

CHAPTER 5



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Friendship, Love, and Intimacy

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What Do YOU Think?

Are the following statements **TRUE** or **FALSE**?

You may be surprised by the answers (see answer key on the following page).

- T F** 1 A high value on romantic love is unique to the United States.
- T F** 2 The development of mutual dependence is an important factor in love.
- T F** 3 Love and commitment are inseparable.
- T F** 4 Friendship and love share many characteristics.
- T F** 5 Men fall in love more quickly than do women.
- T F** 6 Heterosexuals, gay men, and lesbians are equally likely to fall in love.
- T F** 7 In many ways, love is like the attachment an infant experiences for a parent or primary caregiver.
- T F** 8 A high degree of jealousy is a sign of true love.
- T F** 9 Partners with different styles of loving are likely to have more satisfying relationships because their styles are complementary.
- T F** 10 Love is something experienced and expressed similarly by people regardless of their ethnic or racial backgrounds.

You had me at hello.”

So says Renee Zellweger’s character, Dorothy Boyd, to Tom Cruise’s character, Jerry Maguire, near the end of the 1996 movie of the same name. It is the defining moment in the movie, when Jerry has arrived to restate his love for Dorothy. As he stammers and stumbles, searching for the right words with which to articulate his feelings and to explain his return, she cuts him off with her simple but moving pronouncement: “You had me at hello.”

It appears as though Americans share the sentiment first expressed by American businessman Franklin P. Jones: “Love doesn’t make the world go round, love is what makes the ride worthwhile.” We are, it seems, in love with love. We can see this in the ways we live our daily lives, especially in the kinds of relationships we want, seek, and make and in the steps we take to find and keep them. It is also evident in the popular culture that we produce and consume. There, we can see our love affair with love in everything from the things we read and watch to the music we listen to. Love is *the* dominant theme of popular music, where song titles and lyrics are typically testimonies to the power, pleasure, and pain associated with falling in and out of love. Among book genres, romance novels sell widely, accounting for more than half of all popular mass-market fiction and 40% of all fiction sold in the United States. According to Romance Writers of America, nearly 65 million Americans read romance novels, and the genre had annual sales revenue of \$1.2 billion in 2004 (Romance Writers of America 2006, <https://www.rwanational.org>). However, more than in music or books, our devotion to love stands out especially well in movies.

Romantic movies, *love stories* as they are often appropriately called, provide us with vivid scenes and memorable lines filled with heartfelt, often poignant declarations of the depth of a character’s love. Often scenes stay with us, even coming to symbolize our very idea of true love. Sometimes it is love lost, as in the 1993

movie, *Sleepless in Seattle*, when Sam Baldwin, played by Tom Hanks, describes for a radio talk show host what it was about his late wife that made him love her:

It was a million tiny little things that, when you added them all up, they meant we were supposed to be together . . . and I knew it. I knew it the very first time I touched her. It was like coming home . . . only to no home I’d ever known. . . . I was just taking her hand to help her out of a car and I knew. It was like . . . magic.

Sometimes it is love found, even if it is found many years into an on-again, off-again friendship, as it was between Billy Crystal’s Harry and Meg Ryan’s Sally in the 1989 film *When Harry Met Sally*:

I love that you get cold when it’s 71 degrees out. I love that it takes you an hour and a half to order a sandwich. I love that you get a little crinkle in your nose when you’re looking at me like I’m nuts. I love that after I spend the day with you, I can still smell your perfume on my clothes. And I love that you are the last person I want to talk to before I go to sleep at night. And it’s not because I’m lonely, and it’s not because it’s New Year’s Eve. I came here tonight because when you realize you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible.

And sometimes, as in *Jerry Maguire*, it is love reclaimed:

Hello? Hello. I’m lookin’ for my wife. Wait. Okay . . . okay . . . okay. If this is where it has to happen, then this is where it has to happen.

I’m not letting you get rid of me. How about that?

This used to be my specialty. You know, I was good in a living room. They’d send me in there, and I’d do it alone. And now I just . . .

But tonight, our little project, our company had a very big night—a very, very big night.

But it wasn’t complete, wasn’t nearly close to being in the same vicinity as complete, because I couldn’t share it with you. I couldn’t hear your voice or laugh about it with you.

I miss my—I miss my wife.

We live in a cynical world, a cynical world, and we work in a business of tough competitors.

I love you. You—complete me. And I just had—

Answer Key for What Do You Think

- 1 False, see p. 155; 2 True, see p.173; 3 False, see p. 155; 4 True, see p. 152; 5 True, see p. 159; 6 True, see p. 164; 7 True, see p. 170; 8 False, see p. 178; 9 False, see p. 167; 10 False, see p.167.



Courtesy of Everett Collection

■ Popular films, such as *Jerry Maguire*, reflect how much American popular culture emphasizes romantic love.

To which Renee Zellweger’s character, Dorothy, interrupts:

Shut up. Just shut up. . . . You had me at hello.
You had me at hello.

We want to feel “magic.” We want someone with whom we can spend the rest of our lives. We want to be and feel “completed.” We want to make “the ride” worthwhile. In short, we want to be in love.

Much like the culture that surrounds them, American families place high value on love. Decisions about entering or exiting a marriage, assessments of the quality and success of any particular marriage, and devotion between spouses or parents and children all come down to love. On both an individual level and a familial level, then, it is important to consider the role love plays in our lives. This chapter is devoted to such consideration. However, before we turn to love, we need to consider the broader phenomenon of intimacy, including the intimacy of friendship.

The Need for Intimacy

Humans require other humans with whom we feel close and to whom we can commit. We need to form relationships in which we can share ourselves with others, exchange affection, and feel connected. In the developmental model formulated by psychologist Erik

Erikson, this was the great task facing us in young adulthood—intimacy versus isolation; either we satisfy our need for intimacy or we remain socially and emotionally isolated (Hook et al. 2003). But what exactly is intimacy and why is it so important?

In its most general sense, **intimacy** refers to closeness between two people. Sometimes we associate “intimacy” or “being intimate” with sexual relations. Certainly, sexual relations are part of physical intimacy, as are kisses, caresses, and hugs. However, it is more the emotional intimacy, having someone to talk to, to share ourselves with that is such an important part of our social and psychological well-being.

Reviewing research and theory on intimacy, Misty K. Hook and colleagues (2003) suggest that intimacy consists of four key features: the presence of *love and/or affection*, *personal validation*, *trust*, and *self-disclosure*. The more we feel as though another person likes us or loves us, the more comfortable we will be sharing our innermost feelings and revealing our most personal thoughts. When we feel as though someone understands and appreciates us, we feel accepted and more freely open ourselves to this person. We feel safe in the thought that we will be neither judged nor betrayed. Finally, to be intimate entails **self-disclosure**, the sharing of both the facts of our lives and our deeper feelings (Hook et al. 2003).

Intimate relationships provide us with a variety of benefits. They buffer us against loneliness, provide us with positive feelings about ourselves and others, give us confidence that our needs will be fulfilled in the future, and enhance our self-esteem. Intimate relationships are connected to happiness, contentment, and a sense of well-being. They also offer protection from some stress-related symptoms and reduce our likelihood of illness, depression, and accidents. People who lack satisfying, positive intimate relationships are at greater risk of illness; once ill, they recover more slowly and have higher susceptibility to relapse or recurrence of their illness. If we “cannot connect in a positive, intimate way with another human being, then physical, interpersonal, and emotional difficulties will ensue” (Hook et al. 2003, 463).

In a relationship, intimacy can be expressed in a variety of ways—talking together, listening to each other, making time for each other, being open and honest with each other, and trusting each other. As a

determinant of relationship satisfaction, the degree of intimacy is more important than independence (autonomy, individuality, freedom), agreement (harmony, few quarrels), or sexuality (sexual harmony and satisfaction, physical contact). The importance of intimacy in defining relationship quality cannot be stressed strongly enough. This holds true in but also beyond the United States. In comparative research using German and Canadian samples, intimacy was the factor most highly correlated with relationship satisfaction in both countries and for both males and females (although it was somewhat more strongly correlated with women's than with men's relationship quality and may have different meanings for females and males) (Hasselbrauck and Fehr 2002; Hook et al. 2003).

The Intimacy of Friendship and Love

Although both have proved difficult to define with precision or consistency, friendship and love are among the most important sources of intimacy we have. They bind us together, provide emotional sustenance, buffer us against stress, and help preserve our physical and mental well-being. The loss of a friend and especially a loved one can lead to illness and even suicide.

Reflections

What are the ideas you associate with love? With friendship? How do they overlap? Have you ever mistaken one for the other?

Friendship often supplies the foundation for a strong love relationship. Shared interests and values, acceptance, trust, understanding, and enjoyment are at the root of friendship and form a basis for love. As much as they may benefit us similarly, love and friendship are not the same thing. One way to see the differences between love and friendship is to look at the qualities we value and seek in a friend as opposed to a romantic partner. Do we want the same things in our friends as we do our romantic partners?

The evidence is mixed. There are more similarities in what we want from friends and lovers than there are differences (Sprecher and Regan 2002). For example, trust, enjoyment, acceptance, kindness, and warmth are valued in both friends and romantic partners. A study by Mary Laner and J. Neil Russell (1998) found that when college students were asked what qualities they'd most want in a best friend and a spouse,

answers overlapped quite a bit. Both men and women included qualities such as "sensitive/warm," "open/honest," "trustworthy," and "communicative." Given that romantic partners are would-be spouses and we expect our spouses to be our closest intimates—our best friends—this overlap is not entirely unexpected. Yet other research suggests that we differentiate either in kind or degree between those qualities we seek in a close or best friend and what we desire in a lover or romantic partner (Sprecher and Regan 2002; Cann 2004).

Unlike both more formal role relationships (such as between boss and employee, teacher and student, or coworkers), or the more intense relationship between romantic partners in a relationship, the role of friend and the qualities sought in friends are more ambiguous (Cann 2004). Unlike more formal relationships, there is no specific task or purpose we seek to satisfy with friends aside from finding pleasure in our interactions. Unlike romantic love relationships, we have less at stake and are therefore less certain about criteria we desire in selecting friends, aside from shared interests, kindness, and loyalty. Potential friends may be deemed desirable based on their specific combination of unique attributes and how those attributes match our needs and wants at a given point in time. Romantic partners, on the other hand, are more carefully selected, evaluated as desirable, based on possession of certain qualities or attributes that might indicate their commitment to the relationship, their potential reproductive success, and their eventual attachment to offspring. In terms introduced by John Scanzoni and colleagues, romantic partners are selected based on their seeming ability to satisfy multiple needs that are products of the multiple "interdependencies" two people share. Interdependencies consist of shared activities, statuses, and patterned exchanges between two people. Romantic partners are expected to be able to satisfy four types of interdependencies: intrinsic (for example, emotional support), extrinsic (for example, money or services), sexual (sexual activity), and formal (shared legal status). Friends, however, typically provide only intrinsic resources (Scanzoni et al. 1989; Sprecher and Regan 2002). In addition, because romantic partners are potential spouses and our spouses are expected to be our closest emotional support, qualities such as affection, kindness, and sensitivity take on greater importance in choosing romantic partners than in choosing friends.

In a study comparing the importance of 34 different qualities in friends, romantic partners, bosses and

employees, Arnie Cann (2000) found that respondents rated those qualities associated with intimacy, achievement, dependability, and kindness higher in romantic partners than in friends. For qualities associated with intimacy (such as physical attractiveness, sensitivity, being affectionate, and gentleness), respondents rated romantic partners higher than they did the other three relationships, suggesting such qualities are especially desired in romantic partners. Respondents rated friends and bosses similarly, indicating that although they desire to have emotional connections with friends, the connection is not significantly more important to them than what they desire from their bosses. Achievement qualities (such as intelligent, analytical, competitive, and good earning potential) were considered less important in close friends than in the other three relationships. Although qualities associated with dependability (reliable, truthful, helpful, efficient, confident, and ambitious) were rated highly for all four types of relationships, again they were lowest for friends. Finally, qualities associated with kindness (compassionate, sincere, tactful, and conscientious) were rated important for all four relationships. Romantic partners were rated highly for all four composite qualities, reflecting the importance of such a choice. We are evaluated and judged not just by our own qualities but also by our partner's qualities. His or her strengths and weaknesses become our strengths and weaknesses.

Research by Susan Sprecher and Pamela Regan also looked at similarities and differences in qualities desired in their romantic partners and friends by a sample of 700 students at a large, midwestern university. Specifically, they explored the importance of 14 qualities that might be desired in a casual sex partner, dating partner, marriage partner, same-sex friend, and opposite-sex friend. Qualities included attractiveness, intelligence, warmth, earning potential, sense of humor, exciting personality, and similarity on interests, leisure activities, social skills, and background characteristics (such as race or social class). For romantic or sexual partners (for example, casual sex partner, dating partner, and marriage partner), prior sexual experience and sexual passion were also included. Looking across all five relationship types, certain qualities stood out as most desirable regardless of type of relationship. Warmth and kindness, openness, expressiveness, and a sense of humor were judged most desirable and most important. However, romantic partners were subjected to higher standards for these attributes, suggesting that such qualities are more im-

portant in romantic partners than in friends. Although intrinsic attributes may be desired in all relationships, they take on particular importance in romantic relationships. Meanwhile, romantic partners were expected to display extrinsic attributes (for example, qualities associated with appearance or social status) as well, whereas friends were not (Sprecher and Regan 2002).

The Importance of Love

Love is essential to our lives. Love binds us together as partners, spouses, parents and children, and friends and relatives. The importance of romantic love cannot be overstated. We make major life decisions, such as marrying, on the basis of love. Love creates bonds that we hope will enable us to endure the greatest hardships, suffer the severest cruelty, and overcome any distance. Because of its significance, we may even torment ourselves with doubts about the sincerity (“Is it really love?”) or mutuality (“Do you love me as much as I love you?”) of love.

Love is both a feeling and an activity. We feel love for someone and act in a loving manner. But the paradox of love is that it encompasses opposites, including both affection and anger, excitement and boredom, stability and change, bonds and freedom. Its paradoxical quality makes some ask whether they are really in love when they are not feeling “perfectly” in love or when their relationship is not going smoothly. Love does not give us perfection; however, it does give us meaning.

We can look at love in many ways besides through the eyes of lovers, although other ways may not be as entertaining. Whereas love was once the province of lovers, madmen, poets, and philosophers, social scientists have also taken a look at love. Although there is something to be said for the mystery of love, understanding how love works in the day-to-day world may help us keep our love vital and growing.

Love and American Families

Romantic love is the basis for family formation in the United States, as it has been for most of the last two centuries (Coontz 2004). Although American marriages were never quite as formally arranged as they have been in other places in the world, throughout the eighteenth century they were guided by more practical considerations and subject to more parental,

■ *While it is difficult to come up with a formal definition of love, we usually know what we mean when we tell someone we love them. Such feelings are important at the individual, relationship, and institutional level.*



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especially paternal, control. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, most active parental involvement in their children's marriage choices had dissipated (Coontz 2004; Mintz 2004). Economic developments had decreased the dependency of adult children on their parents; increasingly, economic opportunity could be found without parental assistance, which freed people from worrying about the consequences of parental disapproval of their choice of mate. With increasing economic activity among women, a spread of legal and social recognition of women's rights, and enhanced opportunity for young people to meet and mingle, American courtship was further transformed (Mintz and Kellogg 1988; Murstein 1986). Love, as experienced, perceived, and pursued by individuals, became the vehicle that drove mate selection.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, new ideals about marriage and family emerged. Although American family life had already shifted from an economic to an emotional emphasis with the appearance of the democratic family, this was extended even further with the emergence and celebration of **companionate marriage**, wherein spouses were to be each other's best friends, confidants, and romantic partners (Mintz and Kellogg 1988). Love was the foundation upon which marriage was built and the criterion by which spouses were chosen.

Selecting a spouse on the basis of romantic love has consequences. It may lead to a greater tendency to idealize the partner, display affection toward the partner, and to attach more importance to sexual intimacy (Medora et al. 2002). Ironically, perhaps, the high emphasis we place on love as the basis for spousal choice contributes to the American patterns of divorce and remarriage. The qualities we "fall in love" with may not be easy to sustain across the lifelong duration of a marriage. Thus, we are more likely to perceive our marriages as "failures" when we sense that those qualities are gone or diminished. We then seek those same idealized qualities from subsequent marriage partners.

Within our marriage practices we find a number of distinct but related cultural beliefs about the character and place of love, including (1) that love is the criterion for choosing a spouse ("love and marriage, love and marriage, go together like a horse and carriage . . ." or "First comes love, then comes marriage . . ."), and (2) that love is uncontrollable and irrational ("Love is blind"). However, as much data show, Americans tend to follow a marriage pattern known as **homogamy**—the tendency to marry people much like themselves. The prevalence of homogamy casts some doubt on some of our ideas about love and marriage.

Perhaps love is more controllable and rational than we pretend (and therefore not blind), because we seem

to fall in love with people like ourselves. On the other hand, if love *is* blind (that is, uncontrollable and irrational), it must not be the only determinant of mate selection. In other words, if—as the song lyrics suggest—love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage, we are selective in which horses we harness to our carriages. We don't marry simply because we've fallen in love and probably recognize some “loves” as unwise marriages. Finally, the social circles within which we live and move limit love. Thus, our “one and only” is drawn from a smaller pool than what the romantic mystique surrounding love suggests. With these qualifications in mind, we should still remember that most Americans who marry say they are marrying because they are in love.

In addition to the above, there are other beliefs comprising the ideology of romanticism in U.S. culture (see the “Exploring Diversity” box). Many Americans believe that love strikes powerfully upon first sight, that each of us has one and only one “one and only,” and that as long as we love each other everything else will work out. As we will see, these beliefs are not as widely shared in other cultures as they are in the U.S. and western European societies.

Love across Cultures

Neither “falling in love” nor the experience of romantic love are unique to Americans; 90% of the 166 societies examined by William Jankowiak and Edward Fischer recognize and value love as an important element in building intimate relationships (Jankowiak and Fischer 1992). But love appears to have a more central role in American mate selection than in other Western societies (Goode 1982; Peoples and Bailey 2006). It fits well with and helps reinforce other features of American families and society. Love-based marriage validates the importance of individual autonomy and freedom from parental intervention and control, establishes the relative independence of the **conjugal family** from the extended family, and fits with the wider social freedoms granted to adolescents and young adults (Goode 1982). All of these make romantic love functional in industrial societies (Goode 1977). Conversely, in societies in which nuclear families are deeply embedded in extended families, or in which it is important for economic or political reasons to create alliances and exchanges through marriages, romantic love is not a central factor in mate selection. In such societies it may be entirely irrelevant (Medora, et al. 2002).

Love reflects the positive factors, such as caring and attraction, that draw two people together and sustain them in a relationship. Related to love, **commitment** reflects the stable factors, including not only love but also obligations and social pressure, that help maintain a relationship, for better or for worse. Although love and commitment are related, they are not inevitably connected.

It is possible to love someone without being committed, without making the sacrifices and adjustments needed to sustain the relationship. It is also possible to be committed to someone without loving that person. We might remain in a relationship, such as marriage, because of perceived obligation, for the sake of the children, or because of the fear of how other aspects of our life might be negatively affected. Yet, when all is said and done, most of us long for a love that includes commitment and a commitment that encompasses love.

Gender and Intimacy: Men and Women as Friends and Lovers

As shown in the last chapter, many areas of our lives are gendered, meaning they are experienced differently by males and females. Love, friendship, and intimacy are just such areas. In most scientific literature, there is a recurring theme highlighting men's supposed shortcomings as friends and partners. Unlike women, who are said to relate more easily and deeply with others and who develop a greater capacity for disclosing and sharing their inner selves, men maintain greater emotional distance, even as they experience their closest relationships.

Francesca Cancian (1985) argued that there is a gender bias in our cultural constructions of love that distorts our understanding of how both men and women love. Through the **feminization of love**, in other words, by defining or “seeing” love in largely expressive terms (telling each other how you feel), we ignore important qualities or aspects of both women's and men's intimacy. For example, much of what women do as expressions of love (for spouses and children, especially) is **instrumental**, consisting of tasks associated with nurturing and caregiving, more than **expressive** displays, such as telling others how much we care about or love them. Although done *out of love*, such activities may not be seen as *displays of love*. Likewise,

Exploring Diversity Isn't It Romantic? Cultural Constructions of Love



Although most cultures recognize and value love, the meanings and expectations attached to love vary, sometimes greatly. In individualistic cultures, such as the United States, people value **passionate love**, the kind experienced as an “intense longing for another,” a “lovesickness” that often takes us on “a roller coaster of elation and despair, thrills and terror” (Kim and Hatfield 2004). As a student once put it to one of this book’s authors, such love sometimes feels “like you’ve been run over by a truck—but in a good way.” If reciprocal, passionate love brings us ecstasy and fulfillment; if unrequited, it can bring us emptiness and sadness. In individualistic cultures, it is expected that people will marry out of such an intense love, which is to be the most important factor in finding a spouse. This is part of the greater **romanticism** found in such societies (Medora et al. 2002). Prime importance is given to the affective element of relationships, and there is a stronger belief in each of the following components associated with romanticism:

1. Love conquers all.
2. For each person there is “one and only one” romantic match.
3. Our beloved should and will meet our highest ideals.
4. Love can and often most powerfully does strike “at first sight.”
5. We should follow the heart not the mind when choosing a partner.

In collectivist cultures, including many Asian societies such as Japan, China, India, and Korea, individual happiness is subordinated to group well-being. Loyalty, especially to the wider kin group and extended family,

dictates decisions people make about entering marriage and who they shall marry. Higher value is placed on what Elaine Hatfield and Richard Rapson (1993) call **companionate love**, a less intense emotion in which warm affection and tenderness is felt and expressed toward those to whom our lives are deeply connected. Importance is placed on shared values, commitment, intimacy, and trust. Passionate love and marriage based on romantic love are seen negatively as potential threats to family approved and/or arranged marriages, associated with sadness and jealousy, and thought to interfere with family closeness and kin obligations (Kim and Hatfield 2004). More traditional and less developed collectivist eastern cultures, such as China and India, are reported to attach the least importance to romantic love. The idea of baring the soul, sharing or confiding innermost and heartfelt feelings to a partner receives more cultural validation in the United States and other individualistic cultures than in collectivist cultures (Kito 2005).

Additional cross-cultural research compared the attitudes toward romantic love of college undergraduates from the United States, Turkey, and India. The United States is an individualistic society in which romanticism is idealized and topics such as love, dating, and finding a partner are openly and frequently discussed, often becoming subjects of considerable media attention. To the contrary, India is a sexually conservative and more collectivist society in which family stability is valued above individual gratification and autonomy and marriages are frequently arranged. Turkey is a society “in transition.” The ideal of romantic love was introduced as part of the processes of westernization and secularization. Although families may still

“assist” in the process of finding a spouse, formal arranging is uncommon. Comparing the attitudes of college undergraduates from the three countries, researchers found the students from the United States to be most and the Indian students to be least romantic (Medora et al. 2002). Using a 29-item, 5-point scale (from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree), individuals could score between a low of 29 and a high of 145, with higher scores indicating more romanticism. Items included statements such as the following:

“Somewhere there is an ideal mate for most people. The problem is just finding that one.”

“Love at first sight is often the deepest and most enduring type of love.”

“Common interests are really unimportant; as long as each of you is truly in love, you will adjust.”

The average scores were as follows:

	U.S.	Turkey	India
	N = 200 (86 male, 114 female)	N = 223 (114 male, 114 female)	N = 218 (98 male, 120 female)
Mean score	86.09	74.92	70.33
Standard deviation	15.6	13.6	14.4

In all three national subsamples, females scored higher than males. Overall, the gender difference was as shown below:

	Male	Female
Mean score	74.63	79.81
Standard deviation	15.5	16.0

From Medora et al. 2002.

because men believe they “show” or express love by *what they do* more than by *what they say*, conceptualizing or recognizing love largely in terms of things said renders men’s sincere attempts to show intimacy invisible and leaves them looking especially inadequate as intimate partners (Hook et al. 2003).

Misty Hook and colleagues note the following gender differences in intimacy (2003). To women intimacy means sharing love and affection and expressing warm feelings toward someone. To men, being intimate may mean engaging in sexual behavior and being physically close. Women display intimacy in their verbal exchanges, which can become “negotiations for closeness, during which people try to reach agreement and both give and receive support” (Hook et al. 2003, 464). Women express more empathy, being more likely than men are to come to an understanding of what others are feeling. Men are more likely to react to disclosures of negative or problematic emotions by trying to solve a supposed problem. Men also associate intimacy with “doing” things together or for another person and often find women’s need or desire to “talk things through” puzzling. Although men may feel as though they show intimacy by sharing activities and interests, telling stories, and even sitting together in silence, women associate intimacy with being together and sharing themselves with another (Hook et al. 2003). To reinforce Cancian’s critique of feminized conceptions of love, and to extend it more broadly to conceptualizations of intimacy, which of the preceding descriptions seems like “true” or “real” intimacy, women’s or men’s?

Gender and Friendship

The critique of the cultural feminization of love applies as well to friendship. We tend to conceptualize “real” or “true” friendship by such qualities as emotional support and self-disclosure—telling each other innermost feelings and attitudes and sharing personal experiences (Sprecher and Hendrick 2004). Friends share their inner lives with each other; sharing how they feel, including how they feel about each other. The closer the friend, the more personal and more frequent the disclosures. This conceptualization measures friendship against a standard more consistent with female friendships and may underestimate the “real” intimacy that men’s friendships contain, especially if such closeness is expressed in other, more covert ways (Swain 1989; Twohey and Ewing 1995, Hook et al. 2003).

Indeed, there are gender differences in disclosure in same-sex friendships. If intimacy means self-disclosure, as early as age 6, female friendships are more intimate. This gender difference is accentuated in adolescence and persists into and through adulthood (Benenson and Christakos 2003). Women experience and express “closeness” with each other through conversation, disclosing more of both a positive and a negative nature (Hook et al. 2003; Sprecher and Hendrick 2004). Given the expectation and opportunity for greater sharing and disclosure between female friends, we might predict that their friendships would protect females from depression and emotional difficulty more than male friendships would protect boys and men. However, research shows that females more than males experience depression in adolescence. Psychologist Amanda Rose explains these seemingly contradictory findings (females disclose and share more but are more depressed) through the concept of **co-rumination**. Co-rumination may be thought of as *excessive disclosure* or sharing of personal problems—as in either discussing the same problem repeatedly, speculating about problems, mutually encouraging each other to talk about problems and, generally, “focusing on negative feelings” (Rose 2002, 1,830). Rose uses as an example, “talking at length about whether the ambiguous behavior of a boyfriend or girlfriend is signaling the demise of the relationship” (1,830). Co-rumination points to the possibility that disclosure that is excessive and/or focuses too much on negative topics may not benefit the friends sharing such disclosures.

There are other noteworthy differences in the number and nature of male and female friendships. Males reportedly have more friends (Dolgin 2001). In childhood and adolescence, boys spend more of their time in groups and in group activities, especially physical activities, games, and sports; girls spend more time in dyads and engage in more mutual disclosure. Looking at “closest friendships,” girls’ closest friendships tend to exist “in isolation,” boys’ closest friendships tend to be embedded in a larger group context. As a consequence, when conflict arises between close friends, males may have an easier time reaching resolution. Within a group context we can draw others in, drawing upon third parties to act as mediators, serve as allies, or even become alternate partners. With more loyalty to the larger group, one-on-one conflict may be kept to a lower level (Benenson and Christakos 2003).

Boys spend less time sharing, less time co-ruminating, but as a consequence may be spared some

Popular Culture

Love in the World of Disney



Do you remember Belle? How about Ariel? Both are characters in animated Disney films where love relationships take center stage. The films in which we meet them, Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* (1989), are among 26 full-length animated Disney movies analyzed by Lisa Tanner, Shelley Haddock, Toni Schindler Zimmerman, and Lori Lund in research published in *The American Journal of Family Therapy* (2003).

Beginning with an assertion that children gain information and develop their understanding of couples and families from numerous sources *other than their own families*, the authors set out to identify dominant messages and themes found in the medium of animated Disney films. Noting that children use media, popular stories, myths, and fairy tales to make sense of themselves and their social environment, Tanner and colleagues turn their attention to Disney, “a major contributor to most avenues of children’s media . . . (including) a major television network, cable television networks, and radio

stations . . . children’s books, cartoons, movies, videos, computer software and games . . . backpacks, lunch boxes, and clothing” (2003, 356). Using the 26-film sample, they set out to “identify the prominent themes about family relationships” (357).

The films studied included early Disney classics such as *Snow White*

and the *Seven Dwarves* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), and *Lady & the Tramp* (1955), as well as more recent films such as *Tarzan* (1999), *Mulan* (1998), and the two previously mentioned films, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and *The Little Mermaid* (1989). Although their article also looks at portrayals of families (for example, “Who comprises a family?”

■ *The animated love story, Beauty and the Beast, is one of 26 Disney films analyzed for its messages about couples and relationships. It was also the first animated film nominated for a Best Picture Oscar.*



Courtesy of Everett Collection

of the emotional fallout from dwelling on problems. In addition, men display less affection, using either words or touch, than women do toward their friends (Dolgin 2001). Yet female friendships appear to be more fragile. With increasingly intense sharing comes more opportunity for misunderstanding or even for conflict. Furthermore, when females’ closest friendships end they are more likely to “find themselves alone” (Benenson and Christakos 2003).

Men are more open and intimate in cross-sex relationships than in their friendships with other men (Dolgin 2001). Wives or romantic partners are often

the closest confidants in men’s lives. In those relationships, men find themselves reaping the benefits that come from greater disclosure, even if the levels at which they disclose don’t match what their partners desire. Certainly, the tendency to funnel their intimacy into one relationship, especially marriage, is consistent with the cultural expectations of marriage as best-friendship. But even outside marriage, the depth of men’s disclosure to women stands in contrast to the male–male style, suggesting not so much inability as unwillingness at or discomfort with male–male intimacy.

and “How are families created and maintained?”) and parents (for example, “Which parents are present?” and “What is the nature of mothers and fathers?”), here we concern ourselves with portrayals of couple relationships in keeping with the theme of the present chapter.

Who Comprises a Couple?

Unsurprisingly, all couples shown in the Disney films were heterosexual. The researchers note that in *Mulan*, as long as Mulan was thought to be a man, she and Lee Shang were only friends. As soon as he discovered that Mulan was a woman, they fell in love.

How Are Couple Relationships Created?

Because 3 of the 26 films provided no information, this analysis was based on the remaining 23 movies. In 78% of the films (18 films) we find the notion of “love at first sight.” It typically took just minutes for couples to fall in love. In *Pocahontas*, John Smith and Pocahontas fell in love despite not being able to speak the same language. Appearance alone was enough to bring them together. In *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel falls in love with Prince Eric at first sight; he falls in love with her voice.

How Are Couple Relationships Maintained?

In most of the movies, there was a “happily ever after” theme; couples fell in love, married, and lived together easily, as well as happily, ever after. Tanner and colleagues cite the example of Snow White, who managed to fall in love while asleep and who, when asked if it was hard to fall in love, replied, “It was easy.” Commonly, in the selected Disney films, falling in love seemed to follow too quickly and easily upon a man and a woman meeting. In only three (13%) of the sampled films (*Rescuers Down Under*, *Mulan*, and *Tarzan*) did falling in love take time, at least enough time for the couple to get to know each other.

What Are Couple Relationships Like?

Although many films provided too little information to generalize from, in 8 of the 23 relevant movies (34.8%), couples were unequal in the amount of power that each partner had. Of these eight, only one (*Alice in Wonderland*) depicted the female (in this case, the Queen of Hearts) as more powerful than the male. Three movies (*101 Dalmatians*, *The Rescuers Down Under*, and *Tarzan*) depicted couple relationships

between equals who shared power in their relationships.

Traditional Gender Representations Predominate

The authors concluded that most couples in the world of Disney are portrayed in relatively traditional ways. Men and women fall in love at first sight and live happily ever after, and the films stress appearance as the most important factor in selecting a partner and entering a relationship. Marriage and children are presented as the life goal, even though in portraying marriage and motherhood women are often powerless and marginalized. This gives girls a mixed message—strive for something that, once obtained, will not treat you fairly.

Movies are but one element of popular culture to which children are exposed. It is hardly likely that just from watching one or a few (or even 26) Disney films they will expect reality to fit the animated images and themes. But these images and themes do have an effect, especially when they are consistent with other elements of popular culture to which children are exposed.

SOURCE: Tanner et al. 2003, 355–373.

Gender and Love

With regard to love, the genders differ in a number of ways. Men fall in love more quickly than women, describe more instrumental styles of love (that is, love as “doing”), and are more likely to see sex as an expression of love. Because men have fewer deeply intimate, self-disclosing friendships, when they find this quality in a relationship they are more likely to perceive that relationship as special. Having more intimates with whom they can share their feelings, women are less likely to be as quick to characterize a particular rela-

tionship as love. In addition, traditionally, women could do so less safely unless other, economic, criteria were also met. Thus, men could afford to be more romantic, and women needed to be more realistic (Knox and Schacht 2000). In a study of 147 never-married undergraduate students designed to look for and at gender differences in timing and reason for saying “I love you,” David Knox, Marty Zusman, and Vivian Daniels (2002) found the following:

- In heterosexual relationships, males say “I love you” before their partners do.

- Males say “I love you” in part to increase the likelihood that their partner will agree to have sex with them.

Other gender differences surface in the connection between love and sex. Although men are often depicted as easily separating sex and love, there is evidence that within relationships men see sex as a means of expressing or showing love (Rubin 1983; Cancian 1987). Women’s experiences of love and sexuality are different. Although sexual scripts have been changed in the direction of more open and acceptable expressions of female sexuality, to feel loved requires more than sexual expression.

Gender differences may be more exaggerated in *what people say* than in *what they do*. This is certainly the case with friendship, where bigger differences show up in how the genders talk *about* friendship than in what they experience as friends (Walker 1994). Karen Walker discovered that although her male and female informants validated the more common characterizations of how women’s and men’s friendships differ, on talking about *their friends*, they revealed more complex, often gender “inappropriate” patterns of relating. Thus, men had male friends to whom they disclosed personal information, and women had some relationships that resembled men’s friendship patterns (Walker 1994). Similarly, despite the gendered expectations and definitions of love, within the context of heterosexual, romantic love relationships, significant gender differences in self-disclosure are absent; men and women disclose similarly (Sprecher and Hendrick 2004).

In identifying the factors that shape men’s and women’s intimate relationships, most researchers point to aspects of gender socialization (McGill 1985; Basow 1992). Some emphasize dominant cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity, wherein men are inexpressive, competitive, rational, and uncomfortable with revealing their innermost feelings, especially of vulnerability or of affection toward other males (Bell 1981; Rubin 1985; McGill 1985; Stein 1986). Women are allowed and encouraged to express a wider range of feelings without concern for the consequences.

Other researchers suggest that gender-specific relationship styles emerge because of differences in how males and females resolve the developmental task of early childhood identity formation (Chodorow 1978; Rubin 1985). As a result of being “mothered,” and having the closest early relationship be with a female, the genders develop different ways of relating. Females

develop “permeable ego boundaries” open to relationships with others, and they retain a strong connection with their mothers. Males are forced to separate from their mothers, identify with absent or less present fathers, and build boundaries around themselves in relation to their most nurturant caregivers. This haunts them throughout their later relationships, because it makes them less able to “connect” intimately with others (Rubin 1985). Women experience themselves in the context of relationships, whereas men—depicted as “selves in separation”—remain oriented more toward independence and task completion (Kilmartin 1994).

We might also emphasize the role-model consequences of being “mothered” but not “fathered.” Without a loving, attentive, nurturing presence from fathers or other male role models, boys come to inhibit their own emotional expressiveness, identifying such behavior as typical of mothers (and women in general) and to be avoided. Because of the relative involvement of mothers versus fathers in caring for young children, and the greater prevalence of single-mother over single-father households, boys have fewer available role models for intimacy. Furthermore, what role models they have are products of gender socialization and carry a style of relating that results from that socialization. Girls have the opportunity to observe up close a caring, loving female role model from which they learn how to relate and express love.

Finally, still others stress evolutionary explanations for gender differences. Beginning with the idea that each gender has different “reproductive strategies,” differences in intimacy are linked to such sex-specific goals. For males, the objective is to reproduce as widely as possible, seeing that their genetic material is spread widely in multiple offspring. For women, the objective is to see that each child successfully survives to a healthy adulthood. Such a difference is said to explain numerous other differences, especially in areas of intimacy, love, and sexuality. For example, from an evolutionary perspective on qualities desired in romantic and sexual partners, females will desire males of high status who are ambitious and dependable. Males will desire physically attractive females (Sprecher and Regan 2002).

Exceptions: Love between Equals

The gender differences depicted earlier, although common in the literature on love and intimacy, are not inevitable. As noted in the previous chapter, there are

marriages and intimate heterosexual relationships that depart from traditional gender patterns (Schwartz 1994; Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1997). Pepper Schwartz's research on peer couples illustrates loving relationships that avoid the aforementioned gender patterns. Schwartz conceptualized **peer marriage** as a relationship built on principles of equity, equality, and **deep friendship**. The emphases on equity and equality resulted in shared chores, equal say in decision making, and equal involvement in childrearing. More important for now is the element of deep friendship. These couples most valued an intense companionship, "a collaboration of love and labor in order to produce profound intimacy and mutual respect" (Schwartz 1994).

In peer marriages spouses become more alike over time, and thus both husbands and wives are more likely to display and value a blend of female and male styles of intimacy. Women value and appreciate the instrumental displays of love from their partners (for example, finding her husband has had her car serviced) because they know what it is like to make or take time from their demanding daily routines to attend to such things. Because husbands are more involved in daily domestic and childrearing routines, they share interests and concerns with their wives that traditional spouses do not. With enlarged identities outside the marriage and home, peer wives also need less of the conventional, conversational demonstrations of love and affection. They and their husbands have "learned love on each other's terms" (Schwartz 1994).

Schwartz's peer couples, like Risman and Johnson-Sumerford's post-gender couples, are uncommon. They represent what is possible in marriage, but creating such a lifestyle requires both an ideological commitment to sharing and equality and an ability to withstand scrutiny and curiosity from more typical couples. Most such lifestyles also require each spouse to have a job or career that the other recognizes as equal in importance to his or her own.

Showing Love: Affection and Sexuality

Within relationships based on romantic or passionate love, the emotional connection between partners is expressed in many ways, including typically through displays of affection and through sexual desire and

activity. The state of "being in love" is assumed by most people to include sexual desire. Two people in a relationship absent sexual desire are assumed to not be in love (Regan 2000). Psychologist Lisa Diamond challenges this assumption, noting that sexual desire often occurs in the absence of romantic or passionate love and, more controversially, that romantic love, even in its earliest and most passionate stage, does not require sexual desire (Diamond 2003).

Although love and sex are separate phenomena, recent research shows that for both men and women sex often includes intimacy and caring, key aspects of love, and love is most often expected to include sexual desire. Men and women who feel the greatest sexual desire for dating partners are also likely to report the strongest feelings of passionate love. Interestingly, sexual *activity* (mean weekly number of "sexual events" in which partners engaged) is not associated with amount or depth of passionate love (Regan 2000). Pamela Regan, Elizabeth Koca, and Teresa Whitlock asked 120 college undergraduates to list all features that they considered *prototypical* of being in (passionate) love. Respondents generated a list that included 119 features, and sexual desire was the second most frequently mentioned feature (listed by 65.8% of the sample). Kissing (10%), touching or holding (17.5%), and sexual activity (25%) were mentioned far less often. Nevertheless, gender differences do exist, especially in terms of more casual relationships. (See Chapter 6 for a further discussion of sexuality.)

Besides sexual intimacy, there are many other ways we show intimacy and love. Some such displays occur openly, in public, as we say or do things that show others that we are a couple. Holding hands, being out together alone, telling others that we are a couple, and meeting our partner's parents are examples of public displays of affection and couple status (Vaquera and Kao 2005). More privately, we may exchange presents, tell each other how we feel (saying that we love each other), and just think about ourselves as a couple. Finally, the physical acts, from kissing to touching under clothes or with no clothes on, touching each other's genitals, and having sexual intercourse, are all "intimate displays" (Vaquera and Kao 2005).

Using data drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, with its large, nationally representative sample of high school students, Elizabeth Vaquera and Grace Kao examined how displays of affection varied between intraracial and interracial couples. Noting that interracial relationships are still a small percentage of all couple relationships in the

Understanding Yourself

"What Kind of Touching Makes You Feel Loved?"



For those of you who are or have been in romantic love relationships, which of the following makes or made you feel most loved, understood, or satisfied with your relationship? Is or was it the amount of hugs? Gentle massages or back-rubs? Is or was it cuddling with or holding your partner? Being kissed on the face? Being kissed on the lips? Being caressed? What about simply holding hands? This is the subject Andrew Gulledge, Michelle Gulledge, and Robert Stahmann sought to explore in their study of 295 college students at Brigham Young University. How similar or different are your answers to their findings?

Gulledge, Gulledge, and Stahmann hypothesized that individuals who were more physically affectionate with their romantic partners would be more satisfied with their relationships and generally happier than those who were less physically affectionate. They looked specifically at the seven types of physical affection mentioned previously, asking respondents to rank each of the seven from

most to least in terms of the following dimensions: favorite, frequent, intimate, and expressive of love. Before you read any further, try ranking them yourself, from most (1) to least (7), thinking about a current, former, or even anticipated or imagined relationship.

Think about your partner. Would his or her answers likely be the same? Now, consider how much you think each of the forms of physical affection affects whether you and your partner are (were, would be) satisfied with the relationship and with each other. In other words, are certain forms of physical affection more strongly associated with relationship happiness or satisfaction?

Finally, answer each of the following by indicating with a score of 1 to 7 (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree) how you respond to each of the following statements. Where low rankings on the prior list indicated more favorite, or more intimate, and so on, low scores for the

following items indicate strength of disagreement and high scores indicate how strongly you agree with the statement.

Item (PA = Physical affection)	Reply (1-7)
PA is important in achieving happiness or satisfaction in romantic relationships.	_____
There is less conflict in romantic relationships when partners give each other PA.	_____
PA is a good way of showing romantic love for another.	_____
I feel more loved by my romantic partner when he or she gives me PA.	_____
I feel more understood by my romantic partner when he or she gives me PA.	_____

Gulledge, Gulledge, and Stahmann found the following:

1. There were both similarities and differences in men's and women's rankings of favorite, frequent, intimate, and expressiveness of love associated with physical affection types. The rankings by gender are as follows:

Form of Affection	Favorite	Frequent	Intimate	Expressive of Love
1. Backrubs or massages				
2. Caressing or stroking				
3. Holding hands				
4. Cuddling or holding				
5. Kissing on the lips				
6. Kissing on the face				
7. Hugging				

	Favorite		Frequent		Intimate		Expressive of Love	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
(Most)	Kissing on lips	Cuddling	Cuddling	Holding hands	Kissing on lips	Kissing on lips	Kissing on lips	Kissing on lips
	Cuddling	Kissing on lips	Hugging	Cuddling	Cuddling/holding	Cuddling/holding	Cuddling/holding	Cuddling/holding
	Hugging	Hugging	Kissing on lips	Hugging	Caressing/stroking	Caressing/stroking	Caressing	Kissing on face
	Backrubs	Holding hands	Holding hands	Kissing on lips	Kissing on face	Kissing on face	Kissing on face	Caressing
	Caressing	Kissing on face	Caressing	Kissing on face	Backrubs	Backrubs	Hugging	Holding
	Kissing on face	Backrubs	Kissing on face	Caressing	Hugging	Holding hands	Holding hands	Hugging
(least)	Holding hands	Caressing	Backrubs	Backrubs	Holding hands	Hugging	Backrubs	Backrubs

Both men and women favor kissing on lips and cuddling (as 1 and 2 or 2 and 1), but women favor holding hands significantly more than men do. Men favor giving backrubs more than women do. Fairly consistent agreement characterizes the rankings for most intimate, and slightly less but still consistent rankings are found between women and men in terms of how expressive of love each kind of physical affection is.

2. All types of physical affection except holding hands and caressing/stroking are significantly correlated with satisfaction with relationship or partner. Most highly correlated with relationship satisfaction is the amount of backrubs a couple gives to each other. Gulledge, Gulledge, and Stahmann suggest this may be because of the more “selfless” nature of the display, and the fact that they take more energy for a

sustained period, suggesting determination and dedication. Also worth noting, conflict was more easily resolved with increasing amounts of kissing on the lips, cuddling or holding, and hugging.

3. Respondents most strongly agree (mean = 6.01) that they feel more loved, and more understood (mean = 5.01), when receiving physical affection. They further believe strongly that physical affection is a good way to show romantic love (mean = 5.97) and is important to achieve happiness or satisfaction in a relationship (mean = 6.05).

Some qualification on these findings is necessary. Gulledge, Gulledge, and Stahmann note that the absence of sexual activity among the rated acts of physical affection may limit the findings, as can the absence of other nonsexual, even nonphysical acts (gazing, talking together, saying I

love you, and so on). Can you think of still other things that the researchers may have left out?

The sample is also a potential limiting factor. The researchers note that cultural differences in the meaning of some acts make the findings more limited. The sample is further limited in that it consists of college students, most of whom are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a conservative religious body that frowns on premarital sex and warns against excessive displays of physical affection. A more diverse sample may therefore generate different results.

Still, research such as this demonstrates how much we use physical means to display and convey intimacy and love.

SOURCE: Gulledge, Gulledge, and Stahmann 2003, 233–242.

United States and therefore may not be as openly or enthusiastically accepted as intraracial couple relationships, Vaquera and Kao look at whether the potential “stigmatizing” of such relationships may lead to different ways of behaving as a couple. Other research has determined that interracial couples limit their exposure, hoping in part to avoid negative reactions, rejection, and pressure. Vaquera and Kao found that in terms of both public and private displays, interracial couples display lower levels of affection. However, when it comes to intimate displays of affection, no difference was found between interracial and intraracial couples. This is consistent with the attention to stigma, because only in settings that involve no others are there no differences between interracial and intraracial couples.

Vaquera and Kao also report differences in the displays of affection across racial groups (that is, among intraracial couples of different racial backgrounds). They determined that compared with Caucasians, African American couples displayed less public affection but more intimate affection. Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans display lower levels of intimate affection than do African American or Caucasian couples. All minority couples displayed less public affection than white couples did. In terms of “private displays,” no statistically significant differences were found among racial groups (Vaquera and Kao 2005).

Gender, Love, and Sexuality

For both women and men, sexual desire—but not sexual activity—is associated with passionate love (Regan 2000). Yet gender differences have been observed in the relationship between love and sex. Men and women who are not in an established relationship have different expectations. Men are more likely than women to more easily separate sex from affection, whereas women attach greater importance to relationships as the “context” for sexual expression (Laumann et al. 1994; Diamond 2004). Lisa Diamond suggests that there are a number of possible reasons for this gender difference. First, men are more likely than women to first experience sexual arousal “in the solitary context of masturbation,” whereas women are more likely to experience sexual arousal for the first time within a heterosexual relationship. Second, as shown in the next chapter, women and men have been differently socialized about the legitimacy of sexual expression. Women have been expected and encouraged to restrict sexual desire and activity to intimate relationships in

which they find themselves. Men have been raised with more “license” regarding casual sexual relationships. Finally, Diamond notes that biological factors may partly explain the gender difference. Specifically, certain neurochemicals, such as oxytocin, that mediate bonding also mediate sexual behavior. Much as oxytocin might be associated with caregiving, it is also released in greater amounts in women than in men during sexual activity. Oxytocin is also associated with orgasmic intensity (Diamond 2004).

Sexual Orientation and Love

Love is equally important for heterosexuals, gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals (Patterson 2000; Aron and Aron 1991; Keller and Rosen 1988; Kurdek 1988; Peplau and Cochran 1988). Given that men, in general, are more likely than women to separate love and sex, it is unsurprising that gay men are especially likely to make this separation. Although gay men value love, they also tend to value sex as an end in itself. Furthermore, they place less emphasis on sexual exclusiveness in their relationships (Patterson 2000). Researchers suggest, however, that heterosexual males are not very different from gay males in terms of their acceptance of casual sex. Lesbians and heterosexual couples tend to be more supportive than gay men of monogamy and sexual fidelity. This is probably because of gender more than sexual orientation; heterosexual males would be as likely as gay males to engage in casual sex if women were equally interested. Women, however, are not as interested in casual sex; as a result, heterosexual men do not have as many willing partners available as do gay men (Foa et al. 1987; Symons 1979).

For lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, love has special significance in the formation and acceptance of their identities. Although significant numbers of women and men have had sexual experiences with members of the same sex or both sexes, relatively few identify themselves as lesbian or gay. An important element in solidifying such an identity is loving someone of the same sex. Love signifies a commitment to being gay or lesbian by unifying the emotional and physical dimensions of a person’s sexuality (Troiden 1988). For the gay man or lesbian, it marks the beginning of sexual wholeness and acceptance. Some researchers believe that the ability to love someone of the same sex, rather than having sex with him or her, is the critical element that distinguishes being gay or lesbian from being heterosexual (Money 1980).

Sex without Love, Love without Sex

How exactly are love and sex linked? Is love necessary for sex? *Must* romantic love have a sexual component? Most of us might assume that love and sex *should be* connected, but our assumption is based mostly on our values and therefore cannot be answered by reference to empirical or statistical data. What we can address empirically is the extent to which this assumption is shared. Pamela Regan (2000) has determined that the link between sex and love is really a link between sexual *desire* and love, *not* between sexual *activity* and love. Sexual desire is assumed to be a basic “distinguishing feature” of passionate love, whereas it is understood that sexual activity may take place in or outside of a love relationship. In research with a sample of heterosexual women and men in relationships, Regan found that the respondents who felt the greatest desire for their partners also reported the greatest amount of love but that sexual activity levels were unrelated to the amount of love respondents felt.

To address the sex–love connection from the other direction, as in the question of the possibility of love without sex, Lisa Diamond notes that “it seems that individuals are capable of developing intense, enduring, preoccupying affections for one another regardless of either partner’s sexual attractiveness or arousal” (2004, 116). She uses the examples of prepubertal children who describe intense romantic infatuations without having experienced the hormonal changes necessary for true sexual desire and of individuals who fall in love with partners of the “wrong gender” (such as heterosexuals falling in love with partners of the same gender and lesbians or gay men who fall in love with partners of the opposite sex). Although, as Diamond indicates, some may suspect that such relationships reflect suppressed sexual feelings, analysis of written reports of those involved in such situations suggests that they more genuinely reflect the presence of love without sexual desire.

Still, the normative expectations clearly suggest connections between sexual desire and romantic love. First, they prescribe that sex within a romantic love relationship is more acceptable and more legitimate than sex outside of a relationship context. Second, they convey the expectation that sexual longing and desire are part of loving another.

To believe that sex does not require love as a justification, argues John Crosby, does not deny the significance of love and affection in sexual relations. Love and affection are important and desirable for endur-

ing relationships. They are simply not necessary, Crosby believes, for affairs in which erotic pleasure is the central feature (Crosby 1985).

Ironically, although sex without love may violate social norms, it is a less threatening form of infidelity. As you will see before this chapter’s end, even those who accept their partners’ having sex outside the relationship find it especially difficult to accept their partners’ having a meaningful affair. As Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz put it, “They believe that two intense romantic relationships cannot coexist and that one would have to go” (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983).

Love, Marriage, and Social Class

Gender is only one variable related to how we experience love and how love is associated with marriage. In many ways, our romantic view of love-based marriage represents a middle-class version of marriage. Among upper-class families, there is a greater urgency in assuring that our children marry the “right kind” because considerable wealth and social position may be at stake. Furthermore, upper-class families have more ability to exercise such control by the threat of withholding inheritance from the maverick child who dares act without consideration of parental preference (Goode 1982). Among the working class, marriage was often entered as a means to escape economic instability and parental authority and to be seen as an adult (Rubin 1976, 1992). This may now be less true, as working-class marriages have taken on more characteristics of the middle-class ideal (for example, expecting more sharing and communication) (Rubin 1995). Still, the economic circumstances that define someone’s life may induce different ways of linking love and marriage.

But What Is This “Crazy Little Thing Called Love”?

Despite centuries of discussion, debate, and complaint by philosophers and lovers, no one has succeeded in finding a single definition of love on which all can agree. Ironically, such discussions seem to engender conflict and disagreement rather than love and harmony.

Because of the unending confusion surrounding definitions of love, some researchers wonder whether

such definitions are even possible (Myers and Shurts 2002). In the everyday world, however, most of us seem to have something in mind and agree on what we mean when we tell someone we love him or her. We may not so much have formal definitions of love, as we do **prototypes** of love (that is, models of what we mean by love) stored in the backs of our minds. Some researchers suggest that instead of looking for formal definitions of love, it is more important that we examine people's prototypes; that is, we consider what people mean by the concept of love when they use it. When we say "I love you," we are referring to our prototype of love rather than its definition. If we find ourselves thinking about our partners all the time, feeling happy when we are with them and sad (or less happy) when we are apart, and spending all our available time together, we compare these thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to our mental models or prototypes of love (Regan 2003). If our experiences match the different characteristics of love, we then define ourselves as in love. By thinking in terms of prototypes, we can study how people actually use the word *love* in real life and how the meanings they associate with love help define the progress of their intimate relationships.

To discover people's prototypes, researcher Beverly Fehr (1988) asked 172 respondents to rate the central features of love and commitment. In order, the 12 central attributes of love they listed are as follows:

- Trust
- Caring
- Honesty
- Friendship
- Respect
- Concern for the other's well-being
- Loyalty
- Commitment
- Acceptance of the other the way he or she is
- Supportiveness
- Wanting to be with the other
- Interest in the other

There are many other characteristics identified as features of love (euphoria, thinking about the other all the time, butterflies in the stomach, and so on). These, however, tend to be peripheral. As relationships progress, the central aspects of love become more characteristic of the relationship than the peripheral ones. According to Fehr (1988), the central features "act as

true barometers of a move toward increased love in a relationship." Similarly, violations of central features of love are considered more serious than violations of peripheral ones. A loss of caring, trust, honesty, or respect threatens love, whereas the disappearance of butterflies in the stomach does not.

Love is also expressed behaviorally in several ways, with the expression of love often overlapping thoughts of love:

- Verbally expressing affection, such as saying "I love you"
- Self-disclosing, such as revealing intimate personal facts
- Giving nonmaterial evidence, such as offering emotional and moral support in times of need and showing respect for the other's opinion
- Expressing nonverbal feelings such as happiness, contentment, and security when the other is present
- Giving material evidence, such as providing gifts or small favors or doing more than the other's share of something
- Physically expressing love, such as by hugging, kissing, and making love
- Tolerating and accepting the other's idiosyncrasies, peculiar routines, or annoying habits, such as forgetting to put the cap on the toothpaste

These behavioral expressions of love are consistent with the prototypical characteristics of love. In addition, research supports the belief that people "walk on air" when they are in love. Researchers have found that those in love view the world more positively than those who are not in love (Hendrick and Hendrick 1988).

Although little research exists on ethnicity and attitudes and behaviors associated with love, one study of Mexican American college students suggests that they share many of the same attitudes and behaviors described previously (Castaneda 1993). Both females and males valued communication or sharing, trust, mutual respect, shared values and attitudes, and honesty. Data from white, middle-class adults indicate that men and women are quite similar in their love attitudes across adulthood (Montgomery and Sorell 1997).

Studying and Measuring Love

A review of the research on love finds a number of definitions, which are tied to a variety of research instruments that have been developed to measure love.

Jane Myers and W. Matthew Shurts (2002) reviewed the instruments that researchers have developed and that other researchers and/or clinicians might use, ultimately identifying nine different instruments. We look briefly here at the four most frequently used instruments and the definitions of love that they contain.

Hendrick and Hendrick's Love Attitude Scale

Hendrick and Hendrick's Love Attitude Scale is a 42-item instrument based on and designed to measure John Lee's six styles of love (Lee 1973, 1988):

- **Eros.** Romantic or passionate love
- **Ludus.** Playful or game-playing love
- **Storge.** Companionate or friendship love

These first three are "primary" styles, which can be combined to generate the following secondary styles:

- **Mania.** A combination of ludus and eros, mania is obsessive love, characterized by an intense love-hate relationship.
- **Agape.** A combination of eros and storge, agape is altruistic love.
- **Pragma.** A combination of storge and ludus, pragma is a practical, pragmatic style of love.

The six basic types can be described in greater detail:

- **Eros.** Erotic lovers delight in the tactile, the sensual, the immediate; they are attracted to beauty (although beauty may be in the eye of the beholder). They love the lines of the body, its feel and touch. They are fascinated by every detail of their beloved. Their love burns brightly but soon flickers and dies.
- **Ludus.** For ludic lovers, love is a game, something to play at rather than to become deeply involved in. Love is ultimately ludicrous. Love is for fun; encounters are casual, carefree, and often careless. "Nothing serious" is the motto of ludic lovers.
- **Storge.** Storge (pronounced *STOR-gay*) is the love between companions. It is, writes Lee, "love without fever, tumult, or folly, a peaceful and enchanting affection." It usually begins as friendship and then gradually deepens into love. If the love ends, it also occurs gradually, and the couple often becomes friends once again.
- **Mania.** The word *mania* comes from the Greek word for madness. For manic lovers, nights are marked by sleeplessness and days by pain and anx-

ety. The slightest sign of affection brings ecstasy briefly, only to have it disappear. Satisfactions last but a moment before they must be renewed. Manic love is roller-coaster love.

- **Agape.** Agape (pronounced *ah-GA-pay*) is love that is chaste, patient, selfless, and undemanding; it does not expect to be reciprocated. Agape emphasizes nurturing and caring as their own rewards. It is the love of monastics, missionaries, and saints more than that of worldly couples.
- **Pragma.** Pragmatic lovers are primarily logical in their approach toward looking for someone who meets their needs. They look for a partner who has background, education, personality, religion, and interests compatible with their own. If they meet a person who meets their criteria, erotic or manic feelings may develop. But, as Samuel Butler warned, "Logic is like the sword—those who appeal to it shall perish by it."

These styles, Lee cautions, are relationship styles, not individual styles. The style of love may change as the relationship changes or when individuals enter different relationships. In addition to these pure forms, there are mixtures of the basic types: storgic-eros, ludic-eros, and storgic-ludus. According to Lee, a person must thus find a partner who shares the same style and definition of love to have a mutually satisfying love affair. The more different two people are in their styles of love, the less likely it is that they will understand each other's love.

Love styles are also linked to gender and ethnicity (Hendrick and Hendrick 1986). Research indicates that heterosexual and gay men have similar attitudes toward eros, mania, ludus, and storge and that gay male relationships have multiple emotional dimensions (Adler, Hendrick, and Hendrick 1989). As to cultural differences, different styles tend to characterize Asians, African Americans, Latinos, and Caucasians. Asian Americans have a more pragmatic style of love than do Latinos, African Americans, or Caucasians, and they place a high value on affection, trust, and friendship (pragma and storge). Latinos often score higher on the ludic characteristics (Regan 2003).

Hatfield and Sprecher's Passionate Love Scale

Hatfield and Sprecher's Passionate Love Scale is based on a 30-item instrument measuring how much passionate love a relationship has. Hatfield and Sprecher divide love into two types, passionate and

companionate. As shown earlier in the “Exploring Diversity” box, passionate love is “an intense longing for union with another” and is familiar to us because it most fits our ideas of being in love (Kim and Hatfield 2004). Passionate love can be seen through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral indicators. Companionate love refers more to the warm and tender affection we feel for close others. It is milder, less intense, and produces less of the extreme highs and lows people experience from passionate love (Kim and Hatfield 2004).

Rubin's Love Scale

In 1970, Zick Rubin developed a 13-item love scale to study what he called romantic love. Seeing love as an attitude one person has toward another that moves them to “think, feel and behave in certain ways toward the other person,” Rubin (1973) found that there were four feelings identifying love:

- Caring for the other; that is, wanting to help him or her
- Needing the other; that is, having a strong desire to be in the other's presence and to be cared for by the other
- Trusting the other; that is, mutually exchanging confidences
- Tolerating the other; that is, accepting his or her faults

Of these, caring appears to be the most important, followed by needing, trusting, and tolerating. **Rubin's Love Scale** was designed to measure and assess three core elements of romantic love: affiliated and dependent need, predisposition to help, and exclusiveness and absorption.

Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale

Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale is based on his **triangular theory of love**. According to the theory, love is composed of three elements that can be visualized as the points of a triangle: intimacy, passion, and decision or commitment. The intimacy component refers to the warm, close feelings of bonding you experience when you love someone. It includes such things as giving and receiving emotional support to and from your partner, being able to communicate with your partner about intimate things, being able to understand each other, and valuing your partner's pres-

ence in your life. The passion component refers to the elements of romance, attraction, and sexuality in a relationship. These may be fueled by the desire to increase self-esteem, to be sexually active or fulfilled, to affiliate with others, to dominate, or to subordinate. The decision or commitment component consists of two parts, one short term and one long term. The short-term part refers to your decision that you love someone. You may or may not make the decision consciously, but it usually occurs before you decide to make a commitment to that person. The commitment represents the long-term aspect; it is the maintenance of love, but a decision to love someone does not necessarily entail a commitment to maintaining that love.

Each of these components can be enlarged or diminished in the course of a love relationship, and their changes will affect the quality of the relationship. They can also be combined in different ways in different relationships or even at different times in the same love relationship. Each combination offers a different type of love—for example, romantic love, infatuation, empty love, and liking. According to Robert Sternberg (1988), the intimacy, passion, and decision or commitment can be combined in eight ways, with these combinations forming the basis for classifying love:

- Liking (intimacy only)
- Romantic love (intimacy and passion)
- Infatuation (passion only)
- Fatuous love (passion and commitment)
- Empty love (decision or commitment only)
- Companionate love (intimacy and commitment)
- Consummate love (intimacy, passion, and commitment)
- Nonlove (absence of intimacy, passion, and commitment)

These types represent extremes that probably few of us experience. Not many of us, for example, experience infatuation in its purest form, in which there is no intimacy. The categories are nevertheless useful for examining love (except for empty love, which is not really love):

- *Liking*. Liking represents the intimacy component alone. It forms the basis for close friendships but is neither passionate nor committed. As such, liking is often an enduring kind of love. Boyfriends and girlfriends may come and go, but good friends remain.

- *Romantic love.* Romantic love combines intimacy and passion. It is similar to liking, but it is more intense as a result of physical or emotional attraction. It may begin with an immediate union of the two components—with friendship that intensifies with passion or with passion that develops intimacy. Although commitment is not an essential element of romantic love, it may develop.
- *Infatuation.* Infatuation is, like love at first sight, the kind of love that idealizes its object, rarely seeing the other as a “real” person with flaws. Marked by sudden passion and a high degree of physical and emotional arousal, it tends to be obsessive and consuming. The person has no time, energy, or desire for anything or anyone but the beloved (or thoughts of him or her). To the dismay of the infatuated individual, infatuations are usually asymmetrical: The passion (or obsession) is rarely returned equally, and the greater the asymmetry, the greater the distress in the relationship.
- *Fatuous love.* Fatuous, or deceptive, love is whirlwind love; it begins the day a couple meets and quickly results in cohabitation or engagement and then marriage. It goes so fast we hardly know what has happened. Often, nothing did happen that will permit the relationship to endure. As Sternberg (1988) observes, “It is fatuous in the sense that a commitment is made on the basis of passion without the stabilizing element of intimate involvement—which takes time to develop.” Passion fades soon enough, and all that remains is commitment. But commitment that has had relatively little time to deepen is a poor foundation on which to build an enduring relationship. With neither passion nor intimacy, the commitment wanes.
- *Companionate love.* Companionate love is essential to a committed relationship. It often begins as romantic love, but as the passion diminishes and the intimacy increases, it is transformed. Some couples are satisfied with such love; others are not. Those who are dissatisfied in companionate love relationships may seek extra relational affairs to maintain passion in their lives. They may also end the relationship to seek a new romantic relationship in the hope that it will remain romantic.
- *Consummate love.* Consummate love is born when intimacy, passion, and commitment combine to form their unique constellation. It is the kind of love we dream about but do not expect in all our love relationships. Many of us can achieve it, but

it is difficult to sustain over time. To sustain it, we must nourish its different components, each of which is subject to the stress of time.

- *Nonlove.* Nonlove can take many forms, such as attachment for financial reasons, fear, or fulfillment of neurotic needs.

The shape of the love triangle depends on the intensity of the love and the balance of the parts. Intense love relationships create triangles with greater area; such triangles occupy more of our lives. Just as love relationships can be balanced or unbalanced, so can love triangles. The balance determines the shape of the triangle (see Figure 5.1). A relationship in which the intimacy, passion, and commitment components are equal forms an equilateral triangle. But if the components are not equal, unbalanced triangles form. The size and shape of a person’s triangle give a good pictorial sense of how that person feels about another. The greater the match between each person’s triangle in a relationship, the more likely each is to experience satisfaction in the relationship.

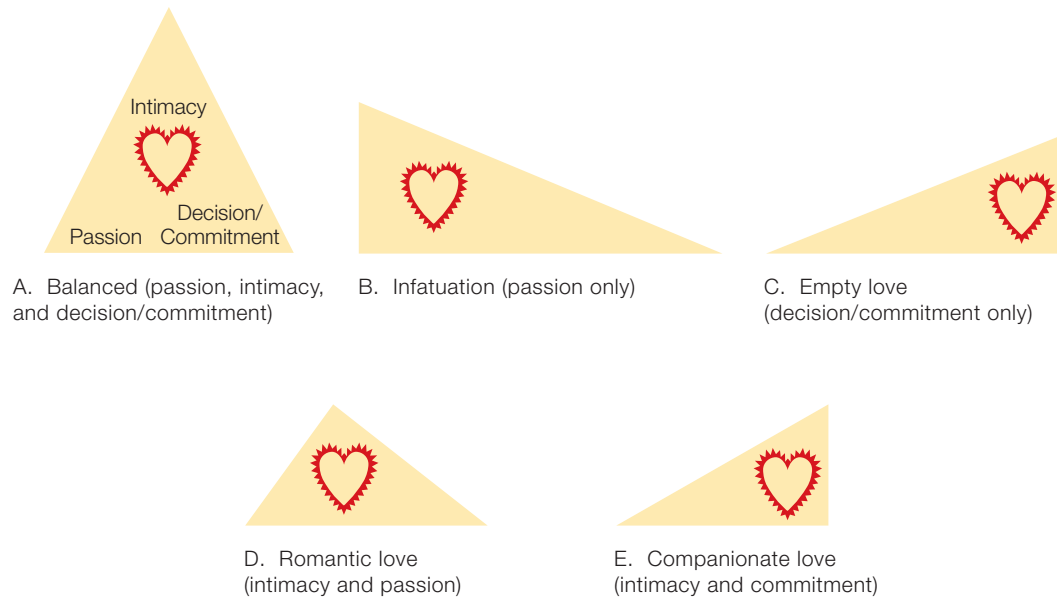
These four instruments are the most widely used. They have adequate reliability (measurement consistency) and validity (fit between instrument and concepts). They are accessible, short, and easy to use and interpret (Myers and Shurts 2002). They are not perfect, however; no research instrument is. Because they have been generated from samples of college students, the norms defining different types of love, or the expected extent of different components, may not fit noncollege populations. Similarly, it is questionable how well the standards for interpreting scores and applying concepts pertain in other cultures or to gay and lesbian relationships.

Love and Attachment

The **attachment theory of love** maintains that the degree and quality of attachments we experience in early life influence our later relationships. It has been increasingly used to study personal relationships, including love. It examines love as a form of attachment that finds its roots in infancy (Hazan and Shaver 1987; Shaver, Hazan, and Bradshaw 1988). Phillip Shaver and his associates (1988) suggest that “all important love relationships—especially the first ones with parents and later ones with lovers and spouses—are attachments.” On the basis of infant–caregiver work by John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980), some researchers suggest

Figure 5.1 ■ The Triangles of Love

The passion, intimacy, and decision or commitment components of love can be combined in a variety of ways to form different shaped triangles. The shape of a love triangle may change over time. In addition, the greater the intensity of love we experience, the greater will be a love triangle in area. The greater a given component of love, the further the point from the center of the triangle. Triangle A reflects a balanced love, in which intimacy, passion, and commitment are equally intense. Triangle B illustrates infatuation (passion only). C reflects empty love (containing commitment or decision only). D is romantic love (intimacy and passion). E is companionate love (containing intimacy and commitment). The five triangles reflect five different kinds of love, as a result their triangles are differently shaped.



numerous similarities between attachment and romantic love (Downey, Bonica, and Rincon 1999; Bringle and Bagby 1992; Shaver et al. 1988).

These include the following:

Attachment	Love
Attachment formation and quality depend on attachment object's responsiveness, interest, and reciprocation.	Feelings of love are related to lover's feelings.
When attachment object is present, infant is happier.	When lover is present, person feels happier.
Infant shares toys, discoveries, and objects with attachment object.	Lovers share experiences and goods and give gifts.
Infant coos, talks baby talk, "sings."	Lovers coo, talk baby talk, and sing.
There are feelings of oneness with attachment object.	There are feelings of oneness with lover.

According to research by Geraldine Downey (1996), rejection by parents of their children's needs can lead to the development of **rejection sensitivity**, or the tendency to anticipate and overreact to rejection. Individuals who develop rejection sensitivity seek to avoid

rejection by their partners and closely monitor, even overanalyze, the relationship dynamics for signs of potential rejection. As Pamela Regan (2003) notes, even "minimal or ambiguous" rejection cues may lead to feelings of rejection and to anger, jealousy, and dependency. Rejection-sensitive people tend to be less satisfied with their relationships and more likely to see them end.

Based on studies conducted by Mary Ainsworth and colleagues (1978, cited in Shaver et al. 1988) there are three styles of infant attachment: (1) secure, (2) anxious or ambivalent, and (3) avoidant. In *secure attachment*, the infant feels secure when the mother is out of sight. He or she is confident that the mother will offer protection and care. In *anxious or ambivalent attachment*, the infant shows separation anxiety when the mother leaves. He or she feels insecure when the mother is not present. In *avoidant attachment*, the infant senses the mother's detachment and rejection when he or she desires close bodily contact. The infant shows avoidance behaviors with the mother as a means of defense. In Ainsworth's study, 66% of the infants were secure, 19% were anxious or ambivalent, and 21% were avoidant.

Some researchers (Feeney and Noller 1990; Shaver et al. 1988) believe that the styles of attachment developed during infancy continue through adulthood. Others, however, question the validity of applying infant research to adults, as well as the stability of attachment styles throughout life (Hendrick and Hendrick 1994). Still others found a significant association between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction (Brennan and Shaver 1995).

Secure Adults

Secure adults find it relatively easy to get close to others. They are comfortable depending on others and having others depend on them. They believe they are worthy of love and support and expect to receive them in their relationships (Regan 2003). They generally do not worry about being abandoned or having someone get too close to them. More than avoidant and anxious or ambivalent adults, they feel that others generally like them; they believe that people are generally well intentioned and good hearted. In contrast to others, secure adults are less likely to believe in media images of love and more likely to believe that romantic love can last. Their love experiences tend to be happy, friendly, and trusting. They are more likely to accept and support their partners. Reportedly, compared to others, secure adults find greater satisfaction and commitment in their relationships (Pistol, Clark, and Tubbs 1995).

Anxious or Ambivalent Adults

Anxious or ambivalent adults feel that others do not or will not get as close as they themselves want. They worry that their partners do not really love them or that they will leave them. They feel unworthy of love and need approval from others (Regan 2003). They also want to merge completely with the other person, which sometimes scares that person away. More than others, anxious or ambivalent adults believe that it is easy to fall in love. Their experiences in love are often obsessive and marked by a desire for union, high degrees of sexual attraction and jealousy, and emotional highs and lows.

Avoidant Adults

Avoidant adults feel discomfort in being close to others; they are distrustful and fearful of becoming dependent (Bartholomew 1990). Thus, to avoid the pain they expect to come from eventual rejection, they

maintain distance and avoid intimacy (Regan 2003). More than others, they believe that romance seldom lasts but that at times it can be as intense as it was at the beginning. Their partners tend to want more closeness than they do. Avoidant lovers fear intimacy and experience emotional highs and lows and jealousy.

In adulthood, the attachment styles developed in infancy combine with sexual desire and caring behaviors to give rise to romantic love. Comparing across these three types of attachment styles indicates that women and men with secure attachment styles tend to be the preferred type of romantic partner by women and men alike. They also tend to find more satisfaction in their relationships, experience more happiness, hold more positive views of their partners, and display fewer negative emotions (Regan 2003).

Love and Commitment

We expect our romantic partner to be there for us through “thick and thin.” When we enter marriage, we pledge our love, “for better for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part.” In other words, we expect that, along with loving us, our partners will be committed to us and to our relationship. Although we generally make commitments to a relationship because we love someone, love alone is not sufficient to make a commitment last. Our commitments seem to be affected by several factors that can strengthen or weaken the relationship. Ira Reiss (1980a) believes that there are three important factors in commitment to a relationship:

1. *The balance of costs and benefits.* Whether we like it or not, humans have a tendency to look at romantic and marital relationships from a cost–benefit perspective. Most of the time, when we are satisfied, we are unaware that we judge our relationships in this manner. But as shown in our discussion of social exchange theory in Chapter 2, when there is stress or conflict we might ask ourselves, “Just what am I getting out of this relationship?” Then we add up the pluses and minuses. If the result is on the plus side, we are encouraged to continue the relationship; if the result is negative, we are more likely to discontinue it.
2. *Normative inputs.* Normative inputs for relationships are the values that you and your partner hold about love, relationships, marriage, and family. These values can either sustain or detract from a

commitment. How do you feel about a love commitment? A marital commitment? Do you believe that marriage is for life? Does the presence of children affect your beliefs about commitment? What are the values that your friends, family, and religion hold regarding your type of relationship?

3. *Structural constraints.* The structure of a relationship will add to or detract from commitment. Depending on the type of relationship—whether it is dating, living together, or marriage—different roles and expectations are structured. In marital relationships, there are partner roles (husband–wife) and economic roles (employed worker–homemaker). There may also be parental roles (mother–father).

These factors interact to increase or decrease the commitment.

Commitments are more likely to endure in marriage than in cohabiting or dating relationships, which tend to be relatively short lived. They are more likely to last in heterosexual relationships than in gay or lesbian relationships (Testa et al. 1987). Ethnicity may also be the greatest predictor of satisfaction and commitment to a friendship (deVries, Jacoby, and Davis 1996). The reason commitments tend to endure in marriage may or may not have anything to do with a couple being happy. Marital commitments may last because norms and structural constraints compensate for the lack of personal satisfaction.

For most people, love seems to include commitment and commitment seems to include love. Beverly Fehr (1988) found that if a person violated a central aspect of love, such as caring, that person was also seen as violating the couple's commitment. If a person violated a central aspect of commitment, such as loyalty, it called love into question.

Because of the overlap between love and commitment, we can mistakenly assume that someone who loves us is also committed to us. As one researcher points out: "Expressions of love can easily be confused with expressions of commitment. . . . Misunderstandings about a person's love versus commitment can be based on honest errors of communication, on failures of self-understanding" (Kelley 1983). Or a person can intentionally mislead the partner into believing that there is a greater commitment than there actually is. Even if a person is committed, it is not always clear what the commitment means: Is it a commitment to the person or to the relationship? Is it for a short time or a long time? Is it for better and for worse?

How Love Develops: Spinning Wheels and Winding Clocks

As shown earlier, one of the core beliefs that comprises the ideology of romantic love in the United States is the idea of love at first sight. This is often articulated by romantic partners in describing how they "just knew" they were meant for each other upon their first meeting, the first time they gazed at each other, or when they first heard the other laugh or speak. Increasingly, people believe they fell in love upon their first e-mail exchange. In fact, love develops through a process, beginning with first meeting but commencing through an intensification of the relationship and eventually a definition or interpretation of feelings as "love."

One of the more popular models depicting this process is Ira Reiss's **wheel theory of love** (Reiss 1960, 1980a). According to wheel theory, the development of love can be depicted as a spinning wheel, consisting of four spokes, each of which drives the others as the wheel spins forward. The four spokes are (1) rapport, (2) self-revelation, (3) mutual dependency, and (4) fulfillment of the need for intimacy.

- **Rapport.** When two people meet, they quickly sense if rapport exists between them. This rapport is a sense of ease, the feeling that they understand each other in some special way. We tend to feel rapport with those who share the same social and cultural background as ourselves. If one or both feel as though they have much in common, they are more likely to feel as though they can understand each other; they may even experience a comfort that makes them feel like they have known each other a long time (or before). However, if one person has only a grade-school education and the other a college education, it is not as likely that they will share many of the same values. If one person is upper class and the other is working class, their life experiences have probably been quite different. Such differences may make the building of rapport more challenging, although it is not impossible (Borland 1975).
- **Self-revelation.** Wheel theory posits that the greater the rapport we feel with someone, the more likely we are to feel relaxed and confident around them and to develop trust about the relationship. As a result, self-revelation—the disclosure of intimate

feelings—is more likely to occur. We will reveal more about ourselves and more of a personal nature with greater confidence and trust. Furthermore, disclosure becomes mutual. Self-revelation may depend on more than the presence or absence of rapport. It may also depend on what is considered proper within our ethnic group or economic class. Certain groups have more of a tendency to be reserved about themselves. Others (for example, middle-class Americans) feel more comfortable in revealing intimate aspects of their lives and feelings.

Reflections

As you examine the wheel theory of love diagram, ask yourself whether your love relationships follow the course Reiss suggests. What creates rapport for you? What factors increase or decrease self-revelation? When self-revelation increases, does mutual dependency also increase? If mutual dependency decreases, do self-revelation and rapport decrease? What effect have social background and role conceptions had on the development of your relationships?

- **Mutual dependency.** After two people feel rapport and begin revealing themselves to each other, they may become mutually dependent. Each needs the other to share pleasures, fears, and jokes, as well as sexual intimacies; each becomes the other's confidant. Each person develops ways of acting and being that cannot be fulfilled alone. Going for a walk is no longer something done alone; they walk together. Sleeping no longer takes place in a single bed but in a larger one with the partner. The two people form a couple.

Here, too, social and cultural background is important. The forms of mutually dependent behavior that develop are influenced by each person's conception of the role of courtship. Interdependency may develop through dating, getting together, or living together. Premarital intercourse may or may not be acceptable.

- **Fulfillment of intimacy needs.** According to Reiss (1980a), we all have a basic need for intimacy—"the need for someone to love, the need for someone to confide in, and the need for sympathetic understanding." These needs are important for fulfilling our roles as a partner or parent. If we find that our needs for love and intimacy are met by our partner, rapport will deepen, setting the stage for more

self-revelation, increased mutual dependency, and greater fulfillment of our intimacy needs.

Reiss describes the relationship among the four processes, which culminate in intimacy, as follows:

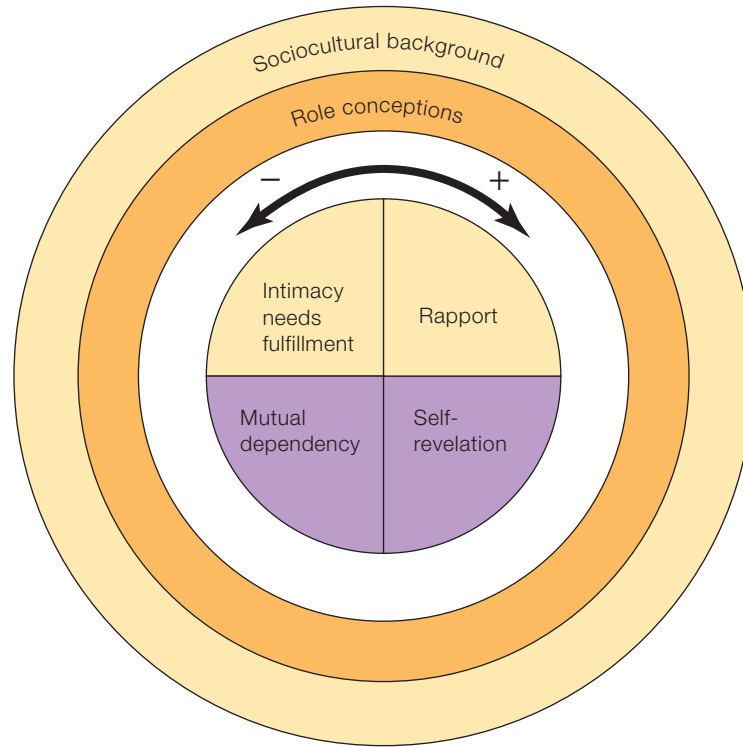
By virtue of rapport, one reveals oneself and becomes dependent, and in the process of carrying out the relationship one fulfills certain basic intimacy needs. To the extent that these needs are fulfilled, one finds a love relationship developing. In fact, the initial rapport that a person feels on first meeting someone can be presumed to be a dim awareness of the potential intimacy need fulfillment of this other person for one's own needs. If one needs sympathy and support, and senses these qualities in a date, rapport will be felt more easily; one will reveal more and become more dependent, and if the hunch is right, and the person is sympathetic, one's intimacy needs will be fulfilled.

Reiss called his model the wheel theory of love and represented the four processes as spokes to emphasize this interdependence. Relationships, like wheels, can spin in reverse, as well as forward. In other words, we can "fall out of love," and the wheel theory addresses this phenomenon. A reduction in any one of the four spokes affects the development or maintenance of the love relationship (see Figure 5.2). If we feel less comfort (that is, rapport) with the other, we may reveal fewer thoughts or feelings, feel less dependent on the other for a sense of happiness or contentment, and seek and fulfill our intimacy needs elsewhere. This seems to approximate what happens through the process of divorce or the ending of intimate relationships as well (Vaughan 1986). If a couple habitually argues, the arguments will affect the partners' mutual dependency and their need for intimacy; this in turn will weaken their rapport. Thus, the model can depict falling in *or* out of love. The "+" and "-" in Figure 5.2 indicate the directions in which the processes can increase or decrease love. The outer ring on the diagram, "sociocultural background," produces the next ring, "role conceptions." All four processes are influenced by role conceptions, which define what a person should expect and do in a love relationship.

To capture that as relationships persist they tend to deepen—we grow closer and our connection "tightens"—Dolores Borland (1975) suggested thinking not so much in terms of a wheel but rather a "clockspring." The "most intimate aspects of the 'real self'" are at the

Figure 5.2 ■ Graphical Representation of Reiss's Wheel Theory of Love

According to this theory, the development of intimacy is most likely to take place between those who share the same sociocultural background and role conceptions. Intimacy develops from a feeling of rapport, which leads to self-revelation; self-revelation leads to mutual dependency, which in turn may lead to intimacy need fulfillment.

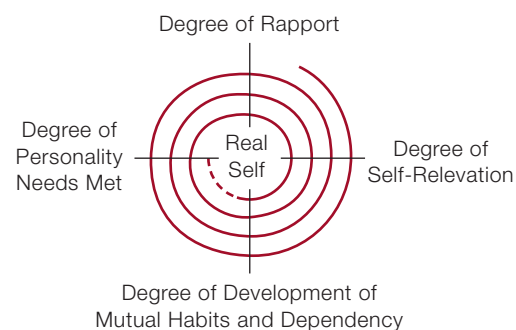


center of the clockspring. As rapport leads to self-revelation, revelation leads to mutual dependency, and mutual dependency leads us to seek and find satisfaction of our need for intimacy in our partner, we wind closer to a relationship with the “real inner self of the other person” (Borland 1975). A clockspring representation can also depict the depth of a relationship (by how much of our “real self” including our vulnerabilities and sensitivities we expose to others), as well as the difficulty and time it will take to “unwind” a relationship. Borland’s “clockspring,” depicted in Figure 5.3, is meant mostly as an aid in teaching about and better understanding the basic elements put forth by Reiss. Such elements are important if we are to fully understand how intimate relationships begin, develop, persist, and/or end.

Although mostly a model of how love develops, Reiss’s wheel theory has been used to examine variations in patterns of marriage and family life in different societies (Haavio-Mannila and Rannik 1987).

Comparing marital relationships in then socialist Estonia with marriages in Finland, Elina Haavio-Mannila and Erkki Rannik (1987) suggest that Finnish couples more often experience a feeling of rapport

Figure 5.3 ■ The Clockspring Variation on Reiss's Wheel Theory



SOURCE: Borland 1975, 289–292.

than do Estonian couples, Estonian men engage in more self-revelation than Finnish men (the women in the two countries did not differ), the two countries were similar in their levels of mutual dependency (with wives more dependent on their husbands than husbands were on their wives), and Estonian respondents reporting that they receive more social support and greater satisfaction of their needs for intimacy than did couples in Finland.

Unrequited Love

As most of us know from painful experience, love is not always returned. We may reassure ourselves that, as Alfred, Lord Tennyson wrote 150 years ago, “’Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all.” Too often, however, such words sound like a rationalization.

Who among us does not sometimes think that it is better never to have loved? **Unrequited love**—love that is not returned—is a common experience.

Several researchers (Baumeister, Wotman, and Stillwell 1993) accurately captured some of the feelings associated with unrequited love in the title of their research article: “Unrequited Love: On Heartbreak, Anger, Guilt, Scriptlessness, and Humiliation.” They found that unrequited love was distressing for both the would-be lover and the rejecting partner. Would-be lovers felt both positive and intensely negative feelings about their unlucky attempt at a relationship. Nearly half of them (44) reported that the unreciprocated love caused them pain, suffering, jealousy, and anger. Almost a quarter of them (22%) experienced fears about rejection. However, positive feelings were more common than negative feelings. More than half looked back on the experience positively (Regan 2003). The rejecters, however, felt uniformly negative about the experience. Unlike the rejecters, the would-be lovers felt that the attraction was mutual, that they had been led on, and that the rejection had never been clearly communicated. Rejecters, by contrast, felt that they had not led the other person on; moreover, they felt guilty about hurting him or her. Nevertheless, many found the other person’s persistence intrusive and annoying; they wished the other would have simply gotten the hint and gone away. Approximately half (51%) felt annoyed by the unwanted attention, 61% felt badly about having to reject the other, and 70% felt a range of negative emotions such as frustration, and resentment



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■ *Unrequited love, when one’s love is not reciprocated, is a painful experience.*

(Regan 2003). Whereas rejecters saw would-be lovers as self-deceptive and unreasonable, would-be lovers saw their rejecters as inconsistent and mysterious.

Unrequited love presents a paradox: If the goal of loving someone is an intimate relationship, why should we continue to love a person with whom we could not have such a relationship? Arthur Aron and his colleagues addressed this question in a study of almost 500 college students (Aron et al. 1989). The researchers found three different attachment styles underlying the experience of unrequited love:

- *The Cyrano style.* Named after Cyrano de Bergerac, the seventeenth-century French poet and musketeer, whose love for Roxanne was so great that it was irrelevant that she loved someone else, this refers to the desire to have a romantic relationship with a specific person regardless of how hopeless the love is. The benefits of loving someone are considered so great that it does not matter how likely the love is to be returned.
- *The Giselle style.* The misperception that a relationship is more likely to develop than it actually is. This might occur if we misread the other’s cues, such as in mistakenly believing that friendliness is a sign of love. This style is named after Giselle, the

tragic ballet heroine who was misled into believing that her love was reciprocated.

- *The Don Quixote style.* The general desire to be in love, regardless of whom we love. Here, the benefits of being in love—are more important than actually being in a relationship. This style is named after Cervantes’s Don Quixote, whose love for the common Dulcinea was motivated by his need to dedicate knightly deeds to a lady love.

Using attachment theory, the researchers found that some people were predisposed to be Cyranos, others Giselles, and still others Don Quixotes. Anxious or ambivalent adults tended to be Cyranos, avoidant adults often were Don Quixotes, and secure adults were likely to be Giselles. Those who were anxious or ambivalent were most likely to experience unrequited love; those who were secure were least likely to experience such love. Avoidant adults experienced the greatest desire to be in love in general; yet they had the least probability of being in a specific relationship. Anxious or ambivalent adults showed the greatest desire for a specific relationship; they also had the least desire to be in love in general.

Reflections

Have you experienced unrequited love? How did it differ from requited love? Do you have a “style” of unrequited love? Have you been the object of someone’s unrequited love? How did you handle it?

Stalking as Extreme Unrequited Love

When unrequited love is joined by obsessive thinking, the stage is set for what has come to be known as **stalking** or *obsessive relational intrusion* (Regan 2003).

The Bureau of Justice Assistance defines stalking as “non-consensual communication and/or harassment of another person” (in Spitz 2003). The National Violence Against Women (NVAW) survey defines it as “repeated (two or more) occasions of visual or physical proximity, nonconsensual communication, or verbal, written or implied threats that would cause fear in a reasonable person” (McFarlane, Campbell, and Watson 2002). In such instances, one person pursues another seeking to initiate or maintain an intimate relationship that the victim does not desire. The pursuer may send unwanted letters or gifts, make phone calls, vandalize property, steal mail, spread gossip

about, and visit, watch, or follow the target of his or her affection. Mary-Ann Leitz Spitz (2003) notes other disturbing examples, including stealing underwear; going through the victim’s garbage; hurting, stealing, or killing pets; and obtaining items or services in the victim’s name.

Although the more extreme forms are less common, perhaps as many as 30% of victims report such behaviors (Regan 2003). Consequences including assault and homicide have also been reported. In the NVAW survey, 81% of women who were stalked by former husbands or cohabiting partners also were assaulted by the stalker. As other research corroborates, stalkers with past intimate relationships with their victims, especially sexually intimate relationships, are most likely to be violent (McFarlane, Campbell, and Watson 2002).

The consequences experienced by the targets of various forms of relational stalking may include anger, self-blame, curtailed lifestyle, distrust of others, and physical symptoms including illness. Kathleen Basile and colleagues (2004) report that stalking, like physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, is significantly related to experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. (See the “Issues & Insights” box for more on the experience of stalking victims.)

Targets may try a variety of strategies to deal with the unwanted attention. Avoidance (ignoring, not responding, not accepting gifts, and so on) is common. Other strategies include direct confrontation, retaliation, and seeking of formal protection. These may not achieve the desired outcome of lessening or stopping the behavior. As Pamela Regan notes, avoidance strategies may be too ambiguous and therefore misunderstood by pursuers. Direct confrontation may actually give the pursuer what she or he is seeking, more contact. Both retaliation and the use of formal protection may serve to anger not stop the pursuer (Regan 2003). It is disturbing but important to note that stalking appears to be increasing; however, as with other forms of intimate violence or abuse the trend may be more an artifact of improved reporting and record keeping than the result of a real increase in frequency of the behaviors (Spitz 2003).

Stalking, like other forms of intimate violence or abuse, seems to be about issues of power and control (Brewster 2003). Brewster’s sample of stalking victims reported that their stalkers were trying to control them, using whatever manner of control they could—social, emotional, financial, psychological, and the threat or use of physical violence.

Obsession appears to be at the center of stalking, although Spitz also differentiates simple and love-obsessional stalking from **erotomania**. Stalkers suffering from erotomania, suffer from delusions in which they believe that they are involved in relationships with their victims. **Simple obsessional stalking**, where real relationships exist or existed between stalker and victim, is the most common form of stalking. It typically emerges after a relationship between stalker and victim ends, including but not necessarily involving a sexually intimate relationship. Simple obsessional stalking is used to punish the person who ended the relationship or to try to force him or her back into the relationship. This is the type most likely to result in violence toward the victim (Spitz 2003). **Love-obsessional** stalkers are not psychotic, but they pursue targets with whom they have never been involved in relationships (Spitz, 2003).

Either women or men can be victimized in such a way, and either gender can be stalkers, though research suggests many more women than men are victimized. Bonnie Fisher, Francis Cullen, and Michael Turner's thorough literature review and their own finding show the following range of estimated stalking victimization:

Year	Study	Sample	Prevalence
1996	Fremouw et al.	Female undergraduates in two psychology classes	31%
1997	Coleman	141 female students	29%
1998	Tjaden and Thoennes	8,000 women	8–12%
1999	Mustaine and Tewksbury	861 women in introductory sociology or criminal justice courses	10.5%
2000	Bjerregaard	512 women in randomly selected courses	25%
2000	Logan	84 women in a communications course	29%
2002	Fisher, Cullen, and Turner	4,446 college women	13.1%

Spitz (2003) reports research estimating that approximately 10 million Americans have been stalked and that 3% of all men and 8% of all women *will be* victims of stalking at some point in their lives. When men are stalking victims, their stalkers are more often colleagues and acquaintances. When women are stalked they are most often stalked by men with whom they have had romantic relationships. Judith McFarlane and

colleagues report that 62% of female victims are stalked by a current or former intimate partner (38% by a current or former husband, 10% by a current or former cohabiting partner, and 14% by current or former boyfriends or dates) (McFarlane et al. 2002). As a general profile, stalkers are typically white males between 26 and 50, with at least high school educations. This makes them older and better educated than most convicted of other crimes (Spitz 2003). Victims tend to be never married or divorced women, on average 35 years old, with at least some college education (Spitz 2003).

The preceding descriptions show that there are both “milder” and more extreme forms of stalking behavior (Spitzberg and Cupach 2001; Regan 2003). It should be noted, however, that even the “milder” forms of stalking, such as repeatedly calling the victim and arguing, begging for another chance, or hanging up without speaking, are intrusive, unwanted, and disturbing to the victim. Such “lesser” forms of stalking should not be ignored, and we should not trivialize or dismiss any behaviors that cause victims discomfort and/or force them to alter their daily routines. At the extreme end, when stalkers follow and spy on their victims, leave them threatening notes on their cars, or—if there are children—threaten to harm children, there is a much greater risk of victims being physically injured or killed by their stalkers (McFarlane et al. 2002).

Jealousy: The Green-Eyed Monster

In addition to bringing us great joy, love relationships are often the source of painful insecurities and jealousy. What exactly is jealousy? As studied by researchers, **jealousy** can be defined as “a complex of behaviors, thoughts, and emotions resulting from the perception of harm or threat to the self and/or the romantic relationship by a real or potential rival relationship” (White and Mullen 1989). It is an aversive response that occurs because of a partner's real, imagined, or likely involvement with a third person (Bringle and Buunk 1985; Sharpsteen 1993). Jealousy sets the boundaries for what an individual or group feels are important relationships; others cannot trespass these limits into other emotional and/or sexual relationships without evoking jealousy.

Sometimes we may think that jealousy proves love and, by flirting with another person, may try to test our partner's interest or affection by attempting to make him or her jealous. If our date or partner becomes



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■ *Jealousy is not necessarily a sign of love.*

jealous, the jealousy is taken as a sign of love. But making jealousy a litmus test of love is dangerous, because jealousy and love are not necessarily related. Jealousy may be a more accurate yardstick for measuring insecurity or possessiveness than love (see Mullen 1993 for a discussion of changing cultural attitudes toward jealousy).

Social psychologists suggest that there are two types of jealousy: suspicious and reactive (Bringle and Buunk 1991). **Suspicious jealousy** is jealousy that occurs when there is either no reason to be suspicious or only ambiguous evidence to suspect that a partner is involved with another. **Reactive jealousy** is jealousy that occurs when a partner reveals a current, past, or anticipated relationship with another person.

Suspicious jealousy generally occurs when a relationship is in its early stages. The relationship is not firmly established, and the couple is unsure about its future. The smallest distraction, imagined slight, or inattention can be taken as evidence of interest in another person. Even without any evidence, a jealous person may worry (“Is my partner seeing someone else but not telling me?”). This person may engage in vigilance, watching the partner’s every move (“I’d like to audit your marriage and family class”). He or she may snoop, unexpectedly appearing in the middle of the night to see if someone else is there (“I was just passing by and thought I’d say hello”). The partner may try to control the other’s behavior (“If you go to your friend’s party without me, we’re through”). Suspicious jealousy may have both legitimate and nega-

tive functions in a relationship. Although it may be a reasonable response to circumstantial evidence and warn the partner what will happen if there are serious transgressions, if unfounded, it can be self-defeating.

Reactive jealousy occurs when one partner learns of the other’s present, past, or anticipated sexual involvement with another. This usually provokes the most intense jealousy. If the affair occurred in the early part of the present relationship, the unknowing partner may feel that the primary relationship has been based on a lie. Trust is questioned. Every word and event must be reevaluated in light of this new knowledge: “If you slept with him when you said you were going to the library, did you also sleep with him when you said you were going to the Laundromat?” Or “How could you say you loved me when you were seeing her?” The damage can be irreparable.

As our lives become more and more intertwined, we become less and less independent and our commitment to each other grows stronger. For some, this loss of independence increases the fear of losing the partner, and indeed there is evidence that the strength of the commitment, the more we rely on the relationship for fulfillment of personal and interpersonal needs, the more threatened we will feel at the thought of losing our partner to a rival. Commitment alone will not evoke jealousy. We must perceive, rightly or wrongly, that our relationship is being threatened (Rydell, McConnell, and Bringle 2004).

Gender Differences in Jealousy

Both men and women are susceptible to jealous fears that their partner might be attracted to someone else because of dissatisfaction with the relationship, attractiveness of a rival, or the desire for sexual variety. Women feel especially vulnerable to losing their partner to a physically attractive rival, whereas in men jealousy is evoked more by a rival’s status (Buunk and Dijkstra 2004). Furthermore, men and women become jealous about different matters. Men tend to experience more jealousy when they feel their partner is sexually involved with another man. Women, by contrast, tend to experience jealousy over intimacy issues (Buunk and Dijkstra 2004; Cramer et al. 2001, 2002). This gender difference has been found in research in the United States, as well as in China, Germany, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, and Sweden (Cramer et al. 2001, 2002).

Psychologist Robert Cramer and colleagues asked a sample of undergraduate women and men to indicate

which of two infidelities would distress or upset them more, by circling either alternative A or alternative B.

- A. Imagining your partner forming a deep emotional attachment to another person.
- B. Imagining your partner enjoying passionate sexual intercourse with another person.

Other respondents were asked to imagine their partners committing *both* infidelities: “Imagine your partner forming a deep emotional attachment to another person *and also* enjoying passionate sexual intercourse with that person.” Participants were then asked to indicate which infidelity, assuming both had occurred, would distress or upset them more.

Results for both questions show a striking gender pattern (see Table 5.1).

Like much jealousy research, Cramer and colleagues use evolutionary theory to account for these gender differences. They suggest that emotional infidelity is more distressing for women than for men because, at least in theory, it threatens a romantic partner’s commitment and, therefore, continued access to material resources and economic stability needed to assure the healthy growth and development of offspring. Men, on the other hand, are more distressed by sexual infidelity than women are because it decreases their “paternity certainty” through the loss of sexual exclusivity (Cramer et al. 2001, 2002).

Both men and women react to jealousy with a host of emotions. Betrayal, anger, rejection, hurt, distrust, anxiety, worry, suspicion, and sadness are all possible. The kind of emotional reaction appears to depend on the type of infidelity that provokes it. Following emotional infidelity, such feelings as anxiety, suspicion, worry, distrust, and threat are more common. Bram Buunk and Pieterneel Dijkstra call this type of jealousy *suspicious* or *preventive* jealousy. Following sexual infidelity, jealousy was expressed more through anger,

sadness, a sense of betrayal, hurt, and rejection. Buunk and Dijkstra label this *fait accompli* (after the fact) jealousy (Buunk and Dijkstra 2004). Further differentiating the genders, following emotional infidelity, jealousy was evoked in men by a rival’s dominance and was experienced mostly as a sense of threat. Following sexual infidelity, men’s jealousy was evoked by his rival’s physical attractiveness, not his dominance, and was experienced as betrayal or anger. For women, after emotional infidelity a rival’s physical attractiveness evoked a sense of threat, whereas after sexual infidelity women’s jealousy responses were unaffected by any particular characteristics of her rival (Buunk and Dijkstra 2004).

Managing Jealousy

Jealousy can be unreasonable or a realistic reaction to genuine threats. Unreasonable jealousy can become a problem when it interferes with an individual’s well-being or that of the relationship. Dealing with irrational suspicions can often be difficult, because such feelings touch deep recesses in ourselves. As noted earlier, jealousy is often related to personal feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. The source of such jealousy lies within a person, not within the relationship.

If we can work on the underlying causes of our insecurity, then we can deal effectively with our irrational jealousy. Excessively jealous people may need considerable reassurance, but at some point they must confront their own irrationality and insecurity. If they do not, they may emotionally imprison their partner. Their jealousy may destroy the very relationship they were desperately trying to preserve.

Managing jealousy requires the ability to communicate, the recognition by each partner of the feelings and motivations of the other, and a willingness to reciprocate and compromise (Ridley and Crowe 1992). If the jealousy is well founded, the partner may need to modify or end the relationship with the “third party” whose presence initiated the jealousy. Modifying the third-party relationship reduces the jealous response and, more important, symbolizes the partner’s commitment to the primary relationship. If the partner is unwilling to do this—because of lack of commitment, unsatisfied personal needs, or other problems in the primary relationship—the relationship is likely to reach a crisis. In such cases, jealousy may be the agent for profound change.

Table 5.1 ■ Percentage of Women and Men Selecting Emotional or Sexual Infidelity as More Distressing

		Men	Women
Forced choice	Emotional	12.9%	54.5%
	Sexual	87.1%	45.5%
Assuming both, which is worse?	Emotional	13.3%	40.6%
	Sexual	86.7%	59.4%

Jealousy: The Psychological Dimension

Jealousy is a painful experience. It is an agonizing compound of hurt, anger, depression, fear, and doubt. We may feel less attractive and acceptable to our partner when we are jealous (Bush, Bush, and Jennings 1988). Jealous responses are most intense in committed or marital relationships because both partners assume “specialness.” This specialness occurs because our intimate partner is different from everyone else: It is with him or her that we are most confiding, revealing, vulnerable, caring, and trusting. There is a sense of exclusiveness. To have sex outside the relationship violates that sense of exclusiveness because sex symbolizes “specialness.” Words such as *unfaithfulness*, *cheating*, and *infidelity* reflect the sense that an unspoken pledge has been broken. This pledge is the normative expectation that serious relationships, whether dating or marital, will be sexually exclusive (Lieberman 1988).

Jealousy represents a boundary marker. It points out what the boundaries are in a particular relationship. It determines how, to what extent, and in what manner others can interact with members of the relationship. It also shows the limits within which the members of the relationship can interact with those outside the relationship. Culture prescribes the general boundaries of what evokes jealousy, but individuals adjust them to the dynamics of their own relationships.

Boundaries may vary, depending on the type of relationship, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. Sexual exclusiveness is generally important in serious dating relationships and cohabitation; it is virtually mandatory in marriage (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983; Buunk and van Driel 1989; Hansen 1985; Lieberman 1988). Men are generally more restrictive toward their partners than women; heterosexuals are more restrictive than gay men and lesbians. Although we know little about jealousy and ethnicity, traditional Latinos and new Latino and Asian immigrants appear to be more restrictive than Anglos and African Americans (Mindel, Habenstein, and Wright 1988). Despite variations on where the boundary lines are drawn, jealousy guards those lines.

Although our culture sets down general marital boundaries, each couple evolves its own boundaries. For some, it is permissible to carve out an area of individual privacy. In some relationships, partners may have few or many friends of their own (of the same or other sex), activities, and interests apart from the couple. In others there are no separate spheres because

of jealousy or a lack of interest. But wherever a married couple draws its boundaries, each member understands where the line is drawn. The partners implicitly or explicitly know what behavior will evoke a jealous response (Bringle and Buunk 1991). For some, it is having lunch with a member of the other sex (or same sex, if they are gay or lesbian); for others, it is having dinner; for still others, it is having dinner and seeing a movie. It is often disingenuous for a married partner to say that he or she didn't know that a particular action (a flirtatious suggestion, a lingering touch, or dinner with someone else) would provoke a jealous response.

It's important to understand jealousy for several reasons. First, jealousy is a painful emotion filled with anger and hurt. Its churning can turn us inside out and make us feel out of control. If we can understand jealousy, especially when it is irrational, then we can eliminate some of its pain. Second, jealousy can help cement or destroy a relationship. It helps maintain a relationship by guarding its exclusiveness, but in its irrational or extreme forms, it can destroy a relationship by its insistent demands and attempts at control. We need to understand when and how jealousy is functional and when and how it is not. Third, jealousy is often linked to violence (Follingstad et al. 1990; Laner 1990; Riggs 1993). It is a factor in precipitating violence or emotional abuse in dating relationships among both high school and college students; among marital partners it is often used by abusive partners to justify their violence (Adams 1990). Rather than being directed at a rival, jealous aggression is often used against a partner (Paul and Galloway 1994).

The Transformation of Love: From Passion to Intimacy

Intense, passionate love does not last forever at the same high level. Instead, it fades or transforms itself into a more enduring love based on intimacy.

The Instability of Passionate Love

Ultimately, romantic love may be transformed or replaced by a quieter, more lasting love. Those in secure companionate love relationships, according to one study, experience the highest levels of satisfaction; they

are much more satisfied than those in traditional romantic relationships (Hecht, Marston, and Larkey 1994).

The Passage of Time: Changes in Intimacy, Passion, and Commitment

According to researcher Robert Sternberg (1988), time affects our levels of intimacy, passion, and commitment.

INTIMACY OVER TIME. When we first meet someone, intimacy increases rapidly as we make critical discoveries about each other, ranging from our innermost thoughts of life and death to our preference for strawberry or chocolate ice cream. As the relationship continues, the rate of growth decreases and then levels off. After the growth levels off, the partners may no longer consciously feel as close to each other. This may be because they are beginning to drift apart, or it may be because they are becoming intimate at a different, less conscious, deeper level. This kind of intimacy is not easily observed. It is a latent intimacy that nevertheless is forging stronger, more enduring bonds between the partners.

PASSION OVER TIME. Passion is subject to habituation. What was once thrilling—whether love, sex, or roller coasters—becomes less so the more we get used to it. Once we become habituated, more time with a person (or more sex or more roller-coaster rides) does not increase our arousal or satisfaction.

If the person leaves, however, we experience withdrawal symptoms (fatigue, depression, anxiety), just as if we were addicted. In becoming habituated, we have also become dependent. We fall beneath the emotional baseline we were at when we met our partner. Over time, however, we begin to return to that original level.

COMMITMENT OVER TIME. Unlike intimacy and passion, time does not necessarily diminish, erode, or alter commitments. Our commitment is most affected by how successful our relationship is. Even initially, commitment grows more slowly than intimacy or passion. As the relationship becomes long term, the growth of commitment levels off. Our commitment will remain high as long as we judge the relationship to be successful. If the relationship begins to deteriorate, after a time the commitment will probably decrease. Eventually, it may disappear and an alternative relationship may be sought.

Disappearance of Romance as Crisis

The disappearance (or transformation) of passionate love is often experienced as a crisis in a relationship. A study of college students (Berscheid 1983) found that half would seek divorce if passion disappeared from their marriage. But intensity of feeling does not necessarily measure depth of love. Intensity, like the excitement of toboggan runs, diminishes over time. It is then that we begin to discover if the love we experience for each other is one that will endure.

Our search for enduring love is complicated by our contradictory needs. Elaine Hatfield and William Walster (1981) offer this observation:

What we really want is the impossible—a perfect mixture of security and danger. We want someone who understands and cares for us, someone who will be around through thick and thin, until we are old. At the same time, we long for sexual excitement, novelty, and danger. The individual who offers just the right combination of both ultimately wins our love. The problem, of course, is that, in time, we get more and more security—and less and less excitement—than we bargained for.

The disappearance of passionate love, however, enables individuals to refocus their relationship. They are given the opportunity to move from an intense one-on-one togetherness that excludes others to a togetherness that includes family, friends, and external goals and projects. They can look outward on the world together.

The Reemergence of Romantic Love

Contrary to what pessimists believe, many people find that they can have both love and romance and that the rewards of intimacy include romance.

Romantic love may be highest during the early part of marriage and decline as stresses from childrearing and work intrude on the relationship. Most studies suggest that marital satisfaction proceeds along a U-shaped curve, with highest satisfaction in the early and late periods. Romantic love may be affected by the same stresses as general marital satisfaction. Romantic love begins to increase as children leave home. In later life, romantic love may play an important role in alleviating the stresses of retirement and illness.

New research on the differences in love attitudes across family life stages reveals some unexpected and

perhaps encouraging news for older romantics. Marilyn Montgomery and Gwendolyn Sorell (1997) write:

The love attitudes endorsed by the broad age-range sample contradicts notions that romantic, passionate love is the privilege of youth and young relationships, functioning to bring partners together. Instead, individuals throughout the life-stages of marriage consistently endorse the love attitudes involving passion, romance, friendship, and self-giving love, and these results indicate that any popularization of young single adulthood as the enviable passionate idea is erroneous.

So it is that, among those whose marriages survive, passion and romance do not necessarily decline over time.

Intimate Love: Commitment, Caring, and Self-Disclosure

Perhaps one of the most profound questions we can ask about love is how to make it stay. The key to mak-

ing love stay seems to be not in love's passionate intensity but in the transformation of that intensity into intimate love. Intimate love is based on commitment, caring, and self-disclosure.

Commitment

Commitment is an important component of intimate love because it is a "determination to continue" a relationship or marriage in the face of bad times, as well as good (Reiss 1980a). It is based on conscious choice rather than on feelings, which, by their very nature, are transitory. Commitment is a promise of a shared future, a promise to be together come what may.

Commitment has become an important concept in recent years. We seem to be as much in search of commitment as we are in search of love or marriage. We speak of "making a commitment" to someone or to a relationship. (Among singles, commitment is sometimes referred to as "the C-word.") A committed relationship has become almost a stage of courtship, somewhere between dating and being engaged or living together.

■ *Being physically limited does not inhibit love and sexuality any more than being able-bodied guarantees them.*



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Real Families

In Search of Real Love



What we expect and experience of love varies across the life span of a relationship. The romantic mystique that defines the early stages of committed relationships in our youth may be difficult to sustain across many years together. It also may become less definitive of the kind of lifelong relationship implied by "till death do us part." Consider the following story of love's "final days," poignantly told by journalist Mike Harden. It captures what is meant when we exchange our vows and promise to love each other forever.

In the End, Real Love Means in Sickness and in Health

When Frank Steger pushed himself into an upright position in the hospital bed, the heart monitor's fluid curvilinear line disintegrated into an erratic scribble.

"I told the doctor," he said, peeking at the edge of the curtain to make sure wife, Mary, was not within earshot, "that I felt like I was drowning. He said, 'This is how it happens with congestive heart disease.' I told him I'd rather he throw me off the roof instead."

Mary returned to the room, drawing a chair to his bedside.

"Thirsty," he complained.

She lifted the straw to his lips as he pulled the oxygen mask aside.

The medicine was making him sick. She fetched the basin, wrapped a firm arm around his spasm-wracked shoulders, mopped the sweat from his forehead.

In sickness and in health, I thought. They were supposed to be preparing for a Florida vacation, not holding on

to one another in the cardiac care unit at Mount Carmel East Hospital.

"Help me sit up," he whispered hoarsely.

In the end, love comes down to this; not Gable's devilish first appraisal of Leigh, not Lancaster and Kerr rolling in the surf. But, "Help me sit up."

A late December rain spattered against the pane. Christmas had come and gone in the half-darkened room, a blur of canned carols punctuated by beeps and buzzes, lit by the winking light on the intravenous monitor.

"Merry Christmas," the cardiologist hailed, parting the curtains.

Christmas had always been a festive time for them. Standing rib roast, all the trimmings. Lift the glasses to the new year. To your health and the health of all who sleep beneath your roof.

When breath came harder, he slept sitting up in the chair next to the bed. By then, the body had turned against itself, the mutinous kidneys loosing their slow poison on the weakened heart.

Mary paused in the waiting room to remove her street shoes and put on her slippers. She did not want to wake him now that sleep was such a rationed luxury. Soundlessly, she slipped into the chair next to his.

In the end, love is not the smoldering glance across the dance floor, the clink of crystal, a leisurely picnic spread upon summer's clover. It is the squeeze of a hand. I'm here. I'll be here, no matter how long the fight, even when what you want most is to close your eyes and be done with it all. Water? You need water? Here. Drink. Let me straighten your pillow.

"Help me into bed," he said, he who had once been warrior triumphant in the business world. He was tough, demanding, but never as much on others as himself. If you gave him your best, no one could

hurt you. If you gave him less, no one could hide you. He was never accused of being a yes man. She had been beside him when the future was golden, beside him when health sent his career into eclipse.

Mary. Faithful Mary.

"I'm thirsty," he said.

"Here," she said, "let me get you something."

Along the road they had once traveled so often to visit family, the hearse wound its way past stubbled fields, shuttered roadside markets. The minister, clutching his Bible against his chest as though it alone was sufficient cloak against the wind whipping across Pickaway County, passed final benediction:

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

He stopped to pick up his hat as the funeral director placed the folded flag in Mary's lap.

When all is said and done, love is not rapture and fire. It is a hand steadier than one's own squeezing harder than a heartbeat. Wine changes back to water. Roses no longer come with love messages, but best wishes for a quick recovery. Endearment is exhibited by what once might have been considered insignificant kindnesses, but which, in the end, become the tenderest of ministrations.

On the day after the funeral, trying to busy herself with chores that could easily wait, she plopped the laundry basket in front of her granddaughter. The child tugged out the end of the sheet her Frank had always held when they did the wash. When the child brought the folded end to meet the corners her grandmother held, she kissed her playfully, just as he had once done.

"I'm thirsty, Grandma."

"Here, let me get you something."

SOURCE: Reprinted with permission, from *The Columbus Dispatch*. Mike Harden, "In the End, Real Love Means in Sickness and in Health."

Caring

Caring is placing another's needs before your own. As such, caring requires treating your partner as valued for simply being himself or herself. It requires what the philosopher Martin Buber called an I–thou relationship. Buber described two fundamental ways of relating to people: I–thou and I–it. In an I–thou relationship, each person is treated as a thou—that is, as a person whose life is valued as an end in itself. In an I–it relationship, each person is treated as an It; a person has worth only as someone who can be used. When a person is treated as a thou, his or her humanity and uniqueness are paramount.

Self-Disclosure

When we self-disclose, we reveal ourselves—our hopes, our fears, our everyday thoughts—to others. Self-disclosure deepens others' understanding of us. It also deepens our own understanding, because we discover unknown aspects as we open ourselves to others. Without self-disclosure, we remain opaque and hidden. If others love us, such love leaves us with anxiety. Are we loved for ourselves or for the image we present to the world?

Together, commitment, caring, and self-disclosure help transform love. But in the final analysis, perhaps the most important means of sustaining love is our words and actions. Caring words and deeds provide the setting for maintaining and expanding love (Byrne and Murnen 1988).



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■ *As we age the dynamics that characterize our intimate relationships change even when the relationships themselves endure.*

Although we increasingly understand the dynamics and varied components of love, the experience of love itself remains ineffable, the subject of poetry rather than scholarship. A journal article is not a love poem, and romantics should not forget that love exists in the everyday world. Researchers have helped us increasingly understand love in the light of day—its nature, its development, its varied aspects—so that we may better be able to enjoy it in the moonlight.

Summary

- Love is of major significance in American society. Popular culture prominently features romantic love themes in songs, books, and films. Families are formed on the basis of love.
- Humans have a basic need for intimacy or closeness with others. Intimacy consists of affection, personal validation, trust, and self-disclosure.
- Intimate relationships such as love and friendship offer numerous emotional, psychological, and health benefits.
- We can see the differences between friendship and love by contrasting the qualities we seek in friends versus lovers.
- In the twentieth century, love became a more central theme in our search for a mate and our expectations for marriage.
- Americans have an ideology of romanticism, in which love is seen as blind, irrational, uncontrollable, and likely to strike at first sight. In addition, it is believed that there is a “one and only” for each of us.
- In more individualistic societies like the United States, a high value is placed on passionate love. In more collectivist societies, individual happiness is subordinate to the well-being of the group (including especially the family) and companionate

- love is more highly valued (and romantic love is devalued and frowned upon).
- Cultural expectations surrounding friendship and love in the United States define such intimacy in more feminine ways, involving heavy emphasis on self-disclosure.
 - There are consistent gender differences in experiences and expectations surrounding friendship, love, and intimacy.
 - Many factors help account for gender differences in styles of intimacy, including gender socialization, early childhood experiences of being mothered, the kinds of role models we have, and evolutionary influences on reproductive strategies.
 - Sexual intimacy is an expected part of romantic or passionate love relationships. We also display love through other forms of physical contact, some of which differ between interracial and intraracial couples.
 - Males and females do not attach the same meanings to how sexual expression fits within love relationships.
 - Heterosexuals, gay men, and lesbians all value meaningful loving relationships.
 - *Prototypes* of love and commitment are models of how people define these two ideas in everyday life. The central aspects of the love prototype include trust, caring, honesty, friendship, respect, and concern for the other; central aspects of the commitment prototype include loyalty, responsibility, living up to our word, faithfulness, and trust.
 - Of the many ways in which love has been studied and measured, four are more common. These are Hendrick and Hendrick's Love Attitude Scale, Hatfield and Sprecher's Passionate Love Scale, Rubin's Love Scale, and Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale.
 - Commitment is affected by the balance of costs to benefits, normative inputs, and structural constraints.
 - The *wheel theory of love* emphasizes the interdependence of four processes: (1) rapport, (2) self-revelation, (3) mutual dependency, and (4) fulfillment of intimacy needs.
 - According to John Lee, there are six basic styles of love: *eros*, *ludus*, *storge*, *mania*, *agape*, and *pragma*.
 - The *triangular theory of love* views love as consisting of three components: (1) intimacy, (2) passion, and (3) decision or commitment.
 - The *attachment theory of love* views love as being similar in nature to the attachments we form as infants. The attachment (love) styles of both infants and adults are secure, anxious or ambivalent, and avoidant.
 - *Unrequited love* is a common experience. Occasionally, unrequited love is expressed through obsessive relational intrusion, or *stalking*. Most stalkers are male and most victims are female.
 - *Jealousy* is an aversive response that occurs because of a partner's real, imagined, or likely involvement with a third person. Jealousy acts as a boundary marker for relationships.
 - Time affects romantic relationships. The rapid growth of intimacy tends to level off, and we become habituated to passion. Commitment tends to increase, provided that the relationship is judged to be rewarding.
 - Romantic love tends to diminish. It may either end or be replaced by intimate love. Many individuals experience the disappearance of romantic love as a crisis. Intimate love is based on commitment, caring, and self-disclosure.

Key Terms

agape 167	Hendrick and Hendrick's
attachment theory of	Loved Attitude
love 169	Scale 167
commitment 155	homogamy 154
companionate love 156	intimacy 151
companionate	jealousy 177
marriage 154	love-obsessional
conjugal family 155	stalking 177
co-rumination 157	ludus 167
deep friendship 161	mania 167
eros 167	mutual dependency 173
erotomania 177	passionate love 156
expressive versus	peer marriage 161
instrumental 155	pragma 167
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needs 173	reactive jealousy 178
Hatfield and Sprecher's	rejection
Passionate Love Scale 167	sensitivity 170

romanticism 156
Rubin's Love Scale 168
self-disclosure 151
self-revelation 172
simple obsessional
stalking 177
stalking 176

Sternberg's triangular
theory of love 168
storge 167
suspicious jealousy 178
unrequited love 175
wheel theory of love 172

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