CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

Chapter 6 Outline

Learning Objectives

LO 6.1 Describe how roles form the structure of human relationships.

LO 6.2 Identify the principle components in interpersonal attraction.

LO 6.3 Compare and contrast research and theories about love and intimacy.

LO 6.4 Explain how culture shapes the dynamics of our intimate relationships.

LO 6.5 Explain the roles of the arts in defining and sustaining relationships.

PREPARING TO READ

- Who should have more friends, a collectivist in Africa or an individualist in North America?

- Does an elder grandfather or grandmother need to be consulted before you make a life decision such as choosing your college major?

- Are marriages chosen for love clearly more or less happy than arranged marriages?

Once, a very long time ago, even before the Han kingdoms went to war, a young herder took his flock into the hills around the headwaters of the Yangtse to nibble the lush grasses of late spring. His elder brother's wife had driven him out of the family home, and he found relief wandering the valleys day by day, enjoying the solitude and the cool breezes as his animals grazed. One day, Niulang (literally, "cowherd") spotted a fine silk robe on the bank by a peaceful pond. He picked it up and, seeing nobody nearby, began to wander on carrying it.

The robe belonged to the youngest of seven daughters of the king and queen of the heavenly celestial realm. Zhinü (literally, "weaver girl") had slipped away from the tedium of weaving clouds, which was her chore, to swim in the soothing waters of that particularly refreshing Chinese stream. Seeing her robe being taken, she gasped, and the herder turned to behold her in her lovely nakedness. The two therefore had to marry because when a virtuous woman is seen disrobed, only marriage to the one who beheld her can restore her honor. They lived for several earthly years in a loving marriage that produced much joy and two beautiful children.

Eventually, the queen of the heavens noticed her youngest daughter was missing and ordered her located and brought back to the skies. The two lovers despaired, for they were of different worlds, she a celestial being and he a mere mortal. The daughter was returned to the heavens. The herder happened, as is the case in mythic stories, to have an ox that was a magical creature that then gave its life and hide to transport the herder and the children to heaven. The queen was so angry that the mortal dared violate the heavens that she cast them out and slashed a river of stars across the sky to divide the lovers. We now call that dividing river the Milky Way.

The shepherd and the cloud weaver felt bereft, but they were also both beloved of the sky beings and the creatures of the earth. The queen eventually relented, allowing them to reunite for one day each year, and on the seventh day of the seventh month, the birds of earth joyfully fly up to make a bridge across the river of stars so the lovers can meet again.

—Ancient Chinese tale

WHY IT MATTERS

This tale illustrates traditional roles in Chinese families and philosophy. It also speaks to universals of relationship across cultures.

The tale of the bridge of birds has been told and retold for many centuries at the time of the *Qixi* festival in China. The details change, but the story always includes romance between the lovers from heaven and earth, represented by the stars Vega and Altair, and forbidden to be together by their social roles and responsibilities. In its basic form, the story mirrors *Romeo and Juliet*, and the earlier Cathar tale of *Abelarde and Heloise* on which Shakespeare based his tragedy. The stories speak of our memberships in groups that existed before we were born, ones perhaps in conflict with other groups, and of fondness that may arise between two people regardless of those larger affiliations.

6.1 ROLES AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

LO 6.1 Describe how roles form the structure of human relationships.

He aha te mea nui o te ao?

He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!

What is the most important thing in the world?

It is people! It is people! It is people!

Māori proverb

The previous sections discussed general constructs of culture and how culture shapes our lives; we now turn to more intimate contexts of relationship. Over the vast span of human existence, we have established frameworks of organization for our social groups in which individuals hold statuses or perform functions that are predictable and that endure as part of our cultures (Moffett, 2013). We describe our relationships with others by the part we play, what we generally call our role, a terminology taken directly from theater (Gusfield, 1989b). As with theatrical roles, social relationship titles are anonymous in that the role continues to exist independent of a particular person who may hold that status for a limited time. In English, we may be a father, mother, child, brother, sister, or friend, and we may be several of these at once. Fiske and Fiske (2007) describe 15 roles (see Table 6.1) they say are salient across cultures that are "culturally elaborated, socially institutionalized, cognitively schematized, and emotionally motivated" (p. 283). We are motivated, they write, to relate in order to establish belonging,

Table 6.1 The 15 Categories of Formalized Relationships

Relationship	Description
Marriage	Life commitment to one or more spouses
In-lawship	Relations with the family of one's spouse
Joking and funerary relationships	Parties joke and tease in normative ways and may have obligations to attend funerals or execute estates
Compadrazgo	Relationship with the parents of one's godchild, common in Catholic countries
Agemates	Typically males of similar age who aid each other in warfare and raiding and who share resources in fellowship and feasting
Kinship	An organizing system based on shared social identity, usually transmitted paternally or maternally, involving cooperation and sharing
Milk-kinship	Most important in Islamic societies, the bond between a woman and a child not her own whom she nursed
Ritual covenant	A bond of aid, trust, and altruism established by ritual sharing of blood
Reciprocal exchange of prestige goods	Participants give each other ritual gifts in processes in which the gift may be of little value but the process constitutes a formal bond
Rotating credit association	A group that meets regularly in which participants contribute equally to a pool which one person draws at each meeting
Sodalities and secret societies	Voluntary groups formed to perform political, moral, ritual, or religious activities
Castes	Social categories established by birth that affect social contact, hierarchy, and marriage
Slavery	One person owns another and holds rights to the time, activities, and products of that person
Prostitution and concubinage	A person is supported or paid in exchange for performance of sexual activities
Totemic	A group or individual identified with an animal, plant, or natural phenomenon, often marrying exogamously (outside the group)

Source: Fiske and Fiske (2007).

understanding, self-enhancement, and trust, goals that all require the presence of others. We achieve those goals by our participation in the relational structures available in our culture. Not all of these roles happen in every culture; a role like president requires a very large political institution. A priest-penitent relationship requires a particular church. We will focus on several more common one-to-one relationships in subsequent pages.

Friendships

Perhaps the least complex of relationship roles is that of friendship: people simply drawn together by shared interests and enjoyment of each other's company. In the Western ideal, friendships are open-ended and unconstrained, voluntary association, free of monitoring in exchange (Silver, 1989). Involvement with friends provides a healthy, secure base as people move from life with family into adulthood (Fraley, Roisman, Booth-LaForce, Owen, & Holland, 2013), and extended social networks provide support for coping with major and minor stressors (Taylor, Chatters, Woodward, & Brown, 2013). The urge for friendship is shared by our primate relatives and was demonstrated in a recent study involving the chimp-like bonobo (Demuru & Palagi, 2012). Three bonobo were placed in separate cages for each trial, with doors that provided opportunity to share with either a known bonobo or one it had never met. Most often, the bonobo with food shared with the unknown one to make friends, then the new friends together tripped a gate to invite the third to eat with them. The bonobo used the food and the opportunity to forge new friendship bonds. The need for companionship extends across species as diverse as donkeys, birds, and rodents (Murray, Byrne, & D'Eath, 2013), and forms a universal among creatures related to us.

Beyond the basics, the dynamics of friendship start to look different across cultures. The English word *friendship* may relate to several of Fiske and Fiske's (2007) categories, such as joking and funerary relationships, *compadrazgo*, and agemates. In many cultures, relationships may include more formalized obligations or responsibilities that fit poorly into the nebulous Western category of friendship. Non-Western people surely enjoy time spent relaxing and having fun with those around them, if presented with the opportunity, and rely on those people when in need. In most ways, friendship is a common theme but with differences that emerge on closer examination.

In the 1980s, Harry Triandis and colleagues began to explore how concepts like the individualism-collectivism dimension would affect relationships. Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca (1988) proposed that in collectivist cultures, vertical relationships like parent-child and boss-employee would be most important, whereas in individualist cultures, horizontal relations like friend to friend and spouse to spouse would be paramount. Individualists, they explained, may move fluidly through many friendships, whereas collectivists would have deeper connections with others, but surprisingly, would have fewer friendships. The deeply rooted cultural mechanisms that underlie the differences bear some explanation.

In Western cultures, they saw the self treated as individual and discreet from the people, things, and creatures around us. This would be an implicit view, built into our ways of thinking and perceiving, operating without conscious awareness. In more

traditional cultures like those of Ghana, where relational-interdependent constructions of reality are the norm, people do not feel separate; they are connected to each other, and to the land and living things around them (Adams & Plaut, 2003). This is true of other more traditional and collectivist cultures, such as Polynesian cultures like the Māori, and indigenous cultures of North America (c.f. Durie, 1994, and Gone, 2008b, respectively). Adams and Plaut (2003) propose that these are more than simply beliefs, but rather, form the patterns of thought and meaning that we replicate in our relationships and institutions, from friendship to business to marriage.

More friends, for an individualist or a collectivist, mean more support, which is good. More friends also mean more people to whom one must *give* support, and with a deep sense of connectedness, one cannot simply walk away when obligations become too much. Collectivist friendships may span generations, and obligations are not easily shirked. Where an American can simply un-friend that person mentioned in Chapter 4 who becomes overly demanding or who phones drunk late at night one time too many, the collectivist perhaps cannot. Adams and Plaut's (2003) research in Ghana demonstrated expected differences between the two cultures. While Americans may have more friends, they feel more loneliness because the feelings of connection may be shallow and fleeting. Ghanaians expect their friends to provide material and emotional support, and to provide companionship and emotional disclosure. Their friendships are lasting, close, and rewarding, but yield more obligations, and are best considered carefully before making that commitment. For Americans, it is a sad thing to lack friends but not necessarily a sign of character defect, while to Ghanaians, a person without friends is strange and disturbing, and probably is too selfish to keep friends.

Efficacy of the individualism-collectivism relational platform established by Triandis et al. (1988) has been demonstrated many times in cross-cultural research, and research into underlying factors continues. Wheeler, Reis, and Bond (1989) contrasted social versus individual orientation in Chinese and American students, finding that Americans had more interactions, but Chinese interactions with friends lasted longer. More recently, Schug, Yuki, and Maddux (2010) investigated the concept of *relational mobility* as a driving force in variation in dynamics of friendship. Interestingly, high relational mobility, where people can more easily leave friendships, causes people to work harder to maintain friendships, disclosing more information to increase intimacy. Friendships reflect the thoughts and values that shape all of our relationships, whether professional, familial, or intimate.

Family

We naturally develop a liking to those, who have long been the objects of our beneficence, especially when we consider them as dependent on us: and it is further natural, for persons who have lived long together, to be unwilling to part.

Beattie, 1783

Family forms a most basic human social unit. The concept of family seems straightforward, but only when viewed within one's own culture. Definitions and descriptions

of families differ incredibly between cultures, and families are shifting into new forms and expanded definitions as globalization and commercial media set off massive seismic shifts in traditional social landscapes (Bengtson, 2001; Georgas, 2003; Otters & Hollander, 2015).

Anthropologist George Murdock (1949) provided the quintessential working definition of family: "The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults" (p. 1). This definition is severely outdated, given growing trends toward alternative lifestyles in the West, including recent legalization of same-sex marriage in the US, New Zealand, Ireland, Taiwan, and numerous other countries. What does remain across cultures and eras are the common dimensions of structure and function, within which variations occur. Structure includes the number and types of people involved and their defined roles, while function includes raising of children; provision of food, shelter, and clothing; working for economic resources; and satisfaction of emotional and psychological needs (Georgas, 2011).

Family Structure

The structure of family in Western culture stereotypically revolves around a nuclear family of father, mother, and children. Convention holds that multiple generations lived together in agricultural settings prior to the 19th and 20th centuries, when nuclear families became the desired norm (Georgas, 2011; Ruggles, 2012). People moved increasingly to cities to work in factories, shops, and banks, leaving extended families and farm life behind. Outside of Western origin cultures, this shift was not as prevalent.

In non-Western cultures, families may normatively be larger and more complex, as is typical of agricultural societies (Georgas, 2003). Multigenerational families may share a house or a compound, including multiple parenting couples, elders, and cousins, or the extended family may not live together but may be very actively involved in day-to-day life functions (Georgas et al., 2001). Relations with extended family may be more formalized than in Western culture. Malaysian culture has specific named roles for collateral kinship relationships with cousins, aunts, uncles, and other extended family, so there is a title by which one addresses a parent's eldest brother (*pak long*) or eldest sister (*mak long*). Cousins who are older are called *kakak*, if female, and *abang*, if male, which are the same terms for older siblings. Younger relatives are not always given honorific titles. Further, family obligations may be much more binding, so if your father's cousin's third son comes to town to attend college, you may be expected to host him for several years.

Marriage may take a number of forms in terms of male or female partners, greatly influencing roles and hierarchies, along with distribution of authority. If your father had four wives, you may have a number of siblings and several mothers telling you to do your chores. In a few cultures like the Nyinba of Nepal, women have multiple husbands, so their family structure might include several elder males to respect and obey, though only the oldest one may officially be considered the father (Levine, 1980; Levine & Silk, 1997).

In the 21st century, families are changing, but in complex patterns. An apparent shift toward nuclear families is ongoing in countries and cultures that traditionally live in extended settings, but recent research shows they maintain very close functional relations with their kin (Georgas, 2003; Georgas et al., 2001). Families are still highly intertwined; even if they now live in separate homes or towns, they continue to come together for meals, holidays, religious activities, and so on. Functional interactions among extended family members were more important than family structure, and viewed from the functional level of analysis, the psychological implications of modern roles and family structures become easier to understand. Livelihood and childcare may still be shared in families much as they have been historically, perhaps with small children all going to a grandmother's house when parents work.

Interestingly, multigenerational households are becoming more common again in Western cultures due to increased longevity, shared family functions, and new relational definitions (Bengtson, 2001). Economic and practical realities now push together larger family groups as children may take years to achieve economic independence or boomerang back after leaving, and elderly parents may receive better care for less expense at home (Bianchi, 2014; Duxbury & Dole, 2015; Otters & Hollander, 2015). These issues are compounded for many immigrant families, such as Mexican families in the US, for whom living in multigenerational extended households may be culturally normative (Richter & Pflegerl, 2001), and where families may be forced to live together because parents may lack legal status or economic means (Leach, 2014). Further, as societies become more tolerant of homosexuality, divorce, out-of-wedlock sex, and other non-traditional life choices, single parent and same-sex or nonbinary households are increasingly common (Vespa, Lewis, & Kreider, 2013).

Differences in norms arise from histories diverging across hundreds or thousands or years. The recent family changes due to increased tolerance, migration, and globalization simply reflect our current status in the march of humanity through time, a manifestation shaped by sociocultural and historical context.

Parenting

From a garden snail to a president, we all have parents who contributed our genetic material. With the snail, parenting ends when eggs are deposited, and the little snails are left to fend for themselves. For warm-blooded creatures, parenting extends beyond birth for some amount of time, fulfilling the biological and social requirements of a species, until the offspring can make its own way. Elephants live in matriarchal herds, while canines live in packs with an alpha-male leader, and emperor penguins live in nuclear families amidst huge nesting colonies. Mother mammals have obvious roles in birth and lactation, and are the primary caregivers for most species. For about 40% of primates, though, the father plays some role in parenting the offspring (Smuts & Gubernick, 1992).

Operating for its first century from a Euro-American viewpoint, some of what psychology assumed should constitute normative and healthy parenting practices may simply be culture-specific norms and ideas, and really may simply be Western

ethnotheories. When wider cultural variation is considered, some Western practices are considered undesirable elsewhere, such as having babies sleep alone and cry themselves to sleep. Parenting practices derive from the lore passed down across generation, and the resulting families reflect the social structures of each culture. Is the family more individualist or more collectivist? Is there a high power distance with an authoritarian head of household or a more egalitarian structure where all family members have voice and make independent choices? Exposure to our peculiar family lives train us in the values and behaviors we take with us into adulthood, shaping our thoughts and decisions along the way, and making us into whatever types of parents we become. In short, our parents teach us by example how to parent (for better or worse).

Fathers

> *There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son.*

> *Confucius, Analects XII, 11, trans. Legge, 1861/2014*

Mothers unquestionably hold the paramount position in terms of child rearing, even in highly patriarchal China. They give birth and lactate, and those bonds cannot be surpassed by any male activities in usual situations. Maternal involvement is a cross-cultural universal, though exact details of how mothers and children interact do change, as discussed in the Development chapter. Everywhere, mothers are the ones who most directly transmit culture to their children, from earliest lullabies onward (c.f. Bornstein et al., 2012; Shand & Kosawa, 1985), but fathers also have important roles in many human cultures. Chinese culture is traditionally organized around the concept of filial piety, devotion and obedience to the father as head of the household, a structure that is reflected up to the national level where the emperor or Communist Party chairman is given this absolute respect as father of the country (Jankowiak, 1992).

Paternal roles vary widely, despite the crucially ubiquitous initial biological role. After conception, though the requisite job is done, paternal care is associated with species like humans that have longer gestation and juvenile times, and may play a role in human ability to bond emotionally (Fraley, Brumbaugh, & Marks, 2005). Culture determines the shape of that involvement, guiding variation in practical responsibilities and normative activities that follow birth. Paternal behavior and roles provide some interesting examples of guiding principles that shape a culture, and what changes and stays the same with this common role across cultures.

Social sciences generally place paternal activities into two categories termed investment and involvement (Hewlett, 1992). The concept of paternal investment comes from biosocial and evolutionary psychology, and relates to activities undertaken to insure survival of his genetic material. In other words, the father invests time and resources to protect and propagate his genetic material on into the future. Involvement, as it is used here, can be viewed as a type of investment describing ways the father may be expected to interact with the child.

Fathers can invest in two broad modes, described as direct and indirect activities (Hewlett, 1992). Direct activities are things the father does proximally to assist the child, such as holding her, working closely with the child teaching a skill, and so on. These will differ by gender and will reflect usual activities, such as daily tasks a boy might need to do and ways families might spend leisure time. Proximal investment also may change depending on the age of the child. A boy may be cuddled as a toddler, but perhaps not as a teen, and a father may maintain physical distance from a girl after puberty. As a boy grows, whether playing baseball, hunting, or building houses, interactions shift as the boy can more closely approximate adult skills.

Indirect activities may benefit the child, but apply to the larger context, for instance when the father engages in hunting that feeds the tribe or in standing guard for the village. The activities benefit the entire group, with the father's own offspring enjoying the protection or nutrition as part of that unit. Military service protecting a city or country could be considered an indirect paternal investment in the family lineage. These investment activities are universally geared toward genetic continuity via survival of the child, or at least survival of the genetic line; a young or childless male protecting the group could die in the effort without passing on his own genes, but he would be helping to assure survival of his family. The shape and specifics of this type of involvement depend on environment, resources, and sociocultural factors.

Involvement similarly has two types or styles: active and passive. Active involvement would be feeding the child, talking or playing with her, and other activities where the father acts directly with the child. Passive involvement includes co-sleeping or simply being near the child, or in other words, proximity without conscious, intentional interaction. Perhaps the family watches television together in the evening, but the father does not particularly speak to or otherwise interact with the child. Involvement activities vary more widely across cultures, being tied less to physical survival and more to socialization. The roles and interactions of the father contribute to the microenvironment, or developmental niche (Super & Harkness, 1986), in which the child learns and grows.

Susan Harkness and Charles Super (1992) summarize how fathers' roles are culturally constructed across a range of possibilities, from the harsh and feared disciplinarian to the fun-loving playmate. In some polygynous cultures, fathers may have several wives in different locations, with their children experiencing only occasional contact. Men in East Africa now may work in cities while their families stay on a rural farm, with the father returning only for holidays or important occasions. The post-industrial polar opposite is the stay-at-home dad, becoming more common in Western cultures. Super and Harkness compared paternal involvement in western Kenya (Kokwet ethnic group) and Boston (primarily affluent, European origin), looking at time spent, settings, and activities. Kokwet fathers were passive and distal in involvement for the first two years, when play and chore involvement began to increase. Boston fathers were more proximally and actively involved from the start, a difference which is explained by cultural perceptions of roles.

Abundance and scarcity shape these paternal roles, based on how these conditions may affect the child. Kokwet fathers believe their primary purposes in a child's life are economic provision and moral discipline, while Boston fathers focused on developing

close emotional bonds with their children. Subsistence life, as with farmers in Kenya, involves real struggle for survival; children still die without food or medicine, and they must grow up able to cooperate with family and community to bring subsequent generations to adulthood. Children of the affluent Boston fathers in Super and Harkness's study rarely would die. They would face a long, slow educational process that would potentially lead the child to a job far away, as a member of a law firm, a medical practice, or teaching at a university somewhere else in the world. The Kokwet have lifetimes of togetherness in their agrarian lifestyle, if children survive, so togetherness may normatively be abundant and it is survival that must be protected rigidly. Boston families enjoy physical safety, but only have a few years to build sense of intimacy before children may move away.

REALITY CHECK

Are there friends from earlier in life that you no longer see?

Who lives in your house? Are bills shared or paid by one or two people?

What are interactions like with your father? How did you interact when you were small?

6.2 DYADIC RELATIONSHIPS: ATTRACTION

LO 6.2 Identify the principle components in interpersonal attraction.

Whether collectivist or individualist, in a city or a jungle, much of human life involves dyads, two people interacting over a significant amount of time. We begin nursing at our mother's breast, a formative intimate dyad discussed in development literature. Special friendships may blossom between two children, and these friendships may last a lifetime. Eventually the child grows up and becomes interested in sexual activity, and procreation usually happens in a dyadic act, though human sexuality has covered a far wider range of behaviors. Clinical sounding descriptions drastically understate the importance of intimate relationships in our hearts and minds, and more broadly in our cultures; love fills our imaginations and overflows into our songs and legends, onto our televisions, and into virtually every aspect of our lives.

Relationships begin with attraction, with something that draws people together. That something may be a shared interest, some aspect of appearance, or common ethnicity. All relationships, from friendship to love, require common elements. Despite the adage that opposites attract, we are really more likely to relate to people similar to ourselves in socioeconomic and ethnic origins, and those relationships will be more stable

over time (Glomb & Welsh, 2005; Hamm, 2000). Generally, though, when one speaks of attraction in context of love, we mean that special smile, that flip of the hair, some physical characteristic that arrests our attention and leads us to want that particular person more than any other. Fortunately, romantic attraction is an appealing topic, so a great deal of research exists on the subject, both within and across cultures. A great deal of research focuses on physical attractiveness or appearance combined with traits such as the ability to provide resources or nurture children.

Physical Attraction

Genetics give people who are considered to be attractive remarkable advantages in life, from wider choices of mates to better jobs. Darwin (1871) observed that appearance was the primary factor motivating men of his day in their choice of a wife. A century later, Cunningham (1986) found that men were more willing to make sacrifices and perform altruistic acts for women they rated as more attractive. The legendary face of Helen launched the thousand ships that sailed to fight the Trojan War (Homer, 800 BCE), costing the Trojans their empire. People also assume that attractive people possess desirable qualities such as intelligence, charm, and happiness, at least in Western culture, but across cultures, attractive people are ascribed whatever qualities are considered the most desirable for that group (Anderson, Adams, & Plaut, 2008; Cunningham, 1986).

Figure 6.1 Artistic Rendering of Prehistoric Venus Stone Figure, ca. 30,000 BCE

Source: Courtesy The Met Museum, Bequest of Walter C. Baker, 1971.

To some degree, standards of beauty and attractiveness shift with changing tides of history, location, and situation. For tens of thousands of years, the ideal of feminine beauty was rotund, corpulent, and maternal, the prototypic great mother with the hips and breasts to bear generations into the future (see Figure 6.1; Coleman, 1998; Huyge, 1991; Józsa, 2011). Among the Awazagh Arabs of the Sahara, girls are fed the richest, most fattening foods so that by adolescence, they are developing the folds of fat on their stomachs and buttocks that are considered most beautiful and sexually attractive (Popenoe, 2012). Some researchers hold that our aesthetic appreciation of body size is an evolutionary adaptation; a plumper woman with some fat reserves was more likely to sustain an infant through its first few years if food is scarce. In times of greater

nutritional opulence, thinness becomes more exotic and therefore desirable (Brown & Konner, 1987; Sobal & Hanson, 2011; Sobal & Stunkard, 1989). If indeed preferences for fatness or thinness form a predictable response to food security, the variety of weight preferences do not demonstrate cultural difference, but rather illustrate a common response to situational prompts. Food supply should, then, predict ideal body preferences in evidence across cultures and historical eras.

The theory that beauty norms reflect response to the presence or absence of adequate nutrition is supported by images from American history. In the dawn of the US, two centuries ago, untapped resources provided immediate great wealth to the new country, fertile soils produced bountiful crops, and willowy women were most desirable. After the devastation of the Civil War, when the fertile fields of the South had been burned again and again, a more buxom form came into vogue. Following Reconstruction and recovery, ideal type slimmed down to the waifish flappers of the 1920s, and then the Great Depression and the corresponding Dustbowl in agriculture coincided with Mae West's buxom popularity. After WWII, Marilyn Monroe was curvaceous but slimmer than Mae West, as preferred BMI decreased toward skin-and-bones Twiggy, a top model in the financially booming 1960s. In the modern US, food has actually been sufficient to feed everyone, with only economic inequality keeping the poorest citizens hungry. Predictably, the most successful recent fashion models are extremely slender, verging on anorexia (Banner, 1983; Levenstein, 2003; Stearns, 2002; Wolf, 2013). In other words, our perception of beauty is arguably hardwired into our drive to survive.

Singh (1993) proposed a related cross-cultural commonality, that waist to hip ratio (WHR) is the most important factor for female body attractiveness, building on the view that markers of fecundity (ability to bear children) would be most desirable from an evolutionary standpoint. A WHR of .7 seems to be most desirable, the waist being 70% of the hip dimension. Furnham, McClelland, and Omer (2003) found this to be true of both English and Kenyan participants, though notably all participants were university students, and therefore were well accustomed to Western norms. Evidence does support consistency in WHR across cultures, independent of body mass index (BMI). In a study of participants from Bakossiland, Cameroon, Africa; Komodo Island, Indonesia; Samoa; and New Zealand, a low WHR consistently was rated as more attractive (Singh, Dixson, Jessop, Morgan, & Dixson, 2010). The overall body size and amount of fat varies greatly, while the proportions of the body shape remain more consistent, so the very heavy women of the Awazagh Arabs probably have a similar WHR to the much slimmer average New Zealand girl. Breast size preferences do differ slightly, with some evidence that men from subsistence cultures prefer larger breasts, and that generally, darker areole, indicating sexual maturity, are preferable (Dixson et al., 2010).

Cross-Cultural Consistencies in Facial Aesthetics

Some additional aspects of attractiveness do not change across cultures, and actually apply across gender. Several of these are explainable for their evolutionary benefits. Clear skin, free of sores and lesions, is always a plus. Good skin indicates the person is free of diseases, an obvious advantage. A second commonality is anatomical symmetry,

especially of the face, which is interpreted to indicate an absence of genetic abnormalities. A lopsided face or short limbs may be judged harshly, perhaps from an instinctive understanding that offspring could be unhealthy because lopsidedness may indicate susceptibility to parasitic infection (Grammer, Fink, Møller, & Thornhill, 2003; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1993) or genetic abnormalities (Scheib, Gangestad, & Thornhill, 1999).

Cultures agree on ratings of facial attractiveness to a surprisingly high degree (e.g., Cunningham, Roberts, Barbee, Druen, & Wu, 1995). Laurentini and Bottino (2014) provide a list of studies showing very consistent ratings of facial attractiveness across a global range of cultures, with high agreement between males and females in those studies. Sorokowski, Kościński, and Sorokowska (2013), however, express concern that samples in attractiveness research tend, as usual, to be Western or from cultures with histories of Western influence. They chose a novel approach to counter the trend, using participants in Poland and in the Indonesian region of New Guinea, the latter having very little Western contact. Four photos were used, with one considered highly attractive in Poland, one very unattractive, and two in a moderate range. Interestingly, New Guinea participants did not agree with the Polish choice for most attractive, but both cultures agreed on which was least attractive. The researchers propose that, while standards of beauty may vary, perceived ugliness may be the real universal.

The widespread consensus on attractiveness suggests that deeply rooted universal processes may be in play. Indeed, several studies of brain activity patterns using MRI, near-infrared spectroscopy (NIRS) and event-related brain potentials (ERP) show differential responses to attractive and unattractive faces (Laurentini & Bottino, 2014), indicating possibility of a hard-wired neurological response to facial characteristics. Trujillo, Jankowitsch, and Langlois (2014) used electroencephalographic analysis to monitor ERPs in the brain, and found that fewer neural resources came into play when participants were shown faces approximating population averages. In other words, it was literally easier to look at attractive faces, illuminating another factor in differential treatment of people who are considered attractive.

Average Is Exceptional

Symmetry, youth, and fecundity form logical explanations for perceptions of beauty, but they do not adequately tell the whole story of human attraction. As Trujillo et al. (2014) explain, "Many perfectly symmetrical faces are not attractive, many youthful faces are not attractive, many faces with big lips are not attractive, and many highly masculine faces are not attractive" (p. 1062). The authors suggest that if these indicators of reproductive viability provided sufficient explanatory power, these exceptions would not exist. Another factor must be in play.

Darwin's (1851) theory of evolution by selection suggests that species stabilize partly by innate preference for a population norm, and those characteristics are biologically reinforced as they become the ever-more desirable choice for mating (Dobzhansky, 1970; Langlois & Roggman, 1990). This trend appears to be true for humans, and ironically, while we think of highly attractive people as exceptional, the faces we think are most attractive are faces that are closest to population averages.

Langlois and Roggman used early digital technology to superimpose photographs of faces and create artificially averaged faces. Perceived attractiveness increased as more and more faces were included in the average, supporting the theory that the population norm is considered most desirable.

Gillian Rhodes and colleagues (2001) hypothesized that if there were a biological basis for this averaging effect, it should be observable in other cultures, and indeed, the effect held true for Chinese and Japanese participants. Rhodes and colleagues then took this research a step further, using faces of Australians of either European or Chinese origin to create averaged faces from each ethnicity, but then to average the two ethnicities into a single set of faces (see Figure 6.2). As with Langlois and Roggman's (1990) experiment, averaged faces within an ethnicity were rated more attractive than the source photos, but averages of both ethnicities blended together were judged most attractive of all.

Trujillo et al.'s (2014) study supported a neurocognitive explanation for the attractiveness of averaged faces. Event related potentials (ERPs) in EKG brain scans of participants were measured while they performed a task discriminating photos of human and chimpanzee faces. The human faces included attractive, unattractive, and averaged faces. Processing time was fastest for the highly attractive and averaged faces, and those faces elicited reduced ERPs, showing that fewer neural resources are used in processing the attractive human faces. From several research approaches, facial attractiveness appears to be a biologically based universal across cultures.

Figure 6.2 Digitally Averaged Faces: Chinese, Caucasian, and Mixed

Chinese24   Caucasian24   Mixed24   Mixed48
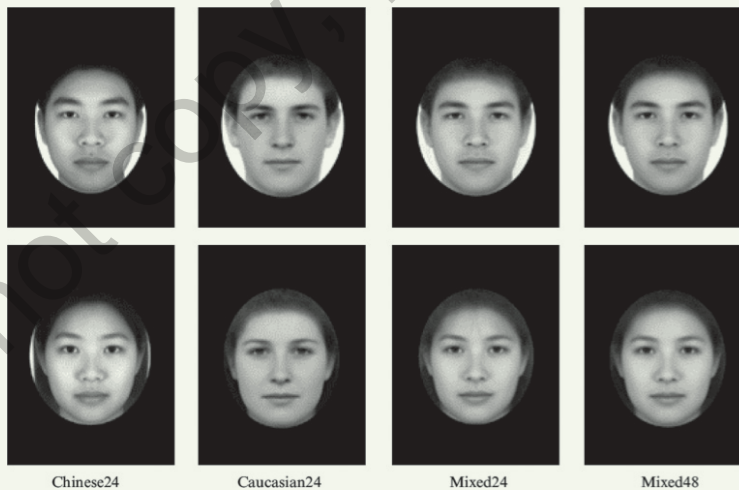
Source: Rhodes et al. (2001, p. 615).

What we seek and value in relationships may differ, as shall be discussed, but our evaluation of facial attractiveness largely follows predictable shared patterns, tending toward population means. Preferences for level of body fat appear to reflect nutritional availability, while WHR may be a cross-cultural constant. Exceptional faces become exceptional by fitting norms for a population most perfectly, so people like Mila Kunis, Angelina Jolie, Zac Efron, and Brad Pitt are actually the least exceptional among us. A facial tattoo is startling when encountered for the first time by someone from a culture lacking the practice, but likewise, a face without tattoo could seem bereft in a traditional culture where that is the norm. Indeed, as the Māori of Aotearoa (Nikora, Rua, & Te Awekotuku, 2004) and the Maisin of Papua (Barker & Tietjen, 1990) have become smaller parts of multicultural societies, the practice had nearly vanished, and is now making a resurgence as a statement of identity.

Gender and Attraction

From the evolutionary perspective of parental investment theory, males and females could reasonably be assumed to differ in what they find attractive. Both genders would benefit from the indicators of health and fecundity already discussed. With differing biological roles, men and women should differ in what attracts them to a mate. David Buss and colleagues indeed found consistent patterns of gender difference across cultures. In Buss's (1989) study of 37 cultures, he found that men valued appearance more than women and preferred women two to three years younger, both of which he interpreted as signaling reproductive capacity. Women emphasized what he termed resource capacity, preferring men who were three to four years older, who possessed status, and who were industrious and ambitious. Cultures differed in emphasis on female chastity. Results have been replicated in a number of subsequent studies (e.g., Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1995). More recent studies in India (Kamble, Shackelford, Pham, & Buss, 2014) and China (Chang, Wang, Shackelford, & Buss, 2011) indicate that preferences are changing around topics like virginity and creativity, but the evolutionary preferences remain constant.

The evolutionary perspective has been criticized for a number of reasons. While gender accounts for important differences in mating preferences, sociocultural factors strongly influence people's feelings and behaviors in mate selection (Hatfield & Rapson, 2006; Wallen, 1989). Also notable, evolutionary theories do not provide a clear explanation of homosexual attraction (Howard, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1987). Howard Russock (2011) examined personal advertisements from print and electronic sources and found the predictable patterns in heterosexual ads, but found female-seeking-female more closely resembled male-seeking-female ads, and that male-seeking-male ads contained no evidence of traits from sexual selection theory. Ha, Berg, Engels, and Lichtwarck-Aschoff (2012) found that all sexual preference combinations desired attractive partners with social status, heterosexual men valued attractiveness most, and heterosexual women most wanted a partner with social status, placing the homosexual participants in between those extremes.

Understanding of human mate choices requires more research in patterns among alternative gender and sexual orientation groups, and particularly requires that researchers

not fall prey to stereotypes or limitations of conventionality (Felmlee, Orzechowicz, & Fortes, 2010; West, Popp, & Kenny, 2008). Around the globe, norms and expectations seem to be shifting toward broad acceptance of alternative lifestyles. Actually, cultures have never exclusively favored strict heterosexual definitions of legitimacy in relationship, and many only adopted narrow heterosexual standards after the spread of European colonialism and widespread adoption of sexually conservative Victorian-era European values (e.g., Ajibade, 2013; Roughton, 2014; Ruiz-Alfaro, 2012). A number of other attraction possibilities will probably emerge as cultural research increases around nonbinary and other gender and sexual orientation identities. Further, some individuals are uncomfortable categorizing themselves in any sexual orientation or gender identity (Scheffey, Ogden, & Dichter, 2019). Keeping in mind limitations of current research, we turn now to examination of cultural literature on dyadic relationships.

REALITY CHECK

How much are you similar to your friends in terms of ethnicity, geographic origin, and interests?

What do you consider attractive in terms of appearance?

What qualities would you like your romantic partner to have? Your life mate?

6.3 COUPLES: ROMANCE AND REALITY

LO 6.3 Compare and contrast research and theories about love and intimacy.

Out of this bond arises feelings of eroticism, passion, and companionship which somehow merge together to form a unified conceptual whole.

Jankowiak & Gerth, 2012

"Marry me," Mikita wrote to Anna on a piece of birch-bark, "I want you, and you me." The sentiment is not unusual. The fact that Mikita sent the proposal to his love between 1280 and 1300 in Novgorod, before Russia even existed, underscores that some truths remain, and people in all places and eras fall in love (Herszenhornoct, 2014). Survival of a species depends on procreation, to state the obvious. From penguins to primates, creatures mate in particular patterns, sometimes with particular rituals. Male penguins search for a particularly attractive stone to give to their prospective mates before they settle down to raise a single egg in monogamous bliss. Clever marketing of

diamonds over the last century has convinced human males in Western culture that they too must find the right stone to induce mating behaviors from a female, in this case set as an engagement ring. The bonobo is very similar to chimpanzees in appearance but much less violent. On the other end of the spectrum from the penguin, bonobo engage promiscuously in hetero- and homosexual liaisons, a practice that keeps their social relations much more peaceful than their chimp cousins. Human relations run the gamut of possible liaisons, but one thing is certain: we are fascinated by love, as demonstrated by the reams of poetry and love songs churned out over the centuries, and perhaps this makes us different from other animals. Our use of language and abstract thought certainly places us in a unique position to examine the myriad ways we have expressed love across history and cultures.

What Is Love?

The minute I heard my first love story,

I started looking for you, not knowing

how blind that was.

Lovers don't finally meet somewhere.

They're in each other all along.

Rumi

From poets to philosophers, humans have struggled to understand love for as long as we have records. To a Sufi mystic like Rumi, all love is love for the one divine creator, manifest in our many human forms. For most of us, love is for the people in our lives. We have maternal love, filial love, and especially, love for a romantic partner. It is the latter, that special someone, to which we turn now.

The Oxford Dictionaries (online) define love as "An intense feeling of deep affection," or "a deep romantic or sexual attachment to someone." Love has been a troubling topic for psychology from the start, being a hypothetical concept more suited to poetry than science (Carter, 1998). Psychological explanations range from libido expression and ego gratification to strict descriptions of physiological and evolutionary functions. In Irving Singer's (1987) estimation, Freud painted a confusing picture of the topic, variously describing love as sexuality fused with tenderness, libido directed toward a love object, *Eros* (the life force), and *Eros* combined with the death force (*Thanatos*), all of which are impossible to quantify and measure. The other end of the spectrum places love in the increasingly measurable realm of neurobiology, drawing strikingly accurate parallels between human love and mating behaviors of prairie voles, for instance (Carter, 1998), with liberal secretion of the bonding hormone oxytocin in both species when they come together. Neither libido nor prairie vole bears much resemblance to the experience of love in daily life.

Cultures do provide more practical and comprehensible answers about the human experience of romantic love. Intense emotions in pair bonding, what we call "love" in English, is a human universal existing across cultures (Buss, 1988;

Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992; Wlodarski & Dunbar, 2014). The commonalities and differences of how we describe and enact love reveal a great deal about the topic and about our cultures (Hatfield & Rapson, 1996). Cultural parameters determine whom we may love, what our responsibilities are in relationship, and how we may and may not behave with our objects of affection. Serious research into love across cultures was rare until recently, due to an unbelievably ethnocentric view that romantic love existed only in European cultures (Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992).

Increased research over the past few decades, notably led by Elaine Hatfield and her husband Richard Rapson, reveals a set of parameters shared across cultures that are definable and measurable while still reflecting the inner, subjective experience of love. Hatfield and Rapson (1996) generally differentiate between two types or aspects of love that appear consistently across cultures: passionate love and companionate love. It is with these concepts that we will begin.

Passionate Love

I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

In passionate love, a person feels great desire, sexual and emotional, for the other person and longs for union. If that union is fulfilled, love is reciprocated and life is wonderful. If not, if it is unrequited, the person may feel empty and anxious (Hatfield & Rapson, 2010; 1993; Hatfield, Rapson, & Martel, 2007). Jankowiak and Fischer (1992) defined romantic love as "any intense attraction that involves the idealization of the other, within an erotic context, with the expectation of enduring for some time into the future" (p. 150). This is the love of Romeo and Juliet, of Tristan and Isolde, and of the herder and weaver in the bridge of birds tale, all of which speak of love so intense that the characters violate rules of their societies to be together (Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992). Across cultures, stories appear describing emotions that overwhelm the characters, driving them beyond the normal ken. The tales usually end unfortunately for the characters, but they make our hearts beat with passion and our imaginations soar.

Love's excitement and euphoria have physiological correlates including an amphetamine relative, phenethylamine (PEA; Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992). Other researchers focus on the neuropeptide oxytocin, which is also present immediately after childbirth as the mother and infant bond, and vasopressin, which is associated with male mating behavior. Levels of these are very high early in romantic relationships, indicating they play an important role in the biology of romantic bonding (Campbell, 2008; Schneiderman, Zagoory-Sharon, Leckman, & Feldman, 2012). Emanuele and colleagues (2006) measured a number of neurotrophic chemicals (ones that induce nerve growth and maturation) and found a distinct correlation between nerve growth factor (NGF) and intensity of romantic feelings. These chemical components of romance provide evidence that romantic love is a universal, built into human physical being, which explains why love is such a powerful presence in our lives and fills the art and music of cultures around the world.

Cacioppo, Bianchi-Demicheli, Hatfield, and Rapson (2012) summarized the burgeoning field of brain research about love, in which fMRI studies show clear patterns of brain activity for passionate love. Passionate love activates both subcortical and cortical areas, including reward centers rich in dopamine, and some patterns that bear similarity to brain activity after consuming drugs like cocaine. Activity is more intense than for love of parents, siblings, or friends, which in turn are more intense than unknown people or celebrities, when pictures are shown during protocols. In the brain, passionate love is a deeply rewarding, highly pleasurable, and possibly addictive experience.

Despite its intense effects and the popularity of passionate love in media, it has been actively discouraged more often than not throughout history (Hatfield & Rapson, 2002), with Christianity taking a particularly repressive stance for the past 1500 years. Tamils of South Indian compare it to *makkyam*, a state of "dizziness, confusion, intoxication, and delusion" (Hatfield, Mo, & Rapson, 2015). Indeed, Wlodarski and Dunbar (2014) discuss the effects of intense love on mental abilities, citing a number of studies showing impairment when participants are prompted to think of the love object. Paradoxically, the same type of prompt is associated with increased accuracy in perceiving emotion. This means passionate love makes us measurably less effective or rational yet more emotionally sensitive. Passion is inherently unstable: the adolescent infatuation portrayed in *Romeo and Juliet* results in six deaths and provides a poor model for maintaining social order. Passions also diminish over time, as partners wrinkle, reveal annoying habits, and generally become commonplace after the blush of new love has faded. Emanuel et al. (2005) found that the high levels of NGF receded after 18 to 24 months to a point where they are indistinguishable from the control group who were not in love. Passion moves our hearts and souls to create great works of art and perform heroic feats, but eventually it fades. Something else must come into play for our relationships to last.

Companionate Love

Complementary to passionate love, and sometimes considered its opposite on the love spectrum, is companionate love. After the flood of neurotransmitters has passed, a longer, less tumultuous phase may follow, "characterized by the growth of a more peaceful, comfortable, and fulfilling relationship; it is a strong and enduring affection built upon long term association" (Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992, p. 150). Melvin M. Knight (1924) used the term to distinguish marriage expressly for companionship from the institution of family, which he described as existing expressly for procreation. By 1978, the second edition of Berscheid and Hatfield's *Interpersonal Attraction* included a chapter on romantic love and one on companionate love, which they described as an intense liking for "someone with whom one's life was 'deeply intertwined'" (Berscheid, 2010, p. 3). Companionate love focuses on feelings of intimacy and commitment rather than emotional fire and physical desire (Hatfield et al., 2015).

Companionate love is not separate from passionate love. Practically, long term relationships include both passionate and companionate feelings. People age and become accustomed to each other, and this is a natural part of life. Focus on passion also varies

by culture, with companionate feelings forming a more normative part of arranged marriages, for instance. A shift to a more companionate phase does not preclude additional times of passion: the two may both be active aspects of a healthy relationship. The two types of love also provide explanatory power to describe relationships in a wider variety of cultural and lifespan contexts. American media emphasizes high passion with lower concern for companionate aspects, and preferences of other cultures may be compared on level of each dimension.

The Triangular Theory of Love

In 1986, Robert Sternberg debuted his triangular theory of love. Instead of the two components, Sternberg had parsed love to three factors: intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment. Intimacy describes feelings of closeness and bonding, passion refers to the romantic and sexual aspects, and decision/commitment refers to the cognitive dedication to preservation of the relationship. Noting that love "can be partitioned in a number of ways" (p. 119), Sternberg (1986) proposes that this partitioning "is particularly useful for understanding elements of love, and how they function in close relationships" (p. 120).

Sternberg's theory indeed illuminates some cultural variation. Cheng and Christopher (2010) investigated relationship satisfaction in China, predicting that commitment would moderate the effects of passion and intimacy. In analysis of responses from 263 participants, they found that levels of intimacy and commitment significantly affected satisfaction, but that passion did not. These findings are in keeping with Chinese traditions for relationship, and differ from the Western emphasis on passion as the basis for successful marriage.

Sex

Societies take what are essentially straightforward, biologically grounded dispositions, for example puberty, or pregnancy, or menstruation, and weave around them the most intricate webs of custom, attitude, and belief.

Broude, 1975, p. 381

Biological imperatives form an absolute substructure of human life; we all must eat, drink, and find shelter, and at least some members of a culture must procreate for the group to survive. What we eat and wear varies, along with the shapes and materials of our shelters, reflecting our environment, our cultural origins, and the thought patterns we have learned in our journeys across the globe. Sexuality, perhaps more than any other of these absolute imperatives, reveals deep differences in belief systems and ways of thinking, leading to very different answers to questions, who can have sex and with whom? Can we speak of sex? Is it taboo or is conversation normally filled with sexual innuendo? Does sex require a legitimized relationship, is it considered pleasant or unpleasant, and what happens if rules are violated?

Premarital Sex

Rules and norms about premarital sex form a bewildering tapestry of contradictions, ranging from absolute prohibition to hearty endorsement. Pre-contact Polynesia, including Hawai'i, had no equivalent concept of marriage, and hence had no notable proscriptions against genital contact, except between low ranking males and female royalty (Diamond, 2004). Broude (1975) provides an extensive list of cultural attitudes when marriage is a component, including the Chewa of central and southern Africa who believe young women need premarital sex to become fertile, and the Goajiro of Colombia and Venezuela who forbid it as an act against the will of the gods. Christians in the US generally forbid premarital sex, and early missionaries to Pacific islands professed shock at the liberal sexuality of Polynesians, but actual behavior often does not match expectations and prohibitions. The Centers for Disease Control (Kann et al., 2014) estimates 34% of US high school students are sexually active and the Department of Health and Human Services recorded a pregnancy rate of 29.4 per 1,000 teen girls in 2013 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2015).

These values and proscription arise from underlying belief systems. Within the US, some cultural and religious groups speak of children as blessings from God and prohibit both birth control and sex for reasons other than procreation, while the other end of the spectrum maintains strictly biological perspectives and may be more liberal about birth control and sexual mores. Higher educational attainment is associated with higher incidence of premarital sex, possibly because women delay marriage to finish degrees and start careers (Addai, 1999). Higher levels of education and affluence also correlate with secularity (Gallup International Association, 2015), which may reduce importance of religious proscriptions. Addai (1999) tested several hypotheses about prevalence of premarital sex in Ghana. The territory that is now Ghana includes multiple ethnic groups with a range of sexual norms and traditions, but several trends are clear. Premarital sex is increasing over time, likely because parental control and adherence to old norms are decreasing as youth are exposed to new elements of modern culture brought by globalized products and media.

Among cultures that prohibit premarital sex, Broude (1975) provided several examples of what she termed "native explanations for restrictiveness" (p. 382). These range from very practical motivation to prevent unwanted pregnancy among the Fon of West Africa (Herskovits, 1938), to the Kazak requirement of virginity at marriage described by Hudson (1938), to the judgment of the Wogeo of New Guinea that premarital sex was an indicator of later marital infidelity (Hogbin, 1945).

Inheritance practices provide another explanation of mores about premarital sex. In patrilineal cultures, inheritance passes father to son, while in matrilineal societies, mothers control ownership, passing land and wealth to daughters. Matrilineal societies have fewer prohibitions about premarital sex because the child has membership in the line of inheritance regardless of who the father is. Patrilineal cultures remain more invested in female chastity because premarital sex may happen with someone other than the eventual husband, and thus, the activity interferes with inheritance by the male's genetic offspring (Addai, 1999).

Whatever traditions govern premarital sex, modernization and media are unquestionably changing traditional practices. Hawai'i traditionally endorsed liberal sexuality before Western contact (Diamond, 2004), but now enjoys a relatively low rate of unwed

births (Shattuck & Kreider, 2013), perhaps because sex education has been available in schools and became mandatory in public schools as of 2016. Unwed mothers in America face a number of economic and social consequences (Shattuck & Kreider, 2013), whatever their cultural origins. Promiscuity also brings with it increased transmission of HIV, causing concern in global health efforts. With greater choice come greater risks.

REALITY CHECK

Is dating allowed in your culture? How did you meet your romantic partner or those you have dated?

If you are in a relationship, can you identify the levels of passionate, companionate, and committed love?

How does your family feel about premarital sex?

6.4 MARRIAGE AND INTIMACY

LO 6.4: Explain how culture shapes the dynamics of our intimate relationships.

Dyadic intimate relationships exist in all times and cultures, fulfilling needs for sex, emotional bonding, and intimacy. Humans have embraced an incredible variety of romantic and marital relationships across history and across cultures (see Table 6.2). In addition to the numbers and types of partners involved, cultures also vary in how relationships come about, who can engage in sexual contact, who makes decisions once the relationship is established, and other factors of day-to-day existence.

Table 6.2	Types of Mating/Marital Arrangements
Monogamy	Men and women are permitted to have only one regular sexual partner or marry only one person at a time
Polygamy	Men or women are allowed to have more than one regular sexual partner or mate at a time
Polygyny	Men are allowed more than one regular sexual partner or wife at a time
Polyandry	Women are allowed more than one regular sexual partner or husband at a time
Polygynandry	Both men and women can have as many sexual and/or marital partners as they desire

Source: Hatfield and Rapson (1996, p. 5).

The Mating Game

Burke considers courtship as a form by which social distinctions, such as classes, are transcended.

Discussion of intimate relationships begins with how people can or cannot meet, who determines and/or legitimizes relationships, and what partners may do once they decide to couple. Propinquity has formed a principal avenue of American research, with Bossard (1932) observing that one third of marriages licensed in Philadelphia in 1931 were between people who had lived within five blocks of each other. Abrams (1943) found the same pattern a decade later, and Korson (1968) found evidence of propinquity in mate selection in the very different cultural milieu of 1960s Karachi, Pakistan. The Karachi case raises a very different issue, however, because all of the marriages Korson observed were arranged by parents or others. Newcomb (1956) observed that "what we are concerned with is something that is made possible, or more likely, with decreasing distance" (pp. 575–576), a fact that is true also in friendship (Nahemow & Lawton, 1976). The choices of mate in Philadelphia, influenced by nearness but made individually, are very different from those arranged marriages in Karachi.

In the realm of who marries whom, personal choice has not historically been the path to liaison; entitativity becomes the paramount consideration, the group or individual level at which decisions can be made (Kashima, 2005). Can a person just decide her marriage partner, or must any marriage be arranged or approved? Attraction and the formalized liaison of marriage have often been two different processes. Throughout recorded history and across cultures, mates are commonly chosen by elders or respected matchmakers rather than by individual choice. At minimum, lovers sought parental blessings on the match, and pairings outside family approval were the stuff of Romeo and Juliet type dramas. Broude and Greene (1983) surveyed an extensive list of cultures to determine common patterns of mate selection, shown in Table 6.3.

In Broude and Greene's (1983) cross-cultural comparison of marriage practices, they found that when men choose whom they marry, women do also. In cultures where marriages are arranged, this may happen in a number of ways. Parents may consult a trusted friend or a religious leader, or a professional matchmaker. Questions to address may include religion, family background, and dowry size. In India, caste (whether noble or some level of commoner) along with religious affiliation are extremely important questions (despite official elimination of caste at founding of modern India). The advantage gained by alliance of the families involved may be of paramount importance (Dion & Dion, 1993). In my (Fox, 2010) study of artists in New Zealand, a thoroughly modern Indian woman in her late 20s expressed that she could see herself entering an arranged marriage, especially since she was getting a bit older without having established a marriage on her own.

Generally, marriage quality is a universal predictor of health and well-being (e.g., Umberson, Williams, Powers, Liu, & Needham, 2006; Williams, 2003). Research into outcomes of marriage based on who initiates the match is difficult for a number of

Table 6.3 Options for Marriage Choice	
Locus of Choice	**Individual Entitativity**
Parents choose	Person cannot choose
Parents choose, person can object	Individual can choose
Arranged and individual choice acceptable	Person and/or others choose
Individuals, kin, and others all must agree	Person has limited choice
Approval of kin and/or community highly desirable	Person has limited choice
Individual solely selects partner	Individual solely chooses

Sources: Broude and Greene (1983); Hatfield and Rapson (1996).

reasons, including differing marital roles, behavioral norms, and communication styles, and cultural constraints on divorce. Some cultures flatly reject love as a criterion of mate selection in favor of arranged marriages, while others endorse love as the criterion or prefer some combination of love and arrangement (de Munck, 1996). Folk wisdom says that love marriages begin hot and grow cooler, while arranged marriages begin cold and grow hotter (Xu & Whyte, 1990). Research into marital choice shows a mixed picture, with some studies showing no significant differences in satisfaction (Myers, Madathil, & Tingle, 2005; Regan, Lakhanpal, & Anguiano, 2012; Schwartz, 2007). Xu and Whyte (1990) observed better satisfaction in Chinese in couple-initiated love marriages. Two studies separated by decades of time showed very high marriage satisfaction for couples in arranged marriages in Jaipur, India (Bowman & Dollahite, 2013; Gupta & Singh, 1982), which the authors credit more to relational dynamics than to how the marriage began.

Interestingly, Madathil and Benshoff (2008) compared Euro- and Indian Americans and Indians in India, finding that the happiest couples were Indians living in the US in arranged marriages, compared to those in marriages of choice, whether Indians in India or Americans. Happiness, well-being, and satisfaction depend on the stability and conflict in our relationships, as Daniel Shek (2001) found with his Chinese participants in Hong Kong, and as did Quek and Fitzpatrick (2013) in Singapore. Cultural factors in relationship further influence these outcomes because cultures have different norms and expectations for marital behavior, and offer different resources for conflict resolution.

Engagement and Changes in Relationship Stability

Between the high individualism of Western culture and the breakdown of traditional restraints on marriage (see Spotlight: Shifting Sands), modern love relationships are certainly characterized by high relational mobility. As Schug et al. (2010) observed, individualists are motivated to make greater investment in relationship to counteract this

SPOTLIGHT

SHIFTING SANDS: LOVE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

World War II unquestionably involved more humans in war than ever before in history. Death and destruction raged across the globe, and men and boys left hearth and home to fight. As war spread and men departed from farms and factories, women entered the workforce, and particularly manufacturing, in unprecedented numbers. Women built the machines and vehicles of war, represented by the archetypal image of a woman in a work shirt often referred to as "Rosie the Riveter" (see Figure 6.3). Some 6 million American women entered the workforce, most of whom had never held a paying job before. Following the war, many GIs and women from the factories and hospitals never went back to agrarian or domestic lives, and the women now had unprecedented earning ability.

Figure. 6.3   We Can Do It! by Miller (1942)

Source: oberart/istockphoto.com

The economic independence of women, along with voting suffrage, socially acceptable divorce, and greater civil equality, radically altered the hierarchies and power structures of gender relations in Western culture. Women could tell an abusive spouse to "hit the road, Jack" without certainty of becoming a starving outcast, as was historically a real risk for women who left marriages. Realistically, many still remain in abusive relationships because the shift to gender equality is far from complete. Wages still favor males, and males far outnumber females in political and corporate positions of power. Though room for improvement remains, the conditions of women have unquestionably improved on average.

The stability and longevity of relationships, on the other hand, plummeted. A popular misconception is that half of American marriages end in divorce, but trends are complex. The marriage rate in 2011 was 6.8 per thousand people, while the divorce rate was 3.6 (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012). The half that divorce include many second or third marriages, and do not reflect the growing number of stable cohabitations. In 1995, 34% of women cohabited as a first union, increasing to 48% in 2006–2010 data, with 23% of births occurring in cohabitation (Copen, Daniels, & Mosher, 2013). What is certain is that traditional marriage is less popular and less stable, and that alternative choices are better tolerated.

In addition to the changes above, modern entertainment, including the seemingly harmless Disney films, promotes an ideal of lasting, passionate love that is not supported by cultural precedent or empirical research. The motherless princess of most Disney movies falls in instant love at first sight, an impractical condition lampooned in *Frozen*.

The older films portray the woman as lacking in personal power, dependent on the handsome prince for her rescue. More recent films such as *Brave, Frozen,* and *Moana* from the Disney brand show increasing independence of the princesses, but those heroines still promote an individualist path to success.

Disney forms the mildest end of the media relationship spectrum. American media has produced brilliant films, music, and other media, but there is a dark side. Media endorsing promiscuity and oozing sexuality is aggressively marketed around the world, spreading cultural instability in its wake.

With loss of proscriptions against divorce, increased economic power of women, and the general drift toward individualistic ways of being, the old reasons marriages lasted are gone. New reasons to stay together have not fully emerged, in one of the fastest cultural shifts of human history. But research consistently shows that people who do not divorce are happier and live longer. Only time will tell how we solve this dilemma.

type of mobility. It is interesting to note that the diamond engagement ring, a literal financial investment, only began to appear outside royal circles in the later 1800s. The expensive ring increased in popularity after elimination of a legal concept called "breach of promise to marry" (Brinig, 1990), in which failure to marry could result in lawsuit. Engagement rings became common after 1945, amid the massive relocation of soldiers and families following WWII (see Spotlight: Shifting Sands). As relational mobility has increased, the popularity of a specific large cash investment in a tangible symbol of relationship (the ring) has become normative. Similarly, the double ring ceremony, in which the man also receives and wears a wedding band, only became a "tradition" in the later 20th century (Howard, 2003). The rings form an alternative way to induce compliance in sexual and relational fidelity as religious and social pressures have waned.

Problems in Relationships

All bleeding eventually stops, and all relationships end, at least in our finite physical world. People naturally face conflict as they attempt to negotiate existence together. Partners change, mature, and disagree over time in all cultures, necessitating redefinition of relationship (Hatfield & Rapson, 1996). Lisa Dillon and colleagues (2015) surveyed 2,600 married couples from the United States, Britain, China, Russia, and Turkey, finding fairly consistent sources of conflict across cultures. Primary issues were sexual activity, financial issues, labor division, and parenting. Kindness, including positive communication, was the primary factor reducing conflict.

Infidelity is considered to be a source of problems across many cultures, despite scarcity of systematic review of evidence on the topic (Jankowiak, Nell, & Buckmaster, 2002). From an evolutionary standpoint, infidelity should be endorsed more by males, in a double standard where males enjoy more opportunities to procreate. Indeed, this gender difference has been supported in research (e.g., Brase, Adair, & Monk, 2014), with notable exceptions. Cultures do differ in acceptance and perceived effect of sexual infidelity (Jackman, 2015). Harris and Christenfeld (1996) found that the seriousness of infidelity depends on whether the culture links sexual infidelity to feelings of

Table 6.4 Percentage of Cultures Allowing Divorce, Rated by Conditions and Gender

Standards for Divorce	Males	Females
No grounds required for divorce	59%	42%
Grounds are not necessary, but grounds ease financial, legal, or social consequences	19%	33%
Divorce is only possible with grounds	7%	9%
Divorce is not allowed	3%	4%

Source: Broude and Greene (1983).

love. Zandbergen and Brown (2015) found that culture predicted jealousy about sexual infidelity, but that gender predicted jealousy over emotional infidelity. Women do appear to be more strongly affected by emotional infidelity across cultures, in keeping with predictions of evolutionary psychology (Brase et al., 2014) because emotional infidelity affects a partner's willingness to remain in relationship until children mature.

Relationships reach an early end for variety of reasons, many of them shared around the world. The Austin Institute for the Study of Family and Culture (2014) cites 17 reasons for divorce in America, including emotional abuse, poor partner match, infidelity, financial differences, and spouse's immaturity. These reasons parallel Dillon et al.'s (2015) cross-cultural comparison, and the literature of relationships across cultures in general. Abandonment also constitutes grounds for divorce in many cultures, including within Sharia practice (Mashhour, 2005), and may form grounds for annulment in Catholicism, which does not actually allow divorce (Vannoy, 2000). Divorce as a legal and ethical issue largely affects ability to remarry (Rheinstein, 1953). Broude and Greene (1983) included a compilation of conditions required for divorce across cultures, rated for frequency of acceptability by gender (see Table 6.4). Their findings definitely show more flexibility for males, but while divorce may technically be allowed, implications may be severe and lasting, with divorce creating a lasting stigma, especially for women. Romantic love is a common experience, but so is loss, and misfortunes in love fill the songs and poetry of many cultures.

REALITY CHECK

Who did or will decide whom you may marry?

Do you think emotional infidelity is a serious infraction?

Are your parents still married? What proportion of people you know are from homes where someone divorced?

6.5. ART AND RELATIONSHIPS

LO 6.5 Explain the roles of the arts in defining and sustaining relationships.

No topic is more powerful in arts across cultures than close relationships. Your desk and walls likely contain photos of friends and family. Before photography, artists painted tiny cameos worn close to the heart, and large portraits to grace grander walls. Shah Jahan commissioned the exquisite Taj Mahal in memory of his most beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, and it has stood for four centuries in silent testament to his affection.

Songs and poems describe our expectations and experiences in relationship. Heroes in myths and movies frequently have a side-kick and love interest. In the Hindu epic the *Mahabarata*, the deity Krishna is the charioteer of the hero warrior Arjuna, who offers wisdom in the *Guru Gita* to prepare Arjuna for the battle to come. Friends in tales from many cultures teach how to be a good and faithful friend, and how to be alert for treachery. Songs sing praises of ancestors, and especially mothers. And of course, love songs fill our hopes and dreams as we move into sexual relationships. The world's songs and literature are filled to the brim with relationships too numerous to discuss, though the topic is fascinating. A few examples regarding romantic love will illustrate some of the commonalities and variations on the theme.

The words of songs and poems convey the deepest thoughts of lovers across time.

All your young beauty is to me

Like a place where the new grass sways

After the blessing of the rain,

When the sun unveils its light.

—Somali Poem (Andrzejewski, 1969)

The sentiment of this Somali poem may be unfamiliar: Somalia is a dry land where rain means life. Bright sun on new grasses compare the lover's presence to nourishment to sustain the writer's heart and soul. *The flower song* is from ancient Egypt's New Kingdom 3,000 years ago. It contains the same theme of sustenance from the lover's presence:

The Flower Song (Excerpt)

To hear your voice is pomegranate wine to me:

I draw life from hearing it.

Could I see you with every glance,

It would be better for me

Than to eat or to drink.

—Egypt, c. 1000 BCE, trans. by M.V. Fox)

Less familiar imagery also appears in ancient Egyptian love poems: *I'll go down to the water with you/and come out to you carrying a red fish*. The fish may represent the lover's heart laid bare. Pollen becomes the metaphor for evidence of infidelity in this Indian poem calling out an unfaithful lover from about the 9th century:

> Did you sleep in the garden, dear,
>
> On a bed of magnolia flowers?
>
> I suppose you know that your breast
>
> Is smeared with the pollen dust?
>
> —India, ca. 800 CE, in Wright (2011)

The conditions and emotions would appear to be similar across time and culture, with the allusions and metaphors changing with the environment, but people may also think differently about love.

In Japan, love poetry is shaded by *mono no aware*, a sentiment of simultaneous sorrow and joy at the fleeting nature of life and love, made all the more precious in its impermanence. Moto-Yoshi Shinnō (died 943 CE) was a son of the Emperor Yōzei, famous for his many love affairs. Of a woman who rejected his advances, he wrote:

> *Wabi nureba*
>
> *Ima hata onaji*
>
> *Naniwa naru*
>
> *Mi wo tsukushite mo*
>
> *Awamu to zo omou.*
>
> We met but for a moment, and
>
> I'm wretched as before;
>
> The tide shall measure out my life,
>
> Unless I see once more
>
> The maid, whom I adore.
>
> —Shinnō, Japan, ca. 10th century

His melancholy seems a lasting condition central to his self-concept, "wretched as before." *A Tale of Genji* was written by Lady Murasaki Shikibu about another roguish charmer, and published in 1008 CE as a pillow book read by wealthy ladies. Illegitimate son of the ruler, Genji pursued many women, never quite finding happiness even in achieving his goal. Genji also had male friends, notably his confidant Koremitsu. The friends shared pleasures and adventures, but Koremitsu was obliged to help Genji

when situations ran afoul, as when a fragile woman died in Genji's bed. Something of a scoundrel, Genji's fictional friendships were not easy on his friends, who, in that hierarchic collectivist setting, had to help him no matter what.

Mono no aware fits well with remorse and nostalgia, and particularly with grief. The sentiment actually was influenced by Chinese poetry. Mei Yao Ch'en wrote a poem mourning his first wife in the 11th century, translated as "In Broad Daylight I Dream":

A Dream at Night

In broad daylight I dream I

Am with her. At night I dream

She is still at my side. She

Carries her kit of colored

Threads. I see her image bent

Over her bag of silks. She

Mends and alters my clothes and

Worries for fear I might look

Worn and ragged. Dead, she watches

Over my life. Her constant

Memory draws me towards death.

—Mei Yao-ch'en (1002–1060), in Chaves (1976)

Music and Love

If music be the food of love, play on.

Twelfth Night, *Act 1, Scene 1*

One of the oldest surviving songs from Europe is Greensleeves, with 16th-century lyrics set to a melody probably older still. Like many songs and poems about relationship across culture, Greensleeves is a song of sorrow and loss:

Your vows you've broken, like my heart,

Oh, why did you so enrapture me?

Now I remain in a world apart

But my heart remains in captivity.

Greensleeves was all my joy

Greensleeves was my delight,

Greensleeves was my heart of gold,

And who but my lady Greensleeves.

At the dawn of rock and roll, traditional life had thoroughly been disrupted by WWII, and in the void, teens with the new mobility of widespread automobile ownership sought new excitement. Arts always reflect and interpret social change, particularly in music (Walters & Spitzer, 2003), and predictably, the greater mobility and independence of women flavored popular music as the Civil Rights movement and feminism expanded. Sexuality definitely played a huge role in rock and roll.

Hobbs and Gallup (2011) examined a large number of songs for reproductive messages, first beginning with Top Ten songs from 2009 (174 songs), then the annual Top Ten for one year from each of the past six decades (60 songs). The authors comment, "A content analysis of the lyrics revealed 18 reproductive themes that read like an outline for a course in evolutionary psychology" (p. 402). Reproductive messages did not start in this modern era, however. Hobbs and Gallup eventually examined classical and operatic repertoire dating back to 1597 (327 songs) and found the same patterns. Mozart was only one of the many respected composers who wrote a set of overtly sexualized madrigals to be enjoyed at parties.

The situations of love vary incredibly, from monogamous heterosexuality to multiple wives or husbands, to the somewhat relaxed liaisons of old Hawai'i. What does not change is the need to bond closely with at least one or more individuals. How we describe those relationships may change depending on our culture and epoch, but the existential need for affiliation remains.

REFLECTING ON YOUR READING

- Looking at the relationships in your life, how might you describe them using the theories presented in this chapter?

- Would you describe your upbringing as more collectivist or individualist? What

evidence could you present to support your claim?

- How might your relationships be different if you grew up in another culture?

CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY

6.1 Roles and Interpersonal Relationships

Role is a theatrical term describing particular relationships, statuses, and responsibilities people may hold. These roles form enduring components of cultures.

Friendships form a generally less formal set of roles. Relational mobility, how easily a person can move in or out of friendships, affects how friends behave toward each other.

Family generally includes genetic relatives and shared residence, though this varies across cultures. Structure also varies in terms of who holds authority or controls resources. Parental roles and responsibilities also vary, particularly for fathers, who may invest energy, time, and resources in proximal (close and direct) or distal (more general to the group) ways.

6.2 Dyadic Relationships: Attraction

Much of human relating is enacted in dyads, whether friends of sexual partners.

Attraction is what pulls people together in relationship. Physical attractiveness may include a range of body types, often reflecting food scarcity. Facial attractiveness across cultures includes symmetry and freedom from blemishes, and an averaging of population norms in specific feature configuration. Males slightly prefer women with higher fertility characteristics, while women tend to prefer evidence of social standing and better resources, both of which reflect evolutionary selection to maximize survival.

6.3 Couples: Romance and Reality

Although love appears to be a universal, cultures differ in descriptions. Generally, love includes elements of affection and attachment. Research describes elements of love, which Hatfield and colleagues suggest may be passionate and erotic, or companionate and comfortable. Sternberg describes three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment. These components are useful in understanding different manifestations of love relationships across cultures.

Though sex is a biological universal, rules and norms about sexuality vary widely across cultures. Acceptance of premarital sexual activity appears to correlate with inheritance practices, with patrilineal cultures assuring genetic connection of father to children through chastity.

6.4 Marriage and Intimacy

Marriage has included numerous configurations across history. A primary difference arises in who can choose, whether people marrying, parents, or matchmakers.

Problems happen in relationships in all cultures, and the causes are strikingly similar. The ways we deal with those problems and the solutions available differ.

6.5 Art and Relationships

Arts contain detailed information about relationships, especially in music. Visual arts convey information about attractiveness and family structure. Love songs and poetry describe relationship dynamics, desires, and expectations for a given era and culture.