

Loving and Leaving: Sex Differences in Romantic Attachments¹

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We propose a two-part generalization about sex differences in entering into and giving up romantic attachments: (1) Men tend to fall in love more readily than women; (2) women tend to fall out of love more readily than men. Evidence in support of these generalizations is derived from a longitudinal study of 231 college student dating couples. The data suggest that women are more cautious than men about entering into romantic relationships, more likely to compare these relationships to alternatives, more likely to end a relationship that seems ill fated, and better able to cope with rejection. We consider several possible explanations of these sex differences from the standpoints of psychoanalytic theory, the social and economic context of mate selection, and the socialization of men and women in the management of their own emotions. To evaluate these (and any other) explanations, further research might profitably investigate whether and to what degree these sex differences are found in other segments of the population.

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This report compares men's and women's orientations toward beginning and ending close male-female relationships. Specifically, it considers whether there is any general difference between the sexes in the propensity or ability to fall in love in the first place, and in the propensity or ability of one who is in love to fall out of it.

This is an area of inquiry which has perhaps been explored most thoroughly by songwriters, comicbook creators, and other producers of popular culture both today and in times gone by. It is an area in which stereotypes reign supreme. If our reading of the popular wisdom is correct, the most common set of perceptions holds that of the two sexes, women are the more starry-eyed and sentimental, while men are the more hardhearted and rational. A woman, according to this stereotype, is more likely to fall in love at first sight and to experience such symptoms as a heightened pulse, a trembling hand, and an itching in her heart. Meanwhile, the male object of the woman's affection is presumed to remain impassive and even unaware of the strange transformation that she is undergoing. Men have also been known to experience some of these physiological symptoms of love, but they are generally thought to be less likely to experience them than women are. A related pair of stereotypes portray the man as a ruthless exploiter who falls out of love, if he ever was in it, quickly and casually, moving on to new conquests while the woman who loves him tearfully watches him ride off into the distance. Women, according to the stereotype, are the lovers, men the leavers.

Do these stereotypes contain a kernel of truth? Our research leads us to propose not only that these stereotypes of female lover and male leaver are unjustified but also that there is a notable difference between men and women that goes in precisely the opposite direction. Our hypothesis can best be stated as a two-part empirical generalization: (a) Men tend to fall in love more readily than women. (b) Women tend to fall out of love more readily than men. Before we proceed to the evidence for these hypothesized differences, several specifications are in order.

First, the terms "fall in love" and "fall out of love" are not being used in a very special or mysterious way. They simply refer to people's ability or propensity to enter into and to give up romantic attachments. Several different indicators of falling in and out of love will be introduced as we examine the relevant evidence.

Second, these generalizations were suggested primarily by the results of a longitudinal study of 231 college student dating couples in the Boston area. The hypothesized differences are seen as being most relevant to such dating or premarital relationships in middle-class America today. They would not necessarily be found in different times, different cultures, different age groups, different social class groups, or different sorts of relationships (such as marriage). As we will suggest later, comparisons with other segments of the population might be of great interest in formulating different explanations of sex differences in love.

Third, even among the sample of dating couples that we will be considering, the sex differences to be reported are not massive ones. On all the measures to be discussed, there is a great deal of overlap between the distributions of the two sexes, and the overall differences are modest ones. Nevertheless, the various strands of evidence combine to suggest that the postulated differences are real ones, if they are viewed as actuarial propositions about a preponderance of cases. These actuarial propositions may be of considerable interest not as social facts in their own right, but for what they imply about the socialization of the two sexes for close relationships in contemporary America.

With these specifications in mind, let us turn to the evidence for our two-part hypothesis. First, we will describe the research program that provides our main source of data. Then we will discuss the evidence bearing on each of the two parts of our empirical generalization. Finally, we will consider several possible lines of explanation for the observed differences.

THE BOSTON COUPLES STUDY

Through a series of letters and advertisements in the spring of 1972, we recruited a sample of 231 couples who were "dating" or "going together" at four colleges in the Boston area. The four colleges were chosen with a view toward diversity. They included a small private college, a large private university, a Catholic university, and a state college enrolling commuter students. The large majority of participants came from middle-class backgrounds. About half of the participants' fathers had graduated from college and about one-fourth of the fathers held graduate degrees. The modal couple consisted of a male junior and a female sophomore who had been dating for about eight months. Almost all the couples were dating one another exclusively, but few had any concrete plans about marriage. Further details of the sampling procedure and characteristics of the sample have been reported elsewhere (Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976).

We proceeded to follow up these couples through extensive questionnaires in fall 1972, spring 1973, and (by mail) in spring 1974. The response rates on the follow-up questionnaires remained high, even though by 1974 many of the participants had left the Boston area. In 1974 the mailed questionnaires were returned by 83% of the women and 75% of the men in the initial sample. In all cases, each partner was asked to complete the questionnaire individually. Subjects were assured that their responses would be kept in strict confidence, and that their replies would never be revealed to their partners.³

³ In many cases, the partners decided to discuss their responses with one another after they had turned in their questionnaires. This was one way in which participation in the research had an effect on couples' relationships, in some respects similar to the effects of couples counseling. For a discussion of "couples research as couples counseling," see Z. Rubin and Mitchell (1976).

The questionnaires covered a wide range of events, experiences, attitudes, and feelings. On the follow-up questionnaires we also asked participants to reflect on changes in the relationship over time. These questions are of particular interest in cases in which the couple had broken up in the interim. We also interviewed a subset of the participants more intensively. Of special relevance to this report is a series of interviews conducted in fall 1972 with 18 people whose relationships had ended since the previous spring.

Proposition 1: Men Tend to Fall in Love More Readily than Women

In spite of prevailing stereotypes about "romantic" women, or women "out to catch a man," there is converging evidence that men tend to fall in love more readily than women do. Men have consistently been found to have higher scores than women on measures of "romanticism" (Hobart, 1958; Knox & Sporkowski, 1968; Z. Rubin, 1969). In the Boston Couples Study men were again found to score significantly higher than their girlfriends on such a romanticism scale (paired $t = 4.10$, $df = 230$, $p < .001$). This scale assesses the degree to which a person adheres to such tenets of romantic ideology as the belief that love strikes at first sight and overcomes bars of race, religion, and economics. Men's greater belief in this romantic ideology suggests that they may be more ready than women to fall in love quickly and with a wider range of partners, while women may tend to be more deliberate and discriminating about entering into a romantic relationship.

This difference in ideology may be paralleled by a difference in dating goals. We asked participants in the Boston Couples Study to indicate how important each of a variety of goals was as a reason for entering their relationship. Surprisingly, in light of the prevailing stereotype of romantic women, men rated the "desire to fall in love" as a significantly more important reason for entering the relationship than did women (paired $t = 2.21$, $df = 227$, $p < .05$).

The suggestion that men tend to fall in love more readily than women is also supported by more direct reports of attraction in the early stages of relationships. In an extensive study of engagement and marriage conducted by Burgess and Wallin (1953) in the 1930s and 1940s, many more men than women reported that they had been strongly attracted to their eventual fiancées at their first meeting or shortly thereafter. In a "computer-dance" study conducted at Iowa State University in the 1960s (Coombs & Kenkel, 1966), men were more satisfied with their randomly assigned partners on all criteria; indicated that they felt more "romantic attraction" toward them; and, when asked to speculate about the possibility that they could have a happy marriage, were more optimistic. In a study conducted at the University of Michigan in 1968-1969, Z. Rubin administered a self-report "love scale" to a large sample of dating couples. This scale is a 9-item self-report attitude scale calling on the respondent to assess the degree to

which he or she feels attached to, cares about, and feels intimate with a particular other person (Z. Rubin, 1970). In the total sample the average love scores of men and of women proved to be approximately equal. But among the 40 couples who had been dating for only a short time (up to three months), boyfriends' love scores were significantly higher than those of their girlfriends (Z. Rubin, 1969). All these findings seem consistent with the proposition that men tend to fall in love more readily than women. In the earliest stages of a relationship, men tend to report greater attraction and love for their girlfriends than they receive in return. This is true both in relationships that later become more intimate (as in the Burgess and Wallin study) and in relationships that typically never get beyond an initial date (as in the Iowa State study).

Proposition 2: Women Tend to Fall Out of Love More Readily than Men

Proposition 2 refers specifically to the ending of close relationships. We were able to keep in touch with at least one member of all but 10 of the 231 couples in the Boston Couples Study over a two-year period, from spring 1972 to spring 1974. By spring 1974, 20% of the couples about whom we had information had married, 33% were still dating or going together, and the remaining 47% (103 couples) had broken up. In considering the evidence for the second proposition, we will focus on the couples who had ended their relationship. We will consider evidence from several different domains — participants' self-report love scores before and after the breakup, their perceptions of problems in the relationship, reports concerning which of the partners most wanted to break up, reports of emotional reactions to the breakup, and reports of whether or not the former partners "stayed friends" after the breakup.

Love Scale Scores. Z. Rubin's love scale was administered to men and women in the sample at two points in time, separated by one year (spring 1972 and spring 1973; the love scale was not readministered in 1974). Within this interval, approximately one-third of the total sample of 231 couples had broken up. Figure 1 presents average love scores of men and women in couples who stayed together over the course of the year (Togethers) and in couples who broke up (Breakups). The members of Together couples were reporting their feelings of attachment, caring, and intimacy toward a current dating partner at each of two points in time. The members of Breakup couples were responding to a current dating partner in 1972 and a former dating partner in 1973. Not surprisingly, the love scores of men and women in Breakup couples plummeted over the one-year period, while those of men and women in Together couples stayed at high levels (Time \times Together-Breakup interaction $F = 107$, $df = 1, 129$, $p < .001$). Of greater relevance are the differences between the average scores of men and women. Among couples who stayed together over the one-year period, women's scores were initially slightly higher than their boyfriends' scores. Among

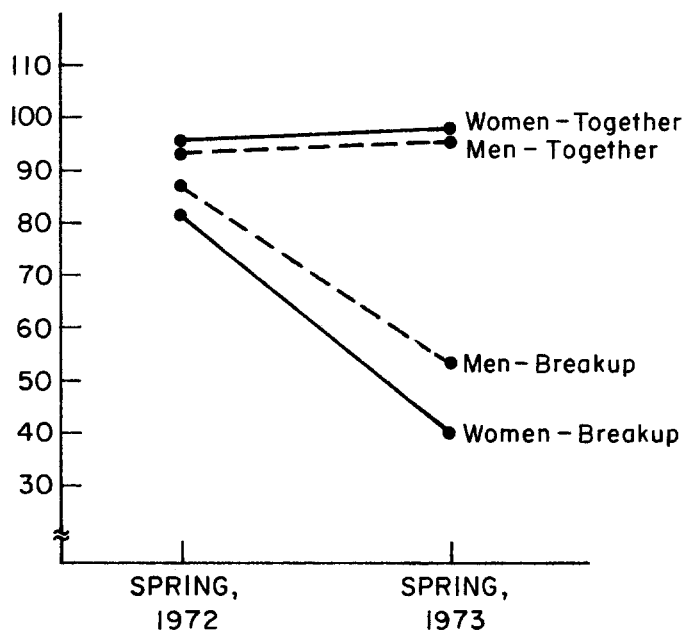


Fig. 1. Women's and men's mean love scores in 1972 and 1973 for those who stayed together and those who broke up during this interval. The means are based on individuals who filled out the love scale in both years (121 women and 118 men in couples who stayed together, 31 women and 39 men in couples who broke up). The maximum possible score is 117.

couples who were to break up over the one-year period, in contrast, the women's love scores were somewhat lower than their boyfriends' scores. Thus, it would have been possible to do a better job of predicting whether a couple would stay together on the basis of women's than of men's scores. In addition, among couples who broke up over the one-year period, the women's scores remained lower than the men's — and dropped even more sharply. (The overall Sex \times Together-Breakup interaction is significant; $F = 7.83$, $df = 1, 129$, $p < .01$.) The total pattern of scores points to two related conclusions: First, a woman's love was a better predictor or barometer of the continuation of a relationship than a man's love; and, second, as a prelude to and/or as a consequence of the ending of a close relationship, women's love tended to diminish more than men's. Both these conclusions seem consistent with the proposition that women tend to fall out of love more readily than men do.

Perception of Problems in the Relationship. One likely reason for — or concomitant of — falling out of love is the perception that one's relationship is beset with problems. We gave the members of couples who had broken up a list of

13 common problem areas and asked them to indicate which of these problems had contributed to the breakup. We found that women indicated more problems had contributed to the breakup than men did (paired $t = 3.15$, $df = 77$, $p < .003$). In particular, more women than men cited "differences in interests," "differences in intelligence," "conflicting ideas about marriage," "my desire for independence," and "my interest in someone else" as contributing factors. The only problem that men cited more frequently than women was "living too far apart." These reports are retrospective and clearly susceptible to distortion. Nevertheless, they suggest that women tended to be more sensitive than men to problem areas in their relationship, and that women were more likely than men to compare the relationship to alternatives, whether hypothetical or actual. These tendencies seem consistent with the postulated tendency of women to fall out of love more readily than men.

Who Precipitated the Breakup? If women tend to fall out of love more readily than men, we would expect them to precipitate the breakups (i.e., to play the role of "breaker-upper") more frequently than men. Combining men's and women's independent reports of "who wanted to break up more," we were able to estimate that the woman was more interested in breaking up in 51% of the couples, the man in 42%, and the breakup was reported as being mutual in 7%. This preponderance is a small one and could be written off as a statistical accident. It is given greater credence, however, by the fact that our participants' reports of the breakups of their closest opposite-sex relationship prior to our study (with over 200 cases for each sex) suggested a similar preponderance of female-initiated breakups (Hill, 1974). And in his study at the University of Michigan, Z. Rubin (1969) found that 17 of 25 nonmutual breakups had been precipitated by women.

This preponderance of female-precipitated breakups might be easily understood if women tended to have been less involved in their relationships than men. This was not the case. Once the relationships of the couples in our study had proceeded beyond their early stages, the women were by all indications at least as involved as the men. Combining the two partners' reports before the time of the breakup, women were categorized as the more involved partner in 45% of all couples and men as more involved in 36%; in the remaining 19% the two partners were classified as being equally involved. As Peter Blau has suggested, a relationship in which there is unequal involvement will not always be ended by the less involved partner: "Whereas rewards experienced in the relationship may lead to its continuation for a while, the weak interest of the less committed, *or the frustrations of the more committed* probably will sooner or later prompt one or the other to terminate it" (Blau, 1964, p. 84, italics added). Our data, presented in Table I, suggest that both of Blau's postulated patterns describe a substantial number of breakups precipitated by women. Many women ended their relationship when they were the less involved partner and wanted to move on to better alternatives. But in a substantial minority of cases, relationships were ended by

Table I. Who Wanted to End the Relationship, as a Function of the Couple's Relative Involvement Before the Breakup^a

	Man was more involved	Woman was more involved	Total
Man wanted to end	7	26	33
Mutual ending	4	1	5
Woman wanted to end	23	16	39
Total	34	43	

^a Measures were derived by averaging men's and women's independent reports; 18 cases in which the two partners were "equally involved" are omitted.

women who had been the more involved partner, when they finally realized that their commitment was not reciprocated. When breakups were precipitated by men, in contrast, only the first pattern was common. Relationships were frequently ended by men when they were the less involved partner, but only rarely when they were the more involved. In asymmetrical situations in which one's own love was not reciprocated, women seemed to be more able than men to relinquish their love and to take the initiative in ending the relationship.

Seeing It Coming. Apparently related to women's ability to give up love more readily than men do is the fact that women tended to see the breakup coming sooner than men did. There was an overall tendency for women to report that the breakup was more "gradual" (as opposed to "abrupt") than their boyfriends reported (paired $t = 2.10$, $df = 76$, $p = .039$). As the means in Table II indicate, this difference was most clear when the woman was the breaker-upper and when the breakup was mutual. When the man was the breaker-upper, the breakup was perceived by both sexes as being about equally abrupt (interaction $F = 3.02$, $df = 2$, 70 , $p = .056$). On the whole, then, women seem to have had

Table II. Mean Ratings of Perceived Gradualness of the Breakup, as a Function of Who Wanted to Break Up^a

	Man wanted to break up ($N = 31$)	Both wanted to break up ($N = 5$)	Woman wanted to break up ($N = 37$)
Women's perceived gradualness	4.23	6.00	5.05
Men's perceived gradualness	4.29	3.80	3.89

^a Only couples in which we have reports from both partners are included. Scale: 1 = ending was "extremely abrupt"; 9 = ending was "extremely gradual."

more a warning that a breakup was coming than men did, and perhaps more time to prepare themselves to fall out of love.

Emotional Reactions to Breaking Up. Our proposition about sex differences in falling out of love would suggest that breaking up tends to be a more traumatic experience for men than for women. Unfortunately, the quantitative data available to test this proposition are limited to the 15 couples from whom we obtained reports of emotional reactions to the breakup from both partners on the one-year follow-up. These data suggest that men were hit harder by the breakup than were women. In the wake of the breakup, men tended to report that they felt more depressed, more lonely, less happy, and less free than did their former girlfriends (paired *ts* median $p = .15$). Even women who had been more involved in the relationship than their boyfriends tended to feel greater equanimity after the breakup than did men in comparable situations. For example, one woman ended her relationship with her boyfriend when she could no longer tolerate his continuing neglect of her. Ruth later told us that she had no regrets about her relationship with David or its ending. "It's probably the most worthwhile thing that ever happened to me in my 21 years," she said, "so I don't regret having the experience at all. But after being in the supportive role, I want a little support now." Ruth added that "I don't think I ever felt romantic [about David] — I felt practical. I had the feeling that I'd better make the most of it because it won't last that long." In contrast, men in such situations were more likely to regret that they had not been able to give the relationship another chance, and more likely to react with incredulity to indications that their love was not reciprocated. Women who were rejected were also likely to react with considerable grief and despair, but they seemed less likely to retain the hope that their rejectors really loved them after all.

In this connection, it is of interest to consider the clinical impressions of George W. Goethals (1973), based on his experience counseling young people: "The notion that the young adult male is by definition a heartless sexual predator does not bear examination. In point of fact some of the most acute cases of depression I have ever had to deal with occurred in attempting to help young men with their betrayal by a young woman in whom they had invested a great deal and who had, as the relationship developed, exploited them rather ruthlessly" (p. 94).

Our proposition about a sex difference in the readiness to give up love may provide part of the explanation for Goethals' observation. It is unlikely that women are by nature any more "exploitative" or "ruthless" than men are. But if men are in fact less ready or able to give up love, men may be particularly likely to be mystified, hurt, and ultimately crushed by rejection.

Staying Friends. If men find it more difficult than women to renounce their love, we might also expect relations between former partners to be more strained after the woman has rejected the man than vice versa. Whereas a rejected woman may be able to redefine her relationship with her boyfriend from "love"

Table III. "Staying Friends," as a Function of Who Wanted to Break Up^a

Did the couple "stay friends"?	Who wanted to end the relationship?			
	Man	Mutual	Woman	Total
Yes	28 (70%)	5 (71%)	23 (46%)	56
No	12 (30%)	2 (29%)	27 (54%)	41

^a"Staying friends" was assessed by pooling the two partners' reports. If either partner said "No," the couple was categorized as nonfriends.

to "friendship" — which, as Davis (1973) notes, is often a euphemism for acquaintanceship — a rejected man may find such a redefinition more difficult to accomplish. In such cases, "staying friends" is likely to be impossible. The data are clearly consistent with this expectation. As shown in Table III, a couple was much more likely to report that they stayed friends if the man had been the one who precipitated the breakup or if the breakup had been mutual than if the woman had precipitated the breakup ($\chi^2 = 5.83, p < .06$).

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

Having summarized the evidence for both parts of our generalization — men tend to fall in love more readily than women, and women tend to fall out of love more readily than men — let us turn to possible explanations for it. We will consider three lines of explanation for the observed differences, from the standpoints of psychoanalytic theory, the social and economic context of mate selection, and the socialization of men and women in the management of their own emotions.⁴

When we reported these findings to our psychoanalytically oriented colleagues, they welcomed them, because they provide support for a psychoanalytic

⁴ Another possible line of explanation derives from sociobiological speculations about sexual selection. Our finding that women tended to be more "selective" than men, being more cautious about entering a romantic relationship and quicker to extricate themselves from a relationship that seemed ill fated, might be seen as an instance of the general tendency for females in the large majority of animal species to be more selective than males in their choice of mate. See, for example, Barash (1977). It would involve a rather large jump from the data at hand, however, to argue that the human sex difference under discussion is a product of natural selection.

notion about sex differences in the capacity for love. This is the notion that because of the strength of their initial love for their mothers, men have a greater capacity for complete heterosexual commitment than women do. Women, in contrast, are believed to handle the Oedipal conflict in a more gradual way, first shifting their sexual interest from mother to father, and later from father to substitute objects of love. Working from this set of assumptions, Nancy Chodorow (1976) argues that "Women have a richer, ongoing inner world to fall back on, and the man in their life does not represent the intensity and exclusivity which the woman represents to the man" (p. 463). Because of their richer reserve of internalized emotional objects and their lesser emotional dependence on men, women may tend to enter romantic relationships more cautiously, to leave them more readily, and to rebound more easily after a rejection. We remain skeptical of this psychoanalytic position, because there is very little firm evidence for the set of early childhood events that it presumes to occur. Nevertheless, the psychoanalytic position may have a grain of truth, and it suggests that the sex difference that we have been discussing may be general, extending far beyond the specific domain of campus courtship. There just may be some deeply rooted aspects of men's and women's personality that make it likely for men to make more complete heterosexual commitments than women — or, at least, to do so more quickly — and that make it harder for men to get over the loss of such a love relationship.

A different explanation of our propositions derives from an examination of the social and economic context of mate selection. Rather than presupposing any deep personal or emotional differences between men and women, this explanation focuses on the peculiarities of the institution of courtship in Western society. According to this approach, women must be more cautious, practical, and realistic than men in the process of mate selection for simple social and economic reasons. In most marriages, the wife's status, income, and life chances are far more dependent on her husband's than vice versa. As a result, in a "free choice" system of mate selection (like that in contemporary America) the woman must be especially discriminating. She cannot allow herself to fall in love too quickly; nor can she afford to stay in love too long with the "wrong person." The woman must carefully evaluate her partner's strengths and weaknesses and must compare him to potential alternative partners, in order to be sure that she is getting the best possible "bargain" in the marriage market. Men, on the other hand, being in a position of greater power both in the larger society and in the marriage market, do not need to worry so much about such rational calculations. Instead, the man can better afford the luxury of being "romantic." This sociological explanation is by no means a new one. It was stated most bluntly by Willard Waller (1938) in the 1930s: "There is this difference between men and women in the pattern of bourgeois family life. 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).

We suspect that there is a great deal of truth in this analysis. In spite of the recent movement toward more egalitarian sex-role attitudes, the marriage marketplace in the 1980s is still characterized to a large extent by the same basic inequities that characterized it in the 1930s. This socioeconomic explanation remains incomplete, however, because it does not deal with the links between the social and economic requirements of mate selection and the differences in emotional capacities that we have been discussing. To fill out the explanation, therefore, we also need to focus on what men and women learn about the experience and management of emotions.⁵ Evidence from a variety of studies suggests that women come to be more socially sensitive than men. Women tend to be more empathic than men (Hoffman, 1977) and more sensitive to nonverbal communication (Hall, 1978). In addition, women have been found to make sharper distinctions between interpersonal sentiments, such as those of "liking" and "loving" than men do (Z. Rubin, 1970). These sex differences are in accord with the traditional assignment of women to the role of social-emotional specialists, while men are the traditional task specialists (Parsons & Bales, 1955). The emphasis on social-emotional matters in women's socialization may lead them to be more sensitive than men to the quality of their interpersonal relationships, both in the present and projecting into the future. Thus, women may evaluate their relationships more carefully than men do, and their criteria for falling in love — and for staying in love — may be higher than men's.

In addition, Hochschild (Note 1) has argued convincingly that women come to be more adept than men at cognitively managing their own feelings. In self-report accounts of emotional experiences that Hochschild collected, women were more likely than men to write about actively managing their own feelings, using such terms as "I made myself feel. . .," "I snapped myself out of it," and "I tucked my feelings in." Men seemed to be less closely in touch with their own feelings and to take a less active stance with regard to them. Hochschild's analysis suggests that women are also more likely to exert cognitive control over such events as falling in and out of love. Such greater cognitive control would help to explain our findings that women tended to be (1) less likely to be swept off their

⁵ It is, of course, possible that some aspects of sex differences in the experience and management of emotions build on differences in genetic predispositions. For example, Hoffman (1977) has summarized evidence that newborn female infants are more likely than newborn males to cry in response to another infant's cry, suggesting the possibility of a constitutional precursor of sex differences in empathy. That sex differences in the experience and management of emotions build on such constitutional differences remains highly speculative, however. In contrast, it is hard to doubt that social learning in early and later life plays a major role in the development of emotional differences.

feet into a deep love relationship; (2) more likely to perceive the problems of a relationship and, if necessary, to end it; (3) better able to get over their feelings of loss when a relationship ends; and (4) when rejected, better able to accomplish the transition from love to friendship. Women presumably develop this greater cognitive control as a result of socialization experiences which emphasize that they have a considerable degree of power in the emotional domain, whereas such emotional socialization is neglected for men. It can also be argued that a greater degree of control for women in the domain of their own emotions is a necessary adaptation to their lesser degree of power and control in other domains.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We proposed a two-part generalization about sex differences in love: (1) Men tend to fall in love more readily than women; and (2) women tend to fall out of love more readily than men. We then presented data from a longitudinal study of 231 student dating couples in support of these propositions. The data suggest that women were less "romantic" than men, more cautious about entering into romantic relationships, more sensitive to the problems of their relationships, more likely to compare their relationships to alternatives, more likely to end a relationship that seemed ill fated, and better able to cope with rejection. Psychoanalytic theorists might account for these differences in terms of underlying differences between men and women in the capacity for complete heterosexual commitment. A socioeconomic explanation, in contrast, focuses on the need for women to be more practical and discriminating than men in the marriage marketplace. A final explanation refers to socialization experiences through which women learn to control and manage their own emotions more effectively than men do.

To evaluate these (and any other) explanations of sex differences in love, it would be valuable to investigate the generalizability of the present findings to other segments of the population. Our sample was restricted to college students of predominantly middle-class background. Almost all these students deferred marriage until or beyond the end of their college years. Would similar sex differences be found among working-class couples who do not attend college and who typically marry earlier? To the extent that the sex differences we observed reflect deeply rooted aspects of men's and women's personality, we might expect them to generalize beyond the boundaries of social class. It might be, however, that women in working-class couples tend to feel a greater pressure to marry early and are less likely, as a result, to exhibit the degree of caution and cognitive control in their love relationships that the women in our sample displayed (cf. L. B. Rubin, 1976). It would also be interesting to determine whether the sex differences we observed would also be found among older unmarried couples or

among previously married men and women who are considering remarriage.⁶ It is hoped that future research will extend the present investigation to couples of different social class backgrounds, ages, and marital histories, as well as of different cultures and historical periods. Such comparative research would help us to choose more knowledgeably among the various explanations of sex differences in love that have been or might be offered. Such research would also help to create a fuller appreciation of the ways in which psychological, social structural, and cultural forces join to shape intimate relationships between men and women.

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⁶ Zeiss and Zeiss (Note 2) have recently reported data on sex differences in initiating and adjusting to divorce that closely parallel our findings of sex differences in falling out of love.

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