

THE SYDNEY SYMPOSIUM OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Social Relationships

Cognitive, Affective,
and Motivational Processes



Edited by
JOSEPH P. FORGAS
JULIE FITNESS

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS



The Sydney Symposium of Social Psychology series

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Contents

List of Contributors	xi
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SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION AND BASIC PRINCIPLES

1	Evolutionary, Sociocultural, and Intrapsychic Influences on Personal Relationships: An Introductory Review	3
	<i>Joseph P. Forgas and Julie Fitness</i>	
2	Passionate Love and Sexual Desire: Multidisciplinary Perspectives	21
	<i>Elaine Hatfield and Richard L. Rapson</i>	
3	The Evolution of Love and Long-Term Bonds	39
	<i>Gian C. Gonzaga and Martie G. Haselton</i>	
4	Augmenting the Sense of Security in Romantic, Leader–Follower, Therapeutic, and Group Relationships: A Relational Model of Psychological Change	55
	<i>Phillip R. Shaver and Mario Mikulincer</i>	
5	Attachment Matters: Patterns of Romantic Attachment Across Gender, Geography, and Cultural Forms	75
	<i>David P. Schmitt</i>	

SECTION 2 COGNITIVE PROCESSES IN RELATIONSHIPS

- 6 Is Love Blind? Reality and Illusion in Intimate Relationships 101
Garth J. O. Fletcher and Alice D. Boyes
- 7 Knowing When to Shut Up: Do Relationship Reflections Help or Hurt Relationship Satisfaction? 115
Linda K. Acitelli
- 8 Understanding Relational Focus of Attention May Help Us Understand Relational Phenomena 131
Margaret S. Clark, Steven M. Graham, Erin Williams, and Edward P. Lemay
- 9 Committed to What? Using the Bases of Relational Commitment Model to Understand Continuity and Change in Social Relationships 147
Christopher R. Agnew, Ximena B. Arriaga, and Juan E. Wilson

SECTION 3 MOTIVATIONAL AND AFFECTIVE PROCESSES IN RELATIONSHIPS

- 10 Social Identity and Close Relationships 167
Marilynn B. Brewer
- 11 Developmental Antecedents of Emotion in Romantic Relationships 185
Jeffry A. Simpson, W. Andrew Collins, SiSi Tran, and Katherine C. Haydon
- 12 Happy and Close, but Sad and Effective? Affective Influences on Relationship Judgments and Behaviors 203
Joseph P. Forgas
- 13 Approach and Avoidance Motivation in Close Relationships 219
Shelly L. Gable
- 14 Sibling Relationships in Adolescent and Young Adult Twin and Nontwin Siblings: Managing Competition and Comparison 235
Patricia Noller, Susan Conway, and Anita Blakeley-Smith

SECTION 4 MANAGING RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

15	Punishment and Forgiveness in Close Relationships: An Evolutionary, Social-Psychological Perspective	255
	<i>Julie Fitness and Julie Peterson</i>	
16	Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration: Insights from the Science of Self-Regulation	271
	<i>Eli J. Finkel</i>	
17	Realizing Connectedness Goals? The Risk Regulation System in Relationships	289
	<i>Sandra L. Murray</i>	
18	Relational Ostracism	305
	<i>Lisa Zadro, Ximena B. Arriaga, and Kipling D. Williams</i>	
19	Attending to Temptation: The Operation (and Perils) of Attention to Alternatives in Close Relationships	321
	<i>Rowland S. Miller</i>	
	Index	339

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Introduction and Basic Principles

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1

Evolutionary, Sociocultural, and Intrapsychic Influences on Personal Relationships *An Introductory Review*

JOSEPH P. FORGAS AND JULIE FITNESS

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Social Relationships and Social Systems	6
Symbolic Processes in Relationships	7
The Social Psychology of Relationships: A Potted History	9
Current Research Directions	11
Outline of the Book	12
Part 1: Social Relationships—Basic Principles and Fundamental Processes	13
Part 2: Cognitive Processes in Social Relationships	14
Part 3: Motivational and Affective Processes in Relationships	15
Part 4: Managing Relationship Problems	17
Conclusions	18
Acknowledgments	19
References	19

INTRODUCTION

The extraordinary importance of personal relationships to the health and happiness of human beings hardly can be overstated. From the time they are born, humans crave love and intimacy and the joy of knowing that they are valued and cherished by others. However, personal relationships are neither straightforward nor easy to understand and manage. Modern industrialized societies, with their emphasis on personal advancement, mobility, and adaptability, present a particularly challenging context for meaningful, long-term personal relationships to develop and flourish. Inevitably, people will experience rejection and loneliness at various times in their lives; close, loving relationships will sour and fall apart; relationship partners will experience discrepant needs and desires; and intentionally or not, relationship partners will hurt one another, neglect one another, and make one another miserable. Understanding how personal relationships are initiated, developed, maintained, and terminated is one of the core issues in psychology and is the subject matter of this book. In particular, contributions to the volume seek to explore and integrate the subtle influence that evolutionary, sociocultural, and intrapsychic (i.e., cognitive, affective, and motivational) variables play in relationship processes.

Despite their centrality to human existence, scientific interest in the whys and wherefores of personal relationships is relatively recent. Throughout much of psychology's history as a distinct discipline it was tacitly assumed that lust, love, jealousy, hate, and the dynamics of relationship development and deterioration belonged to the nonscientific domain of poets, playwrights, and novelists. Over the past 30 years scientific research on the topic has undergone an explosive rate of growth, inspired by the pioneering work of social psychologists with a determination to demystify human relationships. International conferences dedicated to personal relationship topics and themes are held every year; various high-impact journals are committed to publishing quality relationship research (e.g., *Personal Relationships*; *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*; *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*), and there is now a growing number of handbooks, texts, and monographs on relationship research (e.g., Berscheid and Regan, 2005; Fletcher and Clark, 2001; Miller, Perlman, and Brehm, 2007; Noller and Feeney, 2006; Vangelisti and Perlman, 2006).

Unfortunately, however, there has also been a tendency in recent years for the study of relationships to become somewhat separated from the mainstream of research in social, cognitive, developmental, and clinical psychology. Further, it is becoming increasingly difficult to integrate all the theoretical and empirical developments in a field that now encompasses every conceivable aspect of relational structure (including families, friendships, and cyber romances) and process (including cognition, emotion, aggression, social support, and loneliness). The aim of the current volume is to present an integrative overview of the field by an international group of leading researchers who seek to survey the most dynamic and exciting recent developments in the social psychology of close relationships. Further, the current volume picks up a number of threads from the last volume specifically devoted to social psychological aspects of relationships (see Fletcher

and Fitness, 1996) and provides an up-to-date forum where the most significant developments in the field during the past decade can be surveyed.

Rather than merely focusing on traditional research areas mainly concerned with well-established relationship processes, contributions to this volume also advocate an expanded theoretical approach that incorporates many of the insights gained from contemporary research in evolutionary psychology, social cognition, and research on affect and motivation. Several of the contributors to this volume are pioneers in the field of relationship research. Elaine Hatfield, for example, was one of the first to experimentally investigate the mysteries of interpersonal attraction, and she and her collaborators (including Ellen Berscheid) conducted some of the most original—and influential—work in the field. The idea of asking young experimental confederates to approach unknown men and women on a university campus and to ask if they would go to bed with them may seem challenging at first, but Clark and Hatfield's (1989) work in the late 1970s and early 1980s demonstrated the existence of enduring gender differences in mating preferences that were largely consistent with the predictions of evolutionary social psychology (see also Chapter 3 in this volume).

The book is organized into three main sections. After this general introductory chapter by the editors, the first section considers some fundamental theoretical approaches and processes that inform contemporary relationship research, including historical and cultural perspectives on romantic love (Chapter 2), evolutionary influences on relationships (Chapter 3), the important role that personality and developmental factors play in relationships and patterns of attachment (Chapter 4), and cultural variations in attachment patterns (Chapter 5).

The second section of the book focuses on cognitive processes in social relationships and contains four chapters that explore the role of misrepresentations in relationships (Chapter 6), the influence of conscious reflections on relationship maintenance (Chapter 7), the role of attentional flexibility in promoting relationship quality (Chapter 8), and relational commitment as a factor in continuity and change in relationships (Chapter 9).

The third part of the book investigates the role of motivational and affective processes in relationships, such as the links between social identity and relationships (Chapter 10), the antecedents of negative affectivity in relationships (Chapter 11), and the effects of positive and negative moods on relationship cognition and behaviors (Chapter 12). Chapter 13 in this section discusses the role of approach and avoidance motives in close relationships, and Chapter 14 looks at competition and cooperation motives in sibling relationships.

The fourth and final part of the book focuses on the management of relationship problems and discusses punishment and forgiveness in close relationships (Chapter 15), variables influencing partner violence (Chapter 16), mechanisms of risk management in relationships (Chapter 17), the use of exclusion and ostracism in relationships (Chapter 18), and the consequences of paying attention to alternatives in close relationships (Chapter 19).

This introductory chapter in particular surveys the major themes covered in the book, highlights the links between the various chapters, and proposes future avenues for research in this area.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS

From the dawn of evolution, human beings mostly lived in small, close, face-to-face groups. From our earliest hunter-gatherer ancestors to life in small-scale villages that was dominant everywhere as recently as in the 18th century, human social relationships typically involved intimately known others, mostly members of our small, immediate group. The sophisticated ability of human beings to relate to each other is probably one of the cornerstones of the evolutionary success of our species and serves as the foundation of the increasingly complex forms of social organization we have been able to develop. *Homo sapiens* is a highly sociable species. The astounding development of our mental and cognitive abilities and our impressive record of achievements owe a great deal to the highly elaborate strategies we have developed for getting on with each other and coordinating our interpersonal relationships (Pinker, 1997). In fact, we might argue that the cognitive capacity to create and maintain complex relationships constitutes the essential “glue” that holds families, groups, and even whole societies together. However, this ancestral social environment has now almost completely disappeared from our lives. The 18th century brought with it a fundamental revolution in social relationships.

Several historical factors contributed to the rapid disappearance of traditional, face-to-face society and the fundamental change in human relatedness and social integration that occurred (Durkheim, 1956). The philosophy of the enlightenment laid the conceptual groundwork for the influential ideology of the liberated, self-sufficient, and mobile individual, freed from the restrictive influence of unalterable social norms and conventions. This ideology found its political expression in the French Revolution and the American Revolution. Industrialization produced large-scale dislocation and mobility and the reassembly of massive, socially disconnected working populations as required by technologies of mass production. These developments had crucial consequences for the way people related to each other.

In traditional, small-scale societies social relationships are typically long term, stable, and highly regulated. One's place in society is largely determined by ascribed status and rigid norms. Mobility is restricted, and relationships mainly function at the direct, interpersonal level. Compare this with life in modern mass societies. Most people we encounter are strangers. Our position in society is flexible, personal anonymity is widespread, and mobility is high—yet we need the support and comfort provided by enduring social relationships more than ever. The fact that most people we deal with are not intimately known to us makes interpersonal behavior and relationship building and maintenance more difficult and problematic than ever before. It is perhaps not surprising that the emergence of psychology and social psychology as a science of interpersonal relationships has so clearly coincided with the advent of mass societies. For the first time, relating to each other—once a natural, automatic process almost entirely enacted within the confines of small, intimate, and enduring social communities—has become uncertain and problematic and, thus, an object of concern, reflection, and study (Goffman, 1972).

To relate to others, we now need to employ ever more sophisticated and elaborate cognitive and motivational strategies, and success is far from assured.

Emile Durkheim, the father of modern sociology, was among the first to identify a fundamental distinction between social relationships based on organic solidarity and those based on mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1956). The complex web of intense, everyday, face-to-face relationships and interactions that provide cohesion and unity to small-scale, primary social groups is on the wane. Modern mass societies function on the basis of indirect, impersonal, and disembodied networks of relationships that do not require face-to-face interaction. We now depend on, and are influenced by, strangers we never meet, and our relationships are increasingly regulated by rules and contractual expectations that are no longer based on personal contact or experience. The last few hundred years produced a form of social living that is profoundly different from the way human beings lived throughout previous millennia.

Our past evolutionary history could scarcely have prepared us for life in the kind of anonymous mass societies we now find ourselves in. Several of the chapters here discuss the kind of evolutionary (Chapter 3) and sociohistorical (Chapters 2 and 5) influences that continue to shape our relationship processes. Arguably, then, understanding the various ways that people relate to each other and the role of cognitive, motivational, and affective mechanisms in these processes has probably never been of greater importance than today. As modern industrialized societies become ever more complex and impersonal and as geographical, social, and demographic mobility increase exponentially, the ability to maintain stable, flourishing social relationships becomes an increasing complex and demanding task. The demands of relating to and interacting with people in such an environment call for ever more sophisticated and complex cognitive, affective, and motivational strategies, as several of the chapters here suggest (Chapters 7, 8, 10, and 12). It is not surprising, then, that there has been growing recent interest in the kind of symbolic, cognitive mechanisms that partners rely on to manage and maintain their relationships, a topic we shall turn to next.

SYMBOLIC PROCESSES IN RELATIONSHIPS

The ability to construct accurate, reliable, and flexible symbolic cognitive representations and strategies about relationships is a critically important skill for relationship satisfaction and success. Several chapters in this volume explore the operation of such symbolic processes in relationships and investigate the functions of attentional flexibility (Chapter 8), identity processes (Chapter 10), reflections about the relationship (Chapter 7), as well as mood effects on relationship cognition (Chapter 12). It is interesting that the kind of close integration between the mental and the behavioral aspects of relationship strategies described here is by no means a new idea. Indeed, a number of classical social science theories have argued for precisely such an approach, emphasizing the close interdependence between symbolic mental processes and direct interpersonal behavior. Symbolic interactionism, a comprehensive theory of interpersonal behavior developed by George Herbert Mead (1934/1970), offers one important example of such an integrative framework for the study of social relationships. For Mead, social cognition and

social behavior were not distinct, separate domains of inquiry but were intrinsically related. Mead explicitly sought to reconcile the behaviorist and the phenomenologist, mentalistic approaches to psychology and argued that social relationships are only possible as a result of the symbolic representations and expectations formed by social actors as they experience interpersonal episodes. According to Mead, it is the uniquely human ability for symbolic representations allows us to abstract and internalize social experiences, and it is such mental models that are the key to understanding interpersonal behavior in general, and social relationship processes in particular.

A number of the chapters in this volume advocate just such an integration among cognitive, affective, and motivational mental processes and relationship behaviors, mirroring Mead's (1934/1970) emphasis on symbolic representations in explaining behavior (e.g., Chapters 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10). It is perhaps unfortunate that symbolic interactionism has never become an influential theory within social psychology, probably because of the absence of suitable experimental methodologies for studying individual symbolic representations at the time. The currently dominant social cognitive paradigm has changed much of this, as it essentially deals with the same kinds of questions that were also of interest to Mead: How do the mental and symbolic representations that people form of their interpersonal encounters come to influence their social relationships? Recent social cognitive research has produced a range of ingenious techniques and empirical procedures that for the first time allow a rigorous empirical analysis of the links between mental representations and strategic behaviors (e.g., Bless and Forgas, 2000; Wegner and Gilbert, 2000). Several chapters included here provide excellent illustrations of how the merging of cognitive and behavioral approaches can give us important new insights into the nature of relationship phenomena (e.g., Chapters 12, 15, and 16).

Another important, yet frequently neglected, approach that could inform contemporary theorizing about social relationships is associated with the name of Max Weber. Weber always assumed a close and direct link between how an individual thinks about and cognitively represents social situations and their actual interpersonal behaviors. For Weber, it is mental representations and ideas about the social world that provide the crucial link between understanding individual behaviors and the operation of social and cultural systems. Weber assumes that shared individual beliefs and motivations—for example, the spreading acceptance of the protestant ethic—are the fundamental influence that ultimately shapes large-scale social structures and cultures as well as interpersonal behaviors and social relationships (Weber, 1947). Chapter 5 offers such an analysis linking relationship processes with their larger social and cultural context. Weber was also among the first to show that a clear understanding of social relationships must involve both the study of externally observable behavior as well as the subjectively perceived meanings that are attached to an action by the actor. In fact, Weber is one of the key originators of the kind of cognitive social psychological research that is becoming increasingly popular today and is also represented by contributions to this book, unifying the social cognitive approach with a concern with real-life interpersonal relationships as they exist within larger social systems.

Focused interest in the role of symbolic representations in interpersonal behavior has only emerged after social psychology has undergone something like a paradigmatic revolution during the “crisis” of the 1970s. With the emergence of the social cognitive paradigm, we now spend much more time studying the internal cognitive representations, thoughts, and motivations of social actors. During the past few decades social psychology has increasingly adopted an individualistic social cognitive paradigm that has mainly focused on the study of individual thoughts and motivations, often at the expense of studying real interactive behaviors and relationships (Forgas, 1981; Wegner and Gilbert, 2000). Although we have made major advances in understanding how people process information about the social world, insufficient attempts have been made to link such research on social cognition and motivation to an understanding of interpersonal behaviors and relationship processes. Thus, understanding relationship processes requires both paying attention to the thoughts, motivations, and feelings of social actors—their “mental world” (Bless and Forgas, 2000)—and linking this to understanding their actual interpersonal relationship behaviors. The proper focus of relationship research should be the analysis of the interaction between evolutionary and sociocultural factors and their influence on the mental (cognitive and affective) and the behavioral aspects of relationship processes. An important aim of this book (see especially Parts 2 and 3) is to provide an integrative review of how research on social cognition, affect, and motivation can contribute to our understanding of social relationships.

Although the contributions of Weber and Mead are rarely acknowledged by social psychologists, they nevertheless represent an important, if indirect, influence on our field. Their work demonstrates that our discipline has an impressive tradition of theorizing linking symbolic processes to social behaviors that is directly relevant to the objectives of this book. The same kinds of questions that occupied the minds of these authors continue to be reflected in the contributions to this volume. How do cultural and personality variables interact in influencing relationships (Chapter 5)? How do historical and cultural conceptions of love influence relationships experiences (Chapter 2)? What role does people’s quest for meaning, significance and identity play in relationships (Chapter 10)? How do differences in attentional focus (Chapter 8) and reflections about the relationship (Chapter 7) influence its progress?

THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF RELATIONSHIPS: A POTTED HISTORY

From these multifaceted beginnings, empirical relationship research emerged and progressed during the past three decades. In the early 1980s, a seminal volume on close relationships was published (Kelley et al., 1983) that set the research agenda for many years to come. Of the many extraordinary contributions to this volume, two in particular stand out: First, the detailed explications of interdependence theory; and second, Berscheid’s elegant application of interdependence theory to explain the elicitation of emotions in close relationship contexts. Interdependence

theory represented a revolution in the way social psychologists understood and thought about close relationships. Here, at last, was a way of understanding relational connectedness, not in terms of the extent to which people necessarily “liked” or even “loved” one another but in terms of their dependency on one another for desired outcomes. Indeed, interdependence theory is still one of the primary building blocks of relationship science, with its capacity to account for relationship closeness and commitment in terms of cognitive and behavioral interdependence. It led directly to work on accommodation by Caryl Rusbult and colleagues (e.g., Rusbult, Yovetich, and Verette, 1996) and inspired the research programs of relationship scholars such as Jeff Simpson, Eli Finkel, and Chris Agnew, all of whom are represented in the current volume.

Along with interdependence theory, another extraordinarily influential and integrative model of close relationship functioning to emerge in the 1980s was adult attachment theory. First introduced in a landmark paper by Hazan and Shaver (1987), this theory encompasses virtually every level of relationship functioning, from the evolutionary through to the cognitive, developmental, emotional, motivational, behavioral, and social levels. It is certainly the closest we have yet come to a unified theory of human relationship functioning, and as several contributions in the current volume demonstrate (Chapters 4, 5, 11), attachment theory continues to be a source of significant ideas and innovative research in the field.

The exciting developments in the social psychology of close relationships were further highlighted in two edited volumes in the 1990s (Fletcher and Fincham, 1991; Fletcher and Fitness, 1996). The impetus for these volumes arose from the work of researchers with a particular interest in symbolic, social cognitive processes as they impact close relationships. Fletcher and Fincham, for example, turned their attention to the ways in which relationship partners attempt to explain and account for each other’s behaviors (i.e., their causal attributions). These researchers developed multifaceted programs of research on the ways relationship partners’ causal attributions impacted their relationship satisfaction. In particular, two attributional “styles”—relationship-enhancing and distress-maintaining—were identified and examined for their capacity to maintain cycles of positive and negative partner interactions, with correspondingly adaptive and maladaptive outcomes for relationships. Fletcher (2002; see also Chapter 6) also developed models of cognitive processing in relationships that took explicit account of the distal origins of relationship partners’ attributions (e.g., their schemas, or beliefs about the relationship, including their attachment schemas) and the ways these schemas shape attributions and judgments of partner behavior in the current, or proximal, interactional context.

We would strongly argue for the utility of this social cognitive model as a framework for exploring a rich diversity of relationship phenomena (see also previous section). Such research has included, for example, studies exploring the impact of mood effects on various aspects of relationship cognition, including judgments and memories (e.g., Forgas, 1996); research on cognitive biases and illusions and their impact on relationship happiness (e.g., Murray and Holmes, 1996; see also Chapters 8, 9, and 17 in this volume), gender and thought in close relationships (e.g., Acitelli and Young, 1996; see also Chapter 7 in this volume), and the impact of

distal schemas such as attachment models on relationship partners' cognitions and emotions in the proximal context (e.g., Shaver, Collins, and Clark, 1996; see also Chapter 4 in this volume). The current volume contains several contributions that build on these earlier approaches. Clearly, and as noted by Fletcher and Fitness (1996, p. xii), the social psychological approach to relationships is an "exceptionally fruitful one," and, some 11 years later, we would argue on the strength of the chapters in the current volume that this is still the case.

CURRENT RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The field of relationship research has come a long way since the initial work on interpersonal attraction. Indeed, and as Berscheid (2006, p. ix) noted, relationship science is currently "a nova in the heavens of the social, behavioral and biological sciences." Methodologies are becoming increasingly sophisticated, with several researchers involved in large-scale, longitudinal projects that track the development of affection and disaffection over time. The range of topics that now comes under the purview of relationship research is also enormous. For example, in their recently published *Cambridge Handbook of Personal Relationships*, Vangelisti and Perlman (2006) listed a truly daunting number of topics, including relationship development, personality, attachment, gender, communication, social cognition, emotion, physiology, self-disclosure, social support, conflict, sexuality, loneliness, stress, lying, temptations, violence, satisfaction, love, commitment, intimacy, social networks, culture, and the Internet. Several of these topics are represented in the current volume, but as noted previously, it was never our aim to provide a comprehensive review of every imaginable aspect of relationship research. Rather, this volume comprises chapters from social psychologists who share a fascination with the interaction among the evolutionary, sociocultural, and symbolic (cognitive, affective, and motivational) aspects of close relationships and who are currently exploring some of the most interesting of these phenomena.

Indeed, one of the more striking developments in social psychology in general (see Forgas, Haselton, and von Hippel, 2007) and relationship research over the past two decades has been the growing acceptance of an explicitly evolutionary underpinning to a variety of relationship processes (e.g., see Miller, Perlman, and Brehm (2007) for an example of this approach in an undergraduate text; and Fletcher (2002) for a theoretically integrative book on intimate relationships written for educated lay readers). Again, research on interpersonal attraction and mate selection has been at the forefront of this development, with an explosion of theory and research appearing in the literature from anthropologists, biologists, and neuroscientists as well as social psychologists.

In our view, this is a welcome development, with a growing recognition among relationship scholars that evolutionary and social psychological models of relationship processes are not incompatible but, rather, represent different levels of explanation and understanding (see also Fitness, Fletcher, and Overall, 2003). Evolutionary approaches look to the distant past to explain the origins of relational phenomena such as sexual attraction, mate selection, love, lust, and relationship conflict. Their

central tenet is that we are the end products of a long line of successful reproducers and that the mating preferences, desires, emotions, and motivations that have worked for us in the past are now an intrinsic part of the “intimate relationship mind” (Fletcher, 2002). Social psychologists, on the other hand, are interested in the ways evolved psychological mechanisms (e.g., the attachment system; emotions like love and jealousy) shape relationship cognitions, emotions, and behaviors in the proximal context. They are also concerned with the roles played by these proximal variables in adaptive and maladaptive relationship functioning over time. The willingness of relationship researchers, both to accommodate and to actively seek to integrate the two approaches, adds immeasurably to our understanding of a variety of relationship phenomena at a number of levels. Indeed, one need look no further than attachment theory to appreciate the theoretical richness and heuristic value of such an integrative approach.

Finally, another important development in the field that has been identified by a number of scholars (e.g., Miller, Perlman, and Brehm, 2007; Perlman and Duck, 2006) concerns the recent growth of interest in the so-called dark side of relationships, including betrayal, rejection, revenge, sexual coercion, relational violence, ostracism, and relationship dissolution and loss. This development is an indication of the evolution of the field of relationship research itself—that it is moving beyond global, catch-all constructs like *relationship conflict* in favor of more fine-grained analyses of particular kinds of aversive behaviors that are characterized by particular kinds of motivations, cognitions, emotions, and outcomes, and with particular kinds of dysfunctional impacts on relationships at different stages of development. Several of these dark and painful aspects of relationships are represented in the current volume (e.g., Chapters 15, 16, 19). On the other hand, it is also important to note the growing interest among relationship researchers in explicitly positive aspects of relationships, such as compassionate love, forgiveness, and gratitude (e.g., see Mikulincer, Shaver, and Slav, 2006; see also Chapter 15 in this volume).

In summary, theory and research in the social psychology of human relationships are thriving. The scope of enquiry is broadening all the time, with researchers increasingly moving beyond romantic relationships to consider the dynamics of familial relationships, friendships, and even cyber relationships. Much of the research being conducted today is buttressed by strong theory, innovative methods, and advanced data analytic techniques. The chapters in this volume represent the most recent developments in the field and seek to provide an integrative analysis of how evolutionary, sociocultural, and symbolic, intrapersonal (cognitive, affective, and motivational) variables interact in influencing relationship behaviors and outcomes. Together they provide a state-of-the-art picture of what we currently understand about the nature and functioning of human relationships and where we need to direct our future investigations.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The chapters featured in this book were selected to represent a broad a cross-section of contemporary relationship research and to identify integrative themes

across a number of key domains. Contributions are arranged into three sections: chapters that deal with fundamental theoretical and methodological issues relevant to social relationship research (Part 1); chapters that explore the role of mental representations and cognitive processes in relationships (Part 2); chapters that discuss the influence of affective and motivational factors in relationships (Part 3); and chapters that discuss the maintenance, management, and problems in personal relationships (Part 4).

Part 1: Social Relationships—Basic Principles and Fundamental Processes

The first part of the book presents chapters that illustrate some of the basic approaches that inform relationship research. Perhaps one of the major gaps in current relationship research is the neglect of cross-cultural work on relationship structures and processes. An explicit consideration of history and culture is particularly important if one wishes to make strong explanatory claims about the evolutionary underpinnings of relationship processes such as falling in and out of love, relationship maintenance, and relationship dissolution. Clearly, culture and evolution work together in shaping the features and functions of human relationships. This perspective is represented in Chapters 2 and 5. Chapter 2 explores passionate love and sexual desire from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including historical and cross-cultural. This chapter notes that passionate love is recognized in all cultures and has a long and robust history—that passion and lust are universal feelings but that passion is also a biological phenomenon, with corresponding and identifiable brain activation when people think about their beloved. The authors also note, however, that romantic love has not always and everywhere been accepted the basis of long-term partner choices, and they chart fascinating historical changes in our conception of love.

Chapter 3 offers an insightful analysis of relationship processes from an evolutionary perspective. The authors point out that fundamental aspects of the way human beings relate to each other can be understood in terms of evolutionary pressures that influence human mating preferences and regulate the development of long-term bonds so as to maximize reproductive fitness. In particular, the problems and advantages associated with long-term commitment and the establishment of romantic bonds is analyzed in terms of the benefits such bonds convey in terms of parental care and offspring survival. Love in particular, from this perspective, can be seen as an effective commitment device that helps to prevent partners from exploring attractive short-term mating opportunities for the sake of long-term benefits. The chapter suggests that the experience of love probably evolved to help humans form and maintain committed and monogamous pair bonds that are of greatest benefit to their offspring.

Another fundamental approach to understanding relationship behaviors is offered by attachment theory, and Chapter 4 describes how the availability of caring, supportive relationships beginning in infancy can be critically important to developing a sense of attachment security and the formation of mutually satisfying

intimate relationships throughout life. Research suggests that dispositional security functions as a resilience resource and that interactions with loving and caring relationship partners help to further enhance and increase attachment security, with beneficial effects for mental health. The authors present interesting longitudinal findings showing that being involved in a relationship with a supportive romantic partner, coworker, or colleague has long-term beneficial effects on feelings, adjustment, and personality. These findings offer new evidence suggesting the flexibility and responsiveness of the attachment system across the lifespan and the benefits of secure attachment patterns.

In Chapter 5, which explores the fundamental patterns of relatedness across cultures, genders, ages, and relationship statuses, the author discusses evidence from his International Sexuality Description Project—a survey study of more than 17,000 people from 56 nations—showing that secure romantic attachment is “normative” in a majority of cultures. In contrast, insecure romantic attachments are associated with stressful ecological environments, a finding that supports various evolutionary theories of the development of human sexuality. Interestingly, the degree of gender differentiation in romantic attachment was associated with high-stress and high-fertility reproductive environments, again consistent with evolutionary theories of human sexuality (see Chapter 3). National differences in gender equality, however, were not related to gender differences in attachment. The chapter also presents intriguing empirical evidence supporting the links between attachment styles and some health-related behaviors, including antisocial personality traits, risky sexual behaviors, domestic violence, and sexual coercion.

Part 2: Cognitive Processes in Social Relationships

The chapters in this section focus on the role of symbolic, cognitive processes in relationships. In the first chapter in this section, Chapter 6, the authors deal with the fascinating question, Is love blind? They take a social-cognitive approach and explore the question of bias and inaccuracy in intimate relationships in terms of cognitive theories of bias, rationality, and errors in social cognition. Interestingly, it seems that individuals in intimate relationships are sometimes quite aware of positive biases in their judgments and can even estimate their magnitude reasonably accurately. The chapter suggests that accuracy in social relationship judgments can be measured and consists of two independent qualities: (1) tracking accuracy; and (2) bias accuracy. Further, accuracy is influenced by a number of important and interacting variables such as gender, situational contexts, the nature of the relationship, the nature of the judgment, and relationship goals. Under some conditions, individuals seem to possess good meta-awareness of the extent to which they or their partners produce accurate or inaccurate relationship judgments.

The role of awareness and reflections about one's own relationship is explored in Chapter 7. Relationship awareness may include actions such as thinking and talking about the relationship, making comparisons and contrasts between partners and representing the relationship as an entity. It seems that relationship awareness may be related to romantic relationship satisfaction. However, this link partly depends on gender and emotional tone of interactions. An implicit aspect

of relationship awareness is thinking about the self as part of a couple, and such “couple identity” may influence the way a partner interprets a couple’s interactions and circumstances. Couple identity may be instrumental in how partners resolve disagreements and cope with stressors. Relationship awareness may be analyzed in terms of a number of well-documented cognitive mechanisms such as controlled versus automatic processing, relationship schemas, and cognitive interdependence, suggesting a number of exciting new avenues for research on relationship cognition.

In Chapter 8, closely related to Chapter 7 and also looking at symbolic processes, the authors analyze the role of different attentional foci on relationship dynamics. A person’s focus can be on the self, on one’s partner, the activities in which the partners are engaged, or the self and partner as a unit as perceived by third parties. The authors suggest that having a flexible, adaptable focus of attention is beneficial for relationship functioning. For example, when one’s own needs and the partner opportunities are high, focus should be on the self and on how a partner may provide support. When partner needs or opportunities are high, focus should shift to the partner. When needs are low, relationship functioning can be optimized by minimizing focus on the self or partner but instead focusing on joint leisure task or exploratory activities. The ability to maintain a flexible focus of attention in relationships seems beneficial for well-being and also provides positive memories that accumulate and form the basis of the experience of having a good, supportive relationship. The attentional focus approach described here is contrasted with the common tendency in this field to focus on self-needs to the relative exclusion of partner needs. Flexible attentional focus also influences how the relationship and the partners are viewed by outsiders.

Symbolic commitment to a relationship is the focus of Chapter 9, which suggests that relationships may be characterized in terms of continuous changes in how partners represent and interpret their relationships. Relationship representations may morph from one type to another, such as from a steady romantic relationship to a friendship. The chapter examines how people may construct relationship alternatives with others as well as alternative forms of a relationship with their current partner. Thoughts about alternative forms of a relationship and commitment to the current type of relationship are closely linked, and satisfaction level may depend on how a relationship is currently is defined (e.g., a romantic partnership). Past investments often guide the decision whether to continue in a relationship of any type with a given partner. Subjective norms also impact what partners perceive as the kind of relationship most supported by significant others. The chapter offers a rich analysis of the multifaceted ways that symbolic and representational processes about relationship types may influence satisfaction.

Part 3: Motivational and Affective Processes in Relationships

The quest for positive and identity and optimal distinctiveness within a social group is a powerful social motive, yet, as Chapter 10 points out, little has been done to link the large literatures on social identity (collective belonging) close relationships (dyadic belonging). One interesting question is whether these two

mechanisms of belonging represent alternative, or complementary, bases for connecting to others. Can acceptance by a large social group compensate for the absence of close relationships and vice versa? The author of Chapter 10 argues that close personal relationships and close identification with a social group represents two distinct motivational systems, each characterized by the need to achieve optimal distinctiveness, creating a tension between opposing motives for immersion with others and for differentiation from others. The chapter presents a range of empirical findings supporting the separate-systems view. The role of cultural variables, such as individualism and collectivism, in facilitating group “belonging” or dyadic “belonging” motivations is also discussed.

Chapter 11 examines the intriguing prediction based on attachment theory that interpersonal experiences and events that occurred at three pivotal points in a person’s social development—infancy/early childhood, early elementary school, and the teenage years—may predict patterns of positive versus negative emotions people experience with their romantic partners in their early 20s. Their longitudinal study confirmed that participants who were classified as securely attached at the age of 12 months were rated as more socially competent during early elementary school by their classroom teachers. This in turn predicted having more secure relationships with close friends at age 16, which in turn predicted more positive daily experiences of emotion in their adult romantic relationships. These results suggest that early influences on personality and relationship-relevant motivational patterns may come to influence interpersonal experiences, emotions, and relationship quality in later life.

In Chapter 12, on the impact of mood in close relationship contexts, the author argues that affect is a defining feature of social relationships and has an important influence on many relationship judgments and behaviors. Drawing on the Affect Infusion Model (AIM; Forgas, 2002), the chapter argues that temporary moods influence both the cognitive content (valence) and the processing strategies people rely on when dealing with relationship-relevant information. A range of studies show that people in a positive mood form more optimistic judgments, impressions, and attributions about their relationships and relationship problems than do people in a negative mood, as long as the task required some degree of open, constructive processing that allows the infusion of affectively primed ideas into the response. In addition, it also seems that mild negative mood triggers a more accommodative, concrete processing style that has distinct benefits for various strategic relationship behaviors, such as social influence strategies (Forgas, 2007). These mood effects are consistent with other research suggesting that positive moods promote a less attentive and more schematic thinking style, while negative moods facilitate more focused and more attentive thinking strategies.

Chapter 13 looks at the interplay of approach and avoidance motives in close relationships. As relationships function as powerful sources of both pleasure and pain, the motivation to maintain close relationships may include positive motives such as companionship, love, and intimacy, but avoidance motives (avoiding potential threats, such as rejection, conflict, and betrayal) also play a role. The motives and goals people have in their close relationships are rarely balanced and can be focused either on incentives and desired end states (i.e., approach), or they can

be focused on the threats and undesired end states (i.e., avoidance). Approach and avoidance goals in turn influence attention, interpretation of partners' behavior, memory, affective experiences, and actual behavior. Diary studies confirmed that such goals influence individuals' behaviors toward their partners, their interpretation of their partners' behaviors during daily interactions, and relationship satisfaction.

Chapter 14 looks at sibling relationships, the longest relationship most of us ever experience and one that clearly involves an attachment bond, strong motivational states, with strong influences on psychological adjustment. As siblings often compete within the family, competition and comparison are highly salient for them. Parental favoritism affects both the psychological adjustment of the disfavored sibling and the relationship between the siblings. The author of the chapter explores the impact of ongoing comparisons on sibling relationships in adolescence and young adulthood, looking at both nontwins and twins. Based on the Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model, empirical findings suggest that siblings react most strongly when they are outperformed by their sibling on an activity of high relevance to their self-concept. The emotional reactions of twins in situations of competition and comparison also depend on age, birth order, and attachment security.

Part 4: Managing Relationship Problems

The final fourth section of the book explores the way people manage and cope with adverse situations and relationship problems. Chapter 15 discusses how processes of punishment and forgiveness operate in close relationships. Although punishment is often thought of as antithetical to forgiveness, in fact forgiveness involves "giving up the right to punish." Research on forgiveness in marriage found that punishment plays an intrinsically important role in victims' forgiveness of partner offences. The chapter surveys the literature on forgiveness in close relationships and discusses forgiveness process from an evolutionary perspective. Recent data of punishment and forgiveness in marital relationships are discussed, and the chapter draws explicitly on theoretical insights from evolutionary social psychology. In particular, the chapter argues that the urge to retaliate is "hard-wired" and that punishing relationship partners for perceived transgressions can sometimes serve adaptive relationship functions (e.g., emotional communication; behavioral deterrence).

Actual violence between intimate partners represents an extreme form of relationship dysfunction. Chapter 16 presents a three-stage process analyzing how a previously nonviolent interaction between intimate partners may escalate into violence. The first stage involves the experience of an *instigating concern* by one of the partners. The second stage features the experience of strong *violence-impelling forces*, which lead the individual to experience action tendencies toward violence. The third stage refers to the presence or absence of *violence-inhibiting force*; its absence leaves the partner with little ability or motivation to override violent action tendencies. Empirical work shows that several different violence-impelling forces may interact with one central violence-inhibiting force—expectations of negative consequences—to predict violence. Each violence-impelling force predicts violence for individuals who did not expect negative consequences, but there was no

such relationship for individuals who strongly expected negative consequences. These results suggest that we need to place greater emphasis on examining the mechanisms by which individuals restrain themselves from engaging in violent behavior toward their partner.

Chapter 17 outlines a model of risk regulation in relationships, explaining how people balance the goal of seeking closeness against the opposing goal of minimizing the pain of rejection (see also Chapter 13 on a somewhat related theme). The risk regulation system seeks to optimize the sense of assurance and safety in one's level of dependence in the relationship—a feeling of relative invulnerability to hurt. The risk regulation system consists of three interconnected if–then contingency rules, one cognitive (“if dependent then gauge acceptance or rejection”), one affective (“if accepted or rejected then internalize”), and one behavioral (“if accepted or rejected then regulate dependence”). The central question for partners is to decide whether it is safe to put self-protection aside and take the risk of seeking dependence and connectedness. The chapter describes how perceptions of a partner's regard influence the relevance of these three if–then rules in risky situations.

Pursuing the theme of relationship risks and punishment, Chapter 18, on relational ostracism, explores the effects of ostracism (the so-called silent treatment) in close relationships. Drawing on both qualitative data and an innovative experimental paradigm involving a form of symbolic ostracism, the authors demonstrate the potency of ostracism as a form of punishment that is often interpreted as a form of partner betrayal that erodes trust in the relationship. The empirical work reviewed here consists of two different paradigms. First, interviews with individuals produced qualitative data about experiences of relational ostracism by spouses or family members. Second, research looking at laboratory-induced ostracism by a partner demonstrated serious consequences for relationships such as feelings of betrayal and loss of trust.

The final chapter looks at one of the most ancient and ubiquitous relationship problems: the availability of alternative partners. The awareness of, and attentiveness to, enticing alternative partners can impact on current relationships and is a key influence on how alternatives influence current relational commitment. Interest in alternatives undermines commitment to one's partner, and attentiveness is often a better predictor of the short-term future of romantic relationships than are more common measures such as satisfaction and investment. Attentiveness varies over time and is inversely related to current contentment. It is likely that motivated inattention to alluring alternatives can protect a present partnership. Attentiveness to alternatives is a new, promising construct that may have significant predictive value when it comes to understanding how partners respond to relationship problems.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding how people initiate, maintain, manage, and terminate personal relationships has long been one of the key tasks of social psychology and remains

one of the most important questions for social science to deal with. Contemporary industrial societies present a particularly challenging context for rewarding and flourishing social relationships, and the symbolic and cognitive strategies of relationship partners play a critical role in relationship success and failure, as several of the chapters here demonstrate. With the adoption of a much more cognitive orientation in social psychology during the last few decades, interest in relationship cognition is one of most rapidly developing domains in relationship research. We have seen that intrapsychic processes, such as cognitive, motivational, and affective strategies, play a key role in relationship behaviors and relationship outcomes. However, these mechanisms cannot be properly understood without paying close attention to the evolutionary, social, and historical contexts within which relationships function. In their various ways, contributions to this book illustrate that there is much to be gained from an integration of the cognitive, motivational, and behavioral approaches to relationship research with recent advances in our understanding of sociocultural and evolutionary influences on relationships. As editors, we hope that readers will find these contributions as exciting and intriguing as we did, and we hope that collecting them in one volume will stimulate further interest in the scientific study of human social relationships.

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2

Passionate Love and Sexual Desire *Multidisciplinary Perspectives*

ELAINE HATFIELD AND RICHARD L. RAPSON

CONTENTS

Introduction	21
Defining Passionate Love	22
Anthropological and Evolutionary Perspectives	22
Neuroscience and Biological Perspectives	23
Historical Perspectives	25
Cross-Cultural Perspectives	26
The Meaning of Passionate Love	26
Culture and Susceptibility to Love	27
Intensity of Passionate Love	28
The Willingness to Marry Someone You Do Not Love	28
How Long Does Passionate Love Last?	31
Speculations about the Future	32
References	34

INTRODUCTION

The Sumerians invented writing around 3500 BCE. Buried among the Sumerians' clay tablets is inscribed history's first known love poems—a poem dedicated to King Shu-Sin by one of his chosen brides. She said, “Bridegroom, let me caress you/My precious caress is more savory than honey” (Arsu, 2006). Passion and desire evidently possess a very long lineage.

Defining Passionate Love

Poets, novelists, and social commentators have proposed numerous definitions of passionate love. We accept this one:

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

The Passionate Love Scale (PLS) was designed to assess the cognitive, physiological, and behavioral indicants of such love (Hatfield and Sprecher, 1986). It has been translated into a variety of languages—including Farsi, German, Indian, Indonesian, Korean, Peruvian, Spanish, and Swedish (Kim and Hatfield, 2004; Lundqvist, 2006).

This chapter reviews what scholars from a variety of disciplines—social psychology, cross-cultural psychology, anthropology, history, neuroscience, physiology, and evolutionary psychology—have discovered about the nature of passionate love and sexual desire.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES

Americans are preoccupied with love—or so cross-cultural observers once claimed. In a famous quip, Linton (1936, p. 175) mocked Americans for their naïve idealization of romantic love and the assumption that it was a prerequisite to marriage:

All societies recognize that there are occasional violent, emotional attachments between persons of opposite sex, but our present American culture is practically the only one which has attempted to capitalize these, and make them the basis for marriage.... The hero of the modern American movie is always a romantic lover, just as the hero of the old Arab epic is always an epileptic. A cynic may suspect that in any ordinary population the percentage of individuals with a capacity for romantic love of the Hollywood type was about as large as that of persons able to throw genuine epileptic fits.

Throughout the world, a spate of commentators have echoed Linton's claim that passionate love is a peculiarly Western institution (Hatfield and Rapson, 1996; Murstein, 1974). Yet such confident assertions are wrong.

People in all cultures have recognized the power of passionate love. In Australian aboriginal literature, for example, the tale is told of twin sisters, both named Mar-rallang, who fell in love with Wy-young-gurrie. The trio defied traditional taboos and married. Powerful tribal leaders tried to separate them with "truth, inexorable law, and raging fire" but failed. There are also the "Dreamings"

of Lintyipilinti, who chanted love songs and sent a magical bird to a woman who turned out to be his mother-in-law; as punishment for breaking a Jungarrayi taboo, the two lovers were turned to stone (Unaipon, 2001).

Today, most anthropologists agree that passionate love is a universal experience, transcending culture and time (Buss, 1994; Hatfield and Rapson, 1996; Jankowiak, 1995; Tooby and Cosmides, 1992). Jankowiak and Fischer (1992), for example, proposed that both passion and lust are universal feelings. Drawing on a sampling of tribal societies from Murdock and White's (1969) Standard Cross-Cultural Sample, they found that in almost all societies, young lovers talked about passionate love, recounted tales of love, sang love songs, and spoke of the longings and anguish of infatuation. When passionate affections clashed with parents' or elders' wishes, young couples often eloped.

Recently, evolutionary psychologists have begun to devote a great deal of effort to unraveling the genetic and evolutionary underpinnings of love, sexual desire, and long-term companionate commitments (see Buss, 1994; Hatfield and Lieberman, 2006; Lieberman, Tooby, and Cosmides, 2007; and Chapters 3 and 15 in this volume). Passionate love and sexual desire, then, appear to be cultural universals.

NEUROSCIENCE AND BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Recently, social psychologists, neuroscientists, and physiologists have begun to explore the links among love, sexual desire, and sexual behavior.

The first neuroscientists to study passionate love were Birbaumer and his Tübingen colleagues (1993). They concluded (on the basis of their electroencephalogram [EEG] assessments) that passionate love was "mental chaos." More recently, Bartels and Zeki (2000) (using functional magnetic resonance imaging [fMRI] techniques) attempted to identify the brain regions associated with passionate love. They put up posters around London, advertising for men and women who were "truly, deeply, and madly in love." Several ethnic groups and 70 young men and women from 11 countries responded. All scored high on the PLS. Seventeen men and women were rolled into an fMRI scanner. This high-tech mind-reader constructs an image of the brain in which changes in blood flow (induced by brain activity) are represented as color-coded pixels. Bartels and Zeki gave each person a photograph of their beloved to gaze at, alternating the beloved's picture with other friends with whom he or she was not in love. They then digitally subtracted the scans taken while the subjects viewed the "friends" pictures from those taken while they viewed their "beloved" pictures, creating images that represented the brain regions that became more (or less) active when people viewed their beloved's picture. These images, the researchers argued, show the brain regions involved when a person experiences passionate love.

Bartels and Zeki (2000) discovered that passion sparked increased activity in the brain areas associated with euphoria and reward and decreased levels of activity in the areas associated with sadness, anxiety, and fear. Activity seemed to be restricted to foci in the medial insula and the anterior cingulate cortex and, subcortically, in the caudate nucleus, and the putamen, all bilaterally. Most of the

regions that were activated during the experience of romantic love have previously been shown to be active while people are under the influence of euphoria-inducing drugs such as opiates or cocaine. Apparently, both passionate love and those drugs activate a “blessed-out” circuit in the brain. The anterior cingulate cortex has also been shown to become active when people view sexually arousing material. This makes sense since passionate love and sexual desire are generally thought to be “kissing cousins.”

Among the regions whose activity decreased during the experience of love were zones previously implicated in the areas of the brain controlling critical thought and in the experience of painful emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear. Bartels and Zeki (2000) argued that once we get close to someone, there is less need to critically assess their character and personality. (In that sense, love may indeed be “blind.”) Deactivations were also observed in the posterior cingulate gyrus and in the amygdala and were right-lateralized in the prefrontal, parietal, and middle temporal cortices. The authors also found passionate love and sexual arousal to be tightly linked.

Other psychologists who have studied passionate love and sexual desire (using fMRI techniques) have found roughly similar (but not identical) results (Aron et al., 2005; Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2006). Fisher (2007), for example, argued that love is a drug:

The ventral tegmental area is a clump of cells that make dopamine, a natural stimulant, and sends it out to many brain regions when one is in love. It's the same region affected when you feel the rush of cocaine.

This is only one half of the equation, of course. In the preceding research, the couples were happily in love. But love is often unrequited. What kind of brain activity occurs when people have been rejected and, as our definition implies, are feeling anxiety, anger, emptiness, or despair?

In a recent study, Fisher and her colleagues (Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2006) studied men and women who had been wildly in love but had just been jilted by their beloved. They were feeling rejection, rage, and despair. Preliminary fMRI analysis indicated that rejected lovers display greater activity in the nucleus accumbens, the insular cortex, and the lateral orbitofrontal cortex. Jilted lovers' brains now light up in the areas associated with addiction, with taking big risks, and with anxiety, pain, obsessive/compulsive behaviors, and attempts at controlling anger. Alas, other neuroscientists who have studied the fMRI responses of lovers who were actively grieving over a recent romantic breakup found very different results (Najib et al., 2004). Perhaps we are back to Birbaumer and his colleagues' (1993) initial observation that “love is mental chaos”—and the pain of rejection is doubly chaotic.

In parallel with this fMRI research, a number of social psychologists, neurobiologists, and physiologists have begun to explore the neural and chemical substrates of passionate love, sexual desire, and sexual behavior (Carter, 1998; Komisaruk and Whipple, 1998; Marazziti and Canale, 2004; Marazziti et al., 1999). Their results seem to fit nicely with the preceding work on romantic love.