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2

LOVE RELATIONSHIPS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Review the ways in which love is viewed.
- 2.2 Describe how love is socially controlled.
- 2.3 Explain the theories of love.
- 2.4 Identify the process of falling in love and keeping love alive.
- 2.5 Illustrate the various ways in which love is a context for problems.
- 2.6 Review the sources, consequences, and coping mechanisms of jealousy.
- 2.7 Review the advantages and disadvantages of polyamory.

A plotline for the fifth season of *This is Us* (CBS television) was the wedding of Madison and Kevin where Madison was aware that Kevin did not love her but was willing to “do the right thing” and marry her and rear their two children together. She ended the relationship and canceled the wedding an hour before it was to occur. If you were Madison, would you marry someone who did not love you but who would be a good partner and help you rear two children? Alternatively, as Kevin, would you marry someone (who loved you) you did not love who was the mother of your two children? Of course, this is a question never asked by the over 40% of the world’s population living in places where arranged marriages are common and love feelings are not a relevant factor in the decision to marry.

It has been said that “the most important thing about love is to experience it.” The adage emphasizes that reading novels, watching movies, or hearing one’s peers talk about love does not convey the reality of the emotional experience. One must bite the apple to feel one’s teeth cutting through the fresh sweet taste.



Love is associated with many positive emotions.

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Love is a compelling emotion. Almost a third (31%) of 14,687 undergraduates reported that if they were “really in love,” they would marry someone they had known for only a short time (Hall & Knox, 2022). Watkins and Beckmeyer (2020) found that the desire to be in a romantic relationship was associated with happiness in those relationships and wanting to marry. Abundant research documents the positive effects of love on one’s physical (Rauer et al., 2014) and marital well-being (Reis et al., 2014). Whitton et al. (2020) noted the positive mental health outcomes (e.g., lower depression/anxiety/alcohol use) associated with involvement in a love relationship for heterosexual adults, though they found fewer benefits for gender minorities and those with other sexual orientations.

In the absence of love or involvement, one can feel lonely. Former U.S. Surgeon General V. H. Murthy (2020) declared an “epidemic of loneliness.” He noted that research by John Cacioppo (Dr. Loneliness) at the University of Chicago confirmed that we are hardwired to belong to an intimate group for survival. COVID-19 increased a sense of isolation for many and caused them to seek contact with others via social media (Cauberghe et al., 2021). Watkins and Beckmeyer (2018) noted that there is stress, anxiety, and depression associated with wanting a romantic relationship and being unable to achieve or sustain it. There are similar deteriorations in one’s physiological health, such as increased blood pressure and mortality. When partners have lived together for 50-plus years and one dies, the other has a shortened life span.

In this chapter, we examine the various meanings of love, styles, and theories. Along the way, we ask this basic question: How do you fall in love? We begin by reviewing the various meanings we attribute to love.

WAYS OF VIEWING LOVE

A common class exercise among professors who teach marriage and the family is to randomly ask class members to identify one word they most closely associate with love. Invariably, students suggest a wide array of words—commitment, feeling, trust, altruism—suggesting great variability in the way we think about love. In this section, we look at the various ways of conceptualizing love.

Romantic Love

Romantic love is an intense feeling wherein the lover believes in love at first sight, only one true love, and love conquers all. Romantic love has been documented in all human groups at all times in human history—it is not unique to Western society (Berscheid, 2010). Regarding love at first sight, 35% of 3467 undergraduate men and 24% of 11,228 undergraduate women reported that they had experienced love at first sight (Hall & Knox, 2022). Over half (53%) of Match.com men compared to 35% of Match.com women reported that they had felt an emotional connection by the second date, suggesting that men tend to fall in love more quickly (Match.com, 2021).



Colin Hanks and Scarlett Johansson reportedly met on *Saturday Night Live* and were smitten with each other. They also represent the principle of homogamy in that they are of similar celebrity status, age, race, level of attractiveness, and so on.

David Crotty/Patrick McMullan via Getty Images

One explanation for why men fall in love more quickly than women is that, from a biological and evolutionary perspective, men must be visually attracted to young, healthy females to impregnate them. This biologically-based reproductive attraction is labeled and interpreted as a love attraction so that the male feels immediately drawn to the female. Zsok et al. (2017) found that “love at first sight” is not love but an attraction that is labeled as love. Regarding love at first sight, Barelds and

Barelds-Dijkstra (2007) studied the relationships of 137 married couples or cohabitants and found that the relationship quality of those who fell in love at first sight was similar to that of those who came to know each other more gradually. Huston et al. (2001) found that, after 2 years of marriage, the couples who had fallen in love more slowly were just as happy as couples who fell in love at first sight.

An openness to falling in love and developing an intimate relationship is Erik Erikson's sixth stage of psychosocial development. He noted that between the ages of 19 and 40, most individuals move from "isolation to intimacy," wherein they seek to establish committed love relationships. Failure to do so leaves one vulnerable to loneliness and depression. The expectation for feeling chemistry in a relationship is relatively high.

Romantic love involves both lust and infatuation. **Lust** is about sexual desire and is biologically driven. **Infatuation** focuses on the loss of reason related to attraction. The word comes from the same root word as *fatuous*, meaning "silly" or "foolish." The infatuated are euphoric and idealize the partner. They magnify their lovers' positive qualities by saying, for example, "My partner is *always* happy," and overlook or minimize their negative ones, such as "My partner doesn't have a problem with alcohol but just likes to have a good time."

Portolan and McAlister (2022) identified the impact of COVID-19 on the culturally scripted master love plot (in which people meet, fall in love, marry, have children, and live happily ever after). To relieve the anxiety and fear brought by the pandemic, individuals desperately turned to dating apps. They "swiped, matched, and sent direct messages (DMs) in large numbers; became ambivalent and/or lost faith in the apps as a means by which they could embody the masterplot; deleted the apps; experienced loneliness; and returned quickly to the apps to repeat the cycle. While this pattern was not necessarily markedly different to the ways in which people used dating apps in the past, it was heightened and accelerated by the pandemic, as people desperately sought the certainty offered by the romantic masterplot" (p. 355).

To what degree are you a romantic? Take the romantic–realistic Self-Assessment for the answer.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

ROMANTIC–REALISTIC ATTITUDES TOWARD LOVE SCALE

This scale provides a way for you to assess the degree to which you are romantic or realistic in your view of love. Both romantics and realists can be happy individuals and successful relationship partners. After reading each statement, select the number that best reflects your level of agreement using the following scale:

1. Strongly Disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Somewhat Disagree
 4. Neutral
 5. Somewhat Agree
 6. Agree
 7. Strongly Agree
- _____ 1. Love doesn't make sense. It just is.
 - _____ 2. When love hits, you know it.
 - _____ 3. Common interests are really unimportant; as long as each of you is truly in love, you will adjust.
 - _____ 4. It doesn't matter if you marry after you have known your partner for only a short time as long as the two of you are in love.
 - _____ 5. If you are going to love a person, you will "know" after a short time.
 - _____ 6. You can love someone even though you do not like any of that person's friends.
 - _____ 7. As long as you really love a person, you will be able to solve the problems you have with the person.
 - _____ 8. There is really only one true love that each person has in their life.
 - _____ 9. It is necessary to be in love with the one you marry to be happy.

- _____ 10. When selecting a marriage partner, differences in education and religion do not matter if each partner is deeply in love.
- _____ 11. Somewhere, there is a soulmate for most people.
- _____ 12. In most cases, you will “know it” when you meet the right partner.
- _____ 13. Love is best described as an exciting thing rather than a calm thing.
- _____ 14. Most divorces probably result from falling out of love rather than failing to adjust.
- _____ 15. When you are in love, you are at risk for making unwise choices.
- _____ 16. Love comes only once in a lifetime.
- _____ 17. Love is an emotion you can’t control.
- _____ 18. When selecting a marriage partner, being of a different race does not matter if there is a mutual love relationship.
- _____ 19. No matter what anyone says, love cannot be understood.
- _____ 20. You will be happier if you listen to your heart rather than your head.

Scoring

After assigning a number from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), add the numbers. The higher your score—140 is the highest possible score—the more romantic your view of love. The lower your score—20 is the lowest possible score—the more realistic your view of love. The mid-point is 60. Scores lower than 60 suggest more realistic views of love; scores higher than 60 suggest more romantic views of love. Previous data using a scale similar to this have revealed that both men and women are more realistic than romantic, with men having slightly higher romantic scores than women.

Source: This scale was developed for this text and is to be used for general assessment. It is not designed to be a clinical diagnostic tool or as a research instrument.

What happens to romantic love feelings over time? Stanik et al. (2013) interviewed 146 couples who had been married from 3 to 25 years and confirmed a decrease in the intensity of love feelings across time. Hence, romantic love, which may develop quickly from a love-at-first-sight experience, over time may become realistic love. Sprecher and Hatfield (2017) noted that while love is important for beginning a relationship or marriage, it is less important for maintaining it. We now examine realistic love.

Realistic Love

Realistic love is also known as **conjugal love**, or married love. The realist does not believe in love at first sight, one true love, or that love conquers all. Rather, love is thought of as a phenomenon that develops over time, that there are many persons with whom one may fall in love, and that love is not a magic potion that solves all relationship conflicts/problems. Unlike romantic love, which has a sexual basis, realistic love is based on companionship and is characterized by calmness, comfort, and security.

Realists often do not trust love but vet their partners. See the Focus on Research section on vetting.

FOCUS ON RESEARCH

“LET’S FALL IN LOVE . . . AFTER I VET YOU”

Falling in love can be dangerous. Many free online dating sites (including Tinder, OkCupid, Hinge, and Plenty of Fish) do not vet or conduct background checks to identify previously convicted sexual assault felons. Being aware that rapists and liars are in the dating pool suggests the wisdom of being cautious (even suspicious) and vetting each potential/new romantic partner.

Sample

At two universities, 157 undergraduates completed a 31-item survey designed to reveal the degree to which they had vetted a current or past romantic partner.

Findings

Over three fourths (76%) of the respondents admitted to Facebook/social media vetting/stalking someone that they were seeing or considering seeing, with 44% stating that they told the person they had done so. Background checks on potential partners occurred less often, with 23% reporting that they had ever run a background check on someone they were seeing or considering doing so. There were no significant gender differences: 64% of the women compared to 59% of the men reported Facebook/social media stalking/vetting a current or potential partner.

Quotes From Focus Group Respondents

Two focus groups were held to provide qualitative data about love and vetting. Some quotes follow:

“Say, if I find somebody on, like, Tinder or find someone on Instagram and they DM me, I look them up on Facebook. I look their parents up on Facebook. And I go through their pictures seeing what they look like and seeing what they’ve done in their life and everything like that, and I would never tell them that obviously because that’s really weird that I would like look their parents up on Facebook too.” —*Alex*

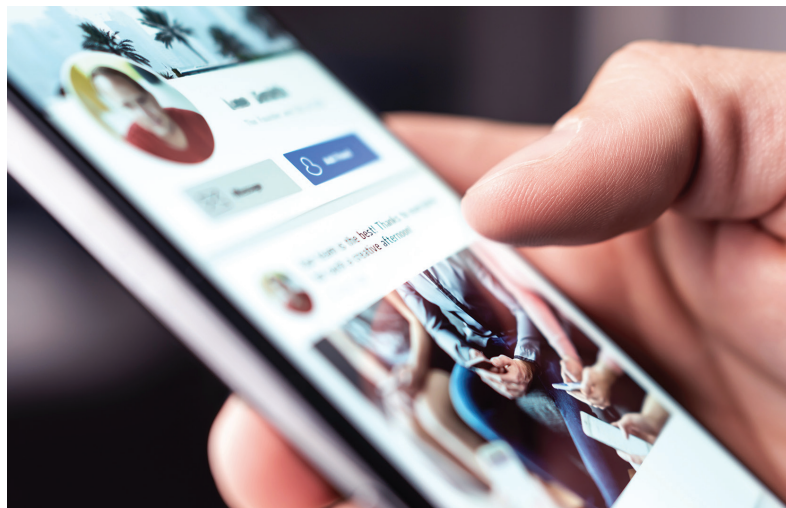
“So there’s this one time where I didn’t know if this guy had a girlfriend or not, and so I stalked him on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and he was DMing me that’s why, so um in all of his profile pictures he had his girlfriend, so I went and talked to him, and I told his girlfriend that he was, like, talking to other girls and insinuating hooking up and hanging out, and she was, like, ‘thank you so much,’ and she dealt with that information.” —*Claudia*

“My boyfriend that I met, one of his friends gave me his number, I never even saw him. I was like okay, I’ll give it a shot, so I texted him, and I was, like, first of all, what’s your Instagram, and I got all of his information. And I definitely looked at his exes and, like, the kind of people they were. I looked at his family, I just think that it’s important if we’re getting into a relationship that you kind of know the person that you’re talking to. I asked him what school he went to and asked my friends there if they knew about him and the kind of person he was.” —*Anna*

Conclusion

Vetting is unromantic. It signals distrust. Yet over three fourths of the respondents, mostly undergraduate women, reported having vetted a person they were considering meeting or had already been out with. The mistrust was born out of previous experiences with partners who had lied, cheated, or both. In addition, many free online dating sites including Tinder, OkCupid, Hinge, and Plenty of Fish do not screen their registries from previous sexual assault convictions. Hence, vetting may be more about survival than distrust.

Source: Adapted and abridged from Perkins, E. B., Dyer, C., Hilliard, T., & Knox, D. (2021). “Let’s fall in love . . . after I vet you”: Romance and vetting. *College Student Journal*, 55(1), 25–28.



About a quarter of undergraduates in one study reported vetting a new partner on social media.

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PERSONAL CHOICES

USING YOUR HEART OR YOUR HEAD?

Lovers are frequently confronted with the need to make decisions about their relationships, but they are divided on whether to let their heart or their head rule in such decisions. We asked students in our classes about deciding with their heart or their head. Some of their answers follow.

Heart

Those who relied on their hearts for making decisions—women more than men—felt that emotions were more important than logic and that listening to their heart made them happier. One sophomore female said,

In deciding on a partner, my heart knows what I want, what would make me most happy. My head tells me what is best for me. But I would rather have something that makes me happy than something that is good for me.

Forbes et al. (2022) noted that we are much more forgiving of someone we love than a stranger.

Head

Some undergraduates make relationship choices based on their head:

In deciding on a mate, I feel my head should rule because you have to choose someone that you can get along with after the new wears off. If you follow your heart solely, you may not look deep enough into a person to see what it is that you really like. Is it just a pretty face or a nice body? Or is it deeper than that, such as common interests and values? Also, I was in love with a guy. But he had no education or career goals—I knew we would need money when the children came, so I broke it off.

Some individuals feel that both the head and the heart should rule when making relationship decisions.

When you really love someone, your heart rules in most of the situations. But if you don't keep your head in some matters, then you risk losing the love that you feel in your heart. I think that we should find a way to let our heads and hearts work together.

There is an adage, “Don’t wait until you find the person you can live with; wait and find the person that you can’t live without!” In your own decisions, you might consider the relative merits of listening to your heart or head and moving forward, recognizing there is not one “right” answer for all individuals on all issues.

Triangular View of Love

Sternberg (1986) developed the “triangular” view of love (see Figure 2.1), which consists of three basic elements: intimacy, passion, and commitment. Intimacy refers to the emotional bond, and passion is conceptualized as sexual or physical attraction. From Instagram official to engagement to marriage, there are different levels of commitment, indicating how invested the partners are in the relationship.

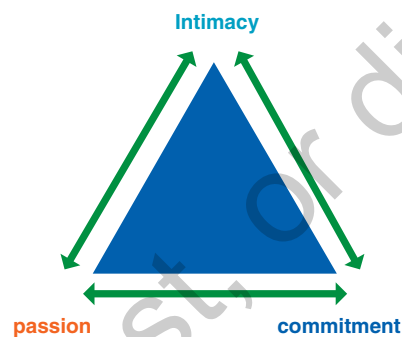
The presence or absence of these three elements provides a way to describe various types of love experienced between individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation.

1. **Nonlove**—the absence of intimacy, passion, and commitment. Two strangers looking at each other from afar are experiencing nonlove.
2. **Liking**—intimacy without passion or commitment. A new friendship may be described in these terms of the partners liking each other.
3. **Infatuation**—passion without intimacy or commitment. Two people flirting with each other in a bar may be infatuated with each other.
4. **Romantic love**—intimacy and passion without commitment. Two individuals connect at the emotional level and also find each other sexually attractive.

5. **Conjugal love** (also known as companionate or married love)—intimacy and commitment without passion. A couple married for 50 years is said to illustrate conjugal love.
6. **Fatuous love**—passion and commitment without intimacy. Couples who are passionately wild about each other and talk of the future but do not have an intimate connection with each other have a fatuous love.
7. **Empty love**—commitment without passion or intimacy. A couple who stay together for social and legal reasons (e.g., for their children) but who have no spark or emotional sharing between them have an empty love.
8. **Consummate love**—combination of intimacy, passion, and commitment—Sternberg's view of the ultimate, all-consuming love.

FIGURE 2.1

Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love



CULTURAL DIVERSITY

LOVE ELEMENTS AROUND THE WORLD

The Western notion of romantic love mainly derives from ancient Greek philosophers (Diogo, 2022). In a study of 25 countries, Sorokowski et al. (2021) confirmed the cultural universality of the three elements (intimacy, passion, commitment) of love in the triangular theory of love. Some patterns were also universal. For example, passion is more often characteristic of relationships of shorter duration, commitment characteristic of those of longer duration. Passion is also more common among American than Chinese couples.

Love Styles

There are several styles of love that provide additional ways to conceptualize love and describe the way lovers relate to each other (Lee, 1973, 1988). Keep in mind that individuals may view love in different ways at different times. These love styles are also independent of one's sexual orientation.

Ludic

The **ludic love style** views love as a game in which the player has no intention of getting seriously involved. Two essential skills of the ludic lover are to juggle several partners at the same time and to manage each relationship so that no one partner is seen too often. The other person is strung along. **Breadcrumbing** is the current cultural term for the modus operandi of the ludic lover—entice the person through text messages, winks, and promises of “hanging out” but don't come through. Tzeng et al. (2003) found that whereas men were more likely than women to be ludic lovers, ludic love characterized the love style of college students the least.

Pragma

The **pragma love style** is logical and rational—a partner is selected on the basis of what is practical. For example, a future spouse may be selected because one would be a good parent or is of the same religion or the parents approve of the partner rather than being in love.

Eros

The opposite of the pragmatic love style, the **eros love style** (also known as romantic love), is imbued with passion and sexual desire. Eros is the most common love style of college women and men (Tzeng et al., 2003) and has been associated with higher relationship satisfaction (Vedes et al., 2016). Mesko et al. (2021) surveyed 800 Hungarian adults ages 18 to 69 and also found that women were more likely to prefer the love style of Eros and men, ludic.

Mania

The **mania love style** is the out-of-control love, wherein the person “must have” the love object. Being jealous, possessive, dependent, and controlling are symptoms of mania love. One must be careful of becoming involved with a manic lover since these may turn into stalkers when the relationship ends.



One's grandparents are likely to feel a storge type of love, or companionate love, toward each other.

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Storge

The **storge love style**, also known as **companionate love**, is a calm, soothing, nonsexual love devoid of intense passion. Respect, friendship, commitment, and familiarity are characteristics that help to define the storge love relationship. The partners care deeply about each other but not in a romantic or lustful sense. Their love is also more likely to endure than a fleeting romance. One's grandparents who have been married 50-plus years are likely to have a storge type of love. Neto (2021) compared love perceptions by age group and found that the older the individual, the more important love became and the less important sex became.

Agape

Agape love style, also known as **compassionate love**, is characterized by a focus on the well-being of the person who is loved, with little regard for reciprocation. The love parents have for their children is often described as compassionate love and is associated with positive parenting (Miller et al., 2015). Key qualities of agape love are not responding to a partner's negativity and not expecting an exchange for positives but believing that the other means well and will respond kindly in time.

Hendrick and Hendrick (2020) noted that four love styles were associated with helping individuals and couples cope with COVID-19. These include eros, storge, pragma, and agape. Ludic and mania were not conducive to mutual nourishing of emotional interests.

Languages of Love

The **five love languages** have become part of American love culture (Chapman, 2010). A love language is behavior that is defined as an expression of love. The five love languages are gifts, quality time, words of affirmation, acts of service, and physical touch. Chapman encourages individuals to use the language of love most desired by their partner rather than the one preferred by the individual providing the love. Bunt and Hazelwood (2017) compared love languages in 67 heterosexual couples and found that 61% had the same primary love language.

Mostova et al. (2022) analyzed data on 100 heterosexual couples and found that higher relationship and sexual satisfaction were associated with a match on one partner's preferences and the other partner's behavioral expression of the same love language. Previously, Bland and McQueen (2018) studied the love languages in 100 couples and found that congruent love languages between the partners were associated with their reporting less distress in their relationship. In another study, Taft and Limeke-McLean (2019) found that undergraduates having the "quality time" love language reported the highest levels of relationship satisfaction. In contrast, partners who reported "receiving gifts" as their love language reported the worst relationship outcomes. Kenrick et al. (2022) took a more wide-angle view of love and suggested guidelines for making love last: to put our partner's interests ahead of our own, hug them frequently, and avoid modern technological aids to infidelity.

SOCIAL CONTROL OF LOVE



Globally, 40% of marriages are arranged by parents.

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Just as there are various ways of viewing love, it is also interesting to note how love is socially controlled. Indeed, when we think of love, we believe that it is a feeling generated between two lovers. We forget that love exists in a social context.

The ultimate social control of love is **arranged marriage**—mate selection pattern whereby parents select the spouse of their offspring (e.g., the person their child is to fall in love with). The practice of "arranged marriage" is still common in 40% of the world's population in countries such as India and Pakistan. In most countries in Asia, marriage is regarded as the linking of two families; the love feelings of the respective partners are irrelevant. Love is expected to follow marriage, not precede it.

Arranged marriages not only help to guarantee that cultural traditions will be carried on and passed to the next generation, but they also link two family systems together for mutual support of the couple.

Parents may know a family who has a son or daughter whom they would regard as a suitable partner for their offspring. If not, they may put an advertisement in the newspaper identifying the qualities they are seeking. The prospective mate is then interviewed by the family to confirm his or her suitability. Or a third person—a matchmaker—may be hired to do the screening and introduction.

Selecting a spouse for a daughter may begin early in the child's life. In some countries, such as Nepal and Afghanistan, child marriage occurs whereby young females from ages 8 to 12 are required to marry an older man selected by their parents. Some offspring may try to escape such a future by running away.

But child marriage in other contexts may be positive. Young women in Conakry, Guinea, who marry before age 18 note both advantages and disadvantages of such marriages; the advantages include health advantages for them and their children, delayed first pregnancy/birth spacing, and positive mental health (Efevbera & Farmer, 2021).

Nevertheless, while parents in countries such as India exercise direct control by selecting the partner for their son or daughter, American parents do their own “arranging.” They influence mate choice by moving to certain neighborhoods, joining certain churches, and enrolling their children in certain schools, colleges, or universities. Doing so increases the chance that their offspring will “hang out” with, fall in love with, and marry people who are similar in race, religion, education, and social class. Parents want their offspring to meet someone who will “fit in” and with whom they will feel comfortable.

Diamond (2003) emphasized that individuals are biologically wired and capable of falling in love and establishing intense emotional bonds with members of their own or opposite sex. Discovering that one's offspring is in love with and wants to marry someone of the same sex is a challenge for many parents. The complete absence of parental control of mate selection is illustrated by the use of technology by today's youth to find their own partner. Another example of loss of social control by parents is that their offspring may meet a partner at work (see the Family Policy section).

FAMILY POLICY

LOVE IN THE WORKPLACE

With prolonged hours spent with coworkers, delayed age of first marriage until late 20s, and increasing numbers of working women (approximately 47% of the workforce), the workplace has become a predictable context for romantic relationships to develop. More future spouses may meet at work than in academic, social, or religious settings. Employees in the hospitality and leisure industries reported the highest rate of workplace romance (Khalilzadeh & Pizam, 2021). In a survey of over 700 adults in the workforce, 30% of respondents aged 18 to 21 and 72% of those over the age of 50 reported having been involved in an office romance (Vault Careers, 2019).

Advantages of an Office Romance

Office romance is the establishment of a romantic relationship between two employees of the same organization. The energy that both fuels and results from intense love feelings can also fuel productivity at work. If the coworkers eventually marry or enter a nonmarital but committed long-term relationship, they may be more satisfied with and committed to their jobs than spouses whose partners work elsewhere. Working at the same location enables married couples to commute together, go to company-sponsored events together, and talk shop together.

Disadvantages of an Office Romance

However, workplace romances can also be problematic for the individuals involved as well as for their employers. When a workplace romance involves a supervisor and subordinate relationship, other employees might make claims of favoritism or differential treatment for that subordinate. In this example of a differential-treatment allegation, an employee may claim that the company denied them a job benefit because their supervisor favored another coworker—who happens to be the supervisor's girlfriend.

If a workplace relationship breaks up, it may be difficult to continue to work in the same environment, and others at work may experience the fallout. A breakup that is less than amicable may result in efforts by partners to sabotage each other's work relationships and performance, to instigate incidents of workplace violence and harassment, or to make allegations of sexual harassment.

Company Policies on Office Romances

Some companies have "nonfraternization" clauses that impose rules on workers talking about private issues or sending personal emails. Some British firms have "love contracts" that require workers to tell their managers if they are involved with anyone in the office. Other companies have anti-nepotism policies prohibiting married couples from working in the same department.

Most companies do not prohibit romantic relationships among employees. However, the company may have a policy prohibiting open displays of affection between employees in the workplace and romantic relationships between a supervisor and a subordinate. Most companies have no policy regarding relationships at work and generally regard romances between coworkers as "none of their business."

THEORIES ON THE ORIGINS OF LOVE

Various theories have been suggested regarding the origins of love, though none is free from criticism (see Table 2.1).

TABLE 2.1 ■ Love Theories and Criticisms

THEORY	CRITICISM
Evolutionary —love is the social glue that bonds parents with dependent children and spouses with each other to care for offspring.	The assumption that women and children need men for economic and emotional survival is not true today. Women can have and rear children without male partners.
Learning —positive experiences create love feelings.	The theory does not account for (1) why some people share positive experiences but do not fall in love and (2) why some people stay in love despite negative behavior by their partner.
Psychosexual —love results from blocked biological drive.	The theory does not account for love couples who report intense love feelings and have sex regularly.
Sociological —one's social context is the source of learning the meaning, expression, and objects of love.	The theory does not acknowledge that personalities vary in regard to how they process what they are taught about love.
Biochemical —love is chemical. Oxytocin is an amphetamine-like chemical that bonds mother to child and produces a giddy high in young lovers.	The theory does not specify how much of what chemicals result in the feeling of love. Chemicals alone cannot create the state of love; cognitions are also important.

Evolutionary Theory

Love has an evolutionary purpose: It is a bonding mechanism between adults who become parents during the time their offspring are dependent infants. Love's strongest bonding lasts about 4 years after the birth of a child, the time during which children are most dependent and when two parents are most beneficial to the developing infant. "If a woman was carrying the equivalent of a twelve-pound bowling ball in one arm and a pile of sticks in the other, it was ecologically critical to pair up with a mate to rear the young," observed anthropologist Helen Fisher (Toufexis, 1993). The "four-year itch" is Fisher's term for the time at which parents with one child are most likely to divorce—the time when one parent can more easily survive without parenting help from the other. If the couple has a second child, doing so resets the clock, and "the seven-year itch" is the next most vulnerable time.

Learning Theory

Learning theory emphasizes that the capacity to love is learned in a family context where the individual was loved and observed love and affection between others in the family of origin (Hadiwijaya et al., 2020). Love for a specific individual may be a response to the behaviors of that person toward you. Individuals in a new relationship who smile at each other, compliment each other, touch each other endearingly, tell each other that they are in love, and do things for each other are engaging in behaviors that encourage the development of love feelings. When these positive behaviors occur in a relationship context with no negative behavior toward each other, love feelings may flourish.

Levels of emotional control and reactivity may be learned. Price et al. (2021) examined two aspects of emotionality: emotional cutoff (EC) and emotional reactivity (ER). The former refers to distancing oneself from intimacy with another, becoming defensive, and disconnecting emotionally. The person is aloof. In a sample of 668 participants (334 married couples), the men reported significantly higher levels of EC than women. Emotional reactivity (ER) occurs when the person is hypersensitive to stressful interaction, has difficulty regulating emotional responses, and becomes moody or argumentative. Women's ER was significantly higher than men's. Might these different love patterns have a cultural learning origin—men learning to “stay in control” and women learning to “express their emotions”?

Sociological Theory

Sociologist Marty Zusman (2022) noted that while reproductive bonding is based on biology, love is based on social context—that one learns from others that love exists, that it is an experience to seek with a partner, and that to lose love is to have feelings of despair. Social context also teaches who appropriate love objects are. Consider the demographic characteristics of age, race, and religion. Love is not blind but sees and directs individuals of similar age, race, and religion to each other.

Psychosexual Theory

According to psychosexual theory, love results from blocked biological sexual desires. In the sexually repressive mood of his time, Sigmund Freud referred to love as “aim-inhibited sex.” Love was viewed as a function of the sexual desire a person was not allowed to express because of social restraints. In Freud's era, people would meet, fall in love, get married, and have sex. Freud felt that the socially required delay from first meeting to having sex resulted in the development of “love feelings.” By extrapolation, Freud's theory of love suggests that love dies with marriage, which offers ready access to one's sexual partner.

Biochemical Theory

Love has a biological basis (Carter & Porges, 2013; Sorokowski et al., 2021). **Oxytocin** is a hormone usually associated with the onset of maternal behavior during labor, but it may be manufactured in both women and men when an infant or another person is present—hence, it is not dependent on the birth process. Oxytocin has been referred to as the “cuddle chemical” because of its significance in bonding. Later in life, oxytocin seems operative in the development of love feelings between lovers during sexual arousal. Oxytocin may be responsible for the fact that more women than men prefer to continue cuddling after intercourse.

Phenylethylamine (PEA) is a natural, amphetamine-like substance that makes lovers feel euphoric and energized. The high that they report feeling just by being with each other is from PEA that the brain releases into their bloodstream. The natural chemical high associated with love may explain why the intensity of passionate love decreases over time. “Love junkies” are those who go from one love affair to the next to maintain the high. Alternatively, some lovers break up and get back together frequently as a way of making the relationship new again and keeping the high going.

The neurobiology of love emphasizes that romantic love and maternal love are linked to the perpetuation of the species. Romantic love bonds a couple together to reproduce, take care of, and socialize new societal members, whereas maternal love ensures that the mother will prioritize the care of her baby over other needs. Because of the social functions of these love states, neurobiologists have learned

via brain imaging techniques that both types of attachment activate regions of the brain that access the brain's reward system, areas rich in oxytocin and vasopressin receptors. Both lovers and mothers are very happy and focused. They are on a biological mission, and the reward center of their brain keeps them on track.

FALLING IN LOVE AND KEEPING LOVE ALIVE

Various social, physical, psychological, physiological, cognitive, and timing conditions are involved in the process of falling in love.

Social Conditions for Love

We noted earlier that love is socially controlled. There is also the notion that it is socially created. Could we fall in love if we had never heard the term? Our society promotes love through popular music, movies, and novels. These media convey the message that love is an experience to pursue, enjoy, and maintain. People who fall out of love are encouraged to try again: Americans grow up in a cultural context that encourages them to turn on their radar for love. They are also socialized to spend money in reference to love (see Another Look at Valentine's Day).



Valentine's Day is a day of joy for some and a day of feeling left out for others.

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ANOTHER LOOK AT VALENTINE'S DAY

February 14 of each year is Valentine's Day—a day of celebrating one's romantic partner or spouse. But for many people, Valentine's Day is problematic and brings with it not the joy of celebration, but stress, disappointment, and depression.

For those individuals who are in a relationship, Valentine's Day can create unnecessary stress and anxiety. If our partner has high expectations for how we celebrate the day, we may feel pressure to "get it right." We may have learned that we are not supposed to ask our partner what he or she would like, but rather, we are supposed to know or figure it out. We are expected to say the right things and give the right gifts. But what if we get it wrong? So many people agonize needlessly about how to please their partner on Valentine's Day. Or they suffer from hurtful disappointment when their partner "forgets" Valentine's Day or celebrates it in a way that is not up to their standards.

In addition, the cultural images of loving, romantic relationships that are emphasized on Valentine's Day may compel partners who are in a less than satisfactory relationship to admit to themselves, and to their partners, that their relationship is not working.

So how can you avoid Valentine's Day stress, anxiety, and disappointment? If you are in a relationship, why not make decisions together about how to celebrate Valentine's Day, or whether to celebrate it at all? Discuss openly with each other your respective desires and expectations. Having this conversation can help you avoid stress and disappointment or help you address and resolve underlying differences in your relationship.

If you do not have a love partner, focus on celebrating your independence/freedom, your friends, and your family. Create your own unique and personal way to celebrate whoever is special in your life.

If you have lost your partner due to an unwanted breakup or death, anticipate that Valentine's Day may magnify your grief. Some surviving partners and spouses find it helpful to make plans to do something with friends or to schedule some activity on Valentine's Day, so they are not alone with their sadness. Regardless, recognize that the cultural messaging of Valentine's day is commercial—it is about inducing spending behavior and using "love" to generate the \$27 billion that will be spent in reference to this one day. Resist and make Valentine's Day a good day for you . . . including ignoring it completely!

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

BODY SIZE PREFERENCES

American obsession/preference for thin and trim is not universal. Two researchers compared body mass preferences among 300 cultures throughout the world and found that 81% of cultures preferred a female body size that would be described as "plump" (Brown & Sweeney, 2009).

Psychological Conditions for Love

Psychological conditions associated with falling in love include perception of reciprocal liking, personality, high self-esteem, and self-disclosure.

Perception of Reciprocal Liking

One of the most important psychological factors associated with falling in love is the perception of reciprocal liking (Riela et al., 2020). When one perceives that he or she is desired by someone else, this perception has the effect of increasing the attraction toward that person. Having someone look at you and smile conveys the message that it is OK for you to approach the other person and say "hello."

Personality Qualities

The personality qualities of the love object have an important effect on a person falling in love. Viewing the partner as intelligent or having a sense of humor are examples of qualities that make the lover want to be with the beloved. The person who falls in love must also be available to do so. Individuals, such as artists, musicians, or poets, who are immersed in creative, artistic endeavors describe less interest in being involved in a love relationship since they may derive their emotional satisfactions from their solitary work (Campbell & Kaufman, 2017).

Self-Esteem

High self-esteem is important for falling in love because it enables individuals to feel worthy of being loved, of being positively evaluated. Feeling good about yourself allows you to believe that others are capable of loving you. Individuals with low self-esteem doubt that someone else can love and accept them. Weisskirch (2017) noted that high self-esteem is associated with less fear of being negatively evaluated by a dating partner. Experiencing reciprocal love can also enhance one's self-esteem. Feeling loved, desired, and accepted by another person may boost one's confidence since one feels that he or she is worthy of love.

People who have never felt loved and wanted may require constant affirmation from a partner as to their worth and may cling desperately to that person out of fear of being abandoned. Such

dependence—the modern term is “codependency”—may also encourage staying in unhealthy or abusive relationships because the person may feel “this is all I deserve.”

Self-Disclosure

Disclosing one’s true self is necessary if one is to fall in love—to feel invested in another. By revealing one’s past or feelings about whatever, one feels closer to the person who now has this information. However, it is not easy for some people to let others know who they are, what they feel, or what they think. **Alexithymia** is a personality trait that describes a person with little affect. The term means “lack of words for emotions,” which suggests that the person does not experience or convey emotion. Persons with alexithymia (also known as aromantics) are not capable of psychological intimacy, have a sense of hopelessness, and are vulnerable to suicide (Bergmans et al., 2020). Lloyd et al. (2021) noted that alexithymia may be associated with childhood maltreatment where the person learned to mute awareness of emotion.

Physiological Condition of Love

Physical chemistry between partners is unpredictable—it does not happen between all people—but is powerful when it occurs. Partners who feel strong chemistry toward each other escalate their relationship; those who do not have less motivation to become or to stay involved.

Cognitive Condition for Love

One must label the anxious positive feelings about one’s partner as love in order to be in love. Thinking about one’s beloved all the time, looking forward to being with the partner, and feeling immense joy when with the partner must be regarded as “I’m in love” for the experience to be real. Hence, one’s cognitions activate the feelings of love. Shakespeare noted in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, “Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind, and therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.”

“Right Time” Condition of Love

There are only certain times in life—for example, when educational and career goals are met or within sight—when people are open to or seek a love relationship. When those times occur, a person is likely to fall in love with the person who is there and who is also seeking a love relationship. Another example of timing as a factor of love is after a divorce. One may be accustomed to being involved and in love and thus be open to a new romance. Hence, many love pairings exist because each of the individuals is available to the other at the same time—not because they are particularly suited for each other.

Technology and Love

Advancement in technology such as dating apps has impacted how people find love (McKeever, 2022). Love at first swipe (via technology) is the way love begins for 20% of new relationships (Kwok & Wescott, 2020). Hence, whether or not some love relationships develop has become dependent on which way an individual swipes after viewing a profile photo online.

The nurturance and maintenance of a love relationship is similarly impacted by technology in that the partners may “go public on social” regarding their relationship status, negotiate how often they will text each other, cope with how they feel about each other texting others, and deal with “technoference” (the distractions that come from cell phones, computers, and games; Kwok & Wescott, 2020).

TECHNOLOGY AND FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

DIGITAL AFFECTION

With 100% of American young adults aged 18 to 29 owning a cell phone (Pew Research Center, 2021), texting is a crucial vehicle for relationship enhancement and development. Texting typically occurs many times throughout the day between couples. With school, work, and other obligations, it is not possible to write a long, heartfelt love letter multiple times every day. Although words can convey affection and deep emotion, emojis can also be sent to express one’s love and affection digitally (Manganari, 2021).

Emojis are digital images (pictogram) used to express emotions. The first emoji was created to enhance mobile communication in Japan (Financial Express, 2021; Wagner et al., 2020). People around the world have used emojis to convey basic emotions such as happiness, sadness, and excitement (Hashmi et al., 2021). One in five tweets on Twitter includes an emoji (Emojipedia, 2021). Manganari (2021) reviewed 46 studies between 1998 and 2020 and found a small percentage of emojis account for 99% of all emoji symbols. The most popular emojis are ones that convey positive emotions. The yellow smiley face 😊 and yellow face with tears of joy 😂 are among the most popular emojis, depending on what platform was surveyed (Emojipedia, 2021; Sampietro, 2021). Women are more likely to use emojis in digital communication (López-Rúa, 2021; Was & Hamrick, 2021).

Emojis are informal and easy to use (Hegner et al., 2021). They can be used alone for quick replies (e.g., replying with a thumbs-up emoji indicates agreement with enthusiasm 👍), and most emojis were placed at the end of the message (Shoeb, 2021). Studies have shown that emojis promote playfulness and greater engagement (McShane et al., 2021) and are most often used in the context of discussing less serious topics (López-Rúa, 2021). Emojis not only elicit humor but also play a vital role in understanding the tone of text messages (Sampietro, 2021; Shoeb, 2021; Surikov & Egorova, 2020). Use of emojis can also be used to enhance mental health services. While emojis can be used to convey emotions and signal intentions, they may lead to misunderstandings due to differences in perception and interpretation (Cherbonnier & Michinov, 2022).

Although emojis emerged in online communication, they have entered mainstream culture. New emojis are created to meet the needs of a changing society. For example, new emojis, such as the mask-wearing emoji 🧑‍🤔, surfaced during the pandemic (Das, 2021; Erlandsson & Kristoffersson, 2021). An increasing awareness of social justice has also impacted the digital world—for example, skin tone can be changed in emojis, there is an emoji for Black Lives Matter 🗳️🇺🇸, and there is an emoji for a hand-holding gay couple 🏳️‍🌈👫 (Labor & Latosa, 2021; Wagner et al., 2020).

Due to the rise of smartphones, couples' digital communication is no longer limited to the written text and emojis, but it also includes pictures and other audiovisual files (e.g., memes)—some may even have connotations or implications of drug or sexual behavior. New emojis are being created every year, and technology will continue to influence courtship and social relations.

Keeping Love Alive Across Time

Partners interested in keeping their love alive across time might consider the following:

- **Select your partner carefully**—one who has a similar background, interests, values, goals, education, and religion and a personality compatible with yours makes for a good beginning.
- **Drop your expectations**—be aware of the principle of **satiation** (a stimulus loses its value with repeated exposure) and don't be shocked to discover that your partner and your relationship does not stay at the high level of fun, excitement, sex, adventure, and enjoyment that characterized its early stages.
- **Expect unpredictable life events to alter everything**—death of a parent, infertility, or a serious car accident can change you, your partner, and your relationship. Allow for major life-changing events to come your way.
- **Keep yourself happy and healthy**—take care of your own needs so that you bring to your partner a happy, engaged, and healthy partner. Do not expect your partner to “fulfill” or “complete” you.
- **Support your partner's interests**—facilitate whatever your partner wants or needs to make his or her own life a fulfilling one.
- **Nurture emotion and physical engagement with each other**—so that neither is vulnerable to looking outside the relationship to fulfil these needs.
- **Plan and execute new activities together**—change the context of the mundane and try a new adventure.
- **Be responsible and keep your relationship on track**—“If you see something, say something” means if you feel that you and your partner are drifting apart, address the issue and change your respective behaviors to put your relationship back on course. Langeslag and Surti (2022) found that just taking time to look at the photo of one's spouse was associated

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with an increase in love feelings. If you don't take time to nurture your relationship, you will be taking time to write out checks to your lawyer over your divorce settlement.

LOVE PROBLEMS

For all of its joy, love is associated with problems. "I've got the blues" is a theme of country-western music. In this section, we review seven such problems.

Unrequited or Unreciprocated Love

Unrequited love is a one-sided love where one's love is not returned. An example is from the short story "Winter Dreams" by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Dexter Green is in love with Judy Jones. "He loved her, and he would love her until the day he was too old for loving—but he could not have her." Blomquist and Giuliano (2012) assessed the reactions of a sample of adults and college students to a partner who said, "I love you." The predominant response by both men and women was, "I'm just not there yet." Both genders acknowledged that while this response was honest, it hurt the individual who was in love.

Making Risky, Dangerous Choices

Plato said that "love is a grave mental illness," and some research suggests that individuals in love make risky, dangerous, or questionable decisions. Nonsmokers who become romantically involved with a smoker are more likely to begin smoking (Kennedy et al., 2011). Similarly, couples in love and in a stable relationship are less likely to use a condom (Milhausen et al., 2018; Skakoon-Sparling & Cramer, 2020).

Difficulty in Maintaining a Romantic Relationship

Anyone who has been in love knows that there are problems. Peel and Caltabiano (2021) analyzed data from an internet sample of 696 individuals (ages 15–80) throughout the world with relationship experience who identified five reasons they found it difficult to maintain a romantic relationship:

- Fear of being hurt or rejected (again!), fear of being abandoned (again!), fear of commitment ("I commit and they dump me")
- Self-esteem issues, not feeling good enough, needing constant reassurance
- Broken trust, having been cheated on inhibits investment and nontrust of one's partner
- High expectations or anticipation of fairy-tale romantic perfection
- Lack of relationship skills, inability to express dissatisfaction or negotiate conflict

The researchers also mentioned that one of the reasons a romantic relationship ends is the attachment/avoidant behavior of one or both partners—attachment in the sense of being anxious and needing the relationship to work out and avoidant in the sense of not investing in the relationship and finding ways to sabotage it. Peel and Caltabiano (2021) defined romantic self-sabotage as employing "a pattern of self-destructive behaviors in relationships to impede success or withdraw effort and justify failure."

Disapproval of Parents and Friends

Some parents disapprove of the partner their son or daughter is involved with to the point that they will end the relationship with their child. "They told me I couldn't come home if I kept dating this guy, so I stopped going home," said one college student who was involved with a partner of a different race. Choosing to end a relationship with one's parents is a definite downside of love. There are also occasions whereby a friend does not approve of or support one's relationship or partner, so the friendship ends.

Simultaneous Loves

While most individuals in a dating relationship expect fidelity in their partners, sometimes an individual is in love with two or more people at the same time. While this is acceptable in polyamorous relationships where the partners agree on multiple relationships (discussed later in the chapter), simultaneous loves may become a serious problem with a partner who expects monogamy.

Emotionally Abusive Relationships

Forty percent of 11,423 undergraduate females compared to 26% of 3,558 undergraduate males reported that they had been involved in an emotionally abusive relationship with a partner (Hall & Knox, 2022). Rejected lovers, most of whom are men, may stalk—repeated pursuit of a target victim that threatens the victim’s safety—a partner because of anger and jealousy and try to win the partner back. Eighteen percent of the males and 29% of the females in the above sample reported that they had been stalked. Abusive relationships and stalking will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 13.

Gaslighting

Hoskins et al. (2020) reviewed the origin of gaslight and gave examples of the strategies men use in interacting with women on six different dating apps. The term “gaslight” originates from Patrick Hamilton’s 1938 play, *Gas Light*, which was made into a movie in 1944. **Gaslighting** refers to a type of abuse that involves psychological manipulation designed to unsettle the victim and make them feel crazy, questioning reality and their own sanity. In her personal use of dating apps, artist Sarey Ruden recognized and documented gaslighting and other manipulations directed at women through online dating. Several of the strategies and examples are presented in Table 2.2. Awareness of these strategies may allow one to be attentive when they are used.

TABLE 2.2 ■ Gaslighting Strategies and Examples

Goading	“I would love to have a fight with you if we were dating. Would be fun!”
Demoralization	“And don’t get too high on yourself from the amount of messages...you clearly don’t know what to do with them... every girl gets a lot of messages.”
Ageism	“You need to get off your pedestal and be a little more humble...your 36...you’ll be 40ty soon enough...your already about to expire...so how about trying the a new approach cause what you been doing the past 20ty yrs of your life clearly is wrong...”
Political attack	“This is today’s feminist movement that we as a country have embraced. That the left has embraced not conservative America. Do you feel empowered now that you can abort a full term baby? Personally I think it’s murder.”
Name-Calling	“You are a bit too much. Anyone ever told you you’re overdramatic with a little bit of crazy.”
Gendered Expectations	“A strong woman can be happy being a woman and not go about trashing men that’s everything that’s wrong with feminism. Hope you never have a son the way feminist vilify men today. Really sad times when good men are somehow looked at as evil.”
Deconstruction of Standards	“Nobody in this world will meet 100% of your requirements. Not going to happen...”
Catfishing	“I hope you didn’t pay \$500 for your profile pic” “I paid” “So, this picture clearly is not you then.” “O.K.”
Apologizing	“Good...u probably been single for a while...” “I’m sorry that I offended u...can we start over??”

Source: Hoskins et al. (2020).

Romance Fraud

Carter (2021) identifies the steps involved in a romance fraud: making contact with an emotionally vulnerable individual, flaunting one's wealth, and then expressing a need for immediate cash, which can be returned by a particular deadline. Statements of love and future marriage are offered. The victim has already been socialized to trust and to be isolated and does not see the scam until it is too late. Romance fraud can be understood through the lens of domestic violence and abuse, manipulation, and so on.

Profound Sadness and Depression When a Relationship Ends

Just as love is associated with relationship happiness, its end may cause sadness and depression. Fisher et al. (2010) noted that "romantic rejection causes a profound sense of loss and negative affect. It can induce clinical depression and in extreme cases lead to suicide and/or homicide." The researchers studied brain changes via magnetic resonance imaging of 10 women and five men who had recently been rejected by a partner but reported they were still intensely "in love." Participants alternately viewed a photograph of the partner who rejected them and a photograph of a familiar individual interspersed with a distraction-attention task. Their responses while looking at the photo of the person who rejected them included feelings of love, despair, good and bad memories, and wondering about why this happened. Brain image reactions to being rejected by a lover were similar to withdrawal from cocaine. Of course, breaking up is common, and most people view it as the price for being in the love game and move on. In Chapter 15 on divorce, we talk about how to minimize distress in response to a breakup and how to move forward.

JEALOUSY IN RELATIONSHIPS

Jealousy is an emotional response to a perceived or real threat to an important or valued relationship. Half of 3,448 undergraduate males and 53% 11,390 undergraduate females agreed that "I am a jealous person" (Hall & Knox, 2022). People experiencing jealousy fear being abandoned and feel anger toward the partner or the perceived competition. Jealousy may be innate in that, in most traditional contexts, it reflects one's psychological survival and well-being since one's source of interpersonal reinforcement is threatened. Jealousy may also be about one's social survival since the termination of a relationship will impact one's relationships with others (e.g., friends the couple share in common). Finally, jealousy may be a response to any situation that threatens the diversion of a mate's resources and investment and not just diversion to a potential mate (Sucre et al., 2022).

Jealousy is a learned emotion and varies with social context. Polygynous Mormons reflect the context where wives are socialized to "share" the husband. Not only is the principle of multiple wives "God's will," but also the wives embrace the presence of other wives who help out with child care and housework. While her research findings have been questioned, Margaret Mead noted that the Samoans were absent in reporting feelings of jealousy (Freeman, 1999).

Types of Jealousy

Barelds-Dijkstra and Barelds (2007) identified three types of jealousy as reactive jealousy, anxious jealousy, and possessive jealousy. **Reactive jealousy** consists of feelings that are a reaction to something the partner is doing, such as texting a former lover. **Anxious jealousy** is obsessive ruminations about the partner's alleged infidelity that make one's life a miserable emotional torment. **Possessive jealousy** involves an attack on the partner or the alleged person to whom the partner is showing attention. Jealousy is a frequent motive when one romantic partner kills another.

Causes of Jealousy

Jealousy can be triggered by a number of external or internal factors.

External Causes

External factors refer to behaviors a partner engages in that are interpreted as (1) an emotional or sexual interest or both in someone or something else or (2) a lack of emotional or sexual interest or both in the primary partner. Visser et al. (2020) noted jealousy in heterosexual relationships may have an evolutionary basis. Women are jealous since their partner's interest in someone else may result in the resources of the man being diverted away from their offspring. Men may be upset if their partner's infidelity results in a child whom they would be expected to devote resources to. Jealousy in lesbian and gay male relationships is generally less intense.

Internal Causes

Internal causes of jealousy refer to characteristics of individuals that predispose them to jealous feelings, independent of their partner's behavior. Examples of internal causes often involve having been cheated on in a previous relationship and being mistrustful. Another reason is having low self-esteem and feeling that one is not good enough to keep a partner's interest. Finally, a feeling that one does not have any other options for a partner may make one desperate to hold on to one's partner and incite suspicion if there is a threat of loss.

Consequences of Jealousy

Jealousy can have both desirable and undesirable consequences.

Desirable Outcomes

Reactive jealousy may have a positive outcome on one's relationship. Not only may reactive jealousy signify that the partner is cared for but also the partner may learn that the development of other romantic and sexual relationships is unacceptable (Barelds-Dijkstra & Barelds, 2007).

The researchers noted that making the partner jealous may also have the positive function of assessing the partner's commitment and of alerting the partner that one could leave for greener mating pastures. Hence, one partner may deliberately evoke jealousy to solidify commitment and ward off being taken for granted. In addition, sexual passion may be reignited if one partner perceives that another might take one's partner away. That people want what others want is an adage that may underlie jealousy.

Undesirable Outcomes

Anxious jealousy, with its obsessive ruminations about the partner's alleged infidelity, can make individuals miserable. They are constantly thinking about the partner being with a new person, which they interpret as confirmation of their own inadequacy. And if the anxious jealousy results in repeated unwarranted accusations, a partner can tire of such attacks and end the relationship with the accusing partner.

Jealousy may also result in conflicts, arguments, and interpersonal violence (Kyegombe et al., 2022). Possessive jealousy involves an attack on a partner or an alleged person to whom the partner is showing attention. In the name of love, people have stalked or killed the beloved and then killed themselves in reaction to being rejected.

Gender Differences in Coping With Jealousy

Zengel et al. (2013) studied a national sample of women and men and found that women reported higher levels of jealousy than men. The researchers also noted that heterosexual men were more jealous when their partner engaged in sexual intercourse with another man than when their partner was emotionally involved with someone else. Evolutionary theorists point out that men are wired to care about the paternity of their offspring, which is the basis of their focus on physical fidelity.

POLYAMORY

Compersion, sometimes thought of as the opposite of jealousy, is the approval, or indeed embrace, of a partner's emotional and sexual involvement with another person. **Polyamory**, meaning multiple loves, is a lifestyle in which two lovers embrace the idea of having multiple lovers. By agreement, each partner may have numerous emotional and sexual relationships. Acceptance is increasing. Almost half (47%) of 330 university students agreed that “committed relationships of more than two should have the same legal rights as married couples” (Kaufman et al., 2021).

Rubel and Burleigh (2020) estimate that up to 5% of the U.S. adult population is polyamorous (up to 1.4 million adults). Persons more likely to identify as polyamorous are those with sexual minority identities, such as bisexual, pansexual, and transgender, and the previously divorced (Balzarini et al., 2019). Despite support for polyamory among university students, Séguin (2019) confirmed wide-ranging attitudes in the general public, including that it is valid and beneficial; unsustainable; perverse, amoral, and unappealing; acceptable; and deficient.



These individuals are emotionally and physically involved with each other.

istockphoto.com/Elisaveta Ivanova

About 80% of the 85 adult members of Twin Oaks Intentional Community in Louisa, Virginia, and 97% of the 30-member Acorn community next door are polyamorous in that each partner may have several emotional or physical relationships with others at the same time. Although not legally married, these adults view themselves as emotionally bonded to each other and may rear children together.

Polyamory is not **swinging**—when a married or pair-bonded couple agree that each will have recreational sex with others while maintaining an emotional allegiance to each other. Swinging is recreational sex. A basic “rule” that swingers have with their partners is that they do not fall in love with others. In contrast, polyamorous lovers prefer enduring, intimate relationships that include sex. People in polyamorous relationships often have the goal to rid themselves of jealous feelings and to increase their level of compersion. Morrison et al. (2013) compared polyamorous and monoamorous individuals and found that the former had higher intimacy needs and interests than the latter.

Polyamory is also not polygamy. The former is about emotional and sexual liberty while the latter is more religiously motivated and typically involves a man with multiple wives who are not involved in an erotic relationship with each other.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Polyamory

Advantages of polyamory include greater variety in one's emotional and sexual life; the avoidance of hidden affairs and the attendant feelings of deception, mistrust, betrayal, or guilt; the avoidance of the pressure of one person meeting all the needs of the other person; and the opportunity to have different needs met by different people.

The disadvantages of polyamory involve having to manage one's feelings of jealousy and emotions in multiple relationships and having limited time with each partner. Of the latter, one polyamorous partner said, "With three relationships and a full-time job, I just don't have much time to spend with each partner, so I'm frustrated about who I'll be with next." There is also stigma and prejudice associated with polyamory. Yancura et al. (2021) revealed stigma toward parents who practice multiple partnering. Perceptions included that the parenting configuration was complicated and deviant. Traditional parents may want to keep their children away from other children living in this context (e.g., no sleepovers). Finally, finding partners to be polyamorous is also a challenge. While not specific to polyamory, Sizemore and Olmstead (2016) studied willingness to engage in consensual nonmonogamy. In a sample of 549 undergraduates, only 12.9% were willing to do so. Over three fourths, about 78.7%, were clear about their unwillingness to participate.

From Polyamory to Monogamy: One Person's Experience

We asked a person who had been involved in polyamory who was engaged to enter a monogamous marriage to share with us the thinking behind her shift. She replied, "I realized that I was using polyamory as a way to hold partners at a bit of a distance, to avoid ultimate intimacy. With enough internal work, I reached a stage where I no longer needed to do that and was ready to be all in. And there I discovered that 'all in' is something you do with one person. I'm incredibly lucky to have found that one person." Of course, this is the experience of one person. Others in polyamorous relationships emphasize that each of their relationships is intense, meaningful, and unique and that it is a fallacy to believe that an individual must be focused on one person for the love to be "real."

SUMMARY

What are some alternative ways of viewing love?

Love remains an elusive and variable phenomenon. Researchers have conceptualized love as a continuum from romanticism—for example, belief in love at first sight, one true love, and love conquers all—to realism, as a style, such as ludic, eros, storge, and mania, and as a triangle consisting of three basic elements—intimacy, passion, and commitment. The five languages of love are gifts, quality time, words, acts of service, and physical touch. Quality time is most associated with relationship satisfaction.

How is love under social control?

Because romantic love is such a powerful emotion and marriage such an important relationship, mate selection is not left to chance when connecting an outsider with an existing family and peer network. Unlike Eastern parents who arrange the marriage of their children—in 40% of the world's population, marriages are arranged by the parents—American parents move to certain neighborhoods, join certain churches, and enroll their children in certain schools. Doing so increases the chance that their offspring will "hang out" with, fall in love with, and marry people who are similar in race, education, and social class.

Finding an online partner via Tinder and Bumble apps reduces parental control over their offspring's mate choice. Corporations exercise minimal control over the love lives of their employees. Those that have rules are in reference to avoiding those relationships where one partner has supervisory control over another worker.

What are the various theories of love?

Love may be explained from an evolutionary, learning, sociological, psychosexual, and biochemical perspective. All may be involved in the development and maintenance of love.

What is the process of falling in love and staying in love?

Love occurs under certain conditions. Social conditions include a society that promotes the pursuit of love, peers who enjoy it, and a set of norms that link love and marriage. Psychological conditions involve high self-esteem, a willingness to disclose oneself to others, a perception that the other person has a reciprocal interest, and gratitude. Physiological and cognitive conditions imply that the individual experiences a stirred-up state and labels it “love.”

Keeping love alive involves selecting a partner who is similar to one’s self, having realistic relationship expectations, being flexible, keeping one’s self healthy and happy, and being supportive of one’s partner.

What are some of love’s problems?

For all of its joy, love is associated with problems, which include unrequited or nonreciprocated love, making dangerous or destructive choices, ending the relationship with one’s parents, simultaneous loves, involvement in an abusive relationship, and profound sadness and depression when a love relationship ends. Valentine’s Day reflects the commercialization of love and the societal bias toward love by reminding the unattached that they “should be in love.”

What is jealousy, and what are its consequences?

Jealousy is an emotional response to a perceived or real threat to a valued relationship. Types of jealousy are reactive, where a partner shows interest in another; anxious, which involves ruminations about a partner’s unfaithfulness; and possessive, which means striking back at a partner or another. Jealous feelings may have both internal and external causes and may have both positive (e.g., confirm to the partner that there are boundaries/limits to interactions with others) and negative (e.g., become so aversive with one’s jealousy that a partner would end the relationship) consequences for a couple’s relationship.

What is polyamory?

Compersion is the opposite of jealousy and involves feeling positive about a partner’s emotional and physical relationship with another person. Polyamory (“many loves”) is an arrangement whereby lovers agree to have numerous emotional relationships, which may include sex, with others at the same time. Persons in polyamorous relationships report similar levels of marital satisfaction to those in monogamous relationships.

KEY TERMS

Agape love style (p. 41)	Ludic love style (p. 40)
Alexithymia (p. 48)	Lust (p. 36)
Anxious jealousy (p. 52)	Mania love style (p. 41)
Arranged marriage (p. 42)	Oxytocin (p. 45)
Breadcrumbing (p. 40)	Polyamory (p. 54)
Compersion (p. 54)	Possessive jealousy (p. 52)
Conjugal love (p. 37)	Pragma love style (p. 41)
Emojis (p. 49)	Reactive jealousy (p. 52)
Eros love style (p. 41)	Romantic love (p. 35)
Five love languages (p. 42)	Satiation (p. 49)
Gaslighting (p. 51)	Storge love style (p. 41)
Infatuation (p. 36)	Swinging (p. 54)
Jealousy (p. 52)	Unrequited love (p. 50)