CHAPTER 8

Love Relationships

Dating and Living Together

The Ideal Romantic Partner
North American Research
Sexual Partners
  Physical Attractiveness
Marriage Partners
  Honesty
  Personality
  Intelligence
Personal Ads
  Do Nice Guys Finish Last?
Cross-Cultural Research
  Cultural Traditions
  Education
  Financial Prospects
  Physical Attractiveness
Explanations for Gender Differences in Preference Patterns

Evolutionary Psychology
- passing on genes to the next generation
- men should prefer young, attractive, healthy-looking women
- women should look for commitment

Criticisms
- highly speculative
- no genetic mechanism
- same-gender relationships
- both men and women are interested in long-term relationships

Social Roles Explanation
- social roles and socialization explain preference patterns
- culture does have an effect on mate preferences
- gender differences in mate preferences are not inevitable
- differences in mate preferences between cultures are typically larger than the differences in mate preferences between genders

Characteristics of Heterosexual Love Relationships

Gender Comparisons
- friendship
- liking, commitment, satisfaction
- sadness, depression, hurt, loneliness
- trust, caring, honesty, respect
- strategies for maintaining a romantic relationship

Factors Related to Satisfaction with the Relationship
- friendship
- skill at expressing emotions

Living Together
- Cohabitation
- Ethnicity
- Living together before marriage
- Divorce
Breaking Up
- men & women report similar negative emotions
- women feel more joy and relief
- picking up the signals
- ambivalence
- coping—blame, distractions

Marriage and Divorce
Average ages for first marriage
Marriage rates and ethnicity

Marital Satisfaction
Satisfaction During Various Periods of Marriage
- newlyweds
- expectations and resentments
- changes and satisfaction
Gender Comparisons in Marital Satisfaction
- devotion to marriage partner
- women report more extreme levels of emotion than men do
- women more likely to report that marriage did not live up to ideal
- women more sensitive to problems in relationship
- gender similarities in marital satisfaction

Characteristics of Happy Marriages
1. Communication skills and understanding
2. More positive comments, rather than negative comments
3. Strong conflict-resolution skills
4. Trust in the other person
5. Mutual support
6. Genuine concern about other’s well-being
7. Flexibility
8. Equal sharing of household tasks
9. Equal sharing in decision making

Distribution of Power in Marriages
Salary and Power
Patterns of Power Distribution
- Traditional Marriage
• Egalitarian Marriage

**Marriage and Women of Color**

Latinas
- Machismo
- Marianismo
Black Women
- Black Matriarchy
Asian American Women
- Role of Ethnicity
  - Conflict between traditional customs and contemporary gender roles

**Divorce**

The Decision to Divorce
- Wives initiate divorce more often than husbands do

Psychological Effects of Divorce
- Transitions and Separations
- Stress, Depression, Anger
- Positive Feelings

Financial Effects of Divorce
- A woman's financial situation is almost always worse following a divorce, especially if she has children
- Many fathers fail to pay child support

**Lesbians and Bisexual Women**

Lesbian
- Sexual Minority
- Heterosexism

*The Psychological Adjustment of Lesbians*
- Homosexuality is not a mental disorder
- The average lesbian is as well adjusted as the average heterosexual woman
- In some studies, lesbians higher in self-confidence, self-sufficiency, ease of decision making

Hate crimes ➔ Depression, Anxiety, Substance Abuse

Lesbians who accept their lesbian identity have higher self-esteem than those who have not accepted their lesbian identity
Community & Family
Characteristics of Lesbian Relationships

The Beginning of a Relationship
- Dependability
- Personality
- Friendship
- Emotional intimacy

Equality in Lesbian Relationships
- Equal decision making more important than equal salary
- Housework

Satisfaction
- Satisfaction similar to heterosexual couples and gay male couples

Relationship Commitment
- Psychological Intimacy

Breaking Up
- Similar reasons
- Same mix of emotions
- Fewer factors preventing break up
- Less support for relationship
- Lack of support after break up

Lesbian Women of Color
- Triple Barrier
- Cultural Barriers
- Invisibility
- Parental Rejection
- Relationship Satisfaction
- Community Support

The Fluidity of Female Sexual Orientation
- Diamond’s research – stable vs. fluid

Legal Status of Lesbian Relationships
- Marriage
- Commitment, Politics, Practicality
- Other Countries
Bisexual Women

Identity Issues Among Bisexual Women

Constructing Identity
Adjustment & Satisfaction
Role of Ethnicity

Attitudes Toward Bisexual Women
Rejection by both heterosexual and lesbian communities
Violating categories

Theoretical Explanations About Sexual Orientation

Questions about Heterosexuality

Biological Explanations
Lack of research with lesbian women
Genetic factors
Hormonal factors
Brain structures
Twin studies

Sociocultural Explanations
Social Constructionist Approach
- culture creates sexual categories
- we use these categories to organize our thoughts about our sexuality
- reject essentialist approach
- heterosexual script
- sexuality as fluid and flexible
- reevaluating our lives
- conscious choice

Intimate Careers Approach
- emphasize diversity of orientations
- variation within life course
- humans take a variety of pathways as we develop our intimate relationships
- variety of reasons for a particular orientation

Combining Approaches
Single Women

Characteristics of Single Women

- more likely to work outside the home
- choosing not to marry
- psychological distress, life span
- independence
- self-acceptance

Social relationships

Romantic status

Attitudes Toward Single Women

Singlism

Advantages and Disadvantages of Being Single

- Freedom
- Privacy
- Free to be themselves
- Self-knowledge
- Loneliness
- Cultural bias
- Social networks

Single Women of Color

- Little research
- Unmarried-daughter role
- Pursuing advanced education
- Lack of appropriate partner
- Supportive friendships & family