

Chapter 10

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY

I'm actually just starting a relationship. So far I'm quite happy with it. Me and [my] boyfriend have agreed that we have plenty of time to experiment sexually during our relationship instead of all at once, and that we're both in no rush to do things. I really enjoy kissing, hugging, and cuddling with him. Eventually we'll do more things when we're both ready and feel it's time. First things first, I'm a virgin, but I don't plan on keeping my virginity until I get married. But I want to at least lose it to someone I love and deserves it. (Emotional Intimacy More Important to Woman? How About the Man? On-line forum, retrieved July 22, 2006, from The-clitoris.com. Reprinted with permission of The-clitoris.com.)

As the above self-disclosure illustrates, being involved in an intimate relationship is, for many people, a deciding factor in whether they will engage in sexual behavior with someone (Christopher & Cate, 1985; Hill, 2002; Roche, 1986; Sprecher, 1989). Many feel that they must be in a relationship and must be in love first before they will engage in sex. Furthermore, relationship status is important with respect to sexuality because being in a steady relationship also means engaging in sex more often, on average (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994).

The emotional closeness provided by relationships is therefore a major factor influencing sexuality in a number of ways. Other advantages to sex in established relationships include greater familiarity and comfort, contributing to higher quality communication. Each partner knowing what the other wants can lead to more satisfying sex as well.

Relationships, however, do not always remain at the lofty peak of blissful intimacy and satisfaction that they may soar to early on in the relationship. Instead, many follow a path of growth and change that stretches across the entire duration of individuals' involvement with one another. Aspects of relationships typically shift and evolve as individuals find out more about one another, react to and ponder one another's unfolding behavior, and share feelings with one another. The nature of these changes affect many facets of individuals' lives, including the kinds of sexual behavior in which they engage, their happiness with what they experience, how often they have sex, and the meaning of these sexual encounters with their partner. For this reason,

understanding the dynamics underlying relationship change is as critical as understanding the factors that brought individuals together in the first place.

Yet not all sexual behavior occurs within the context of ongoing intimate relationships. Because of the dramatic societal changes that took place throughout the last century, a significant amount of sexual behavior occurs outside of ongoing relationships. An important issue to take into account, therefore, is the nature of factors leading some individuals to engage in sexual behavior of a more casual nature. Behavior of this sort is noteworthy because it occurs despite fairly strong societal norms and values that have succeeded in convincing people in general to restrict sexual expression to ongoing intimate relationships. Because sexual behavior does take place outside of intimate relationships with some frequency, this issue is examined as well. Sex outside of relationships includes that in which neither individual is involved in a relationship at the time; it also includes sexual behavior with a person other than individuals' spouse or romantic relationship partner. If relationship involvement is such an important factor in general, then why do some individuals have sex with others when they are not in a relationship with them? This is one of the issues considered in this chapter.

In the previous chapter, the role of love, intimacy, and emotional attachment in the desire to become involved in romantic and sexual relationships was discussed. The current chapter first considers the ways in which relationships develop and progress over time, a process captured more poetically in a song, as described by the songwriter herself:

That's why I called it Dangerously in Love [a song she wrote]. It's basically all of the steps in a relationship: from when you first meet a guy, to realizing you're interested, to dancing with him the first night, to thinking that you're in love, to realizing that you're now a little open to making love, to breaking up, to having to love yourself after the breakup. All of that. A celebration of love. (Beyonce Knowles, American pop singer and actress; ThinkExist.com)

Beginning with strategies that individuals typically use to communicate interest in establishing a relationship, the chapter continues with behaviors that increase commitment once a romantic relationship has begun. It also addresses strategies that are involved in coping with conflict and disagreement between individuals involved in a relationship, as well as the process through which relationships deteriorate and come to an end. Following this, factors involved in how sexual activity first begins within relationships are considered. The frequency and types of sexual behavior that are typical are examined, as well as the role of sexual satisfaction in relationship quality and stability. Because not all sexual behavior occurs within relationships, casual sex and sex outside of established relationships (e.g., affairs) are discussed, as well as factors that are associated with their occurrence. Finally, jealousy that results from a concern about sexual involvement outside of a relationship is examined.

The Path That Relationships Usually Follow

Kindling the Flame: How to Signal Romantic Interest

Yea or Nay: What People Do to Show Interest or Lack of Interest

Flirting is the gentle art of making a man feel pleased with himself.

Helen Rowland, author (ThinkExist.com)

Expressing feelings of interest and attraction for one another, of course, is an essential process involved in forging new romantic relationships (Taraban, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1998). Actually, rather than existing as only one single process, however, research suggests that showing interest in becoming involved romantically may occur in a variety of ways (Fichten, Tagalakis, Judd, Wright, & Amsel, 1992). The most common method of expressing interest is that of using **verbal strategies**; these include asking detailed questions, adding to the conversation, complimenting, and requesting the person's phone number or address. A second method is that of using **nonverbal strategies**. The most typical strategies in this group are making eye contact, moving closer, smiling, and looking intently at the other person.

Box 10.1 | Can't Believe You Said That! Those Risky Come-On Lines

Some may believe that a clever come-on line is the best icebreaker, because it shows a sense of humor and wit, maybe a sparkling, fun personality. In fact, belief in the importance of the come-on line rose to extreme prominence during the 1920s. In an era that focused on the importance of personality, rather than character, as was the focus in Victorian times, men believed that it was important to develop their "line" to be able to meet women successfully. Apparently, the contemporary version of this reliance on come-on lines has evolved—some would say, devolved—into raucous, if not humorous, zingers. Some reflexively cause those who hear them to groan.

Advice from the Web site *How to Attract Women* (2006) warns against using such lines:

Come-ons or "lines" are just plain phony. Women want sincerity from a man. You won't get a date with lines like these:

"What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?"

"I'm sure I know you from somewhere."

"You seemed so lonely standing here all by yourself."

If you simply want to talk to a woman, be real. A woman will usually be flattered when you are sincere.

This Web site also advises would-be suitors to avoid making what it calls, the "Biggest Flirting Mistakes." These include:

Playing the little boy routine. This is very annoying to most women.

Being slick, too cool.

Talking negatively.

Acting like a clown to make her laugh will have her laughing at you, not with you.

Whining is an indicator that he is going to be a complainer or nitpicker.

Author Amy Cohen agrees with such advice in her article, *Come On! What's With Those Pick-Up Lines?* She writes:

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Unfortunately for us, there is no sure-fire way to avoid a Random Act of Sleaziness. By the time a guy approaches and opens his mouth, it is already too late. The key here, I think, is education. The next time a guy comes up to you and asks, “What’s your sign?” tell him it’s *Stop*, then tell him to just be himself. It’s very sexy to see a guy come up to you with the confidence to strike up a conversation without hiding behind some cheesy line you’ve heard a million times before. And let’s face it, we girls all have tired legs—not from running through his mind all night, but from running away from that oh-so-sleazy pick-up line we just can’t seem to avoid. (Cohen, 2006)

So, what are other come-on lines to avoid? Although they are called the “Best Come-On Lines” by Wooden Nickel posted on a Web site (Wooden Nickel, 2005, December 23), you might want to steer clear of these:

- You give me a reason to wake up every day.
- I don’t know if you are beautiful or not; I haven’t gotten past your eyes yet.
- I made a wish on a falling star, and you just made my wish come true!
- Your father must be a weapons specialist because you are the bomb!
- Hey, haven’t I seen you before? Oh, yeah, it was in my dreams!
- I’m not like all the other guys.
- What planet are you from? ’Cause I’ve never seen anyone like you before!
- They say milk does the body good, but darn, how much have you been drinking?
- Your name must be Campbell ’cause you’re Mmm! Mmm! Good.
- Out of all the fish in the sea, you’re the one I got hooked on.
- You must have been a Girl Scout because you have my heart all tied up in knots.
- Wanna see some pictures of my kids?
- Do you have a map? I’m lost in your eyes.
- Baby, you make me melt like an M & M in your mouth.
- You’re the best-looking girl I’ve seen in a while.
- I only thought about you once today—I just never stopped.
- OK, I’m here, what’s your next wish?
- Your smile is as sweet as the sunlight.
- My friend wants to know if you think I’m cute.

References

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- Wooden Nickel. (2005, December 23). *Best come-on lines*. Retrieved March 2, 2007, from <http://www.unsignedmysteries.com/usm438177.html>
- How to attract women*. Lines and come-ons. Retrieved March 2, 2007, from <http://www.how-to-attract-women.com/lines-come-ons.html>

A third means of conveying interest in another person is **touch**, which includes not only simply touching the person, but also putting one's arm around him or her, or kissing. A fourth way of communicating interest is what Fichten and colleagues call **intangible strategies**; these involve behaviors such as paying attention to the other person, acting in a friendly way, flirting, and appearing relaxed. Some strategies are not easily labeled, and were grouped by the researchers into a class called **unclassifiable strategies**. These include such tactics as simply hanging around the other person, performing courteous acts for the person, and phoning often.

Strategies for indicating disinterest likewise fall into the six categories. **Verbal strategies** include informing the other person that one has a romantic partner, lying or making excuses, ending the conversation, and refusing an invitation. Examples of **nonverbal strategies** are looking away from the other person, staying far away from the person, looking bored, and turning away. **Intangible strategies** include being unfriendly and shying away from the person. **Unclassifiable behaviors** are avoiding the other person, distracting oneself while talking with the person, ignoring the person, and avoiding performing courteous acts for the person. None of the strategies for conveying disinterest involved the category of **touch** in their study. This is probably because touch in itself is an intimate experience and could conceivably be misinterpreted as interest in the person. One method of showing disinterest that is not used to express interest is **paralinguistic behavior**; this includes keeping one's statements and responses as short as possible and remaining as silent as possible.

Reactions to Rejection

A sad thing in life is that sometimes you meet someone who means a lot to you only to find out in the end that it was never bound to be and you just have to let go.

Unknown (ThinkExist.com)

In general, most people are quite capable of detecting interpersonal cues that indicate both romantic interest and disinterest. Nonetheless, many of us have probably felt attraction at least once in our lives toward someone who we come to realize does not feel attraction for us. This is referred to as **unrequited love**, the experience of feeling attraction for someone who does not feel a similar attraction in return (Baumeister & Wotman, 1992). However, some individuals report having experienced especially intense feelings of attraction and profound infatuation for another person who was not attracted to them. They therefore felt like they had suffered a severe loss after it became clear that a relationship would not develop.

Actually, the emotional reactions of both individuals involved in this type of experience—the pursued and the pursuer—are often a mix of negative and positive feelings. The positive emotions reported by those who are attracted to the other person include the feeling that their attraction had provided them with a reason for living; they also report periods of intense happiness when it seemed like the other person might also be interested in them. Individuals who are the



Have you ever been pursued by someone whom you were not interested in romantically or sexually? Have you ever tried to show interest for someone who you found out was not interested in you? What feelings did you experience in these situations?

object of attraction indicate that they thought they were friends with the person whom they later found out was romantically or sexually attracted to them. They also tend to have felt flattered by the other's attraction for them upon realizing the attraction existed (Baumeister & Wotman, 1992).

However, negative reactions also occur as the pursuer begins to understand that a relationship is not going to happen. The person who is rejected typically feels upset, angry, disappointed, and jealous. Many of the rejected believe that the one they found attractive had led them on and had actually signaled interest in them as well. Often the person who was pursued feels that the pursuer persisted with attempts to begin a relationship even after being given an outright expression of disinterest in him or her. According to Baumeister and Wotman's research, the disinterested person often experienced guilt and anger as a result of the conflict. Unrequited love therefore results in the experience of negative emotions for both individuals, although the one who was pursued reports feeling more negative than positive about the situation (Baumeister & Wotman, 1992).

Increasing Commitment in a Romantic Relationship

I learned that you cannot put the relationship second. Because love is not enough.

Stephan Jenkins (ThinkExist.com)

Ways to Strengthen Commitment

Once a relationship has begun, what do individuals do to keep the relationship going? What strategies will help them solidify the commitment of their partner? The most common means of clarifying the feelings of one's partner is called a **direct definitional bid** (Tolhuizen, 1989); this is an outright request to the partner for a definite commitment. If the partner who has received such a bid also wants to strengthen the relationship, not surprisingly he or she most commonly uses a strategy called **accept definitional bid**; this is responding affirmatively to the partner's direct definitional bid. No differences among partners' strategies exist if both are equally interested in promoting commitment to the relationship.

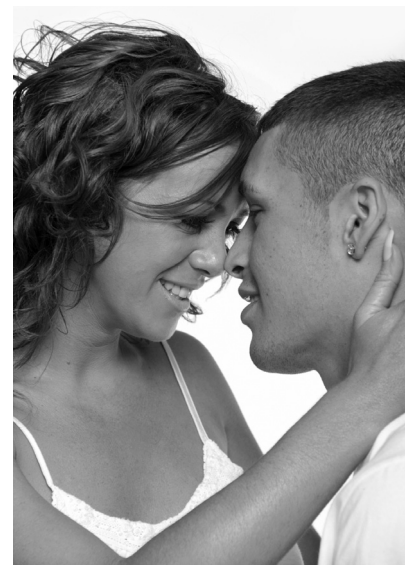
Overall, the most frequent strategies for intensifying relationships in general are (a) increasing contact, (b) relationship negotiation, and (c) requesting social support. The strategy of **increasing contact** is arranging to be with the partner or calling the partner more frequently. **Relationship negotiation** is explicitly engaging the partner in discussing their feelings for one another. **Requesting social support** is asking the partner for advice. Women report a greater frequency of using relationship negotiation and acceptance of definitional bid. Men are more likely to use a direct definitional bid, as well as another strategy, **verbal expressions of affection**, such as saying the words "I love you" (Tolhuizen, 1989).

The greater tendency of men to offer such a strong statement of commitment as "I love you" has been confirmed in other research as well (Owen, 1987). The reason for this may be that men are more impulsive with respect to certain types of emotional expression; that is, they are less able to inhibit and control particular emotional reactions. Gender differences are supported as well in research by Hendrick, Hendrick, Foote, and Slapion-Foote (1984), indicating that women are more pragmatic in dealing with romantic feelings; in contrast, men appear to experience especially intense emotions and passion, making it more challenging for them to regulate their strong emotions. Likewise, women tend to be more capable of distinguishing among intimate feelings such as love, caring, and liking (Rubin, 1970). Greater sensitivity to distinctions among emotions might contribute to women being more selective in deciding that they are in love. They may therefore be more guarded in finally offering the explicit sign of commitment, "I love you" (Taraban et al., 1998).

In addition, it is possible that women are less inclined to be the first to verbalize feelings of love because of their traditional role of reacting to events; men are stereotypically expected to take the lead in relationships, such that it is seen as their responsibility to control the course of the relationship. As Taraban and her colleagues note, however, other interpretations of these tendencies are possible.

The use of touch is a powerful signal of greater intimacy within relationships (Taraban et al., 1998). Expressing intimacy through touch conveys a feeling of sensuality and sexual interest, in addition to a sense of warmth and concern. Moreover, touch appears to be a way of expressing intimacy no matter the length of the relationship; it is common in long-standing relationships as well as in the early stages of relationship development. Nonetheless, research by Guerrero and Anderson (1991) indicates that touching increases most dramatically in early stages of a relationship, such that the period of most rapid increase occurs early on. Although frequency of touching may decline over time within enduring relationships, research suggests that touching does not disappear. Instead, it levels off at a frequency close to that of dating couples (Emmers & Dindia, 1995).

Other evidence suggests that mutuality of touching increases within stable relationships; mutuality refers to the situation in which individuals come to match one another in the amount of touching one another (Guerrero & Andersen, 1994). Touching in early stages of relationships may serve to intensify intimacy and advance the relationship, whereas in later stages it may reflect already existing affection, emotional investment, and comfort with intimacy (Taraban et al., 1998).



Contrary to what some may believe, men are more likely than women to be the first to say those three little, but powerful, words, "I love you."

Giving Your Heart and Soul: What Is Involved in Commitment?

The way that a couple grows to be more and more committed to their relationship is most effectively captured in the concept of **interdependence** or **closeness**; this is the degree to which the fate of individuals in a relationship depend on the relationship partner. One of the most influential theoretical views concerning commitment is the **investment model** (Rusbult, 1980). This model is a version of social exchange theory discussed in the previous chapter, in which greater commitment is proposed to result from (a) high levels of satisfaction, (b) the perception that very few alternatives to one's current relationship exist that are more attractive, and (c) a high degree of investing resources in the relationship.

Within social exchange theory, **satisfaction** is an evaluation of the level of benefits resulting from being in the relationship minus the level of costs. Strong satisfaction is the sense a person has that the relationship is pleasing and contributes tremendously to the quality of his or her life. The behaviors discussed previously that strengthen commitment may do so because they provide pleasurable experiences on which partners come to depend. They may therefore increase the satisfaction that a person experiences within the relationship (Rusbult, 1980).

The concept of **alternatives to the relationship** extends directly from that of comparison levels in social exchange theory. The proposal is that individuals compare the outcomes they obtain from the relationship to those they believe they could obtain from relationships with other individuals. Perceiving a greater distance of current outcomes compared with those available from other relationships contributes to greater commitment to the relationship (Rusbult, 1980).

Investment refers to the amount of one's own resources an individual has devoted to the relationship. Resources include actual financial contributions and the extent to which property and possessions are shared mutually by the couple. However, this concept also includes the amount of time and energy one has devoted to the relationship. Higher levels of investment likewise contribute to one's sense of commitment to the relationship (Rusbult, 1980).

Overall then, greater satisfaction, fewer high-quality alternatives to the relationship, and greater investment produce stronger commitment. Research also has revealed that individuals who are committed to their relationship tend to develop ways of thinking that cast their relationship and their partner in a very favorable light; for heterosexuals, individuals of the other sex are judged to be less attractive, both physically and sexually, by those in dating relationships compared with those not in a committed relationship (Simpson, Gangestad, & Lerma, 2000).

Keeping the Relationship Strong: Dealing With Conflict

Because the lives of individuals involved in a romantic relationship become very interconnected with increasing involvement and commitment, conflict is virtually unavoidable. Even individuals involved in an intimate relationship who care deeply for one another do not have exactly the same needs and goals. If the needs of romantic partners clash, frustration and unhappiness will typically result, especially for important needs. From the perspective of interdependence theory, interference with goals is the cause of conflict (Fiske, 2004).

Four types of reactions to conflict within a relationship are possible (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). The reactions are a function of two distinct factors, the **constructiveness** of the response and whether it consists of an **active or passive type** of behavior (see Figure 10.1). One strategy known as **voice** is a constructive, active strategy; voice involves discussing the conflict, seeking help, making suggestions, and attempting to change the situation. A passive, constructive response is **loyalty**, which includes such behaviors as waiting for conditions to change, being patient, hoping or praying for the best, and being supportive of the partner during the conflict. An active, destructive type of tactic is **exit**, which includes screaming, threatening, intimidating, and even leaving the relationship or seeking divorce. Finally, a passive, destructive reaction is **neglect**, ignoring and avoiding the situation, pouting, being irritable toward the partner, criticizing, and letting the relationship deteriorate.

The act of responding to a partner's destructive behavior with a constructive strategy is called **accommodation**. Couples who respond to conflict with accommodation tend to survive conflict and are more likely to continue in the relationship (Van Lange, Rusbult, et al., 1997). Individuals who accommodate their partners are those who are committed to the relationship, tend to be warm, caring, and compassionate (Van Lange, Agnew, Harinick, & Steemers, 1997), take the perspective of their partner, are socially concerned, and are in mutually dependent relationships (Arriga & Rusbult, 1998). Sacrifice for one's partner is related to the partner's willingness to sacrifice as well (Fiske, 2004). Such a response indicates a type of reciprocal influence, in which behavior by one partner leads to identical behavior by the other partner in response; that is, good will begets good will. Individuals satisfied with their relationship also tend to have positive views of the relationship and their partner, leading them to believe that their partner holds beliefs very similar to their own; couples do, in fact, develop more similar attitudes over the course of a relationship (Davis & Rusbult, 2001). Those who feel loved by their partner tend to deal with difficulties by seeking greater intimacy with their partner, whereas those who do not feel loved become hostile toward their partner (Murray, Belavia, Rose, & Griffin, 2003).

FIGURE 10.1 Reactions to Relationship Conflict

		Level of Activity	
		Active	Passive
Constructiveness	Constructive	Voice	Loyalty
	Destructive	Exit	Neglect

From Rusbult, C. E., Verette, J., Whitney, G. A., Slovik, L. F., & Lipkus, I., Accomodation processes in close relationships: Theory and preliminary empirical evidence, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 53–78. Copyright © 1991, American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission.

Highly similar patterns of conflict resolution and relationship quality have been found for same-sex couples and heterosexual couples with respect to four strategies identified by Gottman and Krokoff (1989): (a) positive problem-solving (compromise, negotiation), (b) conflict engagement (personal attacks), (c) withdrawal (refusing to talk any further, ignoring), and (d) compliance (giving in, discontinue arguing). Heterosexual couples were essentially identical to lesbian and gay male couples in the frequency of using the four strategies (Kurdeck, 1994). Similar findings have been found in other research (Metz, Rosser, & Strapko, 1994). Likewise, same-sex and heterosexual couples are extremely similar in various processes linked to relationship functioning and quality; where differences occurred, lesbian and gay male partners functioned at a higher level of quality than heterosexual couples in 78% of the comparisons (Kurdeck, 2004).

In the way that good will begets further good will, negative reactions likewise tend to generate even more negative feelings, as research by Gottman and Levenson (1992) has demonstrated. The process is called



How do you typically handle disagreements and hurt feelings in your relationship? A basic principle in successfully dealing with relationship problems is "Good will begets good will."

a **conflict cascade**. The progression of conflict occurs as a series of events in which difficulties in the relationship produce negative reactions; the negative reactions lead to further conflict, resulting in a continual backdrop of ill will within the relationship. Under these circumstances, individuals may become exceptionally vigilant of their partner's offenses, dwelling on them and trying to explain them, a process called **negative tracking** (Holtzworth-Munroe & Jacobson, 1985). This process typically results in generating explanations that peg the cause of the couple's problems as being due to the partner's personality characteristics. Blaming the problems on the partner's personality casts the partner as entirely responsible for the negative behaviors in which he or she engages. It also leads to the expectation that the partner will commit the offenses repeatedly in the future and that no hope exists for change.

As a result, couples who fall into such a vicious cycle do not come up with the positive interpretations of one another that help to recover from the negative experiences. These couples are at increased risk for separation and breakup of the relationship (Gottman & Levenson, 1992). In relationships that endure over time, supportive behaviors—such as smiling, caressing, and speaking respectfully—are at least five times more prevalent than hurtful types of behavior, such as ridiculing, making nasty comments, and criticizing. The willingness of at least one of the individuals to respond to the partner's negative behaviors with supportive reactions serves to greatly reduce the risk that the relationship will fall apart (Gottman, 1994, 1998).

The Dying Embers of Love: How Relationships End

The happiest times in my life were when my relationships were going well—when I was in love with someone, and someone was loving me. But in my whole life, I haven't met the person I can sustain a relationship with yet. So I'm discontented about that. I'm angry with myself. I have regrets.

Billy Joel, singer and songwriter (ThinkExist.com)

Ellen [DeGeneres] and I had a three and a half year relationship that ended sadly, not because we were both women, but because we both wanted different things for our lives.

Anne Heche, actress (ThinkExist.com)

Where Did We Go Wrong?

As discussed previously, relationships that are less likely to end are those in which individuals engage in more constructive strategies for resolving conflict, as opposed to destructive strategies. In addition to a stronger relationship orientation and a desire to persist (Arriaga, 2001; Arriaga & Agnew, 2001), those whose relationships flourish attend less to possible alternative relationships (Miller, 1997). They also believe that ending the relationship will be costlier than do those whose relationships actually end, and they also tend to feel a sense of moral obligation to remain in the relationship (Adams & Jones, 1997).

In some cases, an individual may initially become attracted to a romantic partner because of specific unique, alluring characteristics. Ironically, in approximately 30% of breakups, these very characteristics turn out to be primary factors in the eventual decline of the relationship (Felmlee, 1995). Intriguing or fanciful attributes, such as being mysterious or playful, may eventually become irritating and unbearable as an individual has to deal with the tendencies day after day. "Mysterious" becomes "aloof," "brooding," "moody," and "uncommunicative" after many experiences with the partner withdrawing or not being emotionally available. "Playful"

becomes “irresponsible,” “frivolous,” and “immature” following multiple experiences with the partner being unwilling to take any matters seriously. The situation of being attracted to someone initially because of a quality that later causes dissatisfaction and breakup is called “fatal attraction” (Felmlee, 1995).

A great variety of factors have actually been found to contribute to the decline and breakup of romantic relationship, however. Reasons include (a) partners growing to be different from one another in attitudes and interests; (b) lack of emotional expression and sharing; (c) conflicts associated with careers; (d) financial problems; (e) feeling overly controlled or dominated by one’s partner; (f) physical or psychological abuse; and (g) no longer being sexually attracted to one’s partner (Sprecher, 1994). However, no one type of factor has been identified as the primary cause of relationship breakup (Berscheid, 1994). Possibly a common element underlying the escalation of conflict into relationship-destroying problems is difficulty in developing a mutual understanding of the conflict and the relationship; another contributor may be the inability to understand that differences in viewpoints even exist (Harvey & Weber, 2002; Harvey, Wells, & Alvarez, 1978; Holtzworth-Munroe & Jacobson, 1985).

According to the **cascade model** of relationship deterioration advanced by Gottman (1994), particular behaviors and emotional experiences set in motion a series of reactions that doom relationships to fall apart. Conflict produces an emotional experience he calls **flooding**: feelings of intense shock, upset, confusion, and incapacitation in reaction to the partner’s negative emotions. A series of responses and counter-responses produce this stunning emotional experience, which many times proves to be lethal to the well-being of the relationship; for this reason, Gottman has referred to four types of destructive behaviors as the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” The behaviors are (a) **criticism** and complaining, (b) **defensiveness** (rebutting partner criticism, displaying hurt feelings), (c) **stonewalling** (withdrawing from the partner and refusing to interact, becoming stubbornly resistant to further influence attempts by the partner), and (d) **contempt** for the romantic partner.

Typical reactions to this chain of events are to feel that one is the **innocent victim** of the partner’s unfair criticism or to feel **righteous indignation** leading to plans for retaliation. A history of these types of reactions closes off the potential for calling upon the more constructive strategies that were discussed previously. Furthermore, the couple’s history leads to attributions that the partner’s negative behaviors are caused by stable characteristics that will only produce further negative behavior in the future. Hope for change withers, causing partners to withdraw from one another and become distant. The marriage or relationship is reinterpreted as negative and a mistake, leading to the ending of the relationship (Gottman, 1994).

The primary information available on the frequency of the breakup of long-term relationships are those related to divorce because no systematic registry exists for nonmarital relationships. Consequently, little is reliably known about the frequency of the breakup of heterosexual dating relationships, heterosexual cohabitation relationships, or same-sex relationships. The current statistics that are available indicate that approximately 40–50% of all marriages in the United States ultimately end in divorce (Haskey, 1996; Harvey & Weber, 2002; National Vital Statistics System, 1999–2000).

How Do You Mend a Broken Heart? What Happens After Relationships End?

Individuals who experience the ending of a significant relationship typically endure a number of agonizing emotional states, initially ruminating about the partner who is no longer available and then suffering intense sadness upon accepting that the relationship is truly over. Most individuals gradually distance themselves emotionally from the loss, returning to a well-adjusted state of mind (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). However, individuals who are the ones responsible for the breakup of a relationship have been found to struggle with emotional

distress for extended periods, even years. The distress results from the hurt that the breakup caused their former partner, which is worsened if the partner follows up with repeated attempts to rekindle the relationship (Baumeister & Wotman, 1992).

As a way of characterizing the experience of grief and the return to well-being, John Harvey and his colleagues (Harvey, 1996, 2000; Harvey, Weber, & Orbuch, 1990) have developed a theoretical model describing the process of coping with major losses. This proposal is relevant not only to relationship breakup and divorce, but also loss through death. After a traumatic relationship loss—one involving shock, numbness, and feelings of being overwhelmed—individuals are thought to transition through a sequence of stages. However, not all individuals may experience all of the stages, nor progress through all stages in exactly the order proposed within the sequence. The specific stages are (a) outcry, (b) denial, (c) intrusion, (d) working through, (e) completion, and (f) identity change.

Outcry involves initially expressing emotions related to the loss, such as fear, despair, and hopelessness. **Denial** is the stage of the process in which individuals struggle with the reality of the loss by feeling or believing that it has not actually happened; this possibly includes avoiding thinking about the loss, as well as avoiding aspects of life that remind the individual of the loved one. These constitute the early phases of the process, which may last varying amounts of time for different individuals, ranging from weeks to months. Harvey and Weber (2002) suggest that, if the early stages of grieving continue for years, an individual may need to seek professional counseling. The third stage is **intrusion**, a period in which an individual experiences what are called flooded states; these are episodes of intense emotions in which the person is absorbed with reminiscing about the lost loved one. The episodes often occur when the individual is alone, and they tend to be largely private; in fact, individuals may seek solitude so that they can reminisce in private.

The later stages involve eventually coming to terms with, and adjusting to, the absence of the lost partner. The first part of this is the **working-through process**, in which an individual constructs an account of the loss. **Accounts** are personal narratives, or stories, about the events and processes involved in the loss and the coping that followed the loss (Harvey & Weber, 2002). The working-through process may involve **confiding**, sharing the personal account with others. By confronting the loss directly through telling others their personal story, grieving individuals may become more accustomed to the state of loss. In fact, immersing oneself in episodes of remembering the loss may serve to demystify the experience, as well as one's feelings about it (Wegner, 1989). Becoming used to the loss emotionally often allows individuals to integrate it into their self-understanding, and possibly move forward in life more effectively (Harvey & Weber, 2002).

Not all divorces or ended relationships are characterized by bitterness, resentment, and avoidance after the divorce. In fact, Amato and Booth (1997) found that many divorced parents in their study cooperated with one another in fairly civil ways. A major reason for this may be that many U.S. couples decide to end their marriages for reasons other than extreme conflict and contempt for one another. Reasons may include the increasing acceptance of divorce in U.S. society, idealistic beliefs about what they want marriage to be like, and a wide range of factors not related to profound conflict.

Another reason that ending a romantic relationship may not result in grief or a sense of loss is that an individual may instead experience pleasure from getting out of an extremely unsatisfying relationship. Others may experience relief upon escaping from a highly controlling partner, or one that is abusive or even violent. In such cases, the individual may have to cope with the ongoing psychological pain resulting from the suffering that occurred while in the relationship. However, grief itself may not be the primary emotions with which these individuals must cope.

Sexuality Within Long-Term Committed Relationships

As discussed in the previous chapter, various theoretical approaches view love and sexuality as more or less related to one another. In terms of practical, real-world effects on the course of relationships, love and sexuality affect one another in profound ways. For many couples, significant levels of sex do not occur until their relationship has become fairly intimate and they feel they have strong commitment to the relationship (Christopher & Cate, 1985; Hill, 2002; Roche, 1986; Sprecher, 1989). Moreover, satisfaction with sexual aspects of a relationship overlaps a great deal with satisfaction with the relationship in general; consequently, the quality of sexuality within the relationship may be viewed as an important sign of, if not an important influence on, relationship quality overall.

How Do Couples Signal Interest in Sex?

How do couples involved in romantic relationships initiate sex with one another? The traditional, stereotyped expectation for initiating sexual behavior at all stages of heterosexual relationships is that the man attempts to initiate sexual interaction; women are expected to respond to the overture with a positive reaction or a refusal (Cupach & Metts, 1991). This script is relevant to established or marital relationships as well as dating and developing relationships. However, women may actually play a more active role in initiating sexual behavior than the traditional stereotype would lead one to believe, particularly as time goes on. Women may signal an interest in sex in subtle ways, such as by talking suggestively, flirting, or creating a romantic situation. For example, they may play a type of music that the couple associates with being romantic or sexual, or watching a certain movie. In fact, the strategies of talking suggestively or behaving romantically probably represent the typical strategy used by men as well.

Little research has been conducted on initiation of sex within same-sex relationships. In one study (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983), it was found that both partners in lesbian relationships tended to believe that they were the one in the relationship who more frequently refused to engage in sexual behavior. In contrast, both partners in gay male relationships believed that they were the one who *initiated* sex more often. This difference between lesbians and gay men may be related to gender-role issues, according to Rutter and Schwartz (1996). Lesbians tend to feel that initiation is a type of sexual aggression, which runs counter to the ideal of mutuality and equality within relationships that many lesbians embrace. At the same time, refusing to engage in sex is viewed as a woman's prerogative, an option that women have a right to. Both factors potentially contribute to a situation in lesbian relationships of relatively low levels of initiation attempts and high rates of declining the partner's attempts at initiation. In contrast, sexual initiation is strongly associated with the male role, such that both partners in gay male couples are more likely to report making attempts at initiating sex. This may be one factor related to the finding that gay male couples have the highest rates of sexual behavior, compared with heterosexual and lesbian couples.

Are individuals likely to just outright ask their partner for sex, or do they tend to hint around that they are interested in sex? Initiating sexual behavior seldom takes the form of a direct request, often because of concerns about embarrassment and fear of rejection (Cupach & Metts, 1991). Most initiation is likely to be subtle and indirect, to protect one's self-esteem and to recast the behavior as nonsexual in the face of rejection. Common subtle strategies include getting closer physically to one's romantic partner, kissing, hugging, stroking areas of the body that are not explicitly sexual, serving alcohol, and playing alluring music.



Both partners in gay male relationships tend to report that they are the one who initiates sex more frequently, whereas both partners in lesbian relationships tend to report that they are the one who refuses sex more frequently.

What about when a person is not interested in sex? Even in romantic relationships characterized by great sexual and relationship satisfaction, individuals will not always feel interested in engaging in sexual interaction precisely at the same time. This creates the situation in which one partner may refuse the other partner's sexual overtures. Yet, not wanting to have sex does not usually cause huge conflict or extremely hurt feelings in long-term relationships (Cupach & Metts, 1991). The reason is that expressing lack of interest on any particular occasion often takes the form of a direct verbal statement; in other words, the partner who is not interested simply states outright that he or she does not want to have sex at that time (Cupach & Metts, 1991).

Usually, however, the rejection includes some type of explanation that lets the partner who wants to have sex know that the refusal is not a lack of interest in general or a rejection of him or her personally. Such explanations may also express a sense of regard for the partner. Examples of such explanations are, "I'm sorry. I'm really too tired tonight. I've had such a rough day," and "I would really like to make love, but I must finish this work before tomorrow." Particularly constructive refusals may include the prospect of engaging in sex in the very near future (Cupach & Metts, 1991).

The Sex Life of Couples

It's true that the French have a certain obsession with sex, but it's a particularly adult obsession. France is the thriftiest of all nations; to a Frenchman sex provides the most economical way to have fun.

Anita Loos, American Hollywood screenwriter and novelist, celebrated for her novel, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, 1893–1981 (ThinkExist.com)

How Much Sex Do Couples Usually Have?

Married heterosexual couples on average engage in sexual intercourse two to three times a week. A range of difference exists, however, in typical frequency. Approximately one-third of couples engage in sexual intercourse fewer than two times a week, one-third have sex two to three times a week, and another one-third engage in sexual intercourse more than three times a week (Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, & Kolata, 1994). Yet, heterosexual couples who are not married, but who cohabit (live together) engage in sex more frequently, even taking into account other factors such as age (Call, Sprecher, & Schwartz, 1995; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Rao & De Maris, 1995). Race, religion, and education are virtually unrelated to the frequency of sex (Laumann et al., 1994). Gay male couples engage in genital sex most frequently of all couples, whereas lesbian couples engage in genital sex the least frequently. Lesbian couples, however, may be most likely to engage in nongenital sexual behavior, such as caressing, rubbing, kissing, and hugging (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983).

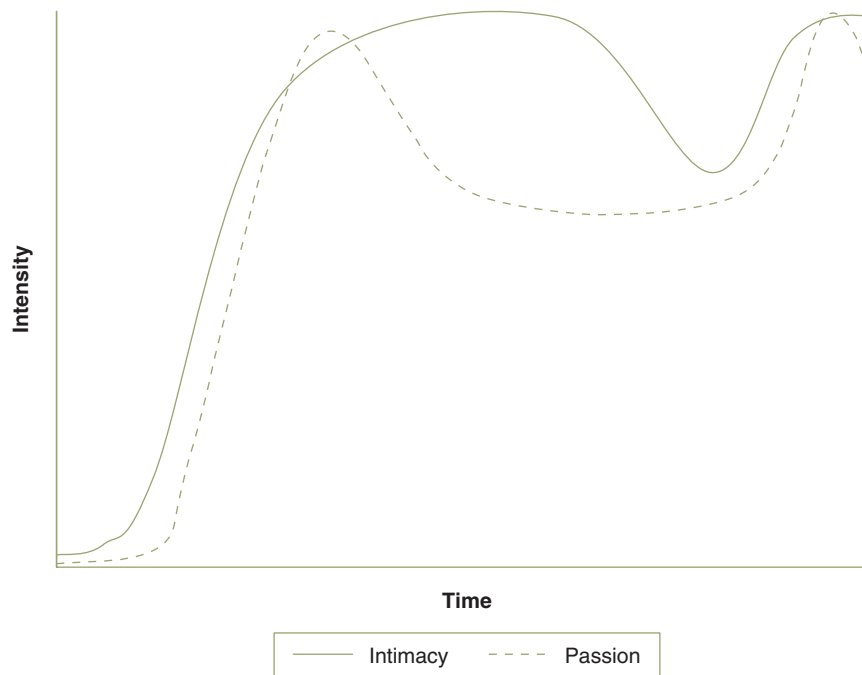
The amount of sexual behavior decreases with time for all couples. This may be true for at least two reasons: (a) decreases in physical and sexual functioning associated with aging and (b) the negative effects of extreme familiarity and predictability on sexual desire for the partner. The decreasing physical stamina and health-related problems that accompany aging may limit the ability of individuals to engage in some strenuous sexual activities. Moreover, if individuals become overly familiar with one another, and sex becomes routine or mundane, it is not unusual for the passion and allure of sexual behavior with a long-term partner to fade to some extent (Sprecher & Regan, 2000).

This typical decline in passion is the subject of a theoretical model proposed by Baumeister and Bratslavsky (1999), presented in Figure 10.2. The model suggests that passionate love may be explained as the result of sudden, intense *increases* in intimacy between people. If you remember from a previous section, intimacy is the sense that one is understood, respected, and appreciated by one's partner. It may be developed in an especially effective way, of course, through verbal self-disclosure—that is, by discussing feelings and desires with one's partner, particularly concerning very private and sensitive issues. In this way, partners' self-conceptions are likely to become more intertwined, and the partners become more important to one another. Positive feelings often result from such increases in mutual understanding, a highly pleasurable aspect of intimacy. Physical and sexual closeness, of course, are also a means of heightening intimacy between individuals.

As noted within the Baumeister and Bratslavsky model, relationship partners typically get to know one another more completely only very gradually over the course of their long-term relationship. As the couple settles into an exclusive relationship, they come to know each other so well that sudden revelations about the other partner become less frequent, and the intervening periods between such revelations become longer. This means that experiencing sudden increases in intimacy grows rarer over time. According to this model, because passion results from sudden increases in intimacy, the frequency of experiencing passion declines over time as well. In contrast, individuals involved in a relatively new relationship usually experience more frequent and intense episodes of passion early in the relationship. Because the couple is typically unfamiliar with most aspects of one another, partners are therefore likely to discover new information on a more frequent basis, bringing about frequent increases in intimacy. Remember that the Baumeister–Bratslavsky model predicts that sudden, profound increases in intimacy result in heightened levels of passion.

FIGURE 10.2

Possible Course of Intimacy and Passion for a Hypothetical Couple (based on the model by Baumesiter & Bratslavsky, 1999)



The model therefore explains the reason that intense passion largely occurs early in romantic relationships; it also helps to understand the reason that long-standing, well-established relationships are usually characterized by high levels of intimacy and lower levels of passion. This view is strongly supported by social psychological research on romantic love in general: Passion occurs most frequently earlier in relationships.

Beyond this, the model suggests that couples in long-term relationships are likely to experience dramatically high levels of passion largely at times when they are reunited after being away from one another for a while. Upon returning from a trip, passion may be rekindled as the couple becomes “reacquainted.” Even more surprising in a way, the emotional distance created by disagreement or conflict may also set the stage for a reunion of sorts, as long as the conflict is not too extreme. As individuals become reacquainted with one another, intimacy increases markedly, followed by a period of heightened passion. So, the notion that some people may “break up” just so they can “make up” may have a sound psychological basis to it.

What Do Couples Do Sexually?

Heterosexual couples generally engage in a variety of sexual behaviors, ranging from kissing, exciting one another’s bodies and genitals with their hands, oral–genital sex, penile–vaginal sex (inserting the penis in the partner’s vagina), and penile–anal sex (inserting the penis in the partner’s anus). Lesbians and gays likewise engage in a range of behaviors, including penile–anal sex for gay men.

Box 10.2**An Eye Toward Research****Does Companionate Love Flourish as Passionate Love Wanes?**

A common view held by a number of social psychologists is that, for relationships that endure over time, as passionate love fades, companionate love takes its place and fuels emotional intimacy in the later years of the relationship. Consistent with the Baumeister and Bratslavsky (1999) model, feelings of passion and sexual behavior gradually decline over time. But, it is thought that couples stay together in relationships because they become more fulfilling as a couple becomes more like friends and companions; the idea is that they begin to look to one another to spend time together and share activities in the later years.

In fact, Traupmann and Hatfield (1981) conducted a study that looked at the course of both passionate love and companionate love. These researchers interviewed a random sample of dating couples, newlyweds, and older married women (married an average of 33 years, although the longest marriage was 59 years). Traupmann and Hatfield had expected that passionate love would fade over time, but that companionate love would remain strong or possibly grow.

As they expected, passionate love was substantially lower among the older married couples than for the dating and newly married couples. Much to their surprise, companionate love declined to some extent as well. The change was especially prominent for women because their feelings of companionate love was substantially greater among the newlyweds, but they were much lower among the older women. Men's feelings of companionate love were not too much greater among newlywed men compared with dating men and older men (based on the wives' perceptions of their husband's feelings; the older men were not actually interviewed).

This seems to indicate that, even among enduring marriages, companionate love declines along with feelings of passion. The researchers note that the group of older couples does not include individuals whose relationship had deteriorated completely and had separated. The perceptions of love would possibly be even lower if such couples had been included in the sample.

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What Sexual Behaviors Are Most Appealing?

I prefer intercourse because during intercourse you get the idea that you're both thoroughly involved at the same time.

An anonymous male (Hite, 2005, p. 63)



Almost all heterosexual women and men, no matter their age, consider penile–vaginal intercourse to be the most appealing type of sexual behavior.

Some of the highest quality information available on sexuality in the United States is that collected in a large study called the National Health and Social Life Survey (Michael et al., 1994). Along with information about the frequency of behavior, data were also obtained regarding the types of sexual behavior considered most appealing to individuals. For both heterosexual women and men of all age groups, the most appealing sexual behavior is penile–vaginal intercourse; over 90% identified it as somewhat appealing or very appealing.

Yet, the meaning of penile–vaginal intercourse differs substantially for women and men. Women perceive vaginal intercourse as involving more of a mutual inti-

macy than other types of sexual behavior; it is seen as a sexual behavior in which both people are equally involved in the sharing of love and pleasure. Although high proportions of men consider vaginal intercourse to be an appealing type of sexual behavior, for men, vaginal intercourse is only one of a number of very desirable sexual behaviors (Sprecher & McKinney, 1993).

The second most appealing activity among heterosexual individuals for both sexes is watching one's partner undress; at least 67% of individuals rate this as somewhat or very appealing. Following this, receiving and giving oral–genital sex were considered appealing by somewhat lower proportions of heterosexuals. However, larger gender differences were found for oral–genital sex than for the two most appealing behaviors, penile–vaginal intercourse and watching one's partner undress, with men finding oral–genital sex more appealing than women. Similar to the finding for gender, greater variability was found across different age groups for oral–genital sex than the other two types of behavior (Michael et al., 1994).

Do Many Heterosexuals Engage in Oral–Genital Sex and Penile–Anal Sex?

Oral–Genital Sex. Typically, more than 70% of women and men report that they have engaged in oral–genital sex (Billy, Tanfer, Grady, & Klepinger, 1993; Janus & Janus, 1993; Laumann et al., 1994). The proportion of college women and men who have both given and received oral sex is 80% or more (Elliot & Brantley, 1997). Proportions engaging in oral sex are greater among White individuals; 81% of White men say that they have performed oral sex, while 71% of Latino men and 51% of Black men indicate that they have (Laumann et al., 1994). The extent to which individuals have a positive view of their own genitals is very probably a factor underlying differences in comfort with oral–genital sex, and consequently the desire to engage in it (Reinholtz & Muehlenhard, 1995).

Penile–Anal Intercourse. Traditional stereotypes cast penile–anal intercourse as a sexual behavior in which only gay males engage. Despite this belief, research actually suggests that a substantial proportion of heterosexual individuals (around 10%) have engaged in penile–anal intercourse in the past year (Laumann et al., 1994). Even greater proportions have engaged in anal intercourse at least once, with several studies revealing

that around 20% of both women and men have engaged in anal intercourse (Kotloff et al., 1991; Lottes, 1993; Michael et al., 1994; Reinisch, Hill, Sanders, & Ziemba-Davis, 1995; Reinisch, Sanders, Hill, & Ziemba-Davis, 1992; Reinisch, Sanders, & Ziemba-Davis, 1988). One random probability of heterosexual students at Indiana University revealed that 69% of males and 49% of females who had engaged in penile–anal intercourse at least once had done so in the previous year; furthermore, 25% of males and 16% of females who had engaged in penile–anal intercourse at least once had done so in the previous month (Reinisch et al., 1995).

Sexual Behavior Among Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexual Individuals

For lesbians, stimulation of one another's genitals with fingers and inserting fingers into the vagina are two of the most common types of sexual behavior. Cunnilingus, stimulating the vulva with one's tongue and lips, is the most preferred activity for stimulating a woman to orgasm (Schureurs, 1993). However, a wide range of sexual behaviors are considered extremely enjoyable, including caressing breasts, deep kissing, and cuddling (Lever, 1995). Similar types of behavior are viewed as favorite activities by gay men (Lever, 1994).

In the National Opinion Research Center national survey (Laumann et al., 1994), more than 90% of women who identified as lesbian or bisexual reported both giving and receiving oral–genital sex. The rate was lower for heterosexual women; 67% reported giving oral sex and 73% reported receiving it.

Oral–genital sex is one of the most prevalent types of sexual behavior among gay men, in addition to stroking and caressing the body and genitals; 90% of gay men report engaging in oral–genital sex. Penile–anal intercourse is also a sexual behavior in which substantial proportions of gay men engage, although not at the levels of other types of sexual behavior (Elliot & Brantley, 1997; Kippax & Smith, 2001; Laumann et al., 1994). Among those who identify as gay, 75% of gay men report engaging in anal sex in the insertive role, and 81% report engaging in anal sex in the receiving role (Laumann et al., 1994). Among gay male couples, approximately a third report engaging in anal sex in which partners always take the same role; another third report engaging in both the insertive and receiving roles; and the last third report never engaging in anal sex (Lever, 1994).



What do you think are the most common types of sexual behaviors in which lesbian couples engage? What about gay male couples?

How Often Do Married Heterosexuals Engage in the Various Sexual Behaviors?

One study in particular (Hurlbert, Apt, & Rabehl, 1993) provides insight into the frequency of various sexual behaviors among married heterosexual couples. Information was obtained from 161 married women who recorded all sexual behavior with their husbands in a diary over a 21-day period. The proportion of episodes involving each behavior is presented in Table 10.1. Virtually all of the sexual episodes involved penile–vaginal intercourse (98.5%), whereas other types of sexual behavior occurred in only a minority of the episodes.

Proportions of Sexual Episodes Involving Various Types of Sexual Behavior for Married Heterosexual Women and Men Over a 21-Day Period

TABLE 10.1

Sexual behavior	Proportion
Penile–vaginal intercourse	98.5%
Fellatio	46.3%
Cunnilingus	32.2%
Woman masturbating herself	17.4%
Man masturbating the woman	5.3%
Penile–anal intercourse	1.3%

From Hurlbert, Apt, & Rabehl, 1993

Sexual behavior involving the wife masturbating the husband, as well as sexual behavior in which the man masturbated himself, were both not frequent at all. Giving and receiving oral–genital sex were a distant second and third after penile–vaginal intercourse.

According to reports provided by the wives, men experienced orgasm during penile–vaginal intercourse 96.8% of the time, whereas women experienced orgasm only 25.2% of the time. As noted by the researchers (Hurlbert et al., 1993), lack of orgasm is a typical occurrence for women, given that penile–vaginal intercourse is the most frequent behavior within heterosexual sexuality; penile–vaginal intercourse does not always provide the type of pleasurable stimulation that enables women to climax. This low frequency of orgasm is a finding that is consistent with reports by other researchers as well (Kaplan, 1979; LoPiccolo & Stock, 1986).

In contrast, orgasm was experienced by women 82.6% of the time when their husbands masturbated them, and 81.4% of the time when men engaged in cunnilingus with them. Directly stimulating the vulva, whether orally or by hand, appears to be the primary source of physical pleasure leading to orgasm for women. Importantly, it is not the sheer number of orgasms that women experience over a certain amount of time that relates to sexual satisfaction for women. Rather, it is the proportion of orgasms women have—that is, the consistency of experiencing orgasms when engaging in sexual behavior—that significantly contributes to sexual satisfaction (Hurlbert et al., 1993).

How Happy With Their Sex Lives Are People in Relationships?

Regardless of the frequency of sexual behavior within relationships, the vast majority of individuals express a great deal of satisfaction with their sexual relationships. Even those having sex relatively infrequently feel very satisfied with the sexual aspects of their relationship. For example, in the National Opinion Research Center survey, 88% percent of married couples report great physical satisfaction and 85% report great emotional satisfaction with the sexual aspects of their relationship (Michael et al., 1994).

Are People Who Have Sex More Often More Satisfied?

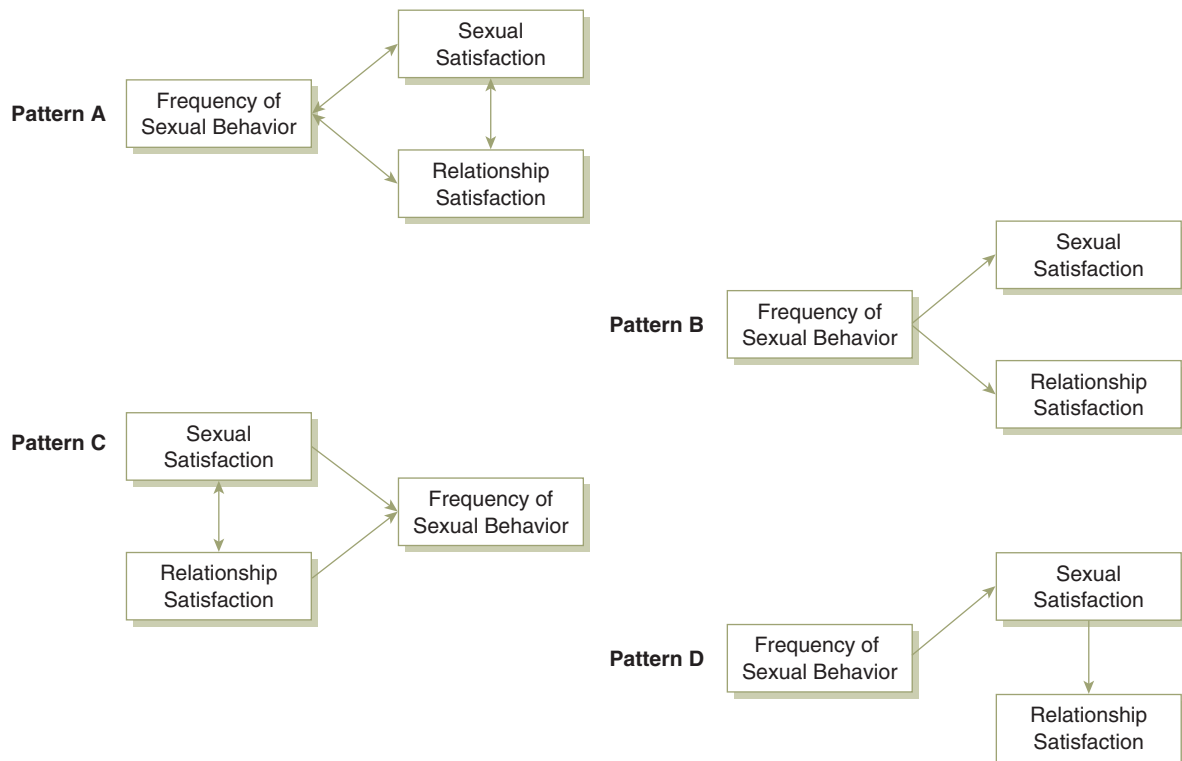
Despite the relatively high level of satisfaction reported by most couples, the frequency of sexual interaction is nonetheless positively associated with satisfaction in general with the relationship (Blumstein & Schwartz,

1983; Call et al., 1995; Donnelly, 1993); this means that more frequent sex is linked to greater happiness in the relationship. Given the lack of studies that follow couples over time, however, it is virtually impossible to determine the causal direction of the link between sexual frequency and satisfaction; that is, it is not possible to tell whether frequent sex leads to greater satisfaction, or whether being satisfied causes individuals to engage in sex more frequently. Not knowing what factors are the causes and which ones are the outcomes is essentially the situation for all factors linked to relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction (Sprecher & Regan, 2000).

Actually, it may be that all three factors affect one another mutually, as depicted in Pattern A of Figure 10.3. An alternative possibility is that engaging in frequent sexual behavior produces greater satisfaction, a relationship presented in Pattern B. However, it may also be that couples who are more satisfied are also more interested in engaging in sex with one another and therefore do so more frequently (Pattern C); in contrast, individuals who are unhappy may not be motivated to have sexual contact with their relationship partner as much. Sprecher and Regan (2000) also note that frequency of sex is not as strongly related to relationship satisfaction for lesbian couples as other types of couples (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983).

Despite the link between frequency of sexual behavior and satisfaction, the *quality* of sexual interaction (i.e., sexual satisfaction) may be more directly associated with general relationship quality (Sprecher & Regan, 2000). Specifically, sexual satisfaction is often more strongly related to general relationship satisfaction than

FIGURE 10.3 Possible Patterns of Relationship Among Frequency of Sexual Behavior, Sexual Satisfaction, and Relationship Satisfaction



is frequency of sexual behavior (Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Edwards & Booth, 1994; Greeley, 1991; Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994; Kurdeck, 1991; Lawrance & Byers, 1995; Oggins, Leber, & Veroff, 1993). This means that a man or a woman who is happy with his or her relationship will probably feel happy with the sexual aspect of the relationship, even if sex does not happen all that often. In addition, sexual satisfaction appears to be as important to relationship satisfaction for women as for men; actually, marital happiness is related to more aspects of sexual satisfaction for women than men (Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994).

In addition, sexual satisfaction tends to be critical in explaining the link between frequency of sexual behavior and relationship satisfaction; this is demonstrated by the fact that frequency is not significantly related to relationship satisfaction if sexual satisfaction is controlled for statistically (Greeley, 1991). This finding suggests that sexual frequency is only indirectly correlated with relationship satisfaction through its relationship with sexual satisfaction. It is possible, for example, that higher frequency results in greater sexual satisfaction, which in turn increases relationship satisfaction (Figure 10.3 Pattern D). Even so, this explanation is really speculation because, as stated previously, it is not possible to determine the exact direction of causality in most studies.

Does Sexual Happiness Beget Relationship Happiness—and Vice Versa?

Some theorists have suggested that the most realistic view is that both types of satisfaction—general satisfaction with the relationship and satisfaction with sexual aspects of the relationship—affect each other (consistent with Pattern A in Figure 10.3). Support for this idea comes from comparisons among groups of married couples who varied in terms of relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction (Hurlbert & Apt, 1994). Husbands who were both maritally and sexually dissatisfied reported not being as interested in the sexual behavior in which they had engaged in the prior 24 hours in comparison to husbands who were satisfied *either* sexually or maritally. Wives who were maritally dissatisfied, regardless of their sexual satisfaction, reported less initial interest in the sexual behavior they had experienced in the previous 24 hours; furthermore, they reported less arousal during the sexual behavior.

Hurlbert and Apt viewed this as pointing to the more pervasive importance of relationship quality in determining sexual satisfaction for women than the actual quality of the sexual behavior itself (this suggests yet another pattern beyond those presented in Figure 10.3). As long as the marriage overall is satisfying, women are more likely to be interested in engaging in sex with their husbands, even if they are not satisfied sexually overall. For men, being satisfied with either the general relationship or with sexual aspects of the relationship leads to interest in engaging in sex with their partner. Despite differences in interest in engaging in sexual behavior, women's relationship and sexual satisfaction levels were unrelated to the frequency of sexual activity within the marriage. This suggests that frequency is more strongly determined by the man in the relationship, given that women's sexual interest is not correlated with frequency.

Do Some Types of Sexual Behavior Lead to Greater Sexual Satisfaction?

The type of sexual behavior in which heterosexual couples engage is in fact related to relationship and sexual satisfaction. In the Hurlbert and Apt (1994) study, women indicating high levels of sexual satisfaction were more likely to have experienced cunnilingus—stimulating the vulva with the partner's tongue and lips. The most satisfied women were also the least likely to have masturbated their husband to orgasm. The greater sexual satisfaction may reflect the fact that cunnilingus is the most enjoyable method leading to orgasm for women (Hurlbert & Whittaker, 1991); therefore, it is likely that experiencing cunnilingus relatively more

frequently contributes to women's greater overall sexual satisfaction. These findings also suggest that a man who is willing to focus more on his partner's stimulation (cunnilingus), and apparently less on his own (being masturbated by the partner), is more likely to have a sexually satisfied partner.

Actually, as stated previously, it is not the absolute number of times women experience orgasm in a particular time period that is important to sexual satisfaction; rather, it is the consistency of experiencing orgasm, or the proportion of times that women experience orgasm when engaging in sexual behavior with a partner (Hurlbert et al., 1993). Timing of orgasm is important to the sexual satisfaction of women, as well; experiencing orgasm before or at the same time as the partner contributes to sexual satisfaction (Darling, Davidson, & Cox, 1991). In fact, women who were either satisfied sexually or with the relationship in general were more likely to experience orgasm during sex with their partner (Hurlbert et al., 1993). In addition, sexually satisfied women were more likely to report adequate levels of foreplay, a finding consistent with other research (Davidson & Darling, 1988; Hurlbert, 1993; Hurlbert et al., 1993).

In the Hurlbert and colleagues (1993) study, women who were more satisfied with their relationship in general were more likely to have performed fellatio—stimulating their husband's penis with their mouth—than those who were not very satisfied with their relationship. Hurlbert and Apt (1994) speculated that, because of the particularly intimate nature of oral–genital sex, those who feel emotionally intimate and comfortable enough with their partner may be the ones who are largely willing to engage in it.

Perhaps surprisingly, fellatio was considerably less likely to result in orgasm for men in their study conducted over a 21-day period (Hurlbert et al., 1993) —only 23.4% of the time fellatio was performed—compared with the proportion of times orgasm occurred during penile–vaginal intercourse (96.8% of the time). This may reflect the attitude that heterosexual men have regarding oral–genital sex, that it is only one aspect of foreplay leading up to penile–vaginal intercourse. That is, orgasm is “saved” for “real sex.” The possibility that most heterosexual men and women view penile–vaginal intercourse as the most desirable behavior in which to orgasm is supported by research on perceptions of sexual behavior. Roughly 60% of both men and women do not consider themselves to have engaged sex if they had experienced oral–genital sex (the question was, “Would you say you ‘had sex’ if you engaged in oral–genital sex”; Sanders & Reinisch, 1999).

Do Some People Enjoy the Sex They Have More Than Others?

The answer is definitely *yes!* Even more important to sexual satisfaction than types of sexual behavior appears to be personality and relationship attributes (Hurlbert et al., 1993). The factor most strongly related to sexual satisfaction for women in the study by Hurlbert and his colleagues was the reported closeness of the relationship with their partner (the degree to which one interacts frequently with one's partner and is affected



A heterosexual man who focuses on his partner's sexual stimulation, such as by orally stimulating her vulva, is more likely to have a sexually satisfied partner.

by one's partner). Other factors independently related to sexual satisfaction were the personality characteristics of sexual assertiveness (the tendency to take the initiative in making sure one's sexual needs are fulfilled) and erotophilia (the tendency to have positive emotional reactions to sexual situations and issues).

In fact, erotophilia may play a central role in sexual satisfaction, not only at the level of the individual, but also in terms of the similarity of heterosexual couples with respect to erotophilia. One study by Smith, Becker, Byrne, and Przybyla (1993) found that married couples tend to be very similar in their erotophilia. Greater dissimilarity in erotophilia among couples apparently results in misunderstanding the partner's likes and dislikes sexually, as well as being associated with sexual dissatisfaction and relationship difficulties. In addition, erotophobia (negative reactions to sexual situations and issues) in either partner is related to greater misperception, dissatisfaction, and difficulty, although the erotophobia of the woman is more consistently related to these negative outcomes.

Individuals who are more strongly erotophilic tend to feel positively about their own and their partner's sexual pleasure, as well as having a more accurate understanding of the partner's desires. The greater importance of women's reactions suggested to the researchers that the stereotype of the man as the sexual initiator and women as the regulator, or "gatekeeper" is accurate, even within marriage. If the woman holds negative views of sexuality, the couple tends to have less positive experiences with sexual behavior. Similar results were obtained in a study by Cupach and Metts (1995) related to the attitude of sexual avoidance, a dimension like that of erotophobia.

What Have You Done for Me Lately? Keep the Good Times Coming

A recent way to conceive of sexual satisfaction is based on an extension of the social exchange model discussed earlier in the chapter. This theoretical view is entitled the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). The model proposes that sexual satisfaction is determined as a function of (a) greater relationship satisfaction; (b) high levels of rewards relative to low levels of costs in one's sexual relationship; (c) the difference between rewards and costs exceeding the rewards that one believes should be obtained in relationships; and, finally, (d) the degree of equality between one's own rewards and those of one's partner, as well as the equality of one's own costs relative to the partner's costs.

Research has demonstrated that each of these components contribute uniquely to sexual satisfaction in short-term heterosexual dating relationships (Byers, Demmons, & Lawrance, 1998), as well as in long-term heterosexual relationships (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). Moreover, a tremendous portion of the differences in sexual satisfaction among couples (79%) was explained by these factors. This model accounts for sexual satisfaction just as well for both women and men. This means that one's own sexual happiness is related not only to having a lot of positive sexual experiences and very few negative experiences oneself, but also that this is true as well for one's sexual partner.

Do Couples Who Are Sexually Satisfied Stay Together?

As discussed previously, sexual satisfaction has been found to relate strongly to general relationship satisfaction, and to psychological well-being (Edwards & Booth, 1994). Moreover, the strength of the association appears to remain fairly constant over time, at least over the first several years of relationships (Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994). Evidence further indicates that being sexually unhappy predicts marital breakup as much as 8 years later (Edwards & Booth, 1994; Oggins et al., 1993; White & Keith, 1990).

Sexual satisfaction is related to relationship satisfaction, love, and commitment for dating couples as well (Sprecher, 2002), consistent with the finding for married couples. In addition, lower sexual satisfaction increases the chances of breaking up later on, a finding supported by other studies examining the importance of sexual satisfaction (Felmlee, Sprecher, & Bassin, 1990; Simpson, 1987).

However, the relationship between sexual satisfaction and later relationship breakup was not statistically significant for women in the study by Sprecher (2002). Instead, lower levels of *general* relationship satisfaction predicted later relationship breakup for women, which was not the case for men. Sprecher speculated that men may tend to rely on the quality of sexual aspects of a romantic relationship as a basis for judging the entire quality of the relationship. In contrast, it appears that women do not consider sexual satisfaction to any great extent, if at all, in evaluating whether it is worth remaining in the relationship. This type of gender difference has not been found for established or marital relationships; instead, sexual satisfaction tends to be important to both women and men in long-term relationships. The bottom line is that individuals often view sexual incompatibility and sexual difficulties as at least moderately important factors when their marriage or romantic relationships end (Sprecher & Regan, 2000).

Sexuality Outside of Traditional Relationships

If a man continually changes the women with whom he has intercourse, the benefit will be great. If in one night he can have intercourse with more than 10 women it is best.

Yū-fang-pi-chūch, in the writing, *I-shin-fang* (c. 600, quoted in Cassell Publishers Limited, 1993, p. 200)

The nude embrace comes to be respected more and more, and finally revered, as a pure and beautiful approach to the sacred moment when husband and wife shall melt into one another's genital embrace, so that the twain shall be one flesh, and then, as of old, God will walk with the twain in the garden of bliss "in the cool of the day" when the heat of ill-regulated passion is no more.

Ida Craddock. *Right Marital Living*, 1899 (quoted in Cassell Publishers Limited, 1993, p. 133)

As we have seen, sexual behavior very frequently occurs within relatively established romantic relationships. The chances of engaging in sex for the first time with a person are greater with increasing emotional intimacy and love. Nonetheless, some proportion of sexual behavior occurs outside of loving, committed relationships, or even outside of any prior relationship at all. An important question, then, is what factors lead people to have sex when they are not involved in an intimate relationship with one another.

Casual Sex

One night at the club with my friends, I saw this very sexy girl. I noticed she was eyeing me for a bit. So, I walked up to her. I wanted to start with small talk but instead she pulled me into the bathroom and started stripping. I said, "Wow!" . . . Then I stripped. She started rubbing me, and I gave her oral. All I can say is that we had explosive sex. We went to her house and started having explosive sex again! (Brad, 23, Explosive Sex—Brad, Netscape Men's Confessions)

Casual sex is sexual behavior that occurs when individuals do not feel any great emotional intimacy for one another; furthermore, the individuals have no real expectation of becoming involved in a romantic love relationship (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000; Winslow, Franzini, & Hwang, 1992). Hardly any research has been conducted on casual sex, and very little theoretical understanding has been developed for the issue. In fact, researchers have often used different terms to talk about the topic and have examined it in different ways (Herold, Maticka-Tyndale, & Mewhinney, 1998; Paul et al., 2000). In some cases, they have focused on **one-night stands**; these are sexual encounters that take place on only one occasion and never again. Other researchers have focused on a broader array of sexual episodes: from occasional sexual behavior with someone with no special emotional significance ranging to unplanned sexual behavior with an unacquainted person (Winslow et al., 1992).

A relatively new phenomenon popular on U.S. college campuses is the **hookup**. This is “a sexual encounter, usually lasting only one night, between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances. Some physical sexual interaction is typical, but it may or may not include sexual intercourse” (Paul et al., 2000, p. 76). The specific sexual encounter is usually spontaneous and unplanned; yet, the general desire to hook up with someone on a particular evening exists before the encounter occurs. Also, the individuals intend for the episode to remain fairly anonymous because no further interaction, and certainly not even a dating relationship, is the goal.

In addition to the recent trend in hooking up, another feature of school life contributes to the tendency of a significant minority of students to engage in casual sex. This phenomenon is the annual Spring Break trip taken to beachside vacation spots by a multitude of college students from both the United States and Canada. A similar phenomenon in Australia is the mass migration of thousands of upper-level high school students or graduates to the Australian Gold Coast in late November and early December (Maticka-Tyndale, Herold, & Oppermann, 2003; Rosenthal & Smith, 1997); these vacationing students are known as “schoolies.”

Maticka-Tyndale, Herold, and Mewhinney (1998) examined intentions students held prior to the trip related to engaging in sex during Spring Break; they also looked at the actual occurrence of sexual behavior during the vacation. Fifty-five percent of men in a group of Canadian students recruited at a Florida resort area planned to have sex while they were there, whereas only 11% of women planned to do so. In fact, 30% of men had made a pact with their friends to engage in casual sex; merely 5% of women made such a pledge with their friends. In contrast, 21% of the women had made a pact *not* to engage in casual sex, whereas only 5% of men vowed not to have casual sex. In terms of actual behavior, however, only 15% of males and 13% of females actually did engage in casual sex with someone they met on vacation; this means that men and women were not really different in the proportions who had sex. Of those who did engage in casual sex, 68% did so with only one partner, 13% had two partners, and 19% had more than two partners.

The factors that were most strongly related to whether casual sex took place were, for women, the formation of a pact with friends and having others who served as role models related to engaging in sex; social factors were therefore very influential for women. In contrast, peers had no direct effect on the occurrence of sex for men. Rather, peer attitudes only affected having the intention to engage in sex prior to leaving for Spring Break, which was the strongest factor related to casual sex for men.

The phenomenon of 17- and 18-year-old Australian high school students swarming to coastal areas produces similar opportunities for substantial levels of casual sexual behavior. Prior to the “schoolie week” vacation, almost two-thirds of the men and one-third of the women who were sexually experienced in the sample had engaged in sex with a new partner within 24 hours of meeting the individual, one possible definition of

Box 10.3**An Eye Toward Research****How Common Is Hooking Up?**

This question was addressed in a study by Paul and her colleagues (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). In a random sample of 555 students at an Eastern university, they found that 48% of college students had engaged in at least one hookup that did not involve penile–vaginal intercourse, 30% of the college students had at least one hookup involving penile–vaginal intercourse, and a small minority, 22%, had not engaged in even one hookup. Those who had experienced a hookup either with or without penile–vaginal intercourse had on average 10.8 hookups overall. The number of episodes in a given year ranged from 0–65 hookups, suggesting that some college students hook up on a weekly basis. Women and men were equally likely to engage in hookups overall. However, greater proportions of men (48%) had engaged in penile–vaginal intercourse during the hookup compared with 33% of women.

The majority of students did not see their hookup partner again in the future, and only 12% began a romantic relationship after the episode. The average length of the subsequent relationship was four months, making it clear that casual encounters of this type do not provide a very substantial basis for forging a long-term relationship. The vast majority of these sexual episodes, however, proved to be casual and for all purposes anonymous, given that people generally did not interact with their hookup partners in any meaningful way after they occurred. An overwhelming proportion of those who had engaged in penile–vaginal intercourse reported using a condom (81%), which provides protection from sexually transmitted disease as well as unwanted pregnancy. Other forms of birth control were used by 25% of the college students.

Personality characteristics were related to the tendency to engage in hooking up, indicating that some types of individuals are more likely to engage in casual sex than others. College students who had greater involvement in hooking up were more likely to have the following characteristics: (a) lower self-esteem; (b) greater tendency to engage in dramatic, entertaining behavior and to be the center of attention (a trait called **exhibitionism**); (c) less likely to have a secure attachment style (discussed in the previous chapter on theories of romantic love); and (d) greater levels of some types of the fear of intimacy (Paul et al., 2000).

Reference

Paul, E. L., McManus, B., & Hayes, A. (2000). "Hookups": Characteristics and correlates of college students' spontaneous and anonymous sexual experiences. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 37, 76–88.

casual sex. During the “schoolie week” vacation itself, 34.5% of the men and 23.6% of the women reported engaging in sexual intercourse. Women were as likely to have engaged in sex with someone they knew or had dated (12.6%) as they were to have engaged in sex with a new or casual partner (11%). Men, however, were much more likely to have sex with a new or casual partner (24.8%) than to have sex with someone they knew or had dated (9.8%).

The two same social factors identified in the Canadian college study were also the major influence on the sexual behavior of women in high school, (a) making a pact not to engage in casual sex and (b) having role models related to sex. The results of this study for men were different from those for Canadian college men, however; in that study, social influences did not have a direct effect on sexual behavior. In the “schoolie study,” in contrast, role models did affect the likelihood of engaging in casual sex for the high school men (Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2003).

A common factor is obvious in all of the environments that lead to high rates of casual sex, whether considering hooking up, Spring Break vacations, or holiday trips. The underlying factor is a highly positive attitude toward sexuality, and casual sex in particular. This attitude is promoted by the atmosphere of continual partying, heavy consumption of alcohol, frequent contests promoting partial or complete nudity, and provocative dancing. Hooking up in particular typically takes place in the context of going out to bars and nightclubs, which likewise encourages the more sensual, entertainment-focused environment. The norms prevalent in these uninhibited settings promote the sense that casual sex is not only acceptable, but also very desirable.

Extradyadic Relationships

*I was working in a bank and there was this sexy coworker whom I always had an eye on. One day, she seemed stressed out over her husband's drinking and wasting money. She wanted to know how to stop him from making long distance calls, which were bringing up a huge bill every month. So, I just asked her out for lunch. During lunch, I made plans for a movie during the weekend and she readily agreed. In the movie, I held her hand and kissed her, and then got a room in a motel. We had sex. She was very satisfied and I was too. This went on for a few months and it was fun while it lasted. (Cole, 30, *Affair With a Co-Worker*, Netscape Men's Confessions).*

Extradyadic relationships are romantic or sexual involvements with people other than an individual's spouse or primary romantic partner. A dyad is a term referring to two people who are involved in an interaction or a relationship, that is, a couple. The word, *extradyadic*, means *outside of the dyad*, and therefore refers to relationships with individuals other than with one's primary romantic partner.



Do you know of someone who has been involved in a sexual affair while also being involved in a romantic relationship or marriage? How common do you think sexual affairs are?

The primary relationship is the one established before one of the partners became involved in a relationship with a third person. The term, *extramarital*, specifically refers to relationships with others besides one's marriage partner. *Extradyadic* includes not only those who are married, but also those who are not married but who are involved in a long-term romantic relationship. Therefore, it is relevant to lesbian and gay couples involved in romantic relationships, as well as heterosexual couples who have not decided to marry, but who are cohabiting, or living together.

A basic assumption underlying views of extradyadic relationships is that couples intend to be “faithful.” This means that the individuals in the primary relationship are

committed to being emotionally and sexually exclusive—that is, they will be intimate only with one another. The commitment to exclusiveness is usually formalized through legal marriage. However, couples who do not marry, or cannot marry, may have such a commitment, whether by discussing it explicitly or by assuming exclusiveness because it is implied in Western cultures by having intense romantic intimacy. For these reasons, involvement in a relationship with someone other than one's primary relationship partner is considered to be an extremely grave, catastrophic violation of trust and loyalty. Consequently, descriptors such as *unfaithfulness*, *infidelity*, and *cheating* are typically used to refer to extradyadic relationships (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2000).

The severity of the offense is revealed by the fact that 77% of participants in a U.S. probability study reported that adultery is always wrong (Laumann et al., 1994), although some individuals have more permissive attitudes than others. Furthermore, extradyadic relationships often create a profound danger for the stability of the primary relationship (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2000). Extramarital affairs are a strong factor in divorce across a number of cultures (Betzing, 1989), although they are seldom the most common reason for divorces (Burns, 1984). However, empirical research has not been conducted to establish the exact likelihood that extramarital relationships lead to divorce. Buunk (1987) has proposed that extramarital involvement is more likely to result in divorce if the basis for the affair is unhappiness with the primary relationship.

The Different Faces of Sexual Affairs

'Tis the established custom in Vienna for every lady to have two husbands, one that bears the name, and another that performs the duties.

Lady Mary Wortley Montague, letter to a friend [1716] (Cassell Publishers Limited, 1993, p. 8)

Distinctions have been made among types of extradyadic involvement based on the meaning of the relationship to the individuals (Morgan, 2004). Lawson (1988) identified three types: (a) parallel, (b) traditional, and (c) recreational. The *traditional extradyadic relationship* exists without the knowledge of the primary relationship partner and extends beyond one or two sexual encounters. A *parallel extradyadic relationship* is one that exists relatively openly alongside the primary relationship. A *recreational extradyadic relationship* is one that occurs very briefly for the pleasure and excitement of the sexual affair, possibly enhanced by the danger of discovery.

In a review of what they term *infidelity*, Blow and Hartnett (2005) identify other conceptual frameworks that suggest different types of extradyadic relationships, such as one-night stands, emotional relationships, long-term relationships, and philandering. However, they conclude that insufficient research has been conducted on these various conceptualizations to be confident about their accuracy. They note that some evidence exists for distinctions based on the degree of emotional involvement and sexual involvement (Glass & Wright, 1985; Thompson, 1984). This view suggests that some extradyadic relationships may be largely emotional in nature, some may be largely sexual, and others may be equally emotional and sexual. Blow and Hartnett (2005) also note that each of these types may take the form of more specific types such as Internet or telephone relationships, work-related relationships, sex with sex-workers, and same-sex relationships.

How Common Are Sexual Affairs?

Fairly reliable data have been collected regarding extradyadic sexual intercourse among heterosexual couples when based on national probability studies (Blow & Hartnett, 2005); these studies include Atkins, Baucom,

and Jacobson (2001); Forste and Tanfer (1996); Laumann and colleagues (1994); and Wiederman (1997). According to Forste and Tanfer (1996), at most 25% of men and 20% of women have ever engaged in extradyadic sexual behavior. The lowest proportions of women to have engaged in extradyadic sex are married women (4%), with greater proportions of dating women (18%) and cohabiting women (20%) having done so. Very low proportions of both men and women, approximately 4% or fewer, depending on the particular study, have engaged in extradyadic sex during the previous year in which the study occurred.

However, Harvey and Weber (2002) have noted that “the percentage of women having affairs [is] generally estimated to be between 25 to 50%, and between 50 to 65% for men” (p. 184). The difference in estimates of the frequency of extradyadic sex is probably due to differences in studies on which they are based. The studies differ in the methods used to collect data and the nature of the samples included in the studies.

Do Men or Women Have Sexual Affairs More Often?

I'm glad you like my Catherine. I like her too. She ruled thirty million people and had three thousand lovers. I do the best I can in two hours.

Mae West in a speech from the stage after her performance in *Catherine the Great*
(Cassell Publishers Limited, 1993, p. 198)

A simple, straightforward conclusion about whether men or women engage in extradyadic relationships at greater levels is not possible, because of variability of age, primary relationship type, and type of extradyadic relationship for women versus men included in studies. Authors of a number of studies have decisively concluded that more men have engaged in extradyadic sex, have more extradyadic partners, have more permissive attitudes about extradyadic sex, and have greater interest in extradyadic sex. On the basis of a review of the available studies (Blow & Hartnett, 2005), however, other researchers have argued that women and men are fairly similar and are becoming even more similar.

Women have been found to value emotional bonding in extradyadic relationships to a greater extent than men, as well as to experience greater levels of emotional involvement. Women are also more likely to fall in love with their extradyadic partner than men, who view their extradyadic partners more as close friends (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). On average, men are more interested in the sexual experience of extradyadic relationships, and to engage in more physically intimate behavior than women (Glass & Wright, 1985). Lesbians tend to have fewer extradyadic partners than gay men, who seek more sexual variety (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983).

What Qualities of Relationships Are Associated With Sexual Affairs

General Satisfaction With the Primary Relationship. As identified in the review of research on infidelity by Blow and Hartnett (2005), several studies have found that unhappiness with the primary relationship is linked to greater levels of extradyadic sexual behavior (Atkins et al., 2001; Glass & Wright, 1985), as well as greater interest in extradyadic sex (Prins, Buunk, & Van Yperen, 1993). Women who are dissatisfied with their primary relationship are especially likely to engage in extradyadic sex (Prins et al., 1993; Wiggins & Lederer, 1984). One study found that individuals who became involved in an extradyadic relationship with a coworker were more satisfied with their primary relationship than those who became involved in an extradyadic relationship with someone who was not a coworker. This suggests that coworker relationships may occur because of the opportunity that results from the availability of a desirable coworker, rather than because individuals

are seeking outside relationships (Spanier & Margolis, 1983). In fact, statistical analyses have shown that characteristics of the primary relationship only account for approximately 25% of the difference between individuals who engage in extradyadic sex and those who do not (Thompson, 1983).

Sexual Satisfaction With the Primary Relationship. Several large studies indicate that less sexual satisfaction is linked to a greater likelihood of engaging in extradyadic sex (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Both lower quality and lower frequency of sexual interaction within primary relationships appear to be related (Liu, 2000). This association may be primarily true for men (Liu, 2000), and largely for African Americans and Hispanic men with lower levels of sexual communication ability (Choi, Catania, & Dolcini, 1994).

Duration of the Primary Relationship. The association between the length of time individuals have been in a primary relationship and the likelihood of engaging in extradyadic sex is dramatically different for women and men (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). The probability that married and cohabiting women will engage in extradyadic sex steadily increases with the duration of the primary relationship (Forste & Tanfer, 1996) and peaks at 7 years (Liu, 2000). This association may also be true for women in dating relationships (Forste & Tanfer, 1996), although not all studies have found a correlation (Hansen, 1987). The pattern for married men is reversed, in that duration of the primary relationship is related to less likelihood of engaging in extradyadic sex until about the 18th year of marriage; after this point, the probability rises (Liu, 2000). Men in dating relationships are more likely to engage in extradyadic sex the longer they have been involved in the relationship (Hansen, 1987).

Another relationship factor that is associated with extradyadic sex is the age at which individuals begin a primary relationship. Younger age is related to greater likelihood of extradyadic involvement (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Atkins et al., 2001).

What Characteristics of the Person Are Associated With Sexual Affairs?

Evidence suggests that stronger interest in sex (Liu, 2000; Treas & Giesen, 2000), greater numbers of sexual partners before the first long-term romantic relationship (Forste & Tanfer, 1996; Treas & Giesen, 2000), and more liberal sexual attitudes for women (Hansen, 1987) are all characteristics related to greater chances of extradyadic sex. Divorce of one's parents (Amato & Rogers, 1997), as well as being divorced (Atkins et al., 2001; Wiederman, 1997), separated (Wiederman, 1997), and remarried (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000) oneself, substantially increases the likelihood that individuals will engage in extradyadic relationships.

Finally, attachment style is linked to greater chances of extradyadic sex (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Two studies have found that an anxious attachment style (also called preoccupied attachment style) is related to greater levels of extradyadic sex. In one study, this was true for both men and women, but to a greater extent for women (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002). In the other study, the association with anxious attachment style was true only for college women; for college men, the dismissive (or avoidant) attachment style was related to greater extradyadic sex (Allen & Baucom, 2004). This means that women who are extremely needy with respect to feeling valued by their romantic partner and concerned about being abandoned by them are more likely to seek out extradyadic partners; having other partners attracted to them appears to bolster their self-esteem. The motivation for dismissive men—who are not greatly interested in intimate relationships—was to establish an independence from their primary relationship partner.

Jealousy

When he is late for dinner and I know he must be either having an affair or lying dead in the street, I always hope he's dead.

Judith Viorst (ThinkExist.com)

With many men, possessiveness kicks in shortly after sex, sometimes just after desire. Their sense of entitlement to have what they want from women, simply because they want it, boggles the mind. Their primary desire seems to be to have sex with me, but this is followed closely by a desire to make sure no one else does. The whole can of worms is presented through a smoke screen of romantic symbolism, which makes me suspect they are running a scam. Though they use words such as "commitment," their tone evokes images of control more than love. (Sullivan, 2000, p. 103)

Although most individuals involved in extradyadic relationships attempt to keep them secret from their primary romantic partner, the primary partner may actually ignore cues that are often available about the affair (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2000). Research based on reports by therapists suggests that almost half of the "deceived" primary partners do not consciously acknowledge the extramarital relationship, in spite of evidence that they really did know. In fact, 58% of the partners were perceived to indicate either open or implied acceptance of the affairs (Charny & Parnass, 1995).



*Are there people who are especially likely to experience jealousy?
What do you think might be the reason for this?*

On the other hand, some individuals tend to be highly suspicious and vigilant of any clues concerning their partner's behavior that may hint at extradyadic involvement (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2000). This tendency to be suspicious and worried about a partner's involvement with others is **jealousy**, which in fact may take several forms (Buunk, 1997). **Reactive jealousy** is a negative emotional reaction to a romantic partner's actual extramarital involvement; this is also called *emotional* or *provoked* jealousy. **Anxious jealousy** is fear or worry generated by an individual without necessarily having realistic evidence to suggest the partner's extramarital involvement. The individual becomes obsessively concerned and constantly looks for clues that an affair might occur. This is also called *cognitive* or *neurotic* jealousy.

Preventive jealousy involves a mind-set in which an individual is determined to prevent an extramarital affair by his or her partner before it can occur; the individual may have absolutely no evidence to suggest that an affair might occur or is likely to occur, but he or she has the goal of making sure it will never happen. The person monitors all interest of the partner in other individuals, and may do everything possible to limit contact of the partner with others. This type is also called *suspicious* or *unprovoked* jealousy.

Why Do People Become Jealous?

He who is consumed by the flame of jealousy turns at last, like the scorpion, the poisoned sting against himself.

Friedrich Nietzsche *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 1883–92 (Cassell Publishers Limited, 1993, p. 102)

Jealousy, the jaundice of the soul.

John Dryden *The Hind and the Panther*, 1687 (Cassell Publishers Limited, 1993, p. 104).

Men tend to be more concerned about sexual involvement of their partner with another person, whereas women tend to be more threatened by emotional involvement (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2000). Both women and men are most severely distressed by characteristics of another person that most contribute to the person as an attractive competitor; these are called **rival characteristics**. In research based on evolutionary psychological theory, women are most threatened by rivals who are physically attractive; on the other hand, men are most intimidated by rivals with strong status-related attributes (Buss, Shackelford, Choe, Buunk, & Dijkstra, 2000; Dijkstra & Buunk, 1998). This supports the proposal that both women and men will experience the greatest jealousy when their potential rivals have characteristics likely to be most attractive to their partner (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2000). Furthermore, people tend to be most jealous with respect to individuals whom they know and about whom they are envious; in contrast, people are the least jealous of those with whom they were not acquainted (Pines & Aronson, 1983).

In keeping with traditional beliefs about jealous individuals, those with low self-esteem, feelings of personal inadequacy, and negative self-views are more likely to experience jealousy. The personality trait of neuroticism is also related to jealousy; this means that individuals who typically experience higher levels of negative emotions and anxiety tend also to suffer from jealousy more often. Likewise, individuals with an anxious–ambivalent attachment style are the most likely to experience jealousy. Research suggests that individuals with low self-esteem, stronger neuroticism, and more anxious attachments may experience greater jealousy because they feel greater dependency on the romantic relationship to fulfill their needs (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2000).

Summary

Various strategies are used to promote commitment within romantic relationships. Responses to conflict within relationships have been proposed to take four basic forms: voice, loyalty, exit, and neglect. After a traumatic relationship loss, individuals are thought to transition through a sequence of stages: (a) outcry, (b) denial, (c) intrusion, (d) working through, (e) completion, and (f) identity change.

Initiation of sexual behavior within established heterosexual relationships may tend to follow the traditional script of the man taking the active role, and the woman responding with either a favorable reaction or a refusal. Both partners in lesbian relationships tend to believe that they are the one in the relationship who more frequently refuses to engage in sexual behavior, whereas both partners in gay male relationships tend to believe that they are the one who initiates sex more often.

(Continued)

(Continued)

The frequency of sexual behavior for married heterosexual couples is on average two to three times per week, although cohabiting couples engage in sex more frequently. Gay male couples engage in sexual behavior most frequently of all types of couples. Lesbian couples are most likely of all couple types to engage in nongenital sexual behavior, such as caressing, kissing, and hugging. Frequency declines for all couples with time due to aging, and increasing familiarity and predictability.

The most appealing type of sexual behavior for both heterosexual women and men of all ages is penile–vaginal intercourse. Most heterosexual individuals have engaged in oral–genital sex, whereas penile–anal intercourse has been tried at least once by approximately 20% of both women and men. The most common type of sexual behavior for lesbians is stimulating the genitals with hands, although cunnilingus is the preferred behavior to stimulate a woman to orgasm.

The vast majority of individuals report high levels of sexual satisfaction, regardless of the frequency of sexual activity. Greater sexual satisfaction for women is related to the likelihood of experiencing cunnilingus, because of the increased likelihood of experiencing orgasm. Consistency of orgasm is more important in influencing sexual satisfaction for women than the sheer frequency of experiencing orgasm. Personality characteristics of individuals and the nature of a given relationship may be more influential in determining sexual satisfaction than the actual quality of sexual behavior itself. Sexual satisfaction is strongly related not only to relationship satisfaction, but also relationship stability, at least for men. General relationship satisfaction predicts the course of the relationship for women.

A fairly prevalent trend on U.S. college campuses is the hookup, a sexual encounter intended to last only one night with no desire for commitment or further contact. Casual sex is more likely to occur in conducive environments that celebrate sensuality and pleasure-related activities, such as partying, alcohol consumption, dancing, and contests involving nudity. Social factors, such as peer influences on attitudes and others serving as role models, have the largest effect on the occurrence of casual sex in these environments.

Studies indicate that 25–50% of women and 50–65% of men have engaged in extradyadic sex. Dissatisfaction with the primary relationship in general, particularly for women, is associated with greater likelihood of extradyadic involvement. Dissatisfaction with sexual aspects of the primary relationship is also related to involvement in extradyadic relationships, although this may be primarily true for men. Younger age at involvement in a primary relationship, more sexual experience prior to a primary relationship, more liberal sexual attitudes for women, parental divorce, being divorced oneself, having an anxious attachment style (possibly only for women), and having a dismissive attachment style for men all increase the likelihood of extradyadic relationships.

Types of jealousy include reactive jealousy, anxious jealousy, and preventive jealousy. Characteristics of rivals that cause them to be most attractive to one's primary romantic partner produce the greatest levels of jealousy. Individuals with lower self-esteem, greater neuroticism, and those who have anxious attachments tend to experience greater jealousy because they are more dependent on the primary relationship emotionally.

Chapter 10 Critical Thinking Exercises

1. Sexuality within long-term committed relationships

What factors do you think are most strongly related to the frequency of sexual behavior in which a couple typically engages? If a couple wished to increase the frequency of sexual behavior in their relationship, what strategies would you recommend as most effective in accomplishing this? What strategies would be most effective in improving the quality of the sexual aspect of their relationship? In what ways are frequency of sexual behavior and sexual satisfaction related for most couples? In what ways are they not related to one another?

2. Sexuality outside of traditional relationships

Think of examples of extramarital or extra-relationship affairs that you know of or have heard about. What factors contributed to the individuals becoming involved in these extradyadic relationships? What implications does extradyadic involvement have for the primary relationship? Does it always lead to negative consequences?



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