

Chapter 9

LOVE, INTIMACY, AND SEXUALITY

Why do people engage in sex with someone for the first time? Is it because of overwhelming lust, a moment of uncontrollable passion? Does it really “just happen” with someone whom you find irresistibly attractive? Could it be that some individuals actually plan to “lose their virginity” as a rite of passage into adulthood, or to establish a sense of independence? Maybe they want to begin engaging in sex so that they will be like other people their age, or to define who they are as a person?

The conscious decision to lose one’s virginity was actually a theme of an episode on the television series, *Kyle XY*. One of the main characters, Lori Trager, and her friend decided to engage in sex for the first time, yet neither were involved in a romantic relationship. The two characters are high school students who decide they must lose their virginity before the next school year begins. Lori does succeed in having sex and meets their deadline, but the experience does not turn out like she had hoped. Her friend wanted to hurry the process up and so she put a guy up to asking Lori to a party, rather than the guy asking Lori to the party on his own. She is hurt and embarrassed when she discovers that her friend had actually arranged the sexual encounter.

Actually, such a scenario is probably not extremely common. Most people probably do not decide that they are going to have sex just for the sake of losing their virginity. On the other hand, a phenomenon known as “hooking up” has appeared on college campuses around the United States. Hooking up is the situation in which individuals go out on a particular night with the intention of having sex with someone they may have just met, without any desire to start a long-term relationship with the person.

Yet, for the majority of people, the critical issue is whether they are in love with the person they have sex with, and whether they feel that they are involved in a lasting romantic relationship with that person. In fact, research has reliably found that greater intimacy increases the likelihood of engaging in sexual behavior (Christopher & Cate, 1985; Hill, 2002; Roche, 1986; Sprecher, 1989). It is for this reason that the ways in which romantic relationships begin, develop, and then either thrive or fall apart are so important. The experience of love, and how it is related to sexuality, is a major concern that links the various issues involved in human sexual behavior.

Romantic Relationships



What do you suppose are the most effective means of increasing the quality of relational intimacy? Does it have to do with sharing of thoughts and feelings, or are other strategies more effective?

Romantic relationships are only one of a number of types of intimate relationship. An **intimate relationship** is an ongoing involvement between individuals characterized by substantial knowledge and understanding of one another that has been gathered through talking and sharing time together. Another critical aspect of the definition is that an intimate relationship involves a level of closeness that distinguishes it from casual, or nonintimate, relationships (Prager & Roberts, 2004).

The first characteristic of an intimate relationship, therefore, is that individuals have a considerable history of interacting with each other and revealing what they are like in a range of important ways. Of course, an important means of revealing what they are like is by disclosing personal information to one another. The information gathered during these many interactions accumulates into what Prager and Roberts call a **mutually shared body of knowledge**. This information is stored in mental frameworks, or schemas. Schemas provide the basis for anticipating the nature of future interactions with the relationship partner, and what the results of the interactions will be.

For example, will certain types of soothing words help the loved one to feel better and lift his or her spirits? Or will such words of comfort actually backfire and make the partner feel like you are just feeling sorry for him or her? This characteristic of intimate relationships is a recognition of the fact that individuals involved in intimate relationships typically come to know a great deal about one another.

The second characteristic of an intimate relationship is the number and quality of the interactions within the relationship, or its **relational intimacy** (Prager & Roberts, 2004). A relationship with greater relational intimacy involves more frequent interaction in which the couple reveals a great deal of personal information about themselves. Stronger relational intimacy also involves more intense positive experiences within interactions in which the individuals feel valued and respected by their partner. In general, relational intimacy refers to the fact that intimate relationships for different couples vary in terms of the frequency, intensity, and warmth of interactions; some relationships will on average be characterized by very positive, intimate interactions, whereas others on average will involve moderate or lower levels of relational intimacy. In fact, positive emotional experiences figure prominently in what people really desire in romantic relationships, as shown in Table 9.1.

According to Prager and Roberts (2004), a committed couple relationship is, by definition, an intimate relationship, despite the fact that intimate relationships vary in their level of relational intimacy. The reason that all committed couple relationships may be considered intimate relationships is that the body of shared knowledge about one another will be substantial, regardless of differences in the quality of relational intimacy.

The concept of intimate relationship actually encompasses a range of different relationships. These include close friendships, relationships with family members, and romantic relationships, whether these are dating

TABLE 9.1 What Individuals Desire in a Romantic Relationship

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Emotional Rewards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling liked and loved • Feeling understood • Feeling accepted • Feeling appreciated • Physical affection (being kissed and hugged) • Sex • Security (commitment to the relationship) • Plans and goals for the future (dreaming about the future together) <p>Personal Rewards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner having an attractive appearance • Partner who is friendly and graceful socially • Partner who is intelligent and informed <p>Day-to-Day Rewards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoothly running daily routine • Comfortable finances • Pleasant interaction and good communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing responsibility for making decisions that affect both individuals and then carrying through with them • Remembering special occasions <p>Opportunities Gained and Lost From Being in a Relationship</p> <p><i>Benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to become a parent • Being invited as a couple to social events • Having someone to count on as one ages <p><i>Costs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement with other potential partners • Career • Money • Travel • Sexual freedom |
|---|---|

From Hatfield, E., & Sprecher, S., Measuring passionate love in intimate relations. *Journal of Adolescence*, 9, 383–410. Copyright © 1986, Elsevier Science & Technology Journals. Reprinted with permission via Copyright Clearance Center.



What is it that defines an intimate relationship? Would you say that a married couple who argues frequently and goes through long periods of not talking to one another are involved in an intimate relationship? How about a couple who only stays together for the sake of the children?

BOX 9.1 AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF-REFLECTION

What Is Your Relationship Like?

Think of the relationship you are currently involved in, or if you aren't in a relationship right now, think of your most recent relationship.

For each of the stages below identified by Levinger, indicate what your relationship was like at that stage, and what it is like in its current stage. Use each of the rating scales to describe the relationship. Of course, if you have not experienced a particular stage, you will not be able to describe your relationship at that stage.

Attraction Stage

This is the point at which your partner seemed desirable to you and feelings of romantic interest were beginning. You began to realize you wanted to be around your partner and spend time with him or her. Use the following scale for your ratings: 1 = Not at all, 5 = Moderately, and 9 = Very much.

1. How much did you attempt (have you attempted) to show the person that you were (are) interested in him or her and found (find) him or her attractive? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2. How satisfied were you at the time (or are currently satisfied) with the nature or status of your hoped-for relationship? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
3. How much sexual intimacy did (do) you expect at this point in the hoped-for relationship? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
4. How committed were (are) you to beginning the hoped-for relationship at this point? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
5. How likely did (do) you think it was (is) that the hoped-for relationship wouldn't (will not) happen when you first began to realize you were attracted to this person? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Beginning Stage

At this point, the relationship has begun in the sense of going on dates or intentionally spending some length of time together (not simply greeting each other in passing).

1. How much did you attempt (or have you attempted) to show your partner that you were (are) interested in his or her feelings and wanted (want) to get to know him or her better? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2. How satisfied were (are) you with the nature or status of your relationship? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
3. How much sexual intimacy did (do) you expect at this point in the relationship? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. How committed were (are) you to staying in the relationship at this point? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
5. How likely did (do) you think it was (is) that the relationship would (will) not work out and might end? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Continuing Relationship

This is the point in the relationship when both partners are obviously committed to staying in the relationship for as far as you can see at the time. The two of you spend significant amounts of time together, and your daily lives have come to overlap a great deal.

1. How much did you attempt (or have you attempted) to show your partner that you were (are) interested in his or her feelings and wanted (want) to work through conflicts? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2. How satisfied were (are) you with the nature or status of your relationship? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
3. How much sexual intimacy did (do) you expect at this point in the relationship? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
4. How committed were (are) you to staying in the relationship at this point? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
5. How likely did (do) you think it was (is) that the relationship would (will) not work out and might end? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Deterioration Stage

This is the point in the relationship in which it has become clear that you or your partner may not be compatible, or in which a great deal of conflict and negative feelings are common in the relationship.

1. How much did you attempt (or have you attempted) to show your partner that you were (are) interested in his or her feelings and wanted (want) to work through conflicts? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2. How satisfied were (are) you with the nature or status of your relationship? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
3. How much sexual intimacy did (do) you expect at this point in the relationship? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
4. How committed were (are) you to staying in the relationship at this point? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
5. How likely did (do) you think it was (is) that the relationship would (will) not work out and might end? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

(Continued)

(Continued)

Look across the various stages for each of the questions; that is, compare your rating on #1 across the four stages, as far as your relationship has progressed. Do this for rating #2, and each of the others. Did you notice any change in rating across the stages?

Research by Kingsbury and Minda (1988) found that levels of expected commitment, expected maintenance, and expected termination varied predictably across relationship stages. Related to this, they demonstrated that relationship satisfaction, love, and expected sexual intimacy increased across the stages, and then fell in the deterioration stage. On the other hand, disagreement between relationship partners in the stage of the relationship—how the relationship is defined—dropped across the stages.

Reference

Kingsbury, N. M., & Minda, R. B. (1988). An analysis of three expected intimate relationship states: Commitment, maintenance, and termination. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 5, 405–422.

relationships or committed, long-term relationships. A **romantic relationship** is a special type of intimate relationship. The distinguishing feature of romantic relationships is the potential for **passion** (Aron & Westbay, 1996), which is the experience of positive feelings related to physical intimacy and sexual involvement. Romantic relationships therefore are of primary concern with respect to sexuality and sexual behavior, because the majority of sexual expression occurs within the context of romantic relationships.

Of course, not all romantic relationships develop into serious, committed relationships. Instead, some deteriorate and end after a period of time depending on the individuals and circumstances involved. Even long-standing, committed relationships may eventually decline in levels of intimacy and quality, ultimately dissolving for various reasons. This issue will be discussed in a later section.

The Development of Intimate Relationships

Levinger's Model of Relationship Progression

Relationship development has been summarized within a theory advanced by Levinger (1980) in terms of the increasing interdependence of individuals and the particular emotions experienced in various stages of relationship progression. Awareness by individuals of their feelings of interest in one another develops during the **attraction stage**, in which they evaluate the extent of their desire for interaction with the potential partner.

As discussed in the previous chapter, a range of factors lead individuals to find one another attractive and eventually begin a relationship. Specific personal characteristics of individuals contribute to attraction; these include being warm, being active and energetic (having vitality), possessing desired resources (such as having social status or wealth), being physically attractive, and having similar attitudes and interests. In addition,

situational factors, such as proximity, mere exposure, and familiarity, play an important role in determining attraction and greater likelihood of involvement in a relationship. As we will see with social exchange theory later in the chapter, after individuals first meet, they are more likely to want to talk or date in the future if they have more positive experiences (called rewards) with one another than negative experiences (called costs).

The **beginning stage** consists of assessing the level of rewards relative to costs available within the relationship, with interdependence increasing across the later stages for relationships. After reaching a certain level of interdependence, individuals make a **commitment** to remain in the relationship. Interdependence may grow even further after this point, or level off at a stable level, during the stage of **continuing relationship**. If the individuals do not experience commitment to the relationship, or if a great deal of conflict and strife plague the relationship, it may move into the **deterioration stage** and eventually end.

The Intertwining of Lives

In most cases, establishing an intimate relationship is typically gradual, as well as fairly complex. As the individuals in a relationship come to rely on one another for the rewards and incentives that only the relationship partner can provide, interdependence develops (Kelley et al., 1983; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). **Interdependence** is the situation in which relationship partners are able to obtain highly desired benefits primarily from the other relationship partner; no one else provides the same quality or intensity of rewards (e.g., emotional experiences, sexual satisfaction, and security) that the relationship partner is able to provide. For this reason, most of the needs and desires of both partners' depend on being able to stay in the relationship.

For many relationships, interdependence increases without the two individuals having a completely conscious awareness that it is happening. Their lives become more and more intertwined, and a relationship has begun without ever really making an explicit decision. As described by Fiske (2004),

High interdependence is closeness. To define **closeness**, the most crucial variables comprise the strength, frequency, and diversity of interdependence. **Strength** refers to how much, how quickly, and how reliably one person influences the other. **Frequency** defines the sheer number of interconnections, and **diversity** describes the span of domains [of interconnections]. (p. 284; words in brackets added)

Eventually, the partner's well-being, as well as the continuation of the relationship, become included in an individual's sense of what is important. Positive outcomes for the partner and the relationship are viewed as **rewards** within social exchange theory. Negative outcomes for the partner and the relationship are viewed as **costs** to the individual. This means, for example, that a person may be thrilled and overjoyed when his partner gets a promotion, and will be devastated when the partner's mother passes away. This change in



As couples come to desire the rewards that only their romantic partner can provide, they become interdependent. Such rewards include the unique intimacy, familiarity, comfort, and respect available only from their partner.

perception is called **transformation**, when the partner becomes included in one's personal calculation (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Moreover, as interdependence increases, individuals develop commitment to the relationship. **Commitment** is the desire and intention to remain in the relationship over the long-term.

How Does Commitment Grow?

Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes; but no plans.

Peter F. Drucker (ThinkExist.com)

Passion can never purchase what true love desires: true intimacy, selfgiving, and commitment.

Unknown (ThinkExist.com)

In applying the social exchange model to an understanding of romantic relationships (see Figure 9.1), Rusbult (1980, 1983) proposed that commitment is enhanced not only by the experience of greater **satisfaction** resulting from positive outcomes that are available by being in the relationship. Commitment is also strengthened by the level of investments an individual has contributed to the relationship. **Investments** are assets the individual has devoted to the relationship that cannot be easily recovered or replaced if the relationship were to break up. As with costs and rewards, investments may be tangible, such as money spent on the relationship partner's career, the house prized by both, or a shared social network. However, they may also be nontangible factors, such as effort devoted to taking care of the partner and providing emotional comfort to the partner.

Intimacy and emotional investment likewise increase with growing levels of commitment, although they are not always perfectly aligned. Intimacy is most accurately conceived as a process, an ongoing series of events throughout the course of the relationship, rather than an endpoint (Fiske, 2004). This concept of intimacy is identical to that of relational intimacy (Prager & Roberts, 2004) discussed in the previous section. Feeling understood, valued, and appreciated—the essence of intimacy—develops through **self-disclosure**, the process of communicating information about oneself to one's relationship partner. Intimacy is enhanced when an individual reveals some aspect of himself or herself, and the romantic partner reacts with understanding in a way that indicates acceptance or admiration. The positive reaction leads to greater attraction for the empathetic partner, thereby strengthening the relationship further.

Beyond social exchange theory, the factors identified within all of the other theories of love that are presented in the next section are also likely to contribute to attraction and the desire to stay in—or to or end—a relationship. You can begin to get an idea of the reason that relationship formation is so complex—there are just so many factors involved. In addition, a clear set of standards have not yet been identified that are widely used to make the conscious decision to enter into a relationship. This is probably an intuitive, highly idiosyncratic process; in other words, the factors affecting attraction and getting involved in a relationship are probably different for each individual.

Theoretical Views of Love and Sexuality

A valuable theoretical framework for understanding thinking about the role of love and sexuality in relationship formation has been developed by noted researchers Arthur and Elaine Aron (1991). Their framework

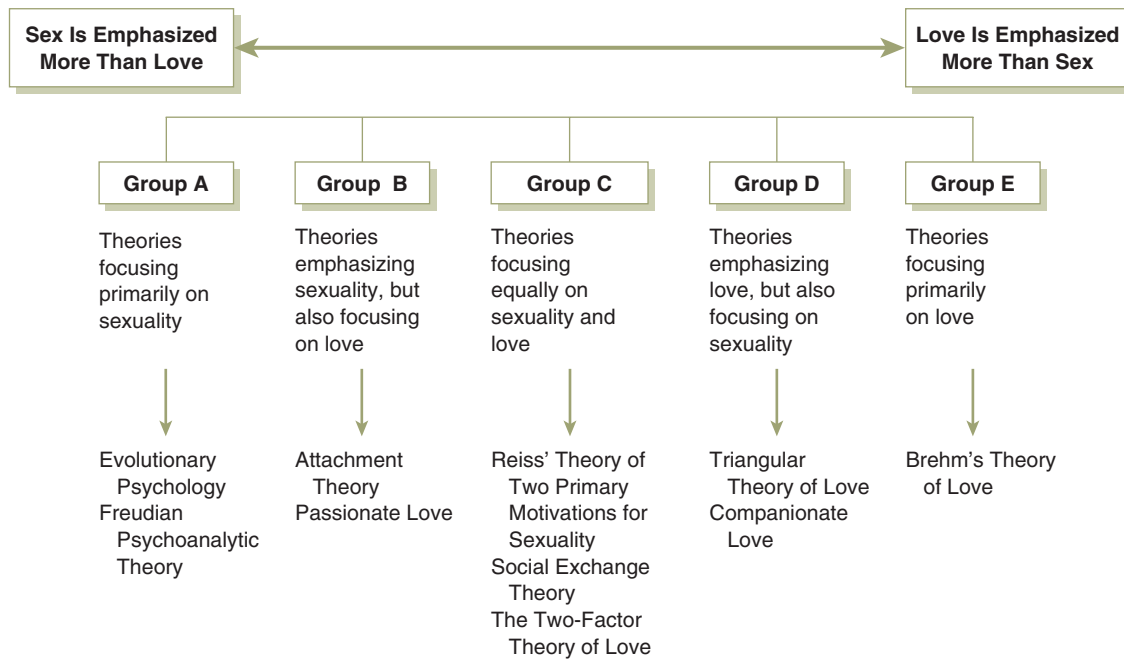
FIGURE 9.1 Rusbult's Investment Model of Relationship Commitment

From Rusbult, C.E., A longitudinal test of the investment model: The development (and deterioration) of satisfaction and commitment in heterosexual involvements, in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45, copyright © 1983 American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission.

provides a convenient way to organize the prominent theories of love in social psychology (see Figure 9.2). This model groups theories in terms of the degree to which they focus either on sexuality or on love, although all of them address both love and sexuality in some way. At one extreme of this range of theories are those that concentrate more on sexuality. The other extreme of theories are those that are concerned to a greater extent with the experience of love, with sexuality seen as a form of the fundamental craving for connectedness and meaning. Theories in between the two extremes focus on love and sexuality more or less equally.

Theories Focusing Primarily on Sexuality

One of the earliest foundations for theories in this group is the biological theory advanced by Charles Darwin. In contemporary times, this thinking gave rise to the areas of sociobiology, and most recently evolutionary psychology. Sociobiology is “the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior” (Wilson, 1975, p. 4). The major premise is that the characteristics currently found in humans have been selected throughout time because they enabled later generations to mate and produce offspring. Those with characteristics that did not promote successful reproduction did not produce offspring, such that their characteristics disappeared from the population. Evolutionary psychology built upon the basic foundations of sociobiology, additionally developing detailed explanations of the ways in which specific behaviors and psychological attributes promote successful reproduction.

FIGURE 9.2 Model of Theories on the Relationship of Love and Sexuality

Adapted from Aron & Aron, 1991. Reprinted with permission of Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Evolutionary Psychology

The overarching premise of evolutionary theory is that attraction for particular partner characteristics, and the use of specific mating strategies, have become linked to reproductive fitness over the course of evolution. **Reproductive fitness** is the capability of individuals to bear and raise offspring because of the particular characteristics the individuals possess; the concept of fitness also involves the requirement that offspring inherit these same characteristics that will enable them to produce successful offspring themselves (Russil & Ellis, 2003).

Parental Investment Theory

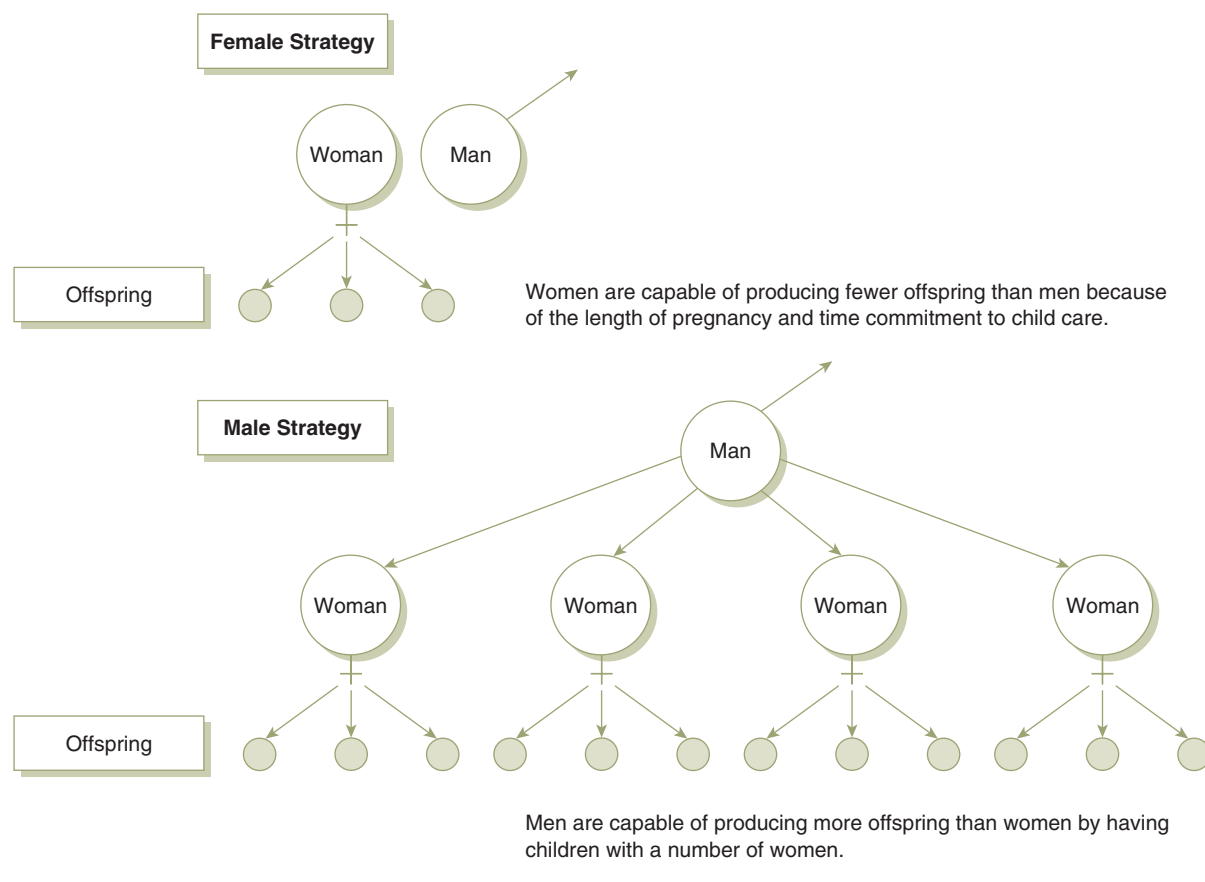
According to a widely accepted view within the evolutionary perspective, called **parental investment theory** (Trivers, 1972), the gender (whether the female or the male) that invests more in the survival of offspring within a species is a valuable commodity to the other gender. Among many animals, the female invests more than the male, which includes humans. Because women are capable of producing relatively fewer offspring than men (as illustrated in Figure 9.3), they have developed the strategy of protecting and caring for every offspring they can produce. Women are limited by the fact that they are the ones who carry the developing offspring during 9 months of pregnancy and typically must devote more time to the care of young children. According to this theory, the basic tendency that is common to women is an attraction to potential

mates who have good genes and who are willing to commit resources necessary for the survival and care of their offspring. Men, however, could hypothetically produce much larger numbers of offspring by impregnating a number of different women.

According to parental investment theory, as the gender that typically invests less in parenting, males are more prone to engage in sexual behavior with greater numbers of partners, to compete with other males for sexual opportunities with partners, and to be less concerned about the quality of sexual partners. In contrast, women are thought to desire fewer sexual partners and to be much more selective regarding the men with whom they choose to engage in sex. A number of studies have supported these proposals advanced within parental investment theory, in terms of both preferences for mates and actual behavior (Russil & Ellis, 2003).

Within this view, the major concern of women is to find a partner of high social status with a great deal of wealth, or the potential to acquire wealth, who will reciprocate in a loving, monogamous relationship. Moreover, willingness to commit to a long-term relationship is the primary criterion for engaging in sex for women. Because of the limited availability of men with these characteristics, women may adopt an alternate strategy of involvement with several men: one who will provide material resources (e.g., money, property) and another who will provide high-quality genetic input for offspring (that is, they have “good genes”). The theory

FIGURE 9.3 Evolutionary Theory View of Gender Differences in Reproductive Strategy





According to evolutionary theories, producing high-quality offspring is at the heart of attraction and mate selection.

proposes that men, at a basic biological level, tend to prefer a mixed type of strategy in general, having an interest in many short-term sexual encounters and a desire for one long-term romantic relationship (Geary, Vigil, & Byrd-Craven, 2004).

Sexual Strategies Theory

A more recent evolutionary theory, **sexual strategies theory** (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), proposes that both women and men possess not just one type of inclination, or strategy. Rather, both genders possess two strategies. The tendency to become involved in a stable, ongoing relationship with a mate is called a **long-term strategy**. The tendency to become involved in many, short-term sexual involvements is called

a **short-term strategy**. Selection pressures have resulted in women developing the long-term strategy to a greater extent than the short-term strategy.

However, this theory maintains that selection forces have also pushed men over time in the direction of greater focus on the long-term strategy, with its emphasis on emotional and romantic attachment (love). This is because of pressure from women to provide signs of commitment to a long-term relationship before agreeing to engage in sex. Moreover, investment in a romantic relationship and family stability assures men of mating with higher-quality women with whom they will have higher quality children; furthermore, men benefit from the pooling of resources in caring for a household that is afforded by a stable romantic relationship. Finally, men have become willing to forgo greater numbers of offspring with a variety of mates for the sake of certainty of paternity, that they are the certain father of a woman's offspring (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

Women and men differ in the characteristics that they desire in partners, both when considering someone for a short-term affair and for a long-term relationship. Women on average value social status, the ability to obtain resources and wealth, and being generous in sharing these resources to a greater extent than men. Men are more likely to value youthfulness and physical attractiveness—thought to be visible indicators of health and capability of producing offspring—in comparison to women. The size of these differences, based on more than 40 studies, are generally fairly large ($d > .80$). The findings are consistent across many different societies and political systems in both survey studies and data based on real-world data, such as official government data (i.e., regarding age differences in spouses). Lesbian women and gay men express partner preferences that reflect their gender, with lesbians similar to heterosexual women and gay men similar to heterosexual men (Okami & Schackelford, 2001).

In addition, the sexual strategies proposal for gender differences in preferences for short-term and long-term partners has likewise received support in a number of studies, according to a review by Okami and Schackelford (2001). The importance of partner physical attractiveness is greater for women when evaluating desirable characteristics in a short-term partner compared with a long-term partner. Yet, the desirability of social status and possessing resources in short-term partners is as important as it is for long-term partners.

For men, the importance of physical attractiveness is actually lower for short-term compared with long-term partners. Symons (1979) proposed that the reason for this is that it is more likely for men to obtain a high-quality spouse than it is for them to obtain high-quality, short-term partners. In contrast, he argued that it is easier for women to obtain a high-quality, short-term sex partner than it is to obtain a high-quality spouse.

Beyond differences in desirable partner characteristics, research has further demonstrated that men are tremendously more willing to engage in casual sex than are women (Okami & Schackelford, 2001). Casual sex is that in which the partners have no expectations of a subsequent romantically intimate relationship. Differences are found in self-reports of interest in engaging in casual sex across a number of studies. In addition to self-report, two now classic studies assessed reactions to the actual opportunity to engage in casual sex (Clark, 1990; Clark & Hatfield, 1989). These were naturalistic experiments, meaning that they were conducted outside of the laboratory and that conditions were different across different people. Specifically in the Clark and Hatfield study (1989), an attractive male researcher approached women students on a college campus, asking them one of two questions: (a) whether they would be willing to go out on a date with him, or (b) whether they would be willing to have sex with him; the particular question each person was asked was determined randomly. An attractive female researcher approached men students and likewise asked them one of the two questions.

Men were overwhelmingly more likely to agree to casual sex than women. Clark (1990) ruled out fear for safety on the part of women as an explanation for their lower interest in casual sex. Individuals were contacted by good friends at the request of the researcher to let them know about someone who wanted to have sex with them. The friends assured the contacted individuals of the trustworthiness of the person who wanted to have sex with them. Yet, a substantial difference was found between women and men in willingness to have sex with a stranger. Women also reported later that in general it was not concern for safety that influenced their behavior. They were simply less interested in casual sex.

Also consistent with evolutionary psychology predictions, men report substantially greater numbers of sexual partners, as well as greater interest in having more sexual partners. The evolutionary theory explanation of these differences is that, because women do not gain a reproductive advantage from multiple sexual partners, they are less interested. They can only give birth once every 9 months and have a limited number of egg cells that can mature and be released each month. Also, reproduction is “dangerous, time-consuming, painful, and depleting of nutritional resources” (Okami & Schackelford, 2001, pp. 204–205), factors that make sexual intercourse more burdensome if pregnancy results. Men do not experience these types of risks associated with reproduction, making sex with large numbers of partners an effective way of increasing their offspring.

The evolutionary psychology perspective is that reproduction and sexuality for both women and men are the fundamental, driving forces underlying attraction, mate selection, and relationship formation; nonetheless, individuals are often not consciously aware of the influence of these factors. Love develops as a strategy for securing successful reproduction. In women, love is the initial and primary focus, serving as a way of obtaining a committed partner; however, even for women, the basic force driving the mating strategy is successful reproduction. In men, love is a way of assuring that they obtain the benefits of a secure household and are the father of their partner’s children.

Do We Really Know Why We Fall in Love?

Psychoanalytic theory was originally developed by Sigmund Freud in the late 1800s and early 1900s, although the perspective has produced a number of offshoots throughout the 20th century. Freud’s theory is

Box 9.2 Analyze This: Looking at Different Perspectives

Biosocial Theory as an Alternative to Evolutionary Theory in Explaining Gender Differences

A powerful challenge to evolutionary theory has been mounted by theorists who focus on the importance of social roles as opposed to biologically based traits. Alice Eagly (1997), one of the most prominent and outspoken challengers of evolutionary theory in social psychology, has identified a number of weaknesses that limit its usefulness in explaining current human behavior.

Moreover, other theories that do not focus at all on evolution lead to precisely the same predictions for gender differences as does evolutionary theory. Eagly (1997) argues that such alternative explanations have not been satisfactorily rebutted by evolutionary advocates. One prominent example is **biosocial theory** proposed by Wood and Eagly (2002), which maintains that gender differences in behavior result from two factors: (a) biological and physical attributes and related behaviors specific to each gender, and (b) social, economic, technological, and ecological conditions prevailing in a particular culture.

With respect to biological attributes that distinguish women and men, those identified as most significant are women's ability to bear children and nurse infants, and men's larger bodies, greater potential for muscle development, greater speed, and stronger upper bodies. Such physical differences make certain types of activities more easily and efficiently carried out; for example, greater body size and

muscle development make it easier to engage in physical aggression or to defend oneself. It has therefore proven useful for women and men to take on duties and roles that are most compatible with their particular physical capabilities. This accounts for the typical role division that is observed across various cultures, in which women take care of children and domestic matters, while men engage in activities outside the home related to resource production.

It is important to note that biosocial theory is different from evolutionary theory in its emphasis on the role of physical differences in the origin of gender differences. Biosocial theory does not propose that the same evolutionary factors that produced differences in male and female bodies cause biological differences in the brain that lead to gender differences in behavior. That is, biological factors do not directly cause behavioral differences. Rather, the physical differences in female and male bodies lead women and men to assume different roles. It is these social roles then that cause women and men to frequently engage in particular behaviors that become associated with each gender. In this way, biosocial theory provides an explanation of how the particular roles come to be assigned to women and men in the first place—because of body differences that make some roles easier, and therefore more practical, for one gender or the other.

To test the ability of biosocial theory to better account for gender differences in comparison to evolutionary theory, Wood and Eagly (2002) examined the available research on variation across cultures with respect to differences between women and men. In less technologically advanced societies, substantial variability exists in the extent to which men are predominantly responsible for obtaining resources. Simpler cultures can be thought of as more likely to reflect the influence of evolved traits that cause gender differences because of fewer factors that make them less relevant (e.g., machinery to do physically demanding chores); simpler cultures therefore provide a better test of evolutionary theory. Such variability across cultures is inconsistent with evolutionary theory proposals that men are endowed with particular behavioral tendencies related to providing for and protecting families.

Furthermore, approximately two-thirds of societies have male-controlled systems, such that male domination is not universal as would be expected by evolutionary theory. Particularly central to evolutionary theory is the proposal that sexual control and power over women by men is universal across cultures. Anthropological evidence indicates, however, that one-third of societies do not place greater restrictions on women's sexuality than they do on men's; that is, the double standard does not exist in a third of human

cultures. Also contrary to evolutionary theory, extramarital sexual involvement by women occurs in many societies throughout the world, with 35% of cultures having norms that allow extramarital involvement and even allow wife-sharing.

On the other hand, consistent with biosocial theory, male concern about paternity tends to be greater in societies based on the inheritance of property through male family members. According to biosocial theory, the development of economies and power structures that give advantage to males lead to the perception of greater male status and power, which in turn leads people to engage in behavior patterns that confirm such perceptions. Similarly, differences in sexuality can be explained as resulting from nonreproductive biological factors that lead to greater social power. The greater male physical power and resulting greater status may therefore explain differences in male and female sexuality.

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another example of the perspective that love is basically an expression of sexual impulses, although in this case an unconscious expression.

According to Freudian psychoanalytic theory, two primitive unconscious instincts are responsible for all behavior: the pleasure instinct (*Eros*, also called the life instinct) and the aggressive instinct (*Thanatos*, also called the death instinct). The two instincts constitute an aspect of personality called the *id*. Both physical and

psychological needs—meaning resources lacked by an individual—cause the instincts to generate psychic energy, called the *libido*, that produces behavior aimed at acquiring the needed resources. The fundamental focus of the pleasure instinct is to provide sensual stimulation, which very early in the developmental process takes the form of a desire for sexual gratification (Funder, 2004).

Through experience with the restraints on self-indulgence demanded by parents and society, a rational component of personality, called the *ego*, develops. The ego constructs unconscious strategies for converting primitive, animalistic needs related to pleasure and sexual gratification into more acceptable forms of behavior; this enables the individual to avoid disapproval and censure from parents and other authority figures. Consequently, a wide array of more acceptable behaviors come to be motivated by the unconscious pleasure-based (sexual) urges, including creativity, desire for closeness and friendship, and love.

Following puberty, the instinctive impulses are transformed into romantic needs and feelings, as well. This leads individuals to enter into a romantic relationship in which the more primitive sexual needs may be more fully expressed, including eventually through explicit sexual behavior. Consequently, within psychoanalytic theory, all love, most especially romantic love, is actually a form of sexual need that has been transformed at an unconscious level by the ego to disguise its true nature.

Theories Emphasizing Sexuality, but Also Focusing on Love

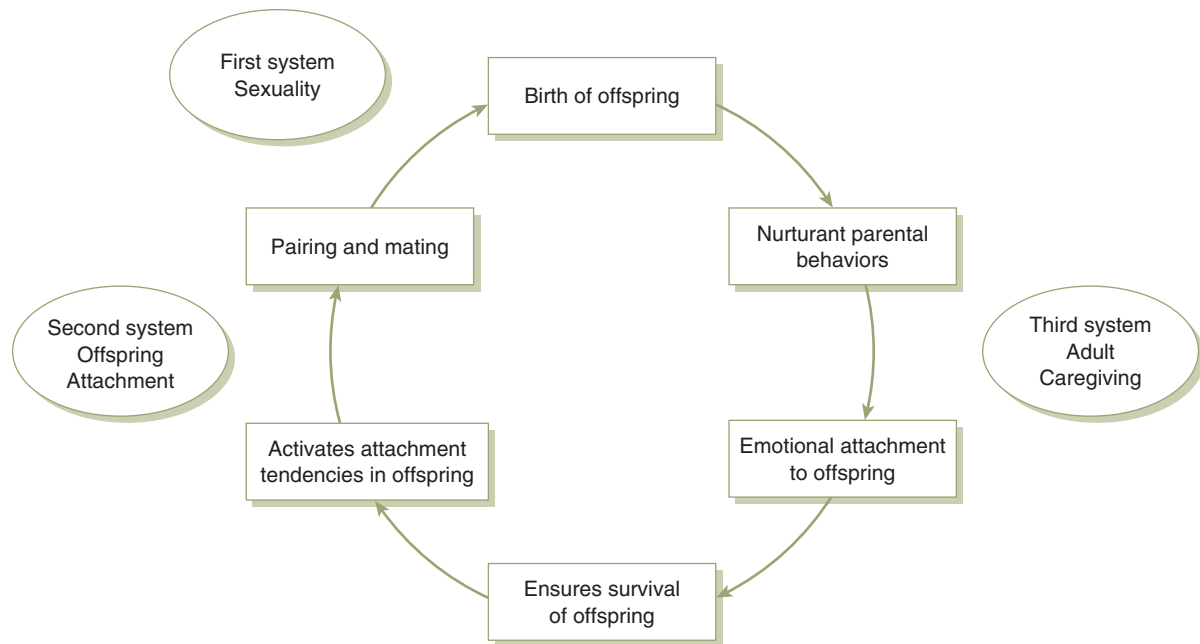
Theories in this group are those that consider sexuality to be the primary factor underlying the formation of romantic relationships. Love is important as it relates to promoting successful reproduction or as it relates to sexual interest.

Do Childhood Experiences With Love Color How We Love as Adults?

A prime example of this second group of theories is **attachment theory** (Bowlby, 1969). Actually, attachment theory is another type of evolutionary theory, one that focuses on differences *within* gender in reproductive strategy; in contrast, parental investment theory and sexual strategies theory focus on differences in reproductive strategies *between* genders. In other words, attachment theory proposes that differences exist across individuals in their interest in romantic and sexual partners, regardless of gender, whereas sexual strategies theory is more concerned with differences in romantic and sexual interest for women in comparison to men (Russil & Ellis, 2003).

Within attachment theory, adult relationships are considered to result from three biological systems that function to ensure successful reproduction and to guarantee that offspring will thrive to produce successful offspring themselves (Bowlby, 1969; see Figure 9.4). One system is the sexual system that is directly involved in reproduction. The other two systems are important for humans and other primates because of the extended period of dependence on parents during childhood and adolescence. The second biological system is the emotional attachment that infants develop for parents because of the security and comfort the infants experience through parental caregiving. The third system is that of adult caregiving, not only for offspring, but also one's mate and other adults as well. This system is conceived as a direct extension of the attachment the adult experienced as an infant and child; individuals develop the capacity for attachment that continues into adulthood because of these early caregiving experiences.

Attachment theory places a heavy emphasis on the biological underpinnings of parent–child emotional attachments as a factor that has promoted the survival of human beings. The emotional attachment that

FIGURE 9.4 The Attachment Theory View of Love

individuals form with their parents during childhood creates what Ainsworth and her colleagues (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) called **internal working models**; these are cognitive and emotional templates of relationships that influence the way that individuals understand relationships and react to them emotionally throughout life.

A later version of attachment theory advanced by Hazan and Shaver (1987) has recently integrated views of the origins of parent–child attachments with reproduction, sexuality, and survival of offspring. The focus of this theory is on the effect of the early parent–child attachments on the formation of romantic and sexual relationships in adolescence and adulthood. Hazan and Shaver originally measured the orientation individuals have toward others reflecting early parent–child attachment through a three-item questionnaire. Each item represents one type of infant–parent attachment style proposed by Ainsworth and her colleagues (see Table 9.2). Respondents are asked to indicate which description most accurately describes them, and this is assumed to identify the nature of the attachment that developed with their parents.

Secure attachment involves comfort with getting close to and depending on others and an absence of insecurity about being abandoned. In childhood, those with secure attachments are likely to feel comfortable exploring their environment and playing with other children, particularly for young children if their parent is close by. Later in life, individuals with secure attachments are more likely to feel comfortable approaching and interacting with others. They also tend to experience greater intimacy and feel comfortable with closeness when they are involved in a romantic relationship.

Anxious–ambivalent attachment consists of intense, obsessive desire to be loved, but substantial insecurity about being abandoned. Children with this type of attachment tend to become easily upset if they are

TABLE 9.2 Attachment Questionnaire

Which of the following best describes your feelings?

1. 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 often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me. (Choosing this description indicates *secure attachment*.)
2. 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 being. (Choosing this description indicates *avoidant attachment*.)
3. 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. (Choosing this description indicates *anxious-ambivalent attachment*.)

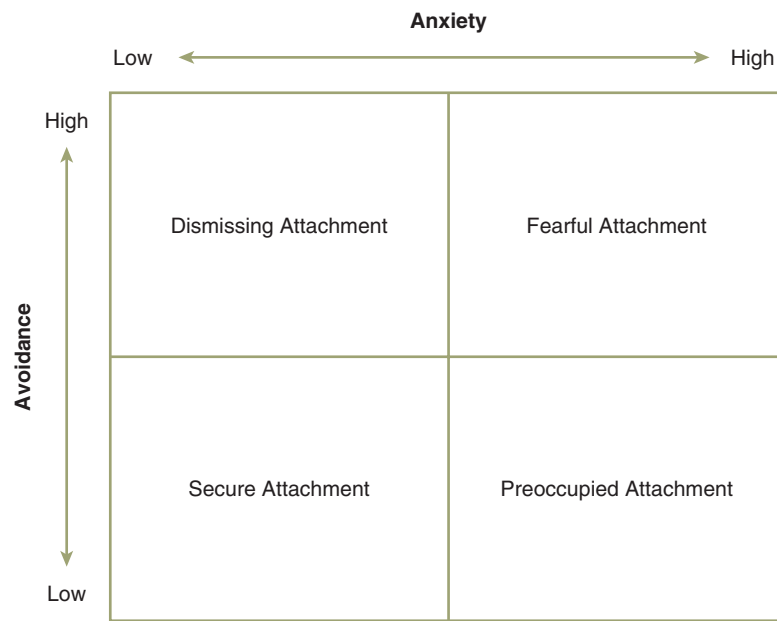
Reprinted with permission (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

separated from their parent or caregiver. Yet, when they are reunited with the caregiver, they are not easily comforted by the person and may even seem to resist being held or being close to the person when he or she is trying to provide comfort. The word *ambivalent* means having both positive and negative reactions to caregivers. As adults, those with an anxious-ambivalent attachment tend to be insecure about relationships with others. They want to be involved in a romantic relationship. They tend to be demanding of attention from their partner, constantly seeking assurance of his or her love, but apparently never fully convinced of their devotion. Such individuals may often be described as “clingy” and jealous.

Avoidant attachment is that in which a person is uncomfortable with emotional closeness and having to depend on others, as well as harboring a general mistrust of others. As children, such individuals are relatively indifferent to whether their parent remains close by. They appear to receive little comfort when they are upset and the caregiver tries to console them. Later in life, they are typically unconcerned about close friendships or socializing to a great extent. They tend to not be interested in involvement in romantic relationships to any great extent, and are little concerned about putting effort into maintaining closeness with their partner. They may not be very affected emotionally when relationships dissolve.

In an early survey of adults (Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988), 56% identified themselves as having a secure attachment, 25% had an avoidant attachment, and 19% had an anxious-ambivalent attachment. These percentages were virtually identical to the proportions obtained by Ainsworth and her colleagues resulting from their observations of infants.

Actually, later research demonstrated that attachment style is related to two separate dimensions (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; see Figure 9.5). One dimension is **anxiety**, fearfulness about being rejected and abandoned; the second dimension is **avoidance**, uneasiness with intimacy and depending on others. Within this framework, secure attachment is conceived as reflecting low levels of both anxiety and avoidance; anxious-ambivalent attachment reflects low avoidance, but high levels of anxiety (this style was renamed **pre-occupied attachment**); and avoidant attachment reflects high levels of both anxiety and avoidance (renamed **fearful attachment**). A fourth attachment style was proposed by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), called

FIGURE 9.5 Dimensions Underlying Attachment Styles (adapted from Fraley & Shaver, 2000)

dismissing attachment. Those with a dismissing style value being independent and not having to rely on others (meaning that they possess high levels of avoidance), but they tend not to be anxious about relationships (low levels of anxiety).

The significance of attachment styles with respect to love is the effect that the styles have on adult romantic relationships (Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Hartup & Laurenson, 1999). Individuals identified as possessing a secure attachment style tend to have satisfying, highly committed romantic relationships that are the most stable and enduring of the various styles. Individuals with the anxious-ambivalent or preoccupied attachment style enter romantic relationships more quickly, which are prone to end more quickly as well. Anxious-ambivalent individuals become



What do you think it would be like to be involved in a relationship with someone who has an avoidant attachment style? Have you ever been involved with someone like this, or known someone who has?

extremely angry if those to whom they are attracted are not interested in them. Individuals with avoidant attachment styles tend to avoid involvement in romantic relationships, and report that they are more likely to have never been in love than those with the other styles (Keelan, Dion, & Dion, 1994; Morgan & Shaver, 1999).

Furthermore, dimensions underlying attachment styles have been shown to relate to sexual motivation, including with respect to concern about the breakup of a relationship. Within attachment theory, separation from a desired relationship is especially significant psychologically. This is because relationships are thought to fulfill important needs that affect the security and well-being of individuals with secure and anxious-ambivalent styles. Separation from a relationship partner is thought to threaten the well-being of the individual, particularly anxious-ambivalent individuals because of their lack of self-confidence and emotional hardiness. The ending of a relationship therefore is conceived as increasing the levels of anxiety individuals experience, resulting in the activation of the security-seeking aspects of the attachment system. The desire for sexual intimacy therefore may be related to higher levels of anxiety about the stability of relationships, given that sexual motivation is viewed as an aspect of the attachment system.

In a study by Davis, Shaver, and Vernon (2004), the dimension of attachment anxiety discussed previously was measured to assess concerns individuals felt about the stability of romantic relationships. Attachment anxiety was found to relate to measures of several different types of dispositional sexual motives, which are traits reflecting stable interest in the rewarding aspects of sexual behavior. That is, concern about being involved in a stable relationship is related to desire for rewarding sexual experiences. These include desire for **emotional closeness** (a modification of the desire to express *value for one's partner* discussed in previous chapters), desire to **feel valued by one's partner** (called *reassurance* in the study), desire for **stress reduction**, desire to **express one's power** sexually, desire to **experience the power of one's partner**, desire to provide **nurturance**, and desire for **procreation**. Attachment anxiety was also correlated with the tendency to want sex when feeling insecure and to manipulate one's partner with sex to obtain caregiving or to protect oneself from the partner's negative moods or violence. Finally, attachment avoidance was associated with less-intense feelings of passion for relationship partners and a decline in passion over time.

Davis and her colleagues concluded that the findings reveal the important influence of attachment processes in the development of sexual motivation. Attachment is seen as the primary factor underlying interpersonal behavior in general, a perspective supported by a large number of studies. Their study links attachment to the desire for sexual behavior as well. In fact, Davis and colleagues note that "Our findings support the hypothesis that the sexual system can serve functions similar or identical to those of the attachment and caregiving systems" (p. 1086).

Love as an Intense Yearning

A classic perspective of the factors involved in romantic love is the theory of **passionate love** (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). Passionate love is defined as

a state of intense longing for union with another. Passionate love is a complex functional whole including appraisals or appreciations, subjective feelings, expressions, patterned physiological processes, action tendencies, and instrumental behaviors. Reciprocated love (union with the other) is associated with fulfillment and ecstasy. Unrequited love (separation) is associated with emptiness, anxiety, or despair. (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993, p. 5)

Other names passionate love is known by include "a crush, obsessive love, lovesickness, head-over-heels in love, infatuation, or being in love" (Hatfield & Rapson, 2005, p. 3).

Because of the very strong correlation between the experience of passionate love and sexual desire for the person who is the focus of the “desire for union,” the two sets of feelings are seen as being virtually the same. (Hatfield and Rapson [2005], however, note that longing for union does not include sexual desire in all societies.) Because of the extreme overlap, the concept of passionate love positions sexual attraction, interest, and excitement at the very heart of the experience of passionate love, the most important factors distinguishing “being in love” from “loving another person” (Sprecher & Regan, 1998, 2000).

People who are more passionately in love become more excited when they think about the one with whom they are involved (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986; Sprecher & Regan, 1998), engage in sexual behavior with their partner more often (Aron & Henkemeyer, 1995), and are more likely to convey their feelings of passion through sexual activity (Marston, Hecht, Menke, McDaniel, & Reeder, 1998). The vast majority of people with whom individuals say they are “in love” are those whom the individuals also identify as people for whom they feel sexual desire (Berscheid & Meyers, 1996). Passionate love therefore is essentially defined by sexual desire (Sprecher & Regan, 2000), at least in a number of cultures.

In addition to desire for physical and sexual contact with the loved one, passionate love is also distinguished from other types of intimate love by the intense devotion and focus on the romantic partner to the exclusion of other people. Typically, romantic love is exceptional in intensity and in its exclusiveness. A measure of passionate love was designed by Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) to assess the intensity of feelings of affection and attraction for a romantic partner, intrusiveness of thoughts about a romantic partner, reactions of jealousy concerning a romantic partner, and extent of being affected by a romantic partner (see Table 9.3).

Theories Focusing Equally on Sexuality and Love

The set of theories in the middle of the range of theories identified by Aron and Aron (1991) focus on both love and sexuality to about the same extent.

Love as a Reason for Sex

Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing.

Rollo May (ThinkExist.com)

The position advanced by Reiss (1986a, 1986b) proposes two primary motivations for sexuality, the desire for pleasure and the desire for self-disclosure. Reproduction is relevant to sexuality for humans only in the sense that mates stay together to assure that offspring are provided for. The self-disclosure motive involves a desire to experience a highly personal, intimate altered state of consciousness with another person. Although self-disclosure that occurs through sexual interaction is sharing a private aspect of oneself with another person, it is not necessarily affectionate and emotionally intimate. Individuals may show affection for one another without engaging in sexual interaction; likewise, individuals may engage in sexual behavior with one another without feeling or expressing warmth and love. Nonetheless, sexual interaction is one way of increasing intimacy and inspiring feelings of affection and love.

For this reason, Reiss distinguishes the desire for reproduction and desire for pleasure from the desire for intimacy and connectedness, or simply stated, love. Moreover, Reiss ascribes nearly equal status to the desire for intimacy (love) and pleasure (sexual desire), which are seen as more important than the desire for reproduction.

TABLE 9.3 The Passionate Love Scale

These items ask you to describe how you feel when you are passionately in love. Think of the person whom you love most passionately right now. If you are not in love right now, think of the last person you loved passionately. If you have never been in love, think of the person you came closest to caring for in that way. Choose your answers remembering how you felt when your feelings were the most intense.

For each of the 15 items, choose the number between 1 and 9 that most accurately describes your feelings. The answer scale ranges from 1, *not at all true*, to 9, *definitely true*. Write the number you choose next to each item.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. I would feel despair if _____ left me. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 2. Sometimes I feel I can't control my thoughts: they are obsessively on _____. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 3. I feel happy when I am doing something to make _____ happy. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 4. I would rather be with _____ than anyone else. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 5. I'd get jealous if I thought _____ were falling in love with someone else. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 6. I yearn to know all about _____. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 7. I want _____—physically, emotionally, mentally. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 8. I have an endless appetite for affection from _____. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 9. For me, _____ is the perfect romantic partner. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 10. I sense my body responding when _____ touches me. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 11. _____ always seems to be on my mind. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 12. I want _____ to know me—my thoughts, my fears, and my hopes. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 13. I eagerly look for signs indicating _____'s desire for me. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 14. I possess a powerful attraction for _____. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |
| 15. I get extremely depressed when things don't go right in my relationship with _____. | <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> |

Scoring the Passionate Love Scale

Add together all of the numbers next to each statement.

You may interpret your scores using the following ranges:

106–135 = Wildly, even recklessly, in love

45–65 = Tepid, infrequent passion

86–105 = Passionate, but less intense

15–44 = No thrill, never was

66–85 = Occasional bursts of passion

From Hatfield, E., & Sprecher, S., Measuring passionate love in intimate relations. *Journal of Adolescence*, 9, 383–410. Copyright © 1986, Elsevier Science & Technology Journals. Reprinted with permission via Copyright Clearance Center.

Are Love and Sex Rewards That Keep Us in Relationships?

Another theoretical perspective that focuses equally on love and sexuality is social exchange theory (Sprecher, 1998; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). This theory was presented previously in considering factors that

contribute to perceptions of attraction and in relationship development. In this perspective, both love and sex are considered to be potential rewards that may be viewed as outcomes one receives in a relationship (Cate, Lloyd, Henton, & Larson, 1982; Foa & Foa, 1974). They therefore have equal standing in this theory, as well. In reality, the two are usually fairly highly related in relationships; the level of love that individuals report typically corresponds to the quantity and quality of sex that characterizes the relationship.

The View That Arousal + Label = Love (or Sex)

Love, like fire, cannot subsist without constant impulse; it ceases to live from the moment it ceases to hope or to fear.

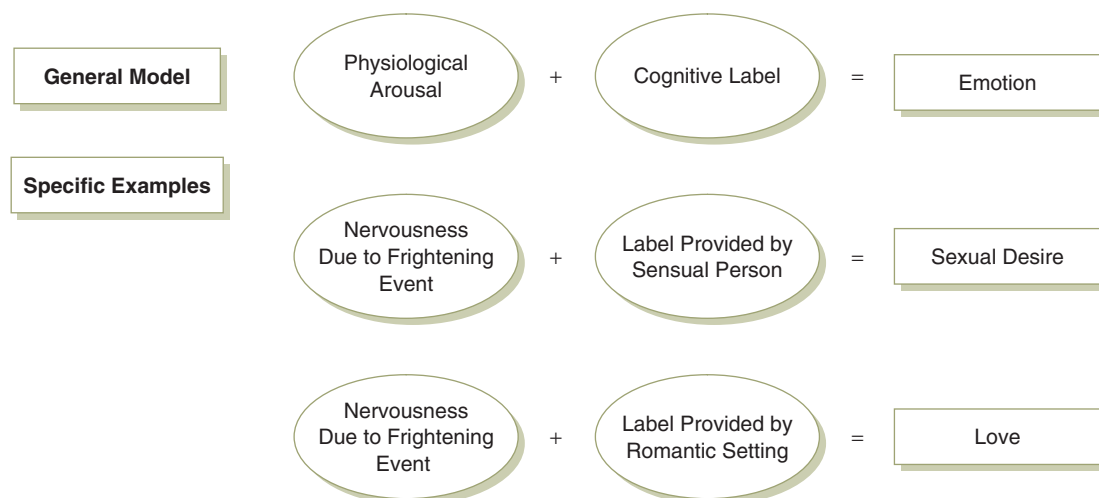
François de la Rochefoucauld (ThinkExist.com)

We invent what we love, and what we fear.

John Irving (ThinkExist.com)

A third perspective in which love and sexuality are given equal status includes several approaches that present love and sexuality as resulting from one common underlying motivation; this motivation is the desire to clearly understand the arousal one is experiencing. One of the most prominent of these approaches is the two-factor theory of love advanced by Berscheid and Walster (1974). Based on a more general two-factor theory of emotions (Schachter & Singer, 1962), the theory of love proposes that the experience of love results from two components: **physiological arousal** and a **cognitive label** that identifies the arousal as caused by love or possibly some other emotion (see Figure 9.6). The power of this theory is due to the possibility that the arousal being experienced may actually result from another source other than love, including physical

FIGURE 9.6 The Two-Factor Theory of Emotion





Have you ever been in an emergency situation, or one that was fairly stressful, only to find yourself strangely attracted to someone involved in that situation? According to the two-factor theory of love, arousal from other emotions, such as fear and distress, may be relabeled as love or sexual arousal.

attraction may be viewed as resulting from the same type of labeling process as love. In addition, arousal resulting from sexual stimulation may be subsequently identified as due to feelings of love, whereas arousal from love-related feelings may be subsequently labeled as sexual attraction and arousal. Therefore, love and sexuality may be thought to originate from the same arousal-label process, having equivalent status and potentially mutually enhancing one another.

Theories Emphasizing Love, but Also Focusing on Sexuality

The theories in this group are concerned primarily with love, viewing sexuality as one of several aspects, or one type, of love. However, sexuality is not the primary focus.

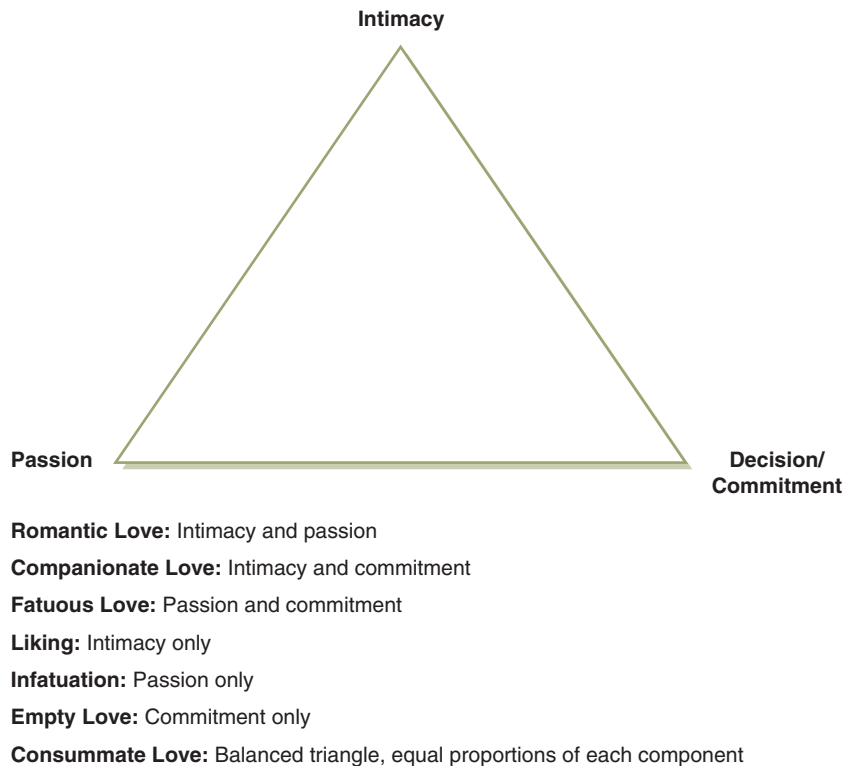
The Three Sides of Love

An especially prominent theory within this group is the **triangular theory of love** (Sternberg, 1986, 1997), which proposes that love consists of three separate components, intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment (see Figure 9.7). **Intimacy** refers to feelings of closeness and affection for a person. **Passion** is excitement and arousal felt toward the person, the dimension that includes sexual arousal and interest. **Decision/commitment** is the aspect of love that involves a choice to enter into a relationship with the person before the relationship has formed (decision); it also consists of an ongoing process throughout the relationship in which the individual is determined to remain in and maintain the relationship (commitment).

Sternberg conceived of the components as dimensions that consist of varying levels of intensity. That is, individuals may experience different levels of each dimension for their romantic partner, some experiencing stronger or weaker feelings of intimacy, more or less intense passion, and greater or lesser commitment. The varying levels of each dimension may be assessed by a self-report questionnaire developed by Sternberg (1988). The level of each dimension is represented as aspects of a triangle of a greater or smaller length, resulting in different triangles of different shapes, or different types of love.

exercise, startle, fear, and anxiety, to name a few. Becoming aware of cues in the environment relevant to love and attraction after experiencing heightened arousal from any source is thought to increase the likelihood that the arousal will be identified as resulting from love. For example, following a frightening event, encountering a loved one, or an individual one finds attractive, may lead people to feel greater love and attraction for that individual (Dutton & Aron, 1974).

In other words, the theory proposes that information from the environment is used as a cue to understand the reason people experience specific emotions such as love. Sexual

FIGURE 9.7 The Triangular Theory of Love

In the early stages of relationship formation, individuals in U.S. culture typically experience very little commitment because the relationship has not yet developed. Most people experience growing feelings of intimacy as they get to know a potential partner and affection increases; greater levels of intimacy with low levels of passion and commitment characterize **liking**. In other situations, an individual may feel intense sexual attraction to someone they encounter, but not knowing the person well, may have little or no feelings of intimacy and commitment; Sternberg identifies this as **infatuation**. As a romantic relationship develops, individuals typically experience increasing intimacy and passion, even before they make a conscious decision to enter into a relationship or become committed to the relationship. High levels of intimacy and passion constitute **romantic love**.

In some cases after being involved in a romantic relationship for some time, feelings of passion may wane while intimacy and commitment remain at high levels or increase in intensity; this type is **companionate love**. Companionate love is also the kind that exists between family members and friends, emotional closeness and devotion without feelings of physical or sexual attraction. The experience of feelings about a partner that are characterized by high levels of all three dimensions is called **consummate love** by Sternberg, the type of love dreamed of by many people and idealized in romantic novels and movies.

Within this theory, sexuality is merely one of three components that make up the broader experience of love. Sexuality may be present at lower or higher levels within various types of love.

Passionate Love Versus Companionate Love

Love is when you take away the feeling, the passion, the romance and you find out you still care for that person.

Unknown (ThinkExist.com)

An early theoretical position on love distinguished passionate love from companionate love, two types of the more general romantic love (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993; Hatfield & Walster, 1978). The prototypical or idealized expectation for romantic love in U.S. culture is for individuals who have “fallen in love” to be intensely, overwhelmingly preoccupied with a partner, craving constant attention and affection from one another. This is what is meant by the concept of **passionate love**, defined formally as “a state of intense longing for union with another” (Hatfield, 1988, p. 193). As discussed previously, passionate love is strongly associated with intense desire for physical and sexual interaction with the romantic partner (Regan & Berscheid, 1999). For this reason, it was considered in the group of theories emphasizing sexuality.

In contrast to passionate love, another type of love is **companionate love**, which has the same types of feelings of emotional investment, concern, and desire for closeness with one’s romantic partner as does passionate love. However, companionate love does not include the same intense physical and sexual attraction as passionate love. Companionate love also does not commonly involve the same level of obsessiveness, preoccupation, and need for constant contact with the romantic partner.

A typical pattern, shown in research conducted in the United States, is for couples to experience passion at the beginning of their romantic relationship, but for the passionate component to wane over time. The roman-

tic relationship therefore changes from being based on passionate love to being grounded in companionate love, although companionate love often subsides as well. For some couples, the experience of companionate love in the later stages of a relationship may be extremely strong and valuable, but it is less likely to involve the obsessiveness and intrusiveness of romantic love, as well as the sexual fascination and passion.

Within this view of companionate love, therefore, sexuality—in the form of physical and sexual attraction to the romantic partner—is somewhat important, but is not central to companionate love in general. Rather, the feelings of devotion, intimacy, and affection are the fundamental aspects of this type of romantic love. They are present in both passionate and companionate love, but for many relationships, the

sexual aspect becomes less important, if not secondary, to couples’ experience of romantic love in the form of companionate love.

Theories Focusing Primarily on Love

This theory group focuses largely on love, with sexuality considered in only a relatively minor way.



Companionate love may become the predominant form of love in the later years of romantic relationships, although companionate love may decline substantially along with passionate love.

A prime example of a theory that focuses primarily on love is that by Brehm (1988), who defined passionate love as “the capacity to construct in one’s imagination an elaborated vision of a future state of perfect happiness” (p. 253). Aron and Aron (1991) note that Brehm aligns herself with the dualistic philosophy advocated by Plato, a perspective that was examined in chapter 2 in considering religious influences on sexuality. This philosophy distinguishes between two types of love, *eros* (carnal, sensual lust) and *agape* (spiritual appreciation for an individual as a person), that are in opposition to one another.

In ancient dualism, carnal love was considered to detract from a person’s capability to experience spiritual love for another person; spiritual love was viewed as contributing to humans’ quest to elevate themselves to a higher level of existence, closer to God, fulfillment, and immortality. Within Brehm’s perspective, sexuality is not critical to the existence of romantic love, but instead is simply one means of enhancing emotional attachment to one’s partner. Unlike the sexuality-focused theories above, Brehm’s theory deemphasizes sexuality and instead casts love as overwhelmingly more significant, and sexuality as one of many aspects of love.

Love and Sexuality Around the World

The Meaning of Love

Views of love among people of the world seem to be remarkably similar in important ways. In other ways, however, various cultures have particular concerns and beliefs that color the associations they have with the experience of love.

As summarized by Hatfield, Rapson, and Martel (in press), reviews of research from a wide range of cultures reveal that conceptions of love are remarkably the same; perceptions were obtained, for example, from the People’s Republic of China, Indonesia, and Turkey, as well as the United States. One study by Shaver, Murday, and Fraley (2001) demonstrated that Indonesian women and men make a distinction between passionate love—involving sexual desire and arousal—and companionate love—affection, liking, and fondness—that is identical to the distinction made by U.S. people. The difference between Indonesian and U.S. cultures is that Indonesians appear to cast passionate love more in terms of a yearning and desire, rather than in terms of actual sexual interaction. This may reflect the relatively greater restrictiveness of the Muslim culture of Indonesia, in which sexual expression is even more tightly controlled.

Are Some Cultures More Likely to Be in Love Than Others?

Because of differences in the value dimension of individualism versus collectivism, Sprecher and colleagues (1994) proposed that Americans are most likely to be in love, Russians next most likely, and Japanese least likely. Individualism is the belief in the importance of independence and pursuing personal goals. Collectivism is the belief in the importance of connection with others and giving lower priority to personal goals than the needs of the community. Individualistic cultures include the United States and countries of northern and western Europe, whereas collectivistic cultures are Asian, African, Latin American, and Pacific Island societies (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990).

Contrary to the expectations of Sprecher and her colleagues, the three groups of student participants were largely similar in the proportion reporting being in love. Specifically, 59% of Americans, 67% of Russians, and 53% of Japanese participants were in love. Women in all three groups were slightly more likely to report that they were in love. Across several studies, a great deal of similarity in proportions of individuals who are in love has been found across ethnic groups (Aron & Rodriguez, 1992; Doherty, Hatfield, Thompson, & Choo, 1994).

Similarly, individuals across various cultures appear to experience the same intensity of passionate love, as measured by the Passionate Love Scale presented previously in the chapter (Doherty et al., 1994; Hatfield & Rapson, 2005).

Are Love and Sexuality Related to Psychological Well-Being?

Many of us have the sense that both love and sexual satisfaction are very important to us, and have a tremendous impact on our happiness. But what exactly is the psychological reason that they both seem to be so vital to us? Aron and Aron (1991) offer the possibility that it is because they both are caused by a higher-level factor. This factor is a basic type of motivation they call **self-expansion**. According to the self-expansion model (Aron & Aron, 1986), individuals possess a fundamental need to increase their ability to achieve their desired goals and control their own outcomes. This ability to have power and exert control is known as **efficacy**, and is similar to other theories concerning motivation to achieve goals (Bandura, 1982; Deci, 1975; White, 1959).

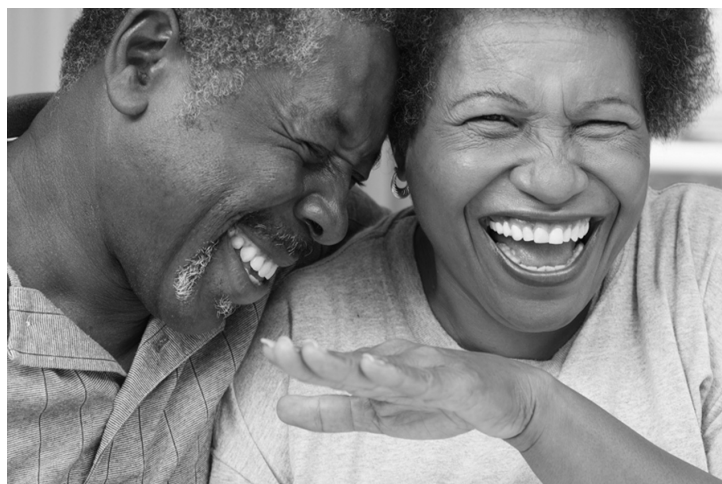
The self-expansion model maintains that a person's belief that he or she is able to control one's outcomes and to have personal power serves to expand one's sense of self. The expansion of self results in an intensely positive emotional experience. Consequently, the experience of self-expansion is a desired outcome in itself, becoming a goal that people avidly seek to achieve. Self-expansion allows individuals to feel extremely positive about themselves. Experiences that result in a sudden, rapid expansion of self are particularly desirable and sought after. Such experiences include "bursts of creative insights, religious conversions, discoveries, winning lotteries, and the like—and, notably, falling in love and intense sexual experiences" (Aron & Aron, 1991, p. 42).

Therefore, according to self-expansion theory, the experience of both love and sexual passion result in self-expansion, and for this reason are highly desirable experiences. That is, both sexuality and love contribute to a person's sense of their ability to achieve desired goals and to control their outcomes. Simply experiencing the feelings associated with being in love with, or being sexually attracted to, another person may produce the positive feelings of self-expansion. Succeeding in involving the other person in a romantic or sexual relationship may also result in even greater feelings of efficacy and control. Aron and Aron (1991) state that "passion is desired because it is perceived as a moment of limitless potential efficacy, or connection with a source of such limitless power" (p. 42).

In fact, love and sexuality are highly preferred by many as a way of achieving the sense of expanded personal competence and growth. Three reasons are the basis for the special importance of love and sexuality. The first is that they are relatively more available to virtually everyone; this contrasts with the fairly rare experiences of making profound discoveries or accomplishments, of experiencing religious conversion, or of acquiring great wealth. Popular media, in the form of books, television, movies, and music, celebrate the experience of love as well as sexual attraction. Beyond this, popular media promote the idea that the ecstatic joys of success in romance and sexuality are possible for everyone independent of social status, education, and wealth.

The second reason that love and sexuality are so highly valued is that, in U.S. society, they are considered to be most appropriately experienced together. The general belief is that individuals should be in love, ideally in a long-term committed relationship, before sexual interaction occurs for the individual. Because of the joining of sexuality with love, the effect is to combine the intensity of the two experiences, probably multiplying the passion and self-expansion of the experience, rather than simply doubling it by adding the two together.

The third reason suggested by Aron and Aron (1991) is that both love and sexuality may serve the psychological function of allowing individuals to explore aspects of themselves they typically neglect, or even deny. Embracing such hidden aspects may be possible by experiencing them through a romantic or sexual partner who possesses those characteristics or who enables an individual to comfortably express them. The process is similar to that proposed by Carl Jung (1971) in which individuals are proposed to seek wholeness through exploring the various aspects of their personality; this type of exploration is thought to contribute to greater psychological adjustment and greater happiness.



The experience of love and sexuality together within a relationship may amplify the effect of both of them on happiness and well-being in a powerful way.

Jung maintained that all individuals possess both masculine characteristics and feminine characteristics. He advocated the importance of women understanding and integrating into their conscious awareness their masculine qualities, as well as men doing so with their feminine qualities. Beyond this, romance and sexuality permit individuals to explore their less mundane, wilder natures. Experiencing aspects of oneself, and possibly embracing them, is exactly the nature of the process proposed by Aron and Aron in self-expansion theory. Great pleasure and growth are theorized to result from the sense of greater knowledge and control over oneself.

Aron and Aron (1991) ultimately integrate both love and sexuality as aspects of self-expansion with more fundamental issues underlying human psychology:

We would suggest that the self-expansion motive prods humans to elaborate and expand every element of themselves. Like the bit of sand inside the oyster, secretions are added to that original something—the older the culture, the larger the pearl. The relatively simple communications of other animals become, in humans, language, education, culture, politics, screenplays, poetry, the evening news, and on and on. . . . Mating becomes freighted with fantasies, rites, institutions, medical specialties, . . . and on and on. . . . [W]e may be biologically programmed to find sexuality, attachment, and caregiving rewarding, but these bits of sand also seem to have grown into much, much more. . . . To say a pearl is only a bit of sand plus some stuff around it seems to greatly miss the essence of the pearl. If we want to say something in general about both the bit of sand, which may be biological, and its outer accretions, called culture, perhaps the most interesting commonality is found in the purpose of each—the expansion of human life. (pp. 43–44)

When Do We First Engage in Sexual Behavior?

I did promise fidelity to one boyfriend in my rebirth-of-lust period, but he still got very angry with me when other men so much as looked at me. Of course, my appearance had attracted him, but he didn't want anyone else to take notice. . . . His particular attitude is a traditional sexist one, which isn't surprising to find, except that it came from a quiet, highly educated artist with leftist politics and a feminist perspective. He seemed so sweet. I was sad to leave

him. A common theme is the good old double standard. These men seemed to be inviting me to share in playful sex, but even if a woman will have casual sex with them, many men convince themselves she wouldn't do it with anyone else. They want to have sex with Sleeping Beauty, who at the moment of a kiss is suddenly transformed into a person with no life, a blank slate upon which the prince writes his desires. (Sullivan, 2000, p. 104)

Substantial evidence exists that, in popular thinking, love and sexuality are in fact intimately linked. Beyond this, popular views hold that love and sexuality *should* be linked, with strong feelings of love, attachment, and investment needing to be established before a couple engages in most types of sexual behavior. Prior to the late 1960s, engaging in sex prior to marriage was widely considered highly immoral and despicable. Individuals who violated the societal prohibition against sex before marriage were often subjected to profound ridicule and were ostracized within many aspects of society (refer to chapters 2 and 3 for discussion of reasons underlying this issue). Women were especially harshly condemned for engaging in premarital sex because of the *double standard*; this value system allowed men greater tolerance with respect to engaging in sexual behavior outside of marital relationships.

The double standard resulted from a succession of religious and cultural beliefs that cast women as (a) epitomizing morality and spiritual purity during the Middle Ages, (b) then as completely “uncontaminated” by sexual desire in the Victorian Era, and finally (c) as motivated to engage in sexual behavior only when they experience “true love” for one man whom they are fated to marry (who is “meant” only for them). This became the romantic view of love and sexuality, an ethic that prevails into current times. Such values make sexual behavior before marriage much more acceptable in the context of an established, loving romantic relationship.

Popular Conceptions of the Relationship of Love and Sexuality

General Beliefs About the Importance of Love

Cognitively, perceptions of sexuality are highly woven into the general understanding of the meaning of romantic love; that is, sexual passion and sexual behavior are conceived as aspects of “being in love,” but sexuality is not the most defining or central component. This was determined in research by Luby and Aron (1990) in which conceptions of *loving someone* and *being in love with someone* were compared in an attempt to define the meaning of love.

Being in love involved many of the same concepts as *loving someone*, such as caring about a person's well-being and feeling closeness, intimacy, and devotion to a person. These are feelings that individuals may associate with many different loved ones beyond a romantic partner, such as one's parents, siblings, and children. However, conceptions of *being in love* included such concepts as *physical attraction*, *sexual arousal*, and *desire*, indicating that sexuality is conceived as an aspect of romantic love. Yet these qualities were not most central to conceptions of romantic love—indeed they had weaker associations with it than features such as compassion, warmth, and emotional intimacy. In other words, sexual feelings are conceived as subservient to feelings of emotional closeness and are thought to occur within the context of other love-related feelings.

The Link Between Beliefs and Sexual Behavior

Because of the strong link between love and sexuality in common thinking, it is not surprising that the likelihood of engaging in sexual behavior increases as a function of both (a) the stage of the relationship and

(b) the level of intimacy and emotional attachment, although the two are very highly related to one another. Feelings of mutual love and a sense of commitment are the most important factors that college students report taking into account in their decision to engage in sexual intercourse (Christopher & Cate, 1985). Because women prefer to wait for higher levels of love and commitment, the greatest agreement of couples on the desired level of sexual involvement tends to be in later stages of dating relationships (McCabe & Collins, 1984).

Women and men, in fact, have very different expectations about when sexual behavior should occur in general, however; men typically expect sex to occur substantially earlier than women (Cohen & Shotland, 1996). Specifically, men expect sex to occur after about 10 dates or after 6 weeks of dating. Women, in contrast, expect sex after 17 dates or 13 weeks of dating. The factor that appears to determine when sex actually does occur is the expectation of women; expectations were correlated with actual behavior for women, but not for men, a finding consistent with earlier research on attitudes and behavior (Earle & Perricone, 1986). Other possible explanations offered by Earle and Perricone are that women are more likely to act according to their beliefs, or that women develop an attitude that is consistent with the behavior in which they actually have engaged for the sake of being consistent. However, Cohen and Shotland suggested the possibility that women take on the role of “the gatekeeper” (Peplau, Rubin, & Hill, 1977), controlling when sex occurs based on the more restrictive attitudes associated with the female gender role.

The greater importance of emotional intimacy for women is indicated by the finding that less than two-thirds of women would have sex in a relationship in which the partners were attracted, but did not feel emotionally close; in contrast, essentially all men reported that they would consider engaging in sex under these circumstances (Cohen & Shotland, 1996). In relationships in which partners felt neither attraction nor emotional closeness, approximately 66% of men said they would consider engaging in sex, whereas only approximately 20% of women indicated that they would consider doing so. Actual experience reflected this gender difference. Around 33% of men reported that they had engaged in sex without feeling either attraction or emotional closeness; only 5% of women had engaged in sex under these conditions.

Furthermore, both women and men believe that the average woman or man expects to engage in sexual behavior earlier than they themselves expected. Cohen and Shotland observed that the perception that others have more permissive beliefs than is actually the case is an example of **pluralistic ignorance**. Pluralistic ignorance refers to the widespread inaccurate understanding of the actual beliefs held by the majority of individuals; people are often wrong in the judgments they make about how the majority actually feels or what the majority actually does.

Hardly any research has been conducted on the relationship of love and sexuality among lesbians and gay men. Nonetheless, aspects of love—such as perceptions of attachment and equality—have been found to be important aspects of gay and lesbian relationships. Such feelings affect not only relationship satisfaction, but also the commitment of individuals to the continuation of the relationship (Kurdeck, 1991, 1995). Clearly, love is an important factor, just as it is in heterosexual relationships. Furthermore, research has indicated that lesbians tend to engage in sexual behavior only after substantial intimacy and attachment have developed within their romantic relationship (Leigh, 1989).

Relationship Stage and Sexual Involvement

Relationship stage has also been explicitly linked to emotional involvement and actual sexual behavior among college students (Roche, 1986). The proportion of both young men and women in this study who engaged in penile–vaginal intercourse increased directly with stage of relationship and emotional involvement. Among

women, 4% had engaged in sexual intercourse at stage one (dating with no particular affection), 11% had done so at stage two (dating with affection but not love), 32% had at stage three (dating and in love), 68% had at stage four (dating one person only and in love), and 81% had engaged in penile–vaginal intercourse at stage five (engaged to be married). Similarly, 15% of men had engage in penile–vaginal intercourse at stage one, 18% at stage two, 49% at stage three, 63% at stage four, and 74% at stage five. The lower proportions for women in comparison to men at stages one through three were not found at the two later, more intimate stages; in fact, proportions were greater for women.

The patterns were very similar for other types of sexual behavior, such as “light petting,” “heavy petting,” and oral–genital sex (*petting* is stroking genitals and breasts with the hands). This is consistent with the finding across a number of studies that being in love and involvement in a serious relationship are more important as a basis for engaging in sexual behavior for women in comparison to men (Carroll, Volk, & Hyde, 1985; Cohen & Shotland, 1996; Hill, 2002; Sprecher, Barbee, & Schwartz, 1995).

Stoking the Fires of Passion: Behavior Leading Up to Sexual Intimacy

Does it matter what you do or say if you want to set the stage with a partner for sexual intimacy? The short answer is “yes,” although the specific way to set the stage depends on whether your partner is a woman or a man. In addition to a general sense of intimacy and attachment within a romantic relationship, the type of



Do you think that you would be more or less likely to experience sexual arousal when being comforted or supported by your romantic partner in comparison to other types of interactions you may have? Does the emotional nature of a situation set the stage for sexual interest?

specific interactions that occur may play a critical role in the decision to engage in sexual behavior. In a study in which participants imagined themselves in eight hypothetical scenarios (Hill, 2002), different types of partner behaviors were described that strongly suggested the possibility that sexual behavior would occur. Each of the eight types of partner behaviors gave the sense that one of eight sexual incentives, or rewards, was available through sexual behavior with the partner. That is, in the scenario, the partner engaged in behavior suggesting that a specific type of emotional experience would result from engaging in sexual behavior with him or her.

For example, one scenario described an individual feeling stressed by work-related problems after coming home one night, with the partner responding in extremely soothing and affectionate ways to the negative mood. This scenario represented the possibility of engaging in sex to obtain relief from a negative psychological state (stress relief), one of the eight sexual incentives. The other sexual incentives are feeling valued, valuing a partner, providing nurturance to one's partner, feeling powerful, feeling the power of one's partner, experiencing physical pleasure, and attempting to have a child.

Five of the situations were hypothesized to indicate a great degree of **emotional investment** in the partner: specifically, the situations providing the opportunity for stress relief, feeling valued, valuing the partner, providing nurturance, and having a child. The other situations were thought to involve partner behaviors that do *not* convey a sense of emotional investment by the partner: specifically, feeling

Box 9.3**An Eye Toward Research****Is There a Link Between Emotional Intimacy and Engaging in Sexual Behavior?**

The link between intimacy and engaging in sexual behavior is highlighted in a study by Christopher and Cate (1985). The focus of this study was couples who were involved in a serious, sexually exclusive relationship (meaning that the couples did not engage in sexual behavior with anyone other than their romantic partner). The first goal of the researchers was to determine what the typical patterns of involvement in sexual behavior are for established relationships.

Four patterns of progression to engaging in sexual behavior were identified among 54 dating couples (who were all White). The first pattern was rapid involvement, couples who engaged in high levels of sexual behavior early in their relationship (7.4% of the couples). The second pattern was gradual involvement, those who engaged in only less intimate sexual behavior, such as fondling the woman's breasts while clothed on the first date; however, the couples progressed to more intimate sexual behavior with each relationship stage (31.5% of the couples). The third pattern was delayed involvement, in which couples engaged in less intimate sexual behaviors such as kissing and fondling in the early stages; sexual behavior leading to orgasm did not occur for these couples until the last stage of "becoming a couple" (44.4% of the couples). The last pattern of sexual behavior was low involvement, in which even by the last relationship stage, the most intimate sexual behavior typical of the couples was fondling the woman's genitals to the point of producing vaginal secretions (16.6% of the couples).

Feelings of love experienced by each individual for his or her romantic partner were measured using a self-report questionnaire indicating the degree of closeness and attachment to the partner. Couples who exhibited a pattern of rapid involvement in sexual behavior tended to report having experienced greater feelings of love at earlier stages of the relationship than other types of couples, paralleling the level of sexual intimacy in which they engaged.

Christopher and Cate (1985) noted that two interpretations could account for this relationship. First, it may be that individuals attribute greater feelings of love earlier in the relationship to legitimize the fact that they have engaged in more intimate sexual behavior earlier. Another possibility is that only couples who feel a great deal of love for one another after engaging in sexual behavior continue on to become established romantic couples; given that only established couples were included in the study, it is possible that individuals who did not experience stronger feelings of love did not go on to become established couples so that they could be included in the study.

The important conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that feelings of love and emotional attachment coincide with the likelihood of engaging in sexual behavior. It is not clear from this research whether greater feelings of love cause people to be more motivated to engage in sexual behavior or whether believing that the couple was intensely in love in retrospect provides an after-the-fact justification for it.

References

Christopher, F. S., & Cate, R. M. (1985). Premarital sexual pathways and relationship development. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 2, 271–288.

powerful by engaging in sexual behavior, feeling the power of one's partner, and experiencing physical pleasure.

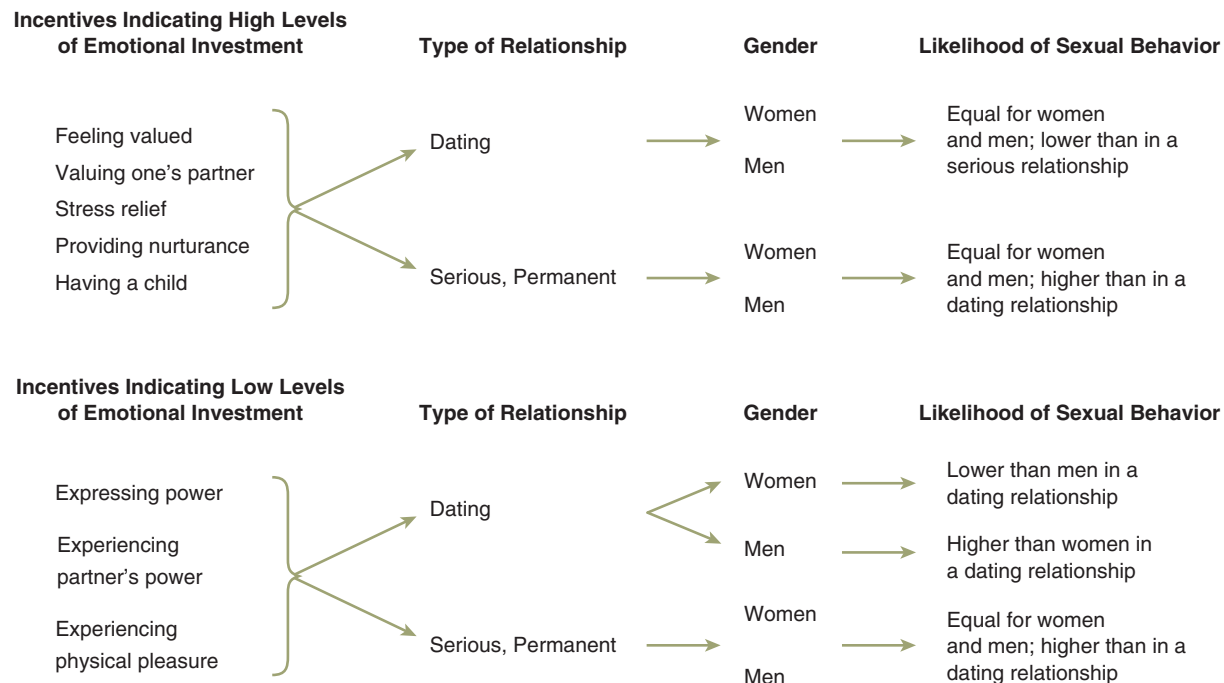
Another factor examined in the study was the type of relationship in which participants imagined that they were involved with the partner: (a) dating one month, and imagining that they could become involved in a serious relationship; (b) dating six months, and imagining a serious relationship was possible; and (c) married or involved in a serious, permanent relationship for six months.

The issue examined in this study was participants' judgments about the likelihood of engaging in sexual behavior with a romantic partner in each situation. The expectation was that women and men would be equally likely to report that they would engage in sexual behavior in situations conveying a sense of emotional investment by the partner (i.e., providing stress relief, feeling valued; see Figure 9.8). However, for both women and men, the likelihood was expected to be greater in more serious, established relationships. In contrast, women were expected to report being less likely to engage in sexual behavior when the partner's behavior did not explicitly convey emotional investment (i.e., expressing power, experiencing the partner's power, and experiencing physical pleasure). Only in the more serious, long-term relationships were women expected to report being equally likely as men to engage in such behavior because emotional attachment is assumed to already exist substantially in these types of relationships.

In large part, these expectations were confirmed by the results of the study. Both women and men reported being more likely to engage in sexual behavior in more serious relationships. Also, women indicated that they

FIGURE 9.8

Proposed Likelihood of Sexual Behavior as a Function of Sexual Incentives, Gender, and Type of Relationship



would be more likely to engage in sexual behavior when their partners' behavior communicated greater emotional investment in them, such that gender differences did not occur even in the early dating relationship (dating 1 month). That is, women were as likely as men to say they would engage in sexual behavior very early in a relationship if they felt emotional investment by their partner.

Actually, two notable exceptions to these results were found. First, women indicated being *more* likely to engage in sexual behavior, regardless of level of relationship, when they felt a need for comfort and relief, or their partner felt such a need. Women reported being especially likely to engage in sexual behavior when they needed comfort while in a serious relationship; men reported being equally likely regardless of type of relationship, but substantially less likely than women in a serious relationship.

The second exception was that women reported being dramatically less likely to engage in sexual behavior when the partner conveyed a desire to exert power over them sexually, regardless of the type of relationship. Apparently, men's desire to exert power over women sexually is perceived by women as intimidating and not sexually arousing. It may be that such behavior activates a schema, a cognitive interpretation, of the male gender role as aggressive and potentially unpleasant, if not dangerous. Such a finding is additionally consistent with the view that emotional warmth, intimacy, and attachment are especially important to women in order to experience sexual desire and interest.

Summary

An intimate relationship is an ongoing involvement between individuals characterized by substantial knowledge and understanding of one another that has been gathered through talking and sharing time together. Another critical aspect of the definition is that an intimate relationship involves a level of closeness in interaction that distinguishes it from casual, or nonintimate, relationships. Relational intimacy involves greater frequency and quality of interactions. A romantic relationship is a type of intimate relationship involving the potential to experience passion: the desire for, and positive emotions, related to physical intimacy and sexual involvement.

Intimate relationships develop through increasing interdependence, the condition of partners being able to obtain highly desired rewards and incentives more and more only from one another. Increasing interdependence contributes to growing commitment to the relationship, the desire and intention to remain in the relationship over the long-term.

Various formal psychological theories of the relationship of love and sexuality have spanned the entire range of possibilities, as noted in Aron and Aron's (1991) theoretical model. The first group of theories focuses primarily on sexuality without focusing on love to any great extent. The second group of theories emphasizes sexuality, but also focuses

(Continued)

(Continued)

on love to some extent. The third group of theories focuses equally on sexuality and love. The fourth group of theories emphasizes love, but also focuses on sexuality to some extent. The final group of theories emphasizes the importance of love without really focusing much on sexuality. Aron and Aron suggest that, beyond all of the theories included in their theoretical continuum, the relationship between love and sexuality may in fact be due to another, higher-order factor, the need for self-expansion.

Sexuality is conceived in the popular mind set as intricately linked to love, as well as involving the belief that sexuality *should* be

linked to love. Research has demonstrated that increasing levels of intimacy and emotional attachment, as well as progression to later relationship stages, increases the likelihood of sexual behavior. Nonetheless, substantial gender differences exist in the desired timing of first intercourse because women prefer to wait for higher levels of love and commitment, whereas men are satisfied with lower levels. The expectations of women generally exerts the stronger influence on the actual timing of first intercourse for a couple. Stage of relationship and level of emotional involvement are typically fairly strongly related to the likelihood of sexual behavior for couples.

Chapter 9 Critical Thinking Exercises

1. The nature of romantic relationships

Think of at least four relationships with which you are familiar (such as those of family, friends, or acquaintances) or about which you have heard (such as relationships involving a celebrity, movie or TV star, music star, or politician).

Which relationship is the most intimate, the most sexual, the strongest, the most satisfying, the most argumentative, and the most likely to end?

Do these dimensions adequately describe romantic relationships? Should other dimensions be included? How important is sexuality to romantic relationships?

2. Initiation of sexual behavior

Research indicates that women believe they would be more likely to engage in sexual behavior when their partner exhibits behavior that communicates emotional intimacy; this is especially true if either the woman or her partner needs comfort. Women are particularly unlikely to want to engage in sexual behavior when their partner appears to want to exert power and control over them. How important do you think specific partner behaviors are in initiating sexual behavior in relationships?



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