

Edited by

Brian H. Spitzberg

William R. Cupach



The Dark Side of Close Relationships

The Dark Side of Close Relationships

The Dark Side of Close Relationships

Edited by

Brian H. Spitzberg

San Diego State University

William R. Cupach

Illinois State University

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
This edition published 2012 by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Copyright © 1998 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in
any form, by photostat, microfilm, retrieval system, or any
other means, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Cover design by Kathryn Houghtaling Lacey

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The dark side of close relationships / edited by Brian H. Spitzberg
and William R. Cupach

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 0-8058-2486-3 (cloth : alk. paper). — ISBN 0-8058-
2487-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Interpersonal communication. 2. Interpersonal con-
flict. I. Spitzberg, Brian H. II. Cupach, William R.

BF637.C45D335 1998


158.2—dc21

98-9549

C ontents

Preface	vii
Introduction: Dusk, Detritus, and Delusion: A Prolegomenon to the Dark Side of Close Relationships	xi
I: SEDUCING	1
1. Fatal Attraction <i>Diane H. Folmlee</i>	3
2. The Dark Side of Jealousy and Envy: Desire, Delusion, Desperation, and Destructive Communication <i>Laura K. Guerrero and Peter A. Anderson</i>	33
II: CONFUSING	71
3. (Mis)Understanding <i>Alan L. Sillars</i>	73
4. Who's Up on the Low Down: Gossip in Interpersonal Relationships <i>Marianne E. Jaeger, Anne A. Skelder, and Ralph L. Rosnow</i>	103
III: BRUISING	119
5. Patterns of Conflict in Personal Relationships <i>Susan J. Messman and Daniel J. Canary</i>	121

6. Codependence: The Paradoxical Nature of the Functional-Afflicted Relationship <i>Beth A. Le Poire, Jennifer S. Hallett, and Howard Giles</i>	153
IV: ABUSING	177
7. Sexual Coercion in Courtship Relations <i>Brian H. Spitzberg</i>	179
8. Obsessional Relational Intrusion and Stalking <i>William R. Cupach and Brian H. Spitzberg</i>	233
V: LOSING	265
9. Losing, Leaving, and Letting Go: Coping With Nonmarital Breakups <i>Anne L. Weber</i>	267
10. To Love or Be Loved in Vain: The Trials and Tribulations of Unrequited Love <i>Ellen Bratslavsky, Roy F. Baumeister, and Kristen L. Sommer</i>	307
11. Disrupted Interpersonal Relationships and Mental Health Problems <i>Chris Segrin</i>	327
VI: MUSINGS	367
12. Investigating the Positive and Negative Sides of Personal Relationships: Through a Lens Darkly? <i>Karen S. Rook</i>	369
Author Index	395
Subject Index	411



P

reface

This volume represents a follow-up to our 1994 publication, *The Dark Side of Interpersonal Communication* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates). In the preface to that volume, we argued, "To fully understand how people function effectively requires us to consider how individuals cope with social interaction that is difficult, problematic, challenging, distressing, and disruptive" (p. vii). In this companion volume, we expand our focus from interaction to close relationships (although it is obvious that the two foci overlap).

Aside from the inherent need to investigate the bad as well as the good of interpersonal relationships, we and our colleagues simply find the dark side metaphor to be intellectually arousing: It is intriguing, heuristic, and provocative. It stimulates investigation of important, yet often neglected, phenomena and it especially encourages consideration of the hidden and forbidden and the paradoxical and ironic, elements of human relating.

The current volume once again assembles the cutting edge work of first rate scholars. As in *The Dark Side of Interpersonal Communication*, the subject matter and stylistic approaches are diverse, reflecting the broad and interdisciplinary domain that is the dark side of human affairs. Our selection of topics is somewhat arbitrary, reflecting only a sample of emerging scholarship in the interdisciplinary study of relationships. The authors come from the ranks of communication, psychology, sociology, and cognate disciplines.

In the brief opening chapter, we present a philosophical frame for investigating the darker sides of interpersonal behavior. Here, we briefly explore some of the meanings, assumptions, and implications associated with employing the dark side metaphor. We pick up where we left off in our epilogue to the previous *Dark Side* volume. Between the lines it should

be apparent that human interest in the dark side is timeless and may itself be suggestive of something in human nature.

In chapter 1, Felmlee extends her provocative work regarding fatal attraction. She reviews previous and current research demonstrating that the very features that attract us to another individual, sometimes lead to disaffection and relationship dissolution. Felmlee explores theoretical explanations of this phenomenon and suggests implications for theories of relational development and dissolution.

Chapter 2 offers an in-depth view of the dark side of jealousy and envy. Guerrero and Andersen concisely situate these complex emotions in a larger context of relationship emotions, focusing on the negative psychic and interpersonal consequences surrounding the experience and expression of jealousy and envy. They also discuss ways in which communication can be used to cope with jealousy and envy.

In chapter 3, Sillars considers how properties of communication and relationships figure into the complex concepts of understanding and interpersonal perception. Sillars identifies many of the key features of perception in close relationships en route to examining the nature of understanding. Drawing on recent empirical data, he discusses common sources of misunderstanding in relationship conflict.

In chapter 4, Jaeger, Skelder, and Rosnow present an explication of the functions and consequences of gossip in interpersonal relations. Framing gossip in the context of larger networks of interaction, these authors provide data that support some common beliefs about gossip while debunking other cherished assumptions.

Patterns of conflict in romantic and family relationships are considered by Messman and Canary in chapter 5. Unlike most examinations of conflict that focus on styles, strategies, and tactics, this chapter takes a look at what is known about sequences and extended patterns of conflict. The authors offer some novel insights into the nature and occurrence of entrenched, interlocking sequences of interaction that relationship members coproduce.

Chapter 6 portrays the paradoxical features of codependent relationships. Le Poire, Hallett, and Giles adopt a relational conceptualization of codependency. Using the theory of inconsistent nurturing as control, they demonstrate that the attempts of codependent partners to control the adverse behavior of afflicted (e.g., alcoholic) partners may actually reinforce and perpetuate the undesirable behavior. Important implications for both research and treatment are derived.

Spitzberg, in chapter 7, reviews diverse and copious literatures bearing on the incidence of sexual coercion among courtship couples. He carefully elaborates the notion of coerciveness and reviews various theories that

account for its occurrence. Then, he explicates an interactional approach to understanding coercion—an approach that focuses prominently on the role of miscommunication.

We lay the foundation in chapter 8 for our own program of research regarding stalking and obsessive relational intrusion. Specifically, we review empirical evidence concerning individuals who receive unwanted pestering or harassment by another person who desires relational contact. After outlining the diverse profiles of intrusion perpetrators, we attempt to clarify the nature and incidence of various forms of intrusion behavior. Then, we consider the consequences for and coping responses of victims of unwanted pursuit.

Weber tackles the subject of nonmarital break ups in chapter 9. With style and flair, she weaves an engaging tale about the occurrence and aftermath of relationship uncoupling. Weber persuasively demonstrates the importance of sense-making processes and offers practical observations about overcoming (and even benefiting from) relationship loss.

In chapter 10, Bratslavsky, Baumeister, and Sommer provide a synthesis of research on the trials and tribulations of unrequited love and they characterize the respective experiences associated with the roles of the rejector and the would-be lover. Interdependence theory is employed to explain differences in the emotional outcomes for rejectors and would-be lovers. The authors conclude that mutuality of love, rather than giving or receiving of love, is what is required for happiness and fulfillment.

Segrin, in chapter 11, reviews a vast literature to show how disrupted and distressed interpersonal relationships can both lead to and result from various mental health problems. He explores the complex links between psychological and relational spheres, elaborating specifically on schizophrenia, depression, loneliness, alcoholism, and eating disorders. Such disorders often represent a sense of losing one's senses, or losing one's place in relationships.

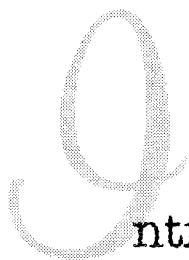
In chapter 12, Rook critically inspects the body of research that investigates the relative impact of positive and negative experiences in personal relationships. On one hand, research suggests that relationships meaningfully contribute to the psychological and physical well-being of individuals. On the other hand, several studies indicate that negative aspects of relationships tend to cancel or outweigh the benefits. Rook carefully dissects this literature, showing methodological weaknesses that undermine our ability to draw strong inferences. These limitations are then used to fashion an agenda for more rigorous future research into the relative importance of positive and negative events in relationships.

Collectively, the scholarly journeys made in this volume are intended to illustrate the complexities, both moral and functional, involved in close

relationship processes. The intent is neither to valorize nor demonize the darker aspects of close relationships, but rather, to emphasize the importance of their day-to-day performances in relationships. Only by accepting such processes as integral to relationships can their role be fully understood.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Tonya Felder, Katherine Ferrer, Jacqueline Post, and Michelle Schroeder for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of the indexes.

—*Brian H. Spitzberg*
William R. Cupach



Introduction: Dusk, Detritus, and Delusion—A Prolegomenon to the Dark Side of Close Relationships

All life is a struggle in the dark.

—Lucretius (*The Nature of Things*, circa 45 BC)

Life may indeed be a struggle in the dark, but a few years hence from our first venture into the shadowlands, the metaphor of the “dark” side of human behavior (or perhaps human nature) continues to intrigue. We began our journey with a collection of chapters on the dark side of interpersonal communication (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1994). This previous collection included chapters on such topics as incompetence, equivocation, paradox, dilemmas, predicaments, transgression, privacy violation, deception, hurtful messages, abuse, and the darkness of normal family interaction. Our original impetus was the belief that the social sciences were overly pollyanna-like in perspective. This is perhaps most evidenced by the contents of most undergraduate textbooks, littered with commendations to be attractive, open, honest, self-confident, assertive, visionary, good-humored, supportive, cooperative, empathic, clear, polite, competent, and to develop and maintain normal friendships, heterosexual romances, and resilient nuclear families. Our argument was not to usurp these maxims of social preference, as much as to provide a more balanced understanding of some of the paradoxes of such morally muddled principles when examined

in the functional fabric of interaction. Attractiveness can be a curse (Tseëlon, 1992), openness can be costly (Bochner, 1982), honesty is often more destructive than deceit (Barnes, 1994; Bavelas, Black, Chovil, & Mullet, 1990; DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer & Epstein, 1996; Rodriguez & Ryave, 1990), self-esteem can be self-absorbing (Gustafson & Ritzer, 1995) and a source of aggression (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Assertiveness tends to be unlikable (Spitzberg, 1993), visionary leadership can be misguided (Conger, 1990), humor can be violent and oppressive (Dundes, 1987; Jenkins, 1994; Keough, 1990), supportiveness can aggravate rather than heal (LaGaipa, 1990, Ray, 1993; Rook & Pietromonaco, 1987), cooperation and empathy are susceptible to exploitation (Tedeschi & Rosenfeld, 1980), clarity is often the least functional form of communication (Cerullo, 1988; Kursh, 1971; Nyberg, 1993; Rue, 1994; Tooke & Camire, 1991), politeness can be a reflection of oppression (Janeway, 1987; Kasson, 1990), and competence in one's communication can backfire in myriad ways (Spitzberg, 1993, 1994a). Friendships are often fraught with difficulties (Fehr, 1996; Rawlins, 1992; Rook, 1989; Wiseman, 1986) and same sex romantic relationships (Huston & Schwartz, 1995) and alternative models of families (e.g., Altman, 1993) often are quite functional compared to their "normal" alternatives (e.g., Blount, 1982; Finkelhor, Gelles, Hotaling, & Straus, 1983; Moltz, 1992; Poster, 1978).

It is possible to know, albeit harder to accept, the shadow side of ourselves, the essential darkness that breeds ill will. Envy, greed, and jealousy are the fundamental components of this malice. ... when the negative components of our emotional life are denied or ignored (because of guilt or fear), the positive ones suffer, too. As always, love and hate are inexorably intertwined—Berke (1988, p. 12, 13)

The obverse of looking on the bright side of life is that the things we often consider dark in their moral or functional implications are instead valuable in surprising ways. Gossip (Bergmann, 1993), obscenity (Allan & Burrige, 1991), embarrassment (Miller, 1996), humiliation (Miller, 1993), paradox (Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1978; Weeks & L'Abate, 1982), narcissism (Emmons, 1984; Watson & Biderman, 1993), jealousy (Fitness & Fletcher, 1993; Pines & Aronson, 1983; Stearns, 1989), envy (Schoeck, 1966), anger (Averill, 1993; Canary, Spitzberg & Semic, 1998; Stearns & Stearns, 1986), aggression (Gilmore, 1987; Twitchell, 1989), violence (Spitzberg, 1997; Tedeschi & Felson, 1994), enmity (Volkan, 1988), hate (Schoenewolf, 1991), regret (Landman, 1993), failure (Payne, 1989); cultism (Festinger, Riecken & Schachter, 1956; Galanter, 1989; Keiser & Keiser, 1987), sadomasochism (Chancer, 1992), child

abuse (McMillen, Zuravin, & Rideout, 1995), and many other presumptively "dark" traits, states, and processes all have their adaptive potential (see Cupach & Spitzberg, 1994; Spitzberg, 1994b). At a truly systemic (and theoretical) level, for example, a certain degree of dishonesty and exploitation in a society may create some level of consumer caution, and therefore less overall exploitation, compared to systems in which consumers presume honesty, and thereby suffer from unchecked and wide-scale exploitation (Schotter, 1986). Relationships obviously come replete with costs as well as rewards (Rook & Pietromonaco, 1987; Sedikides, Oliver & Campbell, 1994). As Duck (1994) emphasized, any comprehensive approach to human relationships requires not only an understanding of the darker aspects of relationships, but the integration of these aspects into theories of relating and into an understanding of the entire relational system. Love and hate are indeed impossible to disentangle.

Modern political science owes a great deal to Machiavelli's ... insights ... that the traditional concentration on the "ought," on the manner in which princes and statesmen ought to behave, interferes with the fuller understanding of the "is" that can be achieved when attention is closely and coldly riveted on the ways in which statecraft is in fact carried on—Albert O. Hirschman (1981, pp. 294–295)

If evil is imagined as other than who or what we are, then it will remain an aspect or segment of life and experience denied to us by the limitations of our imagination. Somehow all that is dark and objectionable has to be seen as material for a full experience of quintessential human life, as well as for the unfolding of our own individual natures—Moore (1994, p. 186)

The dark side is hardly a novel concept (Pratt, 1994). Many observers of the human condition have drawn attention to the more suboptimal (Coupland, Wiemann, & Giles, 1991), asynchronous (Mortensen, 1997), morally ambiguous (Sabini & Silver, 1982), inept (Phillips, 1991), challenging (Duck & Wood, 1995), absurd (Lyman & Scott, 1970), troublesome (Levitt, Silver, & Franco, 1996), stigmatized (Goffman, 1963), perverted (Peak, 1996), relationally exploitative (Fillion, 1996; Goldberg, 1993), destructive (Fromm, 1973), hateful (Berke, 1988), punishing (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Long & McNamara, 1989; Rosen, 1996), criminal (Katz, 1988), and intrinsically darker sides of our behavior (Adams, 1977) and nature (Anders, 1994; Harper, 1968; Watson, 1995). What has often been missing in the social sciences, taken broadly, is the examination of the dark side as not just a Gordian knot of paradoxes, but also an integrative theoretical metaphor. A more complete understanding and appreciation of the dark side of human action requires an examination of certain propositions about the nature of this darkness (i.e., what this darkness is, and who or what we are, rather than what it, or we, ought to

be). We believe that the dark side metaphor implies and means many things for social science.

There are many darkneses. There is the darkness of creative solitude and reverie. There is the darkness of loving adoration and satisfying supplication and thanksgiving, existential and mystical, human and divine. There is the darkness of tragic suffering and watching, the sudden end of life and hope and virtue. There is the darkness of premonition of evil, depression, and then demoralization. There is the loss of love and the certainty of death—Harper (1968, p. 7)

There are indeed many darkneses. First among the many shades of darkness is perhaps the most obvious. The dark side is concerned with the dysfunctional, distorted, distressing, and destructive aspects of human action. Charny (1996) and Baumeister (1997) described such features as forms of evil. These forms of evil are so characterized because they systematically diminish one's own (or another's) ability to function.

Second, the dark side is concerned with deviance, betrayal, transgression, and violation. Behavior that is awkward, rude, and disruptive can annoy, and behavior that boldly transgresses can disintegrate. Enculturation designs a preference for continuity and comfort. Activities that run counter to the normative, the taken for granted, the expected, and the preferred represent pursuits that strike at the core of the dialectic between autonomy and communal consciousness. One person's criminality can be another person's cry for freedom. Violation of norms and preferences is often a source of darkness.

Third, the dark side is concerned with exploitation of the innocent. Excessive extraction of valued or valuable resources, manipulation of the ignorant, cruelty toward the helpless, and constraint of basic freedoms reflect many of the fundamental egocentrisms of social life, and the difficulties of promoting collective welfare in a cultural climate of individualism. Harming those who have little power to protect themselves from harm is another source of darkness.

Fourth, the dark side is concerned with the unfulfilled, unpotentiated, underestimated, and unappreciated in human endeavors. The loves lost and the loves never found, the things we should have said, the paths we could have taken, the regrets and resulting self-recriminations all describe worlds we wish we had created and are painfully aware of having (just) missed. Eden was in our grasp and darkness is now a constant shadow on a world ensnared by a serpent.

Fifth, the dark side is concerned with the unattractive, unwanted, distasteful, and repulsive. Those people deemed unattractive are often normatively shunned, alienated, and isolated. Such symbolic imprisonment can serve to bind group identity, but it can also create a type of hell for those individuals disavowed by the collective.

Sixth, the dark side is concerned with objectification. The treatment of people's basic humanity as if inhuman, diminishing a person's personhood, and categorically reducing an individual to the status of thing are all ways of deanimating humans. Animals we may be, but our capacity for symbolism, creativity, humor, self-reflection, conceptualization, and moral perspective provide us with potential far beyond the level of the inanimate. One need not presume a spirit to be spiritual, but one must be more than a mere object to discover anything worthwhile beyond the objective.

Finally, the dark side is concerned with the paradoxical, dialectical, dualistic, and mystifying aspects of life. Things are seldom entirely what they seem—and when they are, we often refuse to accept them as such, often creating another level of paradox. Excavations of paradox, dilemma and dialectic reveal the complexities of our symbolicity and our seemingly limitless capacity for folly, error, conflict, capriciousness, and entanglement.

As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being—Carl Jung (Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 1963, as cited in Prott, 1994, p. 260)

These seven “deadly sins” of darkness are probably neither comprehensive nor mutually exclusive. They do, we hope, begin to enlighten some of the topography of the dark side. However, being able to see the terrain still does not necessarily reveal much in the ways in which the terrain should best be traversed. Here, we recommend that people who journey to the dark side keep two suggestions in mind. First, excursions into the dark side are often attempts to understand those domains of human activity that are still unexplored, lying in the shadows, and waiting for the enlightenment of scholarly investigation. Second, investigations of the dark side should be about the virtuous, as well as the venal, vexing, and venomous aspects of human nature. Indeed, the dark side is about the ironies involved in discovering that what is presumed to be evil often has moral and functional justification; likewise, what is presumed to be satisfying, legitimate, and righteous often is reprehensible and prone to abuse and destructiveness.

In maps from antiquity, the edge of the enlightened, known universe is often noted by some foreboding to the effect that “beyond here, there be dragons.” A study of the dark side is a boundary-spanning endeavor that must ignore the imaginary dangers of disciplinary and moral edges, requiring instead that scholars intrepidly sail beyond the comforts of their own disciplinary maps and ideological homelands to discover the new domains that lie beyond ordinary and normative pursuits.

It is in Morality as it is in Nature, there is nothing so perfectly Good in Creatures that it cannot be hurtful to any one of the Society, nor any thing so entirely Evil, but it may prove beneficial to some part or other of the Creation: So that things are only Good and Evil in reference to something else, and according to the Light and Position they are placed in—Bernard Mandeville (1732, p. 367)

The study of the dark side often ends up blurring the distinction between good and evil or the bright and the dark of the human condition. There are those who find such endeavors to lack moral perspective and therefore, intellectual gravity (e.g., Rawlins, 1997). The argument is twofold. First, the juxtaposition of investigating topics such as gossip and embarrassment next to rape, violence, and deadly activities (e.g., unsafe sex) trivializes the notion of darkness in general, and the seriousness of the darker topics therein. Second, if all darkness has a silver lining and if this silver lining is viewed solely in the language of functionalism, then we lose our moral bearings and perpetuate a science without an ethical voice. We believe such a critique entirely misses the point.

We do not apologize for what is often a functionalist rhetoric of science. We could have pursued the construction of an ideological and critical architectonic in which to judge the human praxis examined in this and our previous text. However, it is obvious that the functionality of behavior must be at the root of any ethical system, unless we buy into the ontological philosophies that have wreaked such ideological repression and inevitably reflect ethnocentric concepts of right and wrong. Reductionistic moral maxims and universals have wonderful idealistic rings of assent, but their operationalizations in the variegations of human activity become far more problematic and often do not lend themselves to simplistic assessment of implications. The study of the dark side is, in part, a recognition of this moral complexity and ambivalence and constantly cautions us against advancing our ethical forays in the dark.

Second, the very issue of the moral implicature of human behavior can only be questioned competently when people are aware of the nature of the dark side (e.g., Makau, 1991). To the extent that a polyannish rhetoric has infected our textbooks, studies, and teachings, we are hardly able to escape our prevailing ideologies to occupy a vantage point from which moral issues are examined (Burgoon, 1995; Lannamann, 1991; Parks, 1982, 1995). Social behavior is multifunctional, and moral judgments of such behavior are conceptually and empirically independent of its functioning (Wojciszke, 1994). Therefore, only by delving into the dark side of human behavior and discovering its functions are we likely to develop an informed sense of the possible moral issues implicit and explicit in social action.

Furthermore, the notion that only aspects of humanity that threaten life and limb deserve the moniker of *darkness* ignores the lifetimes of quiet struggle, dissatisfaction, and sense of frustration, anger, and despair that result from merely suboptimal forms of human endeavor in our significant (and even mundane) relationships with others. For example, Marshall's (1994) finding that psychological abuse tends to be more predictive of trauma than of physical abuse does not morally excuse physical abuse. Yet, enormous efforts of public policy, expenditures of social resources, and an almost endless number of psychological interventions effectively ignored the dynamics of psychological abuse under the overly simplistic ethical assumption that physical abuse is the most significant problem. Any critique of a functionalist examination of the dark side (on the grounds that it trivializes the true dark side) creates an overly dichotomous separation of dark and light that we reject. A primary rationale for our excursions into the dark side is to discover that the boundaries between light and dark are amorphous and are seldom as distinct as commonly presumed by our sciences and ethical commentaries.

We believe there are moral issues involved in the study of the dark side and that such investigations raise moral questions—both about the phenomena studied and the process of investigation itself. However, we also believe such moral debates are best engaged when informed by sound functionalist scholarship. For example, research that investigates the potential positive functions of child abuse (McMillen et al., 1995) raises obvious moral issues (e.g., Does conducting such research provide potential legitimization of the act it is studying? Does the suggestion of positive functions trivialize or minimize efforts to eradicate such tragic actions or increase societal tolerance for the act of child abuse itself? Does asking the question imply an overly paternalistic, functionalist, and insensitive scientific ideology?). However, if such investigation uncovers characteristic differences between victims who do and do not reveal resilience and self-actualization despite their tragedy, then modes of intervention, and perhaps prevention, are much better informed and vast realms of human suffering are eventually eradicated. Moral censure of such lines of investigations thereby runs the risk of running afoul of its own best intentions. Moral debate without a functionalist science to inform the issues of the debate risks reducing rhetoric to its mere status, with no lessons for the actual habitus and praxis of human pursuits. In essence, science without ideology, if such can be envisioned, lacks a moral compass; yet, morality without science is dangerously disconnected from the empirical world. Furthermore, positing such dichotomies itself unnecessarily exaggerates the schism between principle and practice at a time when common ground is needed most (Parks, 1995).

Darkness is very close by, at all times. We learn the ambiguity of darkness. There is a cold dark, full of fear and loneliness, and a warm dark for embracing and acceptance. ... There is "the dark side of the earth" and "the theoretic bright one." ... Darkness has its advantages—Harper (1968, p. 4, 5)

In conclusion, there is a sense of seduction regarding the forbidden, the deviant, and the destructive (Goldberg, 1993; Katz, 1988). There is fascination in the human psyche with those things that nature, nation, and relationships have forbidden or made taboo. This collection of essays continues the journey begun by many others through time and the journey we began in earnest in our earlier collection. The current selection of topics is intended to be neither comprehensive nor fully representative of the dark side of close relationships—indeed, we continue to search the shadows for the next venture into the dark side. Perhaps paradoxically, we hope that many more dark journeys still await us.

*All nature is but art unknown to thee;
All chance, direction which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good.*

—Pope (1733, p. 249)

REFERENCES

- Adams, R. M. (1977). *Bad mouth: Fugitive papers on the dark side*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Allan, K., & Burrige, K. (1991). *Euphemism and dysphemism: Language used as shield and weapon*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Altman, I. (1993). Challenges and opportunities of a transactional world view: Case study of contemporary Mormon polygynous families. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 21, 135–163.
- Anders, T. (1994). *The evolution of evil*. Chicago: Open Court.
- Averill, J. R. (1993). Illusions of anger. In R. B. Felson & J. T. Tedeschi (Eds.), *Aggression and violence: Social interactionist perspectives* (pp. 171–193). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Barnes, J. A. (1994). *A pack of lies: Towards a sociology of lying*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Batsche, G. M., & Knoff, H. M. (1994). Bullies and their victims: Understanding a pervasive problem in the schools. *School Psychology Review*, 23, 165–174.
- Baumeister, R. F. (1997). *Evil: Inside human violence and cruelty*. New York: W. H. Freeman.
- Baumeister, R. F., Smart, L., & Boden, J. M. (1996). Relation of threatened egotism to violence and aggression: The dark side of high self-esteem. *Psychological Review*, 103, 5–33.
- Bavelas, J. B., Black, A., Chovil, N., & Mullett, J. (1990). *Equivocal communication*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Becker, E. (1968). *The structure of evil*. New York: George Braziller.
- Bergmann, J. R. (1993). *Discreet indiscretions: The social organization of gossip* (J. Bednarz, Jr., Trans.). New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

- Berke, J. H. (1988). *The tyranny of malice: Exploring the dark side of culture*. New York: Summit Books.
- Bernstein, J. Y., & Watson, M. W. (1997). Children who are targets of bullying: A victim pattern. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 12, 483-498.
- Blount, F. (1982). *The subversive family: An alternative history of love and marriage*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Bochner, A. P. (1982). On the efficacy of openness. In M. Burgoon (Ed.), *Communication yearbook* 5 (pp. 109-124). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction/International Communication Association.
- Burgoon, M. (1995). A kinder, gentler discipline: Feeling good about being mediocre. In B.R. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication yearbook* 18 (pp. 480-497). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Canary, D. J., Spitzberg, B. H., & Semic, B. A. (1998). The experience and expression of anger in interpersonal settings. In P. A. Andersen & L. K. Guerrero (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and emotion* (pp. 189-213). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Cerullo, K. A. (1988). What's wrong with this picture? Enhancing communication through distortion. *Communication Research*, 15, 93-101.
- Chancer, L. S. (1992). *Sadomasochism in everyday life: The dynamics of power and powerlessness*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Charny, I. W. (1996). Evil in human personality: Disorders of doing harm to others in family relationships. In F.W. Kaslow (Ed.), *Handbook of relational diagnosis and dysfunctional family patterns* (pp. 477-495). New York: Wiley.
- Conger, J. A. (1990). The dark side of leadership. *Organizational Dynamics*, 19, 44-55.
- Connell, A., & Farrington, D. P. (1996). Bullying among incarcerated young offenders: Developing an interview schedule and some preliminary results. *Journal of Adolescence*, 19, 75-93.
- Coupland, N., Wiemann, J. M., & Giles, H. (1991). Talk as "problem" and communication as "miscommunication": An integrative analysis. *Miscommunication and problematic talk* (pp. 1-17). Newbury Park: Sage.
- Crant, J. M. (1996). Doing more harm than good: When is impression management likely to evoke a negative response? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 26, 1454-1471.
- Cupach, W. R., & Spitzberg, B. H. (Eds.). (1994). *The dark side of interpersonal communication*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- DePaulo, B. M., Kashy, D. A., Kirkendol, S. E., Wyer, M. M., & Epstein, J. A. (1996). Lying in everyday life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 979-995.
- Duck, S. (1994). Stratagems, spoils, and a serpent's tooth: On the delights and dilemmas of personal relationships. In W.R. Cupach & B.H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (pp. 3-24). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Duck, S., & Wood, J. T. (1995). For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer: The rough and the smooth of relationships. In S. Duck & J. T. Wood (Eds.), *Confronting relationship challenges* (pp. 1-21). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dundes, A. (1987). *Cracking jokes: Studies of sick humor cycles and stereotypes*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.
- Emmons, R. A. (1984). Factor analysis and construct validity of the narcissistic personality inventory. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 48, 291-300.
- Ewart, C. K., Taylor, C. B., Kraemer, H. C. & Agras, W. S. (1991). High blood pressure and marital discord: Not being nasty matters more than being nice. *Health Psychology*, 10, 155-163.
- Fehr, B. (1996). *Friendship processes*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ferraro, K. J., & Johnson, J. M. (1983). How women experience battering: The process of victimization. *Social Problems*, 30, 325-339.
- Festinger, L., Riecken, H. W., & Schachter, S. (1956). *When prophecy fails*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Fillion, K. (1996). *Lip service: The truth about women's darker side in love, sex, and friendship*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Finkelhor, D., Gelles, R. J., Hotaling, G. T., & Straus, M. A. (Eds.). (1983). *The dark side of families: Current family violence research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Fitness, J., & Fletcher, G. J. O. (1993). Love, hate, anger, and jealousy in close relationships: A prototype and cognitive appraisal analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65, 942-958.

- Fox, S. A., & Giles, H. (1996). Interability communication: Evaluating patronizing encounters. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 15, 265–290.
- Fromm, E. (1973). *The anatomy of human destructiveness*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Galanter, M. (1989). *Cults: Faith, healing, and coercion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gemen, J. (1997). Dangerous liaisons: On the systematic self-production of codependent identities. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 25, 132–149.
- Gilmore, D. D. (1987). *Aggression and community: Paradoxes of Andalusian culture*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Goldberg, J. G. (1993). *The dark side of love: The positive role of our negative feelings—anger, jealousy, and hate*. New York: Putnam.
- Gustafson, S. B., & Ritzer, D. R. (1995). The dark side of normal: A psychopathy-linked pattern called aberrant self-promotion. *European Journal of Personality*, 9, 147–183.
- Harper, R. (1968). *The path of darkness*. Cleveland, OH: Case Western Reserve University Press.
- Hirschman, D. O. (1981). *Essays in trespassing: Economics to politics and beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huston, M., & Schwartz, P. (1995). The relationships of lesbians and of gay men. In J. T. Wood & S. Duck (Eds.), *Under-studied relationships: Off the beaten track* (pp. 89–121). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Janeway, E. (1987). *Improper behavior*. New York: Morrow.
- Jenkins, R. (1994). *Subversive laughter: The liberating power of comedy*. New York: The Free Press.
- Kasson, J. F. (1990). *Rudeness and civility: Manners in nineteenth-century urban America*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Katz, J. (1988). *Seductions of crime: Moral and sensual attractions in doing evil*. New York: Basic Books.
- Keiser, T. W., & Keiser, J. L. (1987). *The anatomy of illusion: Religious cults and destructive persuasion*. Springfield, IL: Thomas.
- Keough, W. (1990). *Punchlines: The violence of American humor*. New York: Paragon House.
- Kursh, C. O. (1971). The benefits of poor communication. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 58, 189–208.
- LaGaipa, J. J. (1990). The negative effects of informal support systems. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Personal relationships and social support* (pp. 122–139). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Landman, J. (1993). *Regret: The persistence of the possible*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lannamann, J. W. (1991). Interpersonal communication research as ideological practice. *Communication Theory*, 3, 179–203.
- Levitt, M. J., Silver, M. E., & Franco, N. (1996). Troublesome relationships: A part of human experience. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 13, 523–536.
- Long, G. M., & McNamara, J. R. (1989). Paradoxical punishment as it relates to the battered woman syndrome. *Behavior Modification*, 13, 192–205.
- Lyman, S. M., & Scott, M. B. (1970). *A sociology of the absurd*. New York: Meredith Corporation.
- Makau, J. M. (1991). The principles of fidelity and veracity: Guidelines for ethical communication. In K. J. Greenberg (Ed.), *Conversations on communication ethics* (pp. 111–120). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Mandeville, B. (1732/1924). *The fable of the bees* (Part I, A search into the nature of society). London: Oxford University Press.
- Marshall, L. L. (1994). Physical and psychological abuse. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (pp. 281–312). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- McMillen, C., Zuravin, S., & Rideout, G. (1995). Perceived benefit from child sexual abuse. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 63, 1037–1043.
- Miller, R. S. (1996). *Embarrassment: Poise and peril in everyday life*. New York: Guilford.
- Miller, W. I. (1993). *Humiliation, and other essays on honor, social discomfort, and violence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Moltz, D. (1992). Abuse and violence: The dark side of the family—An introduction. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 18, 223.
- Moore, T. (1994). *Dark eros: The imagination of sadism* (2nd ed.). Woodstock, CT: Spring Publications.

- Mortensen, C. D. (1997). *Miscommunication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nyberg, D. (1993). *The varnished truth: Truth telling and deceiving in ordinary life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Palazzoli, M. S., Boscolo, L., Cecchin, G., & Prata, G. (1978). *Paradox and counterparadox: A new model in the therapy of the family in schizophrenic transaction*. New York: Aronson.
- Parks, M. (1982). Ideology in interpersonal communication: Off the couch and into the world. In M. Burgoon (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 5* (pp. 79–108). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Parks, M. R. (1995). Ideology in interpersonal communication: Beyond the couches, talk shows, and bunkers. In B. R. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication yearbook/18* (pp. 480–497). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Payne, D. (1989). *Coping with failure: The therapeutic uses of rhetoric*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Peak, K. J. (1996). "Things fearful to name" An overview of sex crimes and perversions. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 12, 204–214.
- Phillips, G. M. (1991). *Communication incompetencies: A theory of training oral performance behavior*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Pines, A., & Aronson, E. (1983). Antecedents, correlates, and consequences of sexual jealousy. *Journal of Personality*, 51, 108–136.
- Poster, M. (1978). *Critical theory of the family*. New York: Seabury.
- Pratt, A. R. (1994). *The dark side: Thoughts on the futility of life from the ancient Greeks to the present*. New York: Carol Publishing Group.
- Putney, M. J. (1992). Welcome to the dark side. In J. A. Krantz (Ed.), *Dangerous men and adventurous women* (pp. 99–105). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Rawlins, W. K. (1992). *Friendship matters: Communication, dialectics, and the life course*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Rawlins, W. K. (1997). Review: *The dark side of interpersonal communication*. *Communication Theory*, 7, 89–93.
- Ray, E. B. (1993). When the links become chains: Considering dysfunctions of supportive communication in the workplace. *Communication Monographs*, 60, 106–111.
- Rodriguez, N., & Ryave, A. (1990). Telling lies in everyday life: Motivational and organizational consequences of sequential preferences. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13, 195–210.
- Rook, K. S. (1989). Strains in older adults' friendships. In R. G. Adams & R. Blieszner (Eds.), *Older adult friendship: Structure and process* (pp. 166–194). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Rook, K. S., & Pietromonaco, P. (1987). Close relationships: Ties that heal or ties that bind? In W. H. Jones & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Advances in personal relationships* (Vol. 1, pp. 1–35). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Pope, A. (1733/1966). *Pope poetical works* (Essay on man, Epistle I). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rosen, K. (1996). The ties that bind women to violent premarital relationships: Processes of seduction and entrapment. In D. D. Cahn & S. A. Lloyd (Eds.), *Family violence from a communication perspective* (pp. 151–176). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rue, L. (1994). *By the grace of guile: The role of deception in natural history and human affairs*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sabini, J., & Silver, M. (1982). *Moralities of everyday life*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Schoeck, H. (1966). *Envy: A theory of social behavior* (M. Glenny & B. Ross, Trans.). New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Schotter, A. (1986). On the economic virtues of incompetency and dishonesty. In A. Diekmann & P. Mitter (Eds.), *Paradoxical effects of social behavior* (pp. 235–241). Heidelberg, Germany: Physica-Verlag Heidelberg Wein.
- Schoenewolf, G. (1991). *The art of hating*. Northvale, NJ: Aronson.
- Sedikides, C., Oliver, M. B., & Campbell, W. K. (1994). Perceived benefits and costs of romantic relationships for women and men: Implications for exchange theory. *Personal Relationships*, 1, 5–21.
- Spitzberg, B. H. (1993). The dialectics of (in)competence. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 10, 137–158.

- Spitzberg, B. H. (1994a). The dark side of (in)competence. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (pp. 25–49). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Spitzberg, B. H. (1994b). The dark side metaphor. *International Society for the Study of Personal Relationships Bulletin*, 11, 8–9.
- Spitzberg, B. H. (1997). Intimate violence. In W. R. Cupach & D. J. Canary (Eds.), *Competence in interpersonal conflict* (pp. 174–201). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Stearns, C. Z., & Stearns, P. N. (1986). *Anger: The struggle for emotional control in America's history*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Stearns, P. N. (1989). *Jealousy: The evolution of an emotion in American history*. New York: New York University Press.
- Tedeschi, J.T., & Felson, R.B. (1994). *Violence, aggression, and coercive actions*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Tedeschi, J. T., & Rosenfeld, P. (1980). Communication in bargaining and negotiation. In M.E. Roloff & G. R. Miller (Eds.), *Persuasion: New directions in theory and research* (pp. 225–248). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Tooke, W., & Camire, L. (1991). Patterns of deception in intersexual and intrasexual mating strategies. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 12, 345–364.
- Tseelon, E. (1992). What is beautiful is bad: Physical attractiveness as stigma. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 22, 295–310.
- Twitchell, J.B. (1989). *Preposterous violence: Fables of aggression in modern culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Volkan, V.D. (1988). *The need to have enemies and allies: From clinical practice to international relationships*. Northvale, NJ: Aronson.
- Watson, L. (1995). *Dark nature: A natural history of evil*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Watson, P. J., & Biderman, M. D. (1993). Narcissistic personality inventory factors, splitting, and self-consciousness. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 61, 41–57.
- Weeks, G. R., & L'Abate, L. (1982). *Paradoxical psychotherapy: Theory and practice with individuals, couples, and families*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Wiseman, J.P. (1986). Friendship: Bonds and binds in a voluntary relationship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 3, 191–212.
- Wojciszke, B. (1994). Multiple meanings of behavior: Construing actions in terms of competence or morality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 222–232.

I SEDUCING

1

Fatal Attraction

Diane H. Felmlee

University of California, Davis

"... the traits that make him appealing can make him appalling in the flash of an eye."

—*New York Times* article describing
President Bill Clinton (Purdum, 1996, p. 36)

It begins with an attraction; two people are drawn inexorably to one another and an intimate relationship ensues. More often than not, however, it ends with disillusionment and heartbreak; the relationship does not work out. In such instances, a person's perceptions of a romantic partner shift from that of idealization and infatuation to irritation and resentment. In discussing the causes of a breakup, for example, divorced individuals often mention that their former partners were flawed, or lacking in desirable attributes (Goode, 1956; Spanier & Thompson, 1984). The implication is that they did not get what they wanted in a romantic partner. What happened? What went wrong? How is it that a once beloved partner is now viewed in such a negative light?

The answer proposed here suggests that for some, the process of attraction is less straightforward and more paradoxical than is usually assumed. The central focus of this chapter is that there are often close links between the qualities in a partner that initially allure us, and those that we later find problematic. Like a moth to a flame, individuals are drawn to the very aspects of another individual that they eventually will dislike. This process is termed *fatal attraction*, where *fatal* is used in the dictionary sense not of "deadly,"

but of "foretelling a sequence"; in this case, the initial attraction foretells a relationship sequence that ends in disenchantment (Felmlee, 1995).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an in-depth investigation of the process of fatal attractions in intimate relationships. First, related research is discussed in the areas of interpersonal attraction and personal accounts of relationship breakups. Next, theoretical explanations for fatal attractions are described and previous research on the topic is summarized. New information and analyses on this relationship issue are then presented in which the dark and corresponding light sides to fatal attractions are examined. Finally, this chapter ends with a discussion of the implications of this pattern of romantic disenchantment for theories relevant to the initiation and dissolution of intimate relationships.

THE SUNNY SIDE OF ATTRACTION

The process by which one person is attracted to another receives considerable attention in literature. A number of factors were found to play a significant role in interpersonal attraction, including proximity (e.g., Festinger, 1951), physical attractiveness (e.g., Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986), similarity (e.g., Newcomb, 1961), and familiarity (e.g., Zajonc, 1968).

One factor that was the focus of extensive research, for example, is physical attractiveness. Many studies on this topic find support for the *matching hypothesis*, that is, that attractiveness is significantly correlated among members of romantic couples (e.g., for a meta-analysis, see Feingold, 1988). Other studies conclude that there is a social stereotype that links beauty and goodness, whereby physically attractive people are thought to possess a number of positive characteristics relating to social and/or intellectual competence (for meta-analyses, see Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Feingold, 1992; Jackson, Hunter, & Hodge, 1995). Finally, there are also gender differences in the salience of physical attractiveness. Mate selection studies find that physical attractiveness is more important in a prospective mate for men than it is for women, whereas women are more likely than men to prefer an ambitious, educated, intelligent, and/or dependable partner (e.g., Buss, 1994; Sprecher, Sullivan & Hatfield, 1994; for a meta-analysis, see Feingold, 1990).

The role of similarity in attraction has also gained considerable attention. There is a link between attraction and similarity on a number of dimensions, such as demographic characteristics (e.g., Surra, 1991), attitudes (e.g., Byrne, 1971), personality traits, such as extreme gender role adherence (Smith, Byrne, & Fielding, 1995), cognitive traits, such as cognitive complexity (e.g., Neimeyer, 1984), and social-cognitive and communication skills (e.g., Burleson & Denton, 1992).

Nevertheless, research on the role of similarity in the attraction process is not without its critics. Rosenbaum (1986), for instance, argued that rather than similarity leading to attraction, dissimilarity in another is avoided (i.e., the *repulsion hypothesis*). Others maintained that the link between attitude similarity and attraction is greatly overestimated (Sunnaf Frank, 1991). Finally, scholars also note that the process of becoming attracted to another person occurs in an interactional context and that a dynamic communication perspective is needed to understand the intricacies of attraction (Bell, Tremblay, & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1987; Burleson & Denton, 1992).

Stage models represent an additional line of development in the field of interpersonal attraction. These models delineate sequential steps in the selection of an intimate partner (e.g., Kerchoff & Davis, 1962; Lewis, 1973; Murstein, 1970), with most models maintaining that one of the steps is based on similarity. In the premarital dyadic formation framework, for instance, Lewis (1973) proposed that the attraction process goes through five stages, beginning with "perceiving similarities" and ending with "achieving dyadic crystallization." In an alternative model, Duck (1977) argued that attitudinal similarity predicts interpersonal attraction early on in acquaintance. In the later stages of a relationship, however, similarity in the context of interpersonal constructs (i.e., one's worldview) becomes more important than attitudinal similarity.

In general, the emphasis in the attraction literature is on the positive and appealing qualities of a potential mate or on the relatively smooth, sequential stages by which the attraction process progresses.

Relatively little work, however, attempts to examine potentially troublesome aspects of the attraction process. Two exceptions that relate most directly to fatal attractions are: the clinical literature, which introduces the concept of *disenchantment*, the process by which individuals in serious relationships become disenchanted with partner characteristics that they initially found appealing (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993) and a small study of married couples in which Whitehouse (1981) examined not only the positive aspects of partner characteristics, but also those that are negative. She found that the qualities reported as most annoying in a spouse were either an exaggeration, implication, or the opposite of those that were most appealing. Despite these types of exceptions, our knowledge of the dark side of attraction is comparatively meager (cf. chaps. 2 and 8, this volume; Freeman, 1985; Goldberg, 1993; Tseëlon, 1992).

THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL NATURE OF BREAKUPS

Another relevant area of inquiry examines the so-called "grave-dressing phase" of relationship dissolution (Duck, 1982), that is, the public story

that each partner constructs about how and why a relationship ended (e.g., Harvey, Orbuch, & Weber, 1992). One of the most common reasons given for breakups in such accounts concerns some type of dissimilarity in the interpersonal characteristics of the dyad. Different interests, for example, was the most common reason given for the demise of a relationship in a recent study of couples (Sprecher, 1994). Communication problems, desire for autonomy or independence, and problematic characteristics of the partner (e.g., lack of supportiveness and lack of openness) are other typical rationales (e.g., Baxter, 1986; Cupach & Metts, 1986; Sprecher, 1994; Stephen, 1987). These personal accounts suggest that the ending of a romantic relationship is relatively opaque and unpredictable—differences surface between partners, communication problems arise, someone needs more autonomy or has undesirable traits. Such explanations make the romantic attraction process more intriguing and complex. After examining these breakup accounts, for example, the question arises: "Why is a person attracted in the first place to an individual who has different interests, is difficult to communicate with, or possesses undesirable qualities?" The answer proposed here is less circumstantial and implies that sometimes individuals are attracted to those potentially vexing aspects from the beginning.

THE DARK SIDE OF ATTRACTION

There are a number of ways in which the attraction process has a contradictory or problematic side, although such negative issues in close relationships generally receive relatively little regard in literature (Duck, 1994b). To begin, research on interpersonal attraction proposes that the norm of *homogamy*—in which like attracts like—is dominant. Nevertheless, countless individuals defy this norm and are attracted to those whose demographic characteristics differ from their own. Other societal norms are ignored in attractions to individuals who are already married or to those of the same gender. Given that society often deems such pairings as inappropriate, couples in these situations are likely to encounter difficulties in their dealings with the larger society, if not in their own interactions. Furthermore, attractions can have a seriously dark side to them, in the case of individuals who are attracted to those who would do them harm—either emotionally or physically—or to those whom they would harm (Marshall, 1994; Spitzberg, 1997).

Unlike these obvious dark sides of the initiation of romantic liaisons, the phenomenon of fatal attraction is more subtle. Yet, it may also be more

common. In fatal attractions, individuals are drawn to partners because of certain pleasing qualities, but they later dislike aspects of those same qualities. Examples of such attractions include a woman who was interested in a man because he was "funny and fun," but disliked his "constant silliness," and a man who was attracted to his girlfriend's "refreshing innocence," yet found her "lack of maturity" problematic (Felmlee, 1995). In such cases, the characteristics that individuals disliked in their former companions were closely related to those that attracted them in the first place.

FATAL ATTRACTION: THE THEORY

Why does such a pattern of disillusionment with a partner occur? At least three different factors help explain the emergence of fatal attractions. First, a person's virtues and vices may be one and the same. Such a conclusion is implied in the clinical psychology literature, where we see discussions of the shadow side of personality (Goldberg, 1993; Jung, 1973; Moore, 1992). According to Goldberg (1993), in her discussion of the dark side of love: "The line that separates normal from pathological is, at times, frighteningly thin. Protectiveness can easily turn into possessiveness; concern into control; interest into obsession" (p. 8). Popular literature also reiterates such a message. A *New York Times* reporter summed up his assessment of President Clinton as: "His strengths and weaknesses not only spring from the same source, but could also not exist without one another. In a real sense, his strengths are his weaknesses, his enthusiasms are his undoing and most of the traits that make him appealing can make him appalling in the flash of an eye," (Purdum, 1996, p. 36). If it is true that virtues and vices are inextricably linked, this means that when people are drawn to the strengths of another, they encounter that person's shadow side as well. Given such reasoning, it is not surprising, then, if people dislike the very qualities they once found alluring in a partner.

A second explanation for fatal attractions operates at the dyadic, rather than the individual, level. This explanation focuses on the fact that intimate couples develop their own interactive system that evolves over time (Felmlee & Greenberg, 1996) and that such a system can facilitate the development of fatal attractions. Dialectical theorists, for example, argue that individuals in close relationships confront ongoing tensions between pairs of contradictory forces, such as those of autonomy and connection, novelty and predictability, and closedness and openness (e.g., Altman, Vinsel, & Brown, 1981; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). According to such perspectives, a couple's experience pulls from both poles of forces simul-

taneously; that is, they feel the need for both autonomy and connection, novelty and predictability, as well as closedness and openness in their relationships. One reason that fatal attractions occur, therefore, is that individuals choose a partner on the basis of qualities that exemplify one pole of a dialectical force (e.g., novelty), but then they find that their relationship is lacking in the opposing pole (e.g., predictability).

Finally, the concept of fatal attraction is also informed by relationship theories that focus on the construction of meaning. Duck (1994a), for example, maintained that giving meaning to one another's behavior is one of the central purposes of personal relationships and this task constantly evolves and is never completely finished. From this perspective, a fatal attraction is seen as a shift over time in the meaning of a partner's characteristic, a shift that represents only one moment of what is, in fact, a fluid, ongoing transformation.

The theoretical arguments regarding the shadow side of personality, opposing relationship tensions, and the plasticity of meaning help explain why fatal attractions occur; that is, they provide an explanation as to why someone would reject the characteristics that initially attracted them to a romantic companion. Nevertheless, these arguments do not address questions concerning the over-time psychological process involved in such an attraction. Why aren't the negative dimensions of the positive qualities of a partner rejected immediately? How does a fatal attraction unfold over time?

FATAL ATTRACTION: THE PROCESS

There are several possible scenarios by which the type of disenchantment involved in a fatal attraction could occur. These scenarios are labeled as follows: time will tell, sour grapes, rose-colored glasses, people pleasing, and familiarity breeds contempt.

Time Will Tell. One possible fatal attraction process is that individuals are initially drawn to certain aspects of another person, but the individual does not reveal the negative sides of those qualities until some amount of time has passed in a relationship. This happens if people try to put their "best face" forward and attempt to hide or alter the less attractive elements of their personality at the start of a romantic liaison, but then are unable to maintain this facade over time.

Sour Grapes. A second possibility is that individuals attempt to reduce the cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) generated by the demise of a

once close, intimate relationship by denigrating their former partner's character. Of course, they can denigrate an ex-partner in many ways that would not be defined as fatal attractions. Nevertheless, it may be cognitively easier to recast a former partner's attractive qualities in a negative light (i.e., a fatal attraction) than it would be to claim that a partner never possessed those qualities at all or to maintain that a partner had weaknesses that were completely unrelated to his or her strengths.

Rose-Colored Glasses. A third possible scenario is that individuals are romantically drawn to the strengths of another person and they are aware of the associated weaknesses from the very beginning, but choose to ignore or downplay these weaknesses. When infatuation fades, however, it becomes difficult to ignore the other person's weaknesses and to overlook related relationship tensions, and thus, a fatal attraction becomes evident. Certain vices are probably harder to disregard than others (e.g., those that are different from one's own and those that are extreme) and so, disenchantment with an intimate companion is especially likely in such cases.

People Pleasing. Another possible explanation for fatal attractions is that people in a relationship actually change and they may alter in ways that cause their own attractive trait to turn into a liability. Suppose, for instance, that individuals unwittingly or intentionally reinforce the appealing qualities and actions of a partner by complimenting and giving attention to these qualities. Their partner then attempts to intensify or amplify these characteristics and related behaviors. Someone aware that his romantic companion likes humor, for example, then tells so many jokes and acts so funny, that he appears silly. Another may exude arrogance and a "know-it-all" attitude when she attempts to further impress a boyfriend who originally found her intelligent and confident manner pleasing. (See chap. 6, this volume, on the paradoxical reinforcement involved in codependent relationships.)

Familiarity Breeds Contempt. A final possibility is that there is a saturation effect of partner attributes over time, and that a partner's endearing qualities can get old and become annoying. Certain relationship stage models (e.g., Huston, McHale, & Crouter, 1986), as well as theories of emotion (Berscheid, 1983), suggest that either arousal potential diminishes over time for routine or familiar activities or the things that were once rewarding can lose their reinforcement value over time.

The various theoretical arguments discussed thus far help explain why fatal attractions might occur and what might transpire in the over-time

process of such attractions. Yet, how prevalent is this particular type of disillusionment? Do fatal attractions occur in a substantial number of couples? To answer these questions, we turn to previous empirical work on romantic relationships.

EXAMINING FATAL ATTRACTIONS

Research Design

A sample of 301 individuals (200 females and 101 males), who were attending one of three lower-division courses in a West Coast university, provided information on a past romantic relationship. Six respondents reported on homosexual relationships. The ethnic composition of students in the department from which the data were collected was relatively diverse, with Caucasians representing less than one half of the population: 43% Caucasians/Whites, 23% Asian Americans, 20% Mexican Americans/Latinos, 10% African Americans/Blacks, and 4% other ethnicities.

Participants were given a questionnaire in which they were asked to think about the most recent, serious romantic relationship they had that ended. Next, they were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions, two of which were used to determine whether a fatal attraction occurred: "Describe the specific qualities that *first attracted* you to that individual" and "In retrospect, what were the qualities about that individual that you found *least attractive*?" Responses to these two open-ended questions were placed by coders into general categories of "liked" and "disliked" partner qualities.

Previous Results

Previous research (Felmlee, 1995) found that for both men and women, the four most common categories of characteristics mentioned as attractors, in order of those most frequent, were "Physical" (27.5%, e.g., attractive, eyes, and sexy), "Fun" (17.8%, e.g., fun, and funny), "Caring" (15.6%, e.g., caring, nice, and attentive), and "Competent" (11.7%, e.g., intelligent, confident, and powerful). Qualities that they did not like, on the other hand, were most frequent in the categories of "Selfish"

(28.3%, e.g., selfish, and insensitive), "Insecure" (22.5%, e.g., possessive, and insecure), "Undependable" (12.1%, e.g., dishonest, and immature), and "Physical" (10.7%, unattractive, and short), respectively.

Fatal attractions were defined as occurring when a quality reported by a respondent to be least attractive in a former partner was similar to (e.g., a synonym), or a negative interpretation of, a quality reported as being initially attracting. Arrogance, for example, was defined as a negative interpretation of the quality of confidence. Each of the cases was evaluated by the author and two independent coders, and an intercoder reliability of $\kappa=1.76$ was obtained for the 301 cases.

Fatal attractions occurred for 88 of the 301 individuals (29.2%). This means that at least one of the qualities listed as "least attractive" was directly related to one or more of those reported as initially attracting for a little less than one-third of the participants. Fatal attractions occurred among all categories of partner characteristics, but some types were more predominant than others. An intimate companion's qualities were significantly more likely to be fatal attractions when they were in the categories of "Fun" (e.g., funny, and fun), "Competent" (e.g., intelligent and confident), "Excitement" (e.g., exciting and spontaneous), "Easy-Going" (e.g., laid-back), or "Different" (e.g., different interests), than those not in these categories, according to univariate, chi-square tests. Characteristics in the "Similar" (e.g., common interests and similar values) and "Physical" (e.g., attractive and smile) categories, on the other hand, were significantly less likely to be later disliked (i.e., have fatal attractions).

Thus, previous research shows that fatal attractions occur in a substantial number of romantic relationships and that a variety of partner qualities are vulnerable to this type of disenchantment. However, we still do not know what shadow sides surface in these types of romantic pairings. Therefore, in the following section, a new analysis is undertaken in which the light sides and corresponding dark sides of fatal attractions are delineated.

THE LIGHT AND DARK SIDES OF FATAL ATTRACTIONS

There are numerous pairs of positive and negative components to close relationships that emerge from an examination of the data. Three of the most common are described in the following.

Fun to Foolish. The most prevalent dark side to personality reflected in fatal attractions was foolishness, with fun as its corresponding light side. One attraction of this type involved a woman who was drawn to her partner because he was “extremely funny and spontaneous.” In retrospect, however, she said that what she least liked about this man was that he “would embarrass me in public by throwing himself on the floor or exhibiting really STRANGE behavior.” In another case, a man’s “I don’t care ... I’ll have fun anyway” attitude attracted a woman, but she then disliked his “immaturity.” Thus, the implication is that the downside of a fun and humorous relationship is its frivolity and lack of seriousness.

Strong to Domineering. There were also a number of examples of fatal attractions in which domineering behavior was mentioned as a negative quality. One man, for instance, was drawn to his former girlfriend because of her “strong character and beliefs.” He disliked, however, that she was “pushy, loud, domineering, and always took the initiative.” In another relevant example, a woman was attracted to a “strong-willed” man whom she later judged to be “domineering and macho.” In such cases, pushiness or domineering behavior, appears to be the vice associated with the virtue of character strength.

Spontaneous to Unpredictable. A dark side of personality that emerged in fatal attractions to spontaneous partners was unpredictability or irresponsibility. In one such case, a woman disliked that her “spontaneous” ex-boyfriend was “flighty.” In another instance, a man was of interest to a woman because he was “impulsive,” but subsequently, she was bothered by his tendency to “blow at any moment.”

Numerous additional positive and negative themes occur in this data set. Examples of some of these can be seen in the illustrations of fatal attractions listed in Table 1.1. Like the previous examples, these illustrations contain verbatim quotes from respondents regarding the qualities that initially attracted them to a partner and those they later disliked.

Taken together, the findings discussed yield evidence of a dark side to certain romantic attractions. They do not identify, nevertheless, the conditions under which fatal attractions are particularly probable. In the next section, factors that potentially influence the chances of this type of disenchanting encounter are discussed and the effects of these factors are investigated.

TABLE 1.1

Illustrations of the Light and Dark Sides of Fatal Attractions, Based on Direct Quotes Describing an Attracting Partner Quality and Its Corresponding Disliked Quality

<i>Light Side</i>	<i>Dark Side</i>
Nurturing	Smothering
Confident	Acted like a god
Offbeat personality	Too hippie
Intense interest in me	Jealous & possessive
Spontaneity, fun	Irresponsibility
Strong-willed, persistent	Domineering, persistent
Shy and timid	Insecure
Very unique	No common interest
She would have sex	She couldn't say no to sex
Relaxed	Constantly late
Older	Too mature
Successful and focused	Work commanded him
Flattering	Superficial
Sense of humor	Played too many jokes
Sweet and sensitive	Too nice

FACTORS AFFECTING FATAL ATTRACTIONS

Theoretical Arguments

Given the ironic and potentially frustrating nature of fatal attractions, it is important to understand the circumstances under which they are more, or less, likely. There are several factors thought to influence fatal attraction propensities, four of which are discussed as follows:

Similarity–Dissimilarity. One factor that affects the probability of a fatal attraction is whether the attraction is based on similarity or dissimilarity. One major determinant of interpersonal attraction is similarity (e.g., Newcomb, 1961), as discussed earlier. Similarity between partners can have a dark side, however, if it results in too much predictability in a relationship or too little excitement and challenge. Similarity, as a basis of attraction, is also problematic when it is debilitating to the individual or dysfunctional to the relationship. A relationship between two extreme introverts, for example, might suffer from insufficient open communication.

Nevertheless, similarity is likely to play a role in attraction because it is rewarding in a number of ways. Similarities with another person validate our own perspectives (Byrne & Clore, 1970) and encourage expectations that the other person will like us (Aronson & Worchel, 1966). Characteristics of a romantic companion that are similar to those of an individual,

therefore, are apt to be positively regarded. In addition, similar characteristics are unlikely to be subject to subsequent negative reinterpretation because people are less harsh when examining the qualities of a partner that they also share. For these reasons, then, fatal attractions are expected to be relatively infrequent when an individual is attracted to qualities in another person that are similar to his or her own.

In some cases, dissimilarity in a potential mate is appealing because encountering differences can lead to an expanded sense of self (Aron & Aron, 1986) or because it fosters feelings of uniqueness or specialness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Nevertheless, dissimilarity is a much less likely source of attraction than is similarity (Byrne, 1971). Dissimilarity is also associated with strong disliking (Byrne, 1971) and is a frequently cited rationale for divorces and breakups (Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976; Spanier & Thompson, 1984).

Clearly intracouple dissimilarity is often problematic and there are a number of reasons. First, unlike similarity, differences challenge one's views of the world and they also raise fears that this dissimilar person to whom one is attracted will be rejecting. Second, differences between partners are troublesome because they lead to disagreements and conflict. Dissimilar communication skills, for example, make it difficult for members to resolve disagreements (Burleson & Denton, 1992). Finally, discrepancies between partners in demographic characteristics, personality, or attitudes, heighten resistance to the relationship from family and friends because couples are expected to be similar in a variety of sociodemographic characteristics (Kerchoff, 1974).

Because of the problems inherent in differences among a couple, qualities in a partner that are viewed as dissimilar are susceptible to disillusionment. A difference that is initially appealing is likely to wear thin over time. In fact, dissimilarities that are attractive at the start of a relationship can be particularly fatal because they are likely to be immediately noticed, suggesting that the size of the discrepancy is considerable. Considerable differences result in considerable disagreements, thereby facilitating the disenchantment process.

Extreme Traits. A second factor that is thought to influence the chances of disenchantment is the intensity or the extremity of an attractive quality of a partner. Virtues of a partner that are intense in nature are especially likely to have clearly associated vices. For example, an extremely confident person is more susceptible to arrogance than a person who is only moderately confident. Likewise, perhaps an individual who is unusually humble is more insecure than someone who is only somewhat humble. Furthermore, when an individual is attracted to qualities in a partner that

are extreme, this indicates that one relationship dimension is being emphasized at the expense of another. The focus of a relationship is likely to be on autonomy, rather than on connection (e.g., when the basis of an attraction is extreme independence in a romantic companion). Such an intense focus on autonomy should produce a desire for more connectivity or interdependence, according to dialectical theorists. In other words, qualities in an intimate partner that are intense or extreme are particularly likely to have a downside and to be involved in fatal attractions.

Atypicality Gender Qualities. Previous research considered the contention that atypical gender qualities are over represented in fatal attractions. Atypical gender qualities refer to personality characteristics that are unrepresentative of traditional gender stereotypes, such as gentleness or expressiveness in a man or confidence and assertiveness in a woman. Atypical gender characteristics, it was argued, are not widely supported in the general culture and thus, are especially disillusioning. Nevertheless, findings indicated that atypical gender partner characteristics are not overrepresented in fatal attractions and attractions to intimate companions with qualities that were gender typical (e.g., an aggressive man, or a caring woman), rather than atypical, could also end in disenchantment (Felmlee, in press, a).

Multiple Indicators of a Fatal Quality. Certain individuals also have a tendency to report a series of attractive partner qualities that are later disliked (i.e., fatal), most of which are synonyms for, or variations of the same general quality, according to earlier work (Felmlee, in press, a). For instance, one man listed numerous physical traits of a woman (e.g., face, legs, hair, body, etc.) as the qualities that initially attracted him, but later disliked that his relationship was "too physical" and based only on "lust, not love." Reporting so many physical aspects of this woman as appealing suggests that he found her to be extremely physically attractive. Therefore, this tendency to describe multiple dimensions of the same general attracting characteristic (e.g., physical attractiveness) in a fatal attraction provides additional evidence for the argument that attractions based on qualities of a partner that are extreme are vulnerable to disillusionment. This particular case also shows that physical traits can become a source of fatal attractions.

New Research Agenda

A number of interesting questions remain unanswered in fatal attraction research. Here two are examined: the role of positive partner qualities that are physical in fatal attractions and how the responsibility for the breakup idea might influence such encounters.

Physical–Personality Qualities. Previous multivariate work on fatal attraction predictors used data on only nonphysical (i.e., personality) partner characteristics (Felmlee, in press, a). It is not known if the same influences affect the chances of a fatal attraction based on the physical aspects of a love object. Yet, the most common category of attractor in the data discussed here is physical—both for women and men—and physical fatal attractions do transpire, as was previously shown. It is important to determine whether the main factors of extremeness and dissimilarity, for instance, influence the likelihood of fatal attractions for all types of partner qualities—physical as well as personality. It is also of interest to examine whether traits that were once enticing in a loved one are less likely to be disliked (i.e., fatal) later if they are physical rather than nonphysical.

Theoretically, it is possible that certain physical features of an individual, such as general attractiveness, could result in fatal attractions. An example of such a fatal attraction would be an individual who is drawn to a partner's physical beauty, but who does not appreciate the time and money spent on make-up and clothing designed to highlight that beauty. Another example might be someone who finds the physique of a body builder appealing, but who resents the time that person spends in the gym.

On the other hand, physical attributes are less susceptible to reinterpretation over time than personality characteristics of a partner because most are probably more difficult to change. Specific physical virtues do not always have corresponding physical vices. For instance, having pretty eyes or nice hair does not have a clear downside that would be obvious to a partner; a person is unlikely to be judged as having eyes that are too pretty or hair that is too nice. This is not to say that more generally, beauty lacks a dark side. Physical attractiveness has negative as well as positive (e.g., vain or snobbish) connotations (Freeman, 1985), and it acts as a stigma by which the beautiful, especially women, are viewed as objects (Tseëlon, 1992). Nevertheless, these drawbacks are probably more salient to those who exhibit physical attractiveness than they are to those who admire it.

Whose Idea Was the Breakup? We know that termination of a relationship is unlikely to be mutual, that one member of a couple often desires a breakup more than the other, and that one person is more likely to initiate the breakup (Vaughan, 1986). Whether an individual is the initiator of a breakup probably influences the likelihood of disenchantment, although this issue was never investigated.

Two differing scenarios concerning the role of responsibility for the breakup idea in fatal attractions can be described. First, suppose that an individual's partner is the one who initiated the idea of ending the

relationship. That person may then justify being the victim of the breakup by impugning the instigator's virtues. A fatal attraction in such situations would be a case of "sour grapes." In one case from this data set, for example, a woman said that her boyfriend ended their relationship because, "He got back together with his previous girlfriend. I learned about it from mutual friends." She said that what originally attracted her, however, was that he had "an intense interest in me." In retrospect, what she did not like about him was that he was "jealous and possessive," as well as insincere and dishonest. The fact that her boyfriend ended the relationship may have caused this woman to reinterpret her boyfriend's initially positive trait of "intense interest" in her as the negative trait of jealousy.

Second, the individual himself or herself initiates the breakup. In this scenario, that person may have wanted to breakup precisely because he or she became aware of drawbacks to the other person's virtues. In fact, individuals who take responsibility for a breakup can be especially disillusioned with their partner's appealing traits, implying that these cases will become prominent in fatal attractions. In one such example, a man broke up with his girlfriend and said that what he liked least about her was her "lack of maturity." On the other hand, he reported that he was initially drawn to his former girlfriend because, "She had an innocence about her that was refreshing." This man's negative appraisal of his girlfriend's trait of innocence appeared to be one reason that he stopped seeing her.

The next section of this chapter addresses these previously unanswered issues in an examination of empirical data. An analysis of fatal attractions is conducted, using new information from physical and personality attractors taken from the data set described earlier in this chapter (Felmlee, 1995). This analysis determines whether the factors previously found to influence fatal personality attractions remain significant in analyses of attractions due to either personality or physical attributes. In this investigation, the role of an additional factor is also examined—responsibility for the breakup idea.

PREDICTORS OF FATAL ATTRACTIONS

A Multivariate Analysis

The determinants of fatal attractions are investigated in a multivariate, logistic regression analysis. The unit of analysis is the attracting quality listed by each respondent, and the dependent variable measures if the

attracting quality is later disliked (i.e., a fatal attraction). The final sample consists of the 1,416 physical and nonphysical positive partner characteristics listed by the 301 study participants. Logistic regression analysis is used—rather than ordinary least squares—because the dependent variable is a skewed, dichotomous variable (fatal–not fatal). The independent variables include the following measures, of which the first five are intended to examine various theoretical issues and the last three are control variables.

Respondent's Breakup Idea. This variable is included in order to examine the effect of initiation of the breakup on the likelihood of a fatal attraction. Respondents were asked the following open-ended question: "Whose idea was it to end the relationship?" Answers to this question were placed into five categories: *completely partner's* (1)—e.g., "hers," or "the other person's," 14.8%, *mostly partner's* (2)—e.g., "mostly hers/his," 4.9%, *mutual idea* (3)—e.g., "mutual" or "both of ours," 24.8%, *mostly respondent's* (4)—e.g., "mine, but we agreed," 9%, *completely respondent's* (5)—e.g., "mine," 46.5%.

Extreme Partner Quality. This variable measures the degree to which an attracting quality of a partner was described in an extreme or intense manner. If an extreme adjective, such as "extremely," "unusually," or "incredible" was used, then this variable was given a value of 2 (12.6%). If a more moderate adjective was used, such as "very," "really," or "lots," then this variable received a value of 1 (10.9%). If no special modifiers were used to describe a partner's positive trait, then a value of 0 (76.5%) was given to this variable (i.e., *not extreme*). Two coders (one male and one female) read the verbatim descriptions of the attracting qualities and determined which of the three categories was appropriate, with an inter-coder reliability of $\kappa = .79$.

Different Partner Quality. This variable measures whether the attracting quality is in the category of *Different*. A quality of a partner is coded as 1 (*Different*) if the respondent used words such as "different" or "unique" when describing the characteristics that attracted him or her (1.1%); otherwise, it is coded 0 (98.9%).

Similar Partner Quality. This variable measures whether the attracting quality is in the category of *Similar*. A quality of a partner is coded as 1 (*Similar*) if the respondent used phrases such as "similar interests" or

"common values" in describing the characteristics that attracted her or him (5.2%); otherwise, it is coded 0 (94.8%).

Physical Partner Quality. Attracting qualities that are physical traits or physical characteristics are coded 1 (27.5%); those that are nonphysical characteristics (i.e., personality traits) are coded 0 (72.5%). Two new coders (one male and one female) verified the validity of this category, *Physical*, as well as the validity of the other two categories of qualities, *Different*, and *Similar*, with an overall intercoder reliability of $\kappa = .82$.

Female Respondent. This variable is coded 1 if the respondent is female (69.9%); it is coded 0 for males (30.1%).

Duration of Relationship. This variable measures the total length of the relationship in months ($M = 9.5$, $SD = 18.9$).

Number of Qualities. This variable is the total number of attracting qualities mentioned by the respondent ($M = 5.6$, $SD = 2.3$). It is possible that a person's propensity to experience a fatal attraction is directly related to the number of attracting qualities in a partner that an individual reports. Therefore, this variable is included to control statistically the tendency of respondents to be at a high risk of a fatal attraction simply because they list numerous positive partner qualities.

Results

Initiating the idea of a relationship breakup is positively and significantly associated with the likelihood of a fatal attraction, even when controlling for a number of other factors in the multivariate analysis, as shown in Table 1.2. Respondents who reported that the idea to end the relationship was theirs are approximately 1.8 times more likely than those who said the idea was the other person's to later dislike a quality that they were initially attracted to (i.e., a fatal attraction). Thus, those who initiate a breakup are almost twice as likely as those at the recipient end to have a fatal attraction.¹

Another new finding is that physical traits are less likely to be fatal than

¹The antilog coefficient for a one unit change in the variable Respondent's Breakup Idea is 1.15, which means that a change of one unit in Respondent's Idea multiplies the likelihood of a fatal attraction by 1.15. The antilog for a four unit change is 1.8; that is, a change from the value 1 (*completely partner's idea*) to the value 5 (*completely respondent's idea*) multiplies the rate of a fatal attraction by 1.8.

TABLE 1.2

The Effects of Predictors of Fatal Attractions in a Logistic Regression Analysis of 1,410 Physical and Nonphysical Attracting Partner Qualities

<i>Physical and Nonphysical Attracting Partner Qualities.</i>			
<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Beta Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Antilog Coefficient</i>
Respondent's breakup idea	.14*	.07	1.15
Extreme partner quality.	.71***	.10	2.03
Different partner quality	1.43**	.55	4.17
Similar partner quality	-1.60*	.73	.20
Physical partner quality	-.94***	.26	.39
Female respondent	.49*	.22	1.64
Duration of relationship	-.01	.01	.99
Number of qualities	.01	.04	1.01
Constant	-3.14	.38	
Model Chi-Square	100.89***		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

personality characteristics, as can be seen in the negative, highly significant coefficient for the Physical variable. The size of the effect is also large. Fatal attractions are close to one-third less probable when the attracting quality in a partner is physical, rather than nonphysical.

Additional results show that the rate of a fatal attraction increases when individuals use extreme, rather than less extreme, adjectives to describe a partner's qualities and when respondents view these qualities as "different" or "unique." However, when the appealing characteristics of a companion are similar to those of the respondent, the likelihood of a fatal attraction decreases. These effects are all large in magnitude, with the chances of a fatal attraction being four times more likely when a quality appears to be extreme (as opposed to not extreme) or when it is in the category of *Different* rather than another category. However, when a partner's characteristic is *Similar*, the probability of a fatal attraction is only one fifth of what it would be otherwise. Therefore, whether a positive partner quality is extreme, different, or similar, has large effects on fatal attraction propensities.

Finally, although the effect size is not large, females are more likely than males to have fatal attractions, with a ratio of female to male attractions of this type of 1.64 to 1. In addition, respondents who mention many attracting qualities are not significantly more prone to fatal attrac-

tions than those listing fewer qualities.² Finally, regarding length of involvement, short relationships are not significantly more likely than longer ones to be fatal, although it should be noted that the range of relationship length is relatively limited in this sample.³ With the possible exception of gender, then, control variables have little effect on the probability of a fatal attraction in these data.

DISCUSSION

The findings reported in this chapter help to clarify a picture of the phenomenon of fatal attraction. First, illustrations of individual cases show that there are light and dark sides to these attractions (e.g., nurturing vs. smothering). These results reinforce the possibility that one's virtues and vices emanate from a common source and that this shadow side to personality helps explain why fatal attractions might occur. In addition, these light and dark dimensions are reminiscent of some of the opposing relationship forces discussed by dialectical perspectives. The corresponding positive and negative qualities of spontaneity and unpredictability, for example, imply that tensions emerge in some fatal attractions between the dialectic forces of novelty and predictability. The possibility of new, unidentified dialectical tensions, such as those between relaxation and motivation (e.g., easygoing to lazy) also emerges in these data (Felmlee, in press, b).

A second set of results, based on the statistical analysis of predictors of fatal attractions, confirm the proposed theoretical arguments. Findings indicate that when individuals are attracted to qualities in another person that are extreme or different, they are especially prone to fatal attractions (as hypothesized). However, attractions to others because of similarities

²In order to control for the possibility of correlated errors within individuals, an analysis was conducted in which dummy variables were included in the model for each individual in the sample. Due to redundancies among independent variables, some of the variables in the model had to be dropped (e.g., number of fatal qualities, or breakup idea). The general substantive conclusions regarding the effects of the remaining variables in the model (e.g., *Similar, Different, Extreme*) remained the same as those reported in this chapter.

³The sample here contains relationships of moderate length at best, when compared with a 20-year marriage. Perhaps if longer relationships were included in the data, fatal attractions would be confined mostly to relatively short-lived relationships. On the other hand, if vices and virtues are indeed one and the same, then fatal attractions could occur in lengthy relationships as well as brief ones. In other words, one could dislike the downside of a partner's initially appealing virtues even after many years.