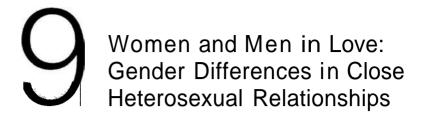Webster, M., & Driskell, J. E. (1978). Status generalization: A review and some new data. American Sociological Review, 43, 220–236.

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9 Women and Men in Love: Gender Differences in Close Heterosexual Relationships

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Studies of heterosexual couples are a relatively new focus in social psychology. Early work on interpersonal attraction (e.g., Festinger, Schachter & Back, 1950; Newcomb, 1961) concerned the development of friendship in naturalistic settings. In the later 1960s, however, research on interpersonal attraction moved into the laboratory; for the next decade, studies of first encounters between strangers were predominant (Byrne & Griffitt, 1973). Social psychologists have only recently turned their attention from first impressions to the development of enduring male–female relationships.

Rubin's (1973) *Liking* and *loving: An invitation to social psychology* was one of the first attempts to integrate social psychological findings about love relationships. In the late 1970s, reviews of work on interpersonal attraction (e.g., Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Huston & Levinger, 1978) broadened to include discussions of love and close relationships. As the 1980s approached, several books on the psychology of close relationships appeared (e.g., Burgess & Huston, 1979; Cook & Wilson, 1979; Hinde, 1979; Kelley, 1979; Levinger & Raush, 1977; Murstein, 1976). Today, the emphasis within social psychology has clearly shifted from initial attraction among strangers to the dynamics of enduring close relationships (e.g., Kelley et al., 1983). The series of volumes on *Personal relationships* edited by Duck & Gilmour (e.g., 1981) and the new *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* begun in 1984 are indicative of the interest in this field. The empirical study of women and men in love, once the province of sociologists and marital therapists, is now being claimed by social psychologists as well.

The origins of this change in social psychology are diverse. As researchers have become less obsessed with laboratory techniques, it has become more

acceptable to study relationship processes that do not fit experimental paradigms. Advances in research design and statistical methods have also contributed. Social changes, most notably the increased divorce rate, have challenged traditional views of love and commitment. "The unproblematic remains unquestioned and uninvestigated" (Levinger & Raush, 1977, vii). Love relationships and their dissolution have now taken their place alongside prejudice, violence, and international conflict as a "social problem" worthy of investigation.

The changing roles of women in American society and the emergence of feminist psychology have also contributed to an interest in close, heterosexual relationships. Common assumptions about relationships — that the man should be the "head" of the family, that highly differentiated male–female roles enhance relationships, that marriage is more important to women than to men —are being challenged. Familiar interpretations of the relations between the sexes are also being questioned. For example, do women sometimes use crying and pouting as influence techniques because of socialization for emotional expressiveness, or because of their lesser status and power in heterosexual relationships'? An awareness that gender per se may not adequately account for observed male-female differences has led researchers to begin studies of the impact of sex-role attitudes and sex-role self-concept on behavior in relationships. It is becoming clear that sex differences provide an important window into close relationships, shedding light on basic interpersonal processes.

This chapter takes stock of research findings about gender differences in heterosexual love relationships. Much of the existing research has been descriptive, aimed at documenting male-female differences. Explanations about the causes of these sex-linked patterns have often been offered post *hoc*. Where possible, we have speculated about the origins of observed sex differences. Our belief is that future research should move beyond mere description and focus explicitly on explaining sex differences in close relationships.

Our review is organized around six major issues. We begin by asking what men and women want and value in love relationships. Next, we consider sex differences in falling in love. and examine whether one sex is more romantic than the other. Three sections investigate key facets of interaction in relationships— communication, the division of labor, and power. A sixth section concerns the psychological consequences of relationships, and provides evidence that marriage may be more beneficial to the psychological well-being of men than of women. In a concluding section, we discuss directions for future research.

WHAT WOMEN AND MEN WANT IN RELATIONSHIPS

The experiences of women and men in close relationships are shaped by their attitudes and values. Most Americans value love relationships highly. Although stereotypes depict men as more resistant to marriage and "settling down" than

women, actual gender differences in expectations about marriage are very small. For example, a study of college students (Hill, Rubin & Peplau, 1976; Rubin, Peplau & Hill, unpublished data) asked men and women about the likelihood that they would eventually get married. Among students currently in a steady dating relationship, only 3% of the men and 1% of the women said they would "definitely" never marry. Among students not currently "going with" one partner, 5% of the men and none of the women said they would definitely never marry. Intimacy and its institutionalized expression in marriage are major goals for most heterosexual women and men.

Men have somewhat more traditional attitudes about relations between the sexes than do women. When asked about such matters as whether the husband should be the primary wage earner for the family and whether the wife should have major responsibility for homemaking and childcare, men consistently endorse more traditional male-female role differentiation (e.g., Osmond & Martin, 1975; Parelman, 1983; Peplau, 1976; Scanzoni & Fox, 1980; Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Tomeh, 1978). For example, one survey (Astin, King & Richardson, 1980) asked students entering college in the fall of 1980 whether "women's activities should be confined to the home." About 35% of the men agreed with this statement, compared to only 19% of the women. In any particular dating or marital relationship, partners tend to be relatively similar in their sex-role attitudes. For example, in a sample of college dating couples, Peplau (1976) reported a significant correlation of .48 between partners' scores on a 10-item sex-role attitude scale. Traditionalists are usually matched with traditionalists and feminists with feminists. Nonetheless, there is also likely to be a small but consistent difference in the relative traditionalism of partners. with women being more pro-feminist than their male partners.

Relationship values are also reflected in people's goals for dating or for marriage. Much commonality has been found in men's a d women's relationship priorities. For example, one study of dating couples (Rubin, Peplau & Hill, unpublished data) asked college students to rate the importance of six goals as a reason for entering their current dating relationship. Both sexes gave the greatest importance to a desire "to have a good time with someone" and "to have a friend of the opposite sex." Men and women both gave the lowest priority to the desire "to find a marriage partner" or "to have a guaranteed date," and intermediate Importance to the desire "for sexual activity" and "to fall in love." However, whereas men rated sex more important than love, women rated love more important than sex.

Several studies have asked husbands and wives to rank the importance of various marriage goals. Levinger (1964) found that the overall ranking of nine goals was, in the order of their importance: affection, companionship, happy children, personal development, religion, economic security, attractive home, wise financial planning, and a place in the community. Levinger found few sex differences: Both sexes emphasized affection and companionship and gave low

priority to task-oriented goals about the standard of living. There is also some evidence that the ranking of such goals is affected by social class (Farber, 1957). Across all social classes, women rank affection high, but men vary. Levinger has suggested that "The more a couple is assured of economic security and occupational stability, the more likely it is that the husband will share the wife's concern with socio-emotional matters" (1964, p. 442). Working-class men, on the other hand, may put less emphasis on companionship than do their wives (e.g., Rubin, 1976).

More recent studies have attempted to go beyond the ranking of fairly global goals in order to identify more precisely those specific features of relationships that are most important to women and to men. Cochran and Peplau (in press) asked college students to rate the importance of 22 features of love relationships, such as partners having similar attitudes, sharing many activities, sexual exclusivity, and disclosing intimate feelings. A factor analysis of responses indicated that values clustered around two themes. "Dyadic attachment" values concerned a desire for a close and relatively secure love relationship, and were reflected in an emphasis on seeking permanence in a relationship, wanting to reveal personal feelings, sharing many activities with the partner, and valuing sexual exclusivity. "Egalitarian autonomy" values indicated a concern with maintaining one's independence. This theme was reflected in wanting to have separate interests and friends apart from the dating relationship, and wanting to preserve one's independence within the relationship by dividing decision-making and finances in an egalitarian manner. Men and women did not differ significantly in their ratings of dyadic attachment issues; both sexes were equally likely to value—or to devalue—these more traditional features of close relationships. Students' attachment values were unrelated to their general sex-role attitudes. In contrast, the sexes did differ in their ratings of personal autonomy values. Women were more likely than men to emphasize the importance of independence and equality. In addition, students with pro-feminist attitudes gave greater value to maintaining separate interests outside the relationship and to equality within the relationship. (When the effects of sex-role attitudes were controlled, women continued to score higher on autonomy values.) It should be emphasized, however, that although significant sex differences in autonomy were found, their magnitude was small. There was much overlap in the expressed values of both sexes. Indeed, the relative ranking of specific values was highly similar for both women and men.

Also pertinent are findings from a study of young married couples by Parelman (1983). She examined spouses' ideals of marital closeness—what each considered to be the important ingredients of an ideal marriage. Women gave greater importance to feeling emotionally involved with the spouse and to verbal self-disclosure. Women also gave greater importance to partners' being independent and self-reliant. Men gave greater emphasis to themes of "sacrifice and dependency"—feeling responsible for the partner's well-being, spending time with the spouse, putting the spouse's needs first. Parelman concluded that "in this sample, women were more concerned with maintaining their separate activities and interests and with accommodating less to their spouse." Parelman noted, however, that the similarities between men and women were much greater than the differences. Further, she found that gender was not as good a predictor of relationship values as were measures of sex-role attitudes. For both sexes, pro-feminist attitudes were associated with wanting less sacrifice and dependency, greater independence, less similarity, fewer traditional role divisions, and greater verbal expressiveness.

People's preferences about relationships can also be seen in the traits they seek in a partner. Not surprisingly, there is much commonality in the qualities desired by men and women. Both sexes seek a partner who is affectionate, understanding, and has the right "personality" (e.g., Laner, 1977; Pietropinto & Simenauer, 1981; Wakil, 1973). Nonetheless, small but consistent gender differences do emerge. American culture encourages sex-linked asymmetries in the characteristics of dating and marriage partners (Bernard, 1972; Peplau, 1976). Women are traditionally taught to seek a man who is taller, older, more "worldly," more occupationally successful—someone to be a protector and provider. Men are traditionally taught to desire a woman who is an attractive companion and will be a good mother and homemaker. Empirical evidence (Burchinal, 1964; Hudson & Henze, 1969) indicates that people's personal preferences often reflect these cultural norms.

Several studies reveal that men put greater importance on a partner's physical attractiveness and sex appeal than do women (Hudson & Henze, 1969; Huston & Levinger, 1978; Pietropinto & Simenauer, 1981). In one study (Laner, 1977), 48% of heterosexual college men rated "good looks" as very important in a "permanent partner," compared to only 16% of college women. Women often give greater emphasis to a partner's intelligence and occupational attainment (e.g., Burchinal, 1964; Hudson & Henze, 1969; Langhorne & Secord, 1955). In Laner's (1977) study, 70% of the women ranked being "intelligent" as very important, compared with 53% of the men. The comments of a husband and wife interviewed by Pietropinto and Simenauer (1981) illustrate these common gender differences:

> Husband: She was attractive. vivacious, and interesting. I thought she would prove to be a loving companion. a wonderful wife and mother.
>
> Wife: We were in love. . . . He went out of his way to make me happy. I felt he could be a good provider and give me financial security (p. 43).

Studies of actual mate selection suggest that these sex-linked preferences are not always translated into action. In general, dating partners and spouses tend to be reasonably similar in social characteristics (Leslie, 1976). For instance. Hill et al. (1976) found that college dating couples were significantly matched in age,

height, physical attractiveness (as rated from photos by a panel of judges), educational aspirations. and SAT scores. When asymmetries do occur, however, it is more often the boyfriend or husband who is older, has more education, and is higher in occupational attainment (Bernard, 1972; Leslie, 1976; Rubin, 1968). This phenomenon, called the "marriage gradient," has led sociologists to speculate that the pool of "eligible" partners may be smallest for high-status, occupationally successful women and for low-status, occupationally less successful men.

Taken together, the available studies of what men and women want in close relationships lead to several general conclusions. First, there is much overall consensus between men's and women's relationship values. In actual relationships, male-female agreement is usually futher enhanced by the selection of a partner who shares compatible attitudes and is similar in background. Second, whereas most American women strongly value affection and companionship in relationships, men are more variable on this theme. In middle-class and college samples, men and women generally give equal importance to companionship. In working class samples, some men de-emphasize companionship. Women of all social classes appear to view verbal self-disclosure as a more important component of intimacy than do men. Third, among college educated younger adults, the importance of personal independence may be more salient for women than it is for men. Our speculation is that women cannot take personal autonomy for granted to the same extent that men can. For men, love relationships have never precluded outside activities or careers. For women, these have often been seen as incompatible (e.g., Homer, 1970). Family historians (e.g., Degler, 1980) suggest that this century is witnessing women's struggle for autonomy outside the home. For younger, educated women this may lead to a greater concern with maintaining separate interests and friends in addition to having a primary love relationship. Fourth, women are generally more likely to endorse change in the traditional marital roles of women and men. Finally, there is some evidence that men and women prize somewhat different qualities in their love partners. Men often seek partners who are youthful and sexually attractive; women more often value men's experience and occupational achievements. It may be that these asymmetrical partner preferences are most pronounced among conservative individuals who seek relationships with clearcut male–female role differentiation. Whether feminists show a similar pattern is unknown at present.

Our understanding of sex roles in close heterosexual relationships benefits from these examinations of what men and women want in relationships. But existing research leaves many unanswered questions. We do not know how well most people are able to articulate their personal values and goals. Such issues may not be very salient for some people, whose answers to researchers may be heavily influenced by stereotypes and social desirability pressures. We do not know whether the sexes interpret values such as "affection" and "companionship" in similar ways. It is possible that when men think of companionship

they imagine joint activities such as hiking or going to a movie, whereas women think of intimate conversations (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). We know little about how relationship values affect people's actual selection of partners and behavior in relationships. An especially important question may be whether sex differences in values lead to conflict and problems in heterosexual relationships. Finally, we can profitably ask how young people's relationship values are affected by the changing roles of men and women in American society.

FALLING IN LOVE

Is one sex more "romantic," or prone to falling in love more easily? The answer depends a good deal on terminology (Gordon, 1981). We find it useful to distinguish people's ideology or beliefs about the nature of love from their subjective experiences in a close relationship.

Love Ideologies

A distinction has frequently been made between romantic versus pragmatic beliefs about love (e.g., Hobart, 1958; Knox & Sporakowski, 1968). The romantic person believes that true love lasts forever, comes but once, is strange and incomprehensible, and conquers barriers of custom or social class. The pragmatist rejects these ideals, knowing that we can each love many people, that economic security is more important than passion, and that some disillusionment surely accompanies marriage.

By these criteria, men are apparently more romantic than women. Several studies (e.g., Fengler, 1974; Hobart, 1958; Knox & Sporakowski, 1968; Rubin, 1970; Rubin, Peplau, & Hill, 1981) have found small but consistent sex differences on various romanticism scales. Further evidence comes from responses to questions about the importance of love as a basis for marriage. For example, Kephart (1967) asked students, "If a boy (girl) had all the other qualities you desired, would you marry this person if you were not in love with him/her?" Most of the men (65%) said no, compared to only 24% of the women. Finally, recent research developing a typology of six styles or orientations to love (e.g., Hatkoff & Lasswell, 1979; Lasswell & Lobsenz, 1980; Lee, 1977) further corroborates this picture. Hatkoff and Lasswell (1979) found that women were more likely than men to adopt "logical" or "best friends" approaches to love. Men were more likely to be "romantics" who believed in love at first sight, or "game players" who enjoyed flirtation.

Intrigued by these findings, social scientists have freely speculated about the reasons for men's greater romanticism. The most common explanation concerns the social and economic context of mate selection. As Waller (1938) explained, "A man, when he marries, chooses a companion and perhaps a helpmate, but a

woman chooses a companion and at the same time a standard of living. It is necessary for a woman to be mercenary" (p. 243). Men, it seems, can afford to be more frivolous in love. Other explanations (see Rubin et al., 1981) have emphasized women's presumed lesser emotional dependence on men, or have cited the greater stigma of spinsterhood as a reason for women's willingness to marry regardless of love (Knox & Sporakowski, 1968). Whether social changes increasing women's financial independence and making singlehood more acceptable will alter these sex differences remains to be seen.

The Experience of Love

Another research tradition has investigated sex differences in the intensity of a person's feelings toward his or her partner. Rubin (1970, 1973) argued that love and liking are qualitatively distinct attitudes toward another person, and he developed separate scales to assess each. The 9-item Liking Scale measures feelings of respect and affection toward another. The 9-item Love Scale assesses feelings of attachment, caring, and intimacy. Rubin found that, on the average, boyfriends and girlfriends love each other equally yet girlfriends reported greater liking for their dating partner. Rubin interpreted this in terms of a possible masculine bias in items on the Liking Scale (e.g., questions about recommending the partner for a responsible job). Rubin also reported that the correlation between a person's liking and love for their partner was higher among men (.56) than among women (.36). He speculated that women may make finer discriminations between these two attitudes than do men. Finally, Rubin's research demonstrated the utility of distinguishing a romantic love ideology from one's feelings of love for a specific partner. Rubin found that love scores were significantly correlated with progress toward permanence in the relationship during the school year, but only for romantics. For students who rejected romanticism and espoused a more pragmatic ideology of love, progress in the relationship was unrelated to love for the partner. (For more recent data, see Hill et al., 1976.)

The Symptoms of Romantic Love. Although the sexes may not differ in global assessments of their love for each other, other aspects of the love experience do distinguish men and women. In dating relationships, women are more likely than men to report various emotional symptoms of love. In one study (Kanin, Davidson & Scheck, 1970), women were more likely to report that they were "floating on a cloud," "wanted to run, jump or scream," had "trouble concentrating," "felt giddy and carefree," and had a general sense of well-being. Dion and Dion (1973, 1975) also found greater feelings of euphoria among women. Whether these results represent actual sex differences in the experience of love, or simply women's greater willingness to disclose intimate feelings is unclear.

Speed of Falling in Love. Rubin, Peplau, and Hill (1981) have reviewed evidence that men tend to fall in love more readily than women. For example, men report that they recognize feelings of love earlier in the development of a relationship than do women (Burgess & Wallin, 1953; Cate & Huston, 1980; Kanin et al., 1970). In a computer dating study (Coombs & Kenkel, 1966), men reported greater "romantic attraction" to their randomly assigned partner than did women. In another study (Kephart, 1967), twice as many men as women said they were "very easily attracted" to opposite-sex partners. And, among college dating couples, Rubin (1970) found that in short-term relationships, men scored higher on his Love Scale than did their girlfriends; no sex differences were found among longer-term couples. These differences may be tied to men's greater romanticism, but they may also result from men's greater emphasis on physical attractiveness in a partner—a characteristic that is easily ascertained. The man's role as initiator in dating relationships may also contribute to his higher level of initial attraction.

Which sex is more romantic? Discussions of this matter will benefit from greater precision in terminology. Among young adults, men are stronger proponents of a romantic love ideology than are women, and men report falling in love earlier in the development of a relationship. But women report more emotional and euphoric symptoms of love. The origins of these sex differences, like the romantic's conception of love, remains mysterious.

COMMUNICATION

Are women the expressive or socio-emotional leaders in close relationships? The discussion of this issue has often suffered from vagueness in defining the central concept. We focus specifically on research about gender differences in self-disclosure and interactional style.

Self-Disclosure

The sharing of intimate feelings is often considered the hallmark of a close relationship (Jourard, 1959). Yet folk wisdom suggests that men are often less expressive than women. A working class couple interviewed by Lillian Rubin illustrates this pattern:

Wife: He doesn't ever think there's anything to talk about. I'm the one who has to nag him to talk always, and then I get disgusted.

Husband: I'm pretty tight-lipped about most things most of the time, especially personal things. I don't express what I think or feel. She keeps trying to get me to, but, you know, it's hard (cited in L. B. Rubin, 1976, p. 124).

Just how common are the sex differences in disclosure found in this couple? The clearest evidence of sex differences comes from studies of same-sex friendship. Throughout adult life. women often disclose more personal information to friends than do men (Cozby, 1973), and are more likely to say that they have an intimate, same-sex confidant (Booth, 1972; Booth & Hess, 1974; Lowenthal & Haven, 1968). Women are also more likely to enjoy "just talking" with their same-sex friends, and to say that talking helped form the basis of their relationship (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982).

Studies of heterosexual couples present a more complex picture. In general, people disclose more to their spouse than to anyone else (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Rosenfeld, Civikly, & Heron, 1979). A norm of reciprocity in self-disclosure generally encourages similar levels of disclosure between partners. Nonetheless, wives sometimes disclose more than their husbands do (Burke, Weir & Harrison, 1976; Hendrick, 1981; Jourard, 1971; Komarovsky, 1967; Levinger & Senn, 1967). This sex difference has been observed in both working-class and middle-class couples. For example, in *Blue* Collar *Marriage* (1967), Komarovsky reported diverse patterns of self-disclosure: 35% of the couples interviewed had equal and full disclosure by both spouses, 10% had equal and moderate disclosure, and 24% had equal but meager disclosure. In 21% of the couples, the wife disclosed more; in 10% the husband disclosed more. Education and social class often have dramatic effects on the general level of self-disclosure by both husbands and wives. Komarovsky found that only 35% of men with less than a high school education disclosed fully to their wives, compared with 61% of those men who had completed high school. In Komarovsky's view, the less educated working-class man is the prototype of the inexpressive male.

Komarovsky argues that when there is low disclosure in a marriage, it is typically the husband who blocks communication. This would be consistent with the notion that men generally prefer lower levels of verbal communication. Burke and Weir (1977) examined how spouses react to stress. They found that wives were more willing to tell their husbands when they were feeling tense and to try to explain their feelings. In general, women may be more likely than men to seek emotional support from other people when they are feeling stressed or depressed (e.g., DeBurger, 1967; Funkabiki, Bologna, Pepping & Fitzgerald, 1980; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

Some studies of college students (e.g., Komarovsky, 1976; Rubin, Hill, Peplau & Dunkel-Schetter, 1980) suggest that younger, more educated couples may be moving away from the traditional pattern of silent men and talkative women toward a pattern of more equal and intimate disclosure by both sexes. For example, a study of college dating couples (Rubin et al., 1980) found that high proportions of both men and women reported having disclosed their thoughts and feelings "fully" to their partners in almost all domains. Disclosure was higher among men and women who had egalitarian sex-role attitudes than among more traditional couples. A few small sex differences were found. When students

perceived unequal disclosure in their relationships, it was more often the man who was considered less revealing. Men revealed less than women on specific topics, such as their greatest fears. Overall, however, disclosure tended to be quite symmetrical. Taken together, self-disclosure research shows that women are sometimes—but not always—more verbally expressive than men. The extent to which this pattern is influenced by social class, education, and changing cultural values is an important topic for future research.

Several researchers (e.g., Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Komarovsky, 1967) have suggested that low self-disclosure in marriage is linked to broader patterns of sex-role differentiation in which the husband's life centers around work and the wife's around children and homemaking. This is illustrated in the comments of a working-class husband: "I can't find anything to talk [to my wife] about. The kinds of things she wants to talk about are kidstuff and trivial . . . I can talk to the fellows at work about the things I like to talk about—cars, sports, work" (Cited in Komarovsky, 1967, p. 150). Sex differences in the interests and experience of husbands and wives may inhibit cross-sex verbal expressiveness.

A closer examination of the content of conversations between the sexes appears warranted. Derlega et al. (1981) found that in mixed-sex dyads, women, when compared with men, disclosed more on "feminine" topics and less on "masculine" topics. Hacker (1981) found that in mixed-sex friendships, a third of the women revealed their weaknesses but concealed their strengths (compared with none of the men) and a third of men revealed their strengths but concealed their weaknesses (compared with none of the women.) Komarovsky (1967) found that working-class wives preferred to talk about themselves, their homes, and their relationships with family and friends; their husbands preferred to talk about cars, sports, work, and politics. An intensive study of a single married couple who wore radio transmitters throughout a day (Soskin & John, 1963) similarly found that the wife talked more about her feelings and experiences, while the husband gave more information and directions.

Interactional Style

Sex differences in communication may be evident not only in what the sexes reveal to each other, but, perhaps more importantly, in how they interact. An early study by Leik (1963) used a modification of the Bales coding scheme to assess interaction in families who were asked to discuss issues about family values and goals. In groups comprising a mother, father, and daughter, Leik found no significant gender differences in behaviors classified as expressive, nor in task-oriented actions. In contrast, triads composed of a husband, wife. and daughter who were unrelated to each other did show sex differences. In such groups, the men engaged in significantly less expressive behavior and greater task behavior than did the women. Leik proposed that sex-role differentiation in expressive leadership is less likely in families where individuals interact frequently and privately, than in groups of strangers.

Other research (e.g., Henley, 1977; Lakoff, 1975) has found sex differences in several aspects of male–female communication, such as the use of language and nonverbal behavior. Unfortunately, few of these studies have explicitly investigated close, heterosexual relationships. One exception is a study by Fishman (1978), who analyzed tape-recordings of spontaneous conversations by heterosexual couples, and found clear sex differences in the form of verbal interaction. For example, women asked questions three times more often than did their male partners. Women appeared to be more supportive of male speakers than vice versa; they were also more skilled at using "mm's," and "oh's" to indicate interest and attention. Fishman concluded that there is a "division of labor" in conversation, with women doing the greater share of the work. These interesting findings need to be confirmed by more extensive research.

Although the available research is limited, it hints that women may function as facilitators of communication in heterosexual couples. One interpretation is that this pattern attests to women's greater communication skills and expressive leadership. Another interpretation (see Fishman, 1978) is that it reflects women's lower status in male–female relations: Men can afford to neglect communication because women can be counted on to do the work.

THE DIVISION OF LABOR

Close relationships entail not only the communication of personal information and feelings, but also the accomplishment of specific tasks. For a dating couple, this may mean planning a picnic or organizing a party. For married couples, it typically includes providing for the welfare of the family, maintaining a joint household, and often rearing children. There is abundant evidence that men and women contribute differently to their close relationships. For example, Wenz (cited in Kidder, Fagan & Cohn, 1981) asked people what they gave and received in their close relationship with a person of the opposite sex. Men reported contributing more than women in instrumental areas: providing money and being an intelligent and informed person. Women reported contributing more in socioemotional and homemaking areas: showing affection, remembering special occasions, and doing housework.

Most of the available research on distinctions between "men's work" and "women's work" has investigated married couples. Here, we focus on sex differences in paid employment and the performance of family tasks.

Paid Employment

In an influential analysis of the American family, Parsons (1955) argued that the husband's instrumental leadership in the family is fundamentally tied to his nearly exclusive role as breadwinner. According to Parsons, the husband's eco-

nomic contribution to the family is complemented by the wife's contribution as mother and homemaker. Recent research, however, demonstrates that the actual economic contribution of women to the family is typically more substantial than has been assumed. A cross-cultural study (Aronoff & Crano, 1975) found that in nonindustrial societies, women contribute an average of 44% of subsistence production through such activities as gathering, hunting, fishing and agriculture—and they do this in addition to their domestic responsibilities. In American society, a majority of married women currently work outside the home for pay, and this proportion increases annually. The presumed "typical" American family with a working husband, nonemployed wife and two children is increasingly becoming uncommon (Pifer, 1978). Has women's increased participation in the occupational sphere led to an increase in men's participation in domestic activities?

Family Work

There is clear evidence that husbands and wives perform different types and amounts of what Pleck (1981a) has called "family work"—housework and childcare. For example, Levinger (1964) found sex differences in which spouse performed such activities as repairing things around the house, doing the dishes, keeping in touch with relatives, and taking out the trash. As further evidence that these behaviors are sex-typed, Levinger found a negative correlation between how frequently the husband and wife performed each activity: the more often one spouse performed a task, the less frequently it was performed by the partner.

The most accurate and detailed information about family work patterns comes from time budget studies (e.g., Berk, 1980; Pleck & Rustad, 1980; Robinson, 1977; Walker, 1970; Walker & Woods, 1976) in which individuals keep careful accounts of how they spend their time. Such data support two major conclusions: First, wives do the bulk of household work and childcare. Second, this pattern is not significantly altered if the wife also has fulltime paid employment outside the home.

In an illustrative study, Robinson (1977) found that the husband's total family work averaged about 11.2 hours per week. In contrast, wives who were fulltime homemakers spent about 53.2 hours per week. More important, wives employed fulltime spent 28.1 hours on family work. Thus, employed wives spent roughly three times as many hours on family work as did their employed husbands. The amount of time the husband spent on family activities was not related to whether his wife worked outside the home. The consequence is that employed wives have significantly less free time than do either fulltime homemakers or employed husbands. Another study (Robinson et al., 1977) found that in a family with an employed wife and a preschool child, the husband had roughly 339 minutes of "free time" per day compared to only about 221 minutes for the wife—a

difference of two hours each day. Women perform most homemaking and child-care activities, regardless of whether or not they have a job outside the home.

There is some evidence that these sex differences in family work may be decreasing. In a review of relevant studies, Pleck (1981a) has argued that in the 1970s, women's contribution to family work decreased and men's increased—with estimates of the amount of change ranging from about 5% to 20% for each sex. Pleck suggests that this trend signals an increased convergence in the patterns of work and family roles for both sexes, and that it has reduced the role overload previously experienced by married women who worked fulltime for pay. Whether Pleck's optimistic view of recent trends will be corroborated by future studies is an important, unanswered question.

Why does a traditional division of labor in marriage persist, even when wives are employed fulltime for pay'? Several explanations have been proposed. First, we should note that common explanations for women's traditional family role do not adequately account for current patterns. The belief that childbearing and nursing make it sensible for women to engage in domestic activities might explain why people resist paid employment for women. But given that a large proportion of wives *are* employed outside the home, biological explanations alone cannot account for the lack of change in the husband's role. Similarly, the "availability hypothesis" (Blood & Wolfe, 1960)—that household work is allocated on the basis of the partners' time and skills—does not explain why employed wives spend many more hours on family work than their husbands do. Two more plausible explanations will be briefly considered.

Several analyses point to the influence of economic conditions on the division of labor in the family (see Farkas, 1976; Lloyd, 1975; Perrucci, Potter, & Rhoads, 1978). One hypothesis is that spouses allocate their time between family work and paid employment so as to maximize their economic efficiency. Thus, men do less homemaking than women because men can better contribute to the family by their paid labor. Given the current sex stratification of occupations and the discrimination against women in employment, this fairly rational and pragmatic hypothesis seems, at first glance, to be quite reasonable. However, evidence linking the relative wages of husbands and wives to household work arrangements has been inconsistent (see review in Farkas, 1976; Lloyd, 1975; Perrucci et al., 1978). Thus, this does not appear to be an adequate explanation.

A more interactional view of how economic factors can influence marital roles is suggested by Berk and Berk (1979). They found that the work schedule of an employed wife was important to the division of labor at home. If the wife worked during the day, her husband did not help with the dinner dishes. In families where the wife worked an evening shift, however, necessity led many husbands to do after-dinner chores. "In other words, an important pan of husbands' contributions to household work may rest on two conditions: the existence of certain household needs after dinner and an employed wife who leaves for work just about that time" (p. 231). Analyses at this more proximal, interactive level seem a fruitful direction for research.

Another explanation points to the important effects of the *attitudes* and *shared norms* held by spouses about childcare and housework. Although Americans' sex-role attitudes have become more egalitarian in the past two decades (Mason, Czajka, & Arber, 1976), many people continue to believe that family work should be women's work, even when wives have paid jobs outside the home (Yankelovich, 1974). Two studies (Beckman & Houser, 1979; Perrucci et al., 1978) have directly examined the impact of spouses' sex-role attitudes on the division of family work. In both cases, people with more traditional attitudes reported lower levels of husband participation in housework and childcare. One study of working wives (Robinson et al., 1977) found that the desire for husbands to provide "more help with household chores" was greater among younger wives and wives with pro-feminist attitudes.

Social scientists have speculated about the specific attitudes supporting men's lower participation in family work. For some people, the belief that traditional marital roles are essential to the psychological development of children may bolster a traditional division of labor (Mason et al., 1976). Some may consider it demeaning or psychologically harmful for men to engage in traditionally feminine tasks (Pleck, 1975). People may also believe that women's family work simply counts for less than paid employment (Kidder et al., 1981).

Americans generally report being satisfied with the husband's current level of participation in family tasks (Harris, 1971). Studies of working women (e.g., Bryson et al., 1976; Robinson et al., 1977) have found that over two-thirds of employed wives are satisfied with the division of labor in their marriage. A common theme emerging from studies of dual-worker families is the belief that the employed wife's major responsibility should still be as homemaker, and the husband's major responsibility should still be as breadwinner. Even when a wife works fulltime for pay, her job is often interpreted as less important than her husband's job or than her own family obligations. The comments of a successful woman professor illustrate this view: "Even though my career is clearly secondary, I don't feel cheated in any way because I want it this way. If I didn't want it this way, I think the marriage institution as we know it . . . would be disrupted and that my marriage wouldn't be a successful one" (Cited in Paloma & Garland, 1971, p. 534). Adherence to a "norm of male superiority" in intellectual and occupational achievement continues to be widespread, even among college students who support the idea of women working for pay (Komarovsky, 1976; Peplau & Rook, 1978).

POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

Power is a basic element in all relationships, yet it has proved frustratingly difficult for researchers to investigate in close relationships. Research on power in dating and marital relationships has encountered knotty conceptual and methodological problems (see Cromwell & Olson, 1975; Huston, 1983; Safilios-

Rothschild, 1970). We consider three aspects of power: sex-typing in domains of decision-making, the balance of power in a relationship, and power tactics.

Decision Making: His and Hers

Although most American couples say that many of their decisions are "mutual," partners usually do have sex-typed areas of influence. Boyfriends may have greater say about recreational activities, making decisions about how a couple spends their leisure time together; girlfriends may have more say about progress toward sexual intimacy in the relationship (Peplau, 1984). In marriage, husbands typically make decisions about their own job, the family car, and insurance. Wives typically decide about meals, home decorating, and the family doctor (c.f., Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Centers, Raven & Rodrigues, 1971). The division of labor between the sexes includes not only who does which tasks, but also who makes various decisions.

The Balance of Power

Is the general power structure of American heterosexual relationships male-dominant or egalitarian? Unfortunately, research provides no definitive answer to this deceptively simple question.

A common approach to assessing marital power (e.g., Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Centers et al., 1971) is to ask one spouse to indicate which partner typically makes each of several types of decisions (e.g., about insurance and home decorating). These are summed to arrive at an overall index indicating whether one spouse makes more decisions than the other. Studies using this method have often concluded that American marriages are usually egalitarian. For example, Centers et al. (1971) reported that only about 10% of marriages were husband-dominant, 4% were wife-dominant, and the rest were relatively egalitarian (i.e., decisions were either shared or divided equally). The interpretation of these and similar findings is, however, controversial (see discussion by Safilios-Roths-child, 1970).

In these decision-making studies, researchers decide a priori which family decisions are important and determine how to combine these decisions into an overall index of family power. In a widely cited study, Blood and Wolfe (1960) deliberately included four "masculine" areas and four "feminine" areas, weighted each type of decision equally, and then concluded that most couples are egalitarian. The assumptions implicit in this research strategy are questionable: Whether the husband's decision to move the family to a new city in order to advance his career is equivalent to the wife's decision to serve the family pot roast is open to debate. Of equal concern is that participants in a relationship may perceive and evaluate power differently than observers (Olson, 1977). The wife who appears to outsiders to make most of the family's decisions may actually

cater scrupulously to her husband's wishes and see herself as implementing his ideas. In addition, partners may differ from each other in their views about the balance of power in their relationship (Hill, Peplau & Rubin, 1981; Peplau, 1984).

One alternative approach has been to ask individuals about their perceptions of power in the relationship. For example, one study (Peplau, 1984) asked members of college dating couples, "Who do you think has more of a say about what you and your partner do together—your partner or you?" Only about 45% of the young adults thought that their relationship was "exactly equal" in power. When the relationship was unequal, students said it was usually the man who had more say (40%) rather than the woman (15%). The high proportion of students reporting greater male power is all the more striking given that most students rejected a patriarchal model for relationships. When asked which partner should ideally have more say, 95% of women and 87% of men said that both partners should ideally have exactly equal say.

The analysis of factors that tip the balance of power in favor of one partner rather than the other has been a topic of sustained research interest (e.g., Cromwell & Olson, 1975; Peplau, 1984; Rollins & Bahr, 1976). Three factors seem important. First, social convention has long given men greater status and authority in male–female relations (cf., Bernard, 1972). The belief that the husband should be the "head" of the family, or that the boyfriend has the right to be "leader" can give men a power advantage in heterosexual relationships. Second, consistent with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), the balance of power is influenced by the relative resources of the partners, such as education or income. For example, in Peplau's (1984) study of college couples, the woman's educational and career goals were an important predictor of power. If the girlfriend aspired to less than a bachelor's degree, 87% of the students reported that the man had greater power; if the girlfriend planned to pursue an advanced degree, only 30% reported that the man had greater power. There is also evidence (e.g., Heer, 1958) that paid employment increases wives' relative power in marriage. Kidder et al. (1981) have suggested that the prospects for an egalitarian relationship are further enhanced when both partners contribute and receive similar rewards from a relationship. A third factor influencing power is the relative involvement or dependency of the two partners. As social exchange theory predicts, when there is an imbalance of involvement in a relationship, the partner who is less involved often has greater influence. Dependency on a relationship can be based on many factors, including both attraction to the partner, and the lack of alternative opportunities. Traditional marital roles have put wives at a power disadvantage, as Bernard (1972) colorfully notes:

Take a young woman who has been trained for feminine dependencies, who wants to "look up" to the man she marries. Put her at a disadvantage in the labor market. Then marry her to a man who has a slight initial advantage over her in age, income,

and education. shored up by an ideology with a male bias. . . . Then expect an egalitarian relationship? (p. 146)

The effects of contemporary changes in sex roles on power in male–female relationships are an important topic for future research.

Power Strategies

Another facet of power in close relationships concerns the tactics that individuals use to try to influence one another. Only a few studies of power strategies have explicitly focused on dating and marital relationships (Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Frieze, 1979; Kaplan, 1975; McCormick & Jesser, 1983; Raven, Centers, & Rodrigues, 1975; Raush, Barry, Hertel, & Swain, 1974; Raven, Centers, & Rodrigues, 1975). Although it is too early to draw firm conclusions about sex differences in power tactics, the available data are provocative.

In one study (Raven et al., 1975), wives were more likely to attribute "expert" power to their husbands than vice versa. Husbands indicated that their wives more often used "referent" power, appealing to the fact that they were all pan of the same family and should see eye to eye. In a study of interaction in dating couples. Kaplan (1975) found that boyfriends offered information more often than their girlfriends did. Girlfriends were more likely to disagree with an idea or contradict information given by their boyfriend. Kaplan suggested that whereas men take an assertive stance, women derive power from resisting male initiatives. Kaplan viewed this as consistent with a traditional pattern in which the man "proposes" and the woman "opposes."

In another study of college dating relationships, Falbo and Peplau (1980) found that men were more likely to report using direct and mutual power strategies, such as bargaining or logical arguments, than were women. In contrast, women were more likely to report using indirect and unilateral strategies, such as becoming silent and withdrawn, or pouting. Women's strategies were similar to those of individuals (regardless of sex) who perceived themselves as relatively less powerful than their partner.

Somewhat similar results were found in Raush et al.'s (1974) study of newlyweds. In role-playing conflictual interactions, husbands more often attempted to resolve the conflict and restore harmony; wives more often were cold and rejecting, or used appeals to fairness or guilt induction. The researchers suggested that "women, as a low power group, may learn a diplomacy of psychological pressure to influence male partners' behavior" (p. 153). In a more recent study, Gottman (1979) examined the behavior of spouses in structured situations varying in degrees of conflict. In low conflict situations, the husband responded to the wife's negative behavior in a positive way more often. In the high conflict situations, however, it was the wife who was agreeable and expressed positive affect in response to the husband's complaints. Gottman concluded that "in our

culture, it appears to be the wife's responsibility to keep negative affect from escalating in high conflict situations" (p. 210).

Another perspective on the complex matter of how men and women respond in conflict situations is provided by Kelley and his associates (1978). They investigated what young couples say and do during naturally occurring conflicts. Both sexes expected the woman to cry and sulk, and to criticize the boyfriend for his insensitivity to her feelings. The man was expected (again, by both sexes) to show anger, to reject the woman's tears, to call for a logical and less emotional approach to the problem, and to give reasons for delaying the discussion. Partners in actual dating relationships reported that their conflict interactions were consistent with these stereotypes. Kelley et al. interpreted this pattern as reflecting gender differences in people's general orientation to conflict. The man is a conflict-avoidant person who finds the display of emotions uncomfortable or upsetting. The woman is a conflict-confronting person, who is frustrated by avoidance and asks that the problem be discussed and that feelings be considered. Kelley et al. further suggested that the placating behavior seen in the husbands studied by Rausch et al. (1974) reveals how a conflict-avoidant person behaves when he or she cannot escape dealing with an issue. Kelley et al. proposed that these sex differences in the approach to conflict stem from the socialization of women as socioemotional specialists. and the socialization of men as task specialists. It seems equally plausible to us that different orientations to conflict reflect the current power structure of a relationship. If men have greater power in a relationship, they may have nothing to gain by discussing problems with their partner and may benefit from avoidance. If women have lesser power, they may see confrontation as the only way to protect or to enhance their own position.

Finally, although Americans like to think of close relationships in sentimental terms, it is important to recognize that physical coercion can and does occur. In survey studies of marital power tactics (e.g., Raven et al., 1975), few spouses reported the use of coercion of any kind. But, as Frieze (1979) has pointed out, these data may be affected by social desirability biases. In a study using in-depth interviews. Frieze (1979) found higher rates of reported coercive tactics. It is likely that physical force is most often used as a last resort when other influence strategies appear ineffective. Nonetheless, researchers (e.g., Steinmetz, 1978) estimate that about 3.1 million American wives and over a quarter million husbands have experienced severe beatings from their spouses. Although we do not have precise information on how frequently physical coercion is used as an influence strategy, it appears that this tactic is predominantly used by men against women.

In summary, research suggests that men and women do use somewhat different power tactics to influence one another. These differences may reflect three interrelated factors. First, as a result of sex-role socialization, men and women may learn somewhat different influence strategies or approaches to interpersonal

conflict. It is difficult, for example, to imagine a traditional American husband using tears as a power tactic. Second, men and women may have characteristically different goals in interpersonal interactions. Kelley et al. (1978) linked conflict behavior to preferences for avoiding versus confronting conflict. In another context, McCormick (1979) demonstrated that sex differences in influence tactics used in sexual encounters are closely tied to men's goal of persuading a partner to have sex, and women's desire to resist sexual advances. Third, both power tactics and interpersonal goals may reflect, in some measure, the general power structure of heterosexual relationships. To the extent that partners have different resources in terms of skills, physical strength, expertise, money, and the like, they may be disposed to use different power strategies.

SATISFACTION AND WELL-BEING

Cultural stereotypes often depict marriage as a crowning achievement for women, who "finally trap a man," and something of a defeat for men, who are forced to abandon the "carefree" life of a bachelor. These images might lead us to believe that women are more satisfied with their love relationships than are men. Yet research examining subjective satisfaction with relationships, and the impact of relationships on psychological well-being find few sex differences. If anything, marriage may be more beneficial to men than to women (Bernard, 1972).

Satisfaction

Much research has examined partners' evaluations of their satisfaction or happiness in a relationship, especially marriage. Despite both methodological and conceptual problems with this literature (discussed by Aldous, Osmond, & Hick, 1979; Laws, 1971; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; McNamara & Bahr, 1980). several general trends can be identified.

No consistent sex differences have been found in global ratings of personal satisfaction with dating relationships or marriage. In dating relationships, boyfriends and girlfriends usually report equal and high levels of satisfaction and closeness (e.g., Cochran & Peplau, in press; Risman, Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1981). Presumably, most dating relationships that are not mutually gratifying are short-lived.

Studies of marital satisfaction are more numerous and complex (see reviews by Aldous et al., 1979; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Lewis & Spanier, 1979). In general, most husbands and wives report that their mamage is satisfying, and spouses' happiness ratings are positively correlated. Differences between the sexes, when they do emerge, are small. The results from three large surveys investigating the quality of life in many domains are illustrative. Gurin, Veroff, and Feld (1960) asked Americans to rate the quality of their marriage. Similar proportions of men and women rated their marriage as "very happy" (45% of the women and 48% of the men), and as "not at all happy" (3% of the women, 2% of the men). In another large scale study (Bradburn, 1969), about 60% of wives and husbands rated their marriage as "very happy." The exception to this pattern occurred among those in the lower socio-economic group, where only 49% of wives compared to 59% of husbands rated their marriage as "very happy." In a more recent survey by Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976), 56% of wives and 60% of husbands indicated that they were "completely" satisfied with their marriage. Asked if they had ever wished they had married someone else, 70% of the women and 72% of the men said they had "never" wished for a different spouse.

The marriage and family literature contains many smaller-scale investigations of marital satisfaction that have produced inconsistent sex differences. Several studies have found that husbands report higher marital satisfaction than wives (e.g., Burr, 1970; Komarovsky, 1967; Renne, 1970). A few studies (e.g., Spanier, Lewis & Cole, 1975) have found that at certain times in the life cycle, women report greater marital satisfaction. Other studies have found no sex differences (e.g., Gilford & Bengtson, 1979; Rollins & Cannon, 1974). We conclude that there are probably no appreciable differences in the reported marital satisfaction of most American husbands and wives, although small sex differences may occur in specific subpopulations.

Although global assessments of marital satisfaction are quite similar for men and women, it is useful to examine the ways in which gender and sex roles may influence marital quality for both spouses. We turn now to a consideration of sex differences in the correlates of marital satisfaction, and to an examination of the impact of role differentiation, role consensus, paid employment, and the balance of power on satisfaction.

Gender Differences in the Correlates of Satisfaction.   Global assessments of marital satisfaction may have somewhat different determinants for women and for men. For example, Levinger (1964) found that global marital satisfaction was related to expressions of affection and supportiveness for both sexes (see also Hendrick, 1981). However, sexual satisfaction was more strongly related to overall marital satisfaction for husbands than for wives, and communication was of greater importance to wives than to husbands. A more recent study (Wills, Weiss & Patterson, 1974) found that for husbands (but not wives), marital satisfaction was related to the frequency of pleasurable instrumental activities in the relationship. For wives (but not for husbands), marital satisfaction was associated with the frequency of pleasurable affectional activities. An examination of the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction for both sexes is an important direction for future research.

Role Differentiation.   Is marital satisfaction linked to the overall degree of sex-role differentiation—whether husband and wife have rigidly distinct versus shared roles? Two different views on this matter can be identified (Aldous et al., 1979). Some (e.g., Parsons, 1955) have argued that the existence of clear-cut and complementary roles is beneficial to marriage and to the spouses' happiness. In contrast, others such as Komarovsky (1967) have proposed that the "separate worlds of the sexes" in traditional marriage set the stage for marital discontent.

Empirical evidence about the impact of role differentiation on marital happiness is mixed. In a study of British couples, Bott (1971) found no relationship between marital satisfaction and the degree of role segregation. Similar results were obtained in a study of middle-class American families (Rainwater, 1965). But some evidence has been found linking role-sharing in marriage to greater enjoyment of couple activities (Rapoport, Rapoport & Thiessen, 1974), and to reporting fewer serious problems in marriage (Rainwater, 1965). In a study of blue collar marriages, Komarovsky (1967) found that the divergent interests of the sexes contributed to dissatisfaction with marital communication. One reason for these mixed findings may be that people's global assessments of marital satisfaction are based not only on their actual experiences, but also on their aspirations (Komarovsky, 1967). Couples with rigid differentiation of husband–wife roles may expect little interaction or sharing between spouses, and judge their marriage on that basis. More generally, traditional and nontraditional couples may use different yardsticks in assessing marital success.

Role Consensus.   The specific pattern of interaction that a couple adopts is probably less important to satisfaction than whether the partners agree about the pattern. Several studies (reviewed in Hicks & Platt, 1970; Lewis & Spanier, 1979) document the importance of "role fit" or consensus between the marital role expectations and behavior of spouses (e.g., Chadwick, Albrecht & Kunz, 1976). It seems almost a truism that an ardent feminist who desires shared roles in marriage will be happier with a partner who supports these views than with a staunch traditionalist (cf. Bahr & Day, 1978). Disagreement between spouses about marital roles is a major source of potential conflict and dissatisfaction.

Several older studies (reviewed in Hicks & Platt, 1970; Laws, 1971) found that marital satisfaction was significantly linked to the wife's ability to perceive her husband as he perceives himself, and to conform to his expectations—but not vice versa. Laws (1971) referred to this as the norm of wife-accommodation, and explained that "an accommodative (or empathic, or considerate) spouse contributes to *anyone's* marital satisfaction, . . . and the social norms decree that it shall be the wife's role" (p. 501). This pattern may occur because husbands and wives share a stereotype of masculinity and perceive the husband as enacting it. The opposite pattern has not been found; marital satisfaction is not related to the husband's ability to perceive the wife as she sees herself. New research on this issue would be useful.

Paid Employment.   Many studies have found that the greater the husband's occupational success and income, the greater the marital satisfaction of both spouses (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Recently, Aldous et al. (1979) suggested that this relationship may actually be curvilinear, with extremely low and high occupational success by the husband detracting from the enjoyment of marriage. The impact of the wife's employment status on marital satisfaction is more controversial.

Some family theorists such as Parsons (1955) have viewed role differentiation as essential to marital success and so emphasized the hazards of wives' venturing into the occupational domain. Early studies (reviewed in Hicks & Plan, 1970) seemed to show that marriages were often less happy when wives were employed fulltime, rather than being fulltime homemakers or working for pay only part-time. More recent studies (e.g., Booth, 1979; Staines, Pleck, Shepard, & O'Connor, 1978) cast doubt on this conclusion, however, and suggest that the impact of wives' employment on marital satisfaction is complex. Research is beginning to identify factors that influence the impact of wives' employment on marital satisfaction—such as social class, the woman's choice of employment, and the husband's attitudes about his wife's employment. In thinking about this issue, it seems essential to distinguish wives who enjoy paid employment and have supportive husbands from wives who prefer to stay home, or whose husbands object to their employment.

Several studies show that paid employment can have beneficial effects for wives. For example, Burke and Weir (1976) found that employed wives were happier and had higher self-esteem than did fulltime homemakers. The impact of the wife's employment on her husband's marital satisfaction has been a recent topic for inquiry. Burke and Weir reported that husbands were more satisfied with their marriage and were healthier when their wives did not work fulltime for pay. But studies with larger samples and better controls (e.g., Booth, 1979; Staines et al., 1978) have not replicated this pattern. Rather, no relationship has been found between the wife's employment status and her husband's marital happiness, experience of stress, or personal health. We agree with Lewis and Spanier (1979) that overall marital satisfaction is probably highest when both partners are satisfied with the wife's employment status.

The Balance of Power.   Satisfaction in heterosexual relationships is significandy associated with the balance of power or decision-making. One study (Peplau, 1984) examined the balance of power in college-age dating couples. No differences were found between equal-power and male-dominant couples on measures of satisfaction, closeness, or staying together versus breaking up over a two-year period. In contrast, however, both boyfriends and girlfriends reported less satisfaction in relationships where the woman had greater say. Studies of married couples (e.g., Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Centers et al., 1971; Lu, 1952; Rainwater, 1965) have generally found high levels of satisfaction among both

egalitarian and male-dominant marriages, and lesser satisfaction among female-dominant marriages. Illustrative findings come from a study by Centers et al. (1971). Over 70% of individuals in husband-dominant and egalitarian marriages reported being "very satisfied," compared to only 20% of those in wife-dominant relationships. Minor variations have been found across studies in whether greater satisfaction is found among egalitarian or male-dominant couples; no clear conclusion emerges on this point. It is usually more comfortable, however, to adhere to traditional patterns of male dominance or newer patterns of egalitarianism than to experience female dominance.

Psychological Well-Being

Although husbands and wives typically report roughly equal satisfaction—or dissatisfaction—with their marriage, evidence suggests that marriage provides greater health benefits to men than to women. In general, married individuals enjoy better mental and physical health, report greater happiness and psychological well-being, and experience fewer symptoms of psychological distress than do the single, divorced, or widowed. But evidence also indicates that the positive effects of marital status are greater for men than for women (Bernard, 1972; Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1976; Gove, 1972; Knupfer, Clark & Room, 1966; Lynch, 1977; Pearlin & Johnson, 1977). Gove (1979) concluded that "marriage is more beneficial to men than women, whereas being single is if anything more stressful for men than for women" (p. 57). A common pattern is for married men to score highest on measures of psychological well-being, married and single women to score moderately, and single men to receive the lowest scores. For example. Perlman, Gerson and Spinner (1978) found that widowed men were significantly lonelier than married men; among women, no significant difference was found in loneliness between those who were married and those who were widowed. Although some contradictory evidence has been reported (e.g., Warheit, Holzer, Bell, & Arey, 1976), the bulk of existing research suggests that husbands often enjoy better mental health than wives.

The reasons for the differential effects of marriage for women and men are not well understood, but several possible explanations have been offered (e.g., Bernard, 1972; Peplau, Bikson, Rook, & Goodchilds, 1982). Although response biases and differential selection into marriage for women and men may contribute to this pattern (Bernard, 1972), they do not offer a complete explanation (Cove, 1979). Several researchers have suggested that the traditional homemaker's role is less rewarding than the breadwinner's role. Housework is seen as unstructured, frustrating, and low in prestige (Cove, 1979). For employed wives, there may also be problems of role overload, since husbands do not typically share fully in homemaking and childcare (e.g., Robinson et al., 1977). Power differences favoring husbands may also contribute in some cases. In

short, it has been proposed that asymmetries in the roles of husbands and wives, and inequities in the family division of labor may put women at a disadvantage.

Others have suggested that men benefit from marriage in part because wives serve as important social and emotional resources for their husbands. For example, it is often wives who initiate and maintain relations with friends and relatives. Knupfer, Clark, and Room (1966) speculated that the "man's lesser ability to form and maintain personal relationships creates a need for a wife, as the expressive expert, to perform this function for him" (p. 848). As a result, unmarried men experience an "expressive hardship." The caring functions of the wife may extend into nursing the husband when he is ill and encouraging him to take care of his own health (Troll & Turner, 1979).

At present, the reasons why marriage contributes more to the psychological health of husbands than of wives remain an intriguing puzzle. Speculations abound, but are typically post hoc and unsubstantiated by solid research. Equally puzzling is the discrepancy between findings for marital happiness and psychological well-being. Even though wives exhibit more psychological distress than husbands, both groups report roughly equal marital satisfaction. A better understanding of the social and psychological factors that determine satisfaction with relationships is needed. We know little about the psychological algebra that people use in arriving at overall assessments of their relationships, and whether such processes differ by gender or sex role.

DISCUSSION

Our review of the research on gender differences in heterosexual relationships has found both similarities among the goals and experiences of women and men—and some consistent differences. Space limitations have forced us to omit other areas in which sex differences have also been observed, such as sexuality (e.g., Allgeier & McCormick, 1983; Symons, 1979) and reactions to breakups (e.g., Rubin et al., 1981).

We have said little about the important methodological problems that arise in studying couples (see Harvey, Christensen, & McClintock, 1983; Hill, 1981) and the ways in which these problems may distort research findings about sex differences in relationships. For example, social psychological research on relationships has often relied on college students and other "convenience" samples; we do not know how representative the sex differences we have described are of couples throughout the life-cycle or from various racial and socioeconomic groups. In addition, the effects of volunteer bias on relationship studies are not well understood. Hill, Rubin, Peplau, and Willard (1979) have argued that volunteer samples may under-represent couples with the most traditional sex-role behaviors. Finally, Hill (1981) has recently suggested that the use of inappropri-

ate statistical analyses is common in couples research and can lead to inflated estimates of partner similarity and agreement, perhaps masking the extent of actual sex differences. There is reason for caution in interpreting the results of existing studies of sex differences in close relationships.

Descriptive Typologies

An adequate description of women and men in love must go beyond a simple list of differences to understand the patterning and internal organization of sex roles. How, for example, are various components of a relationship—power, self-disclosure, the division of labor, and personal satisfaction—interrelated? One approach to this question has been to develop typologies of male–female relationships.

Burgess and Locke (1960) contrasted an institutional orientation, where the family is an economic production unit headed by a strong patriarch, and a companionship orientation, where the family is based on mutual love and affection, and is run by democratic consensus. Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1976) identified four patterns in which the relations between husband and wife are that of owner and property, head to complement, senior partner and junior partner, and equal partners. In an extension of ideas developed by Pleck (1976), Peplau (1983) has distinguished three relationship patterns. In traditional marriage, the husband is accorded greater authority, the wife does not work for pay, and clearcut male–female role differentiation is maintained. In modern marriage, greater emphasis is given to companionship. Paid employment for the wife is accepted, so long as it does not interfere with her traditional homemaker responsibilities or jeopardize the husband's role as breadwinner. Egalitarian marriage, more an ideal than a common reality in American life, is founded on a rejection of male dominance and role differentiation based on sex. The characterization of relationships along dimensions of power, role differentiation, and companionship is common to all typologies. Whether through typologies or some other analytic strategy, effort is needed to provide an integrated description of gender-linked patterns in relationships.

Explaining Gender Differences

One crucial direction for future research is to study directly the factors that create and maintain sex-linked patterns, rather than relying on post hoc explanations. Such analyses could potentially encompass a wide array of causal factors, ranging from proximal, immediate causes to more distal and historical ones. Analyses might profitably examine the effects of the characteristics of *individual partners* (e.g., personal attitudes, self-concept, habits, biological predispositions), features of the *dyad* (e.g., similarities and asymmetries in involvement or personal resources; shared norms) and features of the *social context*. We have

seen that social class can have a significant impact on the patterning of interaction in relationships. Other features of the social environment, such as cultural norms and values, social networks, patterns of paid employment, and access to birth control information also deserve study.

Building Successful Relationships

A concern with relationships (and their dissolution) raises questions about how to create gratifying relationships. Feminist psychologists have challenged traditional psychological prescriptions. At the level of personality, it was once believed that healthy adults had to have a clearcut and secure sense of their "masculinity" or "femininity" (see Pleck, 1981b). Today, psychologists are suggesting that greater sex-role flexibility, whether it is called androgyny or sex-role transcendence (e.g., Garnets & Pleck, 1979) is beneficial to individual functioning. At the dyadic level, a similar shift is occurring. Family sociologists (e.g., Parsons, 1955) used to emphasize the benefits of highly differentiated male–female roles in marriage. Such patterns were believed to increase efficiency, decrease competition and conflict, foster mutual dependency, and encourage marital stability. Today, all of these assumptions have been questioned (see Peplau, 1983). It is argued instead that traditional male–female roles often prevent partners from being the kind of companion each wants (e.g., Friedland, 1982). There is a growing belief that role sharing and flexibility may be more beneficial to heterosexual relationships.

It should be emphasized, of course, that research demonstrating the benefits of egalitarian relationships is very limited. Nonetheless, examples of the inhibiting effects of traditional sex differences are readily found. Rubin (1976) has described one marriage:

When they try to talk, she relies on the only tools she has. . . . She becomes progressively more emotional and expressive. He falls back on the only tools he has; he gets progressively more rational—determinedly reasonable. She cries for him to attend to her feelings. . . . He tells her it's silly to feel that way. . . [His] clenchteeth reasonableness invalidates her feelings (p. 117).

Clinical discussions emphasize similar problems. For instance, Napier (1978) has described a "rejection–intrusion" pattern in distressed couples. One partner, typically the woman, seeks closeness and reassurance while the other, typically the man, desires greater separateness and independence. When the woman's bids for affection are rebuffed, she feels hurt, rejected and misunderstood. As a result of the wife's attempts at closeness, the husband feels intruded upon and engulfed. Whether socialization for sex-role similarity and the building of relationships based on equality would reduce such problems is an intriguing question.

A Social Psychology of Close Relationships

Social psychology has been criticized from time to time (e.g., Pepitone, 1981) for an overemphasis on individual processes such as impression formation or social cognition, and for a neglect of interpersonal processes in dyads and groups. The renewed interest of recent years in close relationships promises to move research on couples more squarely into the mainstream of American social psychology (Kelley et al., 1983). We welcome this change in the field.

As social psychologists seek to broaden their understanding of social relationships, the impact of gender and culturally-based sex roles cannot be ignored. Symons (1979) has argued that "the comparison of males and females is perhaps the most powerful available means of ordering the bewildering diversity of data on human sexuality" (p. 4). This argument can be extended to many aspects of social interactions; gender differences are a common feature of heterosexual relationships in contemporary society. Bernard's (1972) notion that in every marriage (and we would add in every heterosexual relationship) there are really two relationships—his and hers—which are experienced differently and which have distinct personal consequences for each sex is compelling. No examination of close relationships can be wholly complete or wholly accurate unless it recognizes differences in the experiences and behaviors of women and men. The careful description and causal analysis of gender differences in relationships is a major avenue for understanding basic processes of interaction in close relationships.

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