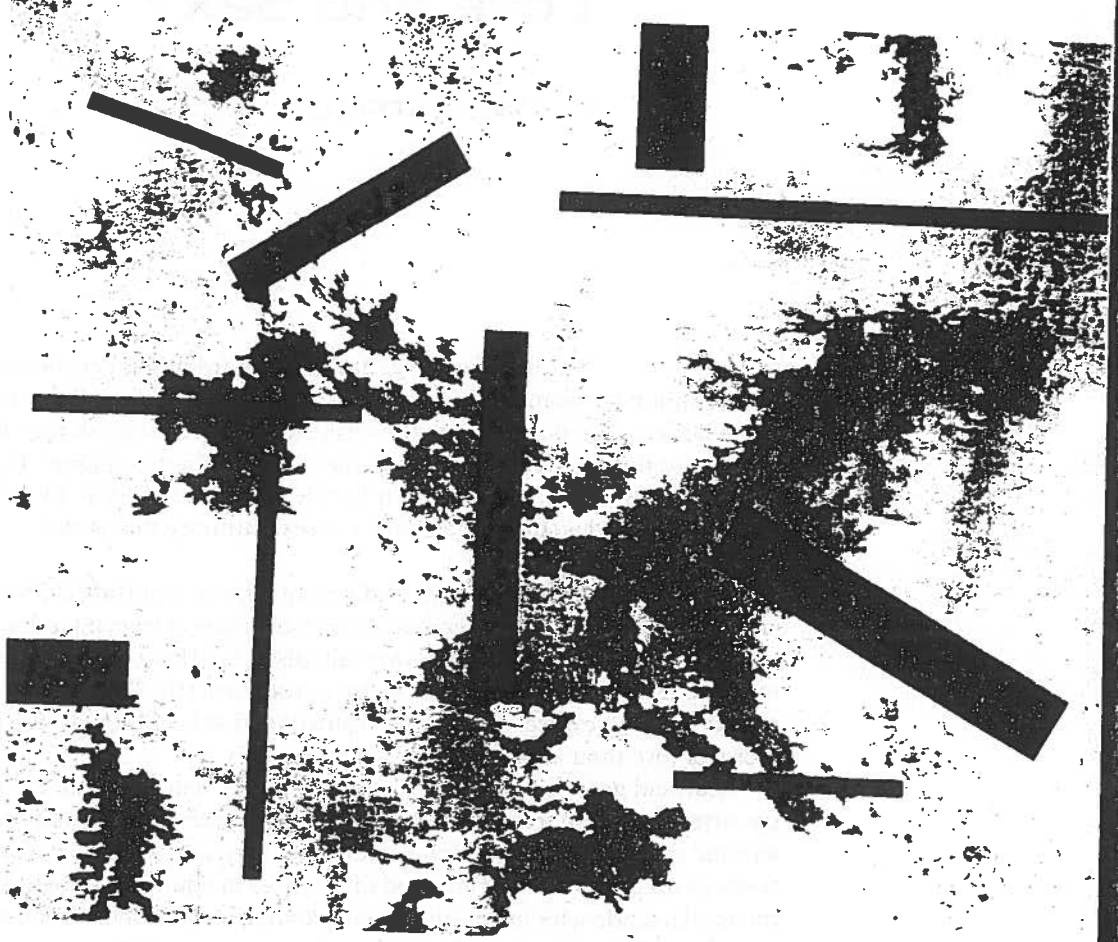


CHANGING BOUNDARIES

GENDER ROLES AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOR



Elizabeth Rice Allgeier
and
Naomi B. McCormick



5 What Do Women and Men Want from Love and Sex?

ELAINE HATFIELD

The benefits of egalitarian over traditional gender-role identification for women's and men's sexual pleasure were well documented in the last chapter. But what are the wishes and expectations of men and women for their love relationships in the long run? In this chapter, Elaine Hatfield reviews research on the similarities and differences in the goals of adult men and women regarding love, sex, intimacy, and sexual performance.

Love means different things to different people, and Hatfield begins reviewing possible gender differences in six variations of love, including romantic, self-centered, sensible, and altruistic (selfless) love. Her research review indicates that men view love more romantically. They also tend, however, to be more cynical about love. Women tend to be willing to sacrifice more for love than is characteristic of men.

Hatfield goes on to examine gender differences in the meaning of sexuality. After reviewing sociobiological versus social learning speculations regarding the sexual interests and responses of men and women, she reviews research on gender similarities and differences in adults' responses to erotic materials, tendencies to initiate sexual activity, enjoyment of sexual stimulation, desire for intimacy, and sexual performance expectations.

Some theorists speculate that the expectations and desires of the two genders are so different that men and women are essentially incompatible with one another. But Hatfield's review of research in the area leads her to an entirely different perspective: "Nature has arranged things more sensibly." She concludes that, although the goals of men and women do differ in a few superficial ways that are largely shaped by differential gender-role socialization, both men and women share the same goals for intimacy, sex, and love.



Love has not been protected from ravages of the battle between the sexes. From time immemorial, men and women have been accusing one another of being incapable of feeling or returning love; for example, "Men can't love" (Firestone, 1971, p. 152) and "Men love women; women merely love love" (Anonymous).

The controversy is far from over. Recently, a woman posed an intriguing question in my human sexuality class: "Why are love affairs generally such disasters?" She had decided it was hopeless—"Men and women just want different things." Her bitter feelings sparked an intense debate.

Most of the students said they believed that men and women were really very much alike. They might talk about things differently, but in truth they both cared about the same kinds of things.

"Not so," said an indignant minority. Students then suggested a bewildering list of ways in which they thought men and women differed:

"Women care about love. They have to trust their partners if they're to have good sex."

"What men care about is sex; they want to have a lot of sex, with a lot of partners, in a lot of ways." ("Yeah! Yeah!" came a rowdy chorus.)

"Men claim to be egalitarian, but they all want to marry virgins; women want someone who is sexually experienced."

"Women are capable of intimacy. Men aren't. They won't talk about their feelings."

"Women want commitment; men don't want to be pinned down."

"Women say they want intimacy, but just let a man express a little weakness, and they really give it to him."

What an array of sexual stereotypes! Is there any truth in them?

REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

I reviewed the research literature in order to find the answer to two questions: (1) What do men and women want out of their intimate relationships—the same things or markedly different things? and (2) What, specifically, is the nature of these differences?

Most theorists seemed to agree that—in the main—men and women hope for very similar things from their intimate relationships. There are, however, probably *some* significant differences in the things they desire.

Sociobiologists contend that men and women are *genetically* programmed to desire different things from their intimate relations (see Hagen, 1979; Symons, 1979; and Wilson, 1975). Symons (1979) argues that gender

differences are probably the most powerful determinant of how people behave sexually. Symons's sociobiological argument proceeds as follows: According to evolutionary biology, animals inherit those characteristics that ensure that they will transmit as many of their genes to the next generation as possible. It is to men and women's advantage to produce as many surviving children as possible. But men and women differ in one critical respect—in order to produce a child, men need only to invest a trivial amount of energy; a single man can conceivably father an almost unlimited number of children. On the other hand, a woman can conceive only a limited number of children. It is to a woman's advantage to ensure the survival of the children she does conceive. Symons observes, "The enormous sex differences in minimum parental investment and in reproductive opportunities and constraints explain why *Homo sapiens*, a species with only moderate sex differences in structure, exhibits profound sex differences in psyche" (p. 27).

What are the gender differences Symons insists are "wired in"? According to Symons,

1. Men desire a variety of sex partners; women do not.
2. Men are inclined to be polygamous (possessing many wives); women are more malleable in this respect; they are equally satisfied in polygamous, monogamous, or polyandrous marriages (possessing many husbands).
3. Men are sexually jealous. Women are more malleable in this respect; they are concerned with security—not fidelity.
4. Men are sexually aroused by the sight of women and women's genitals; women are not aroused by men's appearance.
5. For men, "sexual attractiveness" equals "youth." For women, "sexual attractiveness" equals "political and economic power."
6. Men have every reason to pursue women actively. They are programmed to impregnate as many women as possible. Women have every reason to be "coy." It takes time to decide if a man is a good genetic risk—is likely to be nurturant and protective.
7. Men are intensely competitive with one another. Competition over women is the most frequent cause of violence. Women are far less competitive.

In contrast, social learning theorists insist that gender differences are learned. Men and women are very adaptable. A half century ago, Margaret Mead in *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1969) discussed three cultures of New Guinea (now Papua New Guinea) and their gender-role standards. She described the Arapesh, a culture in which both genders had "feminine" traits; the Mundugamur, among whom both genders were "masculine"; and the Tchambuli, among whom the men were "feminine" and women were "masculine."

Thus, learning theorists argue, if men and women desire different things from intimate relationships, it's because they've been *taught* to desire different things (see Bernard, 1972; Byrne & Byrne, 1977; Firestone, 1971; Griffitt & Hatfield, in press; Hatfield & Walster, 1981; Safilios-Rothschild, 1977; and Tavris & Offir, 1977).

Learning theorists do not always agree about what men and women have been trained to want from intimate relationships. For example, some argue that men are quicker to love, and love more deeply, than do women (Hobart, 1958; Kanin, Davidson, & Scheck, 1970; Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976). Others argue that women love more deeply (Firestone, 1971; Kanin, Davidson, & Scheck, 1970). Some think it is men who are most possessive and jealous; others think that women are (see Clanton & Smith, 1977).

What does research indicate? Are there gender differences in what men and women want out of their intimate love relationships? Theorists have speculated that male-female differences are probably most striking in four areas: (1) concern with love, (2) concern with sex, (3) desire for intimacy, and (4) desire for control.

CONCERN WITH LOVE

According to folklore, it is women who are most concerned with love. Theorists of every political persuasion have assumed that the cultural stereotype—women love; men work—has a ring of truth.

Aristotle argued that it could hardly be otherwise. He theorized that, by nature, men are superior in every respect to women; not only are they superior in body and mind, but even in the ability to live on via the next generation. Aristotle erroneously believed that semen transmitted the soul to the embryo. "Feminine secretions" transmitted only a temporary earthly body to the next generation. Thus, Aristotle argued that "because the wife is inferior to her husband, she ought to love him more than herself; algebraically, this would compensate for their inequality and result in a well-balanced relationship." For Aristotle, the "fact" that women are concerned with loving and being loved, while men care far less, is written in their genes (or rather, in their "semen" and "secretions").

Interestingly enough, modern feminists have tended to agree with Aristotle—they too assume that women are the more romantic of the two genders. For example, Dorothy Dinnerstein (1977, p. 70) writes,

It has often been pointed out that women depend lopsidedly on love for emotional fulfillment because they are barred from absorbing activity in the public domain. This is true. But it is also true that men can depend lopsidedly on participation in the public domain because they are stymied by love.

Shulamith Firestone (1971) agrees. In *The Dialectic of Sex*, she observes, "Men can't love." She comments, "That women live for love and men live for work is a truism. . . . Men were thinking, writing, and creating, because women were pouring their energies into those men; women . . . are preoccupied with love" (pp. 126–127). Firestone does not argue that women should cease being lovers. She argues, instead, that men and women must become equals, so they *both* can love.

This commonsense view—that women are intensely concerned with love while men's feelings are more muted—has been echoed by a wide array of psychologists and sociologists (see, for example, Parsons, 1959; Langhorn & Secord, 1955; and Parsons & Bales, 1955). The theorists agree—but do the facts support the theorists?

Research suggests that the facts are more complicated than one might expect: Men and women seem to differ in what they mean by love. But who is defined as the "romantic" depends on your definition of love.

The Meaning of Love

What do we mean by "love"? Lee (1977) and Hatkoff and Lasswell (1979) argue that "love" means very different things to different people. Hatkoff and Lasswell (1979) have concluded that men and women differ in the way they conceptualize love. They interviewed 554 blacks, whites, and Asians as well as members of several other ethnic groups. The lovers' ages ranged from under 18 to 60. They concluded that men are more romantic and self-centered lovers. Women are more dependent, companionate, and practical. No one is very altruistic.

Research by other investigators suggests that their conclusions might have some validity. Let us consider the evidence regarding gender differences in the different kinds of love.

Romantic love Several theorists agree with Hatkoff and Lasswell's (1979) finding that men are more romantic than are women. In 1958, sociologist Charles Hobart asked 923 men and women to respond to a series of statements related to romanticism. Why not try seeing how you feel about Hobart's 12 statements? You might also want to ask your current dating partner how he or she feels (see Table 5-1).

Hobart (1958) found that men had a somewhat more romantic view of male-female relationships than did women. On the average, women agreed with about four of the romanticism items. Men agreed with about five of them.

Recently, social psychologists tried to replicate Hobart's work in an effort to determine if it is still men who are the real romantics. They found evidence to indicate that men may still be the more romantic sex (see Dion & Dion, 1973, 1979; and Knox & Sporakowski, 1968).

5 What Do Women and Men Want from Love and Sex?

TABLE 5-1
Romanticism Scale

	AGREE	DISAGREE
*1. Lovers ought to expect a certain amount of disillusionment after marriage.	_____	_____
*2. True love should be suppressed in cases where its existence conflicts with the prevailing standards of morality.	_____	_____
3. To be truly in love is to be in love forever.	_____	_____
*4. The sweetly feminine "clinging vine" girl cannot compare with the capable and sympathetic girl as a sweetheart.	_____	_____
5. As long as they at least love each other, two people should have no trouble getting along together in marriage.	_____	_____
6. A girl should expect her sweetheart to be chivalrous on all occasions.	_____	_____
7. A person should marry whomever he loves regardless of social position.	_____	_____
8. Lovers should freely confess everything of personal significance to each other.	_____	_____
*9. Economic security should be carefully considered before selecting a marriage partner.	_____	_____
*10. Most of us could sincerely love any one of several people equally well.	_____	_____
11. A lover without jealousy is hardly to be desired.	_____	_____
*12. One should not marry against the serious advice of one's parents.	_____	_____

NOTE: What's your romanticism score? If you agreed with Items 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, or 11 (the items without an asterisk), give yourself one point per item. If you disagreed with Items 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, or 12 (the items with an asterisk), give yourself one point per item. Record your total score here _____.

SOURCE: Hobart, C. W. The incidence of romanticism during courtship. *Social Forces*, 1958, 36, p. 364. Copyright © 1958 by The University of North Carolina Press. Used by permission.

Other researchers support Hatkoff and Lasswell's findings that men—as the romantics—are more likely to fall in love at first sight, become deeply committed to a romantic dream, and suffer bitterly when their romantic fantasies fall apart. For example, Kanin, Davidson, & Scheck (1970) interviewed 700 young lovers. "How early," they asked, "did you become

Six Definitions of Love

ROMANTIC LOVE

Romantic lovers believe in love at first sight. They're in love with love. They can remember when they met, how they met, and what their partners were wearing when they first touched. They expect their partners to remember, too. Romantic lovers want to know everything about their beloved; to share their joys and sorrows and their experiences. They identify totally with one another. They are thoroughly committed to their lovers. There is a sexual kind of love. Romantic lovers try hard to please their loved ones. They give generous presents.

SELF-CENTERED LOVE

Self-centered lovers play at love affairs as they would play at games. They try to demonstrate their skill or superiority; they try to win. Such lovers may keep two or three lovers on the string at one time. For them, sex is self-centered and exploitative. As a rule, such lovers have only one sexual routine. If that doesn't work, they move on to new sexual partners. Self-centered lovers care about having fun. They get frightened off if someone becomes dependent on them or wants commitment. If a partner ends the relationship, they take loss gracefully: "You win a few, you lose a few—there'll be another one along in a minute."

DEPENDENT LOVE

Dependent lovers are obsessed. They are unable to sleep, eat, or even think. The dependent lover has peaks of excitement, but also depths of depression.

aware that you loved the other?" Of the men, 20 percent fell in love before the fourth date; only 15 percent of the women fell in love that early. At the other extreme, 30 percent of the men, compared to 43 percent of the women, were not sure if they were in love by the twentieth date. Men seemed willing to fall headlong into love; women were far more cautious about getting involved.

There is also some evidence that it is men who cling most tenaciously to an obviously stricken affair and who suffer most when it finally dies. A group of Harvard scientists (Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976) charted the course of 231 Boston couples' affairs for two years. They found that usually it was the women who decided whether and when an affair should end; men seemed to

They are irrationally jealous, and become extremely anxious when their loved ones threaten to leave, even for a short time.

COMPANIONATE LOVE

Companionate lovers are basically good friends. They take it for granted that their relationships will be permanent. The companionate relationship is *not* an intensely sexual one. Sex is satisfying, but not compelling. Temporary separations are not a great problem. If their relationship breaks up, such lovers remain close and caring friends for the rest of their lives.

PRACTICAL LOVE

Practical lovers are intensely pragmatic. They look realistically at their own assets, assess their market value, and set off to get the best possible deal in their partners. They are faithful in love so long as the loved one is a good bargain. Practical lovers think carefully about education, make sensible decisions about family size, and so on. They carefully check out their future in-laws and relatives.

ALTRUISTIC LOVE

Altruistic lovers are forgiving. They assume the best. If their lovers cause them pain, they assume the lovers didn't mean to do so. Altruistic lovers are always supportive, self-sacrificing. They care enough about their lovers' happiness to give them up, if their lovers have a chance for greater happiness elsewhere.

stick it out to the bitter end. When an affair finally did flicker out, the men suffered most. The men felt most depressed, most lonely, least happy, and least free after a breakup. They found it extremely hard to accept the fact that they were no longer loved, that the affair was over and there was nothing they could do about it. They were plagued with the hope that if only they said the right thing or did the right thing everything would be as it was. Women were far more resigned, and thus were better able to pick up the pieces of their lives and move on. And the contention that it is men who suffer most when an affair flickers out, is consistent with the fact that three times as many men as women commit suicide after a disastrous love affair (Bernard, 1972).

Self-centered love Self-centered lovers see love as a pleasant pastime. Following the Roman poet Ovid's advice, they play the game of love for their own purposes. The rules of the game are to exploit a relationship to its fullest without getting deeply involved.

Few social psychologists have explored self-centered love, probably because most people don't consider it to be love at all. Hatkoff and Laswell (1979) do, and they found that men are far more likely to be self-centered lovers than women. Replicating their findings, Dion and Dion (1973) also found that men can be more exploitative in love relationships than women.

Dependent love A number of scientists have studied dependent love, although they have chosen to label this intense state as "passionate love" (the term we prefer), "puppy love," "infatuation," or "falling in love" (as opposed to "being in love").

Hatfield and Walster (1981, p. 9) defined passionate love as "A state of intense absorption in another. Sometimes lovers are those who long for their partners and for complete fulfillment. Sometimes lovers are those who are ecstatic at finally having attained their partners' love, and, momentarily, complete fulfillment. A state of intense psychological arousal." Tennov (1979) argues that passionate love has the following basic components:

1. Lovers find it impossible to work, to study, to do anything but think about the beloved.
2. They long to be loved in return.
3. Their mood fluctuates wildly; they are ecstatic when they hope they might be loved, despairing when they feel they're not.
4. They find it impossible to believe that they could ever love again.
5. They fantasize about how it would go if their partner declared his or her love for them.
6. They're shy in the other's presence.
7. When everything seems lost, their feelings are even more intense than usual.
8. They search for signs (a squeeze of the hand, a knee that doesn't move away, a gaze that lingers) that signify that the other desires them.
9. Their heart aches when they imagine they might lose the other.
10. They feel like walking on air when the other seems to care.
11. They care so desperately about the other that nothing else matters; they are willing to sacrifice anything for love.
12. Love is blind; lovers idealize one another.

Contrary to the evidence presented earlier that men tend to be more romantic, researchers have found that, while a relationship is at its highest pitch, women experience the euphoria and agony of romance more intensely

5 What Do Women and Men Want from Love and Sex?

than do men. Kanin, Davidson, and Scheck (1970) asked men and women to rate (on the following scale: 1 = none; 2 = slight; 3 = moderate; 4 = strong; 5 = very strong) how they felt when they were in love; that is, to what extent did they experience the following love reactions:

- () Felt like I was floating on a cloud
- () Felt like I wanted to run, jump, and scream
- () Had trouble concentrating
- () Felt giddy and carefree
- () Had a general feeling of well-being
- () Was nervous before dates
- () Had physical sensations: cold hands, butterflies in the stomach, tingling spine, and so on
- () Had insomnia

In this study, the women appeared to be the most passionate. They generally experienced the symptoms of passionate love with some intensity. Men did not, with one exception: men and women were both nervous before dates. The recent work of Tennov (1979) provides additional support for the contention that women feel more "symptoms" of love than do men.

Researchers have found only one exception to this conclusion. Traupmann and Hatfield (1981) interviewed men and women at all stages of life about their feelings for their partners. They interviewed 191 dating couples and 53 newlywed couples right after their marriages and then again a year later. They also interviewed 106 older women, but (unfortunately, for our purposes) they did not interview women's husbands. These people were asked how much passionate love they felt for their partners and how much love they thought their partners felt for them. Possible answers were (1) "None at all," (2) "Very little," (3) "Some," (4) "A great deal," and (5) "A tremendous amount." Unlike previous researchers, they found that during courtship and the early years of marriage, men and women felt equally passionate about one another. Both steady daters and newlywed men and women felt "a great deal" of passionate love for their partners. It was only in old age that men *may* begin to love their partners with slightly more passion than they are loved in return. Older women reported that their husbands loved them with "some" passion. They reported feeling slightly less passionate about their husbands. Whether or not their husbands agree with this assessment is unknown (see Figure 5-1). In summary, women appear to love the most passionately, at least until old age.

Companionate and practical love Women appear to *like* their partners more than their partners like them in return. Researchers have talked about this friendly kind of love as companionate love, practical love, or just plain love. For most people, this is the essence of love.

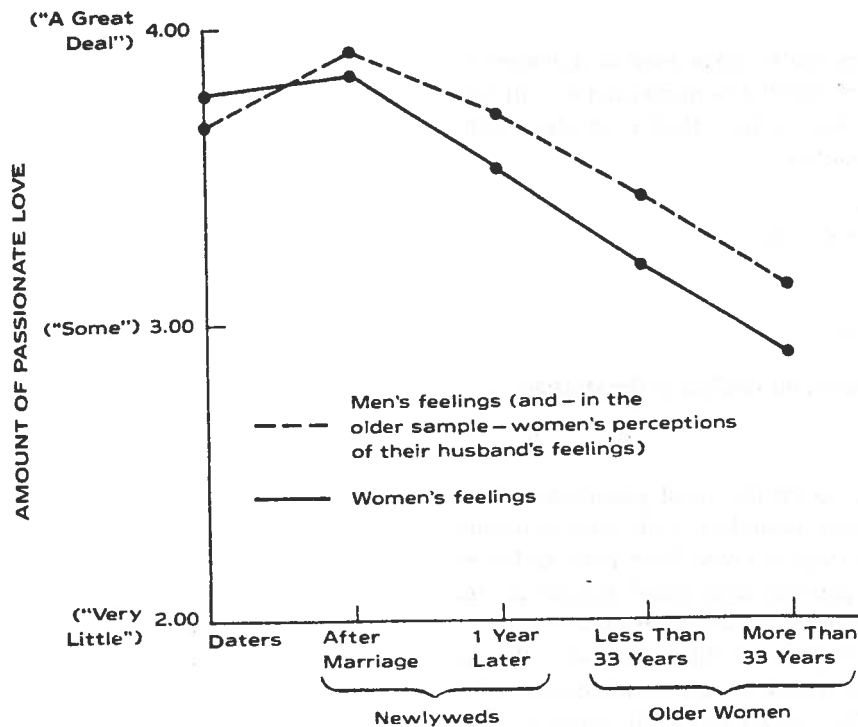


FIGURE 5-1
Dating Couples', Newlywed Couples', and Older Women's Passionate Love for Their Partners

SOURCE: Traupmann, J., & Hatfield, E. Love: Its effect on mental and physical health. In J. March, S. Kiesler, R. Fogel, E. Hatfield, & E. Shanas (Eds.), *Aging: Stability and change in the family*. New York: Academic Press, 1981, p. 261. Used by permission of Academic Press and the authors.

Hatfield and Walster (1981) agree that liking and companionate love have much in common. They define companionate love as "The affection we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply entwined" (p. 9). Rubin (1970) explored some of the components of love. He argued that love includes such elements as idealization of the other, tenderness, responsibility, the longing to aid and be aided by the loved one, intimacy, the desire to share emotions and experiences, sexual attraction, the exclusive and absorptive nature of the relationship, and finally, a relative lack of concern with social norms and constraints.

Again, researchers find that, from the first, women are the friendly lovers. Traupmann and Hatfield (1981), also asked dating, newlywed, and older people how *companionately* they loved their partners and how much they thought they were loved in return. They found that from the dating

5 What Do Women and Men Want from Love and Sex?

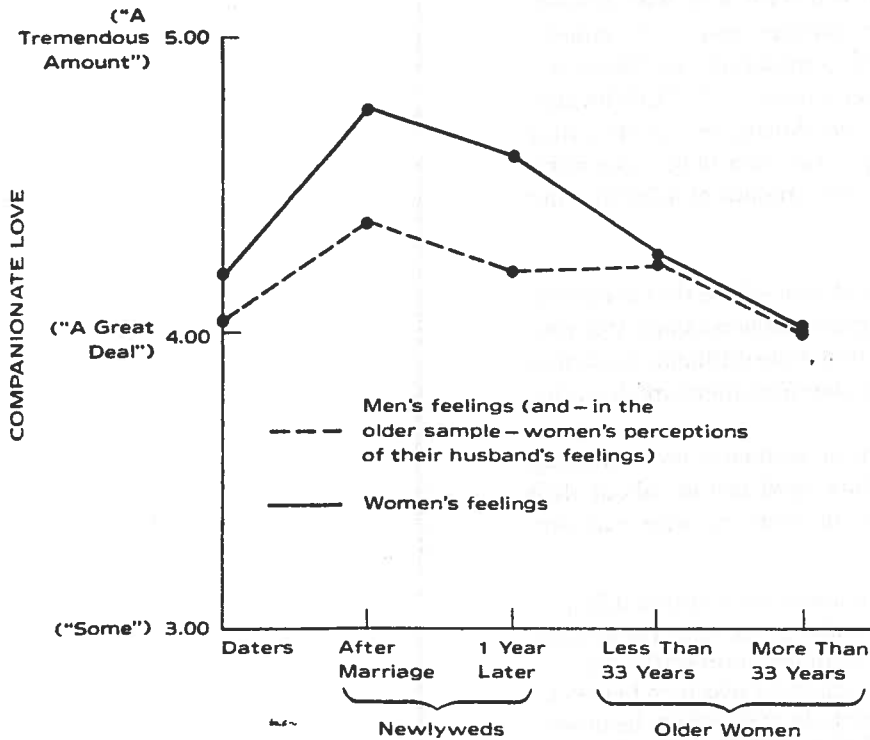


FIGURE 5-2
Dating Couples', Newlywed Couples', and Older Women's Companionate Love for Their Partners

SOURCE: Traupmann, J., & Hatfield, E. Love: Its effect on mental and physical health. In J. March, S. Kiesler, R. Fogel, E. Hatfield, & E. Shanas (Eds.), *Aging: Stability and change in the family*. New York: Academic Press, 1981, p. 262. Used by permission of Academic Press and the authors.

period until very late in life, women admitted they loved their partners more companionately than they were loved in return. Both steady daters and newlyweds expressed a "great deal" to "tremendous amount" of companionate love for their partners. By age 50, most people still expressed "a great deal" of companionate love for their mates—even after many years of marriage. As one can see from Figure 5-2, at each point in time women feel more companionate love than do men. It is only in the final years of life that men and women come to love one another companionately with equal intensity. With long experience, equal respect and love evidently comes.

For many women, the fact that they love more passionately and companionately than they are loved in return is deeply unsettling. They continue to long for love throughout their marriages.

My colleagues and I (Hatfield et al., 1981) interviewed casually dating and newlywed couples in an attempt to determine what they wished from their sexual relations. Men and women's concern with love was assessed via such questions as "During sex, I wish my partner was . . ." (possible answers ranged from "Much more caring and considerate" to "Much less caring and considerate") and "I wish my partner would . . ." ("Talk lovingly much more during sex" to "Talk lovingly much less during sex"). Both dating and newlywed women said they wished their partners would be more affectionate during sexual intercourse; men thought the amount of affection they received was "just about right."

Altruistic love Altruism is a classical form of love—love that is patient, kind, that never demands reciprocity. All the great religions share this concept of love. For example, St. Paul, in his letters to the Corinthians, wrote that Christians have a duty to care about others, whether the others are deserving of their love or not.

The data on who is most altruistic—men or women—are confusing. Sociologist John Lee asked Americans, Canadians, and Britons about their love experiences. He didn't find anyone, man or woman, who was very altruistic. Lee (1974, p. 50) admits,

I found no saints in my sample. I have yet to interview an unqualified example of [altruism], although a few respondents had brief [altruistic] episodes in relationships that were otherwise tinged with selfishness. For instance, one of my subjects, seeing that his lover was torn between him or another man, resolved to save her the pain of deciding; he bowed out gracefully. His action fell short of pure [altruism], however, because he continued to be interested in how well his beloved was doing, and was purely and selfishly delighted when she dropped the other man and returned to him.

Hatkoff and Lasswell (1979) interviewed blacks, whites, and Asians, ranging in age from 18 to 60, about their perceptions, memories, and experiences of love. In Hawaii, it was women (especially Asian women) who were most altruistic. In the mainland United States, men had higher altruism scores than women. Thus, cultural factors probably have an enormous influence on altruism.

Recently, however, other research suggests women may be willing to sacrifice more for love than are men. Psychologists have begun to study couples' implicit "marriage contracts"—men and women's unconscious understandings as to what sort of give-and-take is fair. In his book on marriage contracts, for example, Sager (1976, pp. 4–5) observes,

The concept of . . . marriage contracts has proven extremely useful. . . . But what must be emphasized above all is the reciprocal aspect of the contract: What each partner expects to give and receive in exchange are crucial. Contracts deal with every conceivable aspect of family life: relationships with friends, achievements, power, sex, leisure time, money, children, etc.

And researchers have attempted to determine how fair men and women perceive their respective "contracts" to be (Hatfield, Walster, & Traupmann, 1979; Utne et al., in press; Traupmann & Hatfield, in press; Traupmann, Hatfield, & Sprecher, 1982). The researchers contacted dating couples, newlyweds, and elderly couples who had been married for up to 60 years, and asked them how fair they thought their relationships were.

Couples in this series of studies were asked to focus on four possible areas of concern:

1. *Personal concerns*: How attractive were they and their partners? How sociable? Intelligent?
2. *Emotional concerns*: How much love did they express for one another? How much liking, understanding, and acceptance? How much sexual pleasure did they give and get? Were they faithful? How committed to one another? Did they respect their partners' needs for freedom?
3. *Day-to-day concerns*: How much of the day-to-day maintenance of the house did they and their partners do? How about finances? Companionship? Conversation? Decision making? Remembering special occasions? Did they fit in with one another's friends and relatives?
4. *Opportunities gained and lost*: How much did they gain simply from going together or being married? (For example, how much did they appreciate the chance to be married? To be a parent or a grandparent? Having someone to grow old with?) How about opportunities forgone?

After considering all these things, men and women were asked how fair they thought their relationships were. Were they getting more than they felt they deserved? Just what they deserved? Or less than they thought they had coming from their relationships?

Researchers found that regardless of whether couples were dating, newlyweds, or long marrieds, both men and women agreed that the men were getting the best deal. Both men and women agreed that, in general, men contribute less to a marriage than women do and get more out of marriage than do women.

Bernard (1972) provides additional support for the notion that women sacrifice more for love than men do. In her review of the voluminous litera-

ture contrasting "his marriage" versus "her marriage," she observes a strange paradox. Women are generally thought to be more eager to marry (and marry anyone) than are men. Yet women are the "losers" in marriage. She notes that "being married is about twice as advantageous to men as to women in terms of continued survival" (p. 27). As compared to single men, married men's mental health is far better, their happiness is greater, their earning power is greater, after middle age their health is better, and they live longer. The *opposite* is true for married as compared to single women. For example, all symptoms of psychological distress show up more frequently than expected among married women: nervous breakdowns, nervousness, inertia, insomnia, trembling hands, nightmares, perspiring hands, fainting, headaches, dizziness, and heart palpitations. They show up much less frequently than expected among unmarried women.

These data, then, suggest that, like it or not, women sacrifice the most for love. Perhaps for women, marriage should carry a warning label: "This relationship may be hazardous to your health."

Summary

The evidence, then, makes clear that there is no simple answer to the question "Who is most loving—men or women?" Men tend to have a more romantic view—and a more exploitative view—of love than do women.

When we turn to passionate love, it is women who are the great lovers. Women experience the euphoria and the agony of love more intensely than do men. Yet, for most people, it is probably companionate love that represents "true love" at its best. Here, the evidence is clear. Women love more than they are loved in return. It is unclear who loves most unselfishly, men or women. Most evidence suggests, once again, that it is women who are willing to sacrifice the most for love.

CONCERN WITH SEX

The second type of gender difference that scientists have investigated is in concern with sex. Traditionally, theorists have assumed that sex is far more important for men than for women. According to cultural stereotypes, men are eager for sexual activity; women set limits on such activity (see Chapter 3). Theorists from the sociobiological and cultural-contingency perspectives can agree with this observation. What they disagree about, is *why* such a gender difference exists.

A number of biological determinists, most notably Freud, have argued that biology is destiny, and that interest in sexual activities is determined primarily by genes, hormones, and anatomy. Sociobiologists contend that

men and women are genetically programmed to be differentially interested in sexual experience and restraint (see Hagen, 1979; Symons, 1979; Wilson, 1975). They argue that men are genetically programmed to seek out sexual activity; women, to set limits on it.

At the other end of the spectrum are social learning theorists, who argue that sexual behavior is learned (see Bernard, 1972; Byrne & Byrne, 1977; Firestone, 1971; Foucault, 1973; Griffitt & Hatfield, in press; Hatfield & Walster, 1981; Rubin, 1973; Safilios-Rothschild, 1977; Tavis & Offir, 1977). These authors argue that the sociopolitical context determines who is allowed to be sexual and who is forbidden to be, who is punished for violating sexual rules and who is not, and even what kinds of foreplay and sexual positions are considered to be normal. Because this is a male-dominated society, they argue, existing sexual norms meet the needs of men. Men are encouraged to express themselves sexually; women are punished for doing so. The style of intercourse men prefer (for example, the "missionary" position) is considered normal; the activities that women prefer (such as cuddling and cunnilingus) are neglected. No wonder, then, that men find sex in its common forms more appealing than do women.

Regardless of theorists' debates as to *why* men and women may differ in their enthusiasm for sex, they generally agree that men and women *do* differ. But, as we have seen earlier, cultural stereotypes are not always correct. What does research indicate?

In the earliest sex research, scientists found fairly sizable gender differences. In more recent research, researchers find that although gender differences still exist, they are not always so strong as theorists have assumed. Gender differences have begun to narrow, or disappear.

Gender Differences in Liking for Erotica

Early research supported the traditional assumption that men, not women, are interested in erotica (Kinsey, et al., 1948, 1953). Recently, however, researchers have found that there are few, if any, gender differences in response to literary erotica (Veitch & Griffitt, 1980) or to audiotapes of sexual encounters (Heiman, 1977). For Fisher's comprehensive review of research in this area, see Chapter 12.

Willingness to Initiate Sexual Activity

In Kinsey's day, a double standard existed. Men were allowed, if not encouraged, to get sex whenever and wherever they could. Women were supposed to save themselves for marriage. In light of the double standard, it was not surprising that both men and women agreed that men were more likely to initiate sex and that women were more likely to resist sexual ad-

vances (see Baker, 1974; Ehrmann, 1959; Kaats & Davis, 1970; Reiss, 1967; Schofield, 1965; Sorensen, 1973).

Recent evidence suggests that traditional standards, although changing, are not yet dead. Contemporary college students reject a sexual double standard (Hopkins, 1977; Komarovsky, 1976; Peplau, Rubin, & Hill, 1976). Yet, this new single standard does not seem to have changed the cultural stereotype of male as sexual initiator and female as limit setter. Even today, it is almost always the man who initiates sexual activity (see Chapter 3). In a recent study of unmarried students, the man was found to have more say than the woman about the type and frequency of sexual activity (Peplau, Rubin, & Hill, 1976) except when a dating couple had decided to abstain from coitus in which case the woman's veto was the major restraining influence (Peplau, Rubin, & Hill, 1977).

Gender Differences in Sexual Experience

There is compelling evidence that men and women are becoming very similar with regard to sexual experience, however.

In the classic studies of sexuality, researchers found that society's double standard influenced sexual experience. For example, Kinsey and his colleagues (1948, 1953) tried to assess how sexually active men were throughout their lives, compared to women. They found that (1) indeed, men did seem to engage in more sexual activity than did women, and (2) men and women had strikingly different sexual histories.

At 18, it was usually the man who pushed to have sex. Kinsey and his associates reported that most men were as sexually expressive at age 15 as they would ever be. In fact, according to Masters and Johnson (1966, 1970) 25 percent of men are impotent by age 65; 50 percent are impotent by age 75.

Women's experience was markedly different. Most women were slow to begin sexual activity. At 15, most women are quite inactive. Sometime between the ages of 16 and 20, they slowly shed their inhibitions and begin to feel more enthusiastic about sexual exploration. They continue their high rates of sexual activity for fully two decades. Not until their late 40s does their sexual behavior begin to ebb.

In commenting on women's sexual histories, Kinsey and his colleagues (1953, pp. 353-354) observed,

One of the tragedies which appears in a number of the marriages originates in the fact that the male may be most desirous of sexual contact in his early years, while the responses of the females are still undeveloped and while she is still struggling to free herself from the acquired inhibitions which prevent her from participating freely in the marital

activity. But over the years most females become less inhibited and develop an interest in sexual relations, which they may then maintain until they are in their fifties or even sixties. But by then the responses of the average male may have dropped so considerably that his interest in coitus, and especially in coitus with a wife who has previously objected to the frequencies of his requests, may have sharply declined.

Moreover, the age differential that is common in marriages (the men being older) may contribute to this problem.

Since Kinsey's day, researchers (DeLamater & MacCorquodale, 1979; Ehrmann, 1959; Schofield, 1965; Reiss, 1967; Sorensen, 1973); continued to interview samples of young people about their sexual behavior: Had they ever necked? At what age did they begin? French kissed? Fondled their lover's breasts or genitals? Had their own genitals fondled? Had intercourse? Oral-genital sex? When responses from these studies are compared, we find that indeed, a sexual revolution is occurring. In the early studies, in general, men were far more experienced than were women. By the end of the 1970s, these differences had virtually disappeared. As DeLamater and MacCorquodale (1979) observe,

There are virtually no differences in the incidence of each of the behaviors. Unlike most earlier studies which generally reported lower frequencies of more intimate activities among females, we find that women are as likely as men to have ever engaged in these behaviors. The only exception occurs with coitus, which women . . . are less likely to have experienced. (*Among students*, 75 percent of men and 60 percent of women had had intercourse. *Among nonstudents*, 79 percent of men and 72 percent of women had had intercourse.) [p. 58]

DeLamater and MacCorquodale continue:

Thus, the gender differences in lifetime behavior which were consistently found in studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s have narrowed considerably. This is also an important finding; it suggests that those models which have emphasized gender as an explanatory variable are no longer valid. [p. 58]

When men and women are together in a close, loving relationship, they seem equally likely to desire to engage in sexual activity. There is only one type of situation in which scientists find women are still more reserved than men: if men and women are offered a chance to participate in uncertain, unconventional, or downright bizarre sexual activities, men are more willing to take the risk than are women.

For example, in the Clark and Hatfield (1981) study described in Chapter 3, college men and women were hired to approach Florida State University students of the other gender. If a woman requested a date, suggested that the man visit her apartment, or even go to bed with her, she was generally very successful in getting the stranger to agree. Men were generally at ease with such requests. They said such things as "Why do we have to wait until tonight?" or "I can't tonight, but tomorrow would be fine." When a man made such a request, however, he was much less successful. Although the majority of women would date a man who approached her, few would go to his apartment, and none would agree to go to bed with him. Typical responses to males were "You've got to be kidding" or "What's wrong with you? Leave me alone."

Sociobiologists such as Symons (1979) argue that the gender differences Clark and Hatfield describe are genetically "wired in"; that women are genetically programmed to desire one, deeply intimate, secure relationship, while men are programmed to desire anonymous, impersonal, casual sex. Other scientists have documented that, even today, men are more eager to have sex with a variety of partners, in a variety of ways, and so on. (Sociobiologists such as Symons, 1979, would argue that these gender differences too, are "wired in.") For example, Hatfield and her colleagues (in press) interviewed casually dating and newlywed couples about their sexual preferences. They assessed desire for variety via such questions as

1. "I wish my partner were . . ." (Answers range from "Much more unpredictable about *when* he or she wants to have sex," to "Much more predictable about *when* he or she wants to have sex.")
2. "I wish my partner would be . . ." (Answers range from "Much more experimental sexually" to "Much more conventional sexually.")
3. "I wish my partner were . . ." (Answers range from "Much more variable about *where* we have sex" to "Much more conventional about *where* we have sex.")
4. "I wish my partner were . . ." (Answers range from "Much more wild and sexy" to "Much less wild and sexy.")

The authors predicted that men would be more interested in exciting, diverse experiences than women would be. That is exactly what they found. The men wished their sex lives were a little more exciting. Women tended to be slightly more satisfied with the status quo.

In summary, then, recent evidence suggests that, although some gender differences remain in men and women's concern with sex, a sexual revolution is occurring. The gender differences we have described—in responsive-

ness to pornography, willingness to initiate sex, and sexual experience—are rapidly disappearing. Recent studies indicate that women and men are becoming increasingly similar in their sexual preferences and experiences.

DESIRE FOR INTIMACY

The third way in which theorists agree men and women differ is in desire for intimacy. What is intimacy? Intimacy is not a static state, but a *process*. Intimacy may be defined as a process by which a couple—in the expression of thought, emotion, and behavior—attempts to move toward more complete communication on all levels. According to many clinicians, one of the major tasks people face is the achievement of a separate identity while, at the same time, achieving a deeply intimate relationship with others (Erikson, 1968; Kantor & Lehr, 1975; Kaplan, 1978). Both separateness and intimacy are generally considered to be basic human needs (see Freud, 1922; Maslow, 1954). Kaplan suggests that adults spend much of their lives resolving the dilemma between achieving a sense of self while at the same time establishing close nurturant relations with others.

According to family therapists, men have the easiest time achieving an independent identity; women have the easiest time achieving closeness with others. Napier (1977) describes two types of people who seem, with uncanny accuracy, to attract one another. Type I (Usually a woman) is only minimally concerned with maintaining her independence. What she cares about is achieving emotional closeness. She seeks “fusion with the partner,” “oneness” or “we-ness” in the marriage. She puts much energy into planning “togetherness” activities. Type I fears rejection and abandonment. She feels rejected when her partner chooses to spend an evening alone, or with other friends. Her feeling of rejection may even extend to times when her partner is engaged in necessarily exclusive activities—such as earning an income, studying for exams, or writing a manuscript.

Type I's partner, Type II (usually a man), is most concerned with maintaining his sense of self and personal freedom and autonomy. He feels a strong need to establish his territory within the common household: to have “my study,” “my workshop,” “my car.” Similarly, he feels compelled to draw sharp lines around psychological space: “my night out,” “my career,” “my way of handling problems.” What he fears is being “suffocated,” “stifled,” or “engulfed, . . .” or in some manner intruded on by his spouse.

Napier observes that men and women's efforts to reduce their anxieties make matters worse. Women (seeking more closeness) clasp their mates tightly, thereby contributing to the men's anxiety. The men (seeking more

distance) retreat further, which increases their wives' panic, inducing further "clasping." Sociobiologists such as Symons (1979) argue that the gender difference Napier describes is genetically "wired in"; that women are genetically programmed to desire one, deeply intimate, secure relationship; men, to desire anonymous, impersonal, casual sex.

Theorists can agree, then, that women are far better at intimacy than are men. Family therapists take it for granted that the fact that women are very comfortable with intimate relationships and men are not is a common cause of marital friction. And there are literally dozens of books exhorting men to share their feelings. Therefore, it is startling that there has been so little research devoted to gender differences in intimacy. Worse yet, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from the research that does exist. If I were forced to guess what future research will reveal, I would guess as follows: Women's complaints that men just won't share their deepest feelings is a legitimate one. In general, women *are* more comfortable with intimacy than are men. But paradoxically, even though women complain about men's lack of intimacy in love relationships, male-female differences are *smallest* in a love affair. Women find it fairly easy to be intimate with their lovers, with men friends, with other women, and with children. Many men can be intimate only with their lovers. It is here that they reveal most of themselves—not as much as their lovers might like, but far more than they share with anyone else. It is most difficult for men to be close to other men.

These are broad conclusions—too broad, perhaps. What are the sparse data on which these overgeneralizations are based? A few social psychologists have explored gender differences in people's willingness to get close to others. Generally, they have defined intimacy as a willingness to disclose one's ideas, feelings, and day-to-day activities to lovers, friends, or strangers, and to listen to their disclosures in return.

Psychologist Sidney Jourard (1964) developed one of the most commonly used measures of intimacy, the Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (JSDQ). The JSDQ consists of 60 questions in all. It asks people to think about how much they typically disclose to others in six difference areas of life. A few of these items are shown here. Take a look at these items and think about how much you have disclosed to the person you love most. How much has he or she disclosed to you?

Jourard calculates respondents' self-disclosure scores by adding up their scores in each of the six areas. What was your score? What was your partner's score? Were the differences between the two of you typical of those social psychologists find between men and women in general?

In self-disclosure research, four findings have consistently emerged. First, both men and women disclose far more about themselves in intimate than in casual relationships. In casual encounters, most people are willing to

reveal only the sketchiest, most stereotyped information about themselves. The Renaissance French essayist Montaigne (quoted in Thomas, 1979) observed that everyone is complex, multifaceted:

All contradictions may be found in me . . . bashful, insolent; chaste, lascivious; talkative, taciturn; tough, delicate; clever, stupid; surly, affable; lying, truthful; learned, ignorant; liberal, miserly and prodigal: all this I see in myself to some extent according to how I turn. . . . I have nothing to say about myself absolutely, simply and solidly, without confusion and without mixture, or in one word.

In intimate relationships, more of the complexities and contradictions are revealed. In deeply intimate relationships, friends and lovers feel free to reveal far more facets of themselves. As a consequence, intimates share profound information about one another's histories, values, strengths and weaknesses, idiosyncracies, hopes, and fears (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Huesmann & Levinger, 1976; Jourard, 1964; Worthy, Gary, & Kahn, 1969).

Second, in their deeply intimate relationships, men and women often differ little, if at all, in how much they are willing to reveal to one another. For example, Rubin and his colleagues (1980) asked dating couples via the Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire how much they had revealed themselves to their partners. Did they talk about their current relationships? Previous opposite-sex affairs? Their feelings about their parents and friends? Their self-concepts and life views? Their attitudes and interests? Their day-to-day activities? The authors found that, overall, men and women did *not* differ in how much they were willing to confide in their partners.

There was a difference, however, in the *kind* of things men and women were willing to share with those they love. Men were more willing to share their views on politics and their pride in their strengths. Women were more likely to disclose their feelings about other people and their fears. Interestingly enough, Rubin and his colleagues found that the stereotyped form of communication is most common in traditional men and women.

Some authors have observed that neither men or women may be getting exactly the amount of intimacy they would like. Women may want more intimacy than they are getting; men may want far less. There is evidence that couples tend to negotiate a level of self-disclosure that is bearable to both. In the words of the movie *My Fair Lady*, this ensures that "*neither* really gets what either really wants at all" (Chaikin & Derlega, 1975).

Third, in less intimate relationships, women disclose far more to others than do men (Jourard, 1971; Cozby, 1973). Rubin and his colleagues (1980, p. 306) point out that "The basis for such differences appears to be in socialization practices. Whereas women in our culture have traditionally been encouraged to show their feelings, men have been taught to hide their feel-

The Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire

- 0 = Have told my friend nothing about this aspect of me.
 1 = Have talked in general terms about this item. My friend has only a general idea about this aspect of me.
 2 = Have talked in full and complete detail about this aspect; my friend could describe me accurately.

Attitudes and Opinions

1. What I think and feel about religion; my personal religious views _____
2. My views on the present government—the president, government, policies, etc. _____
3. My personal views on sexual morality—how I feel and how others ought to behave in sexual matters _____

Tastes and Interests

1. My favorite food, the ways I like food prepared, and my food dislikes _____
2. The kind of party, or social gathering I like best, and the kind that would bore me, or that I wouldn't enjoy _____

Work (or studies)

1. What I find to be the worst pressures and the strains in my work _____
2. What I feel are my special strong points and qualifications for my work _____
3. What I feel are my shortcomings and handicaps that prevent me from working as I'd like to, or that prevent me from getting further ahead in my work _____

ings and to avoid displays of weakness (Pleck & Sawyer, 1974). As Kate Millett (1975) has put it: "Women express, men repress." The authors argue that it is traditional men and women who differ most on emotional sharing. They discovered that more egalitarian couples were more likely to disclose themselves fully to one another.

Fourth, and last, women receive more disclosures than do men. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the amount of information people

5 What Do Women and Men Want from Love and Sex?

Money

1. How much money I make at my work, or get as an allowance _____
2. My most pressing need for money right now; e.g., outstanding bills, some major purchase that is desired or needed _____
3. My total financial worth, including property, savings, bonds, insurance, etc. _____

Personality

1. What feelings, if any, that I have trouble expressing or controlling _____
2. The aspects of my personality that I dislike, worry about, that I regard as a handicap to me _____
3. Things in the past or present that I feel ashamed and guilty about _____
4. The kinds of things that make me just furious _____
5. The kinds of things that make me especially proud of myself, elated, full of self-esteem or self-respect _____

Body

1. How I wish I looked: my ideas for overall appearance _____
2. Any problems or worries that I had with my appearance in the past _____
3. My feelings about different parts of my body—legs, hips, waist, weight, chest or bust, etc. _____

SOURCE: Jourard, S. M. *The transparent self* rev. ed. Copyright © 1971 by Litton Educational Publishing, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, Calif. 94002.

reveal to others has an enormous impact on the amount of information they receive in return (see Altman, 1973; Davis & Skinner, 1974; Jourard, 1964; Jourard & Friedman, 1970; Marlatt, 1971; Rubin, 1975; Worthy, Gary, & Kahn, 1969).

There does seem to be some evidence, then, that women feel slightly more comfortable with intense intimacy in their love relationships than do men, and are far more comfortable revealing themselves in more casual

relationships than are men. Tradition dictates that women should be the "intimacy experts." And today, women *are* more comfortable sharing their ideas, feelings, and behavior than are men. But what happens if this situation changes? Rubin and his colleagues (1980) suggest that such changes have already begun.

The prognosis is mixed. Young women usually say they would be delighted if the men they love could be intimate. I'm a bit skeptical that it will be this easy. Change is always difficult. More than one man has complained that when he finally dared to reveal his weaker aspects to a woman, he soon discovered that she was shocked by his lack of "manliness." Family therapists such as Napier (1977) have warned us that the struggle to find individuality *and* closeness is a problem for everyone. As long as men were fleeing from intimacy, women could safely pursue them. Now that men are turning around to face them, women may well find themselves taking flight. In any case, the confrontation is likely to be exciting.

And the change should have real benefit. As Rubin and his colleagues (1980, p. 316) observe,

Men and women should have the freedom to decide for themselves when they will reveal themselves—and when they will listen to another's revelations. "Full disclosure" need not be so full that it eliminates all areas of privacy, even within the most intimate relationships . . . [given that] we believe the ethic of openness is a desirable one. Especially when contemplating marriage, it is valuable for women and men to be able to share rather fully—and equally—their thoughts and feelings about themselves, each other, and their relationship. . . . It is encouraging to discover that a large majority of the college students we studied seem to have moved, even if incompletely, and sometimes uneasily, toward the ethic of openness.

There is one final way in which theorists have speculated that men and women may differ—in their desire to flow with the moment versus to dominate, to achieve.

DESIRE FOR CONTROL

Traditionally, men are supposed to control themselves, other people, and the environment. The ideal man carefully controls his thoughts. He is objective, logical, and unemotional. He hides his feelings, or if he does express any feelings, he carefully telescopes the complex array of human feelings into a single emotion: anger. Men are supposed to be dominant; women, to be submissive. A "real man" is even supposed to control the environment by taming nature.

In contrast with the ideal man, the ideal woman is supposed to be emotional and responsive to other people and the environment. The ideal woman is expressive and warm. She shares herself openly with others but is, at the same time, highly vulnerable to their disapproval. Comfortable expressing a rainbow of feminine feelings—love, anxiety, joy, and depression—she is less in touch with anger. Tears and smiles come easily; anger is an alien emotion. A “real woman” is regarded as somewhat like a child; she is attractive and caring but not independent or competent.

There is considerable evidence that, even today, most men and women hold these stereotypes. Inge Broverman and her colleagues (1972) asked people what men and women *should be* like and what they really *are* like. The answer was clear: “women are expressive and nurturant; men are in control and instrumental.”

What is the purpose of all this male control? Achievement. Some people, usually men, view intimate relations—the one place where people can be themselves, totally relaxed, confident that they will be accepted no matter what, a place for exploring the possibilities of life—as yet another arena for achievement. In reviewing male sexual myths, Zilbergeld (1978) observed that, even in their most intimate relationships, men are more goal oriented than women (see Radlove’s description of Zilbergeld’s work in Chapter 4). In summary, he concludes that “In sex, as elsewhere, it’s performance that counts” (p. 35).

According to theorists, then, there are marked gender differences in three areas: (1) desire to be “in control”; (2) desire to dominate their partners or submit to them, and (3) desire to “achieve” in their love and sexual relations.

Unfortunately, although a great deal has been written about these topics, there is almost no research documenting that these differences do in fact exist. Let us review what scientists do know.

Desire to Be in Control

As I said in the previous section, it appears that even in love relationships, men are more concerned than women about possessing and expressing appropriate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It is especially difficult for men to acknowledge their weaknesses.

Desire to Dominate or Submit to Others

Sociobiologists have argued that gender differences in dominance-submission are genetically “wired in.” Males can ensure the survival of their genes by dominating women; women, by submitting to one man.

There is little evidence, however, to support such a contention. The only study relevant to this issue examined gender differences in the desire for

dominance-submission on couple's intimate sexual encounters (Hatfield et al., 1981). The study reviewed a number of reasons why men's and women's desires might differ.

Most men and women accept traditional roles. They believe that men and women ought to be very different: men "should" be dominant; women "should" be submissive (Broverman et al., 1972). In fact, however, men and women are surprisingly similar in dominance-submission (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). Thus, perhaps both men and women secretly fear they do not "measure up." Men may worry that they're not sufficiently "masculine"—they may feel compelled to exaggerate their "macho" image, to deny any hint of weakness. They want their partners to be as submissive as possible. Women, worried about their "femininity," may wish to deny any hint of strength; they may want their partners to be "real men," dominant and strong. If such a dynamic is operating, men might be expected to wish secretly that their partners would be more feminine, women, to wish their mates would be more dominant.

That's one possibility, but there is another. Gender roles are limiting. Modern men and women may secretly wish that they could express themselves more honestly, but they may be afraid to do so. Some men may want to express their submissive side, and some women may want to express their dominant side in sexual relations. Some theorists have argued that men, forced to be more dominant than they wish to be in their daily activities, are especially attracted to masochistic sexual experiences (Gibson, 1978; Green & Green, 1973; Kamiat, 1936; Krafft-Ebing, 1903/1939). According to this same logic, we might expect women to find sadism equally appealing. Few theorists, however, have ever suggested that they do (Robertiello, 1970; for an exception to this statement, see Stoller, 1978). According to this reasoning, then, we might expect to find that *both* men and women wish their sexual repertoires could be expanded—men wishing their partners would sometimes take the lead, women wishing their partners would sometimes behave more submissively.

To determine which, if either, of these possibilities is true, I and my colleagues (Hatfield et al., 1981) asked dating and newlywed couples how they *wished* things were in their sexual relationships. We measured men and women's desire for dominance submission via such questions as

1. "During sex, I wish my partner would . . ." (Answers range from "Give many more instructions and requests" to "Give many less instructions and requests.")
2. "I wish my partner was . . ." (Answers range from "Much more willing to do what I want sexually" to "Much less willing to do what I want sexually.")

3. "I wish my partner would play . . ." (Answers range from "The dominant role in sex much more" to "The dominant role in sex much less.")
4. "I wish my partner would play . . ." (Answers range from "The submissive role in sex much more" to "The submissive role in sex much less.")

When we examined men and women's reactions to these items, a surprising result emerged: there is no evidence that couples wish men could be more dominant and women could be more submissive—nor any evidence that they wish they could be more androgynous in their sexual lives. What do the data show? Interviews suggested two surprising conclusions. First, as family therapists have noted, couples seem to have a communication problem. Both men and women wish *their partners* would be a little clearer about what they want sexually, but these same men and women are evidently reluctant to say what *they* want. Second, in general, if anything, *both* men and women wish their partners would be more assertive about what they want sexually. Of the two, men are the more eager for their partners to take an active role. Evidently, in spite of some therapists' concerns (see Chapter 3), women have not yet become so dominant and demanding that they frighten men away.

Desire to Achieve in Love and Sex

It is fascinating to speculate about the effects that such gender differences, if they exist, would have on love and sexual relations. Are most men so concerned about acquiring an impressive reputation that, if they had a choice between having a warm, wonderful, sexual encounter and having a reputation of being the world's greatest lover, they would choose the latter? Is women's definition of a "good lover" someone who is loving, tender, and intimate? Do the very men who are most eager to succeed at being "a great lover" focus on "achievements" that women care little about—the objective facts of a sexual encounter such as the size of their partners' breasts, length of their own penises, the number of their conquests, how long they last sexually, and the number of their orgasms? These are interesting speculations, but no one has conducted research on these questions.

In summary, men are more concerned than women about being in control, dominating others, and achieving at love according to the theorists. However, empirical research is needed to determine whether these theoretical speculations are accurate.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I have explored what is known about gender differences in four areas: love, sex, intimacy, and control. Many theorists have seen men

and women as very different—to the point of almost being incompatible. A consideration of the evidence, however, indicates that nature has arranged things more sensibly. Men and women are surprisingly similar in what they want out of their most intimate relations. Everyone, male *and* female, wants love *and* sex, intimacy *and* control. Yet, if one is determined, one can detect some slight differences between the genders. Women may be slightly more concerned with love; men, with sex. Women may be somewhat more eager for a deeply intimate relationship than are men. Men may be a little more eager to be in control of things, perhaps to dominate their partners, to “achieve” at love than are women. This last contention is badly in need of research: the available research clearly indicates far greater similarities than differences in the feelings of men and women about sex and love.