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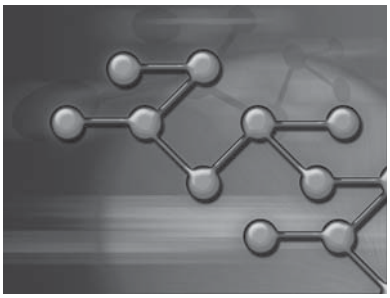
Interpersonal Attraction and Close Relationships

9

Intimate relationships cannot substitute for a life plan. But to have any meaning or viability at all, a life plan must include intimate relationships.

—Harriet Lerner



Both had been born in California and had lived in the San Francisco Bay area. Both eventually left the United States to live in Paris. The first visit between these two people, who would be lifelong friends and lovers, did not begin well. They had become acquainted the previous night at a Paris restaurant and had arranged an appointment for the next afternoon at Gertrude's apartment. Perhaps anxious about the meeting, Gertrude was in a rage when her guest arrived a half hour later than the appointed time. But soon she recovered her good humor, and the two went walking in the streets of Paris. They found that each loved walking, and they would share their thoughts and feelings on these strolls for the rest of their lives together.

On that first afternoon, they stopped for ices and cakes in a little shop that Gertrude knew well because it reminded her of San Francisco. The day went so well that Gertrude suggested dinner at her apartment the following evening. Thus began a relationship that would last for nearly 40 years.

The one was small and dark, the other large—over two hundred pounds—with short hair and a striking Roman face. Neither was physically attractive. Each loved art and literature and opera, for which they were in the right place. The Paris in which they met in the 1920s was the home to great painters (Picasso and Matisse) and enormously talented writers (Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald). Gertrude knew them all. They began to live together in Gertrude's apartment, for she was the one who had a steady supply of money. Gertrude, who had dropped out of medical school in her final year, had decided to write novels. Soon, they grew closer, their walks longer, and their talks more intimate. They traveled to Italy, and it was there, outside Florence, that Gertrude proposed marriage. Both knew the

Key Questions

As you read this chapter, find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is a close relationship?
2. What are the roots of interpersonal attraction and close relationships?
3. What are loneliness and social anxiety?
4. What are the components and dynamics of love?
5. How does attachment relate to interpersonal relationships?
6. How does interpersonal attraction develop?
7. What does evolutionary theory have to say about mate selection?
8. How can one attract a mate?
9. How do close relationships form and evolve?
10. How are relationships evaluated?

11. What is a communal relationship?

12. How do relationships change over time?

13. What are the strategies couples use in response to conflict in a relationship?

14. What are the four horsemen of the apocalypse?

15. What is the nature of friendships?

answer to the proposal, and they spent the night in a 6th-century palace. They shared each other's lives fully, enduring two wars together. In 1946, Gertrude, then 70, displayed the first signs of the tumor that would soon kill her. Gertrude handled this crisis in character, forcefully refusing any medical treatment. Not even her lifelong companion could convince her to do otherwise. When Gertrude eventually collapsed, she was rushed to a hospital in Paris. In her hospital room before the surgery, Gertrude grasped her companion's small hand and asked, "What is the answer?" Tears streamed down Alice Toklas's face, "I don't know, Lovey." The hospital attendants put Gertrude Stein on a cot and rolled her toward the operating room. Alice murmured words of affection. Gertrude commanded the attendants to stop, and she turned to Alice and said, "If you don't know the answer, then what is the question?" Gertrude settled back on the cot and chuckled softly. It was the last time they saw each other (Burnett, 1972; Simon, l977; Toklas, 1963).

We have briefly recounted what was perhaps the most famous literary friendship of the last century, the relationship between Gertrude Stein and Alice B.Toklas. Stein and Toklas were not officially married. They did not flaunt their sexual relationship, for the times in which they lived were not particularly accommodating to what Stein called their "singular" preferences. Yet their partnership involved all the essential elements of a close relationship: intimacy, friendship, love, and sharing. Philosophers have commented that a friend multiplies one's joys and divides one's sorrows. This, too, was characteristic of their relationship.

In this chapter, we explore the nature of close relationships. The empirical study of close relationships is relatively new. Indeed, when one well-known researcher received a grant some years ago from a prestigious government funding agency to study love in a scientific manner, a gadfly senator held the researcher and the topic up to ridicule, suggesting that we know all we need to know about the topic.

Perhaps so, but in this chapter we ask a number of questions that most of us, at least, do not have the answers for. What draws two people together into a close relationship, whether a friendship or a more intimate love relationship? What influences attractiveness and attraction? How do close relationships develop and evolve, and how do they stand up to conflict and destructive impulses? What are the components of love relationships? And finally, what are friendships, and how do they differ from love? These are some of the questions addressed in this chapter.

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The Roots of Interpersonal Attraction and Close Relationships

It is a basic human characteristic to be attracted to others, to desire to build close relationships with friends and lovers. In this section, we explore two needs that underlie attraction and relationships: affiliation and intimacy. Not everyone has the social skills or resources necessary to initiate and maintain close relationships. Therefore, we also look at the emotions of social anxiety and loneliness.

Affiliation and Intimacy

Although each of us can endure and even value periods of solitude, for most of us extended solitude is aversive. After a time, we begin to crave the company of others. People have a **need for affiliation**, a need to establish and maintain relationships with others (Wong & Csikzentmihalyi, 1991). Contact with friends and acquaintances provides us with emotional support, attention, and the opportunity to evaluate the appropriateness of our opinions and behavior through the process of social comparison. The need for affiliation is the fundamental factor underlying our interpersonal relationships.

need for affiliation
A motivation that underlies our desire to establish and maintain rewarding interpersonal relationships.

People who are high in the need for affiliation wish to be with friends and others more than do people who are low in the need for affiliation, and they tend to act accordingly. For example, in one study, college men who had a high need for affiliation picked living situations that increased the chances for social interaction. They were likely to have more housemates or to be more willing to share a room than were men with a lower need for affiliation (Switzer & Taylor, 1983). Men and women show some differences in the need for affiliation. Teenage girls, for example, spend more time with friends and less often wish to be alone than do teenage boys (Wong & Csikzentmihalyi, 1991). This is in keeping with other findings that women show a higher need for affiliation than do men.

But merely being with others is often not enough to satisfy our social needs. We also have a **need for intimacy**, a need for close and affectionate relationships (McAdams, 1982, 1989). Intimacy with friends or lovers involves sharing and disclosing personal information. Individuals with a high need for intimacy tend to be warm and affectionate and to show concern about other people. Most theorists agree that intimacy is an essential component of many different interpersonal relationships (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998).

need for intimacy
A motivation for close and affectionate relationships.

Intimacy has several dimensions, according to Baumeister and Bratslavsky (1999). One is mutual disclosure that is sympathetic and understanding. Intimate disclosure involves verbal communication but also refers to shared experiences. Another dimension of intimacy includes having a favorable attitude toward the other person that is expressed in warm feelings and positive acts such that the person is aware of how much the other cares.

The need for affiliation and intimacy gives us positive social motivation to approach other people. They are the roots of interpersonal attraction, which is defined as the desire to start and maintain relationships with others. But there are also emotions that may stand in the way of our fulfilling affiliation and intimacy needs and forming relationships. We look at these emotions next.

Loneliness and Social Anxiety

Loneliness and social anxiety are two related conditions that have implications for one's social relationships. Whereas the needs for affiliation and intimacy are positive motives that foster interpersonal relationships, loneliness and social anxiety can be seen as negative motivational states that interfere with the formation of meaningful relationships. In this section we shall explore loneliness and social anxiety.

Loneliness

loneliness A psychological state that results when we perceive that there is an inadequacy or a deprivation in our social relationships.

Loneliness is a psychological state that results when we perceive an inadequacy in our relationships—a discrepancy between the way we want our relationships to be and the way they actually are (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). When we are lonely, we lack the high-quality intimate relationships that we need. Loneliness may occur within the framework of a relationship. For example, women often expect more intimacy than they experience in marriage, and that lack of intimacy can be a cause of loneliness (Tornstam, 1992).

Loneliness is common during adolescence and young adulthood, times of life when old friendships fade and new ones must be formed. For example, consider an 18-year-old going off to college. As she watches her parents drive away, she is likely to feel, along with considerable excitement, a sense of loneliness or even abandonment. New college students often believe that they will not be able to form friendships and that no one at school cares about them. The friendships they make don't seem as intimate as their high school friendships were. These students often don't realize that everybody else is pretty much in the same boat emotionally, and loneliness is often a significant factor when a student drops out of school.

Loneliness is a subjective experience and is not dependent on the number of people we have surrounding us (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). We can be alone and yet not be lonely; sometimes we want and need solitude. On the other hand, we can be surrounded by people and feel desperately lonely. Our feelings of loneliness are strongly influenced by how we evaluate our personal relationships (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). We need close relationships with a few people to buffer ourselves against feeling lonely.

Culture is also related to perception of loneliness. There is evidence that loneliness is a cross-cultural phenomenon (DiTommaso, Brannen, & Burgess, 2005). However, the way loneliness is experienced differs across cultures. For example, DiTommaso et al. found that Chinese students living in Canada reported higher levels of three types of loneliness than did Canadians. Additionally, Rokach and Neto (2005) compared Canadian and Portuguese individuals of varying ages on several dimensions relating to loneliness. They found that Canadians were more likely to point to their own shortcomings to explain their loneliness than were Portuguese individuals. Rokach and Neto suggest that this might be due to a greater disposition of North Americans to view loneliness as a form of social failure and to different family values and structures between the two cultures.

As suggested earlier, loneliness can be associated with certain relationships or certain times of life. There are, however, individuals for whom loneliness is a lifelong experience. Such individuals have difficulty in forming relationships with others, and consequently, they go through life with few or no close relationships. What is the source of their difficulty? The problem for at least some of these people may be that they lack the basic social skills needed to form and maintain relationships. Experiences of awkward social interactions intensify these individuals' uneasiness in social settings. Lacking confidence, they become increasingly anxious about their interactions with others. Often, because of their strained social interactions, lonely people may be further excluded from social interaction, thereby increasing feelings of depression and social anxiety (Leary & Kowalski, 1995).

Beyond the psychological effects of loneliness, there are also physical and health effects. Hawkley, Burleson, Berntson, and Cacciopo (2003) report that lonely individuals are more like to show elevated total peripheral resistance (a suspected precursor to hypertension) and lower cardiac output than nonlonely individuals. Loneliness is also associated with a higher risk for a heart condition in the elderly (Sorkin, Rook, & Lu, 2002). Loneliness and social isolation are also associated with higher levels of depression in older males (Alpass & Neville, 2003) and among male and female college students (Segrin, Powell, Givertz, & Brackin, 2003). In the Segrin et al. study, the relationship between loneliness and depression was related to relationship satisfaction. Individuals who are dissatisfied with their relationships tend to be lonely and, in turn, are more likely to experience depression. Finally, lonely individuals get poorer-quality sleep (i.e., awaken more after falling asleep and show poor sleep efficiency) compared to nonlonely individuals (Cacioppo et al., 2002). This latter finding suggests that lonely people may be less resilient and more prone to physical problems (Cacioppo et al., 2002).

Social Anxiety

Social anxiety is one of the most widely diagnosed anxiety disorders. Social anxiety (sometimes referred to as social phobia) arises from a person's expectation of negative encounters with others (Leary, 1983a, 1983b). Socially anxious people anticipate negative interactions and think that other people will not like them very much. These negative expectations then translate into anxiety in a social situation, using "safety behaviors" (e.g., avoiding eye contact and closely monitoring one's behavior) and underestimating the quality of the impressions made on others (Hirsch, Meynen, & Clark, 2004). Socially anxious individuals tend to see ambiguous social situations more negatively than individuals without social anxiety (Huppert, Foa, Furr, Filip, & Matthews, 2003). Additionally, socially anxious individuals tend to dwell on negative aspects of social interactions more than individuals who are low in social anxiety and also recall more negative information about the social interaction (Edwards, Rapee, & Franklin, 2003). According to Edwards et al., this pattern of findings is consistent with the idea that socially anxious individuals perform a negatively biased "postmortem" of social events.

social anxiety Anxiety tied to interpersonal relationships that occurs because of an individual's anticipation of negative encounters with others.

There is a cluster of characteristics that define those with social anxiety. People who suffer from social anxiety tend to display some of the following interrelated traits (Nichols, 1974):

- A sensitivity and fearfulness of disapproval and criticism.
- A strong tendency to perceive and respond to criticism that does not exist.
- Low self-evaluation.
- Rigid ideas about what constitutes "appropriate" social behavior.
- A tendency to foresee negative outcomes to anticipated social interactions, which arouses anxiety.
- An increased awareness and fear of being evaluated by others.
- Fear of situations in which withdrawal would be difficult or embarrassing.
- The tendency to overestimate one's reaction to social situations (e.g., believing that you are blushing when you are not).
- An inordinate fear of the anxiety itself.
- A fear of being perceived as losing control.

Interestingly, many of these perceptions and fears are either wrong or unfounded. The research of Christensen and Kashy (1998) shows that lonely people view their own behavior more negatively than do other people. Other research shows that socially anxious individuals tend to process disturbing social events negatively immediately after they occur and a day after the event (Lundh & Sperling, 2002).

Of course, real events and real hurts may be the source of much of our social anxieties. Leary and his colleagues examined the effects of having our feelings hurt in a variety of ways, ranging from sexual infidelity, to unreturned phone calls, to being teased (Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998). The basic cause of the hurt feelings and consequent anxiety is what Leary calls *relational devaluation,* the perception that the other person does not regard the relationship as being as important as you do. Perhaps the major source of social anxiety is the feeling that you are being excluded from valued social relations (Baumeister & Tice, 1990). Having one's feelings hurt, however, leads to more than anxiety. People experience a complex sense of being distressed, upset, angry, guilty, and wounded. Leary and colleagues (1998) examined the stories written by people who had been emotionally hurt. They found that unlike the old saying about "sticks and stones," words or even gestures or looks elicit hurt feelings, last for a long time, and do not heal as readily as broken bones. Teasing is one example of what appeared to be an innocent event—at least from the teaser's point of view—that in reality imprints long-lasting hurt feelings for many victims. The males and females in the study did not differ much in their reactions to hurt feelings or to teasing.

The people who do these nasty deeds do not realize the depth of the damage that they cause, nor do they realize how much the victims come to dislike them. Perpetrators often say that they meant no harm. No harm, indeed.

Love and Close Relationships

Psychologists and other behavioral scientists long thought that love was simply too mysterious a topic to study scientifically (Thompson & Borrello, 1992). However, psychologists have become more adventuresome, and love has become a topic of increasing interest (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1987). This is only right, because love is among the most intense of human emotions.

Love's Triangle

triangular theory of love
A theory suggesting that love is comprised of three components—passion, intimacy, and commitment—each of which is conceptualized as a leg of a triangle that can vary.

Robert Sternberg (1986, 1988) proposed a **triangular theory of love**, based on the idea that love has three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment. As shown in Figure 9.1, the theory represents love as a triangle, with each component defining a vertex.

Passion is the emotional component of love. The "aching" in the pit of your stomach when you think about your love partner is a manifestation of this component. Passion is "a state of intense longing for union with the other" (Hatfield & Walster, 1981, p. 13). Passion tends to be strongest in the early stages of a romantic relationship. It is sexual desire that initially drives the relationship. Defining passion simply as sexual desire does not do justice to this complicated emotion. It is not improbable that people may love passionately without sexual contact or in the absence of the ability to have sexual contact. However, as a rough measure, sexual desire serves to define passion (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999).

Intimacy is the component that includes self-disclosure—the sharing of our innermost thoughts—as well as shared activities. Intimate couples look out for each other's

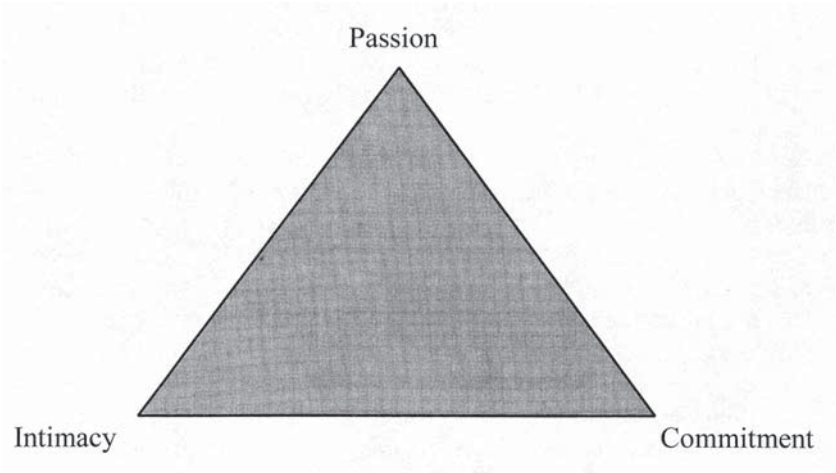


Figure 9.1 Robert Sternberg's triangular theory of love. Each leg of the triangle represents one of the three components of love: passion, intimacy, and commitment.
From Sternberg (1986).

welfare, experience happiness by being in each other's company, are able to count on each other when times are tough, and give each other emotional support and understanding (Sternberg & Gracek, 1984).

The third vertex of the triangle, *commitment,* is the long-term determination to maintain love over time. It is different from the decision people make, often in the heat of passion, that they are in love. Commitment does not necessarily go along with a couple's decision that they are in love. Sternberg defined various kinds of love, based on the presence or absence of intimacy, passion, and commitment. Table 9.1 shows each of these kinds of love and the component or components with which it is associated.

According to Sternberg (1986), the components of love need not occur in a fixed order. There is a tendency for passion to dominate at the start, for intimacy to follow as a result of self-disclosure prompted by passion, and for commitment to take the longest to fully develop. However, in an arranged marriage, for example, commitment occurs before intimacy, and passion may be the laggard.

Table 9.1 Triangular Theory and Different Love Types

Kind of Love	Love Component		
	Intimacy	Passion	Commitment
Non-love	No	No	No
Liking	Yes	No	No
Infatuated love	No	Yes	No
Empty love	No	No	Yes
Romantic love	Yes	Yes	No
Companionate love	Yes	No	Yes
Fatuous love	No	Yes	Yes
Consummate love	Yes	Yes	Yes

Baumeister and Bratslavsky (1999) studied the relationship between passion and intimacy and suggested that one may be a function of the other. These scholars argued that rising intimacy at any point in the relationship will create a strong sense of passion. If intimacy is stable, and that means it may be high or low, then passion will be low. But when intimacy rises, so does passion. Passion, then, is a function of change in intimacy over time (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999). Research generally shows that passion declines steadily in long-term relationships, particularly among women, but intimacy does not and may increase in the late stages of the relationship (Acker & Davis, 1992). Positive changes in the amount of intimacy—self-disclosures, shared experiences—lead to increases in passion at any stage of a relationship.

Types of Love

romantic love Love involving strong emotion and having the components of passion and intimacy but not commitment.

What, then, are Sternberg's types of love? Probably the most fascinating is **romantic love**, which involves passion and intimacy but not commitment. Romantic love is reflected in that electrifying yet conditional statement, "I am in love with you." Compare this with the expression reflecting consummate love, "I love you." Romantic love can be found around the world and throughout history. It is most likely to be first experienced by members of diverse ethnic groups in late adolescence or early adulthood (Regan, Durvasula, Howell, Ureno, & Rea, 2004). Additionally, concepts of romantic love are almost universally positive with characteristics such as trust and fulfilling emotional needs. One of the only negative characteristics that emerged as a "peripheral characteristic" was jealousy (Regan, Kocan, & Whitlock, 1998).

Romantic love doesn't necessarily mean marriage, however, for two main reasons. First, whereas marriage is almost universally heterosexual, romantic love need not be. Second, it is still an alien idea in most cultures that romance has anything to do with the choice of a spouse. Even in our own culture, the appeal of marrying for love seems to have increased among women in recent years, perhaps because women's roles have changed, and they no longer have so great a need to find a "good provider" (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989).

The importance of passion in romantic love is clear. Romantic lovers live in a pool of emotions, both positive and negative—sexual desire, fear, exultation, anger—all experienced in a state of high arousal. Intense sexual desire and physical arousal are the prime forces driving romantic love (Berscheid, 1988). A recent study confirms the physical arousal aspect of romantic love (Enzo et al., 2006). In this study individuals who had recently fallen in love were compared to single individuals and individuals in a long-term relationship. Enzo et al. found that the "in–love" participants showed higher levels of nerve growth factor (NGF) in their blood than single individuals or those involved in a long-term relationship. Interestingly, those "in-love" couples showed a drop in NGF if they remained together for 12 to 14 months. In fact, their blood levels of NGF were comparable to those who were in long-term relationships—perhaps providing evidence for the old adage that romance (passion) burns hot, but burns fast.

As noted, romantic love and sexual desire are likely to be seen as going together and being inseparable. This may be true in some cases. However, there is evidence that romantic love and sexual desire are two separate entities that can be experienced separately (Diamond, 2004). It is possible to experience the passion of romantic love without experiencing sexual desire. There may even be different physiological underpinnings to the two experiences (Diamond, 2004). For example, hormones associated with strong sexual desire have nothing to do with the intense bond experienced in romantic love (Diamond, 2003). Physiological mechanisms underlying the formation

of strong attachments are more closely associated with activity involving naturally occurring opioids in the brain (Diamond, 2004).

Tennov (1979) distinguished a particular type of romantic love, which she called limerence and characterized as occurring when "you suddenly feel a sparkle (a lovely word) of interest in someone else, an interest fed by the image of returned feeling" (p. 27). Limerence is not driven solely or even primarily by sexual desire. It occurs when a person anxious for intimacy finds someone who seems able to fulfill all of his or her needs and desires. For limerent lovers, all the happiness one could ever hope for is embodied in the loved one. Indeed, one emotional consequence of limerent love is a terror that all hope will be lost if the lover leaves us (Brehm, 1988).

consummate love Love that includes all three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment.

Consummate love combines all three vertices of love's triangle: passion, intimacy, and commitment. These couples have it all; they are able to maintain their passion and intimacy along with a commitment to a lifetime together.

Although we may fantasize about romantic love and view consummate love as a long-term ideal, other types of love can also bring happiness. Many couples are perfectly happy with companionate love, which has little or no passion but is infused with intimacy and commitment. Such partners are "friends for life" and generally have great trust in and tolerance for each other. Although they may regret the lack of passion, they are pragmatic and are able to live happily within the rules or limits of the relationship (Duck, 1983).

Unrequited Love

unrequited love Love expressed by one person that is rejected and not returned by the other.

A special and very painful kind of infatuated love is love that is unfulfilled. **Unrequited love** occurs when we fall deeply and passionately in love and that love is rejected. Almost all of us have had some experience with unrequited love. In one study, 98% of the subjects had been rejected by someone they loved intensely (Baumeister, Wotman, & Stillwell, 1993).

What makes unrequited love so painful is that both individuals feel victimized (Aron, Aron, & Allen, 1998). Very often, unrequited love ostensibly starts as a platonic friendship, but then one of the individuals admits that it was never just friendship, that he or she was always secretly in love with the other (Baumeister et al., 1993). In many cases, the object of the unrequited love is often unable to express lack of interest in terms that are sufficiently discouraging. The unrequited lover takes anything as encouragement, sustains hope, and then finds the final rejection devastating. The object of unwanted love, after the initial boost to the ego, feels bewildered, guilty, and angry.

In a typical case of spurned love, a college woman took pity on a young man whom no one liked, and one night invited him to join her and some friends in a game of Parcheesi. He thought the invitation signaled something more than she intended. Much to her horror, he began to follow her around and told her how much he loved her. She wanted this to stop, but she was unable to tell him how upset she was, because she was afraid of hurting his feelings. He interpreted her silence as encouragement and persisted (Baumeister et al., 1993).

Men are more likely than women to experience unrequited love (Aron et al., 1998). This is because men are more beguiled by physical attractiveness than are women. Men tend to fall in love with someone more desirable than they are. Interestingly, people report that they have been the object of unrequited love twice as many times as they have been rejected by another. We prefer to believe that we have been loved in vain rather than having loved in vain.

Unrequited love is viewed differently depending on one's perspective: pursuer or pursued. In one study those being pursued reported being the recipients of more unwanted courtship tactics, both violent and nonviolent, than they say they used as

a pursuer (Sinclair & Frieze, 2005). Some interesting gender differences emerged in this study. For example, men tended to overestimate the extent to which their romantic advances were reciprocated. Women, on the other hand, were more likely than men to report multiple attempts to clearly reject unwanted advances.

Secret Love

If unrequited love is the most painful kind of love, then secret love may be the most exciting. In this form of love, individuals have strong passion for one another, but cannot or will not make those feelings publicly known. Secrecy seems to increase the attraction of a relationship. Researchers have found that people continued to think more about past relationships that had been secret than about those that had been open (Wegner, Lane, & Dimitri, 1994). In fact, many individuals were still very much preoccupied with long-past secret relationships. In a study of secrecy and attraction, subjects paired as couples were induced to play "footsie" under the table while they were involved in a card game with another couple (Wegner et al., 1994). The researchers found that when the under-the-table game was played in secret, participants reported greater attraction for the other person than when it was not played in secret.

Why does secrecy create this strong attraction? Perhaps it is because individuals involved in a secret relationship think constantly and obsessively about each other. After all, they have to expend a lot of energy in maintaining the relationship. They have to figure out how to meet, how to call each other so that others won't know, and how to act neutrally in public to disguise their true relationship. Secrecy creates strong bonds between individuals; it can also be the downfall of ongoing relationships. The sudden revelation of a secret infidelity will often crush an ongoing relationship and further enhance the secret one (Wegner et al., 1994).

The Formation of Intimate Relationships

The habits of the heart may be shaped by our earliest relationships. Developmental psychologists have noted that infants form attachments with their parents or primary caregivers based on the kinds of interactions they have (Ainsworth, 1992). These patterns of attachment, or attachment styles, evolve into **working models**, mental representations of what the individual expects to happen in close relationships (Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988). Working models are carried forth from relationship to relationship (Brumbaugh & Fraley, 2006). So, attachment patterns we use in one relationship are likely to be transferred to subsequent relationships. Attachment theory suggests that attachment styles developed in early childhood govern the way individuals form and maintain close relationships in adulthood. Three attachment styles have been identified: secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant. Statements describing each style are shown in Table 9.2.

working model Mental representations of what an individual expects to happen in close relationships.

Attachment styles relate to how relationships are perceived and how successful they are. According to research, people who identified their attachment style as secure characterized their lovers as happy, friendly, and trusting and said that they and their partner were tolerant of each other's faults (Shaver et al., 1988). Avoidant lovers were afraid of intimacy, experienced roller-coaster emotional swings, and were constantly jealous. Anxious/ambivalent lovers experienced extreme sexual attraction coupled with extreme jealousy. Love is very intense for anxious lovers, because they strive to merge totally with their mate; anything less increases their anxiety. This experience of love for anxious lovers is a strong desire for union and a powerful intensity of sexual attraction

Table 9.2 Attachment Styles

	Answers and Percentages	
	Newspaper Sample	**University Sample**
Secure		
I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.	56%	56%
Avoidant		
I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable about.	25%	23%
Anxious/Ambivalent		
I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.	19%	20%

From Shaver, Hazan, and Bradshaw (1988).

and jealousy. It is no accident that anxious lovers, more than any other style, report love at first sight (Shaver et al., 1988). Interestingly, the relationship between attachment style and relationship quality found with white samples applies to Spanish individuals as well (Monetoliva & Garcia-Martinez, 2005). In this study, a secure attachment was associated with positive relationship experiences. Anxious and avoidant attachments were associated with more negative relationship outcomes.

Given the working model of a partner and the expectations that anxious lovers have, it will not come as a surprise to you that individuals with this style tend to have rather turbulent relationships (Simpson, Ickes, & Grich, 1999). Research shows that anxious/ambivalents have relationships that are filled with strong conflicts. One reason for this, apparently, is that anxious/ambivalent individuals have *empathic accuracy,* the ability to correctly infer their partner's thoughts and feelings. Because of this ability, they are more threatened than are other individuals and feel much more anxious (Simpson et al., 1999). This is a case of knowing too much or, at least, placing too much emphasis on their partners' present moods and feelings that may or may not tell where the relationship is going. As you might imagine, Simpson and colleagues found that of all the couples they studied, the highly anxious/ambivalent partners were much more likely to have broken up within months. Finally, males and females with an anxious attachment react to hypothetical transgressions of their partners quite negatively. Typical responses included high levels of emotional stress, attribution patterns that are damaging to the relationship, and behaviors that escalate conflict (Collins, Ford, Guichard, & Allard, 2006).

Attachment Styles and Adult Love Relationships

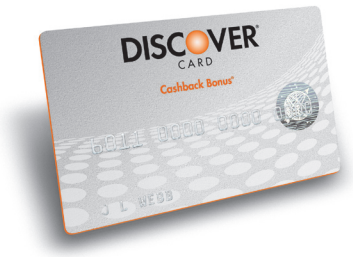
Fraley and Shaver (1998) showed that the ways in which we respond to our earliest caregivers may indeed last a lifetime and are used when we enter adult romantic relationships. Where better to observe how adult individuals respond to the potential loss of attachment than at an airport? The researchers had observers take careful notes on the behavior of couples when one of the members was departing. After the departure, the remaining member of the couple was asked to complete a questionnaire determining his or her attachment style.

Those with an anxious working model showed the greatest distress at the impending separation and tended to engage in actions designed to delay or stop the departure, although in reality that was not going to happen. The anxious individuals would hold on to, follow, and search for their partner, not unlike a child would for a parent under similar circumstances. So attachment styles tend to be engaged particularly when there is threat (departure in this case) to the relationship. The effects seemed stronger for women than for men (Fraley & Shaver, 1998).

It is quite likely that the behavior of those airport visitors with an anxious working model was determined in great part by the level of trust they had in their partners. Mikulincer (1998) examined the association between adult attachment style and feelings of trust in close relationships. The results of this research suggest that those with a secure working model showed and felt more trust in their partners, and even when trust was violated, secure individuals found a constructive way to deal with it. For secure individuals, the main goal of the relationship was to maintain or increase intimacy.

In contrast, anxious working model individuals, although also desiring greater intimacy, were very concerned with achieving a greater sense of security in their relationships. Avoidant individuals wanted more control. But clearly, level of trust differs significantly among the three types of attachment styles. Anxious-style individuals continually have their sense of trust undermined, because they tend to fail at relationships. Sometimes, these individuals try to start relationships that are bound to fail. As you might suspect, the likelihood of someone falling in love with another who does not love them in return is dependent on one's attachment style. Arthur and Elaine Aron found that individuals with an anxious attachment style were more likely to have experienced unreciprocated love (Aron et al., 1998). Secure individuals had been successful in the past in establishing relationships, and avoidants were unlikely to fall in love at all. Anxious individuals place great value in establishing a relationship with someone who is very desirable but are unlikely to be able to do so. They tend to fail at close relationships and, therefore, they should experience more incidents of unrequited love; indeed, that is exactly what the research findings show (Aron et al., 1998).

Are attachment styles a factor in long-term relationships? A study of 322 young married couples, all under age 30, found a tendency for those with similar attachment styles to marry one another (Senchak & Leonard, 1992). Attachment style is not destiny, however, as shown by the observation that people may display different attachment styles in different relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). None of these findings, however, come from long-term studies on the effects of attachment styles beyond childhood. Longitudinal research that follows individuals from infancy at least until early adulthood would give us more definitive information about whether early attachment styles really influence the way we respond in adult love relationships.



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Determinants of Interpersonal Attraction

What determines why we are attracted to some individuals but not others? Social psychologists have developed a number of models addressing this question. Some specific factors identified by these models that play a role in attraction are physical proximity, similarity, and physical attractiveness.

Physical Proximity: Being in the Right Place

How did you and your best friend first meet? Most likely, you met because you happened to be physically close to each other at some point in your life. For example, you might have been neighbors or sat next to each other in elementary school. Physical proximity, or physical immediacy, is an important determinant of attraction, especially at the beginning of a relationship.

physical proximity effect The fact that we are more likely to form a relationship with someone who is physically close to us; proximity affects interpersonal attraction, mostly at the beginning of a relationship.

The importance of the **physical proximity effect** in the formation of friendships was shown in a study of the friendship patterns that developed among students living in on-campus residences for married students (Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1959). As the distance between units increased, the number of friendships decreased. Students living close to one another were more likely to become friends than were those living far apart.

Physical proximity is such a powerful determinant of attraction that it may even overshadow other, seemingly more important, factors. One study looked at friendship choices among police recruits in a police academy class (Segal, 1974). Recruits were assigned to seats alphabetically, and the single best predictor of interpersonal attraction turned out to be the letter with which a person's last name began. Simply put, those whose names were close in the alphabet and were thus seated near each other were more likely to become friends than those whose names were not close in the alphabet and were thus seated apart. The proximity effect proved more important than such variables as common interests and religion.

Why is proximity so important at the beginning stages of a friendship? The answer seems to have two parts: familiarity and the opportunity for interaction. To understand the role of familiarity, think about this common experience. You buy a new compact disc, but when you first listen to it, you don't like it very much. However, after repeated exposure, it "grows on you." That is, exposure to the new music seems to increase your appreciation of it. A similar effect occurs with people we encounter. These are examples of the *mere exposure effect,* in which repeated exposure to a neutral stimulus enhances one's positive feeling toward that stimulus. Since it was first identified in 1968 by Robert Zajonc, there have been over 200 studies of the mere exposure effect (Bornstein, 1989). These studies used a wide range of stimuli, and in virtually every instance, repeated exposure to a stimulus produced liking.

Physical proximity, in addition to exposing us to other people, also increases the chances that we will interact with them. That is, proximity also promotes liking, because it gives us an opportunity to find out about each other. Physical proximity and the nature of the interaction combine to determine liking (Schiffenbauer & Schavio, 1976). If we discover that the other person has similar interests and attitudes, we are encouraged to pursue the interaction.

Physical Proximity and Internet Relationships

Traditional social psychological research on the proximity effect has focused on the role of *physical closeness* in interpersonal attraction and relationship formation. However, with the widespread use of the Internet as a communication tool, the old rules concern-

ing physical proximity need to be reevaluated. The Internet allows for the formation of relationships over great distances. One need no longer be in the same class, work at the same place, or live on the same block with another person to form a relationship. The Internet effectively reduces the *psychological distance* between people, even when the physical distance between them is great.

There is evidence that people are using the Internet to form relationships. For example, in one study 88.3% of male and 69.3% of female research participants reported using the Internet to form "casual or friendly" relationships with others. The study also found that 11.8% of men and 30.8% of women used the Internet to form intimate relationships (McCown, Fischer, Page, & Homant, 2001). In another study, 40% of college students reported using the Internet to form friendships. One of the main reasons for using the Internet in this capacity was to avoid the anxiety normally associated with meeting people and forming friendships. Finally, there was no gender difference in how the Internet was used to form relationships (Knox, Daniels, Sturdivant, & Zusman, 2001).

How do relationships formed via the Internet stack up against relationships formed the old-fashioned way? Apparently, they stack up quite well. McKenna, Green, and Gleason (2002) found that relationships formed on the Internet were important in the lives of those who formed them. This parallels what we know about relationships formed in a face-to-face situation. Further, they found that online relationships became integrated into the participants' lives, just as face-to-face relationships do. The Internet relationships formed were stable and tended to last over a 2-year period. Once again, this parallels more traditional relationships. Finally, McKenna et al. found that women found their relationships to be more intimate than men.

There are some differences between Internet relationships and off line relationships. Chan and Cheng (2004), using a sample of participants from Hong Kong, had participants describe the quality of one Internet relationship and one traditional, off line relationship. Their results showed that off line relationship descriptions tended to show that these relationships were more interdependent, involved more commitment, and had greater breadth and depth than Internet relationships. However, both types of relationships tended to improve over time and fewer differences between the two types of friendships were noted as the relationship matured.

So, it seems clear that the Internet is serving as a medium for the formation of meaningful interpersonal relationships. Is there any downside to this method of relationship formation? The answer is yes. One other finding reported by McKenna et al. (2002) was that individuals who felt that the "real me" was represented on the Internet were most likely to form Internet relationships. These individuals also tend to be socially anxious and lonely. It is these anxious and lonely individuals who are most likely to turn to the Internet as a way to form relationships that they find threatening off line.

So, is lonely people's use of the Internet to form relationships a bad thing? It depends on what one means by loneliness. Weiss (1973) suggested that there are actually two types of loneliness. *Social loneliness* consists of the negative affect associated with not having friends and meaningful relationships. *Emotional loneliness* refers to an empty feeling tied to the lack of intimate relationships (Moody, 2001). A study conducted by Moody (2001) evaluated how face-to-face and Internet relationships related to these two forms of loneliness. Moody found that face-to-face relationships were associated with low levels of both social and emotional loneliness. However, Internet relationships were associated with lower levels of social loneliness, but higher levels of emotional loneliness. In Moody's words: "the Internet can decrease social well-being, even though it is often used as a communication tool" (p. 393). So, while Internet relationships can

fulfill one's need for social contact, they may still leave a sense of emotional emptiness. Additionally, shyness has also been found to correlate with a condition called Internet addiction. The shyer the person, the more likely he or she is to become addicted to the Internet (Chak & Leung, 2004). Shyness is related to loneliness, with shy individuals being more likely to also be lonely (Jackson, Fritch, Nagasaka, & Gunderson, 2002). So, even though the Internet can help shy, lonely people establish relationships, it comes with an emotional and behavioral cost.

Similarity

The importance of the similarity effect as a determinant of interpersonal attraction is suggested by all three models we looked at. Similarity in attitudes, beliefs, interests, personality, and even physical appearance strongly influence the likelihood of interpersonal attraction. An interesting study conducted by Byrne, Ervin, and Lamberth (2004) demonstrated the effects of similarity and physical attractiveness on attraction. This study used a computer dating situation in which participants were given a 50-item questionnaire assessing personality characteristics and attitudes. Students were then paired. Some students were paired with a similar other and others with a dissimilar other. The pairs were then sent on a 30-minute date, after which they reported back to the experimenter to have their date assessed. Byrne et al. found that similarity and physical attractiveness, as expected, positively related to interpersonal attraction. So, there may be some validity to the claims of eHarmony.com, a company that purports to match people on a number of important dimensions, leading to successful relationships being formed!

Clearly, there are many possible points of similarity between people. Attitude similarity, for example, might mean that two people are both Democrats, are both Catholics, and in addition to their political and religious beliefs, have like views on a wide range of other issues. However, it is not the absolute number of similar attitudes between individuals that influences the likelihood and strength of attraction. Far more critical are the proportion and importance of similar attitudes. It does little good if someone agrees with you on everything except for the one attitude that is central to your life (Byrne & Nelson, 1965).

What about the notion that in romantic relationships, opposites attract? This idea is essentially what Newcomb called *complementarity.* Researchers have found little evidence for complementarity (Duck, 1988). Instead, a **matching principle** seems to apply in romantic relationships. People tend to become involved with a partner with whom they are usually closely matched in terms of physical attributes or social status (Schoen & Wooldredge, 1989).

matching principle
A principle that applies in romantic relationships suggesting that individuals become involved with a partner with whom they are closely matched socially and physically.

Different kinds of similarity may have different implications for attraction. If you and someone else are similar in interests, then liking results. Similarity in attitudes, on the other hand, leads to respect for the other person. In a study of college freshmen, similarity in personality was found to be the critical factor determining the degree of satisfaction in friendships (Carli, Ganley, & Pierce-Otay, 1991). This study found similarity in physical attractiveness to have some positive effect on friendships but not a large one.

Why does similarity promote attraction? Attitude similarity promotes attraction in part because of our need to verify the "correctness" of our beliefs. Through the process of social comparison, we test the validity of our beliefs by comparing them to those of our friends and acquaintances (Hill, 1987). When we find that other people believe as we do, we can be more confident that our attitudes are valid. It is rewarding to know that someone we like thinks the way we do; it shows how smart we both are. Similarity may also promote attraction because we believe we can predict how a similar person will behave (Hatfield, Walster, & Traupmann, 1978).

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Limits of the Similarity-Attraction Relationship

The similarity-attraction relationship is one of the most powerful and consistent effects found in social psychology. This, however, does not mean that similarity and attraction relate to one another positively in all situations and relationships. Similarity is most important for relationships that are important to us and that we are committed to (Amodio & Showers, 2005). For less committed relationships, dissimilarity was actually more strongly related to liking and maintaining a relationship over time (Amodio & Showers, 2005). Also, in supervisor-subordinate relationships within organizations, dissimilarity is associated with greater liking on the part of the subordinate for the supervisor (Glomb & Welch, 2005). In organizations, dissimilarity is most likely to translate into positive interpersonal relationships when there is a commitment to diversity (Hobman, Bordia, & Gallois, 2004).

Along the same lines, Rosenbaum (1986) argued that it is not so much that we are attracted to similar others as that we are repulsed by people who are dissimilar. Further examination of this idea that dissimilarity breeds repulsion suggests that dissimilarity serves as an initial filter in the formation of relationships. Once a relationship begins to form, however, similarity becomes the fundamental determinant of attraction (Byrne, Clore, & Smeaton, 1986; Smeaton, Byrne, & Murnen, 1989). Thus, the effect of similarity on attraction may be a two-stage process, with dissimilarity and other negative information leading us to make the initial "cuts," and similarity and other positive information then determining with whom we become close.

Physical Attractiveness

Physical attractiveness is an important factor in the early stages of a relationship. Research shows, not surprisingly, that we find physically attractive people more appealing than unattractive people, at least on initial contact (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991). Moreover, our society values physical attractiveness, so a relationship with an attractive person is socially rewarding to us.

In their now classic study of the effects of physical attractiveness on dating, Elaine Hatfield and her colleagues led college students to believe that they had been paired at a dance based on their responses to a personality test, but in fact, the researchers had paired the students randomly (Hatfield, Aronson, Abrahams, & Rottman, 1966). At the end of the evening, the couples evaluated each other and indicated how much they would like to date again. For both males and females, the desire to date again was best predicted by the physical attractiveness of the partner. This is not particularly surprising, perhaps, because after only one brief date, the partners probably had little other information to go on.

Physical attractiveness affects not only our attitudes toward others but also our interactions with them. A study of couples who had recently met found that, regardless of gender, when one person was physically attractive, the other tried to intensify the interaction (Garcia, Stinson, Ickes, Bissonette, & Briggs, 1991). Men were eager to initiate and maintain a conversation, no matter how little reinforcement they got. Women tried to quickly establish an intimate and exclusive relationship by finding things they had in common and by avoiding talk about other people.

There are, however, gender differences in the importance of physical attractiveness. Generally, women are less impressed by attractive males than are men by attractive females (Buss, 1988a). Women are more likely than men to report that attributes other than physical attractiveness, such as a sense of humor, are important to them.

Despite the premium placed on physical attractiveness in Western culture, there is evidence that individuals tend to match for physical attractiveness in much the same way that they match on personality and attitudinal dimensions. You can demonstrate

this for yourself. Look at the engagement announcements accompanied by photographs of the engaged couples. You will find remarkable evidence for matching. Beyond such anecdotal evidence, there is research evidence for matching for physical attractiveness. Shafer and Keith (2001) found that married couples (especially younger and older couples) matched for weight.

Dimensions of Physical Attractiveness

What specific physical characteristics make someone attractive? Facial appearance has been shown to strongly affect our perceptions of attractiveness through much of our life span (McArthur, 1982; Zebrowitz, Olson, & Hoffman, 1993). Moreover, various aspects of facial appearance have specific effects. One group of researchers suspected that people find symmetrical faces more attractive than asymmetrical faces (Cardenas & Harris, 2006; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1994). Cardenas and Harris had participants examine pairs of faces, asking them to indicate which was more attractive. They found that more symmetrical faces were chosen over less symmetrical faces. Interestingly, when the researchers added asymmetrical makeup decoration to a symmetrical face, it reduced the perceived attractiveness of the symmetrical face. Similarly, Thornhill and Gangestad took photographs of males and females, fed those photos into a computer, created computer versions of the faces, and made precise measurements of the symmetry of the faces. They then asked subjects to rate the computer-generated images for attractiveness. They found that people do judge symmetrical faces to be more attractive than asymmetrical ones. Finally, Mealey, Bridgestock, and Townsend (1999) report that between identical twins, the twin with the more symmetrical face is judged to be more physically attractive.

Thornhill and Gangestad also asked the photographed students to fill out questionnaires about their sex and social lives. Those with symmetrical faces reported that they were sexually active earlier than others and had more friends and lovers. Why should symmetry and facial features in general be so important? The answer may lie more in our biology than in our psychology, an issue we explore later in the chapter.

There is a growing body of research that suggests that people's facial appearance plays a role in how others perceive and treat them (Berry, 1991; Noor & Evans, 2003; Zebrowitz, Collins, & Dutta, 1998; Zebrowitz & Lee, 1999). Zebrowitz and her coworkers (1998) noted that there is a **physical attractiveness bias,** a "halo," whereby individuals who are physically attractive are thought to also have other positive attributes. One cultural stereotype is that what is beautiful is good. That is, we tend to believe that physically attractive individuals possess a wide range of desirable characteristics and that they are generally happier than unattractive individuals (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972) Not only do we find attractive individuals more appealing physically, but we also confer on them a number of psychological and social advantages. We think that they are more competent and socially appealing than the average-appearing person. Moreover, unattractive individuals may experience discrimination because of their appearance. A recent study by Noor and Evans (2003) confirms this. They found that an asymmetrical face was perceived to be more neurotic, less open, less agreeable, and less attractive than a symmetrical face. So, individuals with symmetrical faces are associated with more positive personality characteristics than those with asymmetrical faces.

physical attractiveness bias The tendency to confer a number of psychological and social advantages to physically attractive individuals.

Much of this attractiveness bias is probably learned. However, there is some evidence that the attractiveness bias may have a biological component as well. In one experiment, infants 2 or 3 months old were exposed to pairs of adult faces and their preferences were recorded (Langlois, Roggman, Casey, Riesner-Danner, & Jenkins, 1987).

Preference was inferred from a measure known as *fixation time,* or the amount of time spent looking at one face or the other. If the infant prefers one over the other, the infant should look at that face longer. As shown in Figure 9.2, when attractive faces were paired with unattractive faces, infants displayed a preference for the attractive faces. It is therefore quite unlikely that infants learned these preferences.

Furthermore, a number of distinctly different cultures seem to have the same biases. This doesn't necessarily mean that these biases aren't learned; various cultures may simply value the same characteristics. Studies comparing judgments of physical attractiveness in Korea and in the United States found agreement on whether a face was attractive and whether the face conveyed a sense of power. In both countries, for example, faces with broad chins, thin lips, and receding hairlines were judged to convey dominance (Triandis, 1994).

Zebrowitz and her coworkers showed that appearances of both attractive people and people with baby faces (round faces, large eyes, small nose and chin, high eyebrows) affect how others treat them (Zebrowitz & Lee, 1999; Zebrowitz et al., 1998). Whereas attractive people are thought to be highly competent both physically and intellectually, baby-faced individuals are viewed as weak, submissive, warm, and naive. What happens when baby-faced individuals do not conform to the stereotype that they are harmless? In a study of delinquent adolescent boys, Zebrowitz and Lee (1999) showed that baby-faced boys, in contrast to more mature-looking delinquents, were punished much more severely. This is a contrast effect: Innocent-looking people who commit antisocial actions violate our expectations.

Although attractiveness and baby-facedness may have a downside when these individuals run afoul of expectations, the upside is, as you might expect, that the positive expectations and responses of other people shape the personalities of attractive individuals across their life (Zebrowitz et al., 1998). This is self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby attractive men who are treated positively because of their appearance become

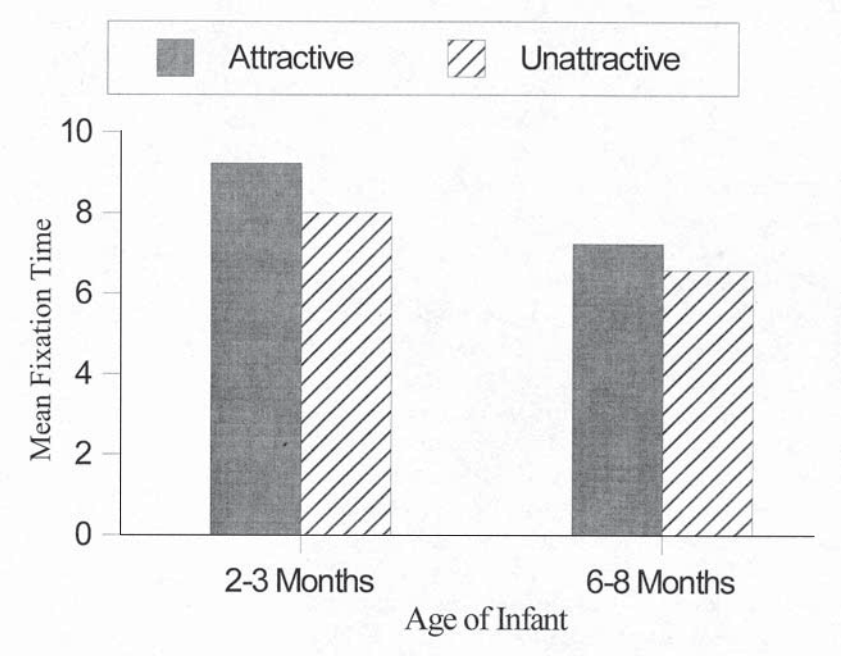

Figure 9.2 Infant fixation time as a function of the attractiveness of a stimulus face. Infants as young as 2- or 3-months-old showed a preference for an attractive face over an unattractive face.

From Langlois and colleagues (1987).

more socially secure as they get older. Similarly, Zebrowitz found that a man who had an "honest" face in his youth tended to be more honest as he got older.

For baby-faced individuals, the effect over time was somewhat different. These individuals become more assertive and aggressive over time, probably as a way of compensating for the stereotype of a baby-faced individual as submissive and weak.

However, Zebrowitz and colleagues (1998) did not observe such a self-fulfilling prophecy for women. That is, attractive young women do not become more attractive and competent socially as they age. Zebrowitz suggested further that less-attractive women may learn to compensate by becoming more socially able to counteract the negative image held of less-attractive women. This would explain the lack of significant differences in socially valued personality attributes between younger attractive and less-attractive women as they age into their fifties. Interestingly, women who had an attractive personality in their youth developed high attractiveness in their fifties, suggesting, according to Zebrowitz, that women manipulated their appearance and presentation (makeup, etc.) more then men did. It may be that this is due to women's greater motivation to present an attractive appearance because they have less power to achieve their social goals in other ways (Zebrowitz et al., 1998).

Physique and the Attractiveness Bias

Physique also profoundly affects our perceptions of attractiveness. Buss (1994) observed that the importance of physical attractiveness has increased in the United States in every decade since the 1930s. This is true for both men and women, although men rate physical attractiveness as much more important than do women. Our society has widely shared notions of which bodily attributes are attractive. We have positive perceptions of people who fit these notions and negative perceptions of those who do not. We sometimes even display discriminatory behavior against those who deviate too far from cultural standards.

People can be categorized by body type into *ectomorphs* (thin, perhaps underweight), *mesomorphs* (athletic build), and *endomorphs* (overweight). Positive personality traits tend to be attributed to mesomorphs and negative ones to people with the other body types (Ryckman et al., 1991). There is some ambivalence about ectomorphs, especially as societal attitudes toward thinness seem to shift, influenced by such factors as an increasing health consciousness and an association of excessive thinness with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Perceptions of endomorphs, in contrast, remain consistently negative. Of course, some people are more intensely attuned to physical appearance than are others. It appears that those people who are most conscious of their own appearance are the most likely to stereotype others on the basis of physique.

Certainly this is the case with regard to overweight individuals. Research confirms that obese individuals are stigmatized and are the target of negative stereotypes in our society. This bias cuts across genders. Obese men and women are likely to be stigmatized (Hebl & Turchin, 2005). These negative stereotypes exist on both the implicit and explicit level (Wang, Brownell, & Wadden, 2004). In one study (Harris, 1990), subjects judged a stimulus person who was depicted as either normal weight or (with the help of extra clothing) obese. They evaluated "Chris," the stimulus person, along several dimensions including the likelihood that Chris was dating or married, her self-esteem, and her ideal romantic partner. The results, almost without exception, reflected negative stereotyping of an obese Chris compared to a normal-weight Chris. Subjects judged that the obese Chris was less likely to be dating or married compared to the normal-weight Chris. They also rated the obese Chris as having lower self-esteem than the normal-weight Chris and felt that her ideal love partner should also be obese.

Studies also show the practical consequences of these attitudes. For example, it has been shown that overweight college students are less likely than other students to get financial help from home (Crandall, 1991). This effect was especially strong with respect to female students and was true regardless of the resources the student's family had, the number of children in the family, or other factors that could affect parents' willingness to provide financial help. The researchers suggested that the finding might be largely explained by parents' negative attitudes toward their overweight children and consequent lack of optimism about their future. In a related domain, there is evidence that businesspeople sacrifice $1,000 in annual salary for every pound they are overweight (Kolata, 1992).

Interestingly, the bias against fat people is shown by children. Children between the ages of 2 and 5 were shown two line drawings of children. One of the drawings showed a child who was 23% larger than the other. The children were asked to ascribe various characteristics to the figures in the drawing. The results showed that the children were more likely to ascribe negative qualities to the larger figure (Turnbull, Heaslip, & McLeod, 2000). This finding should not be surprising since these stereotypic images of body image are portrayed in children's literature and movies (Herbozo, Tantleff-Dunn, Gokee-Larose, & Thompson, 2004). Just think, for example, about the Disney film *The Little Mermaid*, in which the mermaid Ariel is depicted as a slim, beautiful, young woman and the sea witch (the villain) is depicted as an obese, unattractive woman.

The bias against overweight people even extends into the world of health care. In one study, for example, an implicit prejudice and implicit stereotypes were shown toward overweight people by health care workers, a majority of whom were doctors (Teachman & Brownell, 2001). There was, however, little evidence for an explicit prejudice. In another study, doctors showed more negative attitudes toward hypothetical obese patients than average-weight patients and that they would spend less time with an obese patient (Hebl & Xu, 2001). Physicians indicated that they would be more likely to refer obese patients for mental health care. The good news was, however, that doctors seemed to follow an appropriate course of action with respect to weight-unrelated tests.

The bias against obese people may be culturally related. Western culture seems to place a great deal of emphasis on body image (just take a look at the models [male and female] used in advertisements). One cross-cultural study using British and Ugandan participants showed that the Ugandan participants rated a drawing of an obese figure more positively than British participants (Furnham & Baguma, 2004). Another study conducted in New Zealand found that obese job applicants were evaluated more negatively than nonobese applicants (Ding & Stillman, 2005). The bias may also have a racial component as well. One study found that black males stigmatized an obese person less than white males and that black males are less likely to be stigmatized than white males (Hebl & Turchin, 2005).

One reason obese individuals are vilified is that we believe that their weight problem stems from laziness and a lack of discipline. If we know that an individual's weight problem is the result of a biological disorder and thus beyond his or her control, we are less likely to make negative judgments of that individual (DeJong, 1980). What we fail to realize is that most obese people cannot control their weight. There is a genetic component in obesity, and this tendency can be exacerbated by social and cultural factors, such as lack of information and an unhealthy lifestyle.

Attractiveness judgments and stereotyping in everyday life may not be as strong as they are in some laboratory studies. In these studies, we make pure attraction judgments: We see only a face or a physique. When we deal with people, we evaluate an entire package even if much of what we see initially is only the wrapping. The entire

package includes many attributes. A person may be overweight but may also have a mellifluous voice and a powerful personality. In a laboratory study in which subjects were exposed to a person's face and voice, the perception of the person's physical attractiveness was affected by judgments about that person's vocal attractiveness and vice versa (Zuckerman, Miyake, & Hodgins, 1991). Gertrude Stein was a woman many people found attractive even though she weighed over 200 pounds. Her striking face and her powerful personality were the main attributes that people remembered after meeting her.

Beauty and the View from Evolutionary Psychology

It is obvious that we learn to associate attractiveness with positive virtues and unattractiveness with vice, even wickedness. Children's books and movies often portray the good characters as beautiful and the villains as ugly. As noted, in the Walt Disney movie *The Little Mermaid,* the slender, beautiful mermaid, Ariel, and the evil, obese sea witch are cases in point. Such portrayals are not limited to works for children. The hunchback of Notre Dame, the phantom of the opera, and Freddy Kruger are all physically unattractive evildoers.

Evolutionary psychologists suggest that perhaps beauty is more than skin deep. Recall the research on the attractiveness of symmetrical faces. It seems that it is not only humans who value symmetry but also a variety of other species. For example, Watson and Thornhill (1994) reported that female scorpion flies can detect and prefer as mates males with symmetrical wings. Male elks with the most symmetrical racks host the largest harems.

Mate Selection: Good Genes or Good Guys? Proponents of evolutionary psychology, a subfield of both psychology and biology, employ the principles of evolution to explain human behavior and believe that symmetry is reflective of underlying genetic quality. Lack of symmetry is thought to be caused by various stresses, such as poor maternal nutrition, late maternal age, attacks by predators, or disease, and may therefore reflect bad health or poor genetic quality. Thus, the preference for symmetry in potential mates, whether human or animal, may be instinctive (Watson & Thornhill, 1994). Indeed, even small differences matter. Twins with lower levels of symmetry are reliably rated as less attractive than their slightly more symmetrical counterpart (Mealey, Bridgstock, & Townsend, 1999).

The degree to which biology may control human mating preferences can be underscored by the finding that the type of face a woman finds attractive varies with her menstrual cycle. Perret and Penton-Voak (1999) reported a study that showed that when a woman is ovulating, she is more likely to prefer men with highly masculine features. In contrast, during other times, men with softer, feminine features are preferred. The researchers had numerous women from various countries—Japan, Scotland, England—judge male faces during different parts of their menstrual cycles. The researchers believe that these results are explained by the observation that masculine looks, in all of the animal kingdom, denote virility and the increased likelihood for healthy offspring. In a related finding, Gangestad and Thornhill (1998) reported a study that showed that females preferred the smell of a "sweaty" T-shirt worn by the most symmetrical males but only if the women were ovulating.

Of course, it is likely that more choice is involved in mate selection than would be indicated by these studies. In any event, most people do rebel against the notion that decisions about sex, marriage, and parenthood are determined by nothing more than body odor (Berreby, 1998).

Certainly we would expect those with symmetrical appearances to become aware of their advantages in sexual competition. For example, consider the following study by Simpson and his coworkers. Heterosexual men and women were told that they would be competing with another same-sex person for a date with an attractive person of the opposite sex. The experimenters videotaped and analyzed the interactions among the two competitors and the potential date. Men who had symmetrical faces used direct competition tactics. That is, when trying to get a date with the attractive woman, symmetrical men simply and baldly compared their attractiveness (favorably) with the competitor. Less-attractive (read as less-symmetrical-faced) men used indirect competitive methods, such as emphasizing their positive personality qualities (Simpson, Gangestad, Christensen, & Leck, 1999).

Gangestad and Thornhill (1998) have argued that physical appearance marked by high symmetrical precision reveals to potential mates that the individual has good genes and is, therefore, for both men and women, a highly desirable choice. These individuals, especially men, should have fared very well in sexual competition during evolutionary history. Why? Research suggests that greater symmetry is associated with higher survival rates as well as higher reproductive rates in many species (Simpson et al., 1999). In men, it seems that certain secondary sexual attributes that are controlled by higher levels of testosterone, such as enlarged jaws, chins, and so forth, may project greater health and survival capability (Mealey, Bridgstock, & Townsend, 1999). Indeed, symmetrical men and women report more sexual partners and have sex earlier in life than less symmetrical individuals. The more symmetrical the individual—again, especially males—the more probable the person will have the opportunity for short-term sexual encounters, and the more likely, as Simpson and colleagues (1999) found, they will use direct competitive strategies to win sexual competitions.

Of course, good genes are not enough. Raising human offspring is a complicated, long-term—some might say never-ending—affair, and having a good partner willing to invest in parenthood is important. Indeed, theorists have developed what are called "good provider" models of mate selection that emphasize the potential mate's commitment to the relationship and ability to provide resources necessary for the long-term health of that relationship (Gangestad & Thornhill, 1997; Trivers, 1972).

How to Attract a Mate David Buss, a prominent evolutionary social psychologist, suggested that to find and retain a reproductively valuable mate, humans engage in love acts—behaviors with near-term goals, such as display of resources the other sex finds enticing. The ultimate purpose of these acts is to increase reproductive success (Buss, 1988a, 1988b). Human sexual behavior thus can be viewed in much the same way as the sexual behavior of other animal species.

Subjects in one study (Buss, 1988b) listed some specific behaviors they used to keep their partner from getting involved with someone else. Buss found that males tended to use display of resources (money, cars, clothes, sometimes even brains), whereas females tried to look more attractive and threatened to be unfaithful if the males didn't shape up. Buss argued that these findings support an evolutionary interpretation of mate retention: The tactics of females focus on their value as a reproductive mate and on arousing the jealousy of the male, who needs to ensure they are not impregnated by a rival.

Jealousy is evoked when a threat or loss occurs to a valued relationship due to the partner's real or imagined attention to a rival (Dijkstra & Buunk, 1998). Men and women respond differently to infidelity, according to evolutionary psychologists, due to the fact

that women bear higher reproductive costs than do men (Harris & Christenfeld, 1996). Women are concerned with having a safe environment for potential offspring, so it would follow that sexual infidelity would not be as threatening as emotional infidelity, which could signal the male's withdrawal from the relationship. Men, however, should be most concerned with ensuring the prolongation of their genes and avoiding investing energy in safeguarding some other male's offspring. Therefore, males are most threatened by acts of sexual infidelity and less so by emotional ones. Thus, males become most jealous when their mates are sexually unfaithful, whereas women are most jealous when their mates are emotionally involved with a rival (Buss, 1994; Harris & Christenfeld, 1996).

According to the evolutionary psychology view, males ought to be threatened by a rival's dominance, the ability to provide resources (money, status, power) to the female in question, whereas women ought to be most threatened by a rival who is physically attractive, because that attribute signals the potential for viable offspring. Indeed, a clever experiment by Dijkstra and Buunk (1998), in which participants judged scenarios in which the participant's real or imagined mate was flirting with a person of the opposite sex, showed that dominance in a male rival and attractiveness in a female rival elicited the greatest amount of jealousy for men and women, respectively.

Many of Buss's findings about human mating behavior are disturbing because both men and women in pursuit of their sexual goals cheat and frustrate their mates and derogate their rivals. However, some of his findings are kinder to our species. For example, he points out that the most effective tactics for men who wish to keep their mates are to provide love and kindness, to show affection, and to tell their mates of their love. That sounds rather romantic.

Indeed, evidence suggests that women are driven, at least in long-term mate selection strategies, by behavior and traits represented by the good provider models. Although men are strongly influence by traits such as youth and attractiveness, women tend to select partners on the basis of attributes such as social status and industriousness (Ben Hamida, Mineka, & Bailey, 1998). Note the intriguing differences between traits that men find attractive in women and those that women find attractive in men. The obvious one is that men seem to be driven by the "good genes" model, whereas women's preferences seem to follow the good provider models. This preference appears across a range of cultures. One study by Shackelford, Schmitt, and Buss (2005) had males and females evaluate several characteristics that could define a potential mate. The participants were drawn from 37 cultures (including African, Asian, and European). Their results confirmed that, across cultures, women valued social status more than men and men valued physical attractiveness more than women.

The other difference, however, is that traits that make women attractive are in essence uncontrollable: Either you are young or you are not; either you are attractive or you are not. Modern science can help, but not much. Therefore, a woman who desires to increase her value has the problem of enhancing attributes that are really not under her control (Ben Hamida et al., 1998). Male-related attributes—status, achievement—are all, to a greater or lesser extent, under some control and may be gained with effort and motivation. Ben Hamida and his colleagues argue that the uncontrollability of the factors that affect a woman's fate in the sexual marketplace may have long-term negative emotional consequences.

Before we conclude that there is an unbridgeable difference between men and women and that men only follow the good genes model and women only the good provider model, we should consider the possibility that what one wants in the sexual

marketplace depends on what one's goals are and what one can reasonably expect to get. In fact, it appears that when looking for a casual sexual partner, both men and women emphasize attractiveness, and when searching for a long-term relationship, both look for a mate with good interpersonal skills, an individual who is attentive to the partner's needs, has a good sense of humor, and is easygoing (Regan, 1998). In fact, Miller (2000), an evolutionary psychologist, argued that the most outstanding features of the human mind—consciousness, morality, sense of humor, creativity—were shaped not so much by natural selection but rather by sexual selection. Miller suggested that being funny and friendly and a good conversationalist serves the same purpose for humans as an attractive tail serves peacocks: It helps attract mates.

Regan (1998) reported that women were less willing to compromise on their standards. For example, although women wanted an attractive partner for casual sex, they also wanted a male who was older and more interpersonally responsive. Men wanted attractiveness and would compromise on everything else. In fact, a woman's attractiveness seems to overcome a male potential partner's common sense as well. Agocha and Cooper (1999) reported that when men knew a potential partner's sexual history and also knew that she was physically attractive, they weighed attractiveness as much more important in the decision to engage in intercourse than the probability of contracting a sexually transmitted disease as suggested by that sexual history. However, women and men are less willing to compromise when it comes to long-term relationships. The results conform to the idea that casual sex affords men a chance to advertise their sexual prowess and gain favor with their peer group but that long-term relationships are driven by quite different needs (Regan, 1998).

Finally, students often ask about any differences between heterosexual and homosexual mate preferences. The available research suggests that mate selection preferences between these groups may not differ all that much (Over & Phillips, 1997). For example, a study of personal advertisements placed by heterosexual and homosexual males and females was conducted by Kenrick, Keefe, Bryan, Barr, and Brown (1995). Kenrick et al. found that mate selection patterns for heterosexual and homosexual men were highly similar and showed similar patterns of change with age. Both groups of men preferred younger mates and this preference grew stronger with age. There was a slight difference between homosexual and heterosexual women. Younger women in both groups expressed interest in same-aged mates. However, with age, homosexual women were more likely than heterosexual women to desire a younger partner. In another study, homosexual women were found to be more interested in visual sexual stimulation and less in partner status than heterosexual women. Homosexual men placed less emphasis on their partner's youth than heterosexual men (Bailey, Gaulin, Agyei, & Gladue, 1994).

Dynamics of Close Relationships

We have discussed why people form close relationships and why they form them with the people they do. We turn now to the dynamics of close relationships—how they develop and are kept going and how in some cases conflict can lead to their dissolution.

But what exactly are close relationships? What psychological factors define them? There appear to be three crucial factors, all of which we saw in the relationship between Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas. The first factor is emotional involvement, feelings of love or warmth and fondness for the other person. The second is sharing, including

sharing of feelings and experiences. The third is interdependence, which means that one's well-being is tied up with that of the other (Kelley et al., 1983). As is clear from this definition, a close relationship can be between husband and wife, lovers, or friends. Note that even when research focuses on one type of close relationship, it is usually also applicable to the others.

Relationship Development

Models of how relationships develop emphasize a predictable sequence of events. This is true of both models we examine in this section, the stage model of relationship development and social penetration theory. According to the stage model of relationship development, proposed by Levinger and Snoek (1972), relationships evolve through the following stages:

Stage 0, no relationship. This is a person's status with respect to virtually all other people in the world.

Stage 1, awareness. We become conscious of another's presence and feel the beginning of interest. When Stein and Toklas first met in the company of friends, their conversation suggested to each of them that they might have much in common.

Stage 2, surface contact. Interaction begins but is limited to topics such as the weather, politics, and mutual likes and dislikes. Although the contact is superficial, each person is forming impressions of the other. Stein and Toklas moved into this stage the day after their first meeting and soon moved beyond it.

Stage 3, mutuality. The relationship moves, in substages, from lesser to greater interdependence. The first substage is that of involvement, which is characterized by a growing number of shared activities (Levinger, 1988). A subsequent substage is commitment, characterized by feelings of responsibility and obligation each to the other. Although not all close relationships involve commitment (Sternberg, 1988), those that have a serious long-term influence on one's life generally do. We noted how Stein and Toklas began by sharing activities, then feelings, and then an increasing commitment to each other.

social penetration theory A theory that relationships vary in breadth, the extent of interaction, and depth, suggesting they progress in an orderly fashion from slight and superficial contact to greater and deeper involvement.

A second model of relationship development, **social penetration theory**, developed by Altman and Taylor (1973), centers on the idea that relationships change over time in both breadth (the range of topics people discuss and activities they engage in together) and depth (the extent to which they share their inner thoughts and feelings). Relationships progress in a predictable way from slight and superficial contact to greater and deeper involvement. First the breadth of a relationship increases. Then there is an increase in its depth, and breadth may actually decrease. Casual friends may talk about topics ranging from sports to the news to the latest rumors at work. But they will not, as will more intimate friends, talk about their feelings and hopes. Close friends allow each other to enter their lives—social penetration—and share on a deeper, more intimate level, even as the range of topics they discuss may decrease.

Evidence in support of social penetration theory comes from a study in which college students filled out questionnaires about their friendships several times over the course of a semester and then again 3 months later (Hays, 1985). Over 60% of the affiliations

tracked in the study developed into close relationships by the end of the semester. More important, the interaction patterns changed as the relationships developed. As predicted by social penetration theory, interactions of individuals who eventually became close friends were characterized by an initial increase in breadth followed by a decrease in breadth and an increase in intimacy, or depth.

An important contributor to increasing social penetration—or to the mutuality stage of relationship development—is self-disclosure, the ability and willingness to share intimate areas of one's life. College students who kept diaries of their interactions with friends reported that casual friends provided as much fun and intellectual stimulation as close friends but that close friends provided more emotional support (Hays, 1988b). Relationship development is fostered by self-disclosure simply because we often respond to intimate revelations with self-disclosures of our own (Jourard, 1971).

Evaluating Relationships

Periodically we evaluate the state of our relationships, especially when something is going wrong or some emotional episode occurs. Berscheid (1985) observed that emotion occurs in a close relationship when there is an interruption in a well-learned sequence of behavior. Any long-term dating or marital relationship develops sequences of behavior—Berscheid called these interchain sequences—that depend on the partners coordinating their actions. For example, couples develop hints and signals that show their interest in lovemaking. The couple's lovemaking becomes organized, and the response of one partner helps coordinate the response of the other. A change in the frequency or pattern of this behavior will bring about a reaction, positive or negative, from the partner. The more intertwined the couples are, the stronger are their interchain sequences; the more they depend on each other, the greater the impact of interruptions of these sequences.

Exchange Theories

social exchange theory
A theory of how relationships are evaluated, suggesting that people make assessments according to the rewards (positive things derived from a relationship) and costs (negative things derived from a relationship).

One perspective on how we evaluate relationships is provided by **social exchange theory** (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), which suggests that people make assessments according to rewards and costs, which correspond to all the positive and all the negative factors derived from a relationship. Generally, rewards are high if a person gets a great deal of gratification from the relationship, whereas costs are high if the person either must exert a great deal of effort to maintain the relationship or experiences anxiety about the relationship. According to this economic model of relationships, the outcome is decided by subtracting costs from rewards. If the rewards are greater than the costs, the outcome is positive; if the costs are greater than the rewards, the outcome is negative.

This doesn't necessarily mean that if the outcome is positive, we will stay in the relationship, or that if the outcome is negative, we will leave it. We also evaluate outcomes against *comparison levels*. One type of comparison level is our expectation of what we will obtain from the relationship. That is, we compare the outcome with what we think the relationship should be giving us. A second type is a comparison level of alternatives, in which we compare the outcome of the relationship we are presently in with the expected outcomes of possible alternative relationships. If we judge that the alternative outcomes would not be better, or even worse, than the outcome of our present relationship, we will be less inclined to make a change. If, on the other hand, we perceive that an alternative relationship promises a better outcome, we are more likely to make a change.

A theory related to social exchange theory—equity theory—says that we evaluate our relationships based on their rewards and costs, but it also focuses on our perception of equity, or balance, in relationships (Hatfield, Traupmann, Sprecher, Utne, & Hay, 1985). Equity in a relationship occurs when the following equation holds:

$$\frac{\text{Person A's Benefits (rewards – costs)}}{\text{B's Contributions}} = \frac{\text{Person B's Benefits (rewards – costs)}}{\text{A's Contributions}}$$

Rewards may include, but are not limited to, companionship, sex, and social support. Costs may include loss of independence and increases in financial obligations. The contributions made to the relationship include earning power or high social status. The rule of equity is simply that person A's benefits should equal person B's if their contributions are equal. However, fairness requires that if A's contributions are greater than B's, A's benefits should also be greater.

Thus, under equity theory, the way people judge the fairness of the benefits depends on their understanding of what each brings to the relationship. For example, the spouse who earns more may be perceived as bringing more to the marriage and, therefore, as entitled to higher benefits. The other spouse may, as a result, increase her costs, perhaps by taking on more of the household chores.

In actual relationships, of course, people differ, often vigorously, on what counts as contributions and on how specific contributions ought to be weighed. For example, in business settings, many individuals believe that race or gender should count as a contribution when hiring. Others disagree strongly with that position.

Has the fact that most women now work outside the home altered the relationship between wives and husbands as equity theory would predict? It appears, in keeping with equity theory, that the spouse who earns more, regardless of gender, often has fewer child-care responsibilities than the spouse who earns less (Steil &Weltman, 1991, 1992).

However, it also appears that cultural expectations lead to some inequity. Husbands tend to have more control over financial matters than wives do regardless of income (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). Moreover, a study of professional married couples in which the partners earned relatively equal amounts found that although the wives were satisfied with their husbands' participation in household chores and childrearing, in reality there was considerable inequity (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). Women were invariably the primary caregivers for the children. Men spent time with their children and did many of the household chores, but they were not the primary caregivers. This may reflect a lack of equity in these relationships, or it may mean that women simply do not fully trust their husbands to do a competent job of taking care of the children.

What happens when people perceive inequity in a relationship? As a rule, they will attempt to correct the inequity and restore equity. If you realize that your partner is dissatisfied with the state of the relationship, you might try, for example, to pay more attention to your partner and in this way increase the rewards he or she experiences. If equity is not restored, your partner might become angry or withdraw from the relationship. Inequitable relationships are relationships in trouble.

In one study, researchers measured the level of perceived equity in relationships by means of the following question and scale (Hatfield, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978, p. 121).

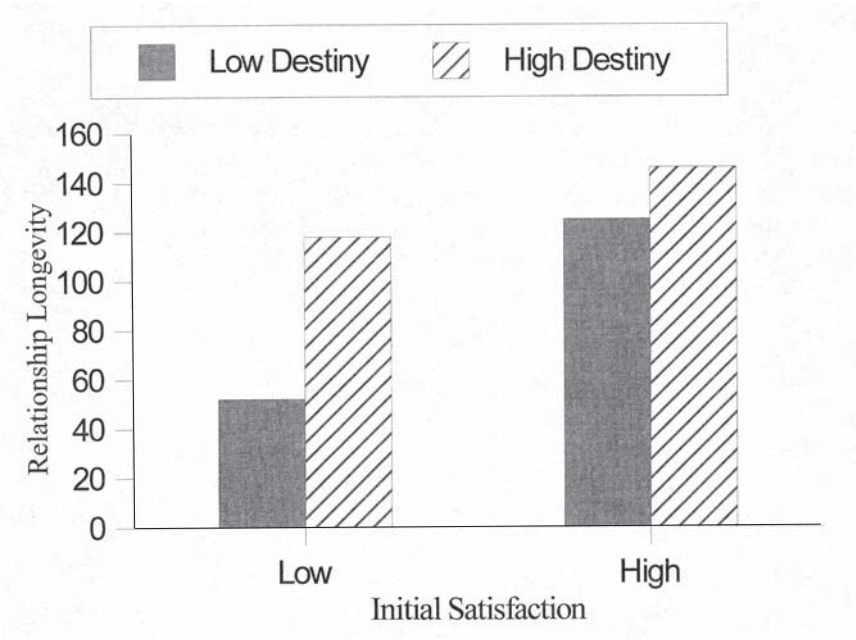

Figure 9.3 Relationship longevity as a function of belief in destiny and initial satisfaction with a relationship. Individuals who believed in romantic destiny and had initial satisfaction with the relationship tended to have longer relationships than those who did not. However, when initial satisfaction was low, individuals who believed in destiny tended not to give the relationship a chance and exited the relationship after a short time.

From Knee (1998).

tend to have more positive descriptions of their ideal partner as compared to those with lesser self-images. Klohnen and Mendelsohn reported a significant similarity between one partner's description of the ideal self and his or her description of the partner. In fact, individuals tended to bias their views of their partner in the direction of the ideal self-concepts.

It appears then that successful relationships require that each partner work to affirm his or her beliefs about the other partner. What happens when one partner, say, gets a nasty surprise and learns that her spouse, a competent individual in social situations with people he does not know, is an awkward mutterer with close family members? Certainly, she may be upset and disillusioned. Past research by Swann (1996) has shown that when individuals confront evidence that goes against their firmly held views of themselves, they work very hard to refute or downgrade that evidence. Similarly, De La Ronde and Swann (1998) found that partners work hard to verify their views of their spouses. As Drigotas and colleagues (1999) suggested, we often enter into relationships with people who view us as we view ourselves. Therefore, we and our partners are motivated to preserve these impressions. Therefore, our surprised spouse will be motivated to see her husband as competent in social situations, as he sees himself, by suggesting perhaps that there is something about family gatherings that makes him act out of character.

There seems, then, to be a kind of unspoken conspiracy among many intact couples to protect and conserve the social world that the couple inhabits. The downside of this, of course, is when one of the partners changes in a way that violates the expectations of the other partner. For example, as De La Ronde and Swann (1998) suggested, if one partner, because of low self-esteem goes into therapy and comes out with a more positive self-image, the spouse holding the other in low regard in the first place is motivated, according to the notion of partner verification, to maintain that original negative image. Clearly, that does not bode well for the relationship.

Comparing what you get out of this relationship with what your partner gets out of it, how would you say the relationship stacks up?

+3 I am getting a much better deal than my partner.

+2 I am getting a somewhat better deal.

+1 I am getting a slightly better deal.

0 We are both getting an equally good—or bad—deal.

–1 My partner is getting a slightly better deal.

–2 My partner is getting a somewhat better deal.

–3 My partner is getting a much better deal than I am.

Respondents were grouped into three categories: those who felt that their relationship was equitable, those who felt that they got more out of the relationship than their partners and therefore were overbenefited, and those who felt that they got less than their partners and therefore were underbenefited.

The researchers then surveyed 2,000 people and found, as expected, that those individuals who felt underbenefited were much more likely to engage in extramarital sex than those who thought that their relationship was equitable or felt overbenefited (Hatfield, Walster, & Traupmann, 1978). Generally, couples who feel that they are in an equitable relationship are more likely to maintain the relationship than those who were less equitably matched (Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976).

Communal Relationships Although the research just reviewed suggests that people make rather cold-blooded, marketplace judgments about the quality of their relationships, it is likely that they also have other ways of evaluating relationships. For example, a distinction has been made between relationships governed by exchange principles—in which, as we have seen, people benefit each other with the expectation of receiving a benefit in return—and relationships governed by communal principles—in which individuals benefit each other in response to the other's needs (Clark, 1986). In **communal relationships**, if one partner can put more into the relationship than the other, so be it. That is, people may deliberately underbenefit themselves for the sake of the relationship.

communal relationship
An interpersonal relationship in which individuals benefit each other in response to each other's needs.

Love relationships are often governed by communal principles. Clark and Grote (1998) reviewed the research concerning how couples evaluate their relationships, and although some of the results show that costs are negatively related to satisfaction as exchange theories would predict, sometimes, however, costs are positively related to satisfaction. That is, Clark and Grote found evidence that, sometimes, the more costs a partner incurs, the higher the satisfaction. How might we explain this? Well, if we consider the communal norm as one that rewards behavior that meets the needs of one's partner, then we might understand how costs could define a warm, close, and affectionate relationship. As Clark and Grote noted, it may be admirable, and one may feel good about oneself if, having helped one's partner, one has also lived up to the communal ideal. By doing so, the helping partner gains the gratitude of the other, feels good about oneself, and these positive feelings then become associated with the relationship.

One way to reconcile the different findings concerning the relationship between costs and satisfaction is to note that the costs one bears in a communal relationship are qualitatively different than those we bear in a purely exchange relationship that may be deteriorating. For example, consider the following costs borne in an exchange relationship: "She told me I was dumb." This is an intentional insult (and cost) that suggests a

relationship that may be going badly. Compare this to a communal cost: "I listened carefully to what he said when a problem arose even though I was quite busy and had other things to get done." This communal cost served to strengthen the relationship (Clark & Grote, 1998). To state the obvious, there are costs and then there are costs.

Love over Time

We have talked about how relationships get started and how the partners evaluate how that relationship is going. Now let's consider what happens to relationships over time. What factors keep them together and what drives them apart? Sprecher (1999) studied partners in romantic relationships over a period of several years. The measures of love, commitment, and satisfaction taken several times over the period of the research show that couples who maintained their relationship increased on all measures of relationship satisfaction. Couples who broke up showed a decrease in measures of relationship health just before the breakup. The collapse of the relationship did not mean that love was lost. In fact, the splintered partners continued to love each other, but everything else had gone wrong.

Sprecher's work as well as that of others suggests that intact relationships are perceived by the partners in idealistic ways and that the partners truly feel that their love and commitment grows stronger as time goes on. Intact, long-term couples are very supportive of each other and that makes it easier for them to weather difficult personal or financial problems (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998). For example, couples who support each other during times of stress are much better able to survive periods of economic pressure that tend to cause much emotional distress in a relationship (Conger, Rueter, & Elder, Jr., 1999).

Some individuals are especially idealistic and affirm a belief that they have met the person that destiny provided. Knee (1998) examined the relationships of those romantic partners who believed in romantic destiny and those who did not. He found that he could predict the longevity of the relationship by two factors: One was belief in romantic destiny and the other was whether the initial interaction was very positive. As Figure 9.3 shows, individuals who believed in romantic destiny and had that confirmed by initial satisfaction tended to have longer relationships than those who did not believe in destiny. But if things don't go quite so well at first, those who believe in destiny tend to bail out quite quickly and do not give the relationship a chance (Knee, 1998).

Sculpting a Relationship

So we see that strong relationships are idealized and are able to withstand stresses because the partners support each other rather than work at cross-purposes. How do such relationships develop? Drigotas (1999) and his coexperimenters found that successful couples have an obliging interdependence in which each, in essence, sculpts the other, much as Michelangelo carved David out of the embryonic stone. This Drigotas aptly called the *Michelangelo phenomenon* (Drigotas, Rusbult, Wieselquist, & Whitton, 1999). In a series of four studies, these researchers showed that each partner tended to become more like the ideal self that their partner envisioned for them. In other words, each partner supports the other's attempts to change. This partner affirmation of each other is strongly associated with ongoing, well-functioning couples.

Of course, one reason that successful couples have similar views of each other is that individuals tend to search for people who are similar to them. For example, Klohnen and Mendelsohn (1998) reported research that showed that individuals pair up with partners of approximately equal value and attributes. Note that this is in line with exchange theories discussed earlier. Therefore, people with positive self-images

Of course, having negative views of one's partner, as you might expect, is associated with decreased relationship well-being (Ruvolo & Rotondo, 1998). In fact, some people have a strong belief that people can change and, to go back to the example used here, that someone with a negative self-image can change for the better. Ruvulo and Rotondo (1998) measured the extent to which people involved in relationships believed that people can change. They found that when individuals had strong beliefs that individuals can change, then the views that they had of their partner were less likely to be related to the current well-being of the relationship. This means that if you saw that your partner had a negative self-image, but you were convinced that he or she could change for the better, that current image was not crucial to how you viewed the status of the relationship. However, for those individuals who did not feel that it was possible for people to change, the views of their partners were crucial to how they evaluated their relationships. So, if you believed that your partner's attributes and feelings were forever fixed, it makes sense that those views would be crucial to how you felt about the relationship. But, if things could change, probably for the better, well then these negative views won't last forever. Therefore, many successful couples behave in a manner that verifies initial images of each other.

Responses to Conflict

When relationships are deemed to be unfair, or inequitable, the result almost inevitably will be conflict. Conflict also can occur when a partner behaves badly, and everyone behaves badly at one time or another. The mere passage of time also makes conflict more likely. Couples are usually more affectionate and happier as newlyweds than they are 2 years later (Huston & Vangelisti, 1991). What happens, then, when conflicts arise? How do people in a relationship respond to conflicts? In this section we shall look at three responses to conflict: developing stories to explain conflict, accommodation, and forgiveness.

Developing Stories

Satisfied couples bias their impressions of their partner in ways that cause idealization of the partner and increase satisfaction in the relationship (McGregor & Holmes, 1999). Researchers have discovered that when satisfied couples confront a threat in the marriage due to something the partner has done (say, had a drink with another man or woman on the sly), individuals devise stories that work to diminish that threat. They construct a story to explain the event in a way that takes the blame away from their partner. The story puts the partner in the best light possible. McGregor and Holmes (1999) suggested that the process of devising a story to explain a behavior convinces the storyteller of the truth of that story. Constructing the motives of the characters in the story (the partner and others) and making the story come to a desired conclusion—all of this cognitive work is convincing to the story's author, who comes to believe in its conclusions.

When reality is complicated, a story that is charitable, apparently, can go far in soothing both the offending partner and the storytelling partner (McGregor & Holmes, 1999).

Sometimes, instead of escalating the conflict, couples find ways to accommodate each other, even when one or both have acted in a negative or destructive manner (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). Typically, our initial impulse in response to a negative act such as our partner embarrassing us in front of other people is to be hurtful in return. That is, we tend toward the primitive response of returning the hurt in kind.

Then other factors come into play. That initial impulse gets moderated by second thoughts: If I react this way, I'm going to hurt the relationship and I will suffer. What should I do? Should I lash back, or should I try to be constructive? Do I satisfy the demands of my ego, or do I accommodate for the good of the relationship?

Accommodation

accommodation process Interacting in such a way that, despite conflict, a relationship is maintained and enhanced.

These second thoughts, therefore, might lead to an **accommodation process**, which means that in interactions in which there is conflict, a partner does things that maintain and enhance the relationship (Rusbult et al., 1991). Whether a partner decides to accommodate will depend largely on the nature of the relationship. To accommodate, a person must value the relationship above his or her wounded pride. If the relationship is happy, if the partners are committed to each other, then they will be more likely to accommodate. People are also more likely to accommodate when they have no alternatives to the relationship.

Accommodation does not always mean being positive. Consistently reacting to a partner's negative behavior in positive ways may lessen the power that constructive comments can have under really serious circumstances. At times, it may be better to say nothing at all than to respond in a positive way. More important than being positive and agreeing with one's partner is to avoid being unduly negative (Montgomery, 1988). The health of a relationship depends less on taking good, constructive actions than on carefully avoiding insulting, destructive actions (Rusbult et al., 1991).

The way people in a committed relationship handle conflict, in short, is an excellent predictor of the health of the relationship. Relationship health correlates with handling conflict through accommodation rather than ignoring conflict or focusing on negatives. Research shows a positive association between happiness in a relationship and a couple's commitment to discuss and not ignore conflicts (Crohan, 1992). Those couples who ignore conflicts report less happiness in their relationship.

Couples who tend to focus on negatives when dealing with conflict are more likely to end their relationship. An initial study showed that couples whose relationship was in difficulty tended to express negative feelings, sometimes even in anticipation of an interaction, and to display high levels of physiological arousal, whereas couples whose relationship was not in difficulty expected interactions to be constructive and were able to control their emotions (Levenson & Gottman, 1983). A follow-up study of most of the couples revealed that those couples who had recorded high physiological arousal were likely to have separated or ended the relationship (Gottman & Levenson, 1986).

As should be clear, conflict is not the cause of relationship breakup, nor is the lack of overt conflict a sign that a relationship is well. Rather, it is the way couples handle conflict that counts. Mark Twain mused that people may think of perhaps 80,000 words a day but only a few will get them into trouble. So it is with relationships. Just a few "zingers"—contemptuous negative comments—will cause great harm (Notarius & Markman, 1993). Consider the husband who thinks of himself as an elegant dresser, a person with impeccable taste in clothes. If, one day, his wife informs him during a heated exchange that she finds his clothing vulgar and is often embarrassed to be seen with him, she has struck a sensitive nerve. Her comment, perhaps aimed at damaging his self-esteem, may provoke an even more hurtful response and lead to growing ill will between the two—or to defensiveness and withdrawal. One zinger like this can undo a whole week's worth of loving and supportive interchanges.

Forgiveness

It is relatively easy to see how accommodation can solve conflict in certain situations. For example, if there is a disagreement over whether to buy a new Corvette or how to

discipline the children, accommodation would be the most effective method of dealing with the conflict. However, there are events that occur in a relationship that might not be fixed by accommodation by itself. For example, an incident of infidelity may call for more than reaching an accommodation. Clinically speaking, infidelity presents one of the most serious challenges in a relationship and is one of the most difficult to handle in therapy (Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2005). Infidelity is particularly damaging to an ongoing relationship when the transgressor is caught in the act or is discovered through an unsolicited third-party account (Afifi, Falato, & Weiner, 2001).

Given the potentially damaging impact of infidelity on a relationship, how can a relationship be repaired following such an event? One possibility is forgiveness, which makes conflict resolution and accommodation easier to achieve (Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2004). In a case of infidelity the harmed partner will need to forgive the offender in order to begin the process of healing the relationship through conflict resolution and accommodation.

Most of us have some sense of what is meant by forgiveness. However, in order to study a concept like forgiveness empirically, we need a scientific definition. McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) define **interpersonal forgiveness** as changes involving a harmed individual showing decreased motivation to retaliate against one's relationship partner, a reduced tendency to maintain distance from the partner, and an increased tendency to express conciliation and goodwill toward the partner (pp. 321–322). McCullough et al. characterize forgiveness as the transition from negative motivational states (e.g., desire for revenge) to positive motivational states (e.g., conciliation) that help preserve a relationship.

interpersonal forgiveness A harmed individual's decreased motivation to retaliate against and a reduced tendency to maintain distance from one's relationship partner, and an increased willingness to express conciliation and goodwill toward the partner.

As you might expect, a wronged partner's likelihood of forgiving his or her transgressing partner relates to the severity of the transgression. The more severe the transgression, the less likely forgiveness will be given (Fincham, Jackson, & Beach, 2005). There is also a gender difference in how men and women respond to infidelity. Men, for example, are less likely to forgive sexual infidelity (e.g., your partner engaging in a passionate sexual relationship with another person) than emotional infidelity (e.g., your partner forming an intimate bond with another person) and would be more likely to terminate a relationship after sexual infidelity than after emotional infidelity (Shackelford, Buss, & Bennett, 2002). Conversely, women would be less likely to forgive an emotional infidelity than a sexual one and would be more likely to break up with a partner who engages in emotional infidelity. Forgiveness is also more likely to occur if there is a high-quality relationship between partners before the infidelity occurs (McCullough, Exline, & Baumeister, 1998).

What are the psychological factors that mediate forgiveness for infidelity? Forgiveness is related to whether empathy for the transgressing partner is aroused (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). McCullough et al. report that when a transgressing partner apologizes, it activates feelings of empathy for the transgressor and leads to forgiveness. Additionally, the type of attribution made for infidelity is important. For partners in a pre-transgression relationship that is of high quality, attributions for a transgression like infidelity are likely to be "benign" and arouse empathy, which will lead to forgiveness (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002).

Love in the Lab

John Gottman has studied marriages in a systematic and scientific manner by using a variety of instruments to observe volunteer couples who agree to live in an apartment that is wired and to have their behavior observed and recorded. Results of research from

what is known as the "love lab" suggest that there are three kinds of stable marriages (Gottman, 1995). The first type is the *conflict avoiding couple,* who survive by accentuating the positive and simply ignoring the negative; the second type is the *volatile couple,* who are passionate in everything they do, even fighting. Last is the *validating couple,* who listen carefully to each other, compromise, and reconcile differences (Gottman, 1995). All these styles work, because the bottom line is that each style promotes behavior that most of the time is positive.

four horsemen of the apocalypse Four factors identified as important in relationship dissolution: complaining/criticizing, contempt, defensiveness, and withdrawal from social interaction (stonewalling).

Gottman has been able to predict with uncanny accuracy the couples that are headed for divorce. He has identified four factors he refers to as the **four horsemen of the apocalypse.** These four factors are: complaining/criticizing, contempt, defensiveness, and withdrawal from social interaction (stonewalling). The last factor is the most destructive to a relationship and is a very reliable predictor of which couples divorce. There is no answer to stonewalling, but it means that communication has ceased and one partner is in the process of ostracizing the other by refusing to talk. Gottman suggested that there is a cascading relationship between the four horsemen of the apocalypse. Criticism may lead to contempt, which may lead to defensiveness and finally to stonewalling.

Most happy couples do not refuse to talk. Indeed, Gottman's observations in the love lab suggest that these partners make lots of attempts to repair a dispute to make sure the argument does not spiral out of control. These repair attempts, reaching out to the other, also include humor that works to defuse anger. Gottman (1995) noted that most marital problems are not easy to resolve. But happy couples realize that their relationship is more important than satisfying their own preferences and idiosyncracies. For example, one spouse may be a "morning" person and the other is not. So when this couple goes on trips, they compromise. The "morning" person is willing to wait a bit later to start the day and the "night" person is willing to wake up a bit earlier.

Friendships

According to Sternberg's definition mentioned earlier, liking involves intimacy without passion. Given that liking involves intimacy, does liking lead to romantic loving? The answer to this question appears to be no. Liking evidently leads only to liking. It is as if the two states—liking and loving—are on different tracks (Berscheid, 1988). People may be fond of each other and may go out together for a long time without their affection ever quite ripening into romantic love. Can we say, then, that liking and loving are basically different?

Rubin (1970, 1973) thought that liking and loving were indeed essentially different. He constructed two separate measures, a liking scale and a loving scale, to explore the issue systematically. He found that although both friends and lovers were rated high on the liking scale, only lovers were rated high on the loving scale. Moreover, separate observations revealed that dating couples who gave each other high scores on the loving scale tended more than others to engage in such loving actions as gazing into each other's eyes and holding hands. A follow-up study found that these couples were more likely to have maintained the relationship than were those whose ratings on the loving scale were lower. Therefore, according to Rubin, we may like our lovers, but we do not generally love those we like, at least with the passion we feel toward our lovers.

However, even if liking and (romantic) loving are conceptually different, this does not necessarily mean that friendship does not involve love or that some of the same motives that drive romantic relationships are absent in long-term friendships. The friendships that we form during our lives can be loving and intimate and passionate. Baumeister

and Bratslavsky (1999) suggested that passion can be just as strong in friendships except that the sexual component may be absent for a variety of reasons, the most obvious one being that the gender of the friend is wrong. The history of a friendship ought not to differ very much from that of a romantic relationship. When two individuals become friends, they experience attraction and affection and share disclosures and experiences. This rising intimacy leads to an increase in the passion of the friends, absent the sexual component (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999).

Gender Differences in Friendships

Female same-sex friendships and male same-sex friendships show somewhat different patterns (Brehm, 1985). Males tend to engage in activities together, whereas females tend to share their emotional lives. Richard and Don may play basketball twice a week, and while playing, they may talk about their problems and feelings, but that is not their purpose in getting together. Karen and Teri may have lunch twice a week with the express purpose of sharing their problems and feelings. Men live their friendships side by side; women live them face to face (Hendrick 1988; Wright, 1982).

The degree of this difference may be diminishing. In the last few decades, there has been a marked increase in the importance both men and women assign to personal intimacy as a source of fulfillment (McAdams, 1989). In fact, both men and women see self-disclosure as an important component in an intimate friendship. It is just that men may be less likely to express intimacy via self-disclosure (Fehr, 2004). Some research suggests that men and women self-disclose with equal frequency and perhaps intensity (Prager, Fuller, & Gonzalez, 1989). Additionally, both males and females place greater weight on the "communal" nature of friendship (i.e., friendship involving interpersonal closeness, intimacy, and trust) over the "agentic" nature (e.g., enhancing social status) of friendship (Zarbatany, Conley, & Pepper, 2004).

Men and women report having about the same number of close friends. Women tend to view their close friends as more important than men do, but men's close friendships may last longer than women's (Fiebert & Wright, 1989). Men typically distinguish between same-sex and cross-sex friendships. For men, cross-sex bonds offer the opportunity for more self-disclosure and emotional attachment. Men generally obtain more acceptance and intimacy from their female friends than from their male friends (Duck, 1988). However, for heterosexual men, cross-sex relationships are often permeated with sexual tension (Rawlins, 1992).

Women, in comparison, do not sharply distinguish among their friendships with males and females. They also see differences in their feelings for the various men in their lives. Some of their relationships with men are full of sexual tension, whereas other men may be liked, even loved, but sexual tension may be absent in those relationships.

Greater levels of interaction with females are associated with fewer episodes of loneliness for both men and women. Why? Interactions with women are infused with disclosure, intimacy, and satisfaction, and all these act as buffers against loneliness (Wheeler, Reis, & Nezlek, 1983). Women seem to make better friends than men do. It is telling that married men, when asked to name their best friend, are likely to name their wives. The expectations women have for friendship are often not satisfied by their spouse, and they tend to have at least one female friend in whom they confide (Oliker, 1989).

Friendships over the Life Cycle

Friendships are important throughout the life cycle. But they also change somewhat in relation to the stage of the life cycle and to factors in the individual's life. Sharing and

intimacy begin to characterize friendships in early adolescence, as a result of an increasing ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of others. Girls have more intimate friendships in their early adolescent years than boys do, and this tends to remain true throughout life (Rawlins, 1992).

Why are boys less intimate than girls with same-sex friends? The reason might be that girls trust their friends more than boys do (Berndt, 1992). Girls tend to listen to their friends and protect their friends' feelings, whereas boys tend to tease or embarrass their friends when the opportunity arises. The more intimate the adolescent friendships, the more loyal and supportive they are. However, disloyalty and lack of support can sometimes result from pressure to conform to the peer group. Of course, these issues are not unique to adolescent friendships. Conflicts between intimacy and social pressure simply take on different forms as people get older (Berndt, 1992).

As individuals move into early and middle adulthood, the end of a marriage or other long-term intimate relationship can profoundly affect the pattern of a couple's friendships. When a woman experiences the breakup of a relationship, her friends rally around and support her (Oliker, 1989). Often, the couple's close friends will have already guessed that the relationship was in trouble. When the breakup occurs, they tend to choose one partner or the other, or to simply drift away, unable to deal with the new situation.

In later adulthood, retirement affects our friendships. We no longer have daily contact with coworkers, and thus lose a source of potential friends. With increasing age, new issues arise. The death of a spouse affects friendships perhaps as much as the breakup of a marriage. People who are recently widowed can often feel like "fifth wheels" (Rawlins, 1992). The physical problems often associated with old age can lead to a conflict between a need for independence and a need for help (Rawlins, 1992). As a result, older friends might have to renegotiate their relationships to ensure that both needs are met. Whatever the problems, friendships among the elderly are often uplifting and vital. This is well illustrated by the following statement from a 79-year-old widower: "I don't know how anyone would ever live without friends, because to me, they're next to good health, and all your life depends on friendship" (quoted in Rawlins, 1992).

Gertrude and Alice Revisited

Stein and Toklas are important because of their role in the vibrant literary world of Paris just after the end of World War I, a period that lasted well into the 1930s. However, aside from their historical importance, the relationship of these two individuals reflects and exemplifies the basic characteristics of close relationships. We saw how the need for intimacy overcame Alice's very strong feelings of social anxiety. Their relationship changed over time, of course, ending, finally, in a companionate one. However, they touched all the vertices of Sternberg's triangle of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment.

Chapter Review

1. What is a close relationship?

   The essence of a close relationship is intimacy, friendship, sharing, and love between two people.

2. What are the roots of interpersonal attraction and close relationships?

Human beings possess positive social motives, the need for affiliation (the desire to establish and maintain rewarding interpersonal relationships) and the need for intimacy (the desire for close and affectionate relationships), which influence us to seek fulfilling relationships. There are, however, motives that may inhibit the formation of social relationships, particularly loneliness and social anxiety, which arise because of a person's expectation of negative encounters with and evaluations from others. Another important factor in interpersonal attraction and close relationships is our earliest interaction with our primary caregiver, which shapes our particular attachment style. Attachment styles are patterns of interacting and relating that influence how we develop affectional ties with others later in life. Each of these styles evolves into a working model, a mental representation of what we as individuals expect to happen in a close relationship.

3. What are loneliness and social anxiety?

Loneliness is a psychological state that results when we perceive an inadequacy in our relationships. It arises when there is a discrepancy between the way we want our relationships to be and the way they actually are. It is not related to the number of relationships we have. The way loneliness is experienced varies across cultures and across age levels. Loneliness has been found to have psychological effects (e.g., feelings of social exclusion and depression) and physical effects (e.g., precursors to hypertension and heart ailments).

Social anxiety arises from a person's expectation of negative encounters with others. A person with social anxiety anticipates negative interactions with others, overestimates the negativity of social interactions, and dwells on the negative aspects of social interaction. Many of these negative assessments are not valid, however. Social exclusion and teasing are a major factor in a person developing social anxiety.

4. What are the components and dynamics of love?

In Sternberg's triangular theory of love, love has three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment. Passion is the emotional component involving strong emotions. Intimacy involves a willingness to disclose important personal information. Commitment is the cognitive component of love involving a decision to maintain love long term.

Different mixes of these three components define different types of love. Romantic love, for example, has passion and intimacy; it involves strong emotion and sexual desire. Companionate love has intimacy and commitment; it is based more on mutual respect and caring than on strong emotion. Consummate love has all three components. Limerence is an exaggerated form of romantic love that occurs when a person anxious for intimacy finds someone who seems able to fulfill all of his or her needs. Unrequited love—love that is not returned—is the most painful kind of love. Secret love seems to have a special quality. Secrecy makes a partner more attractive and creates a bond between individuals.

5. How does attachment relate to interpersonal relationships?

During infancy, humans form attachments to their primary caregivers. These early attachments evolve into working models, which are ideas about what is expected to happen in a relationship. Wording models transfer from relationship to relationship. Individuals with a secure attachment style characterized their lovers as happy, friendly, and trusting and said that they and their partner were tolerant of each other's faults. Those with an avoidant attachment style were afraid of intimacy, experienced roller-coaster emotional swings, and were constantly jealous. An anxious-ambivalent style is associated with extreme sexual attraction coupled with extreme jealousy. The ways in which we respond to our earliest caregivers may indeed last a lifetime and are used when we enter adult romantic relationships.

6. How does interpersonal attraction develop?

Several factors influence the development of interpersonal attraction. The physical proximity effect is an initially important determinant of potential attraction. The importance of proximity can be partly accounted for by the mere exposure effect, which suggests that repeated exposure to a person increases familiarity, which in turn increases attraction. Proximity is also important because it increases opportunities for interaction, which may increase liking. The advent of the Internet as a communication tool has led to a reevaluation of the proximity effect. Individuals who live far apart can now easily contact each other and form relationships. Research shows that Internet relationships are similar to face-to-face relationships: They are important to the individuals involved, they are incorporated into everyday lives, and they are stable over time. However, face-to-face relationships tended to be more interdependent, involved more commitment, and had greater breadth and depth than Internet relationships. On the downside, individuals who use the Internet to form relationships tend to be socially anxious and lonely. These lonely individuals may still experience negative affect, despite having formed relationships over the Internet.

Another factor affecting attraction is the similarity effect. We are attracted to those we perceive to be like us in interests, attitudes, personality, and physical attractiveness. We tend to seek out partners who are at the same level of attractiveness as we are, which is known as the matching principle. Matching becomes more important as a relationship progresses. Similarity is most important for relationships that are important to us and that we are committed to. One hypothesis says that we are repulsed by dissimilar others, rather than being attracted to similar others. In fact, dissimilarity serves as an initial filter in the formation of relationships. Once a relationship begins to form, however, similarity becomes the fundamental determinant of attraction.

We also tend to be more attracted to people who are physically attractive, which is a third factor in interpersonal attraction. Generally, males are more overwhelmed by physical attractiveness than are females. Facial appearance, body appearance, and the quality of one's voice contribute to the perception of physical attractiveness. We tend to ascribe positive qualities to physically attractive people.

The downside to the physical attractiveness bias is that we tend to stigmatize those who are unattractive and ascribe negative qualities to them. In our society, obese people are particularly stigmatized and are portrayed negatively in art, literature, and films.

There is research evidence that the physical attractiveness bias is rooted in our biology: Even at 2 months, infants attend more to an attractive than an unattractive face. A new theory suggests that attractiveness, in the form of facial and body symmetry, may reflect genetic soundness. The physical attractiveness bias would thus have survival value for the species.

7. What does evolutionary theory have to say about mate selection?

Evolutionary theory suggests that symmetry (physical attractiveness) is reflective of underlying genetic quality. The preference for symmetry in potential mates may be instinctive. Physical appearance marked by high symmetry reveals to potential mates that the individual has good genes and is therefore, for both men and women, a highly desirable choice. Of course, good genes are not enough in a relationship. Successful relationships are long-term. "Good provider" models of mate selection emphasize the potential mate's commitment to the relationship and ability to provide resources necessary for the long-term health of that relationship.

8. How can one attract a mate?

Evolutionary theorists suggest that to attract a mate humans have developed love acts—behaviors, such as display of resources the other sex finds enticing, to attract a mate. Males tended to use displays of resources, whereas females tried to look more attractive and threatened to be unfaithful to arouse jealousy. Jealousy is evoked when a threat or loss occurs to a valued relationship due to the partner's attention to a rival. Men and women react differently to infidelity. Men are more concerned with sexual infidelity and women are more concerned with emotional infidelity. Even though men and women use different criteria for selecting a long-term mate (women look for resources, men for physical attractiveness), they have similar strategies for short-term relationships. When looking for a casual sexual partner, both men and women emphasize attractiveness.

9. How do close relationships form and evolve?

Models of how relationships develop emphasize a predictable sequence of events. One such model suggests that relationships develop across a series of stages involving an initial increase in shared activities followed by an increase in mutuality. That is, friends or lovers begin to share more intimate thoughts and feelings and become more and more interdependent.

Social penetration theory emphasizes that relationships change over time in both breadth (the range of topics people discuss and activities they engage in together) and depth (the extent to which they share their inner thoughts and feelings). Relationships progress in a predictable way from slight and superficial contact to greater and deeper involvement. An important contributor to increasing social penetration is self-disclosure, the ability and willingness to share intimate areas of one's life.

At some point, individuals begin to evaluate the status of their relationships according to the rewards and costs derived from them. According to social exchange theory, people evaluate a relationship against two comparison levels: what they think they should be getting out of a relationship and how the present relationship compares with potential alternatives. Equity theory maintains that people evaluate relationships according to the relative inputs and outcomes for each party in the relationship. If inequity exists, the relationship may be in trouble. However, many love relationships are governed by communal principles, in which individuals benefit each other in response to the other's needs. In communal relationships, one partner can put more into the relationship than the other. That is, people may deliberately underbenefit themselves for the sake of the relationship.

10. How are relationships evaluated?

We periodically evaluate the status of our intimate relationships. Any interruption in the normal sequence of events in a relationship sends up a red flag. Social exchange theory suggests that relationships are evaluated according to the rewards and costs derived from a relationship. As long as rewards outweigh costs, a relationship is likely to continue. However, even if rewards outweigh costs, we may not continue the relationship. We use comparison levels to evaluate the outcomes we derive from a relationship. One comparison level is our expectation of what we will obtain from the relationship. Another comparison level involves comparing the outcomes of the relationship we are presently in with the expected outcomes of possible alternative relationships. If we conclude that alternative relationships would not be better or may even be worse than a current relationship, we will likely stay in our relationship. However, if we believe that an alternative relationship holds out the promise of better outcomes, we may end a current relationship.

Another theory is equity theory, which says that we evaluate our relationships based on their rewards and costs, but it also focuses on our perception of equity, or balance, in relationships. An equitable relationship is likely to be stable, whereas an inequitable one is likely to be unstable. Inequity leads people to try to restore equity to the relationship.

11. What is a communal relationship?

A communal relationship is a relationship governed more by communal principles than principles of exchange or equity. In a communal relationship, individuals benefit each other in response to the other's needs. In such a relationship, partners tolerate inequity. Love relationships are often governed by communal principles. In such relationships, high costs are often associated with relationship satisfaction. Making sacrifices for the sake of a relationship can strengthen the relationship.

12. How do relationships change over time?

Research shows that couples who maintained their relationship show increased relationship satisfaction. Couples who broke up showed a decrease in relationship health just before the breakup. Long-term couples are very supportive of each other and that makes it easier to overcome hardship. A

belief in romantic destiny (i.e., that partners were made for each other) is positively related to relationship duration. In a sense, successful relationships involve partners sculpting a relationship by inducing changes in each other. Successful couples work hard at protecting the social structures that support their relationships.

13. What are the strategies couples use in response to conflict in a relationship?

One strategy for handling conflict is to construct a story to explain the event in a way that takes the blame away from their partner, showing the partner in the best possible light. This strategy, however, may just go so far to reduce conflict. Couples can also engage in an accommodation process, which means a partner focuses on positive things that maintain and enhance the relationship in the face of conflict. Accommodation is most likely in important relationships and when no potential alternative relationships exist. Couples who handle conflict via accommodation tend to have successful relationships. Dwelling on negativity harms a relationship.

There may be situations where accommodation is difficult to accomplish. For example, in a case of infidelity, accommodation may not solve a problem. In such cases couples may engage in interpersonal forgiveness. Forgiveness involves a decrease in the use of retaliation along with an increase in conciliation. Forgiveness involves a transition from a negative motivational state to a positive one. Forgiveness is made more difficult as the seriousness of a transgression increases.

14. What are the four horsemen of the apocalypse?

The four horsemen of the apocalypse are four steps identified by Gottman that can lead to the breakup of a relationship. They are complaining/criticizing, contempt, defensiveness, and withdrawal from social interaction (stonewalling). The last factor is the most damaging to a relationship and is highly predictive of marital divorce. There is a cascading relationship between the four horsemen: Criticism can lead to contempt. Contempt can lead to defensiveness, which can lead to withdrawal. Gottman has observed that successful couples take steps to repair a dispute to make sure the argument does not spiral out of control.

15. What is the nature of friendships?

According to Sternberg, friendships are characterized by liking and involve intimacy but not passion or commitment. Friendships are based on an ongoing interdependence between people. There are some gender differences in friendships, although these differences may have decreased in recent years. Both males and females need the intimacy offered by friendships. However, females still seem to view friends as more important than males do, and females make better friends. Interactions with females are more likely to be characterized by disclosure, intimacy, and satisfaction, all of which act as buffers against loneliness.

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