

Gendered Close Relationships

Knowledge Challenge:

- To what extent are talking and sharing activities important for creating and sustaining intimacy?
- Do women or men typically fall in love faster?
- On average, are straight or LGBTQ relationships more equitable?

Perhaps you have found yourself in situations such as those that Mark and Paige describe on the next page. For Mark, as for most people socialized into masculinity, communicating is important when you need to address an issue or solve a problem, but he doesn't see the point in talking extensively about small stuff. For Paige, it's incomprehensible that Ed can work on his paper when there is tension between them. If Paige and Mark do not figure out that their gendered viewpoints are creating misunderstandings, they will continue to experience frustration in their relationships.

In this chapter, we will focus on gender dynamics in close relationships. To begin our discussion, we will consider masculine and feminine ways of experiencing and expressing closeness. Then, we'll explore gendered patterns in friendships and romantic relationships to appreciate different ways that people build and communicate closeness.

The Meaning of Personal Relationships

Of the many relationships we form, only a few become really personal, occupying a special place in our lives and affecting us most deeply. **Personal relationships** are those in which partners depend on each other for various things from affection to material assistance. In personal relationships, partners expect affection, companionship,

time, energy, and assistance with the large and small issues in life. Also, partners in personal relationships regard each other as unique individuals who cannot be replaced. If a casual friend moves, we can find a replacement; if a business associate goes to another company, we can work with a new colleague; if your gym buddy relocates, you can find another exercise partner. When a personal partner leaves or dies, however, the relationship ends, although we may continue to feel connected to the person who is no longer with us.

Research demonstrates that people often choose friends who are similar to themselves in terms of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. These personal relationships are important because they can promote a sense of belonging and equality among peer groups. They are also particularly salient for those with minority identities—for example, gay, lesbian, and trans individuals are more likely to refer to their friends as “family” and may depend on these relationships to meet needs neglected by the larger culture (Galupo & Gonzalez, 2013; Galupo, Bauerband, Gonzalez, Hagen, Heather, & Krum, 2014).

MARK

Sometimes I just don't know what goes on in Ellen's head. We can have a minor problem—like an issue between us, and it's really not serious stuff. But can we let it go? No way with Ellen. She wants “to talk about it.” And I mean talk and talk and talk and talk. There's no end to how long she can talk about stuff that really doesn't matter. I tell her that she's analyzing the relationship to death, and I don't want to do that. She insists that we need “to talk things through.” Why can't we just have a relationship, instead of always having to talk about it?

PAIGE

Honestly, I almost left my boyfriend when we had our first fight after moving in together. It was really a big one about how to be committed to our relationship and also do all the other stuff that we have to do. It was major. And after we'd yelled for a while, there seemed to be nothing else to do—we were just at a stalemate in terms of conflict between what each of us wanted. So Ed walked away, and I sat fuming in the living room. When I finally left the living room, I found him working away on a paper for one of his courses, and I was furious. I couldn't understand how he could concentrate on work when we were so messed up. How in the world could he just put us aside and get on with his work? I felt like it was a really clear message that he wasn't very committed.

Models of Personal Relationships

Differences in masculine and feminine orientations to close relationships usually—but not always—coincide with male and female approaches to relationships.

Yet, researchers disagree about what the differences mean. Some scholars argue that masculine orientations are inferior to feminine ones, while others think that the two styles are different yet equally valid. We'll consider each of these viewpoints.

The Male Deficit Model Because our society views women as interpersonally sensitive, feminine ways of interacting are often assumed to be “the right ways.” Thus, a number of researchers claim that a masculine style of building and maintaining relationships is inadequate. This view, the **male deficit model**, maintains that men are less skilled in developing and sustaining personal relationships.

The central assumption of the male deficit model is that personal, emotional talk is the hallmark of intimacy. With this assumption in mind, researchers began to study how women and men interact in close relationships. A classic investigation (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982) measured the intimacy of same-sex friendships by the amount of intimate information disclosed between friends. As women generally self-disclose more than men, it is not surprising that the researchers concluded that women were more intimate than men. Based on this line of research, men were advised to learn to express themselves more openly.

EDWIN

I don't have any problem being emotionally sensitive or expressing my feelings. I may not go on forever about my feelings, but I know what they are, and I can express them fine. It's just that the way I express my feelings is different from the way most girls I know express their feelings. I'm not dramatic or sentimental or gushy, but I have ways of showing how I feel.

Even today, many people assume that women are the experts at intimacy, and build relationships with greater emotional depth than men. Films, television programs and print, TV, and online ads continue to represent men as emotionally lacking and women as naturally adept at relationships.

The assumption underlying the male deficit model is that verbal, emotional expressiveness, and personal disclosures are the best ways to create closeness. Gradually, however, a few researchers began to question this assumption, leading to a second interpretation of different ways people create and express closeness.

The Alternate Paths Model The **alternate paths model** proposes that there are different and equally valid paths to closeness. This model agrees with the male deficit model that gendered socialization is the root of differences between feminine and masculine styles of relating. It departs from the deficit model, however, in two important ways. First, the alternate paths model does not presume that masculine people lack feelings or emotional depth. Rather, the alternate paths explanation suggests that masculine socialization leads most men to be uncomfortable verbally expressing some feelings and, further, that it limits men's opportunities to practice emotional talk.

Second, the alternate paths model argues that masculine people do express closeness, but in an alternate way than feminine people. According to this model, masculine and feminine ways of expressing closeness are different, and the two ways are equally valid.

The alternate paths model challenges the research used to support the male deficit model. In Western culture, we use a **feminine ruler** to define and measure closeness (Cancian, 1987, 1989; Wood, 2011). Using a specifically feminine ruler (emotional talk) misrepresents masculine modes of caring in the same way that using male standards to measure women's speech misrepresents women's communication.

Influenced by this viewpoint, Scott Swain (1989) studied men's close friendships. He discovered that many men develop a closeness "in the doing"—a connection that grows out of doing things together. Following Swain's lead, other studies showed that men's friendships can be as close as women's, but closeness between men generally doesn't grow primarily out of emotional talk and self-disclosure and it is not primarily expressed in those ways (Clark, 1998; Sherrod, 1989). Research has also shown that father-son relationships are built largely on doing things together (Morman & Floyd, 2006). For many men, like Paige's boyfriend, talking about problems may be less effective than diversionary activities to relieve stress (Metts, 2006a).

Yet, it would be a mistake to think that women don't do things with friends and men don't talk with friends. In a study of how men and women communicate support, men tended to engage in emotional as well as instrumental forms of communication. Similarly, women friends enjoy doing things together and helping each other out. In general, most men engage in less explicit emotional communication, yet most men do experience and express emotions in a range of ways (Chapman & Hendler, 1999). Further, as Paul Wright (2006) notes, many of the activities in which men engage enhance emotional closeness. Camping, for instance, provides a rich opportunity to share experience, thoughts, and feelings.

Gendered expectations and behavior in close relationships can also vary in response to a friend's gender. For example, recent research indicates that both women and men judge a friend more harshly for betraying a confidence if that friend is female (Felmlee, Sweet, & Sinclair, 2012). Additionally, while women engage in more sensitive comforting messages than men do, both sexes are more sensitive when trying to comfort women than when trying to comfort men.

From this research, we may conclude that masculine individuals less often express their feelings in feminine ways, just as feminine individuals less frequently express theirs in masculine ways, while also noting that these tendencies are related to the context in which they unfold. Moreover, we are discussing the frequency with which the sexes engage in particular behaviors. We are not saying that each sex engages exclusively in either instrumental or expressive behavior. As we've seen, there's a lot of overlap.

Gendered Styles of Friendship

Before discussing gendered patterns in relationships, let's note that there are many similarities. Regardless of sex or gender, most individuals value close

friends and invest in them. Also, all sexes engage in instrumental and expressive modes of building and expressing closeness, although men and women differ in the extent to which they use each (Felmlee et al., 2012; Grayling, 2013; Monsour, 2006). Against the backdrop of commonalities in approaches to friendship, there are some differences in how women and men typically—but not invariably—build friendships and interact within them. As you read about these differences, keep in mind that they are not absolute dichotomies. Most of us engage in both styles, although women tend to use feminine more often than masculine style and men tend to use masculine style more frequently than they use feminine style.

As early as 1982, Paul Wright noted that women tend to engage each other face to face, whereas men usually interact side by side. By this, Wright meant that women are more likely than men to communicate directly and verbally with each other to share themselves and their feelings. Men more typically engage in activities that do not involve facing each other. Wright's observation gives us a foundation for exploring the qualities of friendship between women, between men, and between men and women.

Feminine Friendships: Closeness in Dialogue

Regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or economic status, a majority of women regard talk as the primary way to build and enrich friendships (Braithwaite & Kellas, 2006; Wood, 2015; Wright, 2006). Consequently, many women share their personal feelings, experiences, fears, and problems in order to know and be known by each other (Bane, Cornish, Erspamer, & Kampman, 2010). In addition, women talk about their daily lives and activities to connect with one another. To capture the quality of women's friendships, Caroline Becker (1987) described them as “an evolving dialogue” through which initially separate worlds are woven together.

To know each other in depth, women friends typically confide personal feelings and disclose intimate information (Braithwaite & Kellas, 2006; Hall, 2011; Metts, 2006b; Reisman, 1990; Walker, 2004). Consistent with feminine socialization's encouragement of permeable ego boundaries, communication between women friends also tends to be empathic, expressive, and supportive (Campbell, 2002; Kuchment, 2004; Lopez, 2012). While women tend to perceive greater levels of intimacy in face-to-face friendships, online friendships are more likely to be satisfying to women when they include high levels of self-disclosure (Bane et al., 2010).

JANICE

One of the worst things about being female is not having permission to be selfish or jealous or not to care about a friend. Usually, I'm pretty nice; I feel good for my friends when good things happen to them, and I want to support them when things aren't going well. But sometimes I don't feel that way. Like right now, all my friends and I are interviewing for jobs, and my best friend just got a great

offer. I've had 23 interviews and no job offers so far. I felt good for Sally, but I also felt jealous. I couldn't talk about this with her, because I'm not supposed to feel jealous or to be selfish like this. It's just not allowed, so my friends and I have to hide those feelings.

Because most women are socialized to be attentive, emotionally supportive, and caring, it is difficult for many women to deal with feelings of envy and competitiveness toward friends. It is not that women don't experience these emotions but rather that they may think it's wrong to have such feelings (Simmons, 2002, 2004). Many women also find it difficult to override socialization's message that they are supposed to be constantly available and caring. The bottom line is that the responsiveness and caring typical of women's friendships can both enrich and constrain people.

It is not unusual for women friends to talk explicitly about their relationship. The friendship itself and the dynamics between the friends are matters of interest and discussion. Many women friends are comfortable stating affection explicitly or discussing tensions within a friendship (Lopez, 2012). This is perhaps true of online communication as well. A recent study of college students' communication on Facebook found that women were more likely than men to express affection verbally and nonverbally in their posts (Mansson & Myers, 2011). The ability to recognize and talk about problems allows women to monitor and improve their friendships.

A final quality typical of women's friendships is breadth. With close friends, women tend not to restrict their disclosures to specific areas but invite each other into many parts of their lives. Because women talk in detail about varied aspects of their lives, women friends often know each other in complex and layered ways.

In summary, many women's friendships give center stage to communication, which fosters disclosure, verbal expressiveness, depth and breadth of knowledge, and attentiveness to the evolving nature of the relationship. Many women feel deeply connected to friends even when they are not physically together.

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES

When Focusing on Feelings Makes Us Feel Bad

Women who pay attention to their feelings are able to work through feelings. But there may be a down side.

Researchers have coined the term *co-rumination* to refer to frequent or excessive talk—face-to-face, e-mail, texts, and posts on social networks—between friends about the same problem. Co-rumination can lead to heightened anxieties and emotional contagion, in which the person listening

to another's problem feels the anxieties and depression as if it is her own (Kershaw, 2008).

Research shows that women generally have a greater tendency than men to brood about bad feelings and to co-ruminate in their friendships (Barstead, Bouchard, & Shih, 2013). Excessive brooding and co-rumination can lead to feeling stuck in unhappy feelings and depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2003).

TAKE A STAND: To what extent do you find that talking with friends about problems heightens your anxiety? Have you ever experienced emotional contagion?

Masculine Friendships: Closeness in the Doing

Beginning in childhood, friendships between males often revolve around shared activities, particularly sports. Scott Swain's (1989) phrase "closeness in the doing" captures the chief way that many men build friendships. More than two-thirds of the men in Swain's study described activities other than talking as the most meaningful times with friends. Engaging in sports, watching games, and doing other things together cultivate camaraderie and closeness between men. When men do talk, they are likely to talk about activities—reminisce about great games they attended, recall pranks they played or had played on them, and psych themselves up for upcoming activities. Whereas women tend to look for confidantes in friends, men more typically seek companions (Chethik, 2008; Felmlee et al., 2012; Inman, 1996; Swain, 1989; Walker, 2004; Wood & Inman, 1993). Neil Chethik (2008) explains that women are more likely to share feelings, whereas men are more likely to share space. As a reminder, we're discussing tendencies, not absolute dichotomies. Of course, women friends sometimes share space and activities, and men friends sometimes talk and confide in each other.

KEITH

My best friend and I almost never sit and just talk. Mainly, we do things together, like go places or shoot hoops or watch games on TV. When we do talk, we talk about what we have done or plan to do or what's happening in our lives, but we don't say much about how we feel. I don't think we need to. You can say a lot without words.

Growing out of the emphasis on activities is a second feature of men's friendships: an instrumental focus. Many men like to do things for people they care about (Cancian, 1987; Sherrod, 1989); their friendships involve instrumental reciprocity. For example, one helps the other repair his car, and the other provides assistance with a computer problem—an exchange of favors that allows each man to hold his own while helping the other.

A third feature of men's friendship is typically indirect talk about serious feelings. Many men find it uncomfortable to disclose feelings explicitly to other men (Burlinson, Holmstrom, & Gilstrap, 2005). If they mention serious emotional issues, they often engage in "joke talk" (Fisher, 2009), which couches serious feelings in humor. Rather than verbally expressing sympathy or support for a male friend who is hurting, a man is more likely to use joke talk to say he cares indirectly or to suggest diversionary activities that take the friend's mind off his troubles (Cancian, 1987; Riesman, 1990). Recent research in online communication settings suggests that while gendered norms may dissuade men from providing highly person-centered support in f2f contexts, CMC may provide opportunities for men to verbally express greater sympathy and support to friends in need (High & Solomon, 2014).

LEE

I don't know what girls get out of sitting around talking about problems all the time. What a downer. When something bad happens to me, like I blow a test or break up with a girl, the last thing I want is to talk about it. I already feel bad enough. What I want is something to distract me from how lousy I feel. That's where having buddies really matters. They know you feel bad and help you out by taking you out drinking or starting a pickup game or something that gets your mind off the problems. They give you breathing room and some escape from troubles; girls just wallow in troubles.

Fourth, men's friendships often involve "covert intimacy" (Swain, 1989). Male friends tend to signal affection by teasing one another, engaging in friendly competition, and exchanging playful punches and backslaps. Most males learn very early in life that physical displays of affection between men are prohibited except in specific situations such as sports. Compared to women friends, reports Kory Floyd (1997), men "simply communicate affection in different, more 'covert' ways so as to avoid the possible ridicule that more overt expression might invite" (p. 78). While covert intimacy is present in same-sex friendships for all men regardless of sexual orientation, friendships between gay men tend to be more physically and emotionally expressive than straight men's friendships (Kocet, 2014).

Finally, men's close friendships are often, although not always, more restricted in scope than women's close friendships. Men tend to have different friends for various spheres of interest (Wright, 1988). Thus, Jim might play racquetball with Mike, work on cars with Clay, and enjoy collaborating with Zach on work projects. Because men tend to focus friendships on particular activities, they may not share as many dimensions of their lives with friends as women tend to do. Overall, then, men's friendships emphasize shared activities, instrumental demonstrations of affection, covert intimacy, and defined spheres of interaction.

In summary, gender-linked communication patterns characterize most same-sex friendships. Women tend to rely on personal communication to share themselves and their lives and build friendships. Men more typically create and express closeness by sharing activities and interests and by doing things with and for each other. In other words, men tend to bond nonverbally through sharing experiences, whereas women typically become intimate through communicating verbally. These gender-linked tendencies, however, are not absolute, and men's and women's friendship styles are not dichotomous. As we've noted, most men engage in some expressive communication and most women engage in some instrumental communication.

Friendships between Women and Men

Friendships between the sexes pose unique challenges and offer special opportunities for growth. Because our culture so heavily emphasizes gender, it can be

difficult for women and men not to see each other in sexual terms (Halatsis & Christakis, 2009). In addition, misunderstandings may arise as the result of the different gendered speech communities into which male and female friends were socialized.

Despite these difficulties, friendships between men and women are increasingly common. For many women, a primary benefit of friendships with men is companionship that is less emotionally intense. For men, an especially valued benefit of closeness with women is access to emotional and expressive support.

EMILY

Last week Jay came by my place to talk. I've known Jay for a year—we're both in band—but we're not close friends or anything. He told me his parents are divorcing and he was really, really upset. He said it just tore him up, and he was crying and everything. Later, I saw Jay's closest friend Rob and asked how Jay was doing with his parents' divorce, but Rob didn't know a thing about it. I thought it was really strange that Jay hadn't told his closest friend but told me.

Both men and women report receiving more emotional support from women than from men friends. (Burleson, Holmstrom, & Gilstrap, 2005). In cross-sex friendships, men generally talk more and get more attention, response, and support than they offer. A majority of both sexes report that friendships with women are closer and more satisfying than those with men; in a recent study of young adults, men were more likely than women to name someone of the opposite sex as their primary confidant (Barstead et al., 2013). This may explain why both sexes tend to seek women friends in times of stress and why both women and men are generally more comfortable self-disclosing to women than to men (Monsour, 2006).

Gendered Romantic Relationships

Nowhere are gendered roles as salient as in heterosexual romantic relationships. The cultural script for romance is well known to most of us (Eaton & Rose, 2011; Metts, 2006a; Mongeau, Serewicz, Henningsen, & Davis, 2006; Wood, 2015):

- Feminine women and masculine men are desirable.
- Men should initiate, plan, and direct most activities in a relationship.
- Women should facilitate conversation, generally defer to men, but control sexual activity.
- Men should excel in status and earning money, and women should assume primary responsibility for the relationships.

As we will see, this script continues to be played out in many heterosexual relationships.

Developing Romantic Intimacy

Personal ads offer insight into what heterosexual men and women seek in romantic partners. Ads written by men looking for women often place priority on stereotypically feminine physical qualities, using words such as *attractive*, *slender*, *petite*, and *sexy*. Women's ads for male partners tend to emphasize status and success and include words such as *ambitious*, *professional*, and *successful*. In reality, as in personal ads, our views of desirable partners often reflect cultural gender expectations—success and status in males, beauty and nurturing tendencies in females. That may explain why, in online communication, men are more likely than women to misrepresent their personal assets (e.g., financial worth), and women are more likely than men to misrepresent their weight (Hall, Park, Song, & Cody, 2010). Similar gendered expectations are evident in online dating profile patterns, where heterosexual women are more likely to enhance their physical attractiveness for dating profiles and heterosexual men are more critical of online daters' physical attractiveness (Toma & Hancock, 2010).

The conventional heterosexual dating script calls for men to take the initiative. Although many people claim they don't accept this pattern, most heterosexuals still conform to it. Gay and lesbian relationships tend to place a greater premium on relationship equality, and there tends to be less role playing between gay men and even less between lesbian women (Hunter, 2012; Patterson, 2000; Rutter & Schwartz, 1996).

Is one sex more romantic than the other? Contrary to popular belief, research indicates that men tend to fall in love faster and harder than women, profess love earlier, and report greater happiness than women when receiving a declaration of love (Ackerman, Griskevicius, & Li, 2011). Men tend to express love in more impulsive and sexualized ways than women, whose styles of loving are more pragmatic and friendship-focused. For instance, men may see love as taking trips to romantic places, spontaneously making love, and surprising their partners. Women more typically think of extended conversations, sharing deep feelings, and physical contact that isn't necessarily sexual. These gendered preferences for expressing love are also evident in patterns of relational distress. In comparison to men, women report emotional infidelity as more distressing than sexual infidelity; compared to women, men report sexual infidelity as more distressing than emotional infidelity (Burchell & Ward, 2011).

Although the double standard regarding sexual activity is less rigid than in the past, at least for heterosexuals, women and men who are sexually adventurous continue to be judged differently. Even in an era known for hookups, ciswomen who have sex with different partners are judged more harshly than cismen who have sex with different partners. Research also shows the sexes have different primary motives for engaging in sex. Cisgender, heterosexual women more often say intimacy and commitment are their reasons, whereas cisgender, heterosexual men more often say they are motivated by lust and a desire for physical pleasure (Meston & Buss, 2009; Peter & Valkenburg, 2010). Regardless of sexual orientation, men are more likely to engage in cuddling and kissing only when engaged in sexual activity with a person whom they love and feel loved by (Rosenberger, Herbenick, Novak, & Reece, 2014).

Women are more likely than men to focus on relationship dynamics—a pattern that holds regardless of sexual orientation (Metts, 2006a, 2006b; Patterson, 2000). Lesbian partners tend to take mutual responsibility for nurturing and supporting relationships (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007). Gay men, conversely, are less likely to focus on nurturing the relationship and providing emotional leadership (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986b; Patterson, 2000). Gay men’s commitment to romantic relationships tends to be more closely linked to intangible investments such as time, effort, and self-disclosure, whereas straight men’s commitment to romantic relationships tends to be more closely tied to tangible investments such as money and possessions (Lehmiller, 2010).

Committed heterosexual relationships, in general, continue to reflect many traditional gender roles endorsed by the culture (Canary & Wahba, 2006; Wood, 2009a). Men tend to be perceived as the head of the family and are expected to be good breadwinners; women tend to assume primary responsibility for domestic labor and childcare; and men tend to have greater power in families. As we’ve noted in earlier chapters, these perceptions are increasingly at odds with reality: Nearly two-thirds of women in the United States work outside of the home (Peters & Wessel, 2014), and approximately one-fourth of women in heterosexual partnerships earn more money than their male partners (Adams, 2014; Coonz, 2014; Ream, 2012).

Because gender distinctions are less salient, many gays and lesbians are not as bound by roles typical in heterosexual couples. Both gay and lesbian commitments often resemble best-friend relationships with the added dimensions of sexuality and romance. Following the best-friends model, long-term lesbian relationships tend to be monogamous and high in emotionality, disclosure, and support, and partners have the most equality of all types of relationships (Huston & Schwartz, 1996; Parker-Pope, 2008).

KARIN

In Annie’s and my relationship, gender roles are pretty interesting. She’s more femme than I am, but she also maintains our cars. I’m the one you would think of as the masculine partner if you saw us and I make more money, but I like cooking and baking and Annie doesn’t. We’ve already agreed that I’ll stay home with a child when we have one. We’re equal when it comes to making decisions, and we take equal responsibility for keeping the house clean.

Gendered Patterns in Committed Relationships

Gendered orientations influence four dimensions of long-term love relationships: modes of expressing care, needs for autonomy and connection, responsibility for relational maintenance, and power. As we will discover, these dynamics are influenced by the distinctive styles and priorities emphasized by masculine and feminine socialization.

PHIL

What does my girlfriend want? That's all I want to know. She says, if I really loved her, I'd want to be together and talk all the time. I tell her all I do for her. I fix her car when it's broken; I give her rides to places; I helped her move last semester. We've talked about marriage, and I plan to take care of her then, too. I will work all day and overtime to give her a good home and to provide for our family. But she says, "Don't tell me what you do for me," like do is a bad word. Now, why would I do all this stuff if I didn't love her? Just tell me that.

Gendered Modes of Expressing Affection As we have seen, the masculine mode of expressing affection is primarily instrumental and activity-focused, whereas the feminine mode is more emotionally expressive and talk-focused. Women often feel hurt and shut out if men don't want to discuss feelings and the relationship. Conversely, some men feel resentful or intruded on when women push them to be emotionally expressive.

For many women, ongoing conversation about feelings and daily activities is a primary way to express and enrich personal relationships (Peretti & Abplanalp, 2004; Wood, 2015). The masculine speech community in which most men are socialized, however, defines solving problems and achieving goals as reasons to talk. Thus, unless there is a problem, men often find it unnecessary to talk about a relationship, whereas many women feel that ongoing talk keeps problems from developing. Generally, men are more likely to express caring by doing things for and with their partners. Thus, the different genders may not recognize each other's ways of communicating care.

The cultural bias favoring feminine modes of expressing love is illustrated by a classic study (Wills, Weiss, & Patterson, 1974). The researchers wanted to know how husbands' demonstrations of affection affected wives' feelings. To find out, they instructed husbands to engage in different degrees of affectionate behavior toward their wives, and then the wives' responses were measured. When one wife showed no indication of receiving affection, the researchers called the husband to see if he had followed instructions. Somewhat irately, the husband said he certainly had—he had thoroughly washed his wife's car. Not only did his wife not experience this as affection, but the researchers themselves concluded that he had “confused” instrumental with affectionate behaviors. Doing something helpful was entirely disregarded as a valid way to express affection! This exemplifies the cultural bias toward feminine views of loving. It also illustrates a misunderstanding that plagues many heterosexual love relationships.

SHARON

Most of this course has been a review of stuff I already knew, but the unit on how men and women show they love each other was news to me. I'm always fussing at my boyfriend for not showing me he cares. I tell him he takes me for granted, and if he really loved me, he'd want to talk more about personal, deep stuff inside

him. But he bought me a book I'd been wanting, and a couple of weeks ago he spent a whole day fixing my car because he was worried about whether it was safe for me—I thought of that when we talked about the guy in the experiment who washed his wife's car. I guess he has been showing he cares for me, but I haven't been seeing it.

Gay and lesbian couples tend to share perspectives about how to communicate affection. Gay men generally engage in more emotional and intimate talk than straight men but less than women of any sexual orientation. Lesbians, on the other hand, generally share responsibility for taking care of a relationship and build the most expressive and nurturing communication climates of any type of couple (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Patterson, 2000). Lesbian partners' mutual attentiveness to nurturing, emotional openness, and conflict resolution may explain why lesbians report more satisfaction with their romantic relationships than gays or heterosexuals do (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Hunter, 2012).

Gendered Preferences for Autonomy and Connection Autonomy and connection are two basic needs of all humans. We all need to feel that we have both personal freedom and meaningful interrelatedness with others. Yet, gender affects how much of each of these we find comfortable. Masculine individuals tend to want greater autonomy and less connection than feminine people, whose relative priorities are generally the reverse.

Desires for different degrees of autonomy and connection frequently generate friction in close relationships. Many couples are familiar with a pattern called *demand-withdraw* (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000; Holley, Haase, & Levenson, 2013; Wegner, 2005). In this pattern, one partner feels distant and tries to close the distance by engaging in intimate talk, and the other partner withdraws from a degree of closeness that stifles his or her need for autonomy. The more one demands talk, the more the other withdraws; the more one withdraws from interaction, the more the other demands talk. Both men and women are likely to withdraw when partners demand or request change; however, the intensity of withdrawal is greater when a woman requests change in a man than when a man requests change in a woman (Sagrestano, Heavey, & Christensen, 1998). Socialized toward independence, masculine individuals tend to be more comfortable when they have some distance from others, whereas feminine people tend to be more comfortable with close connections. Ironically, the very thing that creates closeness for one partner sometimes impedes it for the other.

JEFF

I get really frustrated talking about relationships with girls I've dated. It seems like they feel a need to discuss the relationship every time we're together. I don't get the point. I mean, why talk about a relationship if everything's going along fine? Why not just be in the relationship and enjoy it?

JANELLE

I don't know why straight women put up with partners who don't work on their relationship. Angie and I both invest a lot of time and emotion in taking care of our relationship because it matters to both of us. I talk to straight friends and hear them complaining about how their partners never even notice the relationship. I would never settle for that.

More hurtful than the demand–withdraw pattern itself, however, are partners' tendencies to interpret each other according to rules that don't fit. For instance, to think that a man who wants time alone doesn't love his partner is to interpret his withdrawal according to a feminine ruler. Similarly, to perceive a woman as intrusive because she wants intimate conversation is to judge her by masculine standards. Although the demand–withdraw pattern may persist in relationships, we can eliminate the poison of misinterpretation by respecting different needs for autonomy and connection.

Gendered Responsibility for Relational Health Lesbian couples tend to share responsibility for their relationships. Because most lesbians, like most heterosexual women, learn feminine ways of thinking and acting; both partners tend to be sensitive to interpersonal dynamics and interested in talking about their relationship and working through problems (Hunter, 2012; Canary & Whaba, 2006; Schwartz & Rutter, 1998).

Against the standard set by lesbians, heterosexual couples do not fare as well in distributing responsibility for relational health. In heterosexual relationships, both men and women tend to assume that women have primary responsibility for keeping relationships on track (Canary & Wahba, 2006; Cubbans & Vannoy, 2004; DeMaris, 2007; Stafford, Dutton, & Haas, 2000).

The expectation that one person should take care of relationships burdens one partner with the responsibility of keeping a relationship satisfying. In addition, it is difficult for one person to meet this responsibility if the other person doesn't acknowledge and work on matters that jeopardize relational health. The partner who is expected to safeguard the relationship may be perceived as a nag by the one who fails to recognize problems until they become very serious. Not surprisingly, research shows that the highest level of couple satisfaction exists when both partners share responsibility for the relationship (Cubbans & Vannoy, 2004; DeMaris, 2007).

Gendered Power Dynamics Historically, the person who makes the money or the most money has had the greater power in heterosexual romantic relationships, and that person traditionally has been male. As you might predict, problems fostered by believing that men should be more powerful are not prominent in lesbian relationships, and lesbians tend to be particularly skilled at building harmonious relationships with romantic partners (Hunter, 2012). Couples of all sexualities desire satisfying relationships, but gay and lesbian couples report a greater desire for shared power and decision-making than do heterosexual couples (Hunter, 2012).

As we noted in Chapter 7, the belief that men should be the primary breadwinners doesn't match reality for the growing number of households in which the woman earns as much as or more than the man. Among minorities, women are twice as likely as minority men to earn college degrees and the greater incomes that degrees tend to generate (Goodman, 2006; Wilson, 2007). Social attitudes reflect changes in women's and men's earning power: In 1977, two-thirds of U.S. citizens thought that the ideal family had a male breadwinner and a stay-at-home wife and mom. Today, not even one-third of U.S. citizens think that (Coontz, 2014).

People who adhere to traditional views of gender in relationships are more likely to experience a decrease in both self-esteem and marital satisfaction if the woman earns more money (Helms, Prouiz, Klute, McHale, & Crouter, 2006; Waismel-Manor & Tolbert, 2010; Torabi, 2014). Men whose fathers were actively involved in home life, sometimes as the primary homemaker and parent, are more likely to see homemaking as compatible with masculinity. Women and men who had mothers who were successful in the paid labor force tend to see a woman's career success as consistent with femininity (Cose, 2003).

ERNEST

As a male who was reared by a single mother, I see women differently from most of the white men I know. I and a lot of blacks see women as our equals more than most white men do. We treat the women in our lives with a lot more respect than middle-class white males. Men who were raised by a single mother understand women and their plight better than most white men. We know we and black women are in it together.

In heterosexual relationships, the belief that men have more power than women is often reflected in the distribution of labor in the home. Although the majority of heterosexual families today have two wage earners, the housework

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES Fertile Expectations

Social expectations regarding responsibility for the care and nurturance of children may extend into medical treatments for infertility. According to the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, the male partner is the sole cause of, or a contributing factor to, 40% of all infertility cases (2014b), yet virtually all medical interventions for infertility are designed to treat women.

Assisted reproduction is emotionally, financially, and medically intensive. Women are subject to the most invasive stages of in vitro fertilization. The risks of these interventions include damage to women's internal organs, miscarriage, infections, ectopic pregnancies, multiple births, and babies born with low birth weight.

TAKE A STAND: Given that both sexes can contribute to couples' infertility, what is the fairest way to treat infertility? What connections do you notice between this and other gendered patterns of relational responsibility and care?

and the care of children, parents, and other relatives continue to be done primarily by women (Coontz, 2014; Medved, 2009; Schiebinger & Gilmartin, 2010; Sheehy, 2010; Wood, 2011, 2015b). In fact, some men who don't have jobs in the paid labor force and whose female partners work outside the home engage in less childcare and home maintenance than do men who have jobs in the paid labor force (Dokoupil, 2009). As a point of comparison, unemployed women spend twice as much time on childcare and housework as employed women do (Dokoupil, 2009).

The reasons for women's and men's unequal contributions to domestic labor are complex. Al DeMaris and Monica Longmore (1996) have identified three primary reasons. The first is gender ideology. Men and women with more traditional beliefs about gender are more likely than people with less traditional gender beliefs to perceive it as appropriate for women to do most of the domestic labor. The second reason is women's alternatives to a relationship. Women who have desirable alternatives to their current relationships have more leverage to persuade their partners to participate more in domestic labor. The third reason is equity. Most people prefer equitable relationships—ones in which they and their partners invest relatively equally and in which both partners benefit equally. The extent to which partners are committed to equity affects how they divide domestic chores. These three reasons often interact. For instance, women with more traditional gender ideology may perceive it as equitable for them to do the bulk of housework, whereas women with less traditional beliefs about gender may perceive it as inequitable for them to do more housework than their partners. Cultural factors may also affect the three reasons DeMaris and Longmore identified.

Dubbing the extra domestic labor that women typically do the **second shift**, sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2003) reports that the majority of wives employed outside the home have a second-shift job in the home. Childcare is a big part of the second shift for many women. Mothers with college educations spend an average of 21.2 hours a week with their children and mothers with less education spend 15.2 hours.

Today's fathers are also spending more time with their children than did their own fathers. College-educated fathers spend an average of 9.6 hours a week with their children, and less educated fathers spend an average of 6.8 hours a week with children. That's more than double the amount of time fathers in 1977 spent with children. Fathers under 29 years of age spend more time with children than older fathers do (Choose Your Parents Wisely, 2014; Council on Contemporary Families, 2010; Parker-Pope, 2010c; Ramey & Ramey, 2009).

As Lynn Hallstein (2008) points out, many women think that because becoming a mother is a choice, they are responsible for the consequences of that choice. In other words, many women who continue working in the paid labor force after becoming mothers accept the idea that they have to figure out how to manage motherhood and a career. They are reluctant to ask their workplaces to make accommodations, and they often find their partners are not willing to invest equal time and effort in parenting. Further, they may feel as much pressure to succeed at mothering as at their job (Choose Your Parents Wisely, 2014; Hallstein, 2010b).

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES *Dads at Work*

Dads care about their work, and by work they mean both the work they get paid for and the work of being a dad. More than in past eras, many men today want to be full parts of their families and communities. Compared to dads, a decade ago (Bland, 2012):

54% take their kids to school once or twice a month, up from 38%

45% attend class events, up from 34%

41% visit their child's classroom once or twice a month, up from 30%

59% attend school-based parents meetings, up from 47%

28% volunteer at school, up from 20%

75% help kids with extracurricular activities, up from 71%

78% help with homework, up from 74%

77% attend parent-teacher conferences, up from 69%

Why do today's dads work so hard at parenting? In their own words (Bland, 2012):

"I know it sounds a bit clichéd, but they do grow up fast, so I want to spend time with them."

"I just want to be part of her life. I want to be there for her."

"It just feels good being with the kids."

"I just feel if you're going to be a parent, you should be there."

TAKE A STAND: In your view, what are the parental roles and responsibilities that fathers should take on?

Men still perform less domestic labor than women, and this is particularly true if couples become parents (Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie, & Robinson, 2012; Council on Contemporary Families, 2010). In part, this may reflect masculine socialization, which typically doesn't emphasize developing skills in domestic chores. Because girls are often socialized to perform more traditionally "feminine" tasks such as laundry, cooking, and cleaning, they typically have developed skill in these tasks by the time they set up an adult household. In addition, many women have higher standards for housekeeping than their male partners. This may lead women to criticize how their male partners perform the tasks and to redo or take over tasks that their male partners aren't performing to the women's satisfaction (Coontz, 2014; Wiesmann, Boeije, van Doorne-Huiskes, & den Dulk, 2008). Responses like these understandably discourage men from being active in homemaking.

GLORIA

I'm a mother and a professional and a part-time student, but I am not the only one who takes care of my home and family. That's a shared responsibility in our home. My daughter and son each cook dinner one night a week, and they switch off on chores like laundry and vacuuming. My husband and I share the other chores 50-50. Children don't resist a fair division of labor if their parents model it and show that it's expected of them.

We should also note that much of the work women do in the home is generally more taxing and less gratifying. For instance, whereas many of the contributions men typically make are sporadic, variable, and flexible in timing (e.g., mowing the lawn), the tasks women typically do are repetitive, routine, and constrained by deadlines (Canary & Wahba, 2006; Hochschild with Machung, 2003). Women are also more likely to do multiple tasks simultaneously (e.g., helping a child with homework while preparing dinner). Whereas mothers tend to be constantly on duty, fathers more typically take responsibility for irregular tasks such as fixing broken appliances and car maintenance. Fathers are also more likely than mothers to engage in occasional fun childcare activities, such as trips to the park or zoo.

AIKAU

My mother works all day at her job. She also cooks all of the meals for the family, does all of the housework, and takes care of my younger brother and sister. When my mother goes out of town on business, she fixes all of the family meals and freezes them before she leaves. She also arranges for day care and cleans very thoroughly before she leaves. My father expects this of her, and she expects it of herself.

It's interesting to trace changes in men's participation in childcare and household tasks. In the 1960s and earlier, few men did much to care for home and children. Between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s, men's contributions increased considerably—and then stagnated at that level (Bronstein, 2004; Hochschild & Ehrenreich, 2003).

The recession that began in 2008 has propelled changes in men's involvement in home life. Between 2008 and 2010, millions of Americans lost jobs, and the majority of them were men. Although some of these men have returned to work, others have not. In 2014, one in six men in prime earning years is out of work in the United States (Peters & Wessel, 2014). For many of these men, the jobs they once had no longer exist due to globalization and technological innovation, which are altering work opportunities (Peters & Wessel, 2014).

Many men who are unable to find work become stay-at-home dads while their partners become sole breadwinners. According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, 2 million fathers are now stay-at-home dads by choice or necessity (Ludden, 2014). Approximately 35% of stay-at-home dads cannot work due to illness or disability and 23% are unable to find a job, perhaps contributing to the fact that half of stay-at-home father families live in poverty.

For men who lose their jobs, the shift from paid employment to childcare is difficult. Laid off after 20 years in a Fortune 500 company, Andrew Emery says, "It was a big part of my identity; it's who you are. It took me a long time to fill in the blank when people asked me what I do" (Kershaw, 2009, p. E6). Yet, many men find great satisfaction in being full-time fathers (Ludden, 2014; Noelle, 2011). For men looking to rejoin the workforce, many hope to find careers that enable them to spend more time with their children (Kershaw, 2009).

Another way in which women's contributions to home life have been greater is in terms of **psychological responsibility**—the responsibility to remember, plan, and make sure things get done (Hochschild, 2003). Partners may agree to share responsibility for taking children to doctors, but typically the woman remembers when inoculations are due, schedules appointments, and keeps track of whose turn it is to take the child. Similarly, partners may share responsibility for preparing meals, but women usually take on the responsibilities of planning menus, keeping an inventory of supplies, making shopping lists, and going to the grocery store. All of this planning and organization is a psychological responsibility that is often not counted in couples' agreements for sharing the work of a family.

The consequences of the second shift are substantial. Women who do most of the homemaking and childcare tasks are often extremely stressed, fatigued, and susceptible to illness (Babarskiene & Tweed, 2009; Hochschild, 2003), and they are at a disadvantage in their paid work because they are drained by responsibilities at home (McDonald, Phipps, & Lethbridge, 2005). Frustration, resentment, and conflict are also likely when one person in a partnership bears the double responsibilities of jobs inside and outside the home (Chethik, 2008; Cubbans & Vannoy, 2004; DeMaris, 2007; Erickson, 2005). Similar stress has been found in single fathers who work a second shift.

Another clue to power dynamics is how couples manage conflict. Masculine individuals (whether female or male) tend to use more unilateral strategies to engage in and to avoid conflicts. They are more likely than feminine people to issue ultimatums, to refuse to listen or discuss an issue, or to assert that the partner is blowing things out of proportion, thus enacting the masculine tendency to maintain independence and protect the self. Feminine individuals more typically defer or compromise to reduce tension, and they employ indirect strategies when they do engage in conflict, which is consistent with feminine speech communities' emphasis on maintaining equality and building relationships (Rusbult, 1987; Stafford, Dutton, & Haas, 2000). Early on in lesbian relationships, partners tend

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES *Scientists and the Second Shift*

In 2009, Carol Greider got the call every scientist dreams of: The voice at the other end of the line was in Stockholm and told her she had won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. Where was Dr. Greider when she got the call? In her lab? Writing a scientific paper? Nope, she was folding laundry, one of the many home responsibilities she assumes.

Greider isn't alone. According to a 2010 study of scientists in the United States, female scientists do twice as

much cooking, cleaning, and laundry as male scientists (Schiebinger & Gilmartin, 2010). And then there's childcare. Dr. Greider, for example, has two school-age children, and she takes much of the responsibility for going to their sports events, taking them to and from play dates, and so forth. And that's in addition to the 56 hours spent in paid labor in her average week (Laster, 2010; Philipsen, 2008).

TAKE A STAND: Can you think of ways to reduce the second shift that many women experience?

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES

Fathering in Other Species

Most human fathers may engage less in childcare than human mothers, but fathering is a big time pursuit in many species (Angier, 2010). Among birds, males and females usually share the tasks of sitting on eggs to hatch them and fetching insects for the baby birds. In certain species of birds, such as emus and rheas, the males exclusively tend the nest.

And birds aren't the only active fathers. Male pipefish and seahorses become pregnant and give birth. Some primates also emphasize the role and status of fathers. Male Barbary macaques, for example, appear with infants to increase their standing in their social groups.

TAKE A STAND: Can you think of reasons why males of other species might be more engaged fathers?

to avoid discussions about interpersonal difficulties, but long-term lesbian couples report improvement in managing relational conflict through productive conversation. For gay partners, avoidant styles of managing conflict are more common, unless the relationship itself is perceived as at risk (Hunter, 2012).

Finally, gendered power dynamics underlie violence and abuse, which are means of exercising dominance over others. We will cover the topic of violence in detail

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES

The Mommy Myth

Many American women today are brought up to expect motherhood to be an idyllic experience (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). The ideal mother loves being with her children, never wants time away from them, and certainly never raises her voice or gets frustrated. Unfortunately, a lot of women find that real, day-to-day mothering is very different from the myth. Many young mothers are overwhelmed by what they are expected to do and, simultaneously, they feel guilty that they aren't doing enough, doing it well enough, or enjoying the bliss of motherhood (Hallstein, 2010b; Schulte, 2014; Slaughter, 2012).

Judith Warner (2005) says the expectations of American mothers today are a recipe for the perfect madness. Because

it is impossible to meet the expectations of contemporary motherhood, many mothers feel inadequate and guilty. Warner, Douglas, and Michaels think that media play a big role in creating and sustaining the mommy myth. Television programs and films often show the mythical woman who "has it all"—being a perfect mother and a successful professional. Working mothers in high-profile careers are featured in magazine and newspaper stories. Compounding media is the relentless quest for perfection that characterizes American culture—whatever we do, we should do it perfectly. One way to address this, say Douglas and Michaels, is to learn what the mommy myth is and to name every instance of it you see.

TAKE A STAND: Where do you see examples of the mommy myth in everyday life? Can you think of ways to promote more realistic views of motherhood and ways to lessen the stressors experienced by moms today?

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES *Global Nannies*

Two careers plus children may be too much! Many two-worker families find they can't fulfill all their responsibilities at home and in the workplace. One solution is to hire someone else to take care of the home, and the cheapest domestic labor is women with limited employment prospects from underdeveloped countries. Each year, millions of women leave Mexico, the Philippines, and other relatively poor

countries to become maids and nannies for well-to-do families in the United States and other wealthy nations. Poor countries become even poorer as women migrate away from their own families and home countries. The result is a "care deficit" in countries that already have too few resources (Bronstein, 2004; Hochschild, 2012; Hochschild & Ehrenreich, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007).

TAKE A STAND: What would you suggest to make it possible for families in wealthy countries to have good childcare without creating care deficits in less wealthy countries?

in Chapter 12, but we also need to acknowledge here that intimate partner violence is one manifestation of gendered power dynamics in romantic relationships. Not confined to any single group, violence cuts across race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. In the United States, one in four women has been violently attacked by her husband or boyfriend, and one is killed by her partner every six hours (Kristof, 2014b). At least 30% of women worldwide have been victims of intimate partner violence (Prevalence of Domestic Violence, 2013). Intimate partner violence is not confined to adult relationships. Approximately one in 10 high school students reports being physically hurt by a girlfriend or boyfriend, and one in three high school students reports psychological violence from a girlfriend or boyfriend (Hoffman, 2012).

Violence is inflicted primarily by men, most of whom have been socialized into masculine identities (Johnson, 2006; Neighbors, Walker, Mbilinyi, O'Rourke, Edleson, Zegree, & Roffman, 2010; Olson & Rauscher, 2011; Wood, 2004). In the United States, every 12 to 18 seconds a woman is beaten by a man; four women each day are reported beaten to death; and women are 600% more likely to be brutalized by an intimate partner than are men (Wood, 2001b). We've seen that personal relationships reflect the expectations and orientations encouraged by feminine and masculine socialization. Gender differences surface in how partners express and experience closeness, preferences for autonomy and connection, the distribution of responsibility for maintaining relationships, and power dynamics.

SUMMARY

Gendered ideas continue to shape friendships and romantic relationships. Yet, today many people feel that traditional gender roles aren't satisfying or realistic. As people discover the limits and disadvantages of traditional gender roles, they are experimenting with new ways to form and sustain relationships and their own identities within those relationships. For instance, some men choose to be stay-at-home dads

because they find greater fulfillment in nurturing a family than in pursuing a career in the paid labor force. Some women discover that they are more effective and more fulfilled by work outside the home than by work inside it. And many people balance home and paid work in ways that transcend traditional roles. Examples such as these remind us that we can edit cultural scripts, using our own lives to craft alternative visions of women, men, and relationships.

KEY TERMS

The following terms are defined in this chapter on the pages indicated, as well as in alphabetical order in the book's glossary, which begins on page 281. The text's companion website also provides interactive flash cards to help you learn these terms and the concepts they represent. You can access the site at www.cengagebrain.com.

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feminine ruler 188

male deficit model 187

Personal relationships 185


psychological responsibility 203

second shift 200

GENDER ONLINE

1. Look at personal ads on OkCupid or Match.com. To what extent do the characteristics sought in men and women conform to gender stereotypes?
2. Online search terms: "cross-sex friends," "psychological responsibility," "second shift," "dual-worker families."
3. The U.S. government's Violence Against Women office describes its mission, activities, and resources at: <http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/>

REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, AND ACTION

1. Reread the quotation on the opening page of this chapter. How could you apply this quotation to the idea of building and sustaining personal relationships?
2. Do you find more value in the male deficit or the alternate paths model of closeness? How does the model you prefer affect your behaviors and your interpretations of others' behaviors?
3. To what extent are gendered patterns of interaction described in this chapter present in your current or past romantic relationships?
4.  Expand your communication repertoire. If you have relied primarily on talk to build closeness, see what happens when you do things with friends. If your friendships have tended to grow out of shared activities, check out what happens if you talk with friends without some activity to structure time.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1. Julia Wood and Chris Inman. (1993). In a different mode: Recognizing male modes of closeness. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 21 (pp. 279–295). This is the article that introduced the alternate paths model of closeness. At the time that the article was written, the authors were team-teaching a course in gender and communication.
2. Niobe Way. (2011). *Deep Secrets: Boys' Friendships and the Crisis of Connection*. Boston: Harvard University Press. In this book, psychologist Niobe Way conducts interviews with hundreds of teenage boys from a range of backgrounds about their friendships. She concludes that boy-boy friendships are very close and vital to boys' navigation of adolescence.