple (and the attorneys, if any).

If an agreement cannot be worked out in this manner, the couple can make proposals until an agreement is negotiated. This process can require hours of attorney time, multiple documents filed with the court, and multiple court appearances. At the extreme, couples can be so hostile and polarized as to require significant hours of attorney and several additional professionals' time (e.g., accountants, appraisers, psychologists or psychiatrists, attorneys for the children) to resolve disputed

issues. This extreme type of litigation is seen as formalized competition in which there is a "winner" and a "loser" for each issue, and has been criticized for being inherently competitive, adversarial, and expensive—which it is.

Although three decades of research have addressed divorce mediation, there has been little on this litigation process. The popular perception is that divorce lawyers are obnoxious, argumentative, and refuse to settle for what is fair thus increasing acrimony between the spouses. Unfortunately, no empirical studies confirm the number and percentage of lawyers who behave in this manner and no studies that focus on what lawyers see as their goal. Interview research indicates just the opposite: Argumentative and unreasonable lawyers are in the minority. The overriding desire among divorce attorneys interviewed is for a "reasonable divorce." The major role of attorneys is to limit client expectations and overcome the resistance of angry clients who do not want to settle but instead want to use the legal system to play out emotional rather than legal issues. This process is often called *cooling out* the client. An interesting twist is that more clients are choosing to negotiate on their own and not involve attorneys or mediators. There is no empirical research on how the negotiation process works when clients negotiate in this manner.

Divorce Mediation

Mediation differs from litigation in several important ways. Most divorce mediation in the United States is through court-connected programs or court-appointed mediation providers. The issues to be settled are nearly always restricted to child-related issues (e.g., custody; parenting time; holiday and vacation schedules; education, religion and medical decision-making). Thus, while in litigation, spouses can resolve all issues; in divorce mediation couples must return to litigation to resolve any financial disputes. Thus, mediation is most often an *adjunct to* litigation rather than an *alternative to* litigation.

The divorcing partners are the negotiators in mediation. They are encouraged to consider options and alternatives, make proposals, consider what is best for their particular family, and to formalize an agreement. By contrast, attorneys assist the clients in formulating proposals and are the negotiators for that proposal. Troubles often arise because clients in emotional crisis do not understand (or remember) what the attorney is negotiating or the attorney is not in agreement on the client's position. Often forgotten is that divorcing clients (in addition to attorneys) have tremendous influence in choosing the level of hostility of any given divorce.

Another feature of mediation is that the couple meets with a neutral third party to express their concerns and tell their side of the story. Some argue that this may be *the* most important feature of mediation. Clients are further able to refine the narrative of their divorce in a cooperative, rather than adversarial, process. And, the cooperative nature of mediation has lasting effects on the clients' postdivorce parenting (e.g., noncustodial parents see their children more).

The manner in which the features of mediation are then put into practice vary greatly. The process varies state-to-state, and even county-by-county within a state. At one end of the spectrum, clients participate voluntarily and pay hourly fees for mediation provided by private mediators. Private mediators can have a range of prior training (e.g., social worker, lawyer, psychologist, business, or no professional training). If the mediator is trained in a mental health discipline and offers a therapeutically oriented model of mediation, a significant number of sessions can focus on resolving emotional issues (e.g., focus on separating parenting and marital roles, defining boundaries of closeness and intimacy, frequency of contact, letting go of past conflicts, building conflict resolution skills). These private mediators can use as many sessions as necessary (and the clients can pay for) to resolve some or all divorce-related issues for a family, including financial and child-related issues.

At the other end of the spectrum are court-connected mediation programs that offer services for free (or a sliding fee) and are generally time-limited (1 to 10 sessions). Mediators in these programs are generally trained in mental health disciplines but, because of time constraints, the focus of this type of divorce mediation is on obtaining an agreement regarding child-related issues, rather than on resolving all issues in dispute (e.g., financial or emotional distress).

Emotional Processes

An influential, normative theoretical model for understanding the emotional process of divorce posits that whether people make the choice to divorce (the "leaver") or are pushed into one by their spouses (the "left"), the process is filled with grief associated with many losses (e.g., friends, the social role of husband/wife, a daily routine, financial security, social status). As the grieving process proceeds, three competing emotions (*love, anger,* and *sadness*) vary in intensity and longevity. Spouses do not cycle through the emotions at the same time but they nevertheless are locked in the cycles with the other. Regardless of the other spouse's emotions, one spouse can become "stuck" in one of the three emotions and not cycle back into the others. This "stuckness" can affect the legal process in several ways.

A person stuck in *anger,* for example, can express this anger by making outrageous accusations against the other parent in court, delaying the legal process, and refusing to follow court orders, which requires a spouse to go back to court again and again. In divorce mediation, this angry spouse can reschedule sessions, show up late, agree, then change his or her mind at the last minute and renege on these prior agreements. Recent research has found a significant predictor of making an agreement in mediation is the level of disparity in attachment between the spouses. If, for example, one spouse is attached and does not want the marriage to end, and the other spouse is not attached, the chances of reaching an agreement in mediation significantly decrease.

One or both spouses can reexperience the grief associated with the divorce and often it occurs during life events and life changes (e.g., holidays, graduations, when one spouse remarries or has a child with a new partner). Ex-spouses may suddenly, on the remarriage of one spouse, begin filing documents in court about parenting time, custody or both. Careful assessment of this situation is important. It may well be that the new spouse or siblings are negatively influencing the existing relationships within the first family; however, it may also be essentially grief and resentment manifesting through the legal process.

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) has become a growing concern among professionals working with divorcing couples. Within the mediation context, the number of mediation cases reported as having some type of IPV ranges between 40 and 80 percent. This range is significantly higher than that found in the general population, which is between 5 and 25 percent. In addition, few couples referred to mediation are screened out because of IPV (6–7 percent).

A particular type of IPV, *culture of violence* or *coercive control,* may be of particular concern. Critical elements include an ongoing strategy of isolating victims from friends, family, and children; controlling access to resources such as transportation, money, and housing; and controlling access to employment and education. Control is subsequently maintained through the use of (or threats of) physical and sexual violence to the victim or the victim's family and friends. Thus, when coercive control is successful, the physical violence necessary to maintain control may be sporadic and in less severe forms. Critical for screening for IPV in divorce cases is to focus on coercive control. Recent research indicates that mediators focus on physical violence, injury, and outside involvement with the family (calls to police, arrests, hospital visits) to make determinations of IPV and may miss victims of coercive control.

Noncoercive negotiations, with a neutral third party, to consensually develop agreements reflecting the needs of all family members are the central elements of a fair mediation process. If one party is being coercively controlled, this is impossible. Within the litigation process, provided attorneys have a sophisticated knowledge of IPV and are aware of the coercive control, they may be able to better shield the client from direct negotiations. Unfortunately, no published empirical research indicates the level of knowledge of most attorneys regarding IPV, if attorneys screen clients for IPV, and if they do shield victims from their abusers.

Concluding Remarks and Future Directions

The manner spouses process their emotions can have tremendous impact on the legal process of

divorce for the family and vice versa. While families are in the midst of a psychological and sometimes financial crisis, they must also participate in a complicated, rigid, linear legal process that focuses "winners" and "losers" of particular positions presented to the court. Research indicates that people need to develop a coherent, organized, and meaningful personal narrative about stressful events (in this case divorce). To do so, spouses need to tell and retell their stories. The litigation process, however, does not allow spouses to tell the story of their relationship and what led to the divorce, nor does it allow the parties to express to the judge moral outrage, anger, or fear. Spouses may recite their stories to an attorney, but attorneys generally do not know what to do with the emotionally laced stories. The attorney's job is to elicit what the client wants in a financial and parenting settlement and argue for it, not to assist a client develop a meaningful and organized narrative of their divorce. Spouses raw with the emotions or stuck in one emotion can use the legal system as an emotional weapon to harass, punish, and drain financial resources from their spouse, without any significant consequences.

For victims of IPV, accurate assessment of and responses to IPV by lawyers, mediators, and judges is essential to protect the victims yet we have little research that addresses whether it is done or if it is done accurately. Continued research addressing the interactions between the emotional and legal process of divorce are essential to design a more fluid system to better address the needs of divorcing families.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Conflict, Family; Conflict, Marital; Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Dissolution of Relationships, Processes; Divorce, Effects on Adults; Emotion in Relationships

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MEMORIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

People tend to have detailed and vivid memories of their relationships, outlining how their relationships have changed and developed over time. These memories form the basis for the relationship stories people present to others, and they provide the framework people use to reflect upon their relationships. This entry discusses how memories influence current feelings, accuracy in relationship memory, how current feelings influence recollections, how memories can predict future outcomes, and how people recall their relationships changing over time.

Accuracy in Relationship Memory

Research on relationship memory demonstrates that like memories in general, memories for relationships are not fully accurate records of past events. Although relationship memories have some degree of accuracy, these memories become degraded over time, essentially missing some of the specific details. Consequently, people use information that is accessible in the present when trying to fill in the gaps in their memory. This is shown in existing research in at least three ways. First, to the extent that people are currently committed to their relationships, they are motivated to preserve their sense of relational security and consequently fill in the gaps in their memory with details that maintain their faith in their relationship. Second, people use their current sentiments and knowledge about the relationship to help them interpret their pasts. Third, people use their current beliefs about how relationships change to help them understand how their own relationship

has changed over time. Although these processes tend to bias relationship memories, these biases, are informative, illuminating how people feel about their relationship at the present time and the likely future of that relationship.

These biasing effects have led some researchers to argue that researchers should be cautious in how they interpret self-reports of change or reports of past relationship events. However, people can enhance the accuracy of relationship memories by asking partners to recall past events together. *Collaborative memories,* memories constructed when two people work together to recall past information, tend to contain more accurate details and fewer errors than the memories recalled by individuals. When working together on recalling a past event, partners can cue each other's recall and even correct one another's errors in recalled details. For example, imagine a couple telling the story about their first date. One partner's recollection that they met at the roller coaster might remind the other partner to add the detail about how long the line was. Alternatively, one partner might recall they meet at the roller coaster while the other partner is convinced they met at the water slide. In such instances, partners might be able to correct each other's recollections. Importantly, the process of working together to recall past events can reveal certain relationship dynamics such as respect, shared emotions, and dominance. For example, unequal levels of dominance among partners would be revealed if one partner always conceded when the partners disagreed on the details of a past event.

Memories Influence Today

Relationship memories surface frequently. Relationship researchers aren't the only ones who ask people about their relationship memories. Friends and family members routinely seek information about the course and development of relationships (e.g., "How did you two meet?"). Relationship memories can even be elicited by a partner's current behavior.

In addition to influencing the behavior partners engage in today, recollections of past relationship events shape the partners' current feelings about their relationship. For example, when people recall a time when their partner surprised them with a

kind and selfless act, they are reminded of a variety of past (or perhaps present) positive feelings about that partner. Such momentary recollections may lead individuals to feel a boost in their good feelings about the relationship. Conversely, present relationship evaluations might be far more negative if one had instead been reminded of a serious past conflict or partner transgression.

Today Influences Memories

Research on relationship memories, like much of the research on memories in general, demonstrates that present knowledge and sentiments play an important role in recollection. Current feelings influence which events are recalled, and as people piece together recalled information, they may interpret, embellish, and revise information to be consistent with their current understanding of their relationship. This process is likely not deliberate or intentional; people merely use their current knowledge to "fill in the blanks" in their memories.

Cathy McFarland and Michael Ross conducted a pioneering study investigating how present feelings can influence the recollection of a relationship. They used what has now become one common method for studying bias relationship memories: Participants were asked to indicate their current feelings about their relationships (Time 1), and 2 months later, they indicated their current feelings (Time 2) and recalled their initial reports (Time 2 Recollection). In this particular study, participants' feelings about their relationships at the present moment (Time 2) biased their recollections of their initial reports. People believed that their current feelings toward a partner were reflections of how they had always felt toward that partner: Those whose affections toward their partners increased retrospectively exaggerated the intensity of earlier reports whereas those whose feelings became more negative underestimated their original positivity toward their partner.

Research on memories for specific events, and not just overall evaluations of the relationship, has demonstrated similar patterns of bias. More satisfied couples fail to recall negative statements from previous conversations, and their relationship memories contain less negative affect and

ambivalence than do those of less satisfied couples. Similar effects have also been reported in nonromantic relationships: Happy friends recall a previous laboratory interaction with a friend as more enjoyable than they had indicated at the time of the initial interaction.

Relying on Scripts

People use their current feelings to infer their recollection and rely on their *scripts,* or general theories of how relationships progress and change, to help fill in the blanks in their memories. Scripts are highly influenced by cultural and social stereotypes. For instance, when people are asked to provide the script for how heterosexual relationships begin, they typically place the male in the initiator role (e.g., asking her for a date) and the female in the gatekeeping role (e.g., accepting or declining his advances). As relationships progress and time passes, people are more likely to use their scripts to fill in the gaps in their memories. For example, people are more likely to downplay the wife's role in initiating a relationship or proposing marriage when recalling the beginnings of a relationship at a later time than soon after the wedding.

Sometimes people rely on their unique, individualized theories of how relationships should progress to help them complete their relationship histories. For example, husbands who consistently endorse high egalitarian beliefs recall equally sharing responsibilities with their wives. However, husbands who wane in their egalitarian beliefs over time revise their earlier memories to reflect an unequal division of responsibilities (e.g., being less involved in wedding planning).

Memories for Own and Others' Relationships

People also exhibit bias when recalling other people's relationships, although typically in the opposite direction. The *perceived superiority effect* refers to the tendency of individuals, especially those who are currently happy in their relationships, to describe their own relationships as better than those of other people. When asked to report their memories for recent events in their own relationship and in the relationships of other people they know, people are more likely to describe more positive events for their own relationship than for

others' relationships. This is true when people are describing what they know about their parents' relationship, their friends' relationships, the relationships of acquaintances, and the relationships of people in the media. Such uneven recollections could certainly fuel the perceived superiority effect and possibly heighten optimism for the future of their own relationship.

Memories Influence Tomorrow

Memories can also influence how people feel about their futures. If a relationship has been satisfying for the last several years, people are likely to feel optimistic about their future together. Conversely, if partners can only recall negative relationship events and see their relationship history as a string of misfortunes, they are likely to be pessimistic about its future. Research in this area demonstrates that when individuals who are asked to recall past events in their relationship describe those memories with greater negativity and disappointment, they are more likely to separate or divorce in the years to come. Similarly, when partners' memories are biased to perceive recent improvements, they are more likely to be happy in their marriages in future years.

Memories for Relationship Change

How do people see their relationships changing over time? The research described suggests that people are inclined to view their pasts in a manner that is consistent with their present feelings. Viewing a relationship as stable might enable individuals to feel more secure. However, Charles Carver and Michael Scheier argued that perceiving improvement was more satisfying than perceiving stability. In other words, people prefer a story that suggests that their relationship has been getting even better to a story that suggests their relationship has always been good. Michael Ross and Anne Wilson proposed the Temporal Appraisal Theory, which suggests that the most recent past has the greatest implications for the present. In a sense, what happened in the distant past is dissociated from the present self and relationship and only the recent past has direct implications for the here and now. Consequently, perceptions of

improvement in the recent history should offer more benefits than should perceptions of improvement in the distant past.

The typical methodology for studying this phenomenon includes asking individuals to report on their relationship quality at several points in time. Further, at each point in time, except for the initial assessment, participants are asked to reflect on the trajectory of change in their relationships since the last assessment(s). In some studies, participants indicate how much they have changed since a specific time point, and in other studies, participants are asked to draw the trajectory of change in their relationship quality over time. Researchers then compare participants' memories of change in quality to their contemporaneous reports. Results reveal that retrospective reports indicate improvement in the *recent* past even though contemporaneous ratings tend to show stability or declines. These effects have been found in studies that have followed spouses and dating partners from periods ranging from 2 to 40 years.

Research also reveals that relationship partners benefit from perceiving recent improvement. First, recalled improvement is strongly associated with present relationship satisfaction. Second, recalled improvement is strongly associated with optimism for the future of their relationships. Third, recalled improvement actually predicts whether a couple will remain together.

Indeed, perceptions of improvement may not simply be beneficial but may be motivated. Perceptions of improvement can also provide a mechanism that allows individuals to maintain positive views of their relationship despite specific negative events. For example, when individuals are asked to recall a time when they hurt or transgressed against their intimate partner, they are apt to report relationship improvement even when their victims do not report similar levels of improvement. In this way, the perpetrators of these transgressions can dissociate themselves from their misdeeds and maintain optimism for their future together. Indeed, these perpetrators were more likely than were their victims to be optimistic about the future of their relationships. As such, perceptions of improvement allowed these perpetrators to feel secure in their relationships and to be optimistic for the future. This suggests that perceptions of improvement might boost cognitive coping strategies. Importantly, recent evidence in a study conducted by Nancy Frye suggests that perceptions of improvement might also reduce negative conflict in relationships. When individuals do not see improvement in their relationships, they have fewer psychological resources available to pursue effective dyadic coping strategies, resulting in a higher rate of verbal and physical aggression. Presumably, perceiving improvement provides hope for the future and ultimately encourages positive relationship behaviors in the present.

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See also Beliefs About Relationships; Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Motivation and Relationships; Satisfaction in Relationships; Storytelling; Transgressions

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MENTAL HEALTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

The relationships people have with their romantic partners and other family members are likely to be the most intimate and long-standing relationships they have in their lives. For example, relationships with romantic partners and family members provide the most frequent opportunity for social support. Because they assume such a prominent role in people's social environment, family and relationship functioning is likely to influence and be influenced by the mental health and well-being of the members of these relationships. Evaluating the importance of family and relationship functioning with respect to mental health is consistent with modern biopsychosocial models of well-being and psychiatric disorders. This entry describes the role of family and relationship functioning on the onset, course, and treatment of mental health problems.

Family Functioning

There is growing awareness that family dysfunction and mental health problems such as psychiatric disorders are often associated with one another. On one hand, the need for emotional and instrumental support that accompanies mental health problems, as well as the symptoms of mental health problems (e.g., negative mood), may be taxing and burdensome for family members. On the other hand, family members may influence the course of mental health problems through such means as treatment adherence and promotion of behaviors that facilitate recovery. Indeed, poor family functioning is associated with a variety of psychiatric disorders, including mood disorders, anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, eating disorders, and schizophrenia spectrum disorders.

Furthermore, the level of family dysfunction observed in the families of psychiatric patients is higher than in families with a medically ill member; however, there is little difference between families with different specific psychiatric diagnoses in their level of family dysfunction. Compared with nonclinical families, families in which one member has a psychiatric diagnosis appear to be particularly impaired in communication and in resolving problems.

Although the research design for much of the research on family functioning and mental health is cross-sectional (i.e., measures of family functioning and mental health are collected at the same point in time), some research shows that family functioning assessed at one point in time is associated with changes in measures of mental health collected at a later time. For example, results from longitudinal or prospective studies indicate that family functioning is associated with the course of mood disorders. Specifically, compared with people with better family functioning, those with poorer family functioning report higher levels of depression, lower recovery, and lower levels of overall adjustment over time. Furthermore, families with a depressed member report worse family functioning than do control families, both during an episode and at remission, suggesting that family problems are not just a consequence of depression.

To the extent that poor family functioning is associated with the onset and course of mental health problems, improving family functioning through interventions such as family-based therapy should result in improvements in psychiatric functioning. In support of this perspective, family-based treatment approaches have been shown to be effective for a variety of mental health problems, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, conduct disorder, eating disorders, alcoholism, and adolescent substance abuse. Studies comparing family-based treatments with other types of intervention generally suggest that family-based treatment is as effective as other approaches to treatment. Furthermore, family-based interventions affect not only the person with the mental health problem, but also have the added benefit of improving functioning in other family members. For example, family-based interventions have positive effects on relatives' caregiver burden, psychological distress, and overall family functioning.

Thus, it appears that family therapy, singly or in combination with other psychiatric interventions such as medication or individual psychotherapy, may be an important part of a comprehensive approach to the treatment of mental health problems.

Marriage and Relationship Functioning

Relationship Quality and Psychopathology

The most commonly studied measure of relationship functioning that has been studied with respect to mental health is partners' self-report ratings of the overall quality of the relationship, as described by terms such as *satisfaction, discord,* or *distress*. Furthermore, most of the research on relationship functioning and mental health has focused on married individuals. Studies have found a negative association between marital satisfaction and symptoms of psychopathology. For example, many studies have found that increasingly lower levels of marital satisfaction are associated with increasingly higher levels of symptoms of depression. To provide an overall estimate of the strength of association between marital satisfaction and personal well-being (e.g., depression, anxiety, psychiatric symptoms), a meta-analysis was conducted of existing research; a meta-analysis is a summary of previous research that uses quantitative methods to compare outcomes across studies and provide a measure of the magnitude or degree of the association (i.e., an effect size). A meta-analysis of the association between marital quality and well-being using different measures of well-being across 93 different research studies yielded a mean effect size (r) of .37. The square of the effect size r (i.e., r^2) can be interpreted as the proportion of variance in either of the two variables that may be accounted for by the variance of the other variable. Squaring the effect size of .37, therefore, suggests that 14 percent in the variability in either marital quality or personal well-being can be accounted for by the other variable.

In addition to symptoms of mental health problems, researchers have studied the association between relationship quality and diagnosable mental health problems (i.e., psychiatric disorders). Results from these studies have consistently shown that marital satisfaction is lower among people with psychiatric disorders. In studying this association, researchers have generally adopted one of two strategies. First, researchers have examined the marital satisfaction of people seeking treatment for a psychiatric disorder compared with people not in treatment. Compared with those without a psychiatric disorder, marital satisfaction is lower among people with mood, anxiety, substance use, and eating disorders. However, because only a subset of people with mental health problems seek treatment for their psychiatric disorder, these studies may be limited in their generalizability insofar as they do not include people with mental health problems that do not seek treatment. Therefore, a second strategy used by researchers studying the association between marital quality and diagnosable psychopathology has been to examine this association in representative, population-based community samples. Results from large epidemiological surveys have found that lower marital satisfaction is associated with sexual functioning and a variety of mood, anxiety, and substance use disorders. For example, in a population-based sample of more than 2,000 people, marital distress was associated with (a) broad-band classifications of anxiety, mood, and substance use disorders; and (b) narrow-band classifications of seven specific disorders, with the strongest associations obtained between marital distress and bipolar disorder, alcohol use disorders, and generalized anxiety disorder. In an earlier population-based study involving more than 2,500 married individuals, maritally distressed individuals were two to three times more likely than were nondistressed individuals to experience mood, anxiety, or substance use disorders. In addition, lower marital quality is associated with higher psychological distress, poorer perceived health, and greater functional impairment (i.e., social impairment in relationships with relatives and friends, work impairment); these associations remain significant when controlling for current mood, anxiety, and substance use disorders, suggesting that relationship discord is incrementally related to distress and impairment, over and above the effects of psychiatric disorders.

Although cross-sectional studies such as these are important for establishing an association between marital quality and psychopathology, the design of these studies does not address the causal direction of this association. Is lower marital

satisfaction for people with mental health problems a cause or a consequence of their emotional and behavior problems? On the one hand, mental health problems can adversely affect relationship outcomes. For example, being married or involved in a committed relationship with a person with mental health problems can result in stress and burden on the spouse or partner, which may contribute to relationship problems and increase the likelihood of relationship dissolution. In support of this perspective, studies have shown that people with early-onset psychiatric disorders are more likely to marry early and are more likely to experience marital separation or divorce.

On the other hand, lower marital satisfaction can adversely affect people's mental health. For example, decreases in support from the partner or increases in relationship stressors or strains can affect the psychological and biological functioning of the person, increasing the risk of mental health problems. In support of this perspective, marital dissatisfaction has been shown to predict increases in symptoms of depression over time. Furthermore, marital dissatisfaction has been shown to predict the onset of psychiatric disorders. In a population-based sample in the United States, low marital satisfaction at baseline predicted increased risk for the onset of major depression and alcohol use disorders among people that did not meet criteria for the corresponding disorder at baseline. Furthermore, marital quality predicts first onset (i.e., incidence) of psychiatric disorders among people who do not have a history of mental health problems. In a longitudinal population-based study of more than 4,500 people in the Netherlands, lower marital quality at baseline was associated with an increased risk for the onset of psychopathology assessed during a subsequent 2-year period. Specifically, lower marital quality at baseline was associated with an increased risk for first incidence of broad-band factors of mood and anxiety disorders, as well as for the separate diagnoses of major depressive disorder, dysthymia, social phobia, and alcohol abuse. Thus, it appears that marital functioning and mental health mutually influence one another over time in a bidirectional, recursive fashion.

Whereas much of the research on couple functioning and mental health has focused on global relationship quality, research is beginning to identify some of the specific relationship components that are associated with mental health outcomes. For example, studies have evaluated communication behaviors and patterns that are associated with mental health problems such as depression, anxiety disorders, and substance use disorders. Furthermore, studies have found that physical abuse occurring in the context of marriage and romantic relationships demonstrates a cross-sectional and longitudinal association with increased risk for psychiatric symptoms and onset of psychiatric disorders.

Finally, marital and relationship functioning is also associated with the mental heath of the partners involved in the relationship, as well as with the mental health of their offspring. Specifically, parental marital discord and violence between parents is associated with elevated rates of psychiatric symptoms and diagnosed psychiatric disorders in children and adolescents. For example, parental marital discord and aggression are associated with the presence of anxiety, depression, oppositional defiance, conduct problems, and substance abuse in children and adolescents. Given this association, researchers have sought to identify moderating variables that affect the magnitude of the association between parental relationship functioning and mental health outcomes in children. Researchers have also sought to identify the mediators or mechanisms by which parental relationship functioning may increase risk for mental health problems in children. For example, parental conflict and aggression may create vulnerabilities that, by themselves or in interaction with genetically based vulnerabilities, produce disruptions in psychosocial functioning, disruptions in stress-responsive biological regulatory system, and poor health behaviors. Thus, poor marital functioning affects the mental health of other family members, including children, as well as that of partners. Furthermore, as with partners' mental health and well-being, marital problems and child mental health problems appear to influence one another in a reciprocal, bidirectional fashion.

Relationship Quality and Treatment of Psychopathology

To the extent that marital discord is associated with the onset and course of mental health

problems, then it may be expected that the higher rates of marital discord will be associated with poorer outcomes to treatments for mental health problems that do not specifically address relationship problems. For example, marital discord might be expected to be associated with poorer outcome for people on medication or who receive psychotherapy that includes only the person with the mental health problem. Indeed, poor functioning in marriage or other intimate relationships is associated with poorer outcome to individual-based treatments (e.g., medication, individually oriented psychotherapy) for mood, anxiety, and substance use disorders. Compared with people who report greater levels of relationship satisfaction, people with lower levels of satisfaction have higher levels of symptoms at the end of treatment and during follow-up and are more likely to relapse or experience a recurrence of the mental health problem following treatment.

To the extent that marital discord is associated with the onset and course of mental health problems, then treatments such as marital or couple therapy that specifically target relationship problems should be effective in improving mental health outcomes. Support for this perspective comes from studies showing that couple therapy is effective in treating major depression and alcohol and drug use disorders; partner-assisted exposure (in which the partner is included in the treatment as a cotherapist, assisting the patient in practice sessions at home) has been shown to be effective in treating obsessive-compulsive disorder, and partner-assisted exposure and partner-assisted cognitive behavioral treatment have been shown to be effective in treating agoraphobia. When the efficacy of couple therapy or other couple-based interventions are compared with the efficacy of medication or individually oriented psychotherapies, couple therapy and couple-based interventions have generally been found to be as effective as these other approaches in the treatment of these disorders. Furthermore, whereas individually oriented treatments for mental health problems do not appear to alleviate marital discord, couple therapy has been shown to improve marital or relationship functioning, as well as reduce psychiatric symptoms. Finally, some evidence indicates that changes in marital quality are responsible for (i.e., mediate) the effects of couple therapy on changes in psychopathology, at least in treatment effects of couple therapy on depression. Taken together, existing studies suggest that couple therapy and other couple-based interventions may be effective for a variety of mental health problems, particularly those that co-occur with marital or relationship discord.

Expressed Emotion and Perceived Criticism

In addition to global measures of family and relationship and functioning, researchers have sought to identify specific aspects of the couple and family environment that predict mental health outcomes. One such component of a person's interpersonal environment that has been identified as important in this respect is the degree of *expressed emotion* (EE). EE refers to how the partner or other relative of a person with a mental health (i.e., psychiatric) problem talk about the person in a private interview with a researcher. Partners or other relatives are classified as high in EE if they make more than a specified threshold number of critical comments about the person with the mental health problem, or show signs of hostility or marked emotional overinvolvement. Initially, EE was developed to understand relapse rates for people with schizophrenia. More recently, it has been more extensively studied as a predictor of relapse for other mental health problems, including depression, bipolar disorder, and eating disorders. A meta-analysis of existing studies indicates that EE predicts relapse in people with schizophrenia (mean r = .30), mood disorders (mean r = .39), and eating disorders (mean r = .51). Furthermore, relatives who are classified as high in EE behave in a more negative fashion when interacting with patients than do relatives who are classified as low in EE. Finally, results from several family-based treatments indicate that decreases in EE following treatment are associated with decreases in relapse rates. In summary, it appears that differences among partners and relatives in their level of EE reflect characteristics of the patient–relative relationship that are important for understanding relapse rates across a range of mental health problems.

Whereas the EE construct is based on observations of a partner or other relative's behavior when talking

to a researcher about the person with mental health problems (or, in some cases, based on self-report questionnaires completed by the partner or relative regarding their relationship with the person), researchers have also evaluated the perceptions of people with mental health problems regarding how critical they think their partner or relative is of them. This subjective measure of *perceived criticism* completed by the person with the mental health problem has been shown to predict relapse for people with mood, anxiety, and substance use disorders. Furthermore, perceived criticism ratings are stable over time and are not related to concurrently assessed symptom severity, suggesting that the association between perceived criticism and relapse is not an artifact of symptoms. Thus, it appears that the degree of criticism in the marital or family environment, whether measured by outsiders' coding of spontaneous comments about the person or by insiders' ratings of their perceptions of criticism, is important for understanding the course of mental health problems.

Mark A. Whisman

See also: Alcoholism, Effects on Relationships; Borderline Psychopathology in Relationships; Divorce, Effects on Adults; Family Therapy for Adult Psychopathology; Health, Relationships as a Factor in Treatment; Neuroticism, Effects on Relationships; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members; Relationship Distress and Depression

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MENTORING PROGRAMS

Mentoring programs pair youth who are perceived to be at risk for poor outcomes with volunteers who are trained to provide mentoring. Such programs have experienced tremendous growth in recent years. An estimated 3 million young people are in formal one-to-one mentoring relationships in the United States. This represents a sixfold increase from just a decade ago, and funding and growth imperatives continue to fuel growth. As mentoring programs have expanded, so too have the ways in which the services are delivered. Among the most popular alternative to the traditional one-on-one pairings of adults and youth are group, peer, and e-mail mentoring. Strategies tied to particular settings—such as school-, workplace-, and faith-based mentoring—also are exhibiting rapid growth. Indeed, although mentoring programs have traditionally been community-based, nearly half of mentoring relationships now meet through schools. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA), the nation's largest and oldest mentoring program, has seen a fourfold increase in school-based matches since 1996.

The enthusiasm for and growth in initiatives to support mentoring speaks volumes about the faith society places in one-to-one relationships between vulnerable young people and unrelated but caring adults. And with good cause. The success of human services initiatives often rests on the quality of relationships that are forged among participants. By putting relationships at center stage, mentoring programs can deliver this healing in full

potency. This entry reviews evidence for the effectiveness of mentoring programs and discusses the elements of mentoring programs that appear to be central to this effectiveness.

Effectiveness of Youth Mentoring Programs

Program evaluations suggest that high-quality youth mentoring relationships can effectively reduce social, academic, and behavioral problems. Nonetheless, there appears to be considerable variability in program impact. In some instances, negative or no effects have been found, or effects have eroded to nonsignificance within only a few months of program participation. Only one mentoring program, "Across Ages," has achieved the status of "model program" on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP), an online registry of independently reviewed and rated interventions.

BBBSA was listed on this registry as an "effective program," a designation that stemmed, in part, from the landmark study of their community-based mentoring (CBM) programs. The evaluators traced the experiences of youth given access to the programs, as well as a control group, over time. Although the standardized effect sizes across all outcomes in the study were relatively small, several widely cited, statistically significant differences in behavior and academic functioning between the mentored youth and the control group were uncovered.

More recently, a large randomized evaluation of BBBSA school-based mentoring (SBM) program was conducted by Carla Herrera and her colleagues. Overall findings were mixed. At the end of the first school year, youth assigned to receive mentoring showed significant improvements in their academic performance, perceived scholastic efficacy, school misconduct, and attendance relative to a control group of nonmentored youth. These effects were generally small in magnitude and, when youth were reassessed a few months into the following school year, most differences were no longer statistically significant.

Despite these somewhat discouraging trends, the group differences that have been uncovered in these evaluations do give grounds for cautious optimism

about the potential viability of mentoring interventions. Given the vast continuum in the quality and duration that exists in the mentoring relationships, however, it is unrealistic to expect dramatic, across-the-board reversals of the negative trajectories that are typical of adolescence. Indeed, matches and programs can vary considerably in their effectiveness, depending on the characteristics of the individuals involved and the quality, intensity, and duration of the relationships they form. Secondary analyses of the SBM data revealed that mentees who experienced longer, closer relationships received bigger benefits than do those in shorter or weaker relationships And, in Year 2, those involved in weaker, shorter relationships actually showed declines relative to their nonmentored peers. The same patterns have been found in CBM. When all relationships are combined, positive outcomes are easily masked by the neutral and even negative outcomes associated with less effective mentoring relationships. The challenge is to identify those program inputs and factors that can facilitate the formation of close, enduring, and, ultimately, effective mentor–youth ties.

Research has been conducted in this regard. Close, enduring connections between youth and mentors appear to be fostered by factors resembling those identified as important in effective therapeutic relationships, such as empathy and authenticity, and a basic compatibility in youth and mentors' personalities, interests, and expectations for the relationship. The formation of a close, effective relationship is also conditioned by the background characteristics of the mentor, the effectiveness of the mentor in addressing the developmental needs of the child, the consistency and duration of the tie, and the quality of broader program and community context in which the relationship unfolds.

A series of meta-analyses also shed light onto the issue of effectiveness. David DuBois and his colleagues revealed favorable effects of mentoring programs across relatively diverse types of program samples, including programs in which mentoring was provided alone or in conjunction with other services. Positive effects were found both in programs that had general goals and in those with more focused goals, and held up for youth of varying backgrounds and demographic characteristics. Among the small number of studies that included

follow-up assessments, the benefits of mentoring appeared to extend a year or more beyond the end of a youth's participation in the program. Although there was considerable variation across studies, the average effect size across the samples was relatively small, particularly in comparison with the effect sizes that have been found in meta-analyses of other prevention programs for children and adolescents. More recent meta-analyses have found similarly modest effects.

Conclusions

In some cases, youth mentoring interventions can have extraordinarily influential effects; in others, they can do more harm than good. The balance can, and should, be tipped toward the former. A deeper understanding of mentoring relationships, combined with high quality programs, enriched settings, and a better integration of research, practice, and policy will better position programs to harness the full potential of youth mentoring programs.

Jean Rhodes

See also Fictive Kinship; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Mentoring Relationships; Social Support Interventions

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MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Association with guiding patrons and more knowledgeable others is featured in stories and biographies of successful men and women in the past and present. Finding and building a relationship with a mentor has been described as facilitating success in business, education, and other life pursuits. Likewise, identifying a talented and promising protégé has been linked to building support and one's life work living on in others.

These relational partners could be college professor and student, business executive and junior partner, volunteer and special-needs child, grandparent and grandchild, neighbor and newcomer, spiritual leader and neophyte, or sports coach and athlete—to name only a few possible mentors and protégés. The knowledge learned and tasks accomplished are as varied as mentors and protégés.

A *mentor* is a person with more knowledge and sophistication in a particular area of expertise who shares this knowledge with someone less knowledgeable through a relationship. The person who learns from the mentor is a *protégé.* Together, the mentor and the protégé form a mentoring relationship.

Mentoring relationships are personal relationships in which neither partner can be substituted without significantly altering the relationship. Mentoring relationships can develop through mentoring programs or they can develop informally. Many long-term mentoring relationships are the result of informal mentoring relationships that develop into high-quality mentoring relationships. This entry discusses the development, maintenance, and repair of mentoring relationships and the overall benefit of these relationships.

Development of Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring relationships are unique from other relationships in that there is no assumption of equality in the relationship. There are fewer mentors available than there are potential protégés. Mentors have knowledge, skills, and connections that are desired by protégés. This gives mentors more relational power and influences the dynamics of the development, maintenance, and repair of mentoring relationships.

Potential mentors may perceive risk in becoming part of a mentoring relationship with a protégé. Those who perceive greater risk in being close to others will be less likely to mentor than will those who do not perceive risk in being close to another. In professional and academic environments, mentors may perceive risk in sharing their secrets and strategies for being successful with others because the protégé may one day become more proficient than the mentor, or the protégé may share the mentor's closely held secrets with others. Generally, mentors may perceive risk in investing the time in helping another person to become successful. As a person's time is typically at a premium, the time spent helping a protégé may be a cost that a potential mentor is not willing to commit. There is the risk that time will be invested in a protégé but that person will not be successful and the protégé will reflect badly on the mentor. Finally, there is the risk that the protégé will simply take the mentor's knowledge and move on to another mentoring relationship.

For the mentor, the risks of a mentoring relationship are countered by the opportunity to help another person, see one's accomplishments remembered by another, be the source of positive regard by another, have a protégé to assist with projects and activities, and receive social support from the protégé. Mentors may also participate in mentoring relationships to help members of disadvantaged groups, to help those they care about, or to help their profession, passion, or area of expertise grow with talented new members who have gained from the knowledge shared.

The limited number of potential mentors coupled with the perceived risk in becoming part of a mentoring relationship places protégés at a disadvantage in finding mentors. Protégés have much to gain from a mentoring relationship and fewer risks to consider. Protégés might perceive risk in exposing lack of knowledge or expertise to a mentor, associating with a mentor, and possible future discouragement by the mentor if one wishes to move on to other relationships or pursuits. However, for protégés, the perceived risk of being close is not as strongly associated with avoiding mentoring relationships as it is for mentors. Being a protégé with a more accomplished mentor means having someone to help one gain knowledge, to advocate on one's behalf, and to help with gaining access to opportunities that one may not have had the opportunity to access on one's own. Those who report having a mentor also report greater success in business, education, and other pursuits. There is often competition with other potential protégés to develop a relationship with particularly successful mentors.

Mentoring relationships can be facilitated through invitation from the mentor to the protégé, through the protégé approaching a mentor, by a third-party arrangement placing the mentor and protégé together, or through routine and strategic social interaction between a potential mentor and protégé.

According to Mentoring Enactment Theory, mentoring relationships are developed, maintained, and repaired through strategic and routine communication with mentors and protégés. Just as with any relationship, mentoring relationships build slowly and communication should be appropriate for the level of the relationship. Mentoring Enactment Theory predicts a protégé approaching a potential mentor for general help and advice will be more effective at building a mentoring relationship than will a protégé who directly asks a potential mentor to be one's mentor. This is because a direct request to mentor would be the relational equivalent of asking someone in a beginning friendship to be one's best friend or asking someone in a beginning romantic relationship to marry. Although sometimes these bold questions will be met with the reward of the other's commitment, more likely the potential relational partner will be rebuffed for requesting too much commitment too soon in a relationship. This would not be the case for potential mentors who have already made the commitment through joining a formal mentoring program.

For mentors and protégés, the relationship develops in the context of the common goal or shared interest, be it work, career, education, hobby, spirituality, or whatever has drawn the mentor and protégé together. The mentor having more knowledge and experience in the area is in the position to teach and guide the protégé. The protégé is in the position to learn from the mentor and perhaps share new insights and discoveries with the mentor. Mentors may introduce the protégé to others who are accomplished in the area of interest and who can also help the protégé.

Mentors may also serve as advocates for the protégé, helping when difficult situations or competitors are encountered. Protégés help the mentor with tasks and with projects relating to the common goal or interest. A new perspective can help the mentor stay fresh. Also as protégés' skills and abilities develop, they can reciprocate with the mentor by sharing new insights, introducing the mentor to new associates with complementary interests, and advocating for their mentor as well.

Relational Maintenance and Repair

Mentors and protégés are members of a relationship and, as with other types of relationships, they can build trust and social support as well as have conflict and jealousy. Any factors or processes evident in any human relationship can be a part of a mentoring relationship. The mentoring relationship is unique in that the focus of the relationship is the goal or interest that drew the two together. This focus is elaborated in the context of a relationship.

Mentoring relationships may last only a few years or they may last a lifetime. Mentoring relationships have been studied as phase-based relationships with a specific beginning, development, and end. Mentoring relationships have also been studied as ongoing relationships that do not necessarily have a predictable trajectory. This perspective considers mentoring relationships to be developed through strategic and routine communication and these relationships may move forward or backward in development depending on the conflicts, challenges, and opportunities that occur as part of any relationship.

As in other relationships, mentors and protégés engage in relational maintenance strategies to keep their relationships viable. When conflict with their mentors occurs, protégés may employ a number of strategies to appease their mentors and to maintain their relationships. These can include pragmatic appeasement, such as pledging to work harder to accomplish expertise and complete tasks, as well as affable appeasement, such as expressing positive regard and focusing on the relationship more than on tasks.

Research has shown that mentors tend to forgive their protégés and to maintain positive regard for them after conflicts have occurred, with pragmatic appeasement strategies being more effective than are affable appeasement strategies. In these situations, the mentor and protégé power differential is evident, with protégés in the position of communicating appeasement and mentors in the position of forgiving the protégé.

Problems can occur in mentoring relationships when protégés' interests change or develop in ways that are no longer compatible with their mentors' interests. Protégés may disagree with the mentor's advice or surpass the mentor in accomplishments. In some cases, as protégés attempt to leave mentoring relationships or redefine these relationships as friendships or other more general sources of social support, this change may not be acceptable to the mentors. Some protégés experience difficulties exiting or redefining mentoring relationships as mentors may resist losing their protégé. As with any relationship, not all mentoring relationships are positive, however the relationships may still flourish with the protégé learning desired skills and the mentor building a legacy of knowledge shared.

Some protégés have several mentors. Others have built a network or constellation of social supportive relationships with mentors and others who are interested in their success. Some mentors have several protégés at one time or have several serial protégés. These protégés may form support networks among themselves as protégés or former protégés of a mentor.

Those who have been mentored are more likely to mentor others. This means that even if a mentor has only mentored one protégé in a lifetime, generations of protégés may be influenced by this relationship. If each protégé mentors one or more other protégés as they develop expertise and knowledge in an area of interest, the number of generations could be endless.

Mentoring relationships are the relational conduit for social support and success of a protégé. They can also provide social support to a mentor. Together the mentor and protégé form a relationship of care and assistance. Mentoring relationships will not always be smooth. However, if the mentor and protégé are able to maintain their relationship and go on to mentor others, then a web of social support and expertise can result from these mentoring relationships.

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See also Acquaintance Process; Helping Behaviors in Relationships; Initiation of Relationships; Maintaining Relationships; Mentoring Programs; Social Support, Nature of; Teacher–Student Relationships; Workplace Relationships

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METACOMMUNICATION

"The two of you might metacommunicate," the facilitator said to the two vice presidents who were struggling with understanding each other. Their puzzled looks were punctuated by one of them asking, "What do you mean by 'meta-comunicate'?" The facilitator replied, "Meta-communication is communicating about communication. For example, when you say, 'John, I'm only kidding' that tells him how to interpret what you said. The facilitator continued, "Such is the role of metacommunication—always present, not always noticed, yet an important interpersonal skill." This entry on metacommunication describes the types and uses of metacommunication and its use by competent communicators.

Explicit Metacommunication

Metacommunication occurs explicitly and implicitly. When someone says, "This is an order," or "I don't mean this as a criticism," or "I'm really upset with you," that person is telling the other explicitly how to interpret what is said. Explicit metacommunication serves as a verbal "frame" to guide the other's interpretation. As with any communication, explicit metacommunication may not match the receiver's experience of the speaker. For instance, if one has a habit of "joking," but is really saying sarcastic things, when he or she labels it as "Oh, I was just joking," the attempt at providing a frame may not match the other's experience. A good relationship occurs when the verbal frame provided matches with the other's experience—saying it was meant as a joke and the other interpreting it as a joke.

One of the skills personal counselors and therapists use is providing alternative "frames" or metacommunication labels for what clients are communicating. For example, if in a marital couple, the man says, "There she goes again, criticizing me," the counselor may say, "That is interesting—it sounded to me like she was just being descriptive and didn't mean that as a criticism." The counselor adds a different metacommunication label or frame, trying to help the man reinterpret the communication from his partner.

Explicit metacommunication can be seen as negative or positive. Early writers on metacommunication thought that in counseling, for example, most metacommunication was negative, such as "there he goes, trying to control me again." However, explicit metacommunication serves positive functions as well. A competent person in the business world might say, "I need to talk about this issue with you so we can be 'on the same page' and you will feel more supported"—clearly, a

positive metacommunication. In personal relationships, positive metacommunication is often at the heart of good exchanges, by labeling exactly what one intended so the other will not misinterpret the verbal message.

In this example, explicit metacommunication is used in the conversation itself. One can also metacommunicate explicitly about the nature of the relationship. For instance, to say, "Julio and I are friends" is a form of relationship-level metacommunication, so if the two of them hurl insults at one another, saying they are friends cues onlookers to their relationship—and how to interpret the exchanges. Romantic partners, who begin as friends and then become romantically involved, have to change their relationship-level metacommunication, by exclaiming, for example, "Oh, yes, we were friends and now we are seriously dating." Explicitly saying, "This is our relationship" is a form of metacommunication about how to interpret the exchanges. At times of relationship change such as this, it helps others interpret the communication by being explicit.

When you attend a party with your romantic partner, and say, "This is Carl, my boyfriend," it cues others about the nature of your relationship. Or, the reverse, when a politician is accused of having an affair and says, "Our relationship is strictly professional," the politician is trying to convince outsiders that the relationship is not romantic. A brother and sister, for example, may be close to each other and do lots of hugging and gentle touching. When they are with others, the brother may say, "Hi, this is my sister—I'm really lucky to have such a close relationship with her." The participants in all these relationships are trying to cue outsiders about the nature of their relationship by being explicit. One rather fascinating example of explicit attempts comes from a parrot. When the owner comes home and opens the door, the parrot says, "I love you." Although it warms the heart of the owner, the parrot is likely motivated more by the desire for a treat than by the desire to provide clear, explicit metacommunication!

Implicit Metacommunication

Humans also metacommunicate implicitly— without labeling their intentions. Implicit metacommunication is cueing the other nonverbally rather than verbally. For instance, if someone says, "Close the door" with a harsh tone of voice, or alternatively, says, "Close the door" in a friendly tone of voice, different implicit signals are given for how to interpret the communication. Interestingly, these implicit forms are more common than explicitly labeling how to interpret communication. The implicit forms occur within every exchange—participants are always cueing others with tone of voice, body language, and body tension about the proper meaning for the message. For instance, if someone is angry at his or her child, using a stilted tone of voice, tense body tone, and eye gaze directed above the child's head cues the child that the parent is upset. Or, the child, who, in response to a request from the parent to clean up her bedroom, doesn't look up and quickly says, "Whatever," lets the parent know the child is not really listening nor complying.

Other animals besides humans also implicitly metacommunicate. For instance, two dogs can signal each other how to interpret their intentions, with absolute accuracy. One dog, while looking aggressive, can metacommunicate to the other, "This is play—not serious dominance." And then they play. The elaborate rituals dogs and other animals use when greeting another of their species ensures fairly accurate metacommunication. The dog in the park doesn't walk up and say, "I'm friendly and won't attack you" to another dog, but body posture, speed of closing in, eye gaze, tail wagging, and the degree of body tension, all signal the other that no attack is forthcoming. It is interesting watching humans who do not know a particular dog misinterpret that dog's implicit metacommunication. Rosie, an Australian shepherd, for example, bares her teeth to humans she likes—it is a "smile," rather than a sign of aggression. But humans who do not know her may think she is snarling at them. Another dog, meeting her, however, relies on a host of cues in addition to the smile, and there is no miscommunication—the meaning is instantly clear and accurate. Dogs also read dominance signals from other dogs they have just met. What is it about dogs (and other animals as well) that allows them to metacommunicate with another with absolute accuracy, yet humans seem to struggle over their metacommunication with someone they have lived with for years? It

may be that humans emit messages with more mixed signals than do other animals. Humans, can, however, learn what signals work to cue their animals about their intentions. Dog owners, for example, who want to play with their dogs can do so without any words. Rather than explicitly saying, "Rover, now we are going to play," the human will hunch over, move rapidly, grab the dog's toy, and instantly the dog knows that this is play behavior—good, implicit metacommunication is occurring between the two of them. An engaging television program, *The Dog Whisperer,* illustrates how interspecies' implicit metacommunication occurs. Caesar Milan, the dog whisperer, specializes in retraining dogs that have gotten out of control. Using no words, he can instantly metacommunicate with a dog. For example, to get a dog to stop jumping on humans, he simply quickly grabs the dog on the neck and lets go. The dog apparently interprets this as a "bite" and, as if an adult dog were training her, stops jumping on the human.

Metacommunication of both types, explicit and implicit, are skills that can be learned. Children learn both by observation and through explicit instruction. For example, a father may teach his son to look someone in the eye when speaking, rather than looking sideways, to signal sincerity and respect. For children, and all of us, once someone learns some metacommunication repertoires, he or she can implicitly show their intentions for a conversation or explicitly say what those intentions are. This allows the receiver into the world of the sender, and opens dialogue about what the receiver interpreted. For instance, if one metacommunicates and describes what is going on in a conversation ("I note that every time I say something about your team, you interrupt me"), it can serve as a springboard to clarify communication patterns.

There may be important cultural differences in the recognition and use of metacommunication because humans learn how to use or not use metacommunication. Some cultures teach and practice it on levels not seen in Eurocentric cultures. For instance, the Maori indigenous culture in New Zealand has the *Haka*—a dramatic approach to strangers that entails a threatening posture and loud vocal sounds. More research could uncover forms of metacommunication used across the world. It would be useful to find examples of when metacommunication enhances communication exchanges and relationships. Learning the skills of both explicit and implicit forms of metacommunication helps individuals expand their communication repertoires. It may be, as trained mediators and counselors know, improving both explicit metacommunication ("talk about talk") and being more sensitive to the implicit cues are both important and useful skills. Such skill improvements are useful in many contexts, from personal relationships to situations where persuasion is the key to success, such as in a sales situation.

William W. Wilmot

See also Accuracy in Communication; Deception and Lying; Equivocation; Initiation of Relationships; Nonverbal Communication, Status Differences; Personal Relationships, Defining Characteristics

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MILITARY AND RELATIONSHIPS

In practical terms, the military family must be divided into at least two major groups, according to the military's institutionalized pattern of stratification. There are officers; an educated, managerial class; and enlisted personnel, a class of workers whose normal duties include the performance of manual labor, or, in the case of higher-ranking enlisted soldiers, the immediate supervision of lower-ranked enlistees. By design, there is little mobility between officer and enlisted classes, but there are gradations within each. There are then at least four main categories of military family, according to the rank of the serving soldier: junior

enlisted (new recruits), senior enlisted (soldiers promoted out of the ranks to administrative and ceremonial positions), junior officers (recent college graduates now tasked with small group leadership), and senior officers (the highest ranked service members). Within each category are subdivisions by the usual demographic markers such as race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic origin, marital status, and number of children (if any). This portrait is further complicated by changes to the military institution itself across time. In the 20th century alone, the U.S. military experienced periods of build-up as well as periods of personnel drawdowns, both popular and unpopular wars, segregation and subsequent desegregation (1948), periods of conscription (World War I, World War II, and 1948 to 1973), and several anomalous events, including a military participation rate of 12 percent during World War II, unmatched in U.S. history, before or since. Thus, there is no single "military family," just as there is no monolithic "civilian family."

Service members serve the needs of a demanding and unusual institution. On the one hand, the families of service members pass through phases familiar to any sociologist of the family: mate selection, marriage, parenting, competing career demands, divorce, internal conflict and perhaps even violence within the family, and retirement planning. On the other hand, these phases are shaped by the unique features of the military institution, among the most intrusive of which are the following: (a) Members of the military are subject to an additional set of laws known as the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). These laws are stringent and socially conservative. For example, adultery and homosexuality are both criminal acts according to UCMJ. In practice, the laws of UCMJ pertaining to family dynamics are selectively enforced. For example, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is an attempt to regularize selective enforcement of the legal prohibition on homosexuality. Although only the service member is subject to UCMJ, his or her entire family is often forced to conform to its mandates by extension. (b) Service members are required to be available to the military at all times, and for whatever duty, however inconvenient, unpleasant, or hazardous. The family must adapt to this reality, which often translates into prolonged separations, frequent relocations,

disruptions to the career of the spouse not serving in the military, school system irregularity for the children, the risk of death or disability to the main provider of the family, and general uncertainty about the future. On a more positive note, the military provides its members and their families with a social welfare net unparalleled in the civilian sector, except perhaps in some religious orders. This safety net consists of such substantial benefits as job security, housing and food subsidies, free medical care, educational benefits, low-cost life insurance, and subsidized retirement plans. Given these distinctive features of military life, it is not surprising that the demographics and trends of military families sometimes differ dramatically from those that characterize their civilian counterparts. This entry describes military families, their benefits, and the challenges they face in contemporary U.S. society.

Characteristics of the Military Family

Marriage

The military provides significant support for single-earner families. Military compensation is to some extent need-based. Although the base salary for enlisted soldiers is low, soldiers with families to support are allocated tax-free housing awards. The amount of the award is based on the zip code in which the soldier is stationed, thus reflecting the actual cost of living in a given area. Similarly, service members with families are provided with allowances for food, and are entitled to free medical care and subsidized childcare. The military also pays service members a moving allowance when relocation is ordered. Again, this amount is based entirely on need: the formula is based on the weight of the family's possessions and the number of miles to be traveled. A by-product of this need-based system of compensation is that the married soldier receives pay in partially prebudgeted form, with money set aside for housing and groceries separately. In this same spirit, senior enlisted personnel are expected to ensure that junior enlisted soldiers provide for their families. For example, sergeants often help new recruits find affordable off-post housing. This house hunting is often carried out in uniform, during the course of a normal day of duty, and often by order of a still-higher

ranked enlisted soldier. Two qualifications should be made here: (1) This family-protective policy is a recent innovation. The military was a conscript force from 1948 to 1973, during which time the normal soldier, in demographic terms, was a young, unattached male serving only for a short time. Family-friendly policy in the military has improved continuously since the advent of the all-volunteer force in 1973, often in response to crises in housing or education. (2) The family-friendly policies of the military are based on a narrow definition of family. No material provisions are made for same-sex couples or heterosexual cohabitators. These policies are thus favorable only to heterosexual married couples and implicitly assume a traditional breadwinner–homemaker model.

The reinforcement of the traditional family model extends beyond financial compensation. Some of the hardships inherent to military life are detrimental to the career of the nonmilitary spouse. Many military posts are located in otherwise remote areas where there may be a lack of employment opportunities. Frequent relocations may prevent the spouse from cultivating the social network and institutional affiliation essential to many high-paying or prestigious jobs. Lastly, the frequent and prolonged absences of the military spouse require that the nonmilitary spouse be prepared at all times to take full responsibility for childcare, a demand incompatible with a high-pressure career. The nonmilitary spouse is effectively assigned a supporting role, an assignment that, according to the little research done in this area, some male spouses find particularly difficult. Perhaps not coincidentally, male service members are more likely to be married than are female service members. In 2002, 42 percent of enlisted women and half of all women officers were married, whereas half of all enlisted men and 71 percent of male officers were married. A contributing factor to this disparity is that men are more likely than women to serve for prolonged periods, and the likelihood of being married increases with seniority. In contrast with the dual-working civilian family norm, the gendered breadwinner–homemaker family model is more common in the military because of such institutional structures. An important exception is the joint-military family (roughly 1 in 10 military marriages), and these marriages are far less likely to have children. The

military's structural conditions and lack of support for cohabitation thus lead to high marriage rates at younger than average ages, even though mate selection is impeded (for men) because of the gender imbalance in the military and strict rules that prohibit romantic relations between service members of different ranks.

Children and Parenting

Service members tend to have children earlier in the life course in comparison with civilians. Many recruits marry and have children before the end of their first term of enlistment. Because of lack of seniority in the military, their pay is low, which is compounded by the fact that they have little experience with budgeting at this point in their lives. As a result, even though they receive some important financial subsidies from the military, they often experience financial difficulties.

Military personnel are usually required to relocate every few years, often to assignments abroad. This policy has both negative and positive consequences for the children of military families (who often refer to themselves as "military brats"). Military children benefit from well-funded Department of Defense schools and living abroad provides the opportunity for second-language acquisition. On the other hand, this distinctive lifestyle can have negative effects on a child's development. Frequent relocations, for example, interrupt the social and educational developmental process for some military children.

Domestic Problems

"The family," Richard Gelles and Murray Strauss wrote, "[is] our most violent institution with the exception of the military in time of war." As noted earlier, many institutional, legal, and economic forces in the military isolate the nonmilitary spouse and ensure her (in most cases) dependence on the service member. Further, the military is an institution where young men (in most cases) are taught to solve problems through aggression and violence. The military invests heavily in domestic violence-prevention programs. Its counterpart to the civilian Child Protective Services is particularly well funded. Families also have much less of a right to privacy than their civilian counterparts, which

facilitates aggressive intervention by social services as well as by superior officers. It is, however, unknown whether the military's additional safeguards against domestic violence compensate for the additional risk factors inherent to military life. Although some studies conclude that domestic abuse is more widespread in the military than in the civilian sector, other studies have come to the opposite conclusion.

Divorce

The divorce rate in the United States increases after war. After World War II, there was a dramatic and unprecedented surge in the divorce rate. By 1950, the rate had subsided to levels approximately equal to that of the immediate prewar period. The rate of divorce after World War II was not equaled again until the 1970s and the advent of widespread female employment and no-fault divorce. Does service in the military increase likelihood of divorce? It is difficult to compare military and civilian divorce rates for several reasons. Approximately a third of new enlistees fail to complete their first term of service, and of those who do, most do not reenlist for a second term. Thus, junior enlisted personnel may separate from the service (just) before divorcing. Nevertheless, some (inconclusive) evidence suggests that the rate of divorce might be lower in the military than in the civilian sector. After all, the military provides legal, social, and economic support for marriage in a way unmatched in the civilian sector. In addition, no conclusive evidence supports the hypothesis that frequent deployments adversely affect marital outcomes, although deployments involving combat are linked to a higher likelihood of divorce.

In sum, available evidence suggests that the experience of combat generally has a negative impact on military families; however, the military attempts to counteract this with policies that both promote and protect the family. Most military service takes place during times of peace, so families appear to benefit overall from such compensatory policies.

Fictive Kinship in the Military

There are concepts of family operative in the military that do not meet the U.S. Census criteria for "family" (individuals related by birth, marriage, or adoption). Some family ties are illegal or unrecognized. As noted earlier, cohabitors in the military receive no support or recognition, and same-sex couples are in violation of military law. On the other hand, there exist institutionally supported family-type relationships between otherwise unrelated soldiers. Just as families are power systems with more or less clearly defined roles, so is the military, with many of the same consequences, both good and bad. Military sociologists have carefully studied the role of male bonding as it relates to combat motivation. The consensus among military sociologists after World War II was that soldiers fought not for ideology but, rather, for their buddies. Military authority, taking the lessons of sociology to heart, has now in effect mandated brotherhood among soldiers at the level of the small unit. This is particularly prevalent in combat units where female soldiers are excluded. This mandate is carried out through the creation of "buddy teams" and through sustained and intense rhetoric. Similarly, the commander of a unit often uses the language of a distant and authoritarian father. The concept of family is thus overlaid on the rigid hierarchy of military life.

Daniel Burland and Jennifer Hickes Lundquist

See also Fictive Kinship; Job Stress, Relationship Effects; Work–Family Conflict; Work–Family Spillover; Workplace Relationships

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Minding the Relationship

Minding the relationship refers to a theory of relationship maintenance and satisfaction. The name of the theory, "minding," emphasizes that relationship satisfaction is primarily a matter of how partners think about a relationship; happiness in a relationship is created in the minds of the partners. The theory suggests that relationship satisfaction may be sustained over long periods through positive habits of cognition and communication between partners. Minding Theory incorporates five basic recommendations: self-disclosure, respect, positive attributions, reciprocity, and continuity. This entry discusses the Minding Theory and its five basic recommendations.

Self-disclosure refers to sharing personal information about oneself with a partner. It is central to Minding Theory that satisfied partners, over time, will gradually disclose more intimate information to each other. One effect of this disclosure between partners is to promote a deeper knowledge of each other's past experiences and current emotions. Another purpose of disclosure is to increase trust between partners, assuming that when disclosure becomes more intimate, partners treat new revelations respectfully. Finally, continuing disclosure allows partners to grow together over time through the continued sharing of new insights, desires, and experiences.

Also central to Minding Theory is the principle of respect and acceptance. In a satisfying relationship, as disclosure increases, partners will be able to respect what they learn about each other. When new information is revealed about a partner, Minding Theory recommends that even if this information is negative, a sense of respect for the other should be retained. Ideally, the information is incorporated into the partner's existing beliefs about the relationship without damaging the overall positive nature of these beliefs. Some discoveries may be too negative for one partner to continue holding onto these positive attitudes, for example, a disclosure of long-term infidelity or dishonesty. Because Minding Theory predicts that relationships are based on how partners think about each other, information that severely damages the positive mindset about a partner should also endanger relationship satisfaction and long-term stability.

The third principle of minding is that partners in a stable and satisfying relationship will tend to make positive attributions or explanations for each other's behaviors. The theory recommends that partners generally explain each others' actions in a positive way. For example, if Sam is late to a dinner date, Chris may initially assume outside factors must be involved rather than immediately blaming Sam for thoughtlessness. The tendency to positive attributions may be especially important when a partner's actions may be ambiguous or awkward, such as giving a well-meant but badly chosen gift or making a clumsy gesture of affection. A minding partner will perceive and acknowledge the good intention. A simpler way of putting this is to say that partners should give each other the benefit of the doubt. It is important in minding to respect information about a partner and to attribute positive motives to the partner's behaviors.

The first three principles of Minding Theory, as discussed, describe ways of developing a particular way of thinking about a partner. During disclosure, partners develop a positive view of each other. Respect encourages partners to maintain this positivity when learning new information about each other. This constructive view of a partner makes it easier to create positive attributions for his or her behavior. The final two Minding Theory principles, reciprocity and continuity, are about the practical nature of maintaining a satisfying relationship.

The principle of reciprocity assumes that disclosure, respect, and positive attributions are most helpful to a relationship when both partners are practicing them. When one partner is not open to intimate sharing with the other, cannot respect what is known about the other, or cannot maintain a generally positive view of the other's behavior, this may damage the stability of the relationship. No matter how hard one person tries to establish a positive foundation for the relationship, Minding Theory predicts that a lack of matching response from the other will ultimately undermine the overall quality of the relationship.

The final component of Minding Theory is continuity. Minding is not just essential at the beginning of a relationship or when a relationship is in danger of ending. To achieve long-lasting relationship satisfaction, the theory stipulates that the process of sharing, respect, and positive attributions

should continue throughout the life of the relationship. There will be points in any long-term relationship when partners are stressed and one or more of the minding elements suffer. The theory would suggest that during those times, the sense of togetherness and stability that minding supports will also suffer. Only when partners begin minding again with regularity will the relationship recover its previous strength. If partners have never fully engaged in the minding components, these ordinary relationship stressors may easily precipitate relationship crises or break ups.

Minding Theory is based on the assumption that relationships are most likely to last over time when they provide emotional satisfaction to the partners. Marriages or other partnerships that are based on other factors, such as social status or financial stability, may be long-lived for other reasons that have little to do with minding. Minding Theory would suggest, however, that even partnerships formed for reasons other than emotional satisfaction can still be sources of this satisfaction if partners begin to practice the components of minding. Minding Theory was also conceived primarily as a method of explaining long-term satisfaction and maintenance of romantic relationships, but can be applied to other types of interpersonal relationships.

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See also Attribution Processes in Relationships; Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Maintaining Relationships; Reciprocity of Liking; Self-Disclosure

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Misattribution of Arousal

Misattribution of arousal occurs when people incorrectly identify the source of their physiological arousal. For example, one might incorrectly attribute elevated heart rate to the presence of a person sitting close by, when this physiological response may actually be caused by some recently ingested caffeine. Although many variables may influence which of several possible sources is acknowledged as the cause of arousal, in the end, two primary factors are necessary for misattribution to occur: physiological arousal and at least two possible sources of that arousal (the true cause and the misidentified cause). Given this simple recipe, the misattribution of arousal may occur during transient interactions as well as in more enduring relationships. This entry discusses the theoretical and experimental origins of the misattribution of arousal effect and how the misidentification of emotions can influence social relationships.

Emotion Misconstrued

One result of misidentifying the source of arousal may be the mislabeling of emotional arousal. In a classic study, Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer suggested that emotion is experienced when both physiological arousal and a cognitive label for the experience co-occur. It matters not whether the arousal precedes or follows the emotional label for the experience of an emotion, just that they are jointly experienced at some point. For example, imagine that a person enters a situation expecting joy and is subsequently aroused. According to this model, this person will experience joy because that label was most available when the arousal was experienced. Although in this instance the emotion (joy) occurs with the onset of arousal, one might also imagine a situation in which arousal precedes the cognitive labeling process. For example, a person might experience an elevated heart rate while sitting in a coffee shop and not attach an emotional label to the arousal until another person sits nearby at another table. In this case, the caffeine-induced arousal might be misattributed to the more salient environmental cue of

the other person, resulting in the attachment of an emotional label (e.g., attraction, love, lust) to the experienced arousal. In this instance, the arousal precedes the emotional label and the true source of the arousal may not be prominent in the person's mind as the situation unfolds.

The impact of the salience of possible sources of arousal and the subsequent mislabeling of emotions has been examined extensively over the years. In Schachter and Singer's experiment, participants were placed in a situation where the source of their arousal could be attributed to multiple sources. Schachter and Singer reported that subjects who did not have an accurate explanation for the cause of their arousal were more likely than others were to mimic the behavior of another person (e.g., euphoric) who was present. This imitation has been interpreted as the result of the misattribution process that resulted in participants' mislabeling of emotion. That is, participants in this situation employed the most salient cue available to interpret their experience—the confederate's behavior—and thereby produced an emotional label that was consistent with the confederate's behavior. Although Schachter and Singer's model is no longer viewed as a viable explanation of emotion, their initial inquiry spawned numerous studies demonstrating that people actively interpret their social situations, consider plausible explanations to label their experiences, and at times settle on the most cognitively available explanation.

Arousal and Attraction

The suggestion that people might mislabel their emotional responses in social situations has served as fertile ground for the study of attraction. For example, why do people feel attracted to another person? Is it because of a unique constellation of traits the other possesses or might this reflect misidentification of the true source of arousal? In an early study, Donald Dutton and Arthur Aron had an experimenter (either male or female) interact with male participants after crossing a 230-foot gorge over a bridge constructed of wooden boards and rope. After a short interview, participants were given the experimenter's phone number to call for additional information about the experiment. Other participants were met after crossing a small footbridge across a pond on campus and the same procedure was followed. Participants who crossed the rope bridge were more likely than were the footbridge participants to call the female experimenter. These results have been interpreted as the males' misattributing the source of the arousal (the scary bridge) to the female experimenter and labeling their experience as attraction rather than fear. One might argue that the source of the arousal was clearly available in this setting, but nevertheless, the men acted in a fashion suggesting they substituted one source label for another. This study has been replicated widely over the years in both laboratories as well as in field settings.

In numerous demonstrations of the misattribution effect, a common theme emerges: arousal is experienced but a likely source of the arousal is discounted or minimized. Therefore, the true impact of the earlier arousal on later behavior and emotional labeling is not accurately assessed; the emotional response to a later situation may be mislabeled entirely. Such mislabeling because of source substitution is consistent with a traditional application of Schachter and Singer's model and usually is paired with the belief that the true source must be ambiguous. However, as suggested earlier, arousal appears to influence assessments of interpersonal attraction even when the ambiguity of the true source varies widely. For example, the link between arousal and attraction has been demonstrated in a variety of settings where the arousal source is diverse and ambiguous, including movie theaters, amusement parks, zoos, and lab settings using aerobic exercise. A meta-analysis of 33 studies confirms a moderately strong relationship between arousal and attraction.

Alternative Explanations for Misattribution

Several plausible alternatives to a misattribution explanation for the link between arousal and attraction have been proposed. For example, the *response-facilitation model* suggests that arousal will enhance the dominant emotional response to a person or a situation. Therefore, if one is predisposed to be attracted to another person, the experience of arousal in the presence of this person would increase the emotional response to them.

Similarly, if the dominant response to one's roommate is disgust, then arousal following exercise would enhance those feelings when encountering him or her. Absent from this model is a need for the source of the arousal to be ambiguous. Therefore, arousal will augment the dominant emotional response regardless of how salient the true source of the arousal is.

A different explanation of the link between arousal and attraction (the Excitation Transfer Model) emphasizes that arousal does not quickly dissipate after being experienced because the sympathetic nervous system takes some time to quiet down. Therefore, arousal from one source may persist following its initial experience. This lingering arousal may enhance later emotional reactions to others but cannot be too salient for the effect to occur. For example, the residual arousal left over from a frightening encounter may augment or intensify attraction to another person if enough time has passed since the arousing event.

Lastly, Craig Foster and his colleagues offer a two-stage *judgment and adjustment model* that integrates the results from the many studies examined in their meta-analysis. The first stage of their model (judgment) allows for arousal to have an automatic effect on attraction regardless of source salience. The second stage (adjustment) represents the period that follows the initial impact of arousal. During this stage, people may alter their initial assessment of attraction (or repulsion), if aware of the arousal and if motivated to change.

Misattribution Research Applied to a Broader Context

Although feelings of attraction to another person may involve arousal, the judgment and adjustment model suggests that there are opportunities to negate (or make negligible) the impact of arousal. For example, one might resist an initial attraction if it is interpreted as coming from an external source. However, one might also ignore these cognitive brakes and accept the feelings of attraction. Perhaps this is a place where personality variables or previous learning histories influence decision-making processes. Or, possibly, this is where alcohol comes into play. Ultimately, this two-stage explanation of the misattribution effect suggests that human cognitive processes are able to override their initial emotional reactions, if so chosen.

Emotional responses other than attraction should also be considered when applying misattribution to human relationships. For example, arousal may augment emotional responses such as anger or hate. Augmenting these emotional responses may lead to aggressive or violent acts directed against other people involved in an arousing situation as well as individuals encountered after the event. Again, using the judgment and adjustment model, it might be predicted that arousal induced by vehicle jousting in rush hour traffic would increase the likelihood of aggressiveness against other commuters, work colleagues, or loved ones after arrival at home. However, as noted earlier, the model also predicts that people can decide whether or not to act upon their emotional states.

Can the misattribution of arousal effect extend to leisure or mildly competitive activities? If one assumes that arousal is a component of these situations, then simply participating in the activity may influence emotional evaluations of others present during the activity as well as persons encountered immediately following the activity. For example, emotional responses might be enhanced toward companions in a robust tennis match or an exhilarating scuba dive.

Finally, although people may recognize that certain situations produce arousal, being overly attentive to the experience of arousal may interfere with performance on some tasks. For example, math exams can elicit high arousal for individuals who believe they lack the aptitude for quantitative reasoning. Talia Ben-Zeev and her colleagues found that female participants were able to overcome the arousal associated with stereotypes of poor female performance on math tests when they were permitted to attribute their arousal to an external source. Under certain circumstance, then, misattribution of arousal may weaken rather than calcify socially harmful stereotypes.

William Dragon

See also Anger in Relationships; Arousal and Attraction; Emotion in Relationships; Excitation Transfer Theory; Interpersonal Attraction; Mate Selection; Physical Environment and Relationships; Stress and Relationships

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MONEY AND COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

Contrary to what many people believe, romantic relationships bear the imprint of economics. *Money,* or economic resources such as earnings or income from stocks, affects whether romantic relationships are formed, how people experience those relationships, and whether they dissolve. This entry defines *couple relationships* as romantic, typically sexual relationships between two individuals. Because most research on the connection between couples and money focuses on married couples or couples who are living together, rather than dating, this entry follows suit.

Forming Couple Relationships

It is well established that married couples enjoy higher incomes than do same-sex or opposite-sex couples who are living together. However, scientists have shown that *getting married* is linked to people's monetary situations, with people who are financially well-off being more likely to marry. Conversely, those who have little money or are poor are less likely to marry, with some never marrying. These conclusions stem from scores of studies that analyze information from thousands of people representative of the U.S. population, or large subgroups of the population, as well as studies based on lengthy interviews with a small number of individuals; the former is termed *quantitative* and the latter *qualitative* research.

Why is money related to getting married? There appears to be a cultural belief that one must be financially secure to wed and that marriage signifies that one is no longer struggling economically. Specific factors include having the money for a wedding and reception, a house, being debt-free, and not living paycheck to paycheck. Scientists have also found that, despite increasing commitment to equality between men and women, some people, both men and women, pay more attention to the man's economic situation than to the woman's in deciding about marriage. In other words, men's monetary standing has a stronger positive impact on marriage than does women's, suggesting a continued cultural emphasis on men as primary breadwinners.

Now that living together, or what is also termed *cohabitation,* has become commonplace and, indeed, the typical path to marriage, many family scientists have been studying the linkage between money and cohabitation as well as money and the movement into marriage among cohabiting couples. Qualitative research shows that many opposite-sex cohabitors explicitly state that the ability to save on expenses is an important and logical reason to move in with a romantic partner, given that the couple is usually already spending so much time together. They report that moving in with a partner allows couples to save money by combining resources and splitting a variety of expenses such as groceries, gas, electricity, and rent.

At the same time, cohabiting couples hold higher economic expectations for marriage than

for cohabitation. In other words, even after moving in together, the decision to get married is connected to economic circumstances: Marriage is more likely to occur when the couple is well-off in job stability and earnings. In addition, more emphasis is again placed by both men and women on men's economic capacity to be a breadwinner than on women's, although one recent study indicates that women's earnings are becoming increasingly important in the decision to marry.

Scientists are increasingly focusing on poor women or couples who have had children outside of marriage. Having children while single or cohabiting has become increasingly common: Nearly 40 percent of children today are born in these circumstances. Policymakers are interested in what can be done to increase the chances that these children grow up in a two-parent, married family. This interest is controversial and based on some research that suggests such a circumstance may be best for children, although this is not always the case. When a marriage is marred by domestic violence or overt conflict, for example, children are better off if their parents part ways. Further, as discussed in this entry, monetary problems make relationships vulnerable to break up.

Similar to research on couples in general, low-income unmarried mothers say that money is an issue when they think about marriage. They expect their male partner to be a reliable breadwinner; inability to do so is an important basis for these mothers' hesitation to marry. Thus, couples are hesitant to marry unless economic stability has been achieved, whether they have children or not. Scientists have also shown that the partners of low-income women, not surprisingly, tend to be disadvantaged themselves. They typically have low education, making it difficult to be optimistic about their capacity to obtain well-paying jobs in the current U.S. economy.

Couple Dynamics

When two people live together in a romantic relationship, whether or not they have formally married, money influences how each experiences the relationship, including their sense of satisfaction. The issue that has received the most attention by researchers, however, is the connection between money and the division of household labor in heterosexual marriages or cohabitations. Many scientists have focused on who does the housework, and why, based on the notion that the partner with less economic power, traditionally the female, will take on the bulk of household and childcare duties.

Although an increasing proportion of women are earning as much or more than their husbands (about one third), husbands still earn more in most marriages. Gender inequality in earnings holds among cohabiting couples, too, although the disparity is somewhat less sharp. An additional point is that earnings differences become more pronounced when a couple has children. This is because many women cut back at work or leave the workforce entirely for a time upon childbearing.

As a result, some scholars argue that women reap greater economic benefits from marriage than men; sharing economic resources increases a woman's standard of living while she is caring for young children, although she is also sacrificing the accumulation of additional employment experience. Even when she is fully employed, some income discrepancy usually remains because of women's lower earnings in the labor market compared with men in general, even when both have the same education and work experience.

Division of Housework

Scientists have drawn on Exchange Theory to understand the division of household labor. This theory posits that the individual who brings more money into the household will have more bargaining power in the relationship. Power essentially refers to who is more likely to get one's way when it comes to decision making about major purchases or the division of household labor.

Research provides general support for this idea. Among gay couples, the wealthier and more educated man enjoys greater power, although this appears less likely to hold in lesbian couple relationships. In heterosexual couples, women decrease time doing housework when they earn relatively more money, perhaps purchasing substitutes such as help with childcare and housework, but still perform the majority of the household work compared with their male partners. Yet one scholar recently demonstrated that wives' relative earnings

compared with their husbands' does not explain how much housework they do. Rather, it is women's absolute earnings that matters: The more a woman earns, the less housework she does. Research also shows that when husbands or wives perceive the division of housework to be unfair, marital satisfaction for both spouses is reduced, putting couples at greater risk of divorce.

Financial Arrangements Among Couples

An emerging focus of research is the extent to which different types of couples *pool* their incomes. That is, do they combine their incomes fully, keep some money separate, or keep all money separate? It is important to emphasize, however, that all couples living together share expenses in one way or another even if their incomes are not combined into joint checking or savings accounts. In this case, each partner pays a share, often proportionate to their earnings, for joint expenses (e.g., mortgage, utilities, children's needs) and pays for independent purchases (e.g., clothing) separately.

Married couples are most likely to fully pool, about three quarters, although cohabiting couples are not far behind at approximately 50 percent. Research also suggests that Blacks, the elderly (likely for tax purposes or to qualify for Medicaid), those who marry at older ages, and couples in which at least one partner has been divorced are less likely to pool economic resources; when partners earn a comparable amount, they are more likely to pool incomes. Some scholars have found that when married couples do pool *and* the husband earns more money, the husband tends to have more control over the couple's economic resources. Although data are lacking about historical trends, arguably pooling was much more common in the past when women were less likely to be employed.

Turning to the matter of relationship quality, pooling money can be a source of tension or conflict: One partner may not agree with the way the other is spending money he or she perceives as jointly owned. In some cases, dual-earner couples begin their marriages with pooled economic arrangements, but later decide that it is best for their marriage to establish separate accounts.

Two other areas of research are relevant to the topic of income arrangements. Recently, some researchers are examining the linkage between debt and marital satisfaction. Taking on large amounts of consumer debt (e.g., credit cards, installment loans, or overdue bills) appears to decrease satisfaction, whereas completely paying off this type of debt increases marital satisfaction. Only large increases in consumer debt are associated with declines in marital satisfaction; this could be a result of longer work hours, and thus less time spent together, to try to pay off debt, as well as arguments about money when couples are under financial stress. Interestingly, mortgage debt does not appear to affect marital satisfaction. A likely explanation is the economic and tax advantage of home ownership. Research has shown that homes constitute the most valuable asset for most married couples.

An area about which little is known concerns dating couples. Who should pay for dates? Although many people still believe that the male is responsible for paying the bill, a 1996 study of college students suggests that women are more likely than men to believe that the person initiating the date should pay. Furthermore, younger students tend to hold less traditional views about paying for dates and do not expect it to necessarily fall to men to do so.

Ending Couple Relationships

It is well known that levels of divorce are quite high, with estimates suggesting that about 50 percent of marriages are likely to end in divorce. The incidence of relationship dissolution is even higher among cohabiting couples. What role does money play in these patterns?

Simply put, the key scientific finding is the opposite of what encourages the formation of couple relationships and particularly marriage. Whereas good economic circumstances encourage marriage, precarious ones make couples vulnerable to break up and divorce. This linkage has been replicated time and time again. For example, scientists have consistently shown that the likelihood of divorce is inversely related to measures of economic well-being such as family income and educational attainment and positively related to economic hardship.

Thus, people who are economically advantaged are more likely to marry and more likely to stay

married. Consider the following estimates, though they draw on education rather than actual income, a measure that scientists often use if necessary to indirectly tap economic standing: 60 percent of the marriages of women without high school degrees will end, compared with only one third of the marriages of women with college degrees or more.

Relationship Quality

Why do disadvantaged economic circumstances translate into higher rates of couple dissolution? Scientists have made progress in unearthing the mechanisms behind such patterns, using both qualitative interviews and analyzing large surveys. The simple answer is that economic distress affects marital quality, with money being protective of couple relationships via interactional and psychological processes. For example, perceived economic hardship is negatively related to relationship quality, with low income and employment uncertainty associated with marital conflict and psychological distress. A study focusing on Black married couples finds that perceived economic adequacy—measured by sufficient income for food, clothing, medical care, leisure, and some extra money left at the end of the month—is connected to marital satisfaction. In addition, scientists have shown that economic pressures harm marital satisfaction by promoting hostility in interactions and decreasing supportive behavior of husbands toward wives.

Cohabiting couples are subject to the same stresses engendered by lack of money. A qualitative study suggests that financial constraints are a source of relationship conflict that affects relationship quality. Couples fight about money when money is tight and not enough to pay all the bills at the end of the month, stressing the relationship. Money, or rather lack thereof, is thus problematic for their relationships and the sense of a stable future, indicating a pathway by which financial difficulties decrease the chance of marriage. In the event that financial circumstances improve, cohabitors report that their relationships improve too.

The financial consequences of divorce differ by gender. Study after study has shown that divorced women fare poorly economically compared with divorced men. Their total incomes usually decline more than men's do when a marriage ends because men typically earn more than women do, and men's

postdivorce incomes are lower than divorced men's even after accounting for child support payments.

The greater instability of cohabiting than marital relationships is a growing focus of research. Additionally, now that cohabitation is such a common family form, scientists are increasingly asking the same questions about the break ups of cohabitations as they have asked about divorce. For example, researchers have long documented the economic consequences of divorce for men and women. Recently, researchers have asked the identical question about what happens economically when cohabiting couples break up: The upshot is similar to divorce. Compared with men, women experience a steeper decline in economic well-being, and have less money, when a cohabiting relationship ends.

Conclusion

A theme throughout this entry has been gender. Despite women's massive entrance into employment during the last several decades and attitudes about gender becoming increasingly egalitarian, when it comes to couples and money, things are not equal. Couples consider the male's economic situation more than the female's when it comes to thinking about and getting married, housework and childcare responsibilities still primarily fall to women, and the economic fallout from breaking up is worse for women than for men. In same-sex couples, the partner having more wealth or a traditionally masculine job wields more power and, not surprisingly, does less work in the home.

Although these may be choices that couples make, consciously or not, it is fascinating fodder to family scientists. In the last several decades, new family forms are being constructed, with decreasing cultural pressure to conform to a traditional or single model of family life. Couples are thus freer to write their own scripts for their relationships. And yet these scripts are still marked by gender difference.

Love, passion, marriage: One might not immediately think about money when contemplating the meaning of romantic relationships. But money is part of the picture all the same. It plays an important role in the formation of couple relationships, how couples divide their time in housework

and employment, how they organize their finances, and whether and why relationships fall apart.

People who are economically well-off are more likely to marry (although they now usually cohabit first), raise children within marriage, and stay married. Those at the economic margins may remain single, cohabit and perhaps cohabit again, have children in cohabitation or dating relationships, and are more vulnerable to the break up of their marriages and live-in relationships. Money can't buy happiness, but it does help to buy marriage, reduce housework for women, and keep divorce at bay.

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See also Biological Systems for Courtship, Mating, Reproduction, and Parenting; Compassionate Love; Falling in Love; Intimacy; Marriage, Expectations About; Romanticism

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MOOD AND RELATIONSHIPS

Moods are affective states that can be every bit as intense as emotions, but are not directed at a target and thus are often experienced in a more prolonged fashion. Emotions, on the other hand, are of shorter duration and largely depend on the onset and offset of a specific event. In some cases, moods may be the residual of an emotion, such as the lingering anxiety that persists even after the original threat has subsided. Affective states such as serenity or irritation are examples of "pure" moods.

Our moods constitute powerful influences on how people think about themselves and the outside world. As such, moods also shape perceptions of the processes in human relationships. At the same time, various relationship processes can lead to the experience of positive and negative moods. This entry discusses the reciprocal influence moods and close relationships exert on each other.

How Moods Shape
Perceptions of Relationship Processes

Moods influence perceptions and evaluations of others in such a way that good moods lead people to perceive and evaluate others more favorably, whereas bad moods lead people to perceive and evaluate others less favorably. It is thus not surprising that moods influence judgments of the physical attractiveness of potential dating partners in predictable ways: Attractive and unattractive others alike look better when perceivers are in good moods and worse when they are in bad moods. Moreover, this congruency extends to the perception of behavior: When in a good mood, perceivers interpret the behavior of others more positively than when in a bad mood. For example, the same smile that is perceived as friendly when one is in a good mood may be considered awkward when one is in a bad mood.

The effects of moods on judgments of attractiveness are not entirely the result of mood congruency because moods can also have a direct influence on the behavior of others. When people are in a good mood, they tend to smile and disclose more; when in a bad mood, people may come across as more passive, uncomfortable, unfriendly, and perhaps even disgruntled and hostile. However, whereas expressing happiness can invite positive behaviors from others, it can also be met with distrust, especially by others who feel that they are somewhat undesirable.

Moods influence perceptions and judgments, especially of others who are somewhat atypical. Making sense of atypical others requires additional time and effort and allows judgments to be infused with positive and negative affect. For example, because couples tend to be well-matched in physical attractiveness, judgments about them can be made with ease because they meet people's expectations. However, judgments about couples who are mismatched in attractiveness require additional processing time and allow affect to come into play. Specifically, happy moods lead to particularly favorable impressions of couples that are mismatched in attractiveness whereas sad moods lead to particularly unfavorable impressions of mismatched couples.

Going beyond happiness and sadness, one of the most well-established findings in the social psychological literature is that people are most attracted to others who are similar to oneself in their attitudes and beliefs. However, romantic moods brought on by interacting with an attractive other profoundly decrease the importance of attitude similarity. When people are in a romantic mood, they feel greater attraction to others who do not share their attitudes, leading to the conclusion that these others are perhaps more similar than it appears. Love appears to be blind, indeed.

In addition to shaping perceptions of others' attractiveness, moods influence a variety of processes in ongoing relationships. These processes include how close people feel to their partners, the extent to which they provide help and support that benefit their partners, perceptions that their needs are being met, and the explanations they generate for relationship conflicts.

Happy moods promote feelings of closeness and sad moods attenuate them. For that to occur, happiness and sadness do not have to result from processes within the relationship. Feelings of closeness increase or decrease even when the respective moods are brought on by events outside the relationship. For example, simply watching a movie with a happy ending may improve feelings of closeness to one's partner whereas watching a movie with a sad ending may decrease those feelings. However, not all sad endings may lead to a decrease in feelings of closeness. A sad mood brought on by thoughts of relationship loss (for example, thinking about losing a partner to death) can lead to increased rather than decreased feelings of closeness.

Providing support and help to a close other is both expected and commonplace in close relationships. Although good moods have been shown to lead to more helping in general, whether people are willing to help their romantic partners also depends on expectations that providing help is rewarding and is likely to lead to enhanced positive mood. At the same time, helping may become less likely when there is a chance that it might interfere with a good mood. Expectations of this sort are especially important in relationships characterized by compassionate love. In these types of relationships, behaviors such as providing verbal support are considered to be especially good examples of "compassionate love acts."

People are naturally concerned that their relationships meet their needs without paying too

much attention to whether their partner treats them fairly in such matters as the division of labor. However, negative moods elicited by relationship distress often compel people to more closely scrutinize the extent to which they are getting a fair shake than they would in the absence of a negative mood. Conducting such mood-induced scrutiny can transform the relationship from one that revolves around meeting each other's needs to one in which the partners instead focus on issues of fairness and equity. If this scrutiny suggests a lack of fairness, partners will be unhappy and the relationship will be marked by conflict.

It has been said that when it comes to conflicts in a relationship, the question is not whether a relationship will experience a conflict but, rather, *when* will a conflict occur and how it will be resolved. Resolution of conflict hinges importantly on how partners explain why it arose in the first place. Sad moods may shape these explanations in pessimistic ways. Specifically, when people feel sad, they are more apt to blame themselves for the conflict and are more likely to think that it was caused by global and nonspecific causes that are difficult to change, especially when the conflict is serious. As a result, sad moods lead to the expectation that there may be little that can be done to resolve the conflict. Happy moods, on the other hand, tend to have a somewhat counterintuitive effect. Although one might suspect happiness would make people more generous and accommodating, happy people are more likely to attribute the causes of a conflict to their partners or the situation than to themselves. Expressions of anger can lower the chances that a conflict will be resolved in a constructive way. This is especially the case when a person responds to a partner's expressions of anger in a reciprocal fashion. Such negative affect reciprocity generally contributes to an exacerbation of an existing conflict.

How Relationship Processes Affect Moods

Just as moods shape perceptions of a number of relationship processes from initial attraction to conflict resolution, what goes on in relationships also influences moods. Sharing positive experiences or simply telling one's partner about positive things that happened give rise to positive affect. Feelings of closeness and relatedness, perceptions of fairness and equity, and receiving social support have also been causally linked to the experience of positive affect in close relationships. On the other hand, depressed moods often result from attachment anxiety, a perceived lack of intimacy, and relationship breakups. Anger and, to some extent, guilt can result from perceptions of inequity as well as the experience of conflict. Although these feelings may more appropriately be considered emotions directed at another or the relationship, they may leave an affective residue akin to moods that then can shape perceptions of just about everything, including other aspects of the relationship.

A sense of relatedness tends to produce good moods, as does a sense of autonomy and a sense of competence. In addition to being the foundation for good moods, a sense of relatedness, autonomy, and competence tends to provide the basis for, among other things, more positive sexual experiences that can lead to further mood enhancement. Happiness and contentment further result from the perception that one is being treated equitably in the relationship. However, people experience negative affect in the form of emotions and moods when they feel underbenefited in their relationships—that is, when they appear to receive less than expected on the basis of contributions to the relationship, while their partners seem to receive more relative to his or her contributions. Being overbenefited also may lead to the experience of negative affect, albeit to a lesser degree. People who feel that they are receiving more than they deserve given their contributions while their partners receive less often experience feelings of guilt.

As one might expect, receiving support from close others in times of distress generally results in improved moods. Interestingly, the extent to which support is received depends on the severity of the problem. When it is particularly stressful, people are more likely to ask for support directly and thus are more likely to receive particularly helpful forms of support. Under such circumstances, people experience improved moods along with a greater sense of being cared for by partners.

The nature of affective bonds with partners also has important consequences for moods. Securely attached individuals who feel that their partners can be trusted and provide a sense of comfort experience feelings of happiness and contentment.

Anxiously attached individuals who feel that their partners do not reciprocate their romantic feelings tend to experience anxiety and worry. Moreover, anxiously attached individuals are relatively poor at providing support. Although they sometimes provide more help than securely attached individuals do, their support is often inept or self-centered. As a result, they often deprive their partners of the emotional benefits of helpful and effective caregiving, which can lessen the emotional benefits they receive in return.

Attachment security in combination with confidence that one can effectively deal with negative moods also plays a role in dealing with conflict and romantic breakups. Securely attached individuals approach conflicts in a more constructive manner to the extent that they feel confident about their ability to manage their negative moods. Generalized expectancies for the regulation of negative moods also play a role when it comes to dealing with the emotional reactions to distressing events, such as a divorce or romantic breakup. Although most people experience depressed moods as a result of a breakup, individuals with a high degree of confidence in their ability to manage a depressed mood tend to employ more effective coping strategies and consequently experience less long-term depression than do individuals with relatively low negative mood regulation expectancies.

Ralph Erber

See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Closeness; Communal Relationships; Conflict Resolution; Emotion in Relationships; Loss; Negative Affect Reciprocity; Social Support and Health

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MORALITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

The nature of personal relationships depends to a considerable extent on the moral precepts and norms accepted by members of the community in question. This entry is not concerned with the particularities of what is considered right or wrong in a particular culture, for cultures differ, but with the way in which the nature of morality impinges on that of personal relationships. In the real world, morality is different from the set of rules that it appears to be at first sight, and this affects the nature of relationships.

What Is Morality?

Moral behavior usually implies behaving positively to others. It is easy to see how selfish and self-assertive behavior arose in the course of biological and cultural evolution, for individuals who looked after their own interests would succeed in competition with their peers, but how could prosocial behavior (that is, behavior that benefits others but not necessarily the self) to potential competitors have arisen? Because early humans lived in small groups that competed with each other, it would have been to individuals' interests to behave positively and cooperatively with members of their own group because they would be promoting the success of their own group in competition with others and thus their own access to resources. Thus, conflict between competition and cooperation with ingroup members is a necessary concomitant of living in groups. Moral rules maintain a balance between cooperation and competition. But there is no cause to behave prosocially to outsiders, and moral rules may not apply to them. Early in human history the ingroup was probably defined by familiarity but the boundary can be influenced in other ways.

Certain moral rules are probably common to all cultures. Variants of the so-called Golden Rule (Do-as-you-would-be-done-by) seem to be

recognized in all cultures: If it were not so, it is difficult to see how the culture could survive. It is useful to distinguish such moral "principles," which are common to all cultures, from "precepts," which have some degree of cultural specificity. Most precepts are compatible with the Golden Rule but apply to a specific type of situation. For instance, "Do not steal from your neighbor" is compatible with the Golden Rule, because one does not want to have one's own possessions stolen, and is probably accepted in all cultures. But the Judeo-Christian precept not to covet your neighbor's wife is clearly not applicable to any culture that does not recognize the institution of marriage: In some cultures, women are inseminated by a number of partners, and in other cultures, women have only temporary sexual liaisons. Children must be looked after, and it is seen as morally right that parents should look after their children unless other practices, such as adoption or fathering by the mother's brother, have been institutionalized.

Precepts governing conduct in relationships differ between cultures and between relationships of different types within any one culture: uncles, for example, but not cousins, may expect respect. Precepts also change over time. For instance, a few decades ago in Western cultures, it was considered grossly improper for a couple to live together if they were not married. For a variety of reasons, including the ready availability of birth control, it became more common in the decades after World War II: As it became more common, it became more respectable, and as it became more respectable, it became more common. Now premarital cohabitation is even sometimes advocated as a wise precaution before full commitment. Such a dialectical relation between what people do and what they are supposed to do is probably the most important mechanism for both the maintenance of and change in the moral precepts governing personal relationships.

To be effective, moral precepts must be seen as absolute. But that they differ between societies and change over time suggests that they need not be. Are they followed consistently in real-life relationships? Whatever we feel about what should happen, it is evident that they are not. The potential for selfish assertiveness in every individual and the complexity of social life ensure this. Some conflict between competitive assertiveness and prosociality

is almost inevitable, and social life ensures that we can rarely be single-minded. Even the mother–child relationship involves conflict, the mother being caught between the child's demands and her own needs. In that case, the conflict has a biological base, but the complexity of modern society makes conflict almost ubiquitous. For instance, exchange is basic to most human relationships: One partner performs a service for the other in expectation of fair reciprocation, perhaps at a later date. Such exchange provides an explanation of the source of many human virtues: Fair exchange demands honesty, trustworthiness, and so on, and one avoids an individual who is known to tell lies. But often the costs incurred and rewards received are not measurable in the same currency. The suitor brings his beloved a bunch of flowers but expects not flowers in exchange but recompense of another sort at a later date. So how can one assess whether an exchange is "fair"? More than that, what matters is not whether an exchange is actually fair but whether it is perceived to be fair by both parties. And there are a number of criteria for fairness—equality, equity (to each what he or she deserves), and social justice (to each according to his or her needs). The potential for disagreement is always present.

Another source of conflict concerns incompatibility between rights claimed and precepts held: Thus, teenagers may claim rights incompatible with parental morality, and inciting racial hatred may be seen as incompatible with freedom of expression. Wherever the partners in a relationship differ in religion or ethnicity, conflict is potentially present. For these and other reasons, moral conflict between alternative courses of action is frequent. One has to choose one course or the other, but may not be entirely happy with the propriety of one's choice. Thus, we are faced with an anomaly: Moral rules must be seen as absolute but can change with time and situation and cannot always be followed. Too often, perhaps, we invent reasons why "just this time" we should break the rule.

Consistent prosociality is improbable also for functional reasons. An individual who behaved prosocially all the time would never succeed in competition with his or her fellows. Conversely, if competition between group members were unrestrained, the group would disintegrate or lose out in competition with other groups, and its members

would suffer. A balance is necessary between the numbers of prosocial and selfish individuals in the group and between selfishness and prosociality in each member. Here lies the major function of moral codes—to maintain an appropriate balance.

Why Do We Behave Morally?

Why do we behave morally? The moral principles, precepts, and norms are incorporated into the way in which we see ourselves, our self-concepts. One's self-concept includes matters of age, sex and occupation, and aspects of one's relationships, as well as whether one sees oneself as honest, kind, courteous, and so on. In most potentially conflictful situations, conscious deliberation is unnecessary: Moral precepts in one's self-concept ensure appropriate behavior "automatically." An individual who sees himself to behave improperly experiences guilt and a "bad conscience." A bad conscience results from a discrepancy between what one sees oneself to be doing and the precepts incorporated in the self-concept. Individuals try to maintain congruence between their self-images, how they see themselves to be behaving, and how they perceive others to perceive them. A person who sees himself as honest but is accused of dishonesty feels uncomfortable and may try to prove his honesty, or discredit his accuser, or claim that he was behaving honestly "really," perhaps inventing a story in justification. Whether or not he is deceiving himself, in these ways, he overcomes the guilt he may have felt. In any case, minor infringements of the moral code are condoned by others with such sentiments as "After all, we are all human" or "He is doing the best he can."

Of greater significance are cases where departures from the moral code are accepted by others without question. This can happen in several ways. As noted earlier, moral codes govern only behavior to members of the same group. Soldiers are permitted and commended for killing only members of the outgroup. War is, of course, an extreme case, but racial and religious prejudice are common, and nearly all the time we see ourselves as members of one group or another, and tend to favor its members over outsiders. We are more favorably disposed toward members of our own firm, school, team, or nation than we are to outsiders, the boundaries of the ingroup being where we and our peers see them at the time. Relations with in-laws may be hampered by their unfamiliar values and customs.

Various devices are employed to emphasize or change the boundaries of the ingroup. In wartime, the whole panoply of nationalism emphasizes the differences between the ingroup and the enemy, and denigrates the latter. In the everyday, most groups advertise their identity and relationships with ingroup members may be marked by special methods of greeting, customs, dietary restrictions, and many other ways.

Duty to members of the ingroup may become an overriding concern. The soldier feels an irresistible duty to his buddy, comrades, platoon, or country. Duty to help a friend in need is a defining characteristic of friendship and can override personal needs and duty to nonfriends. In politics, duty to colleagues in the party causes politicians to vote against their consciences (condoned as "political necessity"). And chief executives have conflicting duties to shareholders, employees, customers, and suppliers and their families.

Again, moral rules apply only to those who are seen as "full persons." In many societies (and in our own until not so long ago), women were not seen as full persons. In some cultures, wives can be treated by their husbands in a manner unacceptable in our own: The institution of marriage has different rules from those that pertain in Western cultures. In many cultures, including our own, children are exploited as lacking full rights. And in our own, lawbreakers can be deprived of their liberty in prison: This is seen as an inevitable consequence of the institution of the law, which is necessary for the well-being of society.

As another possibility, rules may change with the situation. Thus, though bargaining in business may pervert the Golden Rule, operating not with Do-as-you-would-be-done-by but with I'm-going-to-get-the-best-out-of-you-because-I-know-that-you-are-trying-your-best-to-get-what-you-can-out-of-me. This is half-heartedly condoned as "business ethics" and approved of by economists as benefiting the consumer. One hopes the businessperson uses quite different precepts when getting home to his or her family in the evening.

However, gross prejudice against an out-group, gross manipulations of group boundaries, and

gross distortions of the precepts are constrained by the law. The rules can be bent, but not too far.

Thus, we have a series of anomalies. Moral precepts must be seen as absolutes, yet minor infringements can be dealt with by the actor without guilt. In particular contexts, infringements can be condoned or encouraged because they are advantageous to the society. But major infringements are constrained by the legal system. And the law itself must be seen as absolute, and yet can be changed as circumstances change. Thus, personal relationships must be conducted within a complex system of cultural rules. However, although rules can be bent, this in no way implies that breaking the rules is the best option for individuals and society.

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See also Ethical Issues in Relationship Research; Exchange Processes; Guilt and Shame; Trust

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MOTHER–CHILD RELATIONSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE AND ADULTHOOD

Throughout adolescence and into adulthood, mothers' relationships with their children grow more distant. They spend less time together, and children turn to other social ties (e.g., friends, romantic partners) for many supportive and social functions. Nevertheless, mothers remain central in children's lives, and vice versa. Throughout life, the mother–child relationship is the primary intergenerational tie, ahead of relationships with fathers, in-laws, grandchildren, or grandparents. In studies examining social networks, most mothers and adult children list the other party among their most important social ties. Yet, relationship qualities vary as the child progresses from puberty through the transition to adulthood and into midlife, when the mother grows older and approaches death. This entry highlights differences between children's relationships with mothers and fathers during adolescence and adulthood, examines changes in the nature of the mother–child relationship across this period, and reports some of the contextual factors contributing to differences between particular mother–child relationships.

Differences Between Relationships With Mothers Versus Fathers in Adolescence and Adulthood

In adolescence and adulthood, qualities of relationships between mothers and offspring are often compared with qualities of relationships between fathers and offspring. Relationships between mothers and their children tend to be both more positively and more negatively emotional than do relationships between fathers and children. Throughout adolescence, mothers report more intimacy, greater knowledge of their children's daily activities (or parental monitoring), and more frequent conflicts than do fathers. In early adulthood, offspring typically have more frequent contact with mothers than with fathers and are more likely to turn to mothers for advice and emotional support than to fathers. Likewise, throughout adulthood, offspring report stronger positive and negative feelings, or greater ambivalence, toward mothers than toward fathers. In late life, offspring are more likely to care for mothers when they suffer health declines of old age than when fathers suffer such declines.

Theorists postulate several reasons for the greater intensity of ties between mothers and children in adolescence and adulthood. Qualities of the relationship from early childhood may continue into adolescence, with mothers more emotionally connected to offspring than fathers. For example, during adolescence, mothers tend to be more involved in day-to-day parenting, providing more frequent opportunities for supportive

exchanges as well as conflicts with offspring. Similarly, mothers are "kinkeepers" for the family after offspring enter adulthood. Mothers are more likely to organize holiday gatherings that connect far-flung progeny. Mothers keep track of relatives' whereabouts and convey such information to offspring. Further, scholars have argued that relationships between mothers and grown children are dyadic in nature, involving only the mother and each child, whereas relationships between fathers and grown children are typically triadic in nature, mediated via the mother. Thus, a typical interaction between grown children and married parents involves a telephone conversation between child and mother, with the mother putting the father on the phone or conveying the gist of the conversation to the father afterward.

Although relationships with mothers are more intense than are relationships with fathers throughout life, the mother–child relationship is not static from puberty to old age. Changes occur in this relationship across those decades.

Changes in Mother–Child Relationships Across Adolescence and Adulthood

Longitudinal data examining the relationship between mothers and children across adolescence are abundant. For example, the adolescence literature substantiates a linear decrease in maternal involvement with children from early to late adolescence. Mothers also typically share values with adolescent children and engage in conflicts regarding more minor issues such as curfews and hair styles. Longitudinal studies examining the mother–child relationship after adolescence are scant. A few longitudinal studies find continuity in qualities of this relationship from adolescence into young adulthood. For example, mothers and adolescents who have positive relationships at age 15 are likely to report similarly positive relationships at age 26. Such associations in relationship quality attenuate over larger gaps in time; thus, associations of relationship quality from age 11 to age 26 or from age 15 to 35 are less strong. Thus, continuities in relationship qualities are limited to relatively short periods, and relationships between mothers and children are characterized by fluctuations during adolescence and adulthood. It is

unclear when and why relationship qualities change, but several current ongoing national longitudinal studies (e.g., Add Health) involve mothers and children who are soon entering adulthood, and researchers will be able to contribute new findings to an understanding of how mothers and children's relationships change over time.

Methodological innovations in the past decade have already contributed to an altered understanding of mother–child relationships in adolescence and adulthood. For example, through the 1990s, researchers believed that conflict between mothers and adolescents peaked in early adolescence around puberty. These studies included only the mother and one child per family, however, and assumed the family patterns generalize across families. Yet, approximately 80 to 90 percent of families have more than one child. Recently, scholars have focused on within-family patterns. These analyses have revealed that peak conflict with mother varies by birth order. For example, first-born children show a peak in conflict with their mother around age 13, whereas second-borns show such a peak at age 11. A within-family design reveals a different age for peak conflict than that obtained with between-family designs. Likewise, research using within-family designs in adulthood have revealed different patterns of maternal preference for which child should provide care in late life than between family designs suggested. Between-family designs suggest mothers select offspring based on gender and prefer daughters, but within-family designs document maternal preferences for a child who shares their values. In sum, studies relying on between-family designs hold inherent assumptions that the relationship with the mother is similar for all children in the family; studies that include more than one child in the family challenge such assumptions.

Although cross-sectional designs are limited by the inability to describe change, such studies do provide insights into how relationships between mothers and children may vary from adolescence into late life. For example, mothers generally report positive ties to offspring during the transition to adulthood (when offspring are approximately aged 18 to 25), particularly if those offspring have left home. Most U.S. offspring leave the maternal home in early adulthood to pursue an education, to enter the military or other employment, or for other reasons (although some return to their mother's home

at later times). Mothers and offspring transition from daily contact involving shared living conditions to a relationship allowing latitude in frequency of contact, sharing of information, and regulation of emotional exchanges. Mothers of young adults tend to contrast their current positive view with conflict in the adolescent period. Likewise, a study of African-American females found that those who had left home in late adolescence reported less negative relationships with mothers than did similar-aged adolescents living at home or in transition to leaving home.

Maternal well-being also may be affected by their views of how their progeny turned out. Mothers seem to experience satisfaction offering advice and help to young adults who are following normative and successful trajectories, finding their way in education, relationships, and early work experiences. When offspring suffer problems with such normative transitions into adulthood, mothers tend to experience stress. Young adults also typically report strong ties to mothers and report benefiting from financial and emotional support. In sum, maternal involvement is generally strong and positive for both parties in young adulthood.

As mentioned previously, when mothers incur health declines in old age, offspring often become caregivers. Although providing care to the mother can generate role confusion and distress for both parties, such caregiving is so common, it constitutes an almost normative right-of-passage for middle-aged Americans. Thus, the adolescent, young adult, and maternal end-of-life stages of this relationship involve predictable and common events shared by many mothers and children. From young adulthood into midlife, relationship patterns are more difficult to capture because of the many life changes (e.g., marriage or divorce, birth of children and grandchildren, entering or leaving the workforce) that mothers and children experience across these decades.

Contextual Factors Shaping Mother–Child Relationships in Adolescence and Adulthood

Gender

Gender of offspring may play a key role in the nature of mother–child relationships in adolescence and adulthood. In adolescence, the familial constellation sets a backdrop for whether maternal relationship qualities vary by child's gender. In mixed-sex sibling sets, dads are more involved with sons and moms are more involved with daughters. When siblings share gender (i.e., all girls or all boys) and in one-child families, mothers and fathers may show a pattern of involvement with adolescent children based on other features of their tie, such as shared interests.

Nonetheless, research reveals that the mother–daughter relationship in adolescence may be particularly intense. Mother–daughter dyads generally involve higher levels of intimacy, sharing, and confiding than do dyads involving fathers or sons. The level of conflict in the mother–daughter dyad also is more intense throughout adolescence than in dyads involving sons or fathers. Moreover, mothers and daughters are more likely to resolve those conflicts via compromise than are dyads involving fathers or sons.

The mother–daughter tie remains the most intense intergenerational ties in time, intimacy, and investment throughout adulthood. Feminist scholars have suggested that daughters do not individuate from their mothers in young adulthood (as sons do) because of women's shared investment in relationships. Throughout adulthood, in comparison with sons, daughters report more frequent contact with mothers, greater feelings of intimacy, and more tensions. Mothers and daughters share an investment in family and are likely to be involved in tasks that bring the family together. Middle-aged daughters and their mothers describe shared enjoyment of get-togethers involving the daughters' children, spouse, or siblings. Daughters also are more likely to take on hands-on caregiving of elderly mothers than are sons. Before mothers require such care, however, recent studies report fewer gender differences between sons and daughters in adulthood than were reported in the studies conducted in the late 20th century. That is, sons have increased contact with their mothers, greater intimacy, and are also more involved in decisions regarding health care of mothers. The increased involvement of sons may reflect greater flexibility in gender roles and men's greater involvement in family life observed among the baby boomers and their progeny.

Marital Status

Maternal marital status also may shape relationships between mothers and children in adolescence and adulthood. When mothers are not married (i.e., never married, divorced, widowed), their offspring are typically their most important social ties and their relationships may intensify. For example, relationships between adolescents and nonmarried mothers may grow more intense rather than more distant throughout adolescence. But if the mother remarries during this period, the relationship tends to grow more distant. Likewise, widowed mothers in late life place greater demands on offspring than do married mothers. Indeed, widowhood is the single factor that best explains why offspring are more likely to care for frail mothers than for frail fathers; fathers are more likely to have a living spouse who provides care.

Offspring marital status is also linked to qualities of the tie to mother in adulthood, but the pattern of findings is complex. Some studies find the relationship grows closer upon offspring marriage, other studies find that it grows more distant, and still other studies find no changes. These findings suggest that marriage affects different mother–offspring relationships in diverse ways. This lack of clarity may reflect other factors that contribute to variability in the tie, such as geographic distance and cultural values or other individual or relationship differences.

Geographic Distance

Geographic distance between mother and grown child is the structural factor that most clearly determines frequency of contact and exchanges of support. Approximately half of U.S. offspring reside within 50 miles of their mothers, allowing face-to-face visits and exchanges of assistance. Residence far from mother does not vary by offspring gender but, rather, seems to reflect economic circumstances such as educational opportunities, jobs, or military service.

Culture and Ethnicity

Finally, culture and ethnicity shape qualities of relationships between children and mothers in adolescence and adulthood. For example, in Asian families, adolescents report considerably less conflict with mothers than in U.S. families. In African-American families, conflict patterns are similar to those observed in European-American families. Conflict is relatively frequent, low in intensity, and occurs over mundane issues. Yet, studies of African-American mothers also find that they experience conflicting expectations for autonomy and closeness with daughters, stemming from the hope that their daughters will be self-reliant but remain loyal and attached to family in adulthood. In families that have recently immigrated to the United States, mothers and adolescents experience greater conflict if the offspring is more acculturated to the United States than the mother is. Cultural factors interact with other structural factors as well. In farm families, relationships between sons and fathers may be stronger than relationships between daughters and mothers because of the patrilineal pattern of work and inheritance. Likewise, the implications of geographic distance for the relationship may be associated with each party's beliefs about filial obligation or familialism.

In sum, although relationships between mothers and offspring vary across adolescence and adulthood, relationships between mothers and children tend to remain strong during this period. Indeed, the mother–child tie remains dominant throughout life.

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See also Father–Child Relationships; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Kinkeeping; Mother–Child Relationships in Early Childhood; Parenting

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Mother–Child Relationships in Early Childhood

The mother–child relationship is a unique entity. The relationship starts before the infant is born and normally exists even after the death of either partner by remaining in the mind of the living partner. This long-lasting relationship provides the context for learning what it is to be a human being. The relationship will play a substantial role in determining the child's social and emotional development. For the mother, the relationship will provide a lasting source of emotional connection and an opportunity to connect with the future. The mother–child early relationship, years 0 to 5, lays the foundation for the evolution of the sense of contributing to society for the mother and the intergenerational transmission of beliefs and values for both mother and child. The relationship is the context for learning, regulation of behavior, and other relationships. Whether positive or negative, most adult-age children can identify the character of their relationship with their mother and recall the way it influenced their lives.

Although the early role of the mother is mainly protective until the age the child can both walk and talk, the mother takes on a role of promoting the child's exploration while providing safety as necessary. This entry discusses the fundamental components of the early child–mother relationship, including the introduction of Attachment Theory, sensitivity to developmental challenges for the child, and monitoring of the child's general course.

History and Importance of the Relationship

Several components of a relationship are important for understanding the mother–child relationship.

First, the relationship exists based on the past, present, and future. An important feature is the mother's past history of relationships and well-being. Attachment Theory proposes that when caregivers, usually the mother, respond supportively to their child's signs of distress (fussiness, crying, hunger), children develop an expectation or trust that a specific person can assess their needs and be depended on to provide comfort, food, or stimulation. This expectation is referred to as *secure attachment.* Adults who have secure attachment histories and only moderate life stress bring to the parent–child relationship the ability to be emotionally available to the fetus and child. A mother needs to prepare a place in her family or friend network for the new child; she needs to imagine herself as the mother with all the roles that involve caring for the child. When a mother has had a history of poor (insecure) relationships with her own parents, particularly her mother, she has less of a foundation for making herself available to the child. As David Winnicott declared in the 1940s, there is no such thing as an infant, only an infant and a caregiver.

Attachment Theory: Central to the Relationship

Attachment Theory as presented by John Bowlby is the basis for understanding both the biological and psychological significance of the mother–infant relationship, in which there is total dependence on one member of the dyad. The infant's survival and well-being depend on being cared for by a caregiver. In the beginning, care provided in a sensitive manner requires the caregiver or mother's preoccupation with the dependent infant.

In infancy, the mother controls the interaction and should respond in ways that provide consistency, predictability, and emotional availability. The mother needs to monitor the infant's cues and behaviors and to gradually follow the child's lead in the interaction. Managing the young infant's distress is a primary aspect of the mother–child relationship because the infant has not matured enough to get out of the highly distressed (crying) state. The infant needs external calming to bring his state down to either an awake responsive level or to a sleep state. When his caregiver responds to his distress, the baby is also learning to trust his

environment, and if the mother is indeed responsive, the baby is likely to develop a sense of secure attachment through the repeated responsiveness of the mother or caregiver.

During this early time, the mother is the mediator of the child's world. Psychologically during the pregnancy and for the first months, the mother and baby are one and what pleases the baby pleases the mother. At around 6 month of age, the infant begins the discovery of his or her physical self; fascination with hands and feet keep a young baby's undivided attention. The mother–child relationship begins to have more of a dyadic balance as the child's sense of self emerges.

A condition of establishing the mother–child relationship is the woman's own developmental level. A strong mother–child relationship is best achieved when the woman is emotionally ready to put aside her own needs and be available to attend to another's need. A mother who has experienced an emotionally supportive, trusting relationship has an advantage. Generally, the early mother–child relationship greatly contributes to attachment security or insecurity; however, evidence also shows a type of "earned security" where an individual can learn the lesson of trusting another person through an adult relationship or therapy. Attachment Theory predicts that once security has been achieved with one person, usually the mother, the concept of trusting another can be generalized to new relationships. The supportive care of women during their pregnancy, labor, delivery, and early postpartum by a trustworthy adult will contribute to promoting "good enough mothering" and a positive mother–child relationship, especially for women whose early relationship history did not foster the capacity for trusting others.

Evidence indicates that when mothers work full time during the baby's first year, they may demonstrate less sensitivity to the child. The rationale for why full-time working mothers may be on average less sensitive is related to the time they have with the infant; hours spent watching and responding to the infant are fewer, and therefore, the mother has less of a chance to observe and know her child. When a woman has a history of undependable relationships, little capacity to trust others, and many life stressors, this negative life experience renders her less able to make room for the baby in her emotions. Responsive mothering takes practice; this

acquaintance process takes time, and the mother's capacity to take in the baby's needs is primary.

Being emotionally available to the child means having a capacity for monitoring the child. Louis Sanders proposed a developmental model of the early mother–child relationship that has four distinct stages in the early months of life. The first two stages are the launching pad. The first stage (birth to 3 months) involves homeostasis. The mother is sensitive to the expressions of the baby's need for food, sleep, or activity and provides contingent caregiving acts to meet those demands. Sanders called the second stage (4–8 months) the social-emotional period. During this time, the infant is more responsive to the mother's voice and face and smiles when eye-to-eye contact is made. The foundation for future interaction is set at this time, and the infant becomes social and responsive to the caregiver. The signaling of need by the infant or mother and the dyadic responses are all carefully worked out during caregiving times when the baby is awake during such events as feeding, bathing, and diaper changes.

An important part of the early relationship between the mother and child creates the social-emotional relationship in which both the mother and child reciprocally influence the behavior of the other in a way that is potentially rewarding for each of them. Arnold Sameroff has called this *process transaction* in contrast to interaction, where the behavior of each transforms the response of the other so that both are changed. During the process of interaction, the dyad—the caregiver and the infant—learn to adapt, modify, and change their behaviors in response to each other. The baby's positive emotional responses reward mothering acts, but if the baby is irritable and negative or nonresponsive, the baby's emotional responses make mothering more difficult. For example, it has been demonstrated that when infants cry frequently, mothers tend to become more distant, such as trying to comfort the child with verbal responses from across the room.

Developmental Changes in the Relationship

Initially, the child needs hands-on mothering along with the emotional connection to survive, where in time the relationship prepares the child for becoming

a functional, responsible, socially appropriate adult. The mother–child relationship changes over time framed by the tasks of the developing child. In the early months, the mother–child relationship is largely determined by the mother. For example, the child largely depends in infancy on the adult caregiver for basic care, for temporal regularity, and for decision making, whereas in the preschool ages, the child begins to become independent of the primary caregiver while sustaining a mental model that sustains them during long periods of separation. By early school years, the child gains mastery and learns healthy competition but still needs structure, limits, and rules. During the school-age years, the child explores the outside world and develops a strong sense of self. By the years 8 through 12, the child is developing a sense of self that involves mastery, reliance, control, esteem, and emotional literacy. Children play an increasing role in decision making, so by preteens they are making some of their own decisions and accepting the consequences for them by adolescence.

Mary Ainsworth's research with the Strange Situation demonstrated how the behaviors of young children differed in secure versus insecure attachment patterns, and similar findings have recently been demonstrated in older children. After identifying from a questionnaire whether the school-age child had a secure or insecure attachment, the two groups of children were given a series of photographs to view. Some photos were familiar, such as pictures of their mothers, and some were new or novel. The researchers found that secure versus insecure children processed information differently; the secure children attend more to novelty than the insecure children. Secure attachment frees the child to move on to the next landmark of development, exploration, and learning. From the early relationship, the child develops a secure "mental map" of the relationship. If the child experiences the relationship as positive, responsive, and nonintrusive, a mental template is formed that is generalized beyond the mother–child relationship. The child brings this attachment schema of feeling secure or not into new developmental challenges. The resulting mental template can provide direction and support even without the physical presence of the mother. Evidence suggests the internal working model of self and others, based on the adolescent and mother's relationship,

is associated with the adolescent emerging as an emotionally healthy adult.

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See also Adult Attachment Interview; Attachment Theory; Family Relationships in Childhood; Mother–Child Relationship in Adolescence and Adulthood; Strange Situation

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MOTIVATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

Motivation refers to the reason or reasons why people behave and are moved to action. Human

intention, will, and desire—all words used to capture motivation—have fascinated psychologists since the field of psychology began. At the heart of both research and theory on motivation is the idea that humans have an intrinsic need for social connection and relatedness. The desire for human connection is so strong that psychologists Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary have posited that humans have a fundamental "need to belong," a need that is found in all cultures. Infants show an uncanny readiness to seek out and bond with other people, and adults continue to connect with close others throughout the life span. When asked about their life goals, most people list happy and fulfilling social relationships as most important, and those who neglect to place social needs among their top life goals tend to be less happy and healthy.

In the past several decades, psychology and related fields have witnessed considerable gains in understanding the central role of relationships in human motivation. Researchers have conducted many studies that span different kinds of relationships from parent–child relationships to romantic relationships, encompass different phases of relationships from newly developing dating relationships to long-term marriages, and include people at different developmental stages from infancy to old age. This entry examines the factors that influence the motivation for relationships, highlights several specific motives studied by psychologists, presents two prominent classification systems for social motives, discusses the ways in which close others can influence and shape our motives, highlights important changes in social motives across the life span, and reviews different types of methods and measures that researchers use to study motivation in human relationships.

Where Does the Motivation for Human Relationships Come From?

The human desire and need for connection has deep evolutionary roots and is present from the moment of birth. John Bowlby proposed that infants are born with an innate system called the "attachment behavioral system" that motivates them to seek proximity to caregivers in times of need. This system protects human beings of all

ages from threats, but is most directly and transparently observable during infancy. A key idea from Bowlby's theory is that infants use their caregivers as a secure base: Only when infants are confident and secure that their caregivers will be there for them in times of threat or need can they act on their motivation to explore and learn about the world. The desire to form and maintain social bonds has both survival and reproductive benefits. Groups can share food, provide mates, and help care for offspring. Cues that indicate possible harm, such as illness, danger, nightfall, and disaster, seem to increase the need to be with others, underscoring the protective value of group membership. In the human evolutionary past, people who formed attachments were more likely to reproduce than were those who failed to form them, and long-term relationships increased the chances that offspring would reach maturity and reproduce in turn.

Other important influences on the human need for connection are not rooted in evolution. For example, sociocultural norms dictate that "normal" people ultimately settle down with a partner and have children, whereas single or childless people are seen as abnormal. People internalize these pressures, likely influencing their desire to find lifelong partners and raise families. There are also proximal factors based on an individual's current social and cultural environment that influence the motivation to form relationships with romantic partners or friends. For example, a teenage boy who just moved to a new town may befriend the first boy whom he meets to cope with his sense of loneliness, but a popular girl in the same school may be choosier about the types of friends whom she lets into her inner circle as her affiliation needs have already been met.

What Kinds of Motives Do Psychologists Study?

Two particularly important social motives have been studied across a variety of relationship contexts. Dan McAdams defines the *intimacy motive* as a preference for close, warm, and communicative experiences with others, whereas the *power motive* is defined as the preference to feel strong and have influence over others. In a series of studies

of close friendships, people with high intimacy motivation reported interacting with and disclosing more to their friends, better listening skills, and more concern for their friends' well-being. In contrast, people with high power motivation reported trying to take charge of situations with their friends, make plans, and persuade others.

Two other motives studied by psychologists involve people's desires to maintain particular psychological states. *Self-enhancement motives* refer to people's desires to maintain positive views of themselves. When people are guided by self-enhancement motives, they are motivated to interact with other people who make them feel good about themselves, reflecting their need to be valued and admired by others. In the realm of interpersonal relationships, research has shown that people are more satisfied with their dating and marital relationships when their partners hold positive views of their qualities and traits. *Self-verification motives,* however, refer to people's desires to confirm and sustain their existing views of themselves. When people are guided by self-verification motives, they are motivated to interact with other people who confirm their self-concepts, reflecting their needs for consistency. For example, research has also shown that in marriages, people are more committed to spouses whose views of them are consistent with their own self-concepts, even when those self-concepts are negative. Both self-enhancement and self-verification motives likely guide people's behaviors in close relationships, and people may be guided by different motives in different situations or with different interaction partners.

How Do Researchers Classify Social Motives?

People pursue many different kinds of motives and goals in their social interactions. For example, people seek out close others to alleviate boredom, to obtain information about the world, to build their social networks, or to boost their own self-esteem, just to name a few. One useful distinction is whether a person acts to obtain positive outcomes (*approach motives*) or to avoid negative outcomes (*avoidance motives*). In the social domain, people can pursue approach motives such as to obtain intimacy, have fun, or grow as a person, or

they can pursue avoidance motives such as to avoid conflict, rejection, boredom, or loneliness. For example, at a party in her new college dorm, a student with strong approach social motives may focus on meeting new people and having a good time, whereas a student with strong avoidance social motives may spend his time monitoring his actions and focusing on ways to avoid rejection. As discussed by Shelly Gable, the distinction between approach and avoidance social motives has been used to understand a variety of topics in close relationships including sacrifice, sexuality, and relationship commitment. Across all these topics, approach motives generally lead to better social outcomes than do avoidance motives. For example, on days when people make sacrifices for a romantic partner for approach motives (such as to connect with or please their partners), they experience more excitement, enthusiasm, and overall relationship satisfaction. But, on days when they sacrifice for avoidance motives (such as to avoid the partner's anger or disappointment), they experience more guilt, hostility, and relationship conflict.

Another useful distinction is whether a person is motivated to perform a behavior that is a chosen and satisfying end in itself (*intrinsic motives*) or is motivated to perform a behavior for instrumental purposes or as the means to another end (*extrinsic motives*). For example, a man who has intrinsic motives may put energy into maintaining his marriage because he shares fun and pleasurable times with his partner, whereas a man with extrinsic motives may do so because he feels obligated to reciprocate the home-cooked meals and comfortable lifestyle his wife provides. Research by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan has shown that couples who are intrinsically motivated to remain in their relationships report greater feelings of love and faith in their relationships than do couples who are extrinsically motivated.

How Do Other People Influence and Shape Our Motives?

People do not make decisions about how to act in social situations in a vacuum. Interaction partners have a powerful influence on the choices that people make and the motives that guide behavior. An important influence on motivation in social

situations concerns the nature of the relationship between the interaction partners. One important distinction made by Margaret Clark and Judson Mills is between *communal relationships* (e.g., most typically, these are relationships with friends, family members, and romantic partners) and *exchange relationships* (e.g., most typically, these are relationships with strangers, acquaintances, and business partners). In communal relationships, people generally help another person out of a genuine concern and sense of responsibility for that person's welfare, whereas in exchange relationships, people tend to help another person to the extent that he or she has already helped them in the past or if they expect to receive help in the future. In short, the motivation to help other people depends largely on the nature of the relationship between interaction partners.

In romantic relationships in particular, partners have particularly strong influences on one another's motives. Because the things that affect one partner often affect the other, romantic partners are especially likely to consider each other's needs and concerns when making behavioral choices. For example, a woman may decide to sacrifice her girls' night out on the town to stay home and care for her sick husband. Or, a man may decide to forgive his girlfriend for making a nasty remark in front of his friends because the long-term peace and happiness of his relationship is his primary goal. When people make decisions such as these, they enact what Harold Kelley and John Thibaut referred to as a *transformation of motivation,* in which their own self-interested desires are replaced by motives that consider the need to coordinate with their partner's wishes and priorities and focus on the long-term future of their relationships. In short, people's social motives can be shaped both by their partners and by their own broader concerns about their relationship.

How Do Social Motives Change Over the Life Span?

Individuals shift their priorities and goals over the life course, including their goals that concern social interactions. According to Laura Carstensen, two central social motives follow different developmental trajectories. One essential human motive is to seek information about the self and the social world (*the knowledge trajectory*). The fact that infants and children learn so much in the first few years of life reflects the readiness at birth for a great deal of social learning. The knowledge trajectory starts high during the early years of life and declines gradually over the life course as people accrue more knowledge and their futures grow shorter. The second class of human motives is emotional in nature and includes such motives as the desire to feel good, establish intimacy, and verify the self (*the emotion trajectory*). The emotion trajectory is highest during infancy and early childhood when emotional trust and relatedness are initially established, and then rises again in old age when future-oriented strivings are less relevant. Although both of these social motives operate throughout life, with age or other transitions such as moving from one place to another, knowledge-focused motives lose their importance and emotion-focused motives gain importance. As a result, the types of social partners that people choose and the dynamics of social interactions change in fundamental ways. For example, whereas a young child may try out different social behaviors to learn about himself and his role in the social world around him (e.g., by asking his mother many questions), an elderly woman may be more focused on connecting to and maintaining intimacy with those around her (e.g., by writing letters and placing phone calls to close friends).

How Do Researchers Study Motivation in Relationships?

Researchers use many different types of methods to study motivation in human relationships. One type of research involves the use of *cross-sectional surveys,* in which participants report on their social motives at one point in time. Gable has asked participants, at one point in time, to rate their motives in their dating relationships during an upcoming academic quarter. For example, participants indicate the extent to which they intend to try to "deepen my relationship with my romantic partner" (to assess approach social motives) and "avoid conflicts and disagreements with my romantic partner" (to assess avoidance social motives). A

second type of research involves the use of *daily experience surveys,* in which participants report on their social motives repeatedly over a fixed period of time (e.g., everyday for 14 consecutive days). Researchers using these methods are particularly interested in how people's social motives may change from one day to the next depending on variations in the social situation (e.g., how much conflict they experience on a particular day). A third type of research involves the use of *longitudinal surveys,* in which participants are tracked over a period ranging from several weeks to many years. For example, Carstensen has looked at how the same people pursue different kinds of social motives at different points in the life course.

The measures that people use to assess social motives also vary. One type includes *open-ended measures,* in which participants are asked to write or talk about the types of motives that they pursue in their social interactions. From their responses, researchers create coding schemes to distill the large number of responses into a smaller number of meaningful themes, for example themes that focus on intrinsic or extrinsic motives. A second type includes *close-ended measures,* in which participants indicate the extent of their agreement with a list of goals determined ahead of time by the researchers themselves. For example, M. Lynne Cooper and her colleagues developed a close-ended measure of sexual goals, asking participants to indicate the extent to which they engage in sex for approach goals (e.g., "I have sex to feel emotionally close to my partner") and avoidance goals (e.g., "I have sex because I don't want my partner to be angry with me"). A third type of measure includes *implicit measures* of social motives, based on the idea that people may not always have conscious access to their own motives. For example, in some studies using implicit measures, participants look at ambiguous pictures and respond to a set of statements by indicating how they might think or feel in the situation depicted in each picture (e.g., a man taking a test or a woman attending a party).

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See also Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Attachment Theory; Belonging, Need for; Goals in Relationships; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Self-Verification

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MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS

The relationship of families to housing and of housing to family dynamics has interested many social scientists. The concept of multigenerational households has been used in at least two different ways. One is three or more generations in one housing unit or compound or several generations in close proximity. The second meaning includes, as is said in Asian countries, "close enough that the soup doesn't get cold" in transit; in Europe, living in apartments or houses in the same complex; in Central and South America, in the neighborhood, in apartments, and on the farm in a compound. In the United States, living within 1 hour or 100 miles of travel is seen as within easy access for family activities and caregiving. Living in the same dwelling conveys a much closer interaction and shared living, although when there is sufficient wealth many families create areas of privacy and independence within the dwelling. Demographers have been impressed with the decline of multigenerational households as young people have more opportunities. Housing and living arrangements for families and individuals reflect values, available incomes, housing policy, lifestyle choices, and regional and rural-urban opportunities and socioeconomic status. U.S. housing choices are also based on idealization of rural life, seen in an attraction for the suburbs of cities, rather than the central cities. Many fewer U.S. families aspire to live in the big cities than do those in Europe or the developing world. This entry discusses mutigenerational households and reviews the history; current practices both in the United States and other countries; and the demographic, social, and economic forces affecting these practices now and in the near future.

Prevalence of Multigenerational Households

Historically, multigenerational households have been associated with family businesses, especially farming and shopkeeping, and current multigenerational households are often associated with shared business or vocational interests. Historians have argued about whether multigenerational households were ever dominant in Western society, with a general consensus that households often contained boarders and apprentices, but that coresidence was limited to certain periods of life such as early marriage and widowhood. Today, there is a strong preference for relatively healthy elders to live independently and not reside with their children. Coresidence between adult children and their elderly parents has become less common over the decades. Currently the expansion of household structures has been in many more single people living alone. With the increase in longevity, determinants such as health problems, death of former caregivers, financial hardship of both the old and the young, and loneliness, there may be a renewed need for coresidence. When there are few supports for the elderly family care, transfers or sharing of property may encourage such shared living arrangements. The underlying inheritance and in vivo transfers of material resources including housing and other financial instruments may support some members sharing a common residence or location and providing care and support across the generations, especially if supported in the legal structure.

Tradition of Multigenerational Households

The traditional family referred to in much of the multigenerational household literature has been the stem family that has one adult child and one side of the parental generation coresiding and often working together. In many places, the stem family includes the oldest son and his nuclear family living with his parents. In China, the multigenerational house design was usually a single or double hollow square courtyard that provided some separation among the families living there and most commonly included the eldest son's family and any younger or unmarried siblings of his. In Asia in general, the adult children's sense of moral obligation to care for their parents stems from their deep respect and gratitude. There is a belief that parents deserve to be cared for in their elder years by their children as a form of repayment. This filial piety combined with reciprocal affection facilitates the inner workings of the family support system allowing care and security for the elderly parent.

In Central and South America urban areas, having apartments and compounds adjacent or close is

relatively easy, and families may build houses that have separate quarters but connecting doors and access. In small rural communities, the separation among households may amount to little, and people come and go with little notice. In Brazil's big urban centers, large extended families often live within easy walking distance in apartments frequently with the elderly persons close or adjacent to one of the younger adult children. Entertainment may happen in someone's large apartment, but more frequently meeting at a local restaurant brings everyone together.

In Europe, families and close friends often live in the same neighborhood or rural community and may choose to buy vacation homes or trailer park sites in the same place for vacation. The Druze in Israel often work in construction, the military, or education, but maintain a large home in their villages that can accommodate several related families in adjacent structures or within the structures. Some of the houses are always under construction to meet new needs. In Australia, promoting granny flats, which are additions to single-family housing through remodeling, and free-standing units to share the backyard has appealed to some families but has not been as well accepted as hoped by those urban planners who saw promise in such individual solutions to aging care. In the United States, some subcultures such as the Amish and recent immigrants usually try to keep multigenerational households. The Amish build smaller quarters for the grandparents onto farmhouses. The recent influx of immigrants both in North America and Europe suggests many prefer or depend on coresidential living. Some communities within or near big urban areas have houses or apartments that can accommodate larger families and immigrants and are often remodeled to accommodate complex families or individuals who are close family friends or distant relatives sent to them by their families in the home country.

Current Issues in Multigenerational Households

Changing housing markets also make available new options. As middle-class families have bought larger and larger houses, the ability to provide short-term housing for adult children and grandchildren becomes easier. The young adult who a generation ago would have been unhappy without his or her own apartment now may move to a suite with bath at home after college and be quite content. Similarly, the divorced mother and her children may seek support by returning home, at least temporarily. In addition, some parents find their houses full of their grown children's possessions when they are moving to follow work and mobility opportunities. Doubling up of both generations and siblings happens because of economic or mobility pressures. Though perhaps not the preferred living arrangement, housing shortages and high-cost housing create situations in which shared living arrangements are practical. There is a lingering concern from the long-term assumptions that nuclear households reflect appropriate independence and success that question such practical multigenerational households. In the United States, political rhetoric and programs to promote single home ownership exist even for the poor. Unemployment, which threatens families with loss of their house, may result in moving in with kin or friends. In 2008, the vast unraveling of the mortgage and realty markets may make doubling up a necessity.

Among some minority groups, for example African Americans, such events as family reunions, sending children to their grandmothers for summer vacations, and practices such as aunts being important caregivers in times of stress continue multigenerational ties even without regular coresidence. Although these practices are not limited to minority groups, they are especially useful in keeping family ties and helping networks.

Multigenerational living arrangements depend on infrastructure and community planning. In the United States, local zoning laws frequently isolate different types of housing, and owner-occupied single-family homes predominate. Active older adult communities often prohibit young or even teenage children from staying with their relatives for more than short visits. Elderly adults who chose these communities for their amenities may have a difficult time unwinding these financial arrangements when they are needed to care for their grandchildren over long-time commitment.

In Russia, families lived together because few housing choices were available and pooling of resources was useful. Now many more housing

units have come on the market in cities and those with the means tend to live in nuclear family units, but still try to be close for visiting. Economic and cultural conditions in Europe have continued to produce more multigenerational households in the south of Europe and few in the northern countries. Among the wealthy and upper middle class, having more than one home is a strategy that allows some multigenerational contact without living together full time. Also the ability to create nursing home environments within a household may allow elders to be at home longer or to share a home during the highest needs for care.

Functions and Stresses of Multigenerational Households

Multigenerational households continue to serve important functions, particularly at resource-scarce times or when wealth is available to make them comfortable and convenient. These households make the flow of care and intergenerational transfers of goods, services, and monetary benefices relatively simple. However, interactions within these households may be more complicated, especially when generations have different outlooks or conflicts that are not easily resolved. With the continual pattern of change in family structure, it is critical to closely examine multigenerational households, intergenerational bonds, and family relations from a theoretical perspective. Multigenerational living arrangements can be complex, with intense accumulation of demands placed on its members and family discourse. Successful multigenerational relationships are built upon mutuality and shared respect. Changing the expectations for the essentially adult dynamics of parents and their grown children is not automatic and requires some resocialization of both parties to the relationship. Exploitation or violence against elders may be a problem in multigenerational households, especially when there are limited resources or long-term conflicts. Solidarity within a multigenerational household allows families to give each other feedback and exchange help and support, although they may also experience conflict and ambivalence.

Grandparent-Headed Multigenerational Households Today

Recently, more attention has been placed on the grandparents' role within these multigenerational households, after the U.S. Census in 2000 revealed a large number of households in which grandchildren were coresident with grandparents, often without parents. Grandparents who are coresident with their grandchildren are more likely to give both routine and extended care to their grandchildren. They often give more help to younger mothers and are important in minority and low-income households. Having a living grandparent (especially a grandmother) is often noted as a protective factor for children at risk.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the AIDS epidemic has left children with none but their grandparents or other older relatives or neighbors to care for them. These skip-generation households might not seem to be what is usually meant by multigenerational households, but as these families try to support themselves and care for each other, they are key to hopes for survival in Africa. In Kenya and South Africa, grandmothers and older female relatives have primarily covered the care and sponsorship of these orphans. Young children may also care for frail elderly relatives who no longer have living adult relatives. The few nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and state-sponsored orphanages are not able to meet the growing needs for caregiving. In villages, many extra huts are available and not everyone may share the same space, but the few elders try to care for the children and to grow enough food to feed them, often using limited energies and strength with hoe-based gardening.

Conclusion

Multigenerational households are still important for addressing intergenerational relationships and caregiving where resources in the larger society are less dependable and when stressful events require more resources. Proximity is a predictor of helping and caring and for the coresidents the opportunity is real. Both caring for elders and elders caring for grandchildren and the adult caring for disabled or troubled child are simplified

with coresidence in multigenerational households or near proximity of households.

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See also Caregiving Across the Life Span; Extended Families; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Kin Relationships; Reciprocity, Norm of; Resource Theory

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Mutual Cyclical Growth

Jennifer Wieselquist and her colleagues developed a model of *mutual cyclical growth* to explain the across-partner associations among commitment, prorelationship behavior, and partner trust. The model combines concepts identified by Caryl Rusbult and her colleagues in their work on commitment with concepts identified by John Holmes and his colleagues in their work on trust. These analyses are complementary, in that both models rest on the principles of Interdependence Theory. This entry reviews the mutual cyclical growth model, explaining an important aspect of relationship regulation—how close partners influence one another during extended involvement, with each person's motives and behaviors in turn affecting the other's motives and behaviors. Key variables in the model are dependence, commitment, prorelationship behavior, and trust.

Dependence, Commitment, and Prorelationship Behaviors

According to Rusbult's investment model, people develop increasing *dependence* on their relationships as a function of (a) high *satisfaction level*—to the extent that their most important needs are gratified in the relationship (e.g., companionship, security, sexuality); (b) poor *quality of alternatives*—to the extent that their most important needs could not be gratified independent of the relationship (e.g., by a specific partner, the general field of eligibles); and (c) high *investment size*—to the extent that they invest numerous important resources in the relationship, either directly or indirectly (e.g., time, effort, shared friendship network, joint material possessions).

As people become dependent, they develop feelings of commitment to the relationship. C*ommitment level* represents long-term orientation toward a relationship, including intent to persist and feelings of psychological attachment. Strong commitment entails motivation to "make a relationship work" not only by persisting in the relationship, but also by engaging in prorelationship acts such as (a) accommodation—when a partner enacts a potentially destructive behavior (e.g., criticism, irritability), committed individuals inhibit the impulse to react destructively in turn and instead behave in a constructive manner; (b) sacrifice—when partners' interests conflict, committed individuals engage in otherwise undesirable behaviors or forgo otherwise desirable behaviors for the good of the partner and relationship; and (c) affirmation—committed individuals work to elicit the best in their partners, even when doing so is effortful or costly. Many of the behaviors that people enact so as to sustain a relationship—including accommodation, sacrifice, and affirmation—are termed *prorelationship acts,* in that such behaviors to some degree are costly or effortful, yet promote the well-being of a partner or relationship.

Diagnostic Situations, Trust, and Dependence

Situations that call for prorelationship acts—for example, situations in which a partner "behaves badly," or situations in which partners' interests conflict—have been termed *diagnostic situations.*

Dilemmas of this sort are "diagnostic" in that the manner in which people behave in such situations is indicative of their motives. For example, when John sacrifices a long-awaited opportunity to go out with his friends and instead helps Mary plan an upcoming party, Mary can discern the strength of his commitment, in that he has placed her needs and interests above his own. According to Holmes's model of trust, people develop increased trust when they observe a partner behave well in diagnostic situations—when they observe the partner enact costly or effortful prorelationship acts. *Trust* is thus relationship-specific and represents the strength of one's conviction that a partner will be responsive to one's needs, now and in the future. As such, Mary's trust in John reflects the strength of John's commitment to Mary.

As partners develop enhanced trust in each other, they are also likely to become increasingly dependent on each other: Trusting partners feel more satisfied with their relationships, and are more willing to drive away attractive alternatives and invest important resources in their relationships. Thus, as Mary develops trust—becoming increasingly confident that John will be responsive to her needs—she becomes more comfortable being dependent on John, which in turn yields strengthened commitment, which in turn causes her to exhibit prorelationship acts. When John perceives such acts, he develops increased trust in Mary, which in turn makes him more comfortable becoming dependent on Mary, which strengthens his commitment . . . and so on, in a pattern of temporally extended, mutually reinforcing across-partner influence. This model also helps explain deteriorating relationships, in that if any component of the model is weakened—for example, if Mary encounters tempting alternatives, or if she stubbornly refuses to enact prorelationship behaviors, or if she finds that she cannot trust John—the mutual cyclical process will stall or reverse, as partners' motives and behaviors feed back on and influence each other in a negative manner.

Conclusion

Given that each person's motives and behaviors affect the other, mutual cyclical growth is a process through which partners tend to develop and sustain roughly equal levels of dependence, commitment, and trust, and tend to exhibit roughly reciprocal prorelationship acts. Indeed, mutuality and reciprocity tend to be characteristic of well-functioning relationships. The model also illuminates crucial processes in ongoing relationships by integrating important interdependence principles from two traditional theories—Rusbult's theory of how partners develop commitment and Holmes's theory of how partners come to trust each other.

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See also Accommodation; Affirmation; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Interdependence Theory; Investment Model; Maintaining Relationships; Trust; Willingness to Sacrifice

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Narcissism, Effects on Relationships

Narcissism, or self-love, has a complex series of consequences, both negative and positive, for relationships. This makes it an important topic of study for investigators, practitioners, and students in the area of human relationships. Narcissism can interfere with the ability or desire to form close, caring relationships with others. Although primarily destructive for relationships in the long term, during the initial relationship stages, narcissism can also promote relationship functioning. Interactions with narcissistic individuals are often described as exciting and enjoyable in the beginning. For example, a narcissist may be perceived, at first, as a confident, charming new romantic interest or an exciting, charismatic political leader. These positive perceptions, however, often become negative as the relationship progresses. This entry includes a brief description of narcissism, a view of relationships from the narcissist's perspective, and a view from the perspective of the other(s) in the relationship with the narcissist.

What Is Narcissism?

The term *narcissism* is derived from the Ancient Greek myth of Narcissus, popularized in psychology by Sigmund Freud. Narcissism is a personality trait that is characterized by a positive, grandiose, and inflated view of the self. Narcissists see themselves as better than others on traits such as social status, ability, creativity, and physical appearance. Narcissists also have an elevated sense of entitlement and believe that they are special and unique. Narcissism is also related to a lack of interest in forming emotionally close relationships with others. Finally, narcissism is linked with efforts to enhance and defend self-esteem. That is, narcissists seek opportunities that will make them look and feel successful and attractive. In its most extreme form, narcissism becomes narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). This is a rare clinical condition that shares characteristics with narcissism.

Narcissism has consequences for a wide range of relationships. A good deal of research has examined narcissism in dating relationships, new or emerging relationships (i.e., acquaintanceships), and leadership and work relationships. There has been relatively little research on narcissism and parenting, marriage, sibling relationships, or long-term friendships. In general, the outcomes of narcissism are similar across the different relationship types; for example, narcissists' charm and confidence are useful for both finding dating partners and obtaining leadership positions.

The Narcissist's Perspective

From the narcissist's perspective, relationships are needed for maintaining and elevating self-esteem. This leads to an interesting paradox in narcissists' relationships. On the one hand, narcissists do not desire emotional closeness with others; on the

other hand, relationships are useful for inflating the narcissists' self-image. Relationship partners can serve this self-esteem enhancing function in several ways. For example, the narcissist can find an admirer or group of admirers, or associate with high-status people.

Narcissists are skilled at starting relationships. This skill allows narcissists to manipulate others into fulfilling their self-esteem needs. Narcissists tend to be confident, socially adept, charming, and manipulative. They report having relatively high numbers of dating and sexual partners and are likely to rise into leadership positions.

Once narcissists initiate relationships, however, they are problematic partners. Narcissists are relatively low in relationship commitment and more interested in finding other, better relationship partners. Narcissists are game-playing as well; for example, they tend to alternate between displaying and withdrawing commitment to a partner. They also are likely to set off two or more partners against each other. At worst, narcissists can be physically and sexually aggressive. This often occurs when narcissists feel threatened or rejected, or do not get their way. For all these reasons, narcissists' relationships tend to be short. When they do get married, the outcome is mixed. Some evidence indicates that narcissists can be satisfied and committed in some circumstances, but also are prone to be physically abusive and sexually unfaithful.

The Partner's Perspective

When relationships are formed with narcissists, they typically start out well. Narcissists are often attractive when first encountered. They are liked when only seen in short video clips of behavior; they are liked in initial group meetings; and they emerge as leaders in short-term groups. The beginning of dating relationships with narcissists can be satisfying and exciting. Over time, however, social ties with narcissists become less positive. In work groups, this is often a consequence of narcissists' self-focus and selfishness, including counterproductive and unethical behavior. In dating relationships, this is a result of narcissists' unwillingness to form emotionally close relationships coupled with a host of destructive behaviors such as emotional control, game-playing, dishonesty, infidelity, and even aggression. The long-term consequences of narcissism are often highly negative, and those who form relationships with narcissists can suffer for extended periods.

Additional Issues

There are small gender differences in narcissism, with men showing somewhat higher levels. This gender difference is larger in NPD. In relationships, however, men and women with high narcissism scores act in similar ways.

Some limited evidence indicates that narcissists can change for the better in relationships. This change may be brought about by a shift toward taking a caring or connected orientation toward the partner or group. Nevertheless, individuals with high levels of narcissism are unlikely to change in relationships. Because narcissism is often accompanied by higher levels of self-esteem and positive emotion, there is little motivation to change. There are also few clinically validated treatments for NPD, although there are suggested psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, and behavioral therapies. Narcissists' response to relationship break up and rejection can vary. Evidence indicates that narcissists respond to rejection with anger and aggression and that they are able to distort their memories of rejection so that their self-esteem remains intact.

W. Campbell and Laura Buffardi

See also Leadership; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Psychodynamic Theories of Relationships; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships

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NEED FULFILLMENT IN RELATIONSHIPS

One reason humans find relationships particularly rewarding is that they serve to fulfill needs. Needs are those necessary conditions and elements that are essential to individuals' physical and psychological well-being. In his seminal 1938 book, Henry Murray provided a set of nearly 30 specific needs that individuals seek to have met in their lives. Of these, many are interpersonal in nature, including the needs for affiliation, autonomy, dominance, nurturance, play, recognition, rejection, and sex. Similarly, other early theorists such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers highlighted the importance of relationships in fulfilling love and belongingness needs and as a source of unconditional positive regard in self-actualized individuals. This entry discusses need fulfillment from several theoretical perspectives and reviews the empirical findings regarding need fulfillment within the context of romantic relationships.

Theoretical Perspectives

Numerous theoretical perspectives and research findings have noted the importance of the fulfillment of interpersonal needs. For example, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan's Self-Determination Theory highlights the importance of relatedness needs (i.e., the need to be connected to others) along with needs associated with autonomy and competence. Fulfillment of this fundamental "need to belong," according to Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary, is an important motivation at the core of much research and theory on many types of relationships, including romantic relationships, friendships, and group dynamics. In short, from a wide range of perspectives, a diverse set of human needs have been identified, and many are linked to interpersonal relationships.

From an evolutionary perspective, many basic human motivations have social and relational dimensions. To survive and reproduce, organisms must have certain needs met, such as the acquisition of food, safety for oneself and kin, opportunities for mating, and subsequent caretaking of offspring. From this perspective, the continuation of the species is due to humans' abilities to fulfill social needs that promote survival and reproduction.

The Self-Expansion Model, proposed by Arthur Aron and colleagues, is based on the assumption that humans have a fundamental motivation to seek opportunities that facilitate personal growth, promote the development of self-identity, and enhance social and material resources. From this perspective, relationships play an important role in the fulfillment of self-expansion goals because interaction with relationship partners is a primary avenue through which these goals are met. For example, relationships with others serve as a source of self-identity, and knowledge and access to resources are increased through one's relationship partner. Likewise, interactions with a relationship partner may be associated with novel and exciting activities (e.g., having someone to share new experiences with), further enhancing self-expansion.

Furthermore, Interdependence Theory, articulated by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley, is based on the notion that interactions between individuals yield outcomes for those parties involved in the interaction. In other words, people get things that they desire from their relationships. Within a developmental context, as interpersonal needs are met within relationships, those relationships begin to take on more importance to the participants. Over time, individuals begin to rely on their partners for fulfillment of specific needs, thus building a pattern of interdependent interactions between partners (i.e., they depend on each other for need fulfillment). To illustrate, imagine a relationship between George and Susan in which George's needs for intimacy are met through his continued interaction with Susan (e.g., she is a good listener and provides the warmth and closeness he desires). Likewise, George may facilitate the fulfillment of Susan's companionship needs (e.g., she enjoys spending time and engaging in activities with him). As George and Susan's reliance on each other for the fulfillment of their desired needs increases over time, their relationship is strengthened.

The fulfillment of needs within the relationship has a direct impact on individuals' satisfaction in

the relationship; those with their expectations for need fulfillment may experience those relationships more positively. Likewise, if alternative relationships cannot (or are not anticipated to) fulfill needs as well as a current relationship, reliance (called "dependence" in this theory) on the current relationship is strengthened. For example, if George's intimacy needs are being fulfilled by Susan, and those needs for intimacy could not be met as well in another relationship, satisfaction is increased and alternatives are decreased, and that relationship is likely to persist. In a sense, from an Interdependence Theory perspective, commitment to a relationship and subsequent continuation (or termination) of a relationship is a function of the extent that the relationship fulfills one's needs, via satisfaction and alternatives (two important components of Caryl Rusbult's Investment Model of Commitment).

Need Fulfillment in Romantic Relationships

These various theoretical perspectives have given rise to specific needs that are hypothesized to be central in relationships and have been measured in many studies of close relationships. For example, working from an Interdependence Theory perspective, Stephen Drigotas and Caryl Rusbult identified six important relationship needs: intimacy, sexual, emotional, companionship, security, and self-worth. Likewise, Self-Determination theorists suggest the importance of three primary human needs: autonomy (the need to feel in control of one's behavior), competence (the need to feel effective and capable), and relatedness (the need to feel connected). Similarly, Karen Prager and Duane Buhrmester organize needs along two primary dimensions: communal needs and agentic needs. *Communal needs* relate to social interaction, such as intimacy, affection, fun/enjoyment, nurturance, and sexuality, whereas *agentic needs* include those that relate to the self, such as self-esteem, order/structure, recognition, power/influence, and achievement.

Beyond identifying and organizing types of need fulfillment, research on close relationships has focused on the associations between need fulfillment and interpersonal processes. For example, the fulfillment of intimacy needs in marriages has been shown to be associated with enhanced communication skills and relationship satisfaction.

Likewise, need fulfillment is a good predictor of relationship outcomes such as the decision to remain in or leave a romantic relationship. As shown in a longitudinal study of dating relationships, partners reporting that they relied on their relationship for the fulfillment of sexual, emotional, companionship, security, and self-worth needs at one point in time were more likely to still be in their relationships 6 weeks later. Interestingly, the need fulfillment of "leavers" (i.e., those "dumping" their partners) was significantly lower than for those who were abandoned in their relationships (i.e., those "dumped" by their partners) and those whose relationships persisted, suggesting that having one's needs go unfulfilled in a relationship precipitates the decision to end that relationship. In addition, a study assessing these same needs indicated that a lack of need fulfillment was associated with susceptibility to engage in relationship infidelity (i.e., cheat on one's partner).

Furthermore, the fulfillment of relationship needs is associated with well-being and the experience of positive and negative emotions. For example, fulfillment of the needs identified by Drigotas and Rusbult has been shown to be associated with heightened positive emotions and lowered negative emotions, although these associations were found to be lower for those in long-distance relationships. Similarly, fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs is associated with greater well-being, self-esteem, and positive emotions, whereas a lack of fulfillment of these needs predicted experience of negative emotions. Need fulfillment is also associated with low anxiety and avoidance levels in relationships; those with secure attachment orientations report higher levels of relationship need fulfillment.

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See also Belonging, Need for; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Goals in Relationships; Interdependence Theory; Investment Model; Self-Expansion Model

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Negative Affect Reciprocity

Negative affect reciprocity (also called *reciprocation of negativity* or *mutual escalation*) refers to the tendency for one person's negative behavior to instigate another's negative behavior. It references a pattern of behavior between two people in relationship to each other, where one person's negative actions, such as criticism or an angry facial expression, are followed by another's similarly valenced actions. Repeated patterns of negative reciprocity turn into *negative spirals,* continued patterns of reciprocity that work to create a poor relational climate and bring about other negative consequences within relationships. This entry discusses the nature and effects of negative affect reciprocity in a variety of personal relationships, focusing on the behaviors that may be involved and the characteristics of relationships likely to have high levels of negative affect reciprocity.

What Behaviors Are Negative?

Negative affect (also called *negative emotion*) may be manifested during interaction in intimate relationships in many ways. The five primary negative emotions or affects are anger, shame/guilt, fear/anxiety, contempt/disgust, and sadness. Anger and contempt are sometimes studied together as *hostility,* and shame and sadness are sometimes viewed together as *despair.*

Whereas these emotions can arise from interacting with others, particularly in difficult situations, the emotions themselves can also lead to behaviors such as negative forms of *conflict* (e.g., coercion, aversion, or invalidation), *nonverbal behavior*—including silence and frowning, *defensiveness, physical aggression* or *violence, belligerence,* which can occur with verbal or nonverbal messages—and *withdrawal,* or leaving an interaction either physically or mentally. Additionally, negative affect can show up as criticism, disagreement, disapproval, interruptions, put downs, threats, ignoring, changing topics, and denials of responsibility.

Patterns of reciprocity may begin while a person is speaking or listening to another. So, for instance, one friend may be listening to another's problems with her boyfriend, and the listener may begin to sigh. The speaker may reciprocate the sigh—or some other largely negative behavior—in response. The primary characteristic of affect reciprocity is that one person's negative behavior leads to another's negative behavior, and the second person's behavior is not likely to have occurred if the initial action had not taken place. Patterns of behavior-affecting-behavior can continue or spiral over time, creating long-term and problematic cycles for relational partners. So, when a child yells at his mother, and the mother responds with criticism, the son may respond with an angry retort, and so on, turning it into an interaction that is both undesirable on its own and that can have long-lasting effects.

Who Is Affected?

Behavioral reciprocity is common across all interpersonal interactions (i.e., exchanges that occur between people, such as the mother/son discussed). People in close relationships depend on each other to meet their needs and goals, and reciprocity—both negative and positive—tends to be more pronounced when people know each other well or cohabitate. As people's lives and behaviors become enmeshed, there are more opportunities for—and consequences of—patterned interaction.

Most research on reciprocated affect has been conducted with heterosexual "romantic" couples. Researchers have also looked at reciprocated affect in other familial relationships, including the greater likelihood that siblings will reciprocate each other's negative behaviors than reciprocate their friends' negative behaviors. Most notably, there has been a

focus on reciprocity in parent–child relationships. For example, negative reciprocity is particularly likely between a child and his or her mother during encounters that involve criticism or discipline and between fathers and their children at play.

Other work looks toward the *outcomes* of mutual escalation (i.e., when one behavior leads to another, which leads to another and another, the pattern escalating in intensity or frequency of negative affect), particularly on children. Research suggests that, because children learn about affect from their parents primarily, reciprocity patterns exhibited in the household—both negative and positive—condition children for affective patterns with others later in life. Some scholars argue similarly that negativity between two people in a family—such as the parents—can "migrate" to other family members. Mutual negativity between parents can even lead to parental abuse of their children. Parents' negativity reciprocity has also been linked to greater youth delinquency, poor interaction skills, and even mental illness. In some families, the negativity has led to or is created by high levels of stress. Although negative reciprocity can occur in many circumstances, a combination of high stress and affect reciprocity can be particularly volatile.

Negativity reciprocity appears particularly pronounced when children reach adolescence. Perhaps because of the greater emotional intensity that occurs during puberty, reciprocity of both positive and negative behavior is even more likely than during early childhood. Negative reciprocity when children are teens has been found to influence parenting skills and problem solving negatively (i.e., difficult behavior spirals may create environments where other competencies become harder to enact). Moreover, negativity reciprocity during adolescence predicts similar behavior later in adulthood. Thus, its effects can be found beyond the interactions in which such patterns occur.

What Predicts Negative Reciprocity?

Reciprocity is the most common response to negative behavior across relationships. But reciprocity is more likely in relationships that have certain qualities. Research has focused on three:

unhappy relationships, violent relationships, and relationships in which one or more people are alcoholic or substance-addicted.

Negative Affect Reciprocity and Relationship Satisfaction

Researchers have found that dissatisfied couples are more likely than are satisfied couples to reciprocate each other's negative behavior. Whereas the causal link between dissatisfaction and negative affect reciprocity is unclear, some evidence indicates that dissatisfaction may lead to negative reciprocity. When people are unhappy in their relationships, they tend to notice, evaluate unfavorably, and respond in kind to their partner's negative actions. Conversely, negative reciprocity can shape the nature of relationships over time, *leading to* greater dissatisfaction. Behaviors that occur consistently become part of the relational script (i.e., predictable patterns of behavior), influencing partners' expectations for each other and helping form a larger conception of relationship that is judged as more or less satisfying.

As noted, negative reciprocity tends to occur in all relationships, regardless of satisfaction level. One explanation for why negative reciprocity is less frequent and less harmful in satisfying relationships concerns satisfied couples' greater ability to escape from negative patterns by using positive affect to de-escalate the negative spiral. For instance, if a wife frowns at her husband when he comes home late, instead of responding by replying with criticism, a more satisfied husband might go up to his wife and hug her, stopping the reciprocity and changing the affective climate.

Expressions of positive (or even neutral) affect may work by "soothing" their recipient, and this change in affect can be particularly important when the recipient is male, as males' greater tendency toward physiological arousal in negative interactions is at the base of many harmful communicative patterns in couples' relationships. Despite the potential to de-escalate negative patterns of behavior, and the likelihood that those in satisfied relationships will break the cycle with positive or neutral behaviors, even satisfied couples do not often do so.

Negative Affect Reciprocity in Abusive or Violent Relationships

Because negative reciprocity can develop easily in relationships, and because it can be hard to break, researchers have been keenly interested in its manifestation in relationships that are already prone to negative behavior, such as abusive relationships. The tendency to reciprocate negative behavior is more likely in violent rather than nonviolent marital or intimate relationships, especially during conflict. Moreover, patterns of reciprocity usually last longer between physically aggressive couples because nonviolent couples exit negative affect reciprocity patterns more easily than do violent couples.

Negativity escalation does not happen always or with all negative behaviors, but it is a strong trend and occurs most often in the form of withdrawal matched by withdrawal. Some researchers argue that withdrawal patterns are particularly harmful to relationships because conflict remains unresolved, and greater hostility may emerge later as a consequence. Other forms of negative reciprocity appear to be common, particularly for men who are in unhappy, violent relationships. Such men may react more negatively and predictably than do any other group, although men in happy, but violent, relationships are also likely to reciprocate their female partners' negative behaviors.

The tendency to react to a partner's negative behavior with similarly negative behavior— particularly during conflict interactions—may be based on the level of anxiety or arousal some couples feel during those interactions. Whereas most people tend to feel aroused/anxious in difficult interactions, for some people in violent relationships, heightened arousal levels make controlling their reactions more difficult, and this may be more pronounced for males. Other researchers point to the ways in which certain couples think about or make sense of each other's behaviors. Specifically, people in physically aggressive relationships tend to pay considerable attention to their partners' behaviors, and they may be more likely to blame their partner for any perceived "misbehavior." Such ways of thinking increase the likelihood of reciprocity, although this is just one of many potential causes for physical aggression.

Negative Affect Reciprocity and Alcohol Use

For aggressive couples in particular, alcohol often increases the extent of negative affect reciprocity. As with most people, alcohol use impairs their ability to think in ways they would without the alcohol. For example, a woman who has been drinking may be more likely to see her partner's behaviors toward another woman incorrectly as flirtatious rather than friendly. This cognitive impairment is one of the forces behind the increased tendency to react to negativity with negativity. Such impaired cognition is particularly likely in men who are in aggressive relationships, although it occurs for both sexes. Other reasons that have been given for negativity reciprocity and alcohol use include the tendency for alcohol to make some people more coercive, impulsive, dominant, and antisocial, all ways of being that may encourage additional negativity.

Consuming alcohol does not predict negativity reciprocity in all cases. Long-time, steady drinkers, for example, are less likely than are those who drink "episodically" to reciprocate behaviors. Episodic drinkers are also more violence-prone than are steady drinkers, so reciprocity of violent behavior may be more common in relationships with episodic alcohol consumption. The strongest patterns of negative reciprocity when alcohol is consumed are in relationships where physical abuse is common, particularly when the violence-prone drinking partner is male.

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See also Conflict Patterns; Emotion in Relationships; Hostility; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Parent–Child Relationships; Relational Aggression; Substance Use and Abuse in Relationships

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Negative Interactions During Late Life

The beneficial effects of social relationships on mental and physical health across the life span are well documented. Yet, close relationships do not always function as sources of support and companionship. They can also be a source of conflict, demands, and disappointments. Negative interactions with social network members tend to occur less often than positive interactions do, but the effects of negative interactions appear to be more potent. These observations have given rise to a literature on the nature and effects of negative interactions. Individuals of all ages occasionally experience tensions and frustrations in their relationships. This entry reviews the literature on negative social interactions in later life, a time when having to deal with declining health, loss of relationship partners, and other difficult life circumstances may precipitate or magnify the impact of negative exchanges. The entry begins by exploring the implications of negative exchanges for health and well-being in later life, and then examines variations in both exposure and reactivity to negative exchanges.

Impact of Negative Social Interactions on Health and Well-Being

Research that examines the impact of negative social interactions on health and well-being has often compared the effects of positive and negative interactions. A point of departure for such work has been the extensive body of evidence documenting health-related benefits of social ties. Across the life span, structural (e.g., network size, frequency of social contact) and functional (e.g., perceived support availability and quality) aspects of social networks significantly affect health and well-being. Social network members often provide emotional and instrumental support that dampens the adverse effects of life stress and provide opportunities for companionship and shared activities. Not surprisingly, people who have meaningful social relationships report less depression and susceptibility to chronic disease, and greater life satisfaction and longevity. The generally positive impact of supportive social relationships extends into later life; research with older adults indicates that supportive ties have a beneficial impact on mental and physical functioning.

Yet, interactions with social network members are not exclusively positive. Some network members, despite good intentions, engage in selfish, insensitive, or simply clumsy behavior at times. Analyses of social network composition indicate that although most network members function predominantly as a source of positive exchanges, many function as a source of both positive and negative exchanges, and a vexing minority function solely as a source of negative exchanges. These negative exchanges have the potential to elicit negative affect and arouse stress in their own right, thereby threatening well-being.

Negative interactions can take many forms. A review of the literature, however, suggests that they can be classified in four relatively broad categories. Although some degree of overlap exists across these categories, the categories have been validated and found to have distinctive effects in representative samples of older adults. These categories are insensitive or critical behavior by others, intrusive or unsound advice provided by others, failure by others to provide tangible or instrumental support in times of need, and rejection or neglect by others. These are directly parallel to four broad categories of positive exchanges that are consequential for well-being: emotional support, informational support, instrumental support, and companionship.

Although these different kinds of negative interactions can occur at any point in the life span, age differences may exist in the life contexts in which they tend to occur and the specific factors that precipitate their occurrence. For instance, older adults often experience stressful life events and transitions that elicit feelings of loneliness and emotional distress and that increase their needs for support and companionship. Events such as marked declines in physical functioning, the loss of loved ones, and residential relocation involve major life changes that may create long-term needs for support and care by social network members. If social network members are unable or unwilling to provide needed social support and companionship, older adults may be especially likely to experience emotional distress and feelings of rejection or neglect.

Research indicates that negative exchanges arouse considerable distress, as evidenced by strong associations with negative affect, depressive symptoms, and feelings of loneliness among older adults. Even though negative exchanges generally occur less frequently than positive exchanges, the adverse effects of negative interactions on health and well-being appear to outweigh the beneficial effects of positive interactions. This disproportionate impact of negative exchanges, referred to as the *negativity effect,* may be attributed to several factors. One explanation is that negative exchanges violate a fundamental expectation that close network members can be counted on to be supportive and caring. Another explanation is that negative exchanges can serve as sources of acute or chronic

stress. In fact, studies examining different kinds of daily stress have found that stressors of an interpersonal nature (e.g., disagreements and misunderstandings) are among the most distressing. Social relationships in which difficulties persist over time are especially likely to elicit health-damaging negative affect and feelings of stress and to erode perceptions of control among older adults.

Interpersonal stressors also have detrimental effects on physiological processes (e.g., neuroendocrine and immune responses) involved in the human stress system. This may explain why social relationships characterized by recurring problems have been linked to compromised immunological, neuroendocrine, and cardiovascular functioning in later life. Negative exchanges contribute to physical symptomatology, accounting for more variance in physical health symptoms than life stress, daily hassles, or social support. Furthermore, negative exchanges predict more distal health outcomes, such as the onset and progression of physical disability in later life. For example, in one longitudinal analysis of community-dwelling older adults with little to no baseline physical disability, individuals who reported consistent, frequent negative interactions over 2 years were more likely to experience functional declines (e.g., difficulty with activities of daily living).

Moreover, well-intentioned social support can backfire. Providing and receiving instrumental support (material aid, services) appears to be a particularly sensitive issue in later life. Support that recipients perceive to be unwanted, inappropriate, or incongruent with their needs may threaten their feelings of self-efficacy, competence, independence, and overall well-being. For example, among older adults with a physical disability, instrumental support—particularly if overprotective—may foster dependence and reduce confidence in engaging in self-care and physical activities that are essential to preserving physical functioning. Consequently, recipients may feel resentful, and providers may feel unappreciated. Even in the absence of such negative feelings, older adults who need extensive care and close network members who seek to provide such care may experience considerable awkwardness and uncertainty while struggling to negotiate this transition in their relationship. The receipt of instrumental support, ironically—but perhaps not surprisingly from this perspective—has

been shown to predict an increased risk of disability onset and recurrence over time among older adults.

Variations in Exposure to Negative Interactions in Later Life

Although declining health and other circumstances in later life may sow the seeds for misunderstandings and disagreements in older adults' relationships, not all adults are equally vulnerable to negative interactions. Moreover, not all negative interactions experienced by older adults emerge anew in later life; some such interactions reflect problems of long-standing duration in their relationships.

A key factor that influences the nature of older adults' social relationships—and, in turn, their exposure to negative interactions—is the extent to which they are able to selectively manage their social contacts. According to Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST), older adults have a growing awareness that their time left to live is limited, and thus are driven to satisfy emotional needs. Consistent with this idea, evidence indicates that as people age, they selectively prune their social networks and shape their social environments to spend time with emotionally rewarding partners. As a result, older adults are better equipped to prevent, resolve, and recover from interpersonal tensions, and hence, report fewer problematic ties. This may explain why, despite declining rates in the frequency of social contacts and reductions in network size with advancing age, relationships in later life tend to be of better quality and characterized by greater emotional closeness and less negativity.

Nonetheless, variability in life circumstances and individual differences may affect older adults' attempts at selectively managing their social interactions and, in some cases, increase their exposure to negative interactions. As previously mentioned, age-associated life events (e.g., declining mobility, widowhood, or residential relocation) may preclude older adults from engaging in rewarding interactions. Thus, older adults may experience feelings of loneliness, rejection, and neglect. Moreover, as older adults develop limiting physical conditions, they tend to rely more on family members than on friends. This shift may elicit negative interactions, as interpersonal tensions are more likely within the context of kin, rather than nonkin, relationships.

Although changes in life circumstances may precipitate negative exchanges, longitudinal work on negative interactions, though sparse, indicates that among some older adults, negative exchanges are chronic and show stability over time. This, again, may be particularly true to the extent that older adults' networks contain a large proportion of kin. Unlike voluntary ties with friends, kin ties are obligatory and difficult to terminate. Family ties that are unrewarding or persistently problematic may serve as chronic sources of stress. Evidence also suggests that some older adults report negative exchanges across multiple partners (for example, friends, children, *and* spouses), implying that their personal characteristics may play a role in prompting the chronic interpersonal difficulties experienced in later life. Traits such as depressive tendencies, neuroticism, poor social skills, and lack of self-esteem may make some older adults more vulnerable to negative exchanges, as is true in younger age groups. Furthermore, declines in cognitive functioning may render some older adults more susceptible to chronic negative interactions. For example, evidence suggests that declining cognitive inhibition and executive dysfunction contribute to socially inappropriate behavior and negative social interactions. These individual differences and life circumstances may increase older adults' exposure to negative interactions, and may influence their ability to deal with such interactions when they occur.

Variations in Reactivity to Negative Interactions

When confronted with acute or chronic interpersonal tensions, older adults may engage in a number of coping strategies. These strategies typically fall into one of two categories—problem-focused or emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping involves efforts aimed at changing the stressful situation itself, such as confrontation, seeking a compromise, or seeking support from others about how to handle the situation. Emotion-focused strategies are internally directed and aimed at reducing negative emotions elicited by

the event, such as trying not to think about the event, trying to reframe it to feel less stressful, or trying to suppress emotional distress. Whereas younger adults are more likely to use problem-focused coping, older adults tend to use a mixture of strategies. This is due, in part, to older adults' enhanced ability to regulate their emotions and differentiate among multiple strategies for coping with stressors. Accordingly, older adults report less negative affect and anger in response to negative exchanges and remain distressed for shorter periods than do younger age groups.

Moreover, the type of coping strategy employed depends on the person's coping goals or objectives, which also may differ across the life span. Like their younger counterparts, older adults' interpersonal goals range from problem resolution and ending the aversive pattern of interactions, to reducing emotional distress. But, unlike their younger counterparts, older adults may assign special importance to the goal of maintaining harmony and goodwill in their relationships. This helps explain why older adults are more likely than are younger and middle-aged adults to respond to negative interactions with conciliatory coping strategies (e.g., forgiveness, self-blame, and less avoidance). Older adults' use of coping strategies geared toward preserving harmony have been shown, in turn, to predict less emotional distress and greater perceived goal success.

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See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Couples in Later Life; Friendships in Late Adulthood; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Loneliness; Social Support and Health; Stress and Relationships

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NEGOTIATION

Negotiation refers to the communication to reach agreement between two or more conflicting parties. Parties may be, for example, husband and wife, parent and child, colleagues in the same department, or a house owner and an interested buyer. Oftentimes, parties represent or even involve larger groups of people, as in the case of negotiation between the representatives of labor union and corporate management. In negotiation, parties perceive their interests to be opposed to those of their counterpart. Such negotiation can be formal, as in the case of union–management negotiations, or more informal, as in the case of a husband and wife negotiating responsibility for household chores.

Regardless how formal or informal, negotiation involves a set of basic principles and psychological processes that will be briefly discussed in this entry. One key first element of most negotiations is that they involve, at least potentially, several issues rather than one single issue. Husbands and wives discuss responsibility for household chores and may discuss income and child care. Unions and management discuss wages as well as health care, pension plans, vacation time, and training and development. In short, negotiations often concern multiple issues, and in case they do not, parties can bring new issues to the table, or break issues into several smaller ones.

Creating Value in Negotiation

Negotiating about several issues at the same time can have interesting advantages. A famous story is told by a pioneering scholar of negotiation, Mary

Parker Follett, about two sisters quarreling over an orange, who end up splitting the orange in two equal parts. One sister squeezes her part, throws away the peel, and drinks the juice. The other squeezes her half, throws away the juice, and grates the peel to flavor a cake she is baking. Had these sisters talked about their interests they could have reached a mutually more beneficial agreement (the entire peel to one sister, all the juice to the other) than they reached by quarreling over one single issue—the orange.

Another illustration of the benefits of discussing multiple issues comes from the Camp David negotiations between Israel and Egypt in 1977. Since the Yom Kippur war in 1973, Israel had occupied the Sinai Desert, which Egypt wanted back. Instead of dividing the desert in more or less equal parts, it was decided that Egypt would get back the desert to satisfy its historical claims and restore its reputation in the Arab world. But, critically, Egypt would keep the desert demilitarized so that Israel's need for security was satisfied. Both parties thus achieved a better deal by talking about reputation as well as about security, rather than focusing on the single surface issue of who gets what part of the Sinai Desert.

Agreements that take advantage of the fact that the various issues involved in a conflict may not be equally important to all parties are called *integrative agreements*. In integrative agreements, parties concede on issues that are unimportant to oneself but important to the other (e.g., the peel, reputation among Arab neighbors) but stand fast on issues that are important to oneself but unimportant to the other (e.g., juice, security). Compared with simple "split-the-difference" compromises or victory-to-one settlements, studies have shown that integrative agreements tend to be relatively stable, create positive feelings of satisfaction and pride, and install a sense of self-efficacy, allowing parties to approach later negotiations in a more optimistic, problem-solving oriented manner. In addition, parties are more committed to their part of the bargain and more motivated to honor their promises. Integrative agreements create more value to both parties than any other type of agreement. This in turn fosters stability, harmony, and sometimes even economic prosperity; failure to reach (integrative) agreements may create frustration and conflict, distrust and weakened social ties, and

may hurt economic progress. In the long run, failure to agree and continue conflict may lead to relationship dissolution (e.g., divorce, employees leaving an organization).

Psychological Principles in Negotiation

Many scholars in psychology and other social sciences have tried to understand when and why people fail or succeed in reaching integrative agreements. Pioneering work was done by Sidney Siegel and Lawrence Fouraker, Harold Kelley, and Dean Pruitt, among others. These authors created experimental situations in which two persons negotiated over several issues (e.g., the price of the car, delivery time, method of payment), some of which were valuable to the seller but not to the buyer, and some of which were not valuable to the seller but were important to the buyer. By trading the less important issue for the more important one, buyer and seller were able to earn more personally and collectively than by splitting the difference on these issues. But because each party entered the negotiation without knowing what was valuable or not to the counterpart, they were unaware of the possibility to trade off and do well collectively—they had to uncover this possibility through negotiation. This is exactly what the researchers were interested in: Why do some individuals discover the integrative possibilities and others do not?

This pioneering work showed that individuals and groups have great difficulty achieving integrative agreements. According to a structural-motivational account, this is primarily because negotiators simultaneously face a cooperative incentive to reach agreement with their counterpart (i.e., agreement is better than no agreement) and a competitive incentive to do well personally. Whereas cooperative incentives motivate negotiators to make and reciprocate concessions, to lower their demands, and to exchange information openly and accurately, competitive incentives motivate them to withhold and retract concessions, to remain tough in their demands, and to deceive and mislead their counterpart. By implication, if cooperative incentives become relatively more important and available than competitive incentives, negotiators will engage in more

cooperative behavior and are less likely to reach a mutually harmful stalemate.

Cooperative incentives gain or lose prominence relative to competitive incentives because of aspects of the negotiation setting. *Power* is one example. When a negotiator has a good alternative to the current negotiation (e.g., someone else already made an attractive offer), this may fuel the competitive incentive to increase personal outcomes from the negotiation. Or when a negotiator has a punitive capacity, as in international conflicts where some countries have bigger armies than others, such power preponderance may induce a tough stance to elicit concessions from the other, rather than making concessions oneself. Put differently, when power increases relative to one's partner, negotiators generally become reluctant to make and reciprocate concessions. When power is less than that of one's counterpart, the motivation to cooperate and concede increases. Especially when concessions are made on issues that are important to the low-power party, the likelihood of reaching integrative agreement is reduced.

Another factor influencing the balance between cooperative and competitive incentives is *time pressure*. Time pressure may emerge because the goods (e.g., fish or fruit) that are being negotiated may deteriorate, or because an external or self-imposed deadline is approaching (e.g., the market closes at 5 PM; divorce papers are being filed and take effect soon). Time pressure focuses parties on agreement and, in general, fosters concessions and cooperative exchange. Again, if time pressure fosters concessions on important issues, the likelihood of reaching integrative agreement is reduced.

When negotiators operate on behalf of a constituency, as when a small group of workers negotiates on behalf of a union, they need to consider their own (and perhaps their counterpart's) needs and desires, as well as those of their constituents. Research has shown, for example, that negotiators tend to comply with their constituents' desires—when the constituents take a competitive stance toward the other side, representatives negotiate more competitively than when their constituents are eager for an agreement. Interestingly, there is considerable evidence that when constituent goals and desires are unknown or unclear, negotiators tend to assume they should compete rather than cooperate. The mere fact that an individual

represents one or more others generally increases toughness and competitive behavior.

Dual Concern Theory

Bargaining strength, time pressure, and accountability to constituents all lead negotiators to focus on their own outcomes and resist making concessions. Other variables have been shown to influence the extent to which negotiators are mindful of the outcomes of their counterpart. For example, when negotiators are friends or spouses, they may be particularly concerned about their counterpart's outcomes, so they won't jeopardize their relationship. Or when negotiators expect to work together in the future, they are more motivated to search for an agreement that satisfies their counterpart. Dual Concern Theory, developed by Dean Pruitt and Jeffrey Rubin, summarizes these tendencies among negotiators. When concern for own outcomes is high (e.g., there is high power) and concern for other's outcomes is low (e.g., one does not expect to work together in the future), negotiators engage in tough, competitive behavior aimed at dominating the partner. They are reluctant to make concessions, and do not consider others' demands and needs. When concern for own outcomes is low (e.g., time pressure is high) and concern for others' outcomes is high (e.g., the other is a friend), negotiators engage in conciliatory behavior aimed at pleasing the partner. They are willing to make (unilateral) concessions, and cater to the others' demands and needs. When parties engage in mutual force—when each has high concern for own outcomes and low concern for their partner—the negotiation is likely to end in a mutually harmful stalemate, and integrative agreements are unlikely. Likewise, when parties engage in mutual yielding—when each has low concern for own outcomes and high concern for the partner's outcomes—the negotiation is likely to end in a quick, fifty-fifty compromise. Again, integrative agreements are unlikely. The theory predicts that integrative agreements come about when each party has a high concern for both own and other's outcomes. In this situation, negotiating parties resist making concessions because doing so hurts personal interests but they want to make concessions to help the other's interests.

This dilemma leads negotiators to search for creative solutions that integrate both own and other's interests optimally.

Bounded Rationality in Negotiation

Dual Concern Theory is all about motivation and not about the cognitive underpinnings of integrative negotiation. Cognition and information processing are, however, critically important in negotiation. Individuals cannot process all relevant information—they are bounded in their rationality because cognitive ability is limited, and not all relevant information is or can be made available. Also, negotiators may try to mislead and deceive each other, and thus, some of the available information is deliberately inaccurate and cannot be trusted. To deal with this cognitively taxing task, negotiators tend to rely on cognitive heuristics—mental shortcuts that help them make fast and satisfactory judgments and decisions. Thus, negotiators may act on the basis of stereotypes—union representatives may assume management representatives are reluctant to give raises, much as management representatives may assume that union representatives are unaware of macro-economic developments and increasing competition.

Max Bazerman and Maggie Neale developed their Behavioral Decision Approach, in which they discuss many of these cognitive shortcuts and how they affect the likelihood of integrative agreements. An example is the "fixed-pie" assumption—at the outset, negotiators tend to assume that what is important to them (e.g., juice, in the orange-sharing example) is equally important to the other party, and what is irrelevant to them (e.g., peel) is equally irrelevant to the other. Given the fixed-pie assumption, it makes no sense to search for an integrative agreement; all a negotiator can do is to try to get the biggest share of the pie (or orange). And this is indeed what has been found many times: Most negotiators, novices and experts alike, tend to begin with a fixed-pie assumption and search for victory or, when fairness concerns prevail, fifty-fifty compromises. Only when negotiators realize that their fixed-pie assumption is erroneous do they start searching for integrative agreements.

Levels of Information Processing

Recent studies have invoked the notion that negotiators may switch between more automatic information processing—in which case relying heavily on cognitive heuristics—and more systematic information processing. Under systematic information processing, the influence of cognitive heuristics attenuates and negotiators are more likely to reach integrative agreements. Negotiators engage in more systematic information processing when they have low rather than high power, when time pressures are mild rather than intense, and when they are held accountable. These and other factors thereby help negotiators achieve more mutually beneficial, integrative agreements. Taken together, the combination of high concern for own outcomes, high concern for others' outcomes, and a willingness to engage in deep and deliberate processing of information appears to be the optimal mix to arrive at mutually beneficial, integrative agreements.

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See also Communication, Norms and Rules; Conflict Resolution; Fairness in Relationships; Group Dynamics; Interdependence Theory; Mediation, Marriage Dissolution; Power Distribution in Relationships; Reciprocity, Norm of

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Neighbor Relations

Once an important component of social life, relationships with neighbors may be decreasing in importance in the modern world because of people's increased mobility. However, relationships with neighbors can still be an important source of friendship and practical assistance. This

entry discusses the factors that facilitate interactions with neighbors and the benefits that may be gained from positive relations with neighbors.

Predictors of Interacting With Neighbors

A variety of factors predict how extensively people interact with their neighbors. The best predictor of how frequently people interact with their neighbors is residential stability—how long the individual has lived in the neighborhood and the average length of time that his or her neighbors have lived in the neighborhood. Investment in the neighborhood, primarily indexed by home ownership, also predicts more frequent interactions with neighbors. On average, rural residents interact more frequently with their neighbors than do urban residents. Older people, especially those who have retired, also interact more frequently than others with neighbors. People with higher incomes know more of their neighbors, but on average, visit them less frequently than do persons with lower incomes. It appears that more affluent people are less likely to invest time and effort in relationships with neighbors, perhaps because of the many options for social relationships that are open to them.

Close proximity to neighbors increases the probability of becoming acquainted, such as living next door in an apartment complex. Involvement with neighbors is higher if other family members also live in the neighborhood. Family members may introduce each other to their immediate neighbors, thus broadening each family's network of acquaintances. Fear of victimization is among the strongest deterrents to interacting with neighbors. Thus, neighborhoods with high levels of crime tend not to foster close relationships among neighbors. Neighbors may, however, be united by common concerns that they face by virtue of their shared environment, such as pollution, crime, poor school quality, and limited access to services and retail outlets (e.g., the absence of grocery stores in inner-city neighborhoods). Under certain circumstances, neighbors form strong bonds as a result of joint efforts to address neighborhood problems.

Benefits of Neighbor Interactions

Neighbors can be important sources of help in times of need. Practical support (for example, babysitting, or a ride to the doctor's office) is often provided by neighbors. People who live in neighborhoods with a stronger sense of community tend to experience a greater feeling of belonging and report lower levels of loneliness and isolation than do those in neighborhoods without cohesion. Older adults who can rely on their neighbors report greater feelings of autonomy and well-being when factors such as limited mobility, deteriorating health, and financial constraints might otherwise lead to social isolation. In particular, older women living alone (often following the death of a spouse) come to rely on the neighborhood as an integral part of the social network, with a higher sense of belonging to the neighborhood associated with more social support, lower stress, and better physical and mental health. Importance of neighborhood social ties has been established for younger age groups as well. Studies on adolescents suggest that the neighborhood serves as the center of activity for many young people, and a neighborhood sense of community protects against feelings of loneliness even when accounting for connectedness with family and school.

People who live in low-income neighborhoods are more likely to experience depression than are people who live in more affluent neighborhoods; however, those with high social support from their neighbors are able to cope effectively, even in adverse neighborhoods. A famous study found that people who are involved in their community and have ties with others in their neighborhood and workplace actually live longer, even when the researchers accounted for how healthy the people were at the beginning of the study, and other health-related behaviors, such as smoking and drinking alcohol.

Influence of Neighbors on Behavior

Beyond the benefits of personal relationships with individual neighbors, research has shown that the kinds of people who live in the neighborhood may influence people's lives, even if they do not know these neighbors personally. One of the most consistent findings is that children perform better in school and go on to complete more education if there is a higher percentage of affluent and highly educated people in their neighborhood. Children

experience this educational boost regardless of the affluence or education level of their own families. Neighborhood residents can also influence the extent to which youth engage in delinquent behavior. When neighbors make an effort to know one another, monitor the behavior of each others' children, and report youth transgressions to parents or school authorities, neighborhood rates of delinquency are lower than when neighbors avoid becoming involved with one another. One study found that when neighborhood involvement improved over a 5-year period, parents in the neighborhood subsequently began to supervise their children more closely and to express more warmth toward them. In turn, children's behavior improved significantly. Neighborhood involvement of this type is more likely to develop in neighborhoods high in residential stability.

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See also Community Involvement; Contextual Influences on Relationships; Interracial and Interethnic Relationships

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Neuroticism, Effects on Relationships

Whereas some people are calm and emotionally stable, others are extremely nervous and emotionally volatile. Most people fall somewhere between these two extremes. This dimension of personality is captured by a characteristic called *neuroticism.* Many researchers who study relationships are interested in how neuroticism is associated with interpersonal functioning and with how it affects the stability and quality of romantic unions. This entry provides background on neuroticism and summarizes research linking this trait to relationships, particularly romantic relationships.

What Is Neuroticism?

The broad personality dimension of neuroticism captures individual differences in the tendency to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and sadness. Individuals who are relatively high in neuroticism are easily distressed. Neuroticism also involves a negative self-image and chronic patterns of thinking associated with distressing emotions. People relatively high on this dimension have a negative outlook on life, themselves, and the people in their social worlds.

Neuroticism is considered a fundamental personality trait because it appears in nearly all models psychologists use to classify personality characteristics. For example, many psychologists currently argue that five broad domains can be used to organize the most important personality characteristics. These so-called Big Five are Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience. Likewise, neuroticism is one of the three major traits in the personality model developed by Hans J. Eysenck, and traits that are synonymous with neuroticism appear in other popular models of personality created by Raymond Cattell and Auke Tellegen. In short, neuroticism is one of the most discussed and studied adult personality traits in psychology.

Neuroticism is a fairly stable individual characteristic by adulthood. Individuals who are high (or low) in neuroticism in their 30s tend to be high (or low) in neuroticism in their 40s. This does not mean that some people do not change in their levels of neuroticism, nor that individuals do not become more emotionally stable as they mature; it simply means that there is a good deal of consistency in this trait for most adults. In other words, if a person is high in neuroticism at one point in

time, then it is likely she or he will be high in neuroticism in the future.

Aspects of neuroticism are evident in even very young children. Some infants and young children are easily upset, whereas others are calmer and harder to distress. In both young children and adults, it appears that the same neurobiological system underlies the general tendency to become emotionally distressed. This system is called the *behavioral inhibition system,* or the *behavioral avoidance system,* and appears to govern one's overall sensitivity to a potentially punishing stimuli. Individuals with a strong behavioral inhibition system are more sensitive to threat and therefore are more likely to experience anxiety and other negative emotions.

Researchers are beginning to map the neurological pathways, brain structures, and genes that underlie neuroticism. Indeed, evidence from twin studies indicates that individual differences in neuroticism are partially genetic in origin. For example, identical twins are much more similar in their levels of neuroticism than are fraternal twins. All in all, neuroticism is an important personality trait that has a significant biological basis.

Neuroticism and Romantic Relationships

Given that neuroticism appears to be a fundamental individual difference, there is considerable interest in understanding how this personality characteristic is associated with relationships, especially romantic relationships. Studies have examined the association between neuroticism and marital quality for more than 70 years. For instance, Louis Terman and his associates published one of the first psychological studies of marriage in the 1930s, and they used terms such as *emotionally stable* to describe men and women who were happily married. Since that time, dozens of studies have examined the association between neuroticism and marital outcomes. The sheer number of studies illustrates the interest in this topic, but can make it difficult, even overwhelming, to summarize the research.

Fortunately, researchers can use a statistical technique called *meta-analysis* to summarize the results of a large number of studies. Meta-analytic techniques essentially average information across the available studies and make it easier to gain a broad perspective on a research topic. These techniques provide a systematic and quantitative summary of findings across studies. Benjamin Karney and Thomas Bradbury conducted a meta-analysis in 1995 and found that neuroticism was negatively associated with marital satisfaction and marital stability. As scores on neuroticism increased, both marital satisfaction and marital stability decreased. In 2004, Daniel Heller and his associates conducted a more recent meta-analysis based on 40 studies and found that neuroticism was negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. Heller and his colleagues noted that the association between neuroticism and marital satisfaction was among the largest of all of the Big Five traits. Thus, there is consistent evidence that neuroticism is negatively associated with marital satisfaction and stability.

Recent research has tried to better understand the nature of the association between neuroticism and relationship satisfaction. One promising approach is to make a distinction between the *actor* and *partner* effects of personality traits. Actor effects occur when an individual's level on a trait affects that individual's level on a relationship attribute: for example, the degree to which a husband's level of neuroticism is associated with his own level of marital satisfaction. Partner effects occur when an individual's level on a trait affects a relationship partner's level on a relationship attribute; for example, the degree to which a husband's level of neuroticism is associated with his wife's level of marital satisfaction. Both kinds of effects are potentially important; however, the existence of partner effects provides good evidence that personality traits are associated with interpersonal processes, dynamics that are particularly interesting to relationship researchers.

The estimation of actor and partner effects requires the application of a specialized statistical procedure that can only be applied to studies that assess both members of a romantic relationship (e.g., wives and husbands). Relatively few studies have specifically examined actor and partner effects for neuroticism compared with the number of studies that have simply documented associations between neuroticism and relationship outcomes. Nonetheless, several studies have indicated that neuroticism has both actor and partner effects when predicting measures of relationship

satisfaction. Emerging evidence indicates that neuroticism has interpersonal effects insofar as partners of individuals who are higher in neuroticism appear to be less satisfied with their relationship when compared with partners of individuals who are lower in neuroticism.

The presence of both actor and partner effects for neuroticism raises a fundamental question: Why is neuroticism linked with relationship quality? Researchers are just beginning to answer questions concerning the precise mechanisms linking personality traits to relationships. John Caughlin and his associates found that measures of neuroticism were associated with interpersonal negativity: Individuals higher in neuroticism were more hostile and critical of their romantic partners. Similar findings have been reported by other researchers who found that neuroticism was related to interactions involving hostility and interpersonal negativity. Thus, it appears that one reason why neuroticism has partner effects for predicting relationship dissatisfaction is that more neurotic individuals seem to engage in more negative interactions with romantic partners when compared with less neurotic individuals.

In sum, neuroticism is linked with lower relationship satisfaction and more negative interpersonal behaviors within relationships. Given these findings, it is not surprising that several studies have linked neuroticism to an increased risk of divorce. Moreover, according to a recent meta-analysis by Brent Roberts and his colleagues, the risk for divorce associated with neuroticism appeared to be larger than the risk for divorce associated with low socioeconomic status.

Neuroticism and Other Kinds of Relationships

In comparison with the fairly large literature demonstrating associations between neuroticism and aspects of romantic relationships, less evidence links this trait with other relationships. One important relationship involves the bond between parents and children. Grazyna Kochanska and her associates found that mothers who scored high on neuroticism were observed to have interactions with their infants that were less positive than were mothers who scored low on neuroticism. Similarly, researchers in Finland found that neuroticism was

linked with less parental nurturance. This work is more or less consistent with earlier work that studied how depressed mothers interacted with their children. Some evidence links neuroticism to difficulties in parent–child relationships.

Research relating neuroticism to adult relationships besides romantic dyads and parent–child relationships is relatively scarce. One collection of studies found that neuroticism in men (but not women) was linked with diminished social status in groups such as fraternities and college students living in the same dormitory. The authors suggested that high scores on neuroticism violated gender norms for men, which may account for diminished social status. Another study found links between neuroticism and conflict in friendships, a result that appears consistent with work on romantic relationships. It is likely that research linking neuroticism to important relationships beyond romantic unions will accumulate in the coming years.

Future Directions

Although researchers know a considerable amount about neuroticism and relationships, there are many unanswered questions and areas for further study. Three issues seem to stand out. First, additional work will continue to specify the mechanisms that link neuroticism to experiences in relationships. Second, future work will move to integrate studies of broad traits like neuroticism with other individual differences that have been implicated with relationships such as attachment styles, rejection sensitivity, and self-esteem. This avenue promises to help researchers develop a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the links between individual characteristics and relationships. Last, there will be continued attention to the biological underpinnings of neuroticism. Indeed, a major goal for further research is to develop a precise understanding of how biological, psychological, and contextual factors work together to shape human relationships.

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See also Agreeableness; Conscientiousness, Effects on Relationships; Dyadic Data Analysis; Extraversion and Introversion; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Temperament

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Newlyweds

Newlyweds are recently married couples, and newlywed research generally focuses on the first 2 to 4 years of marriage. This early stage of marriage is one of transition, requiring adjustment to being a committed couple, negotiation of new roles, and development of an intimate foundation for the future. About 50 percent of first marriages in the United States are expected to end in divorce, and the divorce rate peaks within the first 4 to 5 years of marriage. Thus, young marriages are at risk for distress and divorce within the first 5 years, and the seeds for later negative outcomes appear early in the newlywed stage.

This entry describes characteristics of newlyweds, common problems and challenges that newlyweds face, and factors that predict changes in satisfaction. Although an emerging literature focuses on marriage in non-Western countries, this entry focuses on couples from North America. In some U.S. states, Canada, and many other countries, marriage between same-sex partners is legally sanctioned, but almost all research on newlyweds is concerned with heterosexual unions. Thus, this entry focuses on heterosexual newlywed couples.

Characteristics of Newlywed Couples

Marriage rates have been steadily declining since the early 1970s, and the rate of cohabitation as a first conjugal union has been increasing. Despite declines in marriage rates, more than half of all men and women are married, and about 80 to 90 percent of people are expected to marry at some point in their lives. Newlywed couples are engaged for an average of 9 months and over half cohabit before marriage. About one third of newlywed couples receive premarital counseling, which is overwhelmingly church-based. Marriage is common in all cultures and ethnic groups in the United States, and marriage rates are similar for Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asians. African Americans are less likely to marry, and do so at an older age than do couples from other racial groups. Overall, couples are delaying the decision to marry and the average age at marriage has steadily increased; the average age at marriage in the United States is 25.5 years for women and 27 years for men.

Marital Satisfaction in Newlyweds

Newlyweds are almost universally happy in their relationship and experience high levels of love and commitment that are relatively stable during the first year of marriage. However, satisfaction and affection then steadily decline for most, although not all, couples. Much of the research on newlywed marriage focuses on understanding predictors of the erosion of loving feelings, which can be grouped into four classes of variables: static historical and sociodemographic factors, enduring personal dispositions, external stresses and strains, and dyadic interaction processes.

Historical and Sociodemographic Predictors

Relatively static factors such as history of parental divorce, difficult family-of-origin experiences, marrying at a younger age, a shorter dating period, and cohabiting before marriage are associated with negative marital outcomes. Some researchers argue that cohabitation is associated with less religiosity and more permissive attitudes, which are likely to be associated with seeing divorce as a viable option, thus, it is not cohabitation per se that leads to less stable marriages. Others have noted that the timing of cohabitation and level of commitment when cohabitation decisions are made matters. Couples who cohabit after becoming engaged do not seem to experience the same increase in risk for divorce as do couples who live together before becoming engaged.

Enduring Personal Characteristics

Individuals enter relationships with certain enduring dispositions, or personality traits that affect how they manage their relationships. For example, relative to five major personality factors (i.e., the popular Big Five model), newlyweds who are prone to experiencing negative emotions (i.e., neuroticism), less agreeable, less extraverted, less conscientious, and less open, tend to have less satisfying relationships. Spouses who are more prone to negative emotions (i.e., neuroticism) are also more likely to experience steeper declines in their satisfaction over time. Attachment insecurity (i.e., anxiety about availability of their partner or avoidance of intimacy and dependence) is also associated with less satisfying marriages, and with steeper declines in relationship satisfaction.

How spouses think about and process information about their relationship also predicts changes in satisfaction. For example, newlyweds who hold idealized (but not unrealistic) views about their relationship or about each other are happier and more supportive toward each other during the first few years of marriage. Spouses who generate benevolent explanations (i.e., attributions) for partners' negative behavior are also more satisfied. Spouses who reconstruct memories of their relationship and who believe the relationship has improved, even when it has not, also experience less decline in satisfaction.

External Stresses and Strains

External stresses and strains—events or circumstances external to the dyad that pose some difficulty or challenge—can also negatively affect newlywed marriage. Stress may arise from chronic ongoing difficulties such as difficult family relationships, or acute stressors or life events such as job loss or family illness. Chronic or acute stress makes it difficult to successfully manage the challenges of newlywed marriage. Stress may drain energy and divert time and resources away from maintaining the newlywed relationship. It is more difficult for couples to resolve conflict well, to be supportive, and to forgive transgressions when they are also dealing with other substantial problems. Stress arising in relationships with friends and family can be potent risk factors for marital distress; however, if functioning well, and if there is overlap in spouses' social networks, family relationships and friendships may support the developing newlywed marriage.

Another important life event that may create stress is the transition to parenthood. Although the transition to first parenthood may happen at any stage of marriage, newlyweds who are happier in their relationship are particularly likely to choose to have children earlier in their marriage (i.e., within the first few years of marriage, but not before marriage). Becoming parents results in steeper declines in marital satisfaction compared with nonparent newlyweds, but these declines are offset to the degree that couples began their marriages feeling more satisfied and they planned to become parents.

Dyadic Interaction Processes

Dynamic processes, such how newlyweds interact with each other, how they resolve conflict, and how they support each other are established early in marriage and predict stability and changes in satisfaction, regardless of initial levels of satisfaction.

Affection

Following their wedding, newlyweds begin spending less time together in recreational activities, become less affectionate (e.g., kissing and hugging), discuss intimate matters less frequently, and do fewer nice things for each other. The

erosion of positive behaviors and the establishment of negative interaction patterns set the stage for later dissatisfaction and dissolution. In a longitudinal study of marriage, Ted Huston and his colleagues found that patterns of behavior established as newlyweds presaged marital outcomes 13 years later. Spouses who experienced less loving feelings, who showed less affection, and who saw their partners as unresponsive in the first 2 years of marriage were later more likely to divorce or to be unhappily married. Thus, early differences as newlyweds distinguish those couples who go on to have successful and stable marriages in the long term and those who do not.

Conflict

Early in marriage, couples report the most significant sources of conflict are managing tempers and moods, financial concerns, dealing with in-laws, and communication. These areas remain problematic at least through the first few years of marriage, but conflicts around in-laws become less frequent and severe as the marriage progresses, and other issues such as managing household chores and sexual problems become more prominent. These temporal patterns suggest that some issues, such as dealing with in-laws, are generally resolved or become less salient, but that other issues, such as dealing with bad moods and communicating effectively, are likely to persist.

The way newlyweds cope with marital conflict is more important for relationship satisfaction than what they argue about. Researchers have investigated newlyweds' communication skills by bringing them into the laboratory to record and code their behavior and emotions displayed while discussing a conflict. The interaction between what couples say and their emotion predicts trajectories of satisfaction. When spouses are relatively more negative (e.g., devaluing the partner, justifying, denying responsibility, demanding, and invalidating) and less positive (e.g., being open and direct about needs and attitudes, compromising, paraphrasing, asking interested questions, and showing understanding) during problem-solving discussions in the lab, experience declines in satisfaction only when their conversations also lack positive emotions (e.g., interest, affection, humor). Thus, poor conflict resolution skills are not uniformly problematic for relationships and only lead to faster declines in satisfaction when humor, interest, and affection are also uncommon in couples' conflict discussions.

Aggression

About half of all newlyweds report some physically aggressive behavior within the past year. Physical aggression is usually reciprocal, minor (e.g., shoving and slapping), and infrequent (e.g., once or twice in a year). Low levels of physical aggression remain relatively stable over time, generally occur during conflict, and are more likely when newlyweds are experiencing high levels of stress. More severe levels of physical aggression decline fairly quickly over the first few years of marriage.

Mutual aggression is common in newlywed couples but it is detrimental to the developing relationship and predicts divorce 4 years later. Physical aggression is more related to dissolution of marriage, whereas negative behaviors such as contempt and criticism are more related to couples staying unhappily married.

Social Support

Early research predicting marital change from couples' interactions was based on the idea that resolving conflict well is the cornerstone of a stable and satisfying marriage. Although the way newlyweds resolve problems is undoubtedly important, low-to-moderate associations between early conflict-related behavior and later marital success indicates that other important marital domains contribute to stability and satisfaction. One area that has garnered increasing attention is how newlyweds seek and provide support. Newlyweds' support behaviors are unrelated to initial levels of marital satisfaction, but predict marital change over time. Open and direct expressions of concerns and responding to partner's concerns with understanding, validation, and interest are related to less decline in relationship satisfaction during the first 2 years of marriage, independently of how newlyweds resolve conflict.

Future Directions

Two important areas of future research are exploring differences in newlywed marriage for same-sex couples, for couples in nondominant cultural and

racial groups, or for interracial couples. Relationships of same-sex couples do not differ in many important ways from those of heterosexual couples, but critical tasks facing same-sex couples, such as family acceptance and coming out, could affect marital adjustment. There is a small literature on cultural differences in marriage, but little psychological research on cultural differences in the transition to marriage and predictors of marital change for newlyweds. Early predictors of distress and instability are being established, but marital researchers know relatively little about how these processes unfold over time and how changes affect the developing relationship. Researchers are studying newlyweds who are at relatively similar stages in their relationships (e.g., beginning first marriages, without children, and at similar ages) and following them over time. Repeated assessments of relationship factors using multiple methods—interview, self-report, physiological data, and observational data—will allow for a richer picture of how relationships develop in the early years. Understanding the development of newlywed marriage will be crucial to helping couples develop effective ways of relating to each other and maintaining positive behaviors that maximize chances of relationship success.

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See also Early Years of Marriage Project; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Marriage, Transition to; Processes of Adaptation in Intimate Relationships (PAIR) Project; Remarriage

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Nonverbal Communication, Status Differences

Many of our social interactions can be described along a dominance, power, status, or other dimensions suggestive of higher versus lower position. Our work environment is characterized by hierarchies with people in different statuses. But also in intimate relationships, power or status differences between partners (e.g., differences in earning power, differences in dominant interpersonal behavior) are not rare. Even in unstructured groups of people with initially equal status, status hierarchies form readily. Some hierarchies are quite pronounced, such as in the military, and others are quite flat, such as in many nonprofit organizations. Some hierarchies are explicit such as the differences in executive decision-making power between a CEO and an office clerk, and others are more implicit, such as the differences in influence on the decision to watch a particular movie among a group of friends. What is common to all hierarchies is that there is a dominance, power, or status difference among group members. Though there are differences between these concepts, for convenience this entry uses the term *status* to describe all these aspects of vertical position. *Status* has been defined in many different ways. It can be defined as having or striving for privileged access

to restricted resources (e.g., money, time) or as having or striving for influence over others. A hierarchy is defined as the status difference among two or more individuals. It has to be noted that a high-status position per se cannot exist alone because it necessitates somebody with low status.

This entry discusses whether and how people are able to infer the status of their social interaction partners, how people use nonverbal behavior to make status inferences, and which nonverbal behaviors people in actual high-status or low-status positions typically express.

Nonverbal Behavior: Definition and Importance

Nonverbal behavior encompasses communication without words. The distinction between verbal and nonverbal communication is not always easy to make. In verbal communication, each word has a specific meaning and people can be held accountable for what they say. Most nonverbal communication, however, is ambiguous with respect to meaning. Situational aspects such as the relationship between the conversation partners or the topic they are talking about can greatly influence the meaning of specific nonverbal cues. Some of the most commonly investigated nonverbal behaviors are facial expressions, eye gaze, body movements (such as gestures), posture, touching behavior, and vocal behavior, such as tone of voice, speech modulation, or speech duration, just to give a few examples.

Whether verbal or nonverbal behavior matters more as a source of information depends on the situation. When a verbal message is unclear or ambiguous, nonverbal cues play a particularly important role. Nonverbal cues become especially salient and important when they contradict the words being spoken or when people doubt the honesty of a verbal communication. Consistent with this, lie detection is more successful when people rely on nonverbal rather than verbal cues. Nonverbal cues are also important in the expression of emotions. In addition to expressing emotions, however, nonverbal cues have many other functions—for example, to signal attention, reflect physical states such as pain, coordinate turn-taking in conversations, reveal personality characteristics,

and signal interpersonal orientations such as friendliness or dominance.

Expression and Perception of Status Through Nonverbal Behavior

Egon Brunswik's lens model has shown itself to be a useful framework for studying expression and perception of interpersonal characteristics such as status. In a lens model perspective, a target's behavior forms the basis of perceivers' judgments about the target's status. If, for instance, a high-status person talks more than a low-status person, speaking time can be considered an indicator of actual status. A perceiver observes the exhibited behavior, for instance, that one person talks more than another, and infers that the person who talks more is higher in status than the person who talks less. Thus, speaking time is used as a cue of elevated perceived status. If perceived status corresponds to actual status, the assessment is called accurate. Within the lens model, one can ascertain which cues are believed to be associated with status (relation between specific cues and perceived status) and which cues are actually associated with status (relation between specific cues and actual status).

Although most of the cues studied within a lens model approach are either verbal or nonverbal behaviors, other cues can work as identifiers of people's status. Appearance can be another cue people use to assess others' status. For instance, high-status people are perceived as taller than low-status people. In the same vein, formal dress is usually associated with expressed and perceived high status.

Expressing Status Through Nonverbal Behavior

Studies looking at nonverbal behavior and actual (as opposed to perceived) status have defined status in terms of personality, structural status (e.g., rank in an organization, socioeconomic dominance, emergent leadership within a group), or assigned status (e.g., in a psychology experiment). In meta-analyses on the expression of status in nonverbal behavior, only a few behaviors have been related to actual status. High-status people show more bodily openness (arms and legs), interact

at closer interpersonal distances, have louder voices, interrupt others more often, and talk more than low-status people do. Studies also show that high-status people have higher visual dominance—defined as the ratio of percentage of looking while speaking to percentage of looking while listening—than do low-status people.

Surprisingly, only a few nonverbal behaviors actually indicate high status on average across studies because people often think that there are many clear indicators of high and low status. Indeed, people use many more nonverbal cues when they try to infer another person's status, as discussed in the following section.

Perceiving Status Through Nonverbal Behavior

Varied research paradigms have been used to study the perception of status. For instance, target stimuli have been schematic faces, photographs of posed facial cues (e.g., smiling versus nonsmiling or lowered versus raised eyebrows), candid photographs of naturalistic interactions, short video clips of people interacting, or face-to-face interactions.

Nonverbal behaviors that are used systematically by observers to assess the status of target individuals have also been investigated in meta-analyses. Perceivers rate targets higher in status if they show more gazing, lowered eyebrows, a more expressive face, more nodding, less self-touch, more touching others, more gestures, more bodily openness, more erect or tense posture, more body or leg shifts, smaller interpersonal distance, a more variable voice, a louder voice, more interruptions, less pausing, a faster speech rate, a lower voice pitch, more vocal relaxation, and more talking. Also, observers use the visual dominance ratio defined earlier as an indicator of high status.

Many of these status–nonverbal behavior relations are influenced by other variables such as, for instance, gender. More specifically, some nonverbal behaviors show parallel differences in gender and in status (e.g., high-status people tend to talk more, men more than women can be found in high-status positions, and men tend to talk more than women, at least in opposite-gender interactions). Nevertheless, this parallelism does not necessarily mean that the status differences in

nonverbal behavior can be explained by underlying gender differences. Furthermore, for a number of behaviors, this parallelism was lacking. More studies going beyond this parallelism and showing causal relations are needed to clarify this question.

That people use a long list of nonverbal behaviors to judge status reflects the existence of clear stereotypes about the nonverbal behavior of high-status (and low-status) individuals. Fewer nonverbal behaviors are characteristic of people with an actual high or low status than there are nonverbal behaviors perceived as indicators of status. Thus, perceivers seem to use nonverbal cues that do not necessarily indicate the status dimension. People harbor expectations—or stereotypes—about which nonverbal cues are related to high or low status. These expectations are not always correct. If this is the case, are people still accurate in judging another person's status?

Accurately Assessing Status

Whether people are able to tell who is the boss and who is not in a social gathering seems important because it can bring about distinctive advantages. For instance, it can improve effective communication (e.g., directly addressing a request to the person who is able to make a decision), prevent social faux pas (e.g., inappropriately addressing a high-status person), or help a person to maneuver in status hierarchies because knowing who has high and who has low status helps one to plan strategic moves.

Although the findings are not unequivocal, it seems that status can be assessed at better than chance level. For instance, better than chance accuracy was found when perceivers judged which of two target people in a photograph was the other's boss. Other research has found that people could assess the status of university employees based on photographs and observers were able to assess targets' assertiveness in videotaped interactions at better than chance level.

So how can we explain that even if perceivers use many invalid nonverbal cues to assess a target's status, they are still accurate in their assessment? First, the potential nonverbal cues targets emit are endless, so in a given study, the investigators might

not have measured genuinely diagnostic cues. To remedy this drawback, future research should measure a more comprehensive list of behaviors, including verbal and nonverbal behaviors and appearance cues. Second, not all cues contribute equally to accuracy. If, for instance, speaking time is more diagnostic for expressed dominance than is gazing, using speaking time correctly and using gazing incorrectly might still result in considerable accuracy. Third, the correct assessment might be based not on single cues but on combinations of different cues. Accuracy would then be a more "Gestalt"-like impression formation process. There is indeed some evidence suggesting that the pattern of how the different nonverbal and appearance cues used to assess status corresponded to the pattern of how status was expressed in these nonverbal and appearance cues. In other words, there is a positive correlation between beliefs and actual status effects. Thus, accuracy is possible because the way people use the array of nonverbal cues to judge status (i.e., how they weight the relevance of each cue to be an indicator of status) corresponds largely to how much each nonverbal cue is a valid indicator of actual status.

Conclusion

The status dimension is inherent to many different social encounters and thus affects how people interact with each other verbally and nonverbally. However, the fact alone of possessing high (or low) status might only marginally explain the exhibited nonverbal behavior. For instance, a high-status leader can adopt a directive leadership style and show behaviors such as frequent interruptions, a loud voice, and averting gaze while the other is speaking. By contrast, a high-status leader can equally well adopt a participative leadership style and show behaviors such as infrequent interruptions, a soft voice, and looking at the other while he or she speaks. Thus, personality factors or the specific motivation or emotion experienced during an interaction can affect the nonverbal behavior on top of, or even more so, than status per se.

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See also Accuracy in Communication; Communication, Nonverbal; Gender Stereotypes; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Power, Predictors of

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Nonverbal Involvement

Nonverbal involvement refers to the behavioral immediacy between people in social settings. Increased nonverbal involvement is a cumulative product of several behaviors, including closer distance, higher levels of gaze, touch, forward lean, more direct body orientation, and greater expressiveness in facial, gestural, and vocal channels. In general, higher levels of nonverbal involvement signal more intense interactions. High involvement may be positive, as in the embrace of lovers, or negative, as in the brawling of enemies. Because nonverbal communication is typically more important in face-to-face interactions than is verbal communication, nonverbal involvement plays a critical role in the formation and maintenance of

relationships. This entry specifically examines the determinants, functions, and dynamics of nonverbal involvement.

Determinants

A variety of factors combine to shape our interactions and, more specifically, our patterns of nonverbal involvement with others. The first and most basic factor is *biology*. During evolution, patterns of high involvement with mates, offspring, and friends were selected because they promoted reproduction and survival. Closer contact and visual attention to others around us also provide opportunities for social support and adaptive information about our surrounding environments. Next, *cultural norms* prescribe specific patterns of behavior that facilitate order and predictability consistent with societal values. For example, in some Asian, collectivistic cultures, individuals tend to be less expressive in public settings than are individuals in more Western, individualistic societies. Third, *gender differences* in nonverbal involvement are the product of both biology and culture. That is, some behavioral differences between males and females are the result of biological hardwiring, but societal norms can also enhance or diminish the expression of those differences. For example, evolution facilitated women's ability to read the nonverbal behavior of others, but the social norms in many societies also promoted greater sensitivity and caring for women than for men. Next, individual differences in *personality* affect stable preferences for nonverbal involvement in interactions. For example, anxious and introverted individuals usually maintain greater interpersonal distances, lower levels of gaze, and less expressiveness in interactions than do nonanxious and extraverted individuals. In effect, biology, culture, gender, and personality constitute the "baggage" that both precipitate and constrain the practical range of nonverbal involvement in specific social settings.

Nevertheless, behavioral involvement is also affected by the physical design of social environments, the norms in the setting, the particular goals of individuals, and the characteristics of interaction partners. This latter set of situational factors introduces considerable variability in the way that the same people behave across different settings. For example, the "fanny pats" by many masculine sports heroes following a great play are not likely to be seen with the same people after a successful business meeting. The next section discusses the functions of nonverbal involvement, that is, the utility of nonverbal patterns in the give-and-take of interaction in all types of relationships.

Functions

Similar patterns of nonverbal behavior can serve different functions in different situations. That is, the meaning and impact of a particular nonverbal pattern depends on the determinants and situational influences mentioned earlier. For example, at a funeral, a person might console an opposite-sex acquaintance with a hug, but the same hug might be inappropriate in the workplace. Conversely, a particular function may be manifested with various combinations of nonverbal behavior. For example, comparable levels of liking may be expressed with a moderately close, directly facing approach, and sustained gaze, or by a closer adjacent approach, touch, and a much lower level of gaze. Despite the ambiguity of isolated nonverbal behaviors across situations, there are regularities in the functions of the larger, coordinated behavior patterns. A given pattern of involvement also can simultaneously serve multiple functions.

A first and basic function of nonverbal involvement is that of *providing information* to our partners. Before a word is spoken, intentions are nonverbally communicated to our partners. Although people can manage their behavior in trying to cover their intentions, we can usually tell if an impending interaction is going to be positive or negative from expressions, posture, and movement of a partner. Furthermore, during interaction, patterns of nonverbal involvement qualify the meaning of verbal messages. As a speaker's expression, gaze, and gestures change, so does the impact of the specific comments. For example, if a speaker's nonverbal behavior is inconsistent with the verbal content, the listener might doubt the speaker's candor. Sometimes individuals' own behavior informs them about their feelings toward a partner. That is,

people can "discover" their feelings toward a partner *after* reflecting on their behavior toward the person. Nonverbal involvement between partners also provides relationship information to others. As two people walk hand-in-hand, it is clear that they are a couple.

A second function of nonverbal involvement is *regulating interaction.* Nonverbal behavior is critical in facilitating and inhibiting contact with others. From encounters as brief and mundane as walking past a stranger on the sidewalk to greeting a loved one, specific nonverbal patterns promote or discourage additional interaction. The initiation of gaze is a critical step in facilitating an interaction. If a glance toward the other is combined with a more direct body orientation and a smile, the likelihood of the partner reciprocating attention increases. In contrast, avoiding gaze, turning away, and maintaining a neutral expression inhibit contact. Nonverbal behavior even helps regulate the verbal side of interactions. For example, listeners typically look more at speakers than speakers do at listeners because listeners have to monitor speakers' expressions to comprehend the full meaning of the message.

A particularly important function of nonverbal involvement in relationships is *expressing intimacy.* A close approach, smile, touch, and gaze are common elements in the expression of liking and love and often have a greater impact than verbal sentiments do. This may be partially because of the assumption that nonverbal behaviors are more difficult to control than are words. Nevertheless, nonverbal involvement, like verbal intimacy, may be deliberately managed to create a particular impression. For example, a subordinate might smile excessively to "kiss up" to an intensely disliked boss. In general, the closer the relationship, the more comfortable partners are with higher levels of nonverbal involvement.

As relationships develop over time, rapport increases between partners and is manifested behaviorally in three relatively distinct components. First, mutual attention, in the form of increased gaze and a more direct orientation, reflects concern and investment in a partner. Second, positivity, typically shown in increased gaze, touch, and smiling, is an expression of the strong affective attachment between partners. Finally, coordination is displayed in the behavioral synchrony between partners and the tendency to match or mimic a partner's movements and posture. In romantic relationships, positivity may be high early in the relationship and decline gradually over time. In contrast, coordination typically increases over time, with long-term couples able to anticipate a partner's behavior. Thus, their interactions are smoother and more efficient as they more or less automatically engage in similar, synchronous postures and movements. The changing course of positivity and coordination over time may be a reflection of the change from passionate love early in a relationship to companionate love later in a relationship.

Behavioral involvement may also be applied in *exercising influence.* That is, across all types of relationships, increasing or decreasing involvement can serve in subtly manipulating the partner toward a specific consequence. A close approach, touch, and gaze can increase compliance to a simple request. More powerful and higher-status individuals typically have the prerogative of initiating high involvement toward a less powerful person. For example, a manager's close approach, gaze, and firm grasp of the subordinate's shoulder while giving an assignment is more intense than simply stating the same instructions from across the room.

Another means of exercising influence is providing feedback and reinforcement to others with increased involvement. A combination of a glance, smile, and touch may often be more effective than verbal reinforcement, just as a scowl and active avoidance may be more effective than negative verbal feedback. Nevertheless, in recent years, concerns about teacher abuse in schools and sexual harassment in the workplace have led to prohibition against touch in some settings. Although the goal of protecting vulnerable individuals is laudable, it may come at the expense of the positive benefits of benign, supportive touch in interactions. Even in our everyday interactions with close friends and family members, a gentle touch and a smile can be initiated to manipulate loved ones. Sometimes it is not the intensity of involvement, such as a touch, but rather, its form that is influential. Specifically, one person's influence may increase when that person copies or mimics the postures and movements of a partner.

A final function is that of *managing impressions.* Sometimes people use their nonverbal behavior

strategically to create particular identities or images. Thus, an individual's behavior is not primarily an affective response to a partner but, rather, a display intended to promote a particular impression to observers. For example, at a party, two individuals might hold hands or wrap an arm around the partner to signal that they are a couple. These displays can be mutual and collaborative or primarily initiated by one member of a pair. In the latter case, an arm around the partner may be a signal that this person is already "taken." Sometimes these behavioral presentations are not only deliberate, but also deceptive. A feuding couple, on the verge of divorce, might hold hands and smile at each another at a family gathering to present the façade of a happy marriage. Thus, they collaborate in the display, but both parties know that it is deceptive. A similar circumstance may be seen with deliberate minimal involvement between romantic partners in social settings. Lovers might try to cover their office romance by literally keeping their distance from each other and minimizing gaze when others are present. These deceptive presentations are clear examples of the occasional and meaningful inconsistency between interpersonal behavior and interpersonal affect.

Thus, nonverbal involvement serves a variety of functions in all types of relationships. The give-and-take at the nonverbal level is, however, shaped by the determinants and situational constraints discussed earlier. Nevertheless, there is some regularity in the particular course of nonverbal exchange over time in interactions. The next section examines these dynamic changes.

Dynamic Processes

Although partners' goals, social norms, and even environmental factors influence the course of interactions, there is typically pressure for stability and predictability in our contacts with others. The most common pattern of exchange in interactions among acquaintances, friends, and loved ones may be described as *reciprocation,* that is, the involvement initiated by one person is matched or reciprocated by the partner. This kind of adjustment may be reactive in that the second person responds to the first person's initial behavior with a similar change in involvement. For example, the first person might lean forward and smile (increased involvement) and the partner responds with increased gaze and a friendly touch. Alternatively, both parties may react simultaneously with scripted exchanges, such as greetings. Simultaneity of behavior and mimicry, another form of reciprocation, are more likely in long-standing relationships than in newer ones. Although reciprocation of increased involvement is facilitated by positive affect toward the partner, such patterns may also be independent of affect and manipulative in intent.

A contrasting pattern of nonverbal exchange may be described as *compensation.* This pattern is more likely when one person is uncomfortable with the partner's involvement level and compensates for it by moving in the opposite direction. For example, a too-close approach by a stranger might result in a person decreasing involvement by turning away and avoiding gaze. Conversely, if a good friend is less involved than usual, the partner might increase involvement by approaching closer, touching, and initiating gaze. In both cases, an inappropriate or uncomfortable level of involvement precipitates a compensatory adjustment toward a more comfortable level of involvement. Again, such adjustments may be more than a simple response to negative affect, that is, they may be strategic reactions to influence the partner. Over time, both patterns promote stability and facilitate comfortable interactions with others. To the extent that these dynamic changes are successful in creating a relatively stable exchange for both partners, the interaction will tend to run its normal course. If they are not successful, the instability is likely to lead to terminating the interaction early.

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See also Communication, Nonverbal; Display Rules; Intimacy; Personal Space; Rapport; Reciprocity, Norm of; Touch

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NORMS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Social norms are rules that both guide and constrain behaviors in social interactions or relationships. Acting as guides, social norms are theorized to be powerful influences on behavior. Some social norms guide behavior across many different interpersonal relationships, with other norms being unique to specific relationships (e.g., marital). Researchers theorize that several types of social norms influence behavior in different ways. This entry describes three common types—descriptive, injunctive, and subjective—and considers how these types help us understand how social norms influence interpersonal behavior.

Descriptive Norms

Descriptive norms provide guidance to what "most" people are doing. It is the norm of what "is" being done by others or what is "normal." These norms are influential because they provide a guide to what is useful or normative behavior in a situation. For example, if a student is aware that most of her high school peers are dating, this knowledge can act as a descriptive norm for behavior influencing the student's own wish to date. Descriptive norms do not always lead to positive behaviors. Among friends, risky sexual behavior may be common and a descriptive norm, although the behavior itself is unhealthy.

Injunctive Norms

Injunctive norms refer to what behavior would be approved or disapproved of, or the norm of what "should" be done. For injunctive norms, the motivation to follow them is to avoid disapproval or gain approval for performing the "right" behavior. There are many examples of interpersonal injunctive norms, for example, a person's parents might disapprove of premarital sexual behavior and cohabitation. Breaking these norms can lead to disapproval from others, whereas meeting the norm can lead to approval.

Subjective Norms

Like injunctive norms, subjective norms are based on a perception of whether important others would approve or disapprove of a behavior. However, subjective norms are composed of two constructs: normative beliefs and motivation to comply. Normative beliefs are the awareness of whether a particular person would approve or disapprove of a behavior. Motivation to comply refers to how willing one is to comply with the source of the normative belief. If a person is not motivated to comply with a source of normative beliefs, then those beliefs will not be influential, but if motivation to comply is high, those beliefs will be influential. Within interpersonal relationships, subjective norms should influence the behaviors that are performed within the relationship. For example, one study has shown that people in a romantic relationship who received supportive subjective norms from friends and family for remaining in the relationship were more likely to stay in the relationship over time.

Each of these three types of social norms can motivate interpersonal behavior, although they do so in different ways. Before a social norm can motivate behavior, it must first be learned. A social norm can be transmitted in many different ways.

Sources of Relationship Norms

Norms regarding relationships come from many sources. Many descriptive and injunctive norms represent societal level guides for behavior. These norms can be communicated through folklore, cultural tales, religious stories, and the formal or informal education provided to children and adults. Different subcultures, religious groups, ethnic groups, and regions of a country likely have

somewhat different descriptive and injunctive norms.

The media (movies, television, etc.) provide an important source of social norms. Researchers have suggested that the media present a general set of culturally based values. The interpersonal behaviors (descriptive norms) and the behaviors that result in approval or disapproval (injunctive norms) presented in the media are often in line with the general societal norms. However, studies in the United States have found the media overrepresents sex and violence, and adolescents' viewing of sex on television is associated with viewing promiscuity as normal behavior (descriptive norm). This suggests that the media can contribute to social norms, although how this occurs is complicated.

Social norms are also developed by observing the behaviors of others, or by observing how others expect a person to behave. For children, it may be school or neighborhood peers; for college students, it may be fellow students; for military personnel, it may be others in a unit; for some people, it may be coworkers, neighbors, fellow churchgoers; and so on. For example, perceptions of how many of other college students are sexually active (descriptive norm) can be associated with whether a student becomes sexually active. How much approval or disapproval (injunctive norms) would be received from fellow churchgoers for a divorce may predict remaining in a marriage.

Both friends and family can be sources of descriptive, injunctive, and subjective norms. Behaviors exhibited in parents' marriages can be carried on and replicated in a child's own future relationships. In addition, parents may provide injunctive norms regarding whom a child should be friends with or who they should marry. As motivation to comply with friends and family will likely be higher than for more general acquaintances, normative beliefs from these groups should be particularly influential.

Other researchers have focused on norms that develop in a specific context. In a particular situation, unique norms may develop and guide behavior. For example, if you are at a party where others are singing and dancing, you may do the same, but you would be unlikely to engage in these behaviors if no one else was. These types of norms can be context and situation specific but still influential in that context.

Perception Versus Reality in Relationship Norms

Researchers have noted that people are often inaccurate in their perceptions of social norms. For example, students often overestimate how much other students use alcohol and are sexually active. Children may be inaccurate in predicting what behaviors their parents would approve of. College students overestimate approval from friends for remaining in a romantic relationship. Generally, it is assumed that a person's perceptions of social norms, whether these perceptions are accurate or not, will be a strong predictor of behavior within relationships.

When Do Social Norms Predict Behavior?

Understanding how social norms influence behavior is difficult because many different norms may be relevant to behavior and some norms may be incompatible with each other. For example, an adolescent may receive injunctive norms against premarital sex from parents but perceive that most of his or her peers are having sex. To resolve this issue, norms-researcher Robert Cialdini and his colleagues proposed the focus theory of normative influence. This theory argues that the norm that influences behavior is the norm that is most focal or salient when the behavior is performed. For example, if an adolescent is discussing sex with friends, sexual descriptive norm from peers, rather than parental injunctive norms, will be likely to be more salient and influence behavior.

Along with social norms, attitudes, beliefs, values, personality, and other factors have been found to influence cognition and behavior. So how do we predict which variable will influence behavior? Focal theory predicts that more focal social norms will be more likely to predict behavior over more personal variables (attitudes, beliefs, etc.). However, outside a laboratory setting (where how focal a norm is can be manipulated or measured), it is difficult to determine which variable will predict best.

General Norms

Many different norms are relevant to relationships, including norms for friendships, romantic

relationships, coworkers, and so on. There are norms that are idiosyncratic to a subculture, religious group, region, corporation, high school, and so on. Some social norms are relevant in a specific context (wedding norms), but other norms have relevance across many types of relationships and situations. It is not possible to list all of the relationship norms, so this entry discusses certain specific norms that have relevance for many types of relationships and provide examples of how social norms function.

Norm of Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the action of providing benefits back to a person who had previously provided benefits to the person reciprocating. For example, a person given a birthday gift can reciprocate by giving a birthday gift in the future. The norm of reciprocity refers to the finding that people often feel an obligation to reciprocate benefits provided by others.

The reciprocity norm can be descriptive as friends, family, coworkers, and so forth often model reciprocity in gift-giving, helping behaviors, social support, and other beneficial behaviors. The norm of reciprocity can also be injunctive, for those who break the norm may receive social sanction and those who follow the norm receive praise. This norm of reciprocity is argued to be so important that, with few exceptions, relationships in which it is regularly violated are predicted to be unhappy and possibly result in relationship termination (parent–child relationships are a notable exception). The norm of reciprocity is powerful, occurring across cultures, and has been argued to be a basis of cooperation in human societies.

Filial Piety

Social norms can also be part of maintaining larger social institutions and upholding cultural rules for behavior. For example, researchers in certain cultures have identified the concept of filial piety. Although the nature of filial piety can vary some across regions, cultures, or historical periods, it has generally been considered to direct young people to be obedient to, respectful of, and care for elders, especially parents and family members. Filial piety has been studied in Asian cultures and

a similar concept of "familism" exists in Mexican and Latino cultures.

A young person in these cultures would see other people showing respect and obedience to elders (descriptive norms), receive approval for respecting elders (injunctive norms), and would know that important others want them to be obedient to elders (subjective norms). These norms, in part, contribute to the maintenance of filial piety or familism in those cultures. However, filial piety or familism is maintained by other means, including societal values, beliefs, morals, and religious beliefs that are taught to children. Filial piety is a good example of how social norms can be one component of how a complex social system of beliefs and behaviors can be maintained within a society.

Gender and Marriage Social Norms

The effect of social norms depends on the nature of a relationship and the characteristics of the people in the relationship. For example, research on marriage has often considered how traditional gender role beliefs influence the division of labor within marriages. Gendered divisions of labor can be supported (or undermined) by social norms regarding gender and marriage. A couple may observe that their fathers were the primary breadwinners while their mothers were the primary caregivers for the children (descriptive norms). The couple may receive approval for maintaining a traditional division of labor from parents, family, friends, and religious sources (injunctive norms). Finally, the couple may perceive that important others want them to maintain traditional gendered division of labor (subjective norms).

The influence of social norms will depend on and compete with other variables. The couple's attitudes regarding equality in marriage, personality, skills, and knowledge will partly determine the division of labor in the relationship. For example, couples with beliefs in equality in marriage will likely develop more equal distributions of household work despite norms from parents supporting unequal roles. The division of labor will also depend on the characteristics of the relationship. If the wife's income is higher than the husband's, they may decide the husband will stay home to care for children and the wife will work. Social

norms are experienced within the context of interpersonal relationships, and characteristics of the relationships and the members of it will change how social norms are expressed.

Relationship Development and Norms

Relationships exist over time with a beginning, development over time, and eventually an ending. Social norms are relevant for each stage of a relationship, although norms may differ across relationship types or cultural context. For example, researchers have identified normative behaviors for a first date, but not every culture has "dating." Instead, cultural relevant social norms lead to other ways of meeting potential partners including matchmaking, arranged marriages, and families interacting.

As relationships progress, some norms will stop being relevant and others will become more important. Beyond the first few dates, a person in a romantic relationship will begin to examine descriptive norms from long-term dating or married couples. As relationships progress, injunctive norms will change as different behaviors are approved of at different stages in a relationship.

Relationship Norms Over Time

Norms are not static, unchanging standards of behavior but instead are responsive to changes in the social, cultural, and historical context. Seventy years ago in the United States, descriptive and injunctive norms would have inhibited interracial friendships. Today in the United States, far fewer people would report descriptive or injunctive norms against these relationships. Romantic and sexual norms have changed in the United States. Both descriptive and injunctive norms have become more approving of premarital sex, cohabitation, and delaying age at marriage. As societies change, social norms will change.

Conclusion

Social norms are powerful predictors of behavior within interpersonal relationships. It is important to remember, however, that the influence of social norms is complex because there are different types of norms and different relationships and different cultures with different social norms. This complexity adds to the power of social norms but also can make it difficult to predict how and when a person will be influenced by social norms.

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See also Beliefs About Relationships; Goals in Relationships; Media Influences on Relationships; Reciprocity, Norm of; Rules of Relationships

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NOSTALGIA

This entry provides a historical overview of conceptualizations of nostalgia. It contrasts past treatises, which viewed nostalgia as a neurological disease and a psychiatric disorder, with a contemporary approach, which views nostalgia as a predominantly positive, self-relevant, and social emotion. The entry reviews empirical evidence indicating that nostalgia is integral to interpersonal relationships. This evidence shows that

nostalgic memories frequently feature the self in a social context, that nostalgia is triggered by loneliness, and that nostalgia increases secure attachment, interpersonal competence, and perceived social support.

Historical Sketch

The word *nostalgia* was coined in the 17th century by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, but references to its meaning can be traced back as far as Homer's *Odyssey*. It is a compound of the Greek words *nostos* (return) and *algos* (pain). The literal meaning of nostalgia is the suffering caused by a desire to return to one's place of origin. In the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as most of the 19th century, nostalgia was thought to be a neurological disease with such varied symptoms as persistent thinking of home, despondency, bouts of weeping, irregular heartbeat, and smothering sensations.

By the end of the 19th century, nostalgia came to be regarded as a psychiatric or psychosomatic disorder. Symptoms included anxiety, sadness, loss of appetite, insomnia, and fever. As the psychodynamic perspective gained strength in the mid-20th century, nostalgia came to be viewed as a regressive disorder reflecting the subconscious desire to return to an early stage of life. Under this influence, nostalgia was downgraded to a variant of depression rooted in incomplete mourning and an inability to cope with the challenges of adulthood, including grief and loss. In this light, it is perhaps not surprising that nostalgia was often equated with homesickness.

Nostalgia did not acquire a unique conceptual status until the latter part of the 20th century. Sociologist Fred Davis laid the groundwork for this new look on nostalgia by showing, for instance, that participants associated words such as *warm, old times, childhood,* and *yearning* more frequently with nostalgia than with homesickness, suggesting that participants could discriminate between these two concepts. Recently, nostalgia has become the topic of social-psychological inquiry focusing on three issues: the content of nostalgic experiences, the triggers of nostalgia, and the psychological functions of nostalgia. Preliminary answers to these questions highlight the link between nostalgia and interpersonal relationships.

Interpersonal Relationships and the Content of Nostalgia

Studies on the content of nostalgia have analyzed autobiographical narratives of nostalgic experiences. In one study, researchers retrieved and content-analyzed narratives published in the periodical *Nostalgia*. Another study followed a vivid-recall protocol in which undergraduate students wrote a detailed narrative account about a nostalgic experience, which was content-analyzed. In both studies, the narratives revealed that individuals most frequently felt nostalgic about close others (family members, old friends). Further highlighting the social aspect of nostalgia was the finding that nostalgic narratives almost exclusively featured the self in interpersonal context. Although many narratives contained descriptions of disappointments and losses (separation, death of loved ones), positive and negative aspects were often juxtaposed to create a redemption sequence—a narrative pattern that progresses from a negative to a positive life scene.

Interpersonal Relationships and Triggers of Nostalgia

Research on the triggers of nostalgia has been guided by the idea that nostalgia often occurs in response to negative psychological states and may help the individual to restore psychological equanimity. Most empirical attention has been focused on the discrete negative affective state of loneliness. In experimental research, loneliness was manipulated by giving British (in one study) and Chinese (in another study) undergraduates false feedback regarding their score on a test that ostensibly assessed loneliness. For some participants, the feedback indicated that they were high in loneliness, for others that they were low in loneliness. Participants then completed a measure of nostalgia, rating the extent to which they missed various aspects of their past (e.g., "someone I loved," "feelings I had"). British and Chinese participants in the high-loneliness condition were more nostalgic than were those in the low-loneliness condition.

Two correlational studies with Chinese participants further showed that loneliness was positively correlated with feelings of nostalgia and that this loneliness-nostalgia association was stronger among high- than among low-resilience individuals. These findings raise the interesting possibility that individuals, particularly those high in resilience, recruit nostalgia to counteract the adverse effects of loneliness.

Interpersonal Relationships and the Psychological Significance of Nostalgia

How might nostalgia help individuals cope with negative subjective states such as loneliness? Research on the psychological functions of nostalgia has identified several pathways. In a typical experiment, some participants are instructed to write about a nostalgic experience and other participants are instructed to write about an ordinary experience from their past. Participants who write about a nostalgic experience (compared with an ordinary experience) show significant increases in positive affect and in positive self-esteem. Furthermore, these experiments provide evidence that nostalgia increases social connectedness. Nostalgic participants scored higher than did control participants on state measures of secure attachment, perceived social support, and interpersonal competence. Nostalgia, then, can make individuals feel loved and capable of loving others.

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See also Affiliation; Loneliness; Memories and Relationships; Resilience; Social Support, Nature of

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O

OBSERVATIONAL METHODS

"You can observe a lot just by watching," baseball great Yogi Berra once said. Researchers interested in human relationships have done a lot of watching, developing varied methods that improve our understanding of human relationships. This entry focuses on these methods and covers the difference between analogue and naturalistic observation, the types of studies employing observation, the use of observation in clinical assessment, and the measurement and statistical considerations involved in observational research.

Naturalistic and Analogue Behavioral Observation

Behavioral observation involves any situation in which an assessor (e.g., a researcher or clinician) systematically watches how people act. Although assessors may also see what effect the situation has on the participants' thinking, feeling, or physiological reactions, the key focus is on observable action.

Behavioral observation comprises two forms. Naturalistic observation involves the measuring of behavior in its typical context without artificial constraints by the observer.

The prefix "analogue" in *analogue behavioral observation* (ABO) is derived from the same root as "analogy"; an analogue is like something else. In this case, the analogue situation is like a real-life

situation, one that is set up by the observer to see more intriguing things than would happen naturally. Thus, in more scientific terms, ABO can be defined as a situation designed by, manipulated by, or constrained by an assessor that elicits a measured behavior of interest. Observed behaviors can be either verbal or nonverbal (e.g., overt actions, observable facial reactions, verbalized attributions). This entry focuses more heavily on ABO, both because ABO is by far the predominant form of observation used in family studies and because it involves slightly more decisions.

Studies of couples' communication are a prime example of ABOs in the study of human relationships, with hundreds of such studies in the published literature. In a typical study, psychologists bring a couple into the lab, give each of them a questionnaire (or interview) to find out what the biggest areas of conflict are (e.g., she would like him to spend more time with the children). The observer then brings them into a room (equipped with cameras and microphones) and asks them to discuss the problem and try to resolve it as they might at home. They are then left alone for 10 to 15 minutes as the video records. This process is often repeated for additional conflicts.

Researchers structure conversations in this way because they have a theory that conflict is important; observers sets up the situation so that there is a high probability that it will happen while the video is recording. The likelihood that a conflict would occur if the observer watched any random 15-minute segment of the couple's at-home behavior is low. In fact, one of the originators of the

conflict-oriented ABO method, psychologist John Gottman, set up a wired apartment in Seattle and had couples stay for 24 hours. Unlike his other studies that tested theories about how couples handle conflict, Gottman saw little conflict. There was so little that he and his colleagues had to come up with a different set of behaviors to study, for example how one partner would try to get the other's attention and whether these attempts worked.

ABO exists on a continuum of naturalism, ranging from highly contrived situations (e.g., How quickly do people walk down the hallway after being exposed to subconsciously presented words about aging?) to naturalistic situations arranged in unnatural ways or settings (e.g., How do couples talk with one another when asked to discuss their top problem topic?) to naturalistic situations with some (but minimal) experimenter-dictated restrictions. Pure naturalistic observation involves no restrictions at all (e.g., How many acts of aggression occur during recess on a school's playground?).

ABO is used as a hypothesis-testing tool for three purposes: (a) to observe otherwise difficult-to-observe behaviors (e.g., conflict behaviors), (b) to isolate the determinants of behavior (e.g., conflicts when a woman is asked to press for a desired change versus when a man is asked to press for change), and (c) to observe qualities of social interaction that unfold over time (e.g., anger escalation between mothers and children during a 15-minute period when the playing with certain objects in the room is forbidden). Although naturalistic observation might be preferable (i.e., observers would not need to guess about how comparable the behaviors were to those in real life situations), the first two purposes require controlled experimentation, necessitating ABO; for the third purpose, ABO is often preferable because it allows the observer to "stack the deck" to make it more likely that the behaviors (and the cause-effect relations) of interest will occur when the assessor can see them.

Types of Studies Using Observational Methods

ABO studies can roughly be divided into those that study the effects of specific situations on individual behavior and those that are interested in behaviors that arise in social situations. The goals of first type of study are to manipulate the setting and test individual differences in response. That is, the situation is set and variations in individuals' behavior are observed. This type of study is common in developmental psychology (e.g., visual cliff experiments), social psychology (e.g., prosocial behavior experiments, emotion regulation experiments), and clinical psychology (e.g., social anxiety assessment).

Studies of social situation employ ABO mostly as a convenience in assessing quasi-naturalistic interaction. The goal of such assessment is typically to understand behavior and its determinants in situations in which participants influence each other while interacting (e.g., groups, families, couples). Understanding generalizable factors that promote or maintain problem behaviors in such systems typically requires more naturalistic approaches than those used in controlled, manipulated situation studies.

Naturalistic observation is used when the behavior of interest happens frequently (e.g., a spouse's or child's bid for attention), predictably (e.g., a mother dropping off a child at daycare), or is demarcated in a way that allows for efficient culling (e.g., loud arguments can activate a recorder with a particular decibel threshold; recorder is activated by the parent at salient times).

Clinical Assessment

Behavioral observation is a useful tool in clinical assessment, although relatively few paradigms have been developed specifically with this application in mind. To be clinically useful, behavioral observation must efficiently provide reliable, valid, nonredundant, and cost-effective information. Because most systematic, empirically sound observation is done in research studies with methods that are impractical in common clinical practice, clinical observational assessments are typically impressionistic rather than formal and statistical. That is, clinical observation almost always is used simply to flesh out self-report information. For example, clinicians observing couple or parent–child interactions do not typically use validated coding systems and calibrate their coding reliability systematically and regularly. Regrettably, the use of any formal,

systematic observation in clinical assessment is relatively rare. This oversight is especially pronounced with couples, families, and children (who typically are accompanied by at least one parent), as the social situation that causes, helps maintain, or can help ameliorate problems is already in the potential observer's office; obtaining such social situations with individual clients is considerably more difficult.

Measurement Considerations

Each behavioral observation paradigm and its accompanying coding systems must be separately considered for "psychometrics"—measurement issues such as interobserver agreement (for systems using human observers), reliability, validity, and utility. *Interobserver agreement* is the concurrence of two or more observers that a particular behavior occurred or occurred at a particular intensity. *Reliability* is the reproducibility of observations (i.e., that the findings are stable and not a fluke). *Validity* is establishing that an observational task or coding measures what it intends to measure. *Utility* refers to the usefulness of results.

The coding of behaviors turns observation into a true tool. Creation or use of a coding system is a theoretical act, and the following questions should have answers before proceeding: Why are you observing? What do you hope to learn? How will it affect your hypotheses (i.e., either research questions or case conceptualization questions)? This is especially true because coding of many observed target behaviors is difficult to do in a reliable, valid, and cost-effective manner.

Sampling

The major sampling strategies are event sampling (the occurrence of certain behavior is coded, ideally in sequential fashion), duration sampling (the length of each behavior is recorded), interval sampling (the observational period is divided into time blocks; during each time block, the occurrence of each code is noted), and time sampling (intermittent observations are made, typically in a duration or interval sampling manner).

Behavioral Targets

Some behaviors are so concrete that the observer serves more as a recorder than as a coder (e.g., the length of time a child stays seated during a time out). Other behaviors require at least some degree of inference (e.g., parallel versus solitary play in young children). Researchers will typically provide a coding manual with prototypical examples, but exhaustive, universal definitions are not possible; thus, the coder is considered a "cultural informant" and uses his or her common sense of the culturally normative meaning of behaviors to infer that a combination of situational, linguistic, paralinguistic, or contextual cues amounts to a behavior that can be coded. Cultural informants will not always agree, for example, whether a particular utterance should be considered "hostile" in a couples coding system; the strength of the system is based largely on a reasonably high level of agreement among coders on the putative hostility of the behavior, on agreement between the coders and the developer, and on the ability of the system to make sensible discriminations (e.g., couples in therapy are likely more hostile than are happy couples) and predictions (e.g., hostile couples may be more likely to divorce). Concrete codes are not necessarily better than informant-inferred codes; sometimes one allows for a more valid measurement of a construct, sometimes the other does. In accord with Occam's razor, coding should be as simple as possible to reliably capture the behavioral constructs of interest.

Global (i.e., molar) coding systems make summary ratings for each code during the entire observation (or across large time intervals). Codes tend to be few, representing behavioral classes (e.g., negativity). Microbehavioral (i.e., molecular) systems code behavior as it unfolds over time and tend to have many fine-grained behavioral codes (e.g., eye contact, criticize, whine).

Topographical coding systems measure the occurrence of a behavior (including, potentially, its duration). Dimensional coding systems measure the intensity of the behavior. Microbehavioral systems tend to be topographical; although global systems tend to use rating scales, they may summarize frequency rather than intensity. Dimensional coding of intensity, especially on moment-by-moment basis, has been used sparingly in observation.

Conclusions

Behavioral observation can be a good theory testing tool because (depending on exactly how it is employed) it minimizes the need for inferences to assess behavior, it can facilitate formal or informal analysis of cause and effect, it can provide the assessor with experimental control of situational factors, it can facilitate the observation of otherwise unobservable behaviors, and it can provide an additional source of useful information in a multimodal strategy (e.g., questionnaires, interviews, observation). Finally, because the assessor can set up a situation that increases the probability that behaviors of interest will occur during the observation period, ABO can be high in clinical utility and research efficiency.

Like any tool, however, observation's usefulness depends on its match to the resources and needs of the person considering using it. Observation is often a time-, labor-, and money-intensive assessment strategy; the use of research-tested protocols and coding is often impractical in clinical settings; adaptations of empirically supported observational methodology in clinical settings may render them unreliable and of dubious validity; the conditional nature of validity may make it difficult to generalize observed behavior to the broad variety of real world settings; and, the less naturalistic the ABO situation, the more nagging the concerns about external validity (i.e., applicability to real-world situations).

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See also Assessment of Couples; Assessment of Families; Coding Systems for Observing Interactions; Communication Skills; Conflict Measurement and Assessment; Family Communication

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OBSESSIVE LOVE

Models of romantic love postulate sets of distinct qualities, such as (a) passion, intimacy, and commitment; (b) attachment, caregiving, and sexuality; (c) passionate and companionate love; and (d) caring and needing. These qualities can occur in various combinations and differing levels of intensity during a relationship. Obsessive love is a unique type of romantic love characterized by a dominant cognitive pattern of recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images about being with another person in a romantic or sexual relationship. Obsessive love may overlap with other attachment systems (e.g., maternal attachment) and love in other contexts (e.g., familial love; friendship love), but this entry is limited to obsessive love as a type of romantic love.

Obsessive love can occur during different phases of a romantic relationship. It may exist before any interaction and be the precursor to a developing relationship that results in more complete love (e.g., intimacy and commitment). It may be a component of romantic love that is complemented by other attributes (e.g., intimacy). Obsessive love may also be a consequence of a terminated romantic relationship where, in the absence of further interaction and other attributes (e.g., commitment), the cognitive obsession for the love object persists.

The cognitive components of obsessive love would both contribute to and be a result of motivational systems (e.g., attachment, mate selection) and biological systems (e.g., sexual arousal) that have interpersonal, intrapsychic, and biological origins. These systems can fuel the obsessive cognitions and result in emotions that are intense, enduring, and seemingly uncontrollable. Thus,

obsessive love, much like other forms of romantic love, is accompanied by a motivation to approach a potential partner to fulfill needs for affiliation, closeness, intimacy, attachment, and sex; however, unlike other forms of love, obsessive love is marked by unequal commitment, lack of reciprocation, and repulsed approaches. Obsessive love is similar to infatuation, lust, a "crush," and limerence, all of which are viewed as an involuntary and emotional state of intense romantic desire for another person.

Obsessive love may also be perceived by the individual as being dystonic because it leads to distress and anxiety. Obsessive love has some characteristics in common with the perspective that views love as an addiction. The dystonic qualities of addictive love are viewed as tied to psychological inadequacies and interpersonal incompetencies of the individual because the obsession may be a means of shifting attention away from the self and toward an external object.

The most substantial feature of obsessive love is persistent and recurring thoughts, impulses, and images coupled with cognitive distortions. These cognitive distortions are characterized by an intense need to be with the love object, biased interpretation of the love object's actions, and the belief that this person alone can fulfill romantic desires. In addition to idealization and incorrect or inappropriate interpretations of the love object's intentions, the lack of commitment by the love object runs the risk of producing consternation when love is unreciprocated or rejected. Active attempts to suppress the predominant cognitions may only increase their frequency and prolong their duration. Thus, these ruminations tend to increase interest in the love object and to reinforce the importance of the love object for obtaining a satisfying relationship, while diminishing the self if that love is unrequited.

Obsessive love can be a benign infatuation that is private, never results in interpersonal romantic behaviors toward the love object, and, with time, passes. Or, obsessive love may lead to a fulfilling lifelong relationship after a period of unreciprocated pursuit. Obsessive love, with its preoccupation for the love object and its desire for greater intimacy, can lead to both appropriate and inappropriate actions that attempt to establish and develop a relationship. As positive as such potential outcomes may be, the behavioral manifestations of obsessive love can be counterproductive, undermine establishing a relationship by driving the love object away, and potentially be catastrophic for both individuals. Thus, the behavioral concomitants of obsessive love represent a continuum of behaviors that (a) can be as simple as loving from afar and initiating the development of a relationship through (b) courting the love object with the goal of a permanent long-term relationship to (c) stalking and obsessive relationship pursuit.

Obsessive love is a high-stakes gamble in which the potential for producing an enduring relationship justifies, in some instances, the use of unscrupulous, Machiavellian, and immoral tactics (although the pursuers do not perceive them as such) along with the risks of failure, embarrassment, and lowered self-esteem. For the love object, this obsessive love can be emotionally trying from the standpoint of having to continually reject another and respond to unwanted advances.

Because of the mix of frustration resulting from rejection and the prospect of a potential relationship that might yet develop, obsessive love is accompanied by both positive and negative emotions. The obsessive lover may view rejection as indicating interest by the love object in a relationship (i.e., playing hard to get). These ruminations and emotions may change during the relationship as rejection mounts.

Although not clinically pathological, obsessive love does share characteristics with obsessions that are pathological (e.g., obsessive-compulsive disorder, criminal stalking) in that obsessive love may involve cognitions that seem inappropriate, they may intrude in ways that distract the individual during routine activities, and they may be perceived as uncontrollable. Typically, the intensity and duration of these attributes are not extreme enough to warrant a clinical diagnosis and are, therefore, considered part of normal phenomena.

Robert G. Bringle and Robert J. Rydell

See also Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Dependence; Jealousy; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Love, Unreciprocated; Obsessive Relational Intrusion

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OBSESSIVE RELATIONAL INTRUSION

It is not uncommon for two individuals to possess incompatible goals and intentions for a shared relationship. For example, one person may desire romance but the other prefers a platonic friendship; one person may want to terminate a relationship that the partner wishes to continue. Such disjunctive relationships can lead to obsessive relational intrusion (ORI), in which one person persistently pursues interdependence with another person that the other explicitly eschews. This entry summarizes manifestations of ORI and reviews the factors that contribute to the occurrence of this phenomenon.

Many of the patterns of behavior that characterize ORI closely resemble ordinary relationship pursuit behaviors. The pursuer engages in activities designed to establish proximity, foster contact, seek affinity, reduce uncertainty, and cultivate closeness and interdependence. Because these behaviors are prosocial, and because the intention behind them may be unclear, the incompatibility of relational goals may take some time to be revealed. When these patterns of behavior are repeated or intensified despite overt rejection by the pursued individual, they become excessive and intrusive.

A single episode of unwanted pursuit does not qualify as ORI. Rather, ORI involves a pattern of unwanted behaviors across multiple episodes of interaction. The relative severity of ORI depends on the *persistence* of the obsessive pursuer. Mild persistence is annoying and pestering, but not particularly distressing. Indeed, some of the inconvenience experienced by the pursued person may be counterbalanced by simultaneously feeling flattered by the unwanted attention. Mildly persistent pursuit involves flirtation, ingratiation, and attempts to be in proximity to the pursued. This can include such behaviors as giving gifts, requesting dates, using third parties to obtain information about the pursued, approaching the pursued in public places, and making contacts via phone calls, instant messages, and the like. When pursuit becomes moderately persistent, it is more frustrating and troublesome to the pursued. The extended duration of ORI as well as the nature and frequency of the unwanted behaviors render the pursuit more exasperating and intrusive. Moderate ORI can include surveillance of the pursued person (e.g., spying, following); trespassing; harassing the pursued's family, friends, or coworkers; spreading false rumors about the pursued, and other behaviors that seem "creepy." Severely persistent ORI is annoying and intrusive, as well as frightening and extremely worrisome. As such, it legally qualifies as stalking. Although stalking can occur for various motives, its most common impetus is the desire to establish or reestablish a relationship with the stalking victim. Ironically, some rejected relationship pursuers engage in threatening and abusive forms of harassment, sometimes in a desperate attempt to forge the desired relationship, and sometimes as a form of revenge for being rejected.

Various explanations for the occurrence of ORI have been proposed. Common among these are social skill deficits, personality aberrations, and mental disorders. Some persistent pursuers lack social skills that would permit them to seek affinity in appropriate ways and to recognize when their pursuit is unwanted and obsessive. It is not uncommon for some pursuers to have a history of failed relationships, and insecure attachment, particularly a preoccupied attachment style, is perhaps one of the most common explanations for ORI. Some obsessive pursuers are prone to experiencing possessiveness and morbid jealousy in their close relationships. Other pursuers suffer from disorders ranging from borderline personality to schizophrenia, and in rare cases, erotomania.

In addition to these explanations, there are other accounts for persistent unwanted pursuit

that are grounded in the complexities of negotiating ordinary personal relationships. Relationships are coconstructed through implication and tacit communication, thereby allowing much room for the mismatching of relationship goals and intentions. Thus, ingratiating behavior that is motivated by the desire to increase relationship closeness can be interpreted by the recipient as mere friendliness. At the same time, the recipient's reciprocation of friendly behavior may be incorrectly taken as a sign of reciprocation of the hidden motive to escalate intimacy. In this way, the manifest behaviors of the pursuer and the pursued seem compatible, but the latent meanings each person attaches to the behaviors are incongruent.

Further contributing to mismatching of relational goals is the fact that unwanted bids for relationship connection tend to be rejected in an indirect and polite fashion. The rejecting person "lets the pursuer down easily" to avoid appearing heartless or cruel, to expiate some of the guilt felt when conveying rejection, and to mitigate some of the rejected person's hurt or embarrassment. This sugarcoating of rejection messages is intended to minimize the loss of face for both parties, but the unintended consequence is to render the rejection itself unclear. The pursuer, who is inclined to rationalize that his or her relational intentions will be reciprocated, often regards the soft rejection as ambivalence or encouragement.

Finally, relationship pursuit occurs within a cultural milieu where persistence in striving for important outcomes is both expected and rewarded. We learn early in life, from actual experiences and from depictions in popular culture, success in achieving goals is a function of effort. The mentality that "quitters never win, and winners never quit" extends to the pursuit of desired relationships. To some degree, this persistence is fueled by the perceived occurrence of token resistance. Potential relationship partners sometimes "play hard to get" to avoid appearing too eager. This reinforces the view of relationship pursuers that persistence, even in the face of apparent rejection, is expected and sometimes welcomed.

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See also Affinity Seeking; Love, Unreciprocated; Obsessive Love; Stalking

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OPENING LINES

An opening line or gambit is a verbal or nonverbal tactic employed by an individual to initiate interaction with a stranger whom the individual finds attractive. In the entertainment media, the leading man is often portrayed as a savvy hunter who bags a doe-eyed female by taking an unerring shot with a captivating line. In the 2005 film *Hitch,* Will Smith portrayed the title character, who offered coaching on opening gambits and relationship initiation to male clients. His emphasis was on both confidence and clever meetings. Hitch claimed, "No matter what, no matter when, no matter who . . . any man has a chance to sweep any woman off her feet; he just needs the right broom." This entry discusses different categories of opening lines and the role of opening lines in the sequence of courtship stages.

The Internet provides numerous Web sites that propose to offer the right broom, in the form of "pickup lines." Many of the pickup lines are intended to be humorous, based on the hope that the display of wit will both convey desirable mating attributes to the opposite sex, and break the ice. The site linesthataregood.com for example, offers more than 1,200 possibilities. Many of the opening lines are based on light-hearted compliments to the other person's general beauty and attractiveness:

I think I can die happy now, 'cause I've just seen a piece of heaven.

What does it feel like to be the most beautiful girl in this room?

Is there an airport nearby or is that just my heart taking off?

It is only a short step from complimenting the person's general attractiveness to a comical focus on their body and sexual attractiveness:

Greetings and salivations!

Was your father a mechanic? Then how did you get such a finely tuned body?

Are those space pants? 'Cuz your body is out of this world!

From mentioning the person's sexual desirability, it is but one more step to a humorous sexual proposition:

If I told you that you had a great body, would you hold it against me?

Do you know, your hair and my pillow are perfectly color-coordinated?

(Give the person a bottle of tequila) Drink this, then call me when you're ready.

Rather than focus on the other person's attractiveness, some pickup lines focus on the self's purported desirability, or lack thereof:

Do you believe in love at first sight, or should I walk by again?

Baby, I'm no Fred Flintstone, but I can make your Bedrock!

I bet you $20 you're gonna turn me down.

Researchers have classified pickup lines into three categories. Cute/flippant lines are compliments, sexual innuendos, and playful challenges, like those listed earlier. Innocuous pickup lines are bland conversational statements such as "Hi" or "What do you think of the band?" Finally, direct opening lines involve a simple, self-deprecating statement, such as "I'm a little embarrassed about this, but I'd really like to meet you." Field tests were conducted on the various categories of opening lines using nearly 300 young adults. Moderately physically attractive males approached females in crowded bars without observing the preliminary nonverbal steps described previously. The direct

and innocuous lines were equally effective, and resulted in the successful initiation of a conversation approximately 50 percent of the time. Cute/flippant lines, by contrast, produced female rejection about 80 percent of the time that the males tried them. Follow-up studies suggested that males who tried cute/flippant lines were seen as less intelligent and less responsible than were males who tried other approaches. Studies conducted in Great Britain produced results similar to those in the United States, finding that those opening lines that involved jokes, empty compliments, and sexual references received poor ratings. By contrast, when the male revealed his helpfulness, generosity, athleticism, culture, and wealth, he was rated more highly, at least in a hypothetical vignette.

Research has focused on opening gambits in face-to-face relationships, but it seems likely that opening gambits based on exaggerated compliments, sexual humor, and bragging are likely to backfire online, just as they do in real life. Such repartee may be enjoyed among cross-sex friends who share some romantic feelings toward one another, but research indicates that few women welcome or accept sexual pickup lines from total strangers. Instead, women tend to be mindful of the risks of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, or threats to the self-concept, and dodge unexpected arrows from would-be cupids. Like the game of chess from which the term *opening gambit* was derived, initial conversations between strangers take place in the context of implicit norms and scripts.

The pickup line generally occurs in the middle of a sequence of courtship steps, most of which are nonverbal. In the first step in this sequence, a female subtly expresses her interest in companionship, such as by scanning the room, grooming herself, or moving in time to music. A male who is interested will try to make eye contact, and exchange smiles. If the female reciprocates his attention, the male has conditional permission to approach. If the male approaches a female who is not interested in social attention, or who approaches without first making eye contact and implicitly gaining permission for an advance, his chance of success is diminished. But, getting the nod is not enough. If the male's nonverbal behavior while coming closer suggests that he is too dominant and predatory, or too shy and

awkward, the female's interest may evaporate, dooming further efforts to failure. Assuming that the female's interest remains, only then does the male have an opportunity to deliver a pickup line. If the content and delivery are pleasing, then the couple can move forward to flirtatious conversation.

This discussion has focused on males approaching females, but what about the converse situation, in which a female approaches a male? Females often generate all of the attention that they desire by wearing appealing clothing and flashing an attractive smile, but in one observational study, approaches by females to males accounted for nearly 20 percent of the opposite-sex encounters. Field research indicates that females are successful at initiating such conversations approximately 90 percent of the time, regardless of whether they use a cute-flippant, innocuous, or direct opening line. When it comes to short-term relationships, males have much less to lose and lower standards than do females.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Casual Sex; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Flirting; Internet, Attraction on

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OPENNESS AND HONESTY

Openness and honesty are often identified as key characteristics desired in personal relationships. This entry explores how openness and honesty affect personal relationships and discusses whether openness and honesty are always the best policy.

Openness

To be in relationship means to be open. Early work by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor demonstrated this by suggesting that relationships vary in the *breadth* and *depth* of topics that partners discuss. For example, a casual acquaintance relationship with a neighbor is characterized by limited breadth and depth (e.g., the new addition to one's house and the weather are all that are talked about). As such, the relationship has limited openness. If the neighbor is one known for some time and who would be considered a good friend, the breadth and depth of discussion, necessarily, increases substantially (e.g., sharing parenting struggles).

Openness implies giving a partner access to one's self. This access may be manifested in four specific ways. First, relational partners may give each other access to information. The more open one is in a relationship, the more information that is known about him or her. Second, partners may give social access. Social access is characterized by time spent together. For example, one can be open socially by talking on the phone, texting, or physically spending time together. Third is physical access. Physical access includes being open to various forms of touch, such as playful touch and affectionate touch. The final form of access is psychological. Psychological access occurs when one is open about how one feels and thinks (for example, sharing one's deepest fears).

Openness across these four dimensions increases the level of intimacy in a relationship. This increase in intimacy is a result, in part, of the relationship risk that each partner shares. This risk is the result of the increased possibility that partners might use private information in hurtful or inappropriate ways. Increased trust is necessary for partners to manage the increased vulnerability that is a

consequence of relational openness. As such, intimacy is developed not merely through openness, but through openness that facilitates closeness and trust.

Scholars have also identified openness as part of a dialectic that is central to most personal relationships: openness—closedness. Dialectical theorists argue that relationships experience a number of internal tensions that are the result of constant negotiation between opposing or contradictory tendencies (e.g., interdependence—independence; judgment—acceptance). From this perspective, individuals in relationships are constantly being pulled between the desire to be open with one's partner and the desire to maintain privacy.

Societal norms and expectations regarding openness made a significant shift in the 1960s. For example, 50 years ago, there was less expectation that one's romantic partner would also be one's best friend—this was especially true for lower socioeconomic couples. Arthur Bochner has suggested that the countercultural movement of the late 1960s polarized social conduct into two camps: instrumental and expressive. Instrumental conduct emphasized certainty, predictability, restraint, and strategic communication. Expressive conduct was characterized by openness, honest talk, and freedom of expression. Phrases like "tell it like it is" and "let it all hang out" illustrate the expectations that individuals in close relationships should be "totally open" with one another (perhaps with little concern for the other person's feelings). However, multiple studies have indicated that individuals in satisfying intimate relationships (e.g., married couples) are selective in their self-disclosure. Happy spouses are characterized by sharing in moderate amounts with each other. Part of this results from the high levels of self-disclosure experienced in growth stages of the relationship, but it also seems that healthy couples have the ability to sense *what* is important to talk about and *when* and *where* and *how* to talk about it.

Honesty

The role of honesty is important when considering the previous findings. Research has demonstrated a strong positive relationship between honesty and positive relationship outcomes. One

can't be open when giving false information or willfully creating a false image or withholding important information for the purpose of misleading one's partner. However, in light of the findings for openness, it's important to recognize that lack of full self-disclosure (openness) may be appropriate and effective when designed to achieve honesty with one's partner in ways that facilitate understanding—as they say, "timing and delivery is everything."

It's clear that friends and romantic partners value both openness and honesty as part of the "rules" of the relationship. Honesty has been demonstrated to be positively correlated with feelings of relational closeness, whereas a lack of honesty and openness has been related to abuse in relationships.

A common perception is that deception is appropriate at times within personal relationships. For many, the classic question, "Do these pants make me look fat?" precipitates a dishonest response. However, it has been argued that in close relationships, appropriate responses to difficult questions should be more a matter of timing and phrasing that facilitate honest understanding, rather than strategic deception that may include incomplete, indirect, and unclear responses, to avoid conflict or relational hurt. Dishonest responses tend to decrease openness in the relationship, limit the other's potential responses, and limit the ability to dialogue and respond to one another in creative and supportive ways. Thus, three criteria are central to creating a strategic and effective response to difficult questions. First, what is the function of the question? For example, is the question designed to find out information ("Do I really look fat?") or is it designed to achieve social support ("I just want to know that you think I'm attractive."). Second, think about *what, when, where,* and *how* questions to construct a message that the receiver is likely to understand without becoming defensive. For example, if the pants are not flattering, one might suggest another outfit ("I've always loved you in your black pants."), then, a few days later, give an honest opinion about the "fat" pants. Third, the speaker needs to consider her or his own level of comfort in sending various types of messages (e.g., many would find it difficult to say, "You look great!" if they didn't really believe it).

Interestingly enough, openness and honesty have also been identified as two of six major personality characteristics. Research on what has become known as the Big Five or Five-Factor model of personality characteristics has included openness as a central personality characteristic in the form of *openness to experience*. Openness to experience is not typically understood in relational terms and, yet, future research may discover that one's tendency to be open through aesthetic appreciation, inquisitiveness, creativity, and unconventionality may be linked to openness in personal relationships. More recent examinations of personality dimensions—the Honesty-Humility (H), Emotionality (E), Extraversion (X), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), and Openness to Experience (O) model (HEXACO)—include a sixth dimension of *honesty-humility* that is characterized at one extreme by honesty, fairness, sincerity, and modesty.

Openness and honesty are significant in negotiating personal relationships. Both are strongly associated with rules and expectations for friendships and romantic relationships. The vulnerability that openness and honesty potentially create and the constant relational tension that exists between openness and closedness, and free expression and strategic communication, keep both of these constructs at the center of creating meaning in close relationships.

Douglas L. Kelley

See also Deception and Lying; Intimacy; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Privacy; Self-Disclosure; Social Penetration Theory

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Optimism, Effects on Relationships

One enduring lesson from social and personality psychology is that beliefs affect social behavior. Beliefs can proactively shape the ways that individuals perceive and make sense of social situations, and beliefs can affect how individuals behave toward others. A belief orientation that has received a great deal of attention in a variety of domains is *optimism*. The focus of this entry is on how optimism is related to relationship processes and outcomes. This entry begins by defining optimism, reviewing some of the outcomes generally associated with it, and presenting a general theoretical model that explains why optimists enjoy more favorable outcomes in many areas of life. It then considers the role of optimism in relationships, discusses some of the positive relationship outcomes that have been associated with optimism, and highlights the adaptive relationship processes through which optimism brings about those outcomes.

What Is Optimism?

Optimism is defined as a tendency to expect favorable outcomes. Research has demonstrated that there are individual differences in global optimism—that is, some individuals are more inclined than are others to expect good things across a variety of life domains. A global, dispositional tendency to be optimistic will typically manifest itself in a variety of more specific beliefs tied to particular times, situations, or life domains, and beyond any dispositional tendency, optimistic or pessimistic beliefs may be activated or diminished by short-term factors (for example, people in happy or angry moods are more optimistic than are people in fearful moods). Optimism and pessimism are generally conceptualized as opposite sides of a continuum. Thus, when this entry refers to *optimists* or *pessimists,* that is used as

shorthand for relative differences along such a continuum, not for qualitatively different types of people.

Research on dispositional, global optimism helps paint a picture of the personality traits and outcomes typically associated with being an optimist. This research has shown that optimists tend to have somewhat higher levels of extraversion and self-esteem, and lower levels of neuroticism, stress, anxiety, and hopelessness. Optimism is associated with a number of favorable outcomes in various domains of physical health and psychological functioning. For example, optimism assessed before a stressful life transition has been shown to predict fewer physical symptoms in patients and better immune system functioning during the transition. Optimism is also correlated with lower depression, fewer mood disturbances, and fewer negative interpersonal interactions. Optimism has been shown to predict less negative affect, depression, and stress during major life transitions.

A subset of optimism research has investigated outcomes in interpersonal relationships. Research has shown that individuals with optimistic outlooks are better liked by others and are socially rejected less often, have fewer negative social interactions, have longer-lasting friendships, and experience lesser social alienation and anxiety. In romantic relationships, both optimists and their partners enjoy greater relationship satisfaction, and optimists' relationships are at lower risk of breaking up.

How Optimism Influences Outcomes

Charles Carver and Michael Scheier, who have theorized and written extensively about optimism, have proposed that the associations between optimism and positive outcomes can be explained using an expectancy-value model of self-regulation and goals. Their model starts with the key assumption that nearly all behavior is driven, implicitly or explicitly, by goals. According to an expectancy-value model, goal-driven behavior is energized by two factors. The *value* of a goal refers to its desirability to the individual. *Expectancies* refer to beliefs about the attainability of goals. Goal pursuit is a joint function of value and expectancies: All else held equal, an individual will be more

persistent in pursuing a goal when that goal is greatly valued and when the individual expects to be successful in attaining the goal. The proposed role of optimism within the expectancy-value framework is that optimists tend to have more favorable expectancies. Thus, one would expect optimists to be more persistent in pursuing desirable goals, and thus to attain better outcomes.

In support of this model, research on coping strategies has indicated that optimists are indeed more persistent and more successful in pursuing goals. When faced with challenges or obstacles, optimists are more likely to use approach-oriented coping strategies like active coping, planning, positive reinterpretation, and less likely to use avoidance-oriented coping strategies such as denial and behavioral disengagement. Optimists are also more likely to use coping strategies that target a problem directly when doing so would be effective, but when a problem is unresolvable or uncontrollable, they make use of emotion-based strategies like acceptance, humor, and positive reframing to lessen the problem's impact. Optimists' persistence is not limitless or self-destructive, however: Optimism is also associated with behavioral flexibility in coping with a stressor, such that optimists disengage from hopeless tasks and shift their attention to more tractable problems, rather than proceeding with nonproductive persistence.

Self-regulation theories propose that progress toward goals can affect mood. Consistent with this idea, optimists experience less negative emotion (such as shame, depression, and anger) when their progress toward goals is disrupted, presumably because they anticipate being able to overcome the obstacles. Indeed, optimists regulate their behavior during goal pursuit by working toward their goals and engage in more proactive steps to promote well-being and prevent stress, suggesting that they are better able to prevent their emotions from interfering with their behavior. Optimists' use of emotion-based coping buffers some of the negative emotions that might otherwise accompany failure or unresolvable problems.

Global Optimism and Relationship Processes

Global, dispositional optimism is not explicitly defined as a relational construct, and the most

commonly used measure of global optimism (the Life Orientation Test) makes no reference to beliefs about relationships. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, several lines of research on optimism and relationships show that a globally optimistic outlook is associated with a variety of positive social outcomes. The following sections consider how optimism helps bring about positive outcomes in relationships.

Perceived Social Support

One key factor that researchers have focused on is *perceived support*. Perceived support refers to the belief that others will be available to provide assistance and comfort if needed. Perceived support is only modestly related to objective indicators of the actual social support received. Thus, it is more than just a realistic reflection of others' supportive behaviors; perceived support appears to also reflect stable, persistent beliefs about others' likely future behavior. As such, it can promote adaptive responses to stressors and obstacles: Before actual support is even necessary, perceived support can lead an individual to appraise a situation as less stressful (because the individual expects that he or she will be able to draw on others' help to cope with the stressor), lowering the demand for objective support or other coping. Perceived support beliefs show some consistency across multiple others, but they can also vary between types of relationships or between specific individual others. For example, an individual can see a romantic partner as very supportive and a friend as not very supportive, or vice versa.

Research indicates that perceived support is associated with several of the same processes as global optimism, including adaptive coping, favorable expectancies, and positive affect. Recently, several studies have provided more direct support for a link between optimism and perceived support. Optimism has been associated with perceived support among air crash rescue workers, bereaved men, romantic couples, and students transitioning to college. It appears that, if global optimism is a general tendency to expect good things, perceived support is a more specific manifestation of optimism in which one expects a particular good thing (social support) in a particular context (close relationships).

Supportive Behaviors in Relationships

Another way that optimism can lead to positive relational outcomes is through actual social support, both offered and received by optimists. One factor to consider is the sheer availability of supportive others. Optimism is a socially valued trait, and as a result optimists tend to be well-liked by others and have larger social networks. Thus, one of the benefits of optimism is to simply have more people available to offer support in difficult times.

Beyond sheer quantity of support, however, optimism affects the quality of support given and received in close relationships. According to the expectancy-value framework, optimists will expect that conflicts with partners can be successfully resolved. As a result, optimists can be expected not to withdraw from conflicts and instead to engage in flexible, constructive, and cooperative problem-solving behaviors with partners. Withdrawal or disengagement from conflict is a major risk factor for relationships; optimism should therefore lower the probability of this risk. Research has supported this prediction: When discussing conflicts with partners, optimists are more likely to listen to their partners and demonstrate interest, and less likely to criticize or withdraw from the conflict. Of particular interest is that the partners of optimists engage in the same constructive behaviors as optimists. In other words, the partner of an optimist will reciprocate the optimist's flexible engagement in problem-solving, regardless of the partner's own level of optimism. These reciprocal, constructive problem-solving processes are a major mechanism by which optimism brings about positive relationship outcomes (i.e., high relationship satisfaction for both partners, and low probability of breakup or divorce).

Specific Optimistic Beliefs

This entry so far has addressed global, dispositional optimism—the general tendency to expect favorable outcomes. A complementary approach is to define optimism with respect to some particular time, situation, or life domain. Thus, rather than focusing on (global, stable) optimists versus pessimists, one might instead consider the importance of particular optimistic beliefs. As discussed

earlier, the two ways of thinking about optimism are not entirely unrelated. A global tendency to be optimistic ("good things are going to happen") can give rise to more specific optimistic beliefs, such as perceived support ("my partner will still love me after this argument"), that act as more specific expectancies to support flexible and constructive pursuit of relational goals. As a practical matter, however, an emphasis on specific beliefs highlights avenues for intervention and change: Whereas it might be difficult to change someone's global outlook, it is more reasonable to target specific beliefs in domains where they are causing the most harm (i.e., through therapy or self-improvement).

Generally speaking, research on optimistic beliefs about relationships has shown that they lead to adaptive outcomes. Research by Sandra Murray and others has shown that partners who have *positive illusions* about each other—meaning more positive views of a partner than the partner has of himself or herself—have more satisfying and longer-lasting relationships. Such positive illusions are most adaptive when they are quite general in their content: A belief that "my partner is a good person" tends to be beneficial for the relationship, even if the believer has to overlook a few of the partner's foibles and failings. However, unrealistically optimistic beliefs about partners are less adaptive when they are so specific that they create opportunities for tangible disappointment. For example, a belief that "my partner is a neat and tidy person" can raise high expectations that come crashing down when faced with a sink full of dirty dishes night after night. Researchers Lisa Neff and Ben Karney have identified "global adoration and specific accuracy" as an especially adaptive pattern in marital relationships.

Conclusion

Optimism brings about positive outcomes in relationships by promoting favorable expectancies, which in turn cause individuals to pursue their relationship goals more flexibly and persistently. This core principle helps explain why other individual differences that correlate only modestly with optimism, such as a secure attachment style or low fear of negative evaluation, appear to lead to many of the same outcomes: They are multiple pathways to favorable expectancies. This principle also suggests avenues for therapeutic intervention or self-improvement. The benefits enjoyed by optimists may be accessible to individuals who work on changing their beliefs. By identifying and revising irrational or pessimistic beliefs about a partner, through therapy or introspection, it may be possible to cultivate a mindset that will lead to more constructive interactions with a partner, and ultimately, to a more satisfying and longer-lasting relationship.

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See also Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Beliefs About Relationships; Expectations About Relationships; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Social Support, Nature of

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OSTRACISM

Ostracism—ignoring and excluding others—is one of the most fundamental strategies for regulating behavior among all social animals, including humans. Social animals such as lions, primates, and even bees ostracize burdensome members to protect and strengthen the group.

Among social animals and in tribal communities, ostracism typically results in death of the ostracized member. Humans also ostracize to strengthen the group, in addition to gaining control over the outcast member, to increase cohesion among the other ostracizing members, to protect themselves from similar treatment by others, and to punish. Ostracism can lead either to ultimate expulsion or can motivate the ostracized member to adjust his or her behavior to be acceptable to the others. In close relationships, a relational form of ostracism is a common occurrence—in Western cultures, it is called *the silent treatment*. At least 70 percent of adults in the United States report being given the silent treatment by a loved one. The silent treatment consists of several behaviors, including silence by the ostracizer to the target of the ostracism, but also lack of responsiveness (verbally and nonverbally), and aversion of eye gaze.

Many experimental studies are now aimed at assessing the impact of ostracism, as well as related concepts such as social exclusion and rejection. Methods for inducing ostracism range from humiliating and public forms of rejection and expulsion, to seemingly innocuous instances of being excluded in a virtual ball toss game (called Cyberball) with strangers. Additionally, telling people that others do not wish to work with them, that their personalities indicate a future alone, or even asking them to imagine past or future instances of exclusion are sufficient to induce the painful consequences of ostracism. A handful of qualitative or interview studies assess the long-term impact of persistent ostracism, as well as role-play and diary studies. This entry discusses three stages of ostracism's impact on the individual: immediate (or reflexive) responses, short-term (reflective) coping reactions, and long-term (resignation) reactions.

First Stage: Reflexive Pain

The impact of ostracism on the target follows three stages. During the initial ostracism episode itself, the target feels pain and distress. This pain has been documented by self-reports, pain estimates, and activation of the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (dACC), the same region of the brain that is activated when individuals experience physical pain. The ostracized individual then experiences a threat to four fundamental human needs: the need to belong, to maintain a reasonably high self-esteem, to perceive control over his or her environment, and to feel worthy of attention and recognition, also known as meaningful existence. Mood shifts, such as increased anger and sadness, also occur.

Diary research shows that individuals are ostracized about once a day, but many of these instances are relatively minor, such as being ignored by strangers in elevators, and lead to swift recovery. However, when ostracized by important others or by a loved one, recovery is slower and is more distressing for the individual. Nevertheless, the initial pain experienced by any episode of ostracism, regardless of how minor or irrelevant it may seem, appears to be experienced similarly by everyone. Studies have shown that individuals experience the same levels of need threat and distress when ostracized by ingroup members, outgroup members, despised others, even when they know it is being done by a computer. Further, ostracism is similarly painful when one benefits financially from exclusion and when inclusion is costly. Even when one expects to be ostracized in a virtual ball toss game with strangers because the individual's computer is not yet communicating with the other players' computer, distress is experienced. All these findings suggest that detecting ostracism is quick and crude, seemingly bypassing interpretations that would logically lead to easy dismissal. That is, logically, it should be easy to dismiss ostracism by a computer, or by a despised outgroup, but the immediate or reflexive response is still to feel pain.

Second Stage: Reflective Appraisal and Fortification of Threatened Needs

In the second stage, individuals strive to fortify the needs that are most threatened, through thoughts and behaviors that increase a sense of belonging, affirmation, control, and recognition. The individual increases his or her inclusionary status by becoming more sensitive and likable to others, especially when belonging and self-esteem are most threatened. If control and desire for

recognition are most threatened, the individual may resort to provocative behaviors and even aggression toward the ostracizers and even naïve others.

Thus, research tends to demonstrate two diametrically opposed behavioral clusters. When control is not overly jeopardized (as when reinclusion is possible or one has his or her control reinstated even in another domain), ostracized individuals are more likely to attend to social information (compared with nonsocial information, and in contrast with included individuals), nonconsciously mimic (i.e., copying the behaviors of another without awareness) another person, especially one who shares ingroup membership, strategically behave more cooperatively, conform more to a new group that is unanimously incorrect in its members' perceptual judgments, comply more to requests from a stranger, and behave more likably to others. However, when future inclusion is unlikely or when a sufficient amount of control has been thwarted, individuals have also been shown to be aggressive to ostracizers and naïve others alike, to be uncooperative and unhelpful to those in need, and to be less able to engage in helpful self-regulation.

Third Stage: Resignation

When individuals face repeated or persistent episodes of ostracism from their groups or relationship partners, their ability to allocate resources to fortify their thwarted needs becomes compromised. At some point, they lack the resources, energy, or hope to build up what has continually been torn down. No longer able to attract others or be reincluded, they are more likely to become alienated and resentful of others. For instance, rarely succeeding in the affirmation that inclusion affords, they become depressed. Whereas initial barriers to control lead to reactance (attempts to take control), continued experience with no control leads to learned helplessness, giving up, and depression. Knowing one is unworthy of attention and not being capable of directing others' attention and recognition of the self leads to despair and dysfunctional and unhealthy life choices. Thus, for individuals whose partners give them the silent treatment, either continuously

over the years or routinely after every displeasing act, their options appear to diminish along with their self-esteem. They, in essence, follow the course of an abused spouse who remains in the relationship because they see no other alternatives. In interviews with individuals who have experienced lifelong ostracism, they report suicidal ideation or actual attempts, promiscuity or isolation, depression, eating disorders, and poor health.

People who routinely engage in ostracizing behavior (or the silent treatment) appear to be similarly distressed in the long run. They report that the habit is so strong that it becomes the first line of defense rather than the method of last resort. They report losing close relationships with important others, transforming their targets into, as one research participant said about his son, "a spineless jellyfish," and stripping away their targets' sense of self. Once they have opted to engage in long-term ostracism, they report the inability to reconcile or to begin a "talking treatment" that will heal the relationship. Silence begets silence, and the target eventually reciprocates it.

Conclusion

The emerging literature on ostracism, social exclusion, and rejection suggests that it saps one of the most primitive and core requirements of human nature—belonging to others in a reciprocal and responsive interaction. Given that ostracism is (or was) an adaptive behavior by those who use it, methods to decrease its use will be difficult. Animals use it, children use it, and institutions use it. Parents and teachers give "time-outs" as a form of punishment and behavioral discipline. Ostracism is ingrained in our lives. Thus, the more hopeful course of action will be to seek ways in which targets can immunize themselves to ostracism's self-perpetuating spiral of self-loathing, and to either improve their social skills or to offer them cognitive plans to be included by other individuals and groups.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Anger in Relationships; Dark Side of Relationships; Rejection; Rejection Sensitivity; Relational Aggression

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