Katherine Aumer *Editor*

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*To my daughter Dylan, my husband Harry, my Mother, my Father, and the rest of my family who all have helped me to appreciate the bitter with the sweet.*

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# Contents

# Chapter 1
# Introduction to the Psychology of Love and Hate in Intimate Relationships

**Katherine Aumer**

Love and hate in intimate relationships have been of historical and literary interest since biblical times: "A time to love, and a time to hate" (Ecclesiastes 3:8). Following in those traditions, the Greeks emphasized the union of love and hate in Euripides' *Medea* (431 B.C.E./1993). Currently, there are songs (e.g., Mathers, Grant, & Hafermann's 2010, *Love the Way you Lie*), movies, and plays (Marber & Rosenthal's 2007, *Closer*) highlighting the interaction of love and hate in our close relationships. Psychoanalysts initiated a scholarly investigation of both love and hate in intimate relationships (see Blum 1997; Kernberg 1992; Klein 1975; McKellar 1950; Moss 2003; Strasser 1999; Vitz and Mango 1997). However, the scientific understanding and empirical contributions toward understanding the processes of hate and love in intimate relationships are still nascent and sparse. The lack of research concerning both love and hate in relationships is understandable, given that most of Western civilization perceives the coexistence of hate and love as antithetical. For most individuals, when thinking of romantic relationships and the person they love, the idea of "hating" that person might seem far-fetched, absurd, and unethical. The ability to feel emotions that are considered "opposite" simultaneously is termed emotional complexity (Lindquist and Barrett 2008), and there is some evidence to suggest that those from Eastern cultures may be more familiar with emotional complexity and subsequently coming to terms with feeling both love and hate in their intimate relationships (e.g., Shiota et al. 2010). The research reviewed and proposed in this book emphasizes that the complexity of romantic relationships is not clearly reflected in current Western social scripts and schemata for relationships. Although it is an important component of both romantic and non-romantic relationships, hate has only recently received attention in relationship research. Additionally, the ever-changing landscape of intimate relationships makes any future investigation of love and hate important for understanding elements of

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relationships. This book presents current research on understudied topics in intimate relationships revealing that future research regarding topics like relationship types, negative aspects of love, hate, and female sexual behavior is an important endeavor that will help provide a more inclusive view of how intimate relationships operate. By providing a foundation and overview of important issues of love and hate in intimate relationships, we hope to inspire more research.

The first half of this book (Chaps. 2–5) covers love and the changing landscape of romantic relationships. The second half (Chaps. 6–9) covers hate and characteristics of hate in intimate relationships. This book is intended for a wide audience. Seasoned academics who have spent several years studying romantic relationships may find insight and inspiration into the juxtaposition (or combination, depending on how one sees the two) of love and hate. Yet, the text will still provide an engaging platform for graduates and undergraduates in a variety of social science courses. Even those without experience with the social sciences may find personal insight in the topics and review of scholarship. The authors of these chapters come from a variety of traditions and backgrounds including social, clinical, and evolutionary psychology. Several of these chapters argue different points of view, and it is our hope that greater understanding of love and hate can be gleaned from this dialectical opposition.

## Love

Social standards of intimate relationships, at least within the USA, have traditionally been heterosexual and monogamous. Conventional dating is often arranged by parents and friends, and marriage for love is seen as the ideal (Coontz 2006), with marriage being the pinnacle of the relationship experience (Buckingham-Hatfield 2000) and divorce ending those relationships, about 50 % of the time (CDC 2014, for information on how divorce rates depend on demographics, see Shellenbarger 2004). To bolster the heteronormative script of intimate relationships, research often finds gender differences with men being sexually promiscuous and women being more sexually reserved (Oliver and Hyde 1993). The not so uncommon issues of intimate relationships infidelity, abuse, sexual issues, betrayal, obsession, and hate are often treated as the "pandora's box" of relationships: If we just do not open (or think about) it, then nothing can go wrong. This classic schema or prototype of an intimate relationship, wherein the relationship is heterosexual, monogamous, full of unconditional love, and male sexually dominated, may not be the most accurate assessment of current intimate relationships; social standards have been shifting.

The idea that intimate relationships should be monogamous may be more of a *desired* characteristic driven by classic Christian or Catholic dogma (Matt 19:3–8 NIV) and supported to some extent by government agencies like the CDC (e.g., CDC 2009) and NIH (Cohn 2014; Conley et al. 2012; Koop 1987; Misovich et al. 1997) rather than a natural element of intimate relationships (e.g., Nowak 2006). Additionally, as the development of technology (e.g., Tinder and Snapchat) has

made dating more expedient and less formal, the characteristics of intimate relationships are readily changing. Being monogamous or heterosexual may not be the best approach or a fitting outcome for everyone's sexual needs, desires, and relationships. In Chap. 2, Peter Jonason and Rhonda Balzarini discuss and review the variety of relationships that have emerged from the dynamic social systems we currently live in. Taking an evolutionary psychology approach, Jonason and Balzarini discuss how evolved sex differences may account for the differences in outcomes observed in the variety of relationship strategies reviewed. Although much of current relationships research has approached non-monogamy as a negative relationship strategy, the authors present a perspective that non-monogamous relationship strategies are adaptive strategies—a worthwhile approach that researchers in a variety of fields may find elucidating.

Additionally, the focus of male-centric intimate relationships, where the man is seen as the primary sexual force and women are seen as frigid gatekeepers, is challenged in Chaps. 3 and 4. Chapters 3 and 4 are written from a social psychological perspective and explain the sex differences that are reported in Chap. 2 as manifesting from the changing expectations and social pressures, as opposed to the natural, environmental pressures. Chapter 3 discusses sexual fantasies, and like non-monogamous relationship strategies, sexual fantasies within an intimate relationship have often been characterized by relationship experts as negative—at least until the dawn of the sexual revolution (Leitenberg and Henning 1995). However, the dearth of research on sexual fantasies within intimate relationships has remained. Do couples or those involved in intimate relationships suddenly stop fantasizing once they have a dedicated and willing sexual partner? Do intimate partners become unaffected by the sexual imagery that is presented online, on billboards, and in the media due to the presumption that their sexual needs are now being fulfilled? In Chap. 3, Ali Ziegler and Terri Conley argue that sexual fantasies are still an important element of intimate relationships and review the common finding in relationships research that women have more passive sexual fantasies than men (Wilson and Lang 1981). From a primarily social psychological framework, Ziegler and Conley demonstrate that sexual passivity in one's fantasies may be a result of conformity to gender roles that may be overcome through exploration, self-knowledge, and creativity. By breaking heteronormative sexual scripts and gender norms, one can equip their sexual life with more variety of fantasies that may be more adaptive for a successful relationship. Chapter 4 continues the journey through more female-focused sexual exploration, by examining the female orgasm. Interestingly, female orgasm has been treated as a rather taboo topic, both by researchers and by non-researchers. Most of the information on female orgasm has been provided by Masters and Johnson's (1966) laboratory studies done in the 1960s. Media tends to shy away from the presentation of female orgasm, with the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) historically giving movies that show females having sexual pleasure or orgasm a harsher NC-17 rating (only allowing people 17 and older to watch the movie), while movies with male sexual pleasure and orgasm a PG-13 rating (allowing those 13 and older to see the movie without parental guidance) (Harris 2007). Why is female versus male sexual

pleasure seen as more scandalous? Why is there so little discussion of the clitoris in relationships research, given that its primary function is to provide pleasure? Jes Matsick, Terri Conley, and Amy Moors provide a detailed presentation of the research on female orgasm and their insights into how female orgasm can be understood and further studied. Their emphasis on social psychological processes provides a clear understanding on how gender roles, environmental pressures, and societal expectations can affect an individual's sexual experience and potential for pleasure.

Concluding the section on love, Chap. 5, by Elaine Hatfield, Cyrille Feybesse, Victoria Narine, and Richard Rapson, presents a nuanced viewed of love: as both joyous and terrifying, and wonderful and terrible. They review the literature and research from a variety of perspectives, including neuroscience, social psychology, evolutionary psychology, clinical psychology, and history. Their presentation goes beyond Western perceptions of love and crosses a variety of cultures and different eras to demonstrate how our perceptions of love are dependent on the times and locations we find ourselves in. Chapter 5 ends with insights from a clinical perspective on how we can value the emotion of love within the overall experience of our lives.

## Hate

The first section on love provides a review of literature on feelings of love, sex, and relationship types, and although Chap. 5 does discuss negative aspects of love, the negative aspects of intimate relationships are not reviewed. The following section describes negative aspects of intimate relationships specifically in relation to hate.

Euripides' *Medea* (431 B.C.E./1993) demonstrates how powerful the combination of hate and love can be in intimate relationships. Jason tells his wife, Medea, that he is going to leave her and their two sons to marry a royal princess: Glauce, who is Creon's (the king of Greece's) daughter. Medea loves Jason so much and hates him so much for what he is about to do, she kills Glauce, Creon, and their sons. The killing of her sons is done with hesitation, but she rushes offstage with a knife to kill them anyway because she believes this will cause Jason the most pain. Her hate is so overwhelming that one may think she has no love for Jason. However, without any love for Jason, one may find it hard to imagine that his betrayal alone could have inspired such hatred.

One may also be resolved to believe that such actions were just the outcomes of odd literary barbarian characters set in ancient Grecian times. Yet, when one looks at the current homicide rates around the world, it is clear that people are still killing those they love and at an alarming percentage. The United Nations Office of Drug and Crime has compiled and made accessible murder rates and percentages from a variety of countries since 2002. Looking at the percentage of male and female homicide victims as a percentage of those killed by an intimate partner or close family member, it is startling to see that so many people are killed by those they

love and who, supposedly, love them (UNODC 2013). For men, an average of 19.6 % of those killed, across all the countries listed, were killed by an intimate partner or close family member. For women, an average of 51.8 % of those killed, across all countries listed, were killed by an intimate partner or close family member (the World Health Organization's 2016 statistics report that up to 38 % of murders of women were done by intimate partners; however, this figure does not, apparently, also consider family members). If a woman is killed in Australia, Italy, or China, the likelihood that she was killed by an intimate partner or loved one is over 70 % (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime 2013). Given these statistics, it appears that being a woman in this world engenders a certain risk, that if murdered, the murderer is likely to be someone who loves—and hates her.

However, the combination of love and hate may not always end in murder. Intimate partner violence may be another method wherein one can exact pain onto an individual they both love and hate. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that around 30 % of women, who have been in intimate relationships, experienced some form of physical or sexual abuse (WHO 2016). Of course, these rates of abuse and homicide do not consider emotional abuse and abuse done by non-intimate members of the family who also (profess to) love their victims.

Additionally, it would be misleading to argue that any or every person who hates the people they profess to love subsequently kills or abuses them. Or that murder and abuse by family members and intimate others always involve love and hate. One could argue that most people in relationships that involve love and hate are more likely to leave the relationship and move on.

Alternatively, according to Chris Burris and Rebecca Leitch in Chap. 6, people may subject ostensibly close others to physically or psychologically harmful acts that are often innovatively subtle with the apparent goal of boosting their own pleasure and satisfaction. As such, Burris and Leitch claim that such acts are sadistically motivated, drawing upon previous theoretical work (Rempel and Burris 2005) wherein sadism is conceptualized as a form of hate (i.e., the desire to harm). Armed with a common motivational core, they make the case for a sadistic family resemblance across a spectrum of severity from clinical manifestations such as sexual sadism disorder to more mundane phenomena such as pranking. Speculating that sadistic motivation is compensatory, originating from a displaced desire to elevate the self following a perceived insult, Burris and Leitch conclude by considering the characteristics of close relationships that might make ostensibly "loved" others more vulnerable to being targets of sadistic hate.

Following in the tradition of hate as motivation, in Chap. 7, John Rempel and Siobhan Sutherland regard hate as a manifestation of the desire to harm a target other. Using current theorizing on emotion and motivation, Rempel and Sutherland refine a motivational theory of hate that was originally proposed by Rempel and Burris (2005) by noting that the desire to harm can be experienced by the way of conscious deliberation and also as the "emotivational" impetus inherent in impulsive emotional expression. They then go on to discuss the various implications that a motivational conceptualization of hate may have for intimate relationships and describe subtypes of hate—redress, mutiny, and tethering—that may be commonly seen in intimate

relationships. They end by discussing how various methods for decreasing hate will need to focus on reducing, rather than merely suppressing, the desire to harm.

In contrast, Chap. 8, by Katherine Aumer and Anne Bahn, delineate how hate functions as an emotion. Like Rempel and Sutherland, they review the literature on hate from a social psychological framework using primarily empirical data. However, their findings suggest that hate may have more than just a destructive purpose. Aumer and Bahn argue that hate is an emotion and like other emotions has broad purposes (which may be even positive or protective), lacks specific deliberation (may suddenly arise without much consideration, for example when feeling betrayed), and can take precedence over other motivations (although one may be hungry, if the only person in the room who has food is someone hated, then one would rather starve). They posit that hate may be more frequent in intimate relationships than once believed and show research on how hate may heighten one's perceptions of threat from a hated target and be a result of the desire to protect oneself or, ironically, the relationship.

If intimate relationships often deal with hatred and if intimate relationships are not always pleasantly positive and secure, then how do we manage and maintain successful relationships? In Chap. 9, Jerrold Shapiro uses case studies and clinical expertise to demonstrate that the common appearance of hate in intimate relationships should be a process to be worked through and dealt with as opposed to ignored or removed. He argues that hate arises from perceived threats and provides methods in which one can work through hatred with their clients. It is important to emphasize that the current literature on helping individuals manage hate is rather sparse. One can find sources from a psychoanalytic perspective (see Blum 1997; Kernberg 1992; Klein 1975; McKellar 1950; Moss 2003; Strasser 1999; Vitz and Mango 1997); however, most of the literature on handling destructive emotions extends from work on anger (Bowlby 1976; Beck 1999; Bushman 2002; Bushman et al. 1999; Averill 2012). Whether the findings on anger can extend to and apply to the principles of hate is still an unanswered empirical question. Shapiro's insight into hate in intimate relationships is further demonstrated as he shows, through the case studies of his clients, that hate provides a convenient method for which to keep someone psychologically close, even when hate motivates us to distance ourselves or harm the individual targeted by the hate. Through understanding one's own threats, insecurities, and motivations, Shapiro provides insight into how clients and therapist can resolve issues of hatred.

It is important to note that although Chaps. 7 and 8 differ in their conceptions of hate as either a motivation or an emotion, they do agree that desire for harm/destruction for the target of hate is an important element in the experience of hate. Additionally, authors in both chapters argue that the perception of a threat is an important elicitor of hate and both chapters demarcate subtypes of hate and outline possible consequences of experiencing hate in intimate relationships. Chapter 7 emphasizes the conception of hate as motivational–specifically a *desire* for harm, while Chap. 8 declares that hate has no central goal, that it can be elicited from perceived betrayal, that it will sensitize one to possibilities of harm from the target of hate, and that it will trigger a sense of self-protection. Whether hate is more

of a motivation or an emotion will only be witnessed, hopefully, with future research. The concept of hate is already an uncomfortable and dark topic, and the studying of hate can be similarly intimidating. However, by better understanding hate, better insight into its manifestation and dissolution may be discovered, which ultimately can benefit intimate relations.

## Conclusion

This volume's presentation of love and hate in intimate relationships is intended to provide readers with a less biased and more informed representation of intimate relationships. Current Western conception of love is still idyllic. Although, historically, as in the case of Medea, the understanding that love and intimate relationships can bring disaster and doom is not unknown, current psychological research on how the two (i.e., love and hate) develop and proceed in an intimate relationship is quite sparse. Similarly, the understanding of different love or mating strategies (e.g., swinging, polyamory, and open relationships) and female agency within heterosexual relationships is shockingly understudied in much relationships research despite changes that have been brought forth by the sexual revolution and feminist ideologies. By presenting current research on love and hate in intimate relationships in one volume, it is our hope that future research will consider the importance of social changes, values, and cultural constraints of studying relationships within a traditional Western philosophical framework where relationships are seen as primarily heterosexual, monogamous, male dominated, and only full of love. By studying the variety of mating strategies available to us, the importance of the female orgasm and fantasy, and the destructive and compensatory pursuits of sadism and hate in intimate relationships, we argue that a more objective and broader view of intimate relationships will be obtained.

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# Part I
# Love

# Chapter 2
# Unweaving the Rainbow of Human Sexuality: A Review of One-Night Stands, Serious Romantic Relationships, and the Relationship Space in Between

**Peter K. Jonason and Rhonda N. Balzarini**

Generally speaking, sex research has been plagued with implicit biases against the very act of sex itself. For instance, a content analysis of articles appearing in four prestigious journals (i.e., *The Journal of Sex Research, Archives of Sexual Behavior, The New England Journal of Medicine, and Obstetrics and Gynecology*) from 1960 to the present (Arakawa et al. 2013) revealed that only a slim minority of articles (7 %) investigated positive aspects of love, sex, and intimacy. The vast majority (58 %) of articles focused on the problems associated with such behavior or could not be classified (35 %). These biases are even stronger in casual sex relationships, a type of relationship that is often treated as a pathology (Cho and Span 2010; Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Fielder and Carey 2010; Fortenberry 2003; Garneau et al. 2013; Owen and Fincham 2011; Townsend and Wasserman 2011), with emphasis on predictors like having a disordered parent–child relationship (e.g., Fielder et al. 2013; Garneau et al. 2013; Schmitt 2005), and alcohol abuse (e.g., Johnson 2013). In discussing the consequences of casual sex, the literature has focused almost exclusively on the perils of casual sex, including the dangers of community censure, shame, promiscuity, sexual disillusionment, physical danger, STIs, AIDS, and teenage pregnancies (Hatfield et al. 2012a, b; Schmitt 2004). Many articles read more like dire warnings than scholarly attempts to understand sexuality. In this chapter, however, we will attempt to take a nonjudgmental stance to the widerange of human sexuality.

In the past, social psychologists have devoted a great deal of time and energy trying to understand traditional, "serious" romantic and sexual relationships (see Hatfield et al. 2012a, b; Hatfield and Rapson 2005; Christopher and Sprecher 2000).

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Up until 5 years ago, anyone who read the research on relationships might conclude that individuals only engage two forms of relationships: one-night stands and serious, romantic relationships (Cubbins and Tanfer 2000; Fisher and Byrne 1978; Hughes et al. 2005; Li and Kenrick 2006; Maticka-Tyndale and Herold 1999). In recent years, however, a few pioneering social psychologists have become interested in more casual encounters (e.g., "one-night stands," "hook-ups," "fuck-buddy sex," "friends-with-benefits," "anonymous sex," "no strings attached," "booty calls," "swinging," "chance encounters," "cruising," and "dogging"). Nonetheless, research on casual sex is relatively recent and riddled with biases, questionable methods, and lack nuance.

A minority of the studies on human sexuality have upset the proverbial applecart in that they suggest there is a wider and perhaps infinite[1] array of potential relationships that individuals can engage in (Afifi and Faulkner 2000; Grello et al. 2006; Puentes et al. 2008). Today, between 25 and 75 % (Jonason et al. 2009; Lambert et al. 2003; Paul et al. 2000) of sexual acts committed by adolescents and college students happen in the context of sexual relationships that lack formal commitment (in contrast to serious romantic relationships) but are recurring acts committed by those with more than a passing acquaintanceship (in contrast with one-night stands). In addition, individuals appear to engage in nonrelational sex for reasons thought to be confined to serious romantic relationships (e.g., emotional intimacy; Jonason et al. 2010; Smiler 2008). It now seems unclear where one relationship starts and others begin.

## Obscuring the Rainbow

Numerous authors have been rather loose in their definition of casual sex in their research, using one-night stands as a representative term to define the range of casual sex relationships (Forster et al. 2010; Greitemeyer 2007; Zeigler-Hill et al. 2009). In response, there have been some attempts to better understand what these relationships mean, but they tend to be characterized by three limitations. First, there has been a tendency to explicitly or implicitly treat any occurrence of sex that does not occur in the context of committed relationships as a problem (Fortenberry 2003) with a few notable exceptions (Kinsey et al. 1948, 1953). For instance, studies have noted a number of consequences of casual sex, such as greater likelihood of post-coital risky sexual behaviors (Cho and Span 2010) and emotional distress of some kind (Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Fielder and Carey 2010; Owen and Fincham 2011; Townsend and Wasserman 2011). While these negative consequences may exist, the rates of people who engage in casual sex relationships and how it may

[1]This possibility is especially the case if one accepts Jonason et al. (2009) assertion that relationships are emergent properties from intersexual negotiations as opposed to preexisting types.

serve to transition people into serious romantic relationships suggest that these relationships are not as bad as once thought (Jonason et al. 2012a, b).

Second, the research tends to be overly reliant on qualitative methodologies (Epstein et al. 2009; Manning et al. 2006; Smiler 2008; Paul and Hayes 2002). Prior attempts to provide a consensus definition were unabashedly based on "exploratory qualitative analysis" (Wentland and Reissing 2011, p. 86). Qualitative methods are useful for uncovering unknown phenomena and reducing experimenter bias, but do not provide reliable or generalizable insight into populations at large. For instance, some qualitative research only examines men (Epstein et al. 2009; Smiler 2008) and may use sample sizes as small as 19 individuals (Epstein et al. 2009). While few sex differences were reported in some recent work attempting to define various casual sex relationships (Wentland and Reissing 2011), it is unclear whether the lack of sex differences was a function of self-report biases in focus-group studies, underpowered tests caused by a small sample size, or an inestimable comparison given the purely qualitative nature of the data. In order to get a reliable sense of the human sexual landscape, we need to rely on relatively large samples and quantitative studies so as to not chase "shadows" created by anomalous effects in qualitative studies. In contrast to qualitative work, quantitative data reliably reveal sex differences in casual sex behavior and attitudes (Jonason et al. 2009; Schmitt 2005; Townsend and Wasserman 2011).

Third, research examining nonrelational sex almost exclusively comes from a sociocultural perspective (Caruthers 2006; Epstein et al. 2009; Singer et al. 2006; Smiler 2008). Those taking this perspective argue that relationships are cultural artifacts consistent with various sociostructural restraints placed on people. For instance, from this perspective, women may engage in less casual sex than men do because of the penalties they may experience in society (i.e., the sexual double standard). This is likely a function of sociocultural and structural theory researchers (e.g., Wood and Eagly 2002) having little a priori reasons to expect one outcome over another, a problem called *the failure to predict* (Confer et al. 2010). In contrast, an evolutionary approach provides a heuristically valuable model to predict how relationships might be defined. From this perspective, women may be less likely to engage in casual sex because of reproductive asymmetries in the patterns of obligations to offspring that have occurred over evolutionary time. However, only a small minority of studies on nonrelational sex has used evolutionary models (Garcia and Reiber 2008; Jonason et al. 2009, 2010; Townsend and Wasserman 2011).

Evolutionary models of mating and sexuality are based around parental investment theory (Trivers 1972). This theory explains why, in the vast majority of mammals, it is the female who invests heavily in offspring and as such she should (1) be more choosy about who she mates with, (2) try to slow the speed of which relationships escalate to sex, (3) have a lessened willingness to engage in casual sex, (4) short-term mate in a strategic fashion, and (5) attempt to test a man's commitment to her. In contrast, males, who can invest almost nothing in their offspring should have a different psychology surrounding short-term mating. Men should (a) desire easy and quick access to willing partners, (b) be patrons of adult entertainment (i.e., strippers, prostitutes, and pornography), (c) fall in love quickly,

(d) be focused on traits that cue to fecundity, and (e) be willing to engage in casual sex. In one of the most (in)famous studies demonstrating such sex differences (Clark and Hatfield 1989), confederates asked strangers in a campus public area one of three questions: Will you have sex with me?; Will you go out with me?; and Will you go home with me? The results were impressive. No women said "yes," whereas about 60–80 % of men said "yes," and the men who said "no" gave pseudo-nos (e.g., "I am busy now but can I get your number"). According to evolutionary theory, men and women differ the most in relation to short-term mating psychology because they are in conflict over investment in any potential offspring (Li and Kenrick 2006; Schmitt 2008). Subsequent replications generally conform these differences in willingness have to have casual sex. For instance, while women demonstrated a greater willingness than zero if the proposer had a desirable personality or was likely to afford sexual pleasure, women (as compared to men) still needed more to engage in casual sex (Conley 2011). Men are reliably more willing than women are to engage in sex with someone who they do not know. This is seen most strongly in homosexual men where the "cruising" or hook-up culture is especially strong (Symons 1997).

Importantly, the advantage of evolutionary models like strategic pluralism (Gangestad and Simpson 2000) provide a much cleaner rationale for why there would be a large variety of relationship options available for people to engage in. For instance, this model suggests that individuals engage in relationships for a wide array of reasons and pursue more than one relationship type in their life as it suits their needs. A logical extension of strategic pluralism is that any one relationship should serve multiple functions just as individuals are likely to engage in numerous relationships for numerous reasons. Indeed, research suggests individuals derive several benefits for engaging in relationships, including sexual gratification, socioemotional support, relief of boredom, and to raise one's self-esteem (Hatfield and Rapson 2010; Jonason et al. 2009; Meston and Buss 2007; Smiler 2008; Townsend and Wasserman 2011). In pursuit of these different goals, individuals may pursue different relationships like one-night stands, nonrelational sex (e.g., "hooking up"[2]; Epstein et al. 2009; "friends-with-benefits"[3]; Puentes et al. 2008; "booty-call" relationships[4]; Jonason et al. 2009), and committed relationships.

In the past, relationships, especially short-term ones, have been the most poorly defined, and despite the variety in types of short-term mating (Hatfield et al. 2012a, b; Jonason et al. 2012a, b), the term "casual sex" still tends to be used as a catch-all for any and all short-term relationships (Forster et al. 2010; Greitemeyer 2007; Zeigler-Hill et al. 2009). As such we will be more explicit. In this chapter, we will define a serious romantic relationship as one that involves social and (potentially) sexual monogamy and possesses a high level of commitment (Jonason 2013;

[2]Sex that occurs among individuals with little sexual commitment.

[3]Friends who also engage in sexual behavior together without any formal commitment.

[4]Sexual relationships that tend to occur among acquaintances.

Jonason et al. 2010). We will also define casual sex as sexual activities (e.g., mutual stimulation, oral sex, or sexual intercourse) outside of a "formal" relationship (i.e., dating, marriage, etc.), without a "traditional" reason (e.g., love, procreation, or commitment) for doing so. Such brief encounters may occur between casual friends, acquaintances, or total strangers, and they frequently "just happen" (Hatfield et al. 2012a, b). Nevertheless, these simple definitions still fail to capture the complexity and beauty of the rainbow of human sexuality. Therefore, we delve deeper into defining and describing relationships next.

## Describing the Rainbow

Almost all men and women (78–99 %), in a variety of countries, consider "a faithful marriage to one partner" to be the ideal arrangement based in college student samples (Pedersen et al. 2002; Stone et al. 2005) and cross-cultural anthropological work (Fisher 1992). Regardless of scholars' perspectives, almost all agree that men and women do differ at least somewhat in their sexual attitudes and behavior—especially with regard to casual sex (Petersen and Hyde 2010). Sociocultural psychologists have—not surprisingly—found cross-cultural differences in attitudes toward chastity, premarital sex, casual sex, other aspects of sexual activity, and sexual satisfaction (Caruthers 2006; Epstein et al. 2009; Manning et al. 2006; Singer et al. 2006; Smiler 2008; Paul and Hayes 2002). Evolutionary psychologists (Garcia and Reiber 2008; Jonason 2013; Jonason et al. 2009) tend to test predictions from the parental investment theory (Trivers 1972). This theory suggests that, as a function of asymmetries in minimum obligation to offspring, the sexes are expected to have different attitudes and behaviors in reference to short- (i.e., casual) and long-term (i.e., serious) relationships (Buss and Schmitt 1993; Gangestad and Simpson 2000). Indeed, there is significant, cross-cultural, quantitative support for their contentions (Baumeister and Vohs 2004; Hatfield et al. 2012a, b; Schmitt et al. 2004).

No review of relationship types could include all variants of relationships people engage in and we must resist the urge to think that there are fixed kinds of relationships. Instead, relationships are likely the result of negotiations, or in other words, responses to numerous socioecological constraints imposed by those within (e.g., the partners) and outside relationships (e.g., society), but also ecological conditions like the availability of quality mates and resources (Jonason et al. 2012a, b; Rusbult et al. 1998). For instance, polyandry (i.e., one female and a collection of related males) tends to occur in locations where the means by which resources are extracted from the earth are so labor-intensive that it takes multiple men to work their farm (Goldstein 1987). Alternatively, polygyny (i.e., one male and numerous females) is an option made available by a localization of resources (Orians 1969). We conjecture that polyamory—an area of human sexuality research getting a lot of attention today—might be a function of an interaction of individual differences in jealousy responsivity, the cobbling together of a one's sexual and security needs

from multiple sources, and the desire to seek secondary benefits like excitement. While these options represent "extreme" solutions to the psychosocial and reproductive tasks organisms including humans face, they are expressions of the interaction of a mating system that is flexible to cultural conditions. For instance, the booty-call relationship (Jonason et al. 2009, 2010) could be an expression of latent mating systems that interact with technologies like the mobile phone, text messaging, and other communication technologies that put men and women in direct contact without parental oversight or familial involvement.

While humans, as a species, can be described as mildly polygamous (Fisher 1992), there are individual differences (i.e., variance around the species-typical disposition) in the solutions individuals find between and within relationships. What this means then is each relationship is different for each person with each partner. We contend that each relationship differs because each is the result of the implicit or explicit negotiations couples go through in defining the parameters of their relationship. Individuals may negotiate the terms of their relationships by considering (explicitly or implicitly) factors such as mate-value and the availability of attractive alternatives (Rusbult et al. 1998). In this section, we review a variety of relationships of the human sexual rainbow that may be the result of some of the compromises individuals make in response to the external and internal constraints placed on them. In particular, we review the scant evolutionary and quantitative studies on these relationships.

**Serious romantic relationships**. The most well studied relationship type is long-term in nature (e.g., Cubbins and Tanfer 2000; Li et al. 2002). Long-term relationships are ones that encompass both marriages and monogamous dating relationships and appear to be equivalent in response to questions about mate preferences (Li et al. 2002) and likelihood of engaging in such relationships (Clark and Hatfield 1989). In the context of long-term relationships, the sexes converge in their interests because they both need to invest heavily in the relationship and any offspring that may have resulted in ancestral conditions would have required serious investment if it were to survive (Buss and Schmitt 1993). Long-term relationships are characterized by sexual and emotional intimacy (Jonason et al. 2010) and the (perceived) primary function of socioemotional support (Jonason 2013). This should translate into similar mate preferences and interests. For instance, both sexes want a mildly hard-to-get (a good investment) long-term mate (Jonason and Li 2013). Such a mate is a good investment as they are less likely to defect from the relationship, to be of reasonably high value, but, also, not a waste of resources by being unattainable. In this type of relationship, men and women want mates who are kind, generous, and intelligent, while both sexes devalue the priority they place on attractiveness in long-term mates (Buss and Schmitt 1993; Li et al. 2002).

**One-night stands**. Up until the 1990s, anything not resembling a serious romantic relationship was either not studied at all or was studied as a clinical or social pathology (e.g., Sexual Double Standard; Jonason 2007). The most commonly studied form of casual sex is the one-night stand (Fisher and Byrne 1978; Li and Kenrick 2006). In this relationship, individuals meet and relatively quickly go

from zero-acquaintance to the act of sex, with little promise of future relationship potential. Such relationships are characterized by high levels of emotional and sexual intimacy that allow for the immediate escalation of the relationship (Jonason et al. 2010) and have the (perceived) primary function of sexual gratification (Jonason 2013). While some have contended that engagement in these relationships are related to an insecure attachment system (Hazan and Shaver 1987), recent cross-cultural estimates suggest otherwise (Schmitt and Jonason 2015). What may be a more important determining factor is a casual approach or attitude toward love, something more common in men than in women and may be an expression of underlying sex differences in evolved psychological systems related to sex (Jonason et al. 2015). If men benefited more over ancestral time from casual sex than women can (e.g., more offspring), natural selection may have created attitudinal biases that act as the proximal psychological factors that drive such behavior (Buss and Schmitt 1993).

**Booty-call relationships**. A booty-call relationship is one where a person has repeated sexual encounters with someone but intentionally restricts their interactions to sexual to ensure it does not escalate to a more serious relationship (Jonason et al. 2010). Booty-call relationships do not fit well in the apparent dichotomy of one-night stands and serious romantic relationships because they combine elements of both long-term and short-term relationships. For women, they offer some stability and access to men they might not otherwise have access to, whereas men may benefit from relatively easy access to sex (Jonason et al. 2009), which is something men appear to want (Townsend et al. 1995). Similarly, the perceived functions for booty-call relationships are less clear than in serious romantic relationships and one-night stands. Such functions may range from assessing a partner for a more serious relationship, or simply to kill time (Jonason 2013). These relationships are characterized by sexual intimacy and little emotional intimacy (Jonason et al. 2010). This evasion of emotional intimacy may be in order to keep the relationship from escalating from sexual to romantic. This may also reflect implicit negotiations the sexes are going through in order to best pursue their sexual agendas.

Evolutionary models are still relevant despite the apparent novelty of this relationship. For instance, when asked why their booty-call relationship ended, men say it is because she wanted more and women say it is because he only wanted sex (Jonason et al. 2009). This is consistent with the asymmetries in reproductive investment in offspring that characterize evolutionary models of mating strategies and sex differences. The technology (e.g., Tinder, mobile phones) that is integral in the formation of these relationships has merely freed up men and women to engage in another form of sexual behavior but they cannot escape the legacy of their evolutionary history. This is not the first technology to apparently alter men and women's mating psychology, as the birth control pill frees women from the reproductive consequences of sex but this has not led women to be equally promiscuous as men are. Women are still pickier than men are and are less willing to have sex with strangers (Conley 2011; Tappé et al. 2013). While women might no longer be saddled with the risk of impregnation from engaging sex like they

once were, their risk remains greater than men's. Moreover, as this technology has not been around long enough to affect gene frequencies, the actual nature of women's sexuality is likely to have changed very little. The point here is that as human sexual psychologies are heavily influenced by ancestral conditions to this day, apparent modern variance like the booty-call relationship or technologies like the birth control pill or mobile phone that might alter the conditions today are merely expressions of ancient scripts playing out on modern stages.

**Friends-with-benefits**. A friends-with-benefits relationship is one where you have sex with the person but also do nonsexual things in a more social/public context (e.g., Afifi and Faulkner 2000). Importantly, these are relationships between those who have a preexisting level of friendship who have decided to engage in a sexual relationship. However, in contrast to booty-call relationship, this type of relationship does not define their overall relationship in the same way. Whereas in booty-call relationships participants attempt to minimize their nonsexual time and interactions as a strategy of keeping their relationship sexual in nature (Jonason et al. 2010), friends-with-benefits are less concerned with blurring this line. These individuals are friends (first) who wish to also engage in sex with one another as a secondary part of their relationship. Negotiating this line is surely difficult given the near-inevitability of one partner developing feelings in responses to the chemical cocktail (e.g., oxytocin) associated with sex and orgasm. Functionally speaking, this relationship may serve to both satisfy sexual needs, to fill time, and also to act as a testing ground for new relationships (Jonason 2013). However popular this relationship might be—accounting for approximately 32 % of participants according to one study (Jonason et al. 2015)—it is rather hard to distinguish quantitatively from booty-call relationships. It is possible, researchers are splitting semantic hairs. Researchers should be wary of reifying terms and re-inventing the wheel. However, it might also be hard to pin down because of the fluctuating nature of men and women's sexuality. Indeed, booty-call relationships appear to paradoxically be sought out for socioemotional support to a meaningful degree (Jonason 2013). And last, it may be that both of these relationships are characterized by sufficiently similar rates of long-term and short-term aspects (Jonason et al. 2009) and that measurement error is particularly problematic.

**Swinging and open relationships**. Swinging is a kind of relationship in which a couple engages in extradyadic sex where both partners are in attendance, whereas open relationships are where individuals engage in couplings while simultaneously engage in extrapair copulations and independently have sex with others (Conley et al. 2012; Jenks 1985, 1998). In both cases, the relationship partners are aware, at least on an implicit level, of their partner's extrapair sexual behavior, often called consensual nonmonogamy (Conley et al. 2012). People who engage in these have a long-term partner where there is no sexual monogamy, just social monogamy. The dearth of research on these relationships may be the result of (1) researchers having an aversion to studying such swinging behaviors, (2) the closeted nature of the participants in these relationships, and (3) a lack of good theory to understand such behaviors making any work merely descriptive in nature. As there is so little known about these relationships, we offer some conjectures here.

From an evolutionary perspective these relationships may represent a unique combination of men and women's short-term and long-term mating strategies (see Fig. 1, Jonason et al. 2009). For instance, swinging may provide men with the sexual variety they need or the motivating forces of apparent sperm competition, whereas open relationships may allow men to exercise their desire for sexual variety. As women often de-prioritize physical attractiveness in their long-term partners (Li et al. 2002), some women may offset this loss by engaging in swinging or open relationships with physically attractive partners. In addition, women, who are more erotically plastic than men are, may engage in consensual nonmonogamy in order to satisfy their same sex, sexual urges (Baumeister 2000). In contrast, sociocultural researchers might contend that people's willingness to engage in such relationships are expressions of the culturally conditioned sexuality people experience. They might argue that those exposed to more sexualized content including having parents/friends who were swingers (acting as models) should predict the engagement in such relationships oneself. They might—erroneously—also contend that such a relationship dispels evolutionary models that have often drawn on evolved sex differences in jealousy. It is likely there are selection biases in who engages in these relationships that reflect individual differences in responsiveness to jealousy inducing stimuli. Natural selection assumes there is variance in adaptive and nonadaptive traits. Where the variance in ancestors resulted in more offspring, selection will take place, but the individual differences in the current generation do not refute the evolutionary argument as there is an assumption that not all members of the species will reproduce.

**Polyamory**. Polyamory is an alternative form of consensual nonmonogamy. Polyamory is the practice or acceptance of having multiple simultaneous romantic relationships where everyone involved consents (Conley et al. 2012: Easton and Hardy 2009; Rubel and Bogaert 2014; Taormino 2008), a relationship type that is subject to serious discrimination (Fleckenstein et al. 2012; Hutzler et al. 2015). Polyamorous relationships differ from swinging and open relationships by including aspects of romantic relationships that the former relationship types are less characterized by e.g., Conley et al. (2012), Klesse (2006), Munson and Stelboum (1999), Pines and Aronson (1981), Rubel and Bogaert (2014). Although polyamory includes many different styles of intimate involvements, one of the most common polyamorous relationships are characterized by a "primary–secondary" relationship configuration (Balzarini et al., manuscript under review; Veaux 2011) with primary relationships being reminiscent of serious long-term relationships in commitment duration and level, financial interdependence, and the rearing of offspring (Sheff 2013). A secondary relationship is more reminiscent to someone one might date with less investment, more independence in time and finances, and greater sexual frequency (Balzarini et al., under review; Veaux 2011).

As in the case with swinging and open relationships, research on polyamory is in its infancy and is generally descriptive (Sheff 2013) in nature or trying to show that it is not evidence of athology (Conley et al. 2012; Rubel and Bogaert 2014). From an evolutionary and sociocultural perspective, engaging in this kind of relationship may be a unique approach to solving people's romantic and sexual needs by piecing

together what one wants from numerous sources. Most strictly monogamous relationships assume that one can have all their needs fulfilled by one person. This might be an unreasonable assumption or, at the very least, might not be possible in all relationships. Indeed, the well-known, and rather high rates of infidelity and divorce might be *prima facie* evidence of this failure of single, monogamous relationships being reliably able to afford people all they need. Therefore, if one cannot get all they want in one person, they might get certain needs met by one partner and others by another. The ability to engage in these relationships will also be predicated on one's ability to either suppress volitionally or simply be characterized by less sexual jealousy.

**Summary**. As noted above, we cannot hope to cover all the possible relationships men and women could engage in, in theory. Indeed, much more work is needed that compares each relationship to better understand the lines between them, if any exist. Nevertheless, we expect the range of relationships to grow as researchers continue to have a better understanding of human sexuality and better instruments for seeing the colors of its rainbow. We expect relationship types to fit within a coordinate system with long-term mating and short-term mating interests as the axes. This distinction is fundamentally important in evolutionary models of mating and sex (Buss and Schmitt 1993; Jonason et al. 2012a, b; Schmitt 2005) and is not predictable from sociocultural models because they would need to assume that either the media or other sources of modeling have decided to portray/engage in versions of sexuality that they "invented" out of thin air. However, as we describe these relationships we should not fall victim to the mistake of thinking they are natural kinds of relationships. Instead, relationships, as identified by researchers, are emergent solutions in a dynamic system involved in how men and women coordinate and compete in the mating game. The conditions for these solutions will continue to fluctuate as physiological and social conditions change. However, researchers should not let apparent fluctuations (i.e., variance) around the average tendency (i.e., mean) confuse one into thinking aspects (e.g., relationship preferences; Jonason et al. 2012a, b) of sexuality and romance are social constructions. For instance, the advent of the global positioning satellite (i.e., GPS) paved the way for technologies like Tinder and Badoo where people can engage in apparently new forms of sexual and romantic behavior. Such a mediated sexual communication is new, but operates on the template provided by evolved mating systems (e.g., Symons 1997; Trivers 1972).

## Limitations, Future Directions, and Conclusions

Despite this extensive review, what we know about human sexuality is severely limited; here, we discuss some of those reasons. First, there may be a prudishness/sexual naiveté among researchers. Dealing with topics like sex makes some researchers "blush" and, therefore, avoid and even derogate such work and its researchers. This happened in the early years of the evolutionary revolution in

biology. Victorian sentiments of the animal world (e.g., lions lay down with lambs) may have created an overly rosy and romanticized image of the natural world. Such sentiments may still persist in the academy in relation to sexuality, thereby obscuring our understanding of it, the acceptance of articles about it, and the distribution of grant money to study it.

Second, beyond sexual naiveté, studying human sexuality is often seen as trivial and a waste of time. At the very least, the rates people engage in various casual sex behavior should be cause enough to study it (e.g., Katz and Schneider 2013). Researchers and laypeople often mistakenly see questions about sexuality and romance as less important than other scientific questions. While this may be true in comparison with curing cancer, for example, there will never be a more important decision one makes in their life than who and who not to mate with (survival is necessary; reproduction sufficient). The evolutionary and social consequences of mate choice and relationship psychology should not be undersold.

Third, paradoxically, the agenda to "free" human sexuality has also been a limitation for sex research. That is, the political movement around sexual liberalism actually works against an objective and broad understanding of human sexuality. In the book *Sex at Dawn* (Ryan and Jetha 2011), the authors advance their apparently scientific case that humans are far more sexual than society allows. They suggest the tendency to view human sexuality and evolution through the lens of the chimpanzee paints an inaccurately violent and male-dominated view of human sexuality; that bonobos would be better. However, such a claim is problematic albeit having the promise of creating more accepting and female-friendly sexuality and social contexts. Primarily, researchers appear to be making the naturalistic fallacy by arguing for how the sexual world should be. Secondarily, they imply that humans evolved from bonobos which is not true as bonobos, chimpanzee, and humans shared a common ancestor 6–10 MYA when none of these species even existed (Wrangham and Peterson 1997). Tertiarily, they are implicitly adopting a group selectionist framework ignoring that selection works on the genes of individuals as it is only individuals who actually reproduce. Last, they ignore that the peaceful and bountiful conditions that permitted bonobos to evolve (i.e., lack of interspecific competition with gorilla) over the last 3 million years simply did not and do not exist for the 10 million years or so of hominin evolution. Sexual variance, whether it is homosexual or heterosexual, monogamous or polyamorous, is part of the species-level sexual repertoire. There is huge variance in all things biological so this should be of no surprise and any political agenda to highlight any particular variant has the opposite effect as desired.

Fourth, beyond these philosophical limitations, there are methodological limitations that characterize sexuality research. Some of these limitations may be the direct or indirect result of the way society and science views and de-prioritizes sex research. Whatever the reason, these are limitations worthy of note. Almost all sex research is conducted with WEIRD (i.e., Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic; see Henrich et al. 2010) samples that are modest in size. There are few large-scale and international (e.g., Schmitt 2005) studies of human sexuality. These studies tend to show rather convergent results across the world which would

be of no surprise if one takes an evolutionary approach (Schmitt 2008). Issues surrounding sexual conflict are part of the human (as opposed to American or French or Japanese) sexual psychology and should, therefore, be rather universal (with some variance per culture). Alternatively, most sex research (not all) relies on some laboratory or self-report methodologies. This may actually undermine the search for the varieties in human sexuality because of the spotlight effect (i.e., one finds things where they are looking). This problem is slightly attenuated in qualitative designs given the flexibility to explore new areas and is strongest in quantitative designs. We encourage researchers to adopt mixed methods approaches where they use qualitative designs to uncover new aspects of human sexuality and then quantitative methods to validate, define, and understand that same sexual flavor.

The idea of unweaving the rainbow comes from Newtown's revelation, with the prism, that the white light we all see is really made up of a range of light waves we call colors. Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins has taken this idea and tried to suggest that evolutionary theory allows us to unweave the complexity of biological life (Dawkins 1998). If we base our psychology research into sexuality and romance on the assumptions provided by evolutionary theory, we might appropriate the metaphor to understanding human sexuality and advancing beyond its classic descriptive traditions. That is, with evolutionary theory, we can better unweave and understand the apparently wide range of contradictory and self-destructive manifestations of human sexuality. We have attempted to provide some insights into the range of human sexuality but also to elucidate the limitations for that process. We hope future research will discover even more beauty and awe that the natural (sexual) world can offer.

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# Chapter 3
# The Importance and Meaning of Sexual Fantasies in Intimate Relationships

**Ali Ziegler and Terri D. Conley**

What are sexual fantasies, and what roles do they play in relationships? Fantasies are sometimes (but not always!) a window into what people want to experience in their own relationships—what do fantasies tell us about relationships? Do they help us get closer to a monogamous partner, or do they drive us apart? Could they be a way to promote communication among partners? Do women and men fantasize differently? And if so how? These are some of the questions we will be addressing in this chapter.

## Is It Okay to Have Sexual Fantasies?

When you think about sexual fantasies, perhaps the first thing you wonder is if it is healthy to have sexual fantasies (especially if you are in a relationship) or whether it means that you are perhaps missing something in your day-to-day life. For example, does the fact that someone in a relationship fantasizes mean that the relationship is deficient in some way?

Sexual fantasy was viewed negatively before the 1950s (Leitenberg and Henning 1995). That is, researchers and clinicians posited that fantasies, especially among women, were problematic or pathological. This conclusion was perhaps unsurprisingly given the larger social climate that was generally not accepting of women's sexual desire and pleasure—either inside or outside of a relationship. Theorists and

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clinicians from this time suggested that sexual fantasy was indicative of a wide range of pathologies and deficiencies from repression to immaturity to sexual dissatisfaction (Deutsch 1944; Freud 1963/1930; Hariton and Singer 1974; Shainess and Greenwald 1971). One reason for this negative assessment of fantasies is that much of earlier information on fantasy was obtained from people in therapy. Therefore, clinicians were much more likely to be interpreted fantasies in light of a pathological model (Brown and Hart 1977).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the discourse on the value and purpose of sexual fantasy markedly shifted. Current sexuality researchers and therapists are much more likely to interpret sexual fantasies positively and suggest that fantasy can be used as a healthy outlet for expressing sexual thoughts without jeopardizing romantic relationships. For example, evidence supports the notion that sexual fantasies are likely related to positive sexual outcomes, including higher levels of sexual interest, activity, desire, and more positive attitudes about sexuality (Purifoy et al. 1992). We now know that women, almost universally, experience some form of sexual fantasy (Brown and Hart 1977; Crepault et al. 1976; Davidson and Hoffman 1986; Ellis and Symons 1990). Men are more likely to report more frequent fantasies than women and to believe that it is more permissible for them to fantasize; yet, men and women report similar levels of arousal, as well as positive and negative feelings related to their experiences with fantasy (Cado and Leitenberg 1990; Ellis and Symons 1990; Knoth et al. 1988; Robinson and Calhoun 1982; Sue 1979). It is important to note this shift in discourse in part to recognize that perspectives on the meaning and utility of sexuality and fantasy are not independent from the relevant cultural and historical context. For example, people feel more guilty about how their fantasies affect their sex lives with their partner when the cultural milieu they are steeped in disparages such fantasies.

## Why Study Sexual Fantasies?

Sexual fantasy can be defined in a number of ways; however, for the purposes of this chapter, we have chosen to use a frequently used definition initially put forth by Leitenberg and Henning as "almost any mental imagery that is sexually arousing or erotic to the individual" (1995, p. 470). We have further narrowed our scope to include only positive sexual cognitions (as opposed to negative sexual cognitions that are oftentimes unwelcome or worrisome sexual thoughts; for further discussion of positive versus negative sexual cognitions, see Renaud and Byers 2005, 2006).

Sexual fantasy provides a unique avenue to investigate gender norms in relationships, because we know that gender norms are especially salient in the context of heterosexual relationships and especially heterosexual sexual interactions (Rohlinger 2002; Sanchez et al. 2006). Sexual fantasy may be particularly useful for studying dynamics within romantic relationships because their fantasies can provide insight into what people really desire from romantic partners.

## What Role Do Sexual Fantasies Play in Romantic Relationships?

We know that sexual communication and sexual satisfaction play an important role in relationship satisfaction (Cupach and Comstock 1990; Cupach and Metts 1995). And, more specifically, there is evidence indicating that greater sexual self-disclosure is positively related to relationship satisfaction (Byers and Demmons 1999). But what do we know about sexual fantasies specifically? Research typically supports the notion that sexual fantasies are a healthy and normal component of one's sexuality; however, these studies typically focus on an individual and do not investigate the role of relationship status. In fact, part of what makes sexual fantasies so interesting and worthy of research is that they are a component of sexuality that can exist with*out* a partner. So, what about sexual fantasizing that occurs within a romantic relationship?

Most fantasy research investigates individuals and not partners within a romantic relationship; however, common sense can help shed light on the potential role of sexual fantasies within romantic relationships. For example, fantasies may serve as a window into what people want in their relationships or might provide an outlet to envision what people want in partnered sex. Fantasies might also provide a way for people in committed monogamous relationships to experience desire beyond the confines of their relationship, without violating their relationship agreement. Additionally, sexual fantasies could contribute to relationship communication and satisfaction by providing a way to share new desires with a partner or afford a means of communicating sexual desires with a partner in a palatable and non-threatening way.

Interestingly, previous research has found that fantasies about a future or former male partner are the most common among single women (Pelletier and Herold 1988). But what about women and men who are partnered? The data are somewhat mixed with regard to sexual fantasizing in romantic relationships. For starters, individuals in romantic relationships reported having less frequent sexual fantasies than unpartnered people (Birnbaum 2007). However, an inability to fantasize sexually is also linked to sexual dysfunction; thus, fewer fantasies within a romantic relationship may be normal and harmless, but a total lack of sexual fantasies may be indicative of some larger sexual or relational issue (Newbury et al. 2012). Additionally, people in romantic relationships are less likely to fantasize about unrestricted and emotionless sex, dissociation, and romance. While the authors did not elaborate on the reasons for these findings, it is possible that people involved in relationships feel satisfied romantically and thus use fantasies to explore other desires.

Some research within clinical psychology promotes the use of sexual fantasy as a means to help cope with sexual dysfunction within romantic relationships. Some therapists even encourage "fantasy training," or the encouragement of sexual imagination and fantasizing, to increase personal growth and couple intimacy (Newbury et al. 2012). Interestingly, Newbury et al. began their research in

response to their concerns about the use of sexual fantasy in romantic relationships and its potential to decrease couple intimacy by psychologically removing one or both partners from the sexual scenario occurring in real life, also referred to as partner replacement fantasies (Heiman and LoPiccolo 1976). Specifically concerns emerged that individuals could become reliant on partner replacement fantasies in order to enjoy sexual activity with their partner, thus removing the focus from togetherness and intimacy to individual personal pleasure. Notably, there is a lack of agreement among clinicians, as some feel that partner replacement fantasies are indicative of healthy relationship functioning and suggest that a serious fear of such fantasies may indicate codependency. In addition to partner replacement fantasies, there are also *extradyadic fantasies*—fantasies involving someone who is not one's relationship partner (these can include partner replacement fantasies).

It is important to note that for some there may be concerns about revealing extradyadic fantasies or partner replacement fantasies as some people feel strongly that having sexual thoughts about other people is "mental infidelity," and as such could create conflict or distress. So, for individuals who experience or enjoy extradyadic fantasies, it might be best to initiate a conversation about each other's thoughts and feelings regarding mental fidelity before sharing these types of fantasies.

Despite some people feeling that extradyadic fantasies are inappropriate or improper, both men and women involved in romantic relationships report experiencing them (Hicks and Leitenberg 2001). This trend tends to increase with relationship length, a finding that the researchers interpreted as potentially related to the idea that the novelty and excitement of fantasizing about one's current partner tends to wane over time. However, because individuals in longer-lasting relationships were more likely to have extradyadic fantasies, the researchers noted that fantasizing about someone other than your relationship partner does not appear to interfere with the ability to maintain long-term relationships.

Although a lot of research provides evidence for sexual fantasies as a positive or neutral component of romantic relationships, some evidence does suggest that certain kinds of fantasy may reflect relationship problems. As mentioned previously, some people are uncomfortable knowing that their partner fantasizes about other people. This discomfort may be particularly salient within a relationship that includes a history of cheating. Specifically, extradyadic fantasies can be related to a history of cheating, as some individuals who previously cheated on their current partner had a significantly greater interest in extradyadic fantasies (Hicks and Leitenberg 2001). Extradyadic fantasies can include (but are not limited to) fantasies about having an affair and there is some evidence that an interest in affair fantasies specifically is negatively related to marital functioning (Trudel 2002).

Sex therapists often evaluate attachment styles of clients before deciding whether encouraging fantasy sharing within romantic relationships is a useful recommendation (Newbury et al. 2012). Typically, fantasy sharing is not encouraged in romantic relationships in which one or both partners have attachment anxiety. Accordingly, a number of studies have also investigated the link between relationship status, attachment style, and fantasy preference. For example, securely

attached individuals in romantic relationships are less likely to report extradyadic fantasies than individuals with insecure attachment styles (Stephan and Bachman 1999). Additionally, regardless of relationship status, Birnbaum (2007) found that attachment avoidance was negatively associated with fantasies that indicated a desire for intimacy, and affectionate and passionate themed fantasies (Birnbaum 2007). And, specifically with regard to people in relationships, attachment avoidance was associated with submission fantasies, an issue which we will address next (Birnbaum 2007).

## What Types of Fantasies Do Women and Men Have?

Researchers have measured fantasy preferences in a number of different ways, which sometimes makes it hard to compare results across studies. There are two main methods, one quantitative and one qualitative, that fantasy researchers primarily rely on: The first, the checklist method, is providing a list to participants and asking them to indicate which fantasies they prefer or which fantasies they have experienced; the second common method is a qualitative method and involves asking participants to write a description of a recent or a favorite fantasy. In addition to using different methodological approaches, different studies will also use different populations; for example, a number of studies look at both women and men, and others look exclusively at women or at men. Despite researchers relying on different methods and populations, a number of studies have given attention to themes of dominance and submission in sexual fantasies, and thus, we will discuss different findings from the last few decades that include information about women's or men's submissive and dominant sexual fantasy preferences.

Across decades of research, using a variety of methods, researchers have consistently found that women prefer and report experiencing submissive sexual fantasies more so than men. Leitenberg and Henning (1995) conducted a comprehensive review of existing literature and consistently found that submissive sexual fantasies are among the most frequent and most preferred fantasies for women. By relying on the checklist method, a number of researchers have found that submission-themed fantasies are consistently rated highly by women (Crepault et al. 1976; Davidson and Hoffman 1986; Hariton and Singer 1974; Person et al. 1989). Two different studies investigated sexual fantasies experienced across multiple contexts (e.g., during intercourse, masturbation, or nonsexual activity) and found that women repeatedly indicated that being overpowered was one of their top fantasies regardless of context (Knafo and Jaffe 1984; Pelletier and Herold 1988). Similarly, Sue (1979) used the checklist method to ask participants specifically about sexual fantasies during partnered sexual activity and found that women were more likely than men to fantasize about being overpowered. Consistent with psychological studies in general, a large portion of fantasy studies have relied primarily on college student samples. However, even when more inclusive community-based

samples are used, researchers continue to find that women prefer submissive sexual fantasies (Joyal et al. 2015; Zurbriggen and Yost 2004).

Upon reviewing the literature, it becomes clear that a large number of fantasy studies primarily rely on quantitative methods; however, there are a number of studies that have incorporated qualitative methods, either in conjunction with quantitative methods, or exclusively. Despite the different use of methods, the finding that women prefer submissive sexual fantasies remains. For example, using a fantasy log, Zurbriggen and Yost (2004) found that women show a preference for submissive sexual fantasies. And in another qualitative study in which respondents were asked to describe their favorite fantasy in writing, women were significantly more likely than men to describe a fantasy that involved being forced to have sex (Wilson 1997). In one of the few studies that utilized a mixed methods approach, Strassberg and Locker (1998) found that more than half of their all female sample reported having engaged in a fantasy involving force.

Though some study researchers found significant gender differences indicating that women have more passive fantasies and men have more active fantasies (Wilson and Lang 1981), researchers also found that active and passive fantasies are correlated for both women and men.

This finding replicates the previously established gender difference that women have more submissive fantasies than men; however, it also complicates the relationship between gender- and power-related fantasies. If dominant and submissive fantasies are correlated, then a woman who is interested in submissive fantasies is more likely than a woman who is not interested in submissive fantasies to also have an interest in dominant fantasies. Although the gender difference clearly remains important, this finding leads us to question the accuracy of viewing women as primarily interested in submissive fantasies and men as primarily interested in dominant fantasies (cf. Greendlinger and Byrne 1987; Hunt 1974; Sue 1979; Zurbriggen and Yost 2004). In other words, most people do not have just one preferred type of fantasy; rather, most people with an interest in sexual fantasies have a wide range of fantasy preferences.

And yet, it is important to note that some researchers have not found support for women's greater interest in submissive sexual fantasy. Using particularly creative methods across two studies, Hawley and Hensley (2009) presented female and male participants with fantasy vignettes that were inspired by women's erotic literature and included themes of dominance or submission. Participants then indicated how appealing they found the scenes. In this study, they found that both men and women prefer vignettes in which they are submissive, but men preferred being submissive to a greater extent than women. However, women were less interested than men in fantasies in which they were dominant. These findings may have emerged because participants were asked in a more indirect way—gender differences that support gender roles tend to me more pronounced with direct questioning.

## So, Is It Bad for Women to Have *Submissive* Fantasies?

You may remember that earlier we discussed whether having sexual fantasies is considered healthy. As it turns out, though sexual fantasies in general are currently regarded as positive ways of experiencing and expressing one's sexuality, women's *submissive* sexual fantasy preference is still criticized by some—it may be seen as resulting from a male-dominant society that eroticizes female sexual submission (Brownmiller 2005; Corne et al. 1992; Leitenberg and Henning 1995). Concerns about female preference for submission center on gender differences in fantasy preferences that tend to resemble inequalities between men and women within broader social structures. Women's interest in submissive fantasies is criticized because it can be seen as maintaining traditional gender stereotypes, eroticizing patriarchy/male domination of women, and perpetuating rape culture. Thus, according to this perspective, already unequal heterosexual relationship dynamics may be perpetuated by women's use of submissive fantasies in these relationships. However, other scholars, including Fahs (2011), highlight the complicated relationship that women have with regard to submissive fantasies and caution against condemning women who fantasize about being overpowered. Women who utilize submissive fantasies are essentially trying to find a way to express their sexual selves without running afoul of cultural norms and standards; thus, although it may be a concern that women use submissive sexual fantasies, the concern is more about the society that gives rise to these fantasies than the choices of any individual woman.

## Why Do Women Have More Submissive Fantasies Than Men?

There are a number of reasons why women may have a stronger preference for submissive fantasies than do men. In this chapter, we will discuss three primary reasons for this gender difference including differential gender socialization, social pressures that require women to be sexy, but not slutty, and the missing discourse of desire for women. Notably, we will address each of these three reasons separately; however, they do not operate independently. Instead, it is important to note how women's fantasy preferences may be a result of multiple different, interacting pressures that are all interrelated.

### *Reason 1: Socialization and Sexual Scripts*

Traditional gender norms define femininity as passive and warm, and masculinity as independent and strong (Eagly and Steffen 1984). We know that these roles extend

into heterosexual relationships and are captured in the ways that men are expected to initiate sexual relationships and women are expected to passively comply with (or reject) men's advances (Greene and Faulkner 2005; Impett and Peplau 2003). These dynamics are also reflected in research indicating that women prefer fantasies that involve submitting to their partner and men prefer sexual fantasies about dominating their relationship partner (Christensen 1990; Iwawaki and Wilson 1983; Mednick 1977; Wilson and Lang 1981; Zimmer et al. 1983).

The fact that women have more submissive fantasies than men is meaningful because the woman-submissive and man-dominant fantasy schema mimics gendered power relations in everyday life. For example, men still disproportionately occupy positions of power, whereas women are more frequently subordinates. This stereotype persists across multiple domains, including the workplace and the family environment, where men are expected to be dominant. These messages are perpetuated by a number of different sources, including media that frequently depict female sexual submission (Kilbourne 2000).

Therefore, the different socialization processes for women versus men may help explain why women are more likely to imagine being the more passive "receivers" and men are more likely to imagine being the active "doers" (Christensen 1990; Ellis and Symons 1990; Iwawaki and Wilson 1983; Mednick 1977; Wilson and Lang 1981; Zimmer et al. 1983). In other words, if men are socialized in their everyday lives to be dominant, assertive, and in charge and women are taught to be cooperative, passive, and attentive to others' needs, then perhaps women's preference for submissive sexual fantasies is simply an extension of their daily roles and interactions. In this section, we explore the interplay between power dynamics present in current sociocultural context and internalized ideas about one's individual power in order to understand the ways that gendered scripts and expectations affect women's sexual preferences and behaviors.

One way in which this differential socialization is reflected is in sexual scripts and the existence of sexual double standards (Gagnon and Simon 1973a, b). Sexual scripts are culture-specific guidelines that dictate the sexual behaviors that are considered normal and acceptable within a particular culture (Bowleg et al. 2004; Hyde and DeLamater 1999). Common sexual scripts within the USA describe how men should be the pursuers and women should be the pursued, thus assigning women the role of passive participants within heterosexual sexual activity (Byers 1996; Greene and Faulkner 2005; Impett and Peplau 2002, 2003; Lawrance et al. 1996). For example, it is considered much more commonplace for a man to ask a woman on a date, than vice versa. Similarly, there are expectations about who should pay for a date (men), who should initiate a first kiss (men), who should ask for a second date (men), and who should reject or passively comply with these advances (women). As a result, then, perhaps women's preference for submissive sexual fantasy is merely a reflection of socialization processes that dictate that women should behave passively and in a manner that is subservient to men.

Sexual mores and guidelines are sometimes explicit; however, sexual scripts often function at a subconscious level such that one is not always aware of the ways in which one's thoughts and behaviors are impacted by sociocultural contexts and

scripts (Gagnon 1990). In this way, it has been hypothesized that women have become conditioned to a male-dominant society via media and other social influences, which thus contributes to women's acceptance (and perhaps even endorsement) of male sexual aggression and female sexual subjugation (Corne et al. 1992; Sanchez et al. 2006). It is possible that male dominance across multiple domains has become so deeply ingrained within women's psyches that voluntary female sexual submissiveness exists as an extension of broader male dominance within society. That is, women's fantasies of being dominated by men may be an adaptation to a social structure that disenfranchises and oppresses women (Fahs 2011). In other words, in a world that prescribes and even eroticizes women's passivity and submission, it would actually appear rational, and perhaps in some ways may even be advantageous, for women to internalize a preference for their own sexual submissiveness. Therefore, women who endorse or internalize sexual scripts and traditional gender roles might find submissive fantasies to be more appealing.

## *Reason #2: Sexy but not Slutty*

Another component of sexual socialization that likely contributes to women's submissive sexual fantasy preference includes the specific pressures put on women to appear sexy, but not slutty. A woman's role within a romantic or sexual relationship is oftentimes quite complicated and nuanced as they are taught to constantly walk the line between being sexually prudent and sexually available. A failure to properly balance these contradictory components can result in negative social repercussions, such as bullying women for actual or perceived sexually lenient behavior, and overall reputational harm (Conley et al. 2012). Accordingly, consistent with sexual scripts, men are allowed greater sexual freedom, whereas women are warned of the consequences of female sexual promiscuity, including pregnancy and a "loose" reputation (Ellis and Symons 1990; Leitenberg and Henning 1995).

Heterosexuality is one necessary component of sexual scripts theory and plays an important role in the socialization of both men and women. Heterosexualization can be defined as the process by which men and women are socialized to be heterosexual within a world which is predominantly heterosexual, while denying the existence or validity of other sexual orientations (Lee 1994; Rudman and Glick 2008). Heterosexuality and heterosexualization play an integral role in socializing women to accept (and perhaps endorse) their position as lesser than men.

As a social norm, heterosexualization convinces women that appearing sexy and appealing to men is necessary for success, both within sexual relationships, and also beyond. According to McHugh, "femininity as a cultural practice of performance is necessary to maintain the institution of heterosexuality" (2006, p. 365). Additionally, women have a stake in the system and receive material rewards, such as greater financial and personal security, as a result of successfully buying into the system that continuously recreates their own lack of power (Douglas 2010; Rich

1980). Not only are women rewarded for conforming to gender roles, they are also punished socially for behaving in gender incongruent ways, which serves to further reinforce gender role conformity (Rudman and Fairchild 2004).

Concomitantly, women receive multiple conflicting pressures and mixed messages regarding their sexuality (Gavey 2012). On the one end, women are taught that their sexuality is valuable to the extent that it attracts men and helps secure their access to valuable resources, such as jobs and power, yet on the other end, more conservative cultural messages (including many sex education programs in high schools; McClelland 2010) promote abstinence and the value of sexual prudence. Given these two dominant discourses: one that promotes "raunch" culture and the sexualization of women, and the other that condemns almost all expressions of sexuality, is it any surprise that many women are conflicted about their sexuality and their desired display of their sexuality? Or as Susan Douglas says in her 2010 book, *Enlightened Sexism,* "a culture that is prudish *and* pornographic—how's that for a contradiction to navigate?" (p. 155). Statistics regarding access to information and sexual content on television paint a grim picture of recent trends, as portrayals of sex (with an emphasis on the sexualization of girls and women) have *increased*; ironically, access to comprehensive sexual education has *decreased* (Douglas 2010).

Together, these seemingly opposite beliefs present a conundrum that sex for women is sacred and also a source of exploitation. In turn, this conundrum promotes the idea that sex is a commodity and the notion that one's virginity and sexuality are limited and nonrenewable resources. To illustrate this point, there is perhaps no analogy that better captures the sex as commodity model than the adage, "who will buy the cow if you're giving the milk away for free."—Equating, of course, women to cows and sex to milk[1] (Millar 2008, p. 31). This saying emphasizes the importance of the transaction that involves exchanging one's goods (i.e., sex) only within the confines of a secure and committed relationship. Women "give" sex in order to "receive" relational support and commitment from men. This model is consistent with the heterosexual script and reinforces men's role as pursuer and women's role as "gatekeeper." A woman must protect her worth, which is higher the fewer sexual partners she has, while a man must try to increase his value by increasing the number of sexual partners he has. Once again, the message is being reinforced that women must be sexy, but must definitely not be slutty.

How do the dynamics of women's sexualization relate to sexual fantasies? If women are taught that they are valuable only to the extent that they are desired, then it seems logical that they would fantasize about being so strongly desired that someone must dominate them to ensure access to their body and sex. If sex is a commodity that is nonrenewable, then women should not want to give sex away freely because that would depreciate its value. However, if as in submissive fantasies, women are so irresistible that sex is taken from them forcibly, then they are

[1]Notably, there is no comparable saying for men and the authors would be shocked if this saying were ever applied to men.

relieved of some of the responsibility that would come with "giving away" sex. Submissive fantasies, then, may allow women to fulfill some of their sexual needs without having to exercise sexual agency because they may provide one way to walk this narrow line between sexy and slutty. That is to say, submissive sexual fantasies allow women to be sexy and sexually active, but still stay within the confines of femininity as defined by the heterosexual script. Accordingly, submissive sexual fantasies may allow women to experience sex without necessarily having to be held accountable for their sexual drive and desire (Knafo and Jaffe 1984).

Think about it this way. If you have sexual feelings, but society is telling you that you shouldn't, then you are in a bind. A creative mind trick to let yourself experience sexual pleasure without guilt is to, at least symbolically, put another person in charge of your sexual pleasure. If a woman allows her boyfriend to, say, tie her wrists behind her back, then she is symbolically abdicating responsibility for sexual pleasure.

## *Reason #3: Missing Discourse of Desire?*

While women are socialized to think about how desirable they appear to others, their own desire is often overlooked. In a culture in which sex is perceived as a commodity, women learn from a young age that their value is a direct result of their perceived attractiveness and desirability by men. According to McHugh:

> Girls are introduced to fairy tales and romances at an early age, and the emphasis on idealized romantic relationships grows stronger as girls develop. We teach girls how to put on makeup and how to make themselves attractive to men. We do not teach them how to recognize their own desires or what to do about them. We socialize girls into the practice of femininity that writes their sexual desire out of existence. Girls are being taught that they need to attract male approval to make it in this culture, and are also taught that attracting males is a dangerous practice. Femininity as a cultural practice of performance is necessary to maintain the institution of heterosexuality… (McHugh 2006, p. 365).

Socialization of girls begins at a young age as they are encouraged to internalize romance as portrayed in fairy tales, which requires their acceptance and enactment of femininity, a femininity that serves to attract men, but often erases girls' own sexual desires (McHugh 2006; Tolman 2005). Tolman further argues that the missing discourse of desire for adolescent girls demonstrates the dangers of erasing women's own sense of desire by prioritizing being sexually appealing over being sexually self-aware or knowledgeable. Even sexually inexperienced adolescents report conforming to traditional gender scripts as evidenced by young women's accounts of their lack of agency during their first sexual experiences (Martin 1996). It has also been argued that women who embody a submissive sexual role are unable to voice their own desires and instead prioritize their partner's pleasure (Tevlin and Leiblum 1983).

How does women's lack of active desire relate to sexual fantasies? Discourse around "saving oneself" and "giving" sex removes space for women to have desires of their own. Within this discourse, women can't just want sex to want sex, especially because withholding sex increases a woman's value. Therefore, women can conceal their desire through fantasies in which they are not actively seeking sex. If women are never taught about their desires or are taught to suppress their desires, then it would make sense that they would prefer to be the object of desire in their own fantasies. Submissive fantasies may allow them to imagine being sexy without having to be an active player in their own sexual pleasure, but rather are the objects of someone else's desire. Additionally, some researchers have suggested that submissive fantasy may reinforce the sexual irresistibility of women (Leitenberg and Henning 1995). According to this theory, women are so irresistible that men cannot resist them and must force themselves upon women, therefore confirming the woman's desirability.

## Implications of Submissive Sexual Fantasy Preference

To be clear, we do not wish to villainize any woman for her sexual preferences, fantasies, and behaviors. In fact, we hope that all women and men are able to maximally enjoy their sexuality. However, in order to do so, we argue that it can be beneficial for both women and men to embrace sexual roles and scenarios that may conflict with traditional gender stereotypes. Why might it be beneficial to step outside of traditional gender roles and embrace a wider variety of sexual fantasies?

For one, gender roles are restrictive for both women and men as they provide rules dictating which behaviors are acceptable for women and men and thus limit the range of appropriate behaviors. Therefore, for both women and men, there exists only a narrow range of behaviors that are allowable within the confines of gender roles, which can have potentially ill effects, especially if the prescribed roles are in conflict with one's actual desires. Furthermore, being concerned with properly conforming to gender roles can interfere with sexual satisfaction because it can be distracting to regulate one's gender performance and can interfere with sexual autonomy (Sanchez et al. 2005, 2012a). Though this may be detrimental for both women and men, we argue that conforming to gender roles in the bedroom is potentially more harmful for women, as gender roles prescribe submissiveness and passivity to women, thus contributing to the elimination or restriction of their sexual agency and autonomy. This is particularly concerning because sexual agency and autonomy have been linked to a number of positive sexual outcomes, including sexual satisfaction and sexual health (Kiefer and Sanchez 2007; Sanchez et al. 2012b).

So, should women suppress their sexual fantasies? Not necessarily. If submissive sexual fantasies are a reflection of one's authentic desires and not motivated by external pressures, then there is little harm in engaging with them (Sanchez et al. 2012a, b). And, studies have repeatedly found evidence that women automatically

associate sex with their own submission (Kiefer et al. 2006; Sanchez et al. 2006), indicating that the relationship between sex and submission is likely deeply engrained in women and thus may be difficult to change. Moreover, as we have discussed previously, sexual fantasies are not necessarily representative of desires that individuals want to act on in reality and therefore, may provide a safe space (i.e., within one's imagination) to explore gender roles. However, even when submissive sexual fantasies and desires are representative of intrinsic motivations, there may still be benefits of subverting one's gender roles and enjoying fantasies outside of traditional sexual scripts, especially considering that a number of studies have found that behaving submissively (both in sexual and in nonsexual contexts) can have detrimental effects (Gavey and McPhillips 1999; Sanchez et al. 2012a, b).

On the other hand, some argue that sexual submission fantasies are not so straightforward and as such, people can derive power in being submissive in sexual scenarios. For example, sexual fantasies about submission can be viewed as "topping from the bottom" (a term used within the BDSM community: the top being the dominant role and bottom being the submissive role) in the sense that women are using their irresistibility to control men since men cannot resist nor can they help themselves because the woman is so sexy. As discussed previously, there is value for women in being wanted by men and thus submissive sexual fantasies may actually be fantasies of power for some women, thus contributing to the idea that a man must convince a woman, persuade her, and overtake her as part of the story about her desirability and irresistibility.

Despite women's automatic association between sex and submission, researchers have found evidence that women can learn to be more sexually assertive (Dworkin et al. 2007), which may be particularly helpful for women who more strongly associate sex with submission, as they tend to experience the most sexual problems (Kiefer et al. 2006). This research is promising because it indicates that sexual behaviors, desires, and fantasies are potentially malleable and therefore people can be proactive in developing a sexuality that is safe, satisfying, and representative of their authentic selves. This is important information for women who wish to improve their levels of sexual satisfaction, but may also have benefits for their male partners and overall relationship functioning. The reasoning here is twofold; first, men want their female partners to initiate sex an equal amount, and second, men often interpret women's passivity as a lack of interest in sex and this interpretation can lead men to feel less sexually satisfied. Moreover, because sexual satisfaction is a predictor of overall relationship satisfaction, engaging in behaviors that decrease sexual satisfaction can also have negative impacts on overall relationship satisfaction (Sprecher et al. 2004).

Finally, although researchers have not found submissive sexual fantasies to be harmful for women who genuinely prefer adhering to gender roles, some researchers do find that women who do not behave submissively and do not prefer partner dominance in the bedroom actually fare the best and have the highest levels of sexual satisfaction, partner satisfaction, and partner perceptions of closeness (Sanchez et al. 2012a, b). That is, contrary to submissive roles, dominant roles

allow greater agency and autonomy, thus providing women with more opportunities to explore and express their true sexual desires.

In sum, there is nothing wrong with women having and enjoying submissive sexual fantasies, especially if they feel that the submissive role is congruent with their view of themselves. However, there is no harm and potentially even some benefits for anyone who is willing to try multiple different roles in the bedroom.

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# Chapter 4
# The Science of Female Orgasms: Pleasing Female Partners in Casual and Long-Term Relationships

**Jes L. Matsick, Terri D. Conley and Amy C. Moors**

## The Science of Female Orgasms: Pleasing Female Partners in Casual and Long-Term Relationships

A quick Internet search exposes an online library of sex advice for how to orgasm (if you are a woman) and/or assist a woman in having an orgasm. Headlines like the following from *Cosmopolitan,* a women's magazine, address the confusion and concern surrounding the existence of women's orgasms (or lack thereof):

- "8 Reasons You're Not Orgasming"
- "10 Things Guys Don't Understand about the Female Orgasm"
- "Sex Positions that Help You Orgasm."

These tips emerge from the disheartening statistics that women orgasm less frequently than men do. For example, some estimates have found that 75 % of men consistently orgasm during partnered sex (i.e., they orgasm *every* time), whereas only 29 % of women reported that they consistently orgasm during their sexual interactions (Laumann et al. 1994). Given that orgasm is often used as the metric of sexual success and pleasure, these statistics might spawn assumptions that heterosexual women do not enjoy partnered sex in the same way or to the same

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extent that men do. Moreover, based on these statistics surrounding the "orgasm gap" (i.e., the difference in men and women's frequency of orgasm), people might even infer that women are simply more difficult to please than men are.

While it may be true that men orgasm more frequently than women in partnered sex, using sociocultural approaches to understanding orgasm, we believe it is inaccurate to suggest that men's orgasms are *easier* and women's are more difficult to invoke. In other words, yes—men orgasm more frequently than women—but this is not because women are biologically hardwired not to orgasm or receive sexual pleasure. Yet remains the question: Why do women orgasm less frequently than men do? What factors might narrow this gap in orgasm frequency between men and women?

In this chapter, we critically examine gender differences in orgasm and, in doing so, provide science-based suggestions for individuals and relationship partners to close the orgasm gap between heterosexual men and women.[1] We will begin our examination of women's orgasm with providing an overview anatomy and orgasms, with a particular focus on the clitoris. For the remainder of the chapter, we consider orgasm frequency in the context of both short-term (casual sex and hookup scenarios) and long-term relationships. Throughout, we offer suggestions for women and their sexual partners to increase women's orgasm frequency across both short-term and long-term relationships.

## Orgasms and Anatomy

In order for sexual partners to have good sex, they need to understand each other's needs and wants. At the most basic level, this involves knowing a partner's anatomy. We imagine that the penis and vagina are body parts that first come to mind when we think about heterosexual sex (or even when we teach kids about sexuality), but we would be leading you astray if we wrote this chapter about women's orgasms without talking about the clitoris. The clitoris is the most powerful predictor of women's orgasms (Angier 1999), yet remains a mystery in some ways to both men and women alike (Ogletree and Ginsburg 2000). Whereas the penis is external and visible, and thus more familiar to men and women, the clitoris remains unseen most of the time until aroused (i.e., it is protected by the clitoral hood and, for most women, it isn't completely visible until it is aroused and emerges from its covering). It also does not help its publicity that the clitoris is by no means at the forefront of the "birds and the bees" conversation given that the clitoris has no reproductive function and that female sexual pleasure is most often held on the back burner in conversations about sex.

[1]We limit ourselves to only discussing the orgasm gap between heterosexual men and women because recent research finds that women orgasm at different rates based on their sexual orientation. Specifically, lesbian women orgasm more consistently during partnered sex than bisexual and heterosexual women do (Garcia et al. 2014).

To clarify, the clitoris is a highly sensitive and responsive female sex organ that serves an important role in sexual pleasure. The clitoris and the penis are homologous—both organs emerge from the same embryonic tissue during development (Hyde and DeLamater 2010). When excited, both the penis and the clitoris swell and fill with blood. However, as we have mentioned, in contrast to the penis and vagina, the clitoris serves no reproductive function, such that it secrets no fluids or genetic material that would contribute to reproduction, nor does it serve a structural purpose for reproduction (e.g., the vagina serves as the birth canal).

So, what is the purpose of the clitoris? Pleasure! In fact, it is the only human organ that serves no other purpose but pleasure. It has more nerve endings than the penis, including the head of the penis. Given the clitoris' obvious involvement in providing sexual pleasure, it is bad news for women's orgasms that the clitoris receives so little attention. For example, the clitoris is not usually a main focus during common sexual acts (e.g., intercourse and fellatio). We will return to this point about attending to the clitoris during sex when we discuss casual sex and hookups for women. Here, we suggest that learning about women's bodies, and the clitoris more specifically, is a great first step that one can take toward providing women with pleasure. Next, we turn to different types of orgasm and the role of the clitoris in orgasms.

## *Are There Different Types of Orgasm?*

We know that men and women differ in frequency of orgasm, but what about quality? Some might think the male orgasm is more powerful and explosive (thus a more important component of good sex) because of the ejaculate it produces. In other words, people may feel that the male orgasm signifies the grand finale of sex, whereas there is more confusion over when and/or whether women's orgasms occur, as there tends to be less physical evidence compared to men's orgasm. Thus, some might believe the male orgasm to be superior or as a required part of the sexual experience (whereas sex can still be seen as completed if a woman did not orgasm). In some of our unpublished research, for instance, we have found that male participants might not even be defining sexual practices as "sex" if they did not orgasm during the encounter (perhaps providing further evidence that men and women may define sex differently; Sanders and Reinisch 1999). Interestingly, researchers asked college men and women to describe their orgasms and found that their descriptions were indistinguishable based on gender—suggesting that orgasm is experienced similarly, despite beliefs that men's orgasms are more intense than women's and thus a more crucial component of sex (Vance and Wagner 1976). Given these findings, we strongly encourage people to equally value and prioritize both men and women's orgasms during sex—one is not greater than the other!

But is there a type of female orgasm that is seen as more superior to other orgasms that women have? Most people talk about orgasms in terms of being vaginal (internal) versus clitoral (external) orgasm. We have even heard of "breastgasm" (i.e., when a woman orgasms from breast stimulation). However, we

are going to focus on the first two types of orgasm because they seem to be the most common and also cause the most confusion even though they may likely be one in the same. Most of us are probably familiar with statistics that suggest only a small proportion of women orgasm from penetration alone (i.e., without any direct or indirect clitoral stimulation); yet, this "internal" orgasm seems so very easy to have if we look at the sex that occurs in pornography, movies, and television. Are "normal people" just bad at sex in real life?

Because of the emphasis put on heterosexual sex and phallocentric views of sex, many might assume that the most important or superior orgasm would be the vaginal/internal orgasm and that women and men are sexually incompetent if this type of orgasm (from penetration alone) does not occur. But, is there even such a thing as an "internal orgasm"? Probably not. We would say that there is a cultural priority placed on the vaginal orgasm, creating a sexual culture in which women who do not have vaginal orgasms are deemed defective and men who do not provide women with vaginal orgasms are deemed inept. However, Masters and Johnson (1966) in their early sexuality research found *no* differences between internal and external orgasms, such that the same physiological responses occurred during both types of orgasm among women. Both were characterized by increased heart rate, blood pressure, muscle spasms, contractions in pelvis, and breathing patterns (just like men's orgasms). Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that these two orgasms are not as distinct as people believe them to be and, perhaps, there may not be different types of orgasms.

But, most interesting, in our opinion, is the role of the clitoris in both types of orgasm: Scientists have posited that the clitoris is responsible for *both* types of orgasm—even vaginal or internal orgasms. Because the clitoris extends into the vaginal cavity (the clitoris has two corpora cavernosa and two crura that extend into the body; Clemente 2002), the internal stimulation of penetration against the vaginal walls may actually be arousing the crura of the clitoris, which triggers the orgasmic response. So, when we say that the clitoris is the body's hub for pleasure, we really mean it!

So if the clitoris is almighty and the acts performed during sex do not stimulate the clitoris, then it is no wonder that that type of sex may not result in orgasm for women. Below, we provide suggestions for improving people's knowledge about the clitoris and applying this knowledge to the bedroom (or wherever else your sex life may take you). However, first, we do want to caution people about following the sociocultural priority placed on orgasm. Of course, there are ways to enjoy sex and even have "mind-blowing" sex without having an orgasm and, for some people, that might be okay. For instance, when defining "sexual satisfaction," some women include orgasm as a part of their definition while other women do not (McClelland 2014). So we want to emphasize that a lack of orgasm does not necessarily mean a partner is not enjoying sex and we would advise readers not to turn an orgasm into a stressful pursuit of a goal or an achievement until discussing everything with one's partner. Sexual satisfaction comes in different forms for different people and for different reasons. However, if a female partner desires to orgasm, the best sexual partners for them should consider the following.

## *Strategies for Pleasing Female Partners*

Keep in mind that sexual scripts for men and women (i.e., the ways that heterosexual men and women should behave in sexual situations; Gagnon and Simon 1973) make it difficult or uncomfortable for women to initiate sex or even communicate their wants and needs for orgasm. (We will return to how this script complicates sexual encounters later in the chapter.) Thus, all of the burden in providing orgasms for women should not fall to women themselves, nor should the responsibility rest solely on their partners' shoulders. As mentioned above, an important and effective first step is for *both* men and women to learn about women's bodies, with an emphasis on understanding and finding the clitoris.

Women's sexual partners should first understand that orgasm is not likely to magically emerge from penetration or intercourse. Rather, most women will require clitoral stimulation—directly or indirectly. Certain positions of intercourse are more likely to provide clitoral stimulation (e.g., if on top, she will have more control of creating friction that can assist her orgasm). Perhaps, women may require or want clitoral stimulation before or after, but not during, penetration if they want to orgasm. All women are different and the best way to learn what she wants is to ask. Communicate about where she wants you to touch her or even ask her to guide your hand or body. The degree of stimulation, pressure, and location surrounding the clitoris may bring about different sensations for different women so verbal and nonverbal communication is key!

Women should also understand that penetration is an unlikely way to bring about orgasm and that she is *not* dysfunction if a "vaginal" orgasm does not occur. However, one way to learn about what may increase the likelihood of her orgasm is to masturbate. If a woman is not sure what needs to happen during sex for her orgasm, we imagine it might be difficult to communicate her needs with a partner (especially in a short-term or one-time context, like a hookup). Data support the notion that self-exploration can reduce gender differences in orgasm frequency. For example, the age at which an individual starts masturbating predicts how likely someone is to orgasm. Given that men masturbate earlier than women do, we can infer that the onset of masturbation is one factor that contributes to men's orgasm frequency later in life. Therefore, we argue that the gap between men and women's frequency of orgasm might be attenuated if girls and women had more experience pleasuring their bodies.

Masturbation is a great way to begin to learn which types of stimulation lead to orgasm and this practice will come in handy later. Sex therapists have touted the benefits of masturbation for years, including ways to improve orgasm consistency and frequency during intercourse, sexual desire, and even a technique to treat female orgasmic disorder (Hurlbert and Apt 1995; Kelly et al. 1990; Zamboni and Crawford 2003). In fact, in a classic study by famous sex researcher Alfred Kinsey, researchers found that women who masturbated before marriage were more likely to orgasm during the first year of marriage with their husbands than women who did not masturbate prior to the marriage (Kinsey et al. 1953). Further, women

masturbate to orgasm in approximately the same amount of time as men (approximately four minutes for both women and men; Kinsey et al. 1953) and more similar numbers of men and women report that they always or usually have an orgasm during masturbation (i.e., 80 % of men compared to 60 % of women, which is a much smaller gap than the 79 and 25 % found when asked about partnered sex; Laumann et al. 1994). Ultimately, these findings should help you lay to rest assumptions that women are biologically more difficult to please and that a difference in orgasm frequency during partnered sex is inevitable. Rather, we hope this information and promotion for masturbation may improve your sex life whether it be solo or with a sexual or relationship partner.

## Orgasms in Casual Relationships

One of our goals in this chapter is to explore orgasms in a variety of types of relationships in order to shed light on how context is associated with women's orgasms. Thus far, we have been addressing the concept of orgasm in a general way. But given that sexual encounters are fundamentally social interactions, the *type* of relationship has implications for whether or not orgasms happen and, more specifically, gender differences in orgasm frequency. In particular, we will now address heterosexual casual sex or "hookups." In essence, when we say "casual sex" or "hookups," we are referring to one-time or short-term sexual experiences that do not involve assumptions of an ongoing relationship following the encounter(s).

The orgasm gap, while often cast as the result of a biological difference between women and men, is evidenced more strongly in some relationship contexts than in others. Specifically, gender differences in orgasm are most pronounced in casual sex relationships (Armstrong et al. 2010). In their study of thousands of college students, they found that women only orgasmed about 32 % of the time compared to men in first-time hookups, but 79 % of the time that men did in relationships.

Is this gap present because it is anatomically more "difficult" for women to orgasm? Recall that women's anatomy is an unlikely culprit in the orgasm gap given their frequency of orgasm during masturbation. What about the possibility that it's more difficult for another person to help a woman orgasm? That is, perhaps it is more difficult for another person to help a woman orgasm than to help a men orgasm. This is a reasonable consideration. Yet, the challenge of orgasm assistance is substantially less prominent in committed relationships; women orgasm at nearly the same rate as men in the context of close relationships. Thus, we suggest that the casual sex orgasm gap is not a product of women's anatomy or women's capacity for orgasm. Instead, we suggest that the casual sex orgasm gap is most fundamentally about the dynamics (physical and psychological) of the relationships in which the casual sex is occurring.

If women's anatomy is not responsible for the gender difference, how do we explain the orgasm gap? When we put aside the idea that women are anatomically more difficult than men, we are left with another common refrain: "women just

don't like sex as much as men" or "women just aren't that sexual." Popular media and common wisdom triangulate upon this standard answer endlessly, with common representations of men pursuing sex from reluctant women and husbands' complaints about wives tepid interest in sex.

If women are, in fact, relatively uninterested in sexual pleasure and orgasms, we might expect that women would not care about the sexual capabilities of their partner in a casual hookup. That is, if they don't like sex anyway, then how good the sex is should be of little concern to women, or, at least of less concern than it is for men. We might expect women to be more concerned with factors other than having an orgasm. Some would say, for example, that a woman's primary concern in sexual encounters is whether the man is high status and thus would be able to support her in a relationship (Conley 2011).

Researchers in our laboratory addressed this question (Conley 2011)—what factors cause a woman to choose casual sex with a particular partner? Across several studies, we asked women and men to tell us about why they would choose a partner that they imagined propositioning them, or to tell us why they chose a sexual partner in the past. In each study, the factor that was consistently associated with acceptance of casual sex offer for both women and men was the perceived sexual capabilities of the proposer. Sexual capabilities of the proposer was the strongest predictor of whether someone would say "yes" when approached for casual sex. In other words, people of both genders are more likely to accept sex from someone they believe to be a good lover.

Interesting, isn't it? We encounter so many cultural messages about how women are not concerned with sexual pleasure or orgasm—that they don't like sex or that they "just want to be held." Yet, what determines whether they are going to accept a particular sexual offer from a particular man? The partner's sexual capabilities… just like men.

## *What Does* Not *Account for the Orgasm Gap in Casual Sex?*

But let's return to our original question, which concerned gender *differences* in orgasm. We hope we have persuaded you that despite cultural assumptions about the capacity of women's bodies to create orgasms, anatomical differences cannot account for the orgasm gap. We also demonstrated that having good sex (in the form of choosing partners who are presumed to have high sexual capabilities) is valued by women; thus, we remain unconvinced that women are just less "sexy" (i.e., interested in or having the capacity for sex) than men are. More specifically, we have discussed how, in casual contexts, women are seeking out good sexual capabilities in a partner. However, in those studies, we did not specifically ask whether women expected that these sexually capable partners would increase the likelihood of orgasm. It is possible that women do not equate sexual pleasure with orgasm. Thus, they seek a partner with good sexual capabilities, but they do not care whether that partner assists their orgasm. Is such an explanation plausible?

Initial research suggested that this explanation could be true (for a review see Armstrong et al. 2012)—that is, women often do not explicitly state a preference for orgasm, at least when asked directly. However, Armstrong and colleagues (Armstrong et al. 2012) addressed this issue slight differently. Although women may not explicitly state that orgasm is important to them, the picture was different when the researchers addressed the association between orgasm and overall satisfaction. Armstrong et al. found that the association between orgasm and sexual satisfaction is quite strong. Armstrong et al. (2012) state, "The most important finding from regressions predicting enjoyment, however, was seen in the effect of orgasm itself… The odds of reporting enjoyment were approximately five to six times higher in relationships and hookups if women had an orgasm. These large effects should put to rest doubt about whether women care about orgasm," p. 453. Thus, although women may explicitly state that they do not care if they have an orgasm, when this question is approached indirectly, it does seem to be key to their sexual happiness. We reject, then, the idea that women orgasm less than men simply because they do not care as much about orgasms. Thus, the mystery of the orgasm gap still persists.

## *What Accounts for the Orgasm Gap?*

Establishing what does *not* account for the orgasm gap is perhaps easier that determining what does cause it.

In the context of college and young adult sexual relationships, part of the reason for the gap is probably heterosexual young men's unfamiliarity with women's bodies. Of course, sexual predilections are idiosyncratic, for both women and men, being in a relationship gives them time to learn their partner's body (Armstrong et al. 2012), but this advanced learning is understandably difficult to achieve in a single hookup. However, young men also feel pressure to know exactly what to do sexually without asking any questions. The "script" of idealized heterosexual sexual encounters (Gagnon and Simon 1973) does not involve actually asking a partner what does or does not feel good. Instead, this information is expected to be effortlessly divined, which sets up highly unrealistic expectations for the dynamics of sexual encounters.

By the same token, women have no cultural script to follow to express preferences and desires during a sexual encounter. As a result, women feel uncomfortable asking for sexual pleasure (Armstrong et al. 2012). In fact, women often don't even feel that they can express to their partner that sexual acts are painful or frightening to them (Fahs 2011). Being able to optimize their sexual pleasure is likely much further afield, then, especially in a casual encounter. Over time in a relationship they are more likely to find their voice.

Another factor influencing the orgasm gap is the type of acts that happen in hookups. As we discussed previously, women need clitoral stimulation to have an orgasm, in the same way that men need penile stimulation. Fellatio is much more common in hookups–with cunnilingus noticeably absent (Armstrong et al. 2010).

Fellatio is about male orgasm. It involves no clitoral stimulation and, hence, has no effect on female orgasmic responses. That is, it would be highly unusual for a woman to orgasm by performing fellatio. Thus, to the extent that fellatio happens during hookups and cunnilingus does not, the orgasm gap could be expected to be quite large. Of course, other hookups involve vaginal intercourse. Common implementations of intercourse generally give men more physical (not to mention psychological) freedom to move their bodies in a way to promote their own orgasms. Given ample research concerning women's lack of agency in sexual situations, it seems likely that women feel unempowered to change or direct sexual positions to optimize clitoral stimulation in a way that would facilitate orgasm. Thus, the very acts that happen during casual encounters stack the deck against the occurrence of women's orgasm.

Finally, we offer an explanation that perhaps gets at the roots of the orgasm gap in casual encounters: communication. Without saying a word, our culture vehemently rejects conversations about sex. Because parents and teachers don't talk to children about sex, or talk about it in an embarrassed way or in a hushed tone, kids learn that sex is an "off-limits" topic. Movies teach us that in a good sexual encounter, there are no junctures of direction or correction that every motion is coordinated seamlessly; therefore, having to communicate during a sexual encounter can make one feel like a failure. Women receive all sorts of cultural messages about sex that inhibit their ability to communicate. For example, they are considered slutty if they like sex, thus communicating to a partner their sexual desires in an encounter is troublesome (e.g., Armstrong et al. 2010; Conley et al. 2013a). And men are supposed to be in charge of the sexual situation—so a woman communicating that she wants something different than what her male partner is doing, could insult him or wound his pride.

We are not implying that the orgasm gap is the "fault" of one gender or another in a heterosexual pair. Rather, we argue that the orgasm gap in hookups is a product of different playing fields for women and men and a culture that makes it difficult for people of either gender to talk about sexuality. Clearly, given the multiple societal pressures on women and men alike, bridging the orgasm gap is daunting. We will now turn to some strategies that might be useful in addressing this problem on both a societal and an individual level.

## *Diminishing the Orgasm Gap in Casual Encounters*

We can probably generally agree that it is to everyone's benefit if women are more satisfied in their casual sex encounters. For one, women want sexual pleasure in partnered interactions. Women are more sexually satisfied when they have orgasms and prefer casual sex partners whom they believe to have good sexual capabilities. These findings contradict the cultural assumption that sexual pleasure is not on women's minds. Moreover, it is hard to imagine a convincing argument to support the notion that men are somehow entitled to more sexual satisfaction than women

are. Clearly, reasonable people would agree that women and men are equally deserving of sexual satisfaction. The current orgasm gap is not fair or just.

However, the benefits of closing the orgasm gap are not for heterosexual women alone. Heterosexual men would also benefit from women believing that casual encounters can be highly pleasurable. Because women prioritize sexual capabilities in choosing male casual sex partners, to the extent that male partners provide women with better sexual experiences, casual sex rates should surely increase. So what can we do?

We suspect that what is most fundamentally absent in casual sex encounters is self-knowledge. In addition to our suggestion of exploring one's body, likes, and needs through masturbation (which arguably should improve the odds of equitable sexual encounters at any stage of life), we also encourage both parties (but especially women) to know exactly what they want sexually. Perhaps, this is part of the reason why women more consistently orgasm in their mid-30s than in their earlier years of being sexual—they have grown into knowing their desires and, more importantly, have learned the best ways to communicate their desires.

To achieve the goal of knowing what one wants out of a sexual encounter, a person must do some planning of the sexual encounter—at least in their own minds. One could think about these questions: What sorts of sex sound appealing for you to try? What behaviors are definitely off limits? What would happen if a partner suggests something new that you haven't thought of? Do you want to definitely say "no" to situations you haven't considered? We suggest that people should do some soul-searching about what they want sexually prior to involving another person in their sex life.

Given our earlier analysis of problems that give rise to the orgasm gap, it should come as no surprise that our primary solutions surround communication. Before people enter sexual situations, they should have considered the means by which they will communicate their desires. We suggest actually practicing phrases out loud (perhaps with no one listening!). From "It feels great when you do that" to "wait, can I move a little?" or "can we try something different?" The bottom line is that people need to think about how they would like to communicate these sentiments. Doing so would allow people to think of the most considerate ways to interact with well-intentioned partners. If you were not giving your partner what she or he wanted, would you want to know? What would be the best way to find that out? Likewise, everyone can ask a partner directly (or perhaps, obliquely!) whether they are experiencing pleasure. Practicing those phrases would also help: thinking of comfortable (or sexy) ways to ask "Do you like that?" or "Does it feel good to you?" Also consider even more proactive communication, like "tell me what you like"; "I want to know what feels good for you," or "what are some things you would like to try?" These phrases encourage a partner to reciprocate communication.

Another issue that seems to obviously influence women's orgasms is that many men simply do not feel that it is necessary for women in casual contexts to have orgasms. A majority of men in Armstrong et al. (2012) reported being sexually selfish in this way, apparently without compunction. A young man in one of Armstrong et al.'s (2012) studies said, "If it's just a random hookup, I don't think

[her orgasm] matters as much to the guy. Say they meet a girl at a party and it's a one night thing, I don't think it's gonna matter to them as much," p. 456. Another confirmed that, "In a hookup… I don't give a shit (about whether the woman orgasms)," p. 456. When asked why he didn't care about a woman's orgasm in a hookup, another young man commented, "I guess it's more of a selfish thing," p. 456. It is hard to fathom the logic behind reasoning of this type. (Except, perhaps, the inaccurate assumption that women are more difficult to please, which we addressed earlier.)

Yet, heterosexual men simultaneously prize the goal of bringing a woman pleasure (Pascoe 2007; Braun et al. 2003; Salisbury and Fisher 2014). In fact, they appear to enact masculinity through presumed heterosexual sex competence. The pressure on women to orgasm in the service of men's egos is high enough that women frequently fake orgasms (e.g., Wiederman 1997). Surely this desire to be a good lover could be harnessed in the name of just and equitable sexuality (or, for that matter, basic politeness). And surely men would feel better knowing that a female partner actually orgasms than they would if they knew that she faked an orgasm to satisfy his ego.[2] Thinking in terms of college environments, workshops for men on "how to be a great lover" could provide a context in which to promote equity in sexual contexts.

## Orgasms in Long-Term Relationships

Despite the orgasm-roadblocks women are confronted with in casual sex encounters, long-term relationships offer some orgasm solace. With casual sex, women may not view men as up-to-par sexual partners (and, subsequently, may avoid sex altogether) or feel uncomfortable about voicing what gives them pleasure. However, a committed partner helps alleviate some of the awkwardness associated with a less-than-familiar sexual partner.

As we have previously noted, cunnilingus helps facilitate women's orgasms, and research has shown that women are on the receiving end to a greater extent in long-term relationships than in first-time hookups (Armstrong et al. 2009, 2012). In fact, according to over 12,000 college-aged adults, for those in committed relationships 16 % said that only the woman received oral sex and 52 % said both partners received oral sex during the last time they engaged in sexual activity

[2]Although there are other reasons as to why women might fake orgasms (e.g., to increase the arousal of one's sexual partner or to appeal to the ego of one's sexual partner), faking it is an alternative to not having an orgasm at all. Though we do not discuss faking orgasms in this chapter, we do wish to put out some advice: If women wish for their partners to be better at sex, faking it could impede their partner's willingness or awareness of needing to learn new skills. We would encourage partners to have honest and open communication about their lack of orgasm, rather than misleading a partner to believe that her or his techniques are effective. Haven't we all heard of the phrase "don't fix it if it isn't broken"? The same logic applies here.

(Armstrong et al. 2009). This is in stark contrast to first-time hookups, where 19 % said only the woman received oral sex and 27 % both mutually received it. Foreplay appears to be the key for women reaching orgasm: In first-time hookups, 31 % of men and a mere 10 % of women had an orgasm but 85 % of men and 68 % of women had an orgasm during their most recent committed-relationship sexual activity (Armstrong et al. 2009).

Again, you might be wondering about enjoyment of the sexual activity beyond merely having an orgasm. For women, not reaching an orgasm does not necessarily mean lack of enjoyment; however, women who had an orgasm (again, more frequently in long-term relationships) reported high enjoyment (Armstrong et al. 2012).

Foreplay and enjoyment are, of course, obvious reasons as to why women orgasm more frequently in long-term relationships than in first-time or casual sex encounters. As discussed earlier, the clitoris has a multitude of nerve endings that can be primarily felt on the outside of a woman's body; thus, making oral sex an ideal vehicle to orgasm (e.g., Fugl-Meyer et al. 2006; Herbenick et al. 2010). Moreover, getting someone else to the point of orgasm can be thought of as a skill that is acquired overtime (Laumann et al. 1994). Again, making long-term relationships is ideal to practice and develop ways to assist one's partner to climax.

A less intuitive explanation that women orgasm at higher rates in long-term relationships, as compared to casual encounters, is the sexual double standard. The sexual double standard is when men and women are held to different ideals (and are differently evaluated) for the same sexual behavior (Crawford and Popp 2003; Reiss 1964). Women fear slut-shaming and a negative reputation for engaging in sex outside of a committed relationship, whereas men are lauded for this exact sexual behavior (Bogle 2008; Conley et al. 2013a). Thus, long-term relationships may serve as a safe haven for sexual activity for women—or at least a space where they are not slut-shamed. Although Armstrong et al. (2012) found that young men are not so concerned with women's pleasure in casual sex scenarios, they do seem more concerned about women's orgasms in committed relationships. Armstrong and colleagues interpret this gender disconnect to provide pleasure as embodying a new version of the sexual double standard, as best said by them: "entitlement to sexual pleasure has become reciprocal within relationships, but doubts about women's entitlement to pleasure in casual liaisons keep women from asking to have their desires satisfied and keep men from seeing women as deserving of their attentiveness in hookups" (p. 458). In other words, the sexual double standard restricts what women feel they can sexually express and gives men latitude to not be concern with women's pleasure during *non*-committed sex.

## *Are Relationships Always Good for Orgasms?*

Above, we described some good news (with a caveat) about the benefits of long-term relationships for women's orgasms. However, as you may have personally experienced, sexual satisfaction and frequency of sex decline over time in

committed relationships (Brewis and Meyer 2005; Clement 2002). Thus, much to everyone's dismay, women have fewer orgasms the longer they are in relationships with the same partners. Ultimately, this decline in orgasm frequency might boil down to the decline in sexual activity in long-term relationships. Many factors contribute to having sex less frequently, including stress about work and childbirth to name only two. But, what about factors that do not deal with daily life stressors or milestones? Over the years, researchers have explored how women's physiological sexual response may be different than men's.

Scientists posit that sexual arousal and desire is incentive based (or circular), suggesting that sexual cues (e.g., porn and erotic audio recordings) and how pleasurable they are perceived can change across time (e.g., Basson 2001). When men and women are shown the same sexual stimuli over and over again, they both report feeling less sexually aroused and devices placed on their genitals also show that they are, in fact, less aroused (Dawson et al. 2013; Koukounas and Over 1993; Meuwissen and Over 1990). Simply put, sexy material that once was arousing becomes considerably less arousing over time. But, when men and women view novel sexual material—something new—they report feeling sexually aroused, and their genitals also show arousal (Both et al. 2011; Dawson et al. 2013; Koukounas and Over 1993, 2001; Meuwissen and Over 1990). Although there is evidence that both men and women habituate to sexual stimuli over time, a study by Both et al. (2011) found that only women habituated to sexual stimuli (in this case a short erotic film), not men. Both and colleagues noted that in other research that showed men became less sexually aroused to the same stimuli over time, it appeared that men habituate more slowly than women. It is tempting to conclude that women habituate to sexy things, perhaps even their long-term romantic partners, quicker than men. However, more research is needed to decide the veracity of this claim.

In sum, women are more likely to have an orgasm with long-term relationship partners than first-time or casual sex partners—which is likely to due to men paying more attention to women's pleasure (especially with oral sex) and men learning overtime what "works" with their partner. But, on the downside, long-term relationships appear to mask the insidious nature of the sexual double standard. Women are more likely to have an orgasm in a committed relationship because they may feel less stigmatized for adhering to inequitable sexual norms—and men are reinforcing this by not being concerned about women's pleasure in casual sex and hookup contexts. Long-term relationships also appear to lend themselves to becoming "sexually boring" with a partner over time, especially for women. Women tend to get used to (or habituated to) the same sexual stimuli sooner than men (however, additional research in this area is warranted).

## *Tips for Keeping the Sparks of Orgasm Alive*

The relationship between long-term relationships and women's orgasms is complicated. On the one hand, sex with a committed partner boosts the odds that

women have an orgasm. On the other hand, long-term relationships are not without their pitfalls for women to reach a climax. One way to circumvent some of these pitfalls should come as no surprise by this point: have open communication with your partner, whether they be your one-night-wonder or your long-term partner about what you like sexually. Not surprisingly, people (in committed relationships) who disclosed what they sexually enjoyed to their partner—for example, they indicated to their partner how much they like to be kissed, receive oral sex, etc.—had high sexual communication and sexual satisfaction (Byers and Demmons 1999). Guiding and instructing someone as to the specifics of what "works" and continues to work will likely lead to more orgasms (plus, simply talking about sex can get pretty sexy!).

Of course, knowing what sexually pleases you is important. Among women in long-term relationships, those who masturbated (compared to those who had never reached an orgasm through masturbation) had more orgasms and required less time to become sexually aroused (Hurlbert and Whittaker 1991). In Hurlbert and Apt's (1995) study, they created a workshop detailing ways to masturbate. If you are unsure of what to try, Google it! Explore what feels good to you and let your partner know. It is important to note that we believe that sexual likes and interests change over time and masturbation is a great tool for exploring those possibilities. So, please do not think of masturbation as an amateur component of your sexuality; rather, it should be a continuous educational experience for you.

Finally, this may sound controversial to some, but there is some evidence that suggests that sexual desire declines for women in long-term relationships and can be increased by a new sexual partner—or even sharing the fantasy of a new sexual partner (Klusmann 2002; Perel 2006). We are by no means suggesting that an affair is in order to orgasm more frequently. However, there is a link between increased sexual desires for those in a long-term relationship who are sexually unfaithful to their partners (Klusmann 2002). If looking for another sexual partner, instead of sexual infidelity, we suggest an alternative: consensual non-monogamy. Consensual non-monogamy is a relationship type in which all partners involved *explicitly* agree to have romantic and/or sexual relationships with other people (Conley et al. 2013b). You might be most familiar with the term open relationship, but other types of consensual non-monogamy include polyamory (a focus on more than one loving and romantic relationship) and swinging (a focus on more than one purely sexual relationship). Perhaps, talking with your partner about the possibility of a threesome or sex with other people could be a way to increase sexual variety and novelty—ultimately leading to more orgasms. However, if this does not sound appealing to you or your partner, there are also other ways to add novelty without involving another person (e.g., sharing erotica, disclosing, or playing out fantasies). Again, communicate!

## Conclusion

Our goal in this chapter was to provide science-based evidence for understanding women's orgasms. We hope that this information can be used to improve the likelihood of women's orgasms in hookup scenarios (i.e., contexts in which the orgasm gap between men and women is the largest), as well as in long-term relationship contexts—which provide its own set of challenges to orgasm. To assist in providing greater orgasm equity for all, we leave you with this checklist that summarizes the strategies we have offered throughout this chapter that should lead you on your way toward mutually satisfying sex. Enjoy!

**Checklist to pass Orgasm 101**:

- Understand, find, and attend to the clitoris
- Communicate about the level of and type of stimulation
- Masturbate— know what your body likes and doesn't like
- Self-knowledge: What sexual acts do you want to happen?
- Practice communicating about what you want or need your partner to do
- Equally prioritize both partners' orgasms
- Recommunicate what is arousing to you and what contributes to your orgasms in long-term relationships
- Continue masturbation as a learning exercise and way to discover new interests
- Discuss how to introduce novelty into your sex life (e.g., new partners, fantasies, and erotica).

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# Chapter 5
# Passionate Love: Inspired by Angels or Demons?

**Elaine Hatfield, Cyrille Feybesse, Victoria Narine and Richard L. Rapson**

## Definitions of Passionate Love

Scientists have proffered several different definitions of romantic and passionate love (Hatfield et al. 2012). In this paper, we will define such love as:

> A state of intense longing for union with another. A complex functional whole including appraisals or appreciations, subjective feelings, expressions, patterned physiological processes, action tendencies, and instrumental behaviors. Reciprocated love (union with the other) is associated with fulfillment and ecstasy; unrequited love (separation) is associated with emptiness, anxiety, or despair (Hatfield and Sprecher 1986, p. 383).

### *Assessing Passionate Love*

In order to investigate passionate love, psychologists have created several scales to assess this construct (Hatfield et al. 2012). *The Passionate Love Scale* (PLS) (Hatfield and Sprecher 1986) is the most commonly used. The scale, a multidimensional self-report scale, was designed to tap the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of passionate love (see Table 5.1). The scale is highly reliable, with excellent internal consistency and has proven to be valid (Feybesse 2015).

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**Table 5.1** Passionate love scale

| We would like to know how you feel (or once felt) about the person you love, or have loved, most *passionately*. Some common terms for passionate love are romantic love, infatuation, love sickness, or obsessive love. | | |
|---|---|---|
| Please think of the person whom you love most passionately *right now*. If you are not in love, please think of the last person you loved. If you have never been in love, think of the person you came closest to caring for in that way. Try to describe the way you felt when your feelings were most intense. Answers range from **(1) Not at all true** to **(9) Definitely true** | | |
| Whom are you thinking of? | | |
| • Someone I love *right now*. | | |
| • Someone I *once* loved. | | |
| • I have never been in love. | | |
| | Not True | Definitely True |
| I would feel deep despair if _____ left me | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| Sometimes I feel I can't control my thoughts; they are obsessively on _____ | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| I feel happy when I am doing something to make _____ happy | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| I would rather be with _____ than anyone else | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| I'd get jealous if I thought _____ were falling in love with someone else | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| I yearn to know all about _____ | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| I want _____ physically, emotionally, mentally | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| I have an endless appetite for affection from _____ | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| For me, _____ is the perfect romantic partner | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| I sense my body responding when _____ touches me | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| _____ always seems to be on my mind | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| I want _____ to know me—my thoughts, my fears, and my hopes | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| I eagerly look for signs indicating _____'s desire for me | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| I possess a powerful attraction for _____ | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| I get extremely depressed when things don't go right in my relationship with _____ | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 | |
| **Total**: _____ | | |
| **Results**: | | |
| • 106–135 points = Wildly, even recklessly, in love | | |
| • 86–105 points = Passionate, but less intense | | |
| • 66–85 points = Occasional bursts of passion | | |
| • 45–65 points = Tepid, infrequent passion | | |
| • 15–44 points = The thrill is gone | | |

This instrument has been translated for use in several countries such as France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Korea, Peru, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Feybesse (2015) includes a table listing all the countries that have used the PLS and discussing the reliability and validity of each study. He argues that these data provide supplementary evidence on the universality of passionate love.

In recent fMRI studies of brain activity, the PLS has been found to correlate well with certain well-defined patterns of neural activation. For example, Aron et al. (2005) discovered that PLS scores correlate well with activation in a region of the *caudate* associated with reward (see Hatfield and Rapson 2009, for a review of recent neuroscience research correlating the PLS with participants' fMRI reactions). The PLS has also been found to be highly correlated with a variety of measures of love, intimacy, and sexuality.

## *Passionate Love: A Cultural Universal*

Passionate love is as old as humankind. The world literature abounds in stories of lovers caught up in a sea of passion and violence: Daphnis and Chloe (Greek myths), Shiva and Sati (Indian), Hinemoa and Tutanekai (Maori), Emperor Ai and Dong Xian (Chinese), and the VhaVhenda lover who was turned into a crocodile (African). Scholars from a wide variety of disciplines (anthropology, social psychology, sociology, sexology, history, and the neurosciences) have concluded that passion is a cultural universal, existing in almost all cultures and during all historical eras (Jankowiak 1997; Neto et al. 2000; Pinto and Neto 2008). Drawing on a sampling of tribal societies from the *Standard Cross-Cultural Sample*, Jankowiak and Fischer (1992) found that in almost all far-flung societies, young lovers talked about passionate love, recounted tales of love, sang love songs, and spoke of the longings, and anguish of infatuation. When passionate affections clashed with parents' or elders' wishes, young couples often eloped.

Recently, cultural researchers have begun to investigate the impact of culture on people's definitions of love, what they desire in romantic partners, their likelihood of falling in love, the intensity of their passion, and their willingness to acquiesce in arranged marriages *versus* insisting on marrying for love (Ghimire et al. 2006; Riela et al. 2010; Schmitt et al. 2009). They find that throughout time, people have embraced different attitudes toward romantic and passionate love, have ascribed somewhat different meanings to "love," have desired very different traits in romantic partners, and have differed markedly in whether such feelings were to be proclaimed to the world or hidden in the deepest recesses of the heart. In the real world, human romantic sexual attitudes and behavior seem forever in flux. Nonetheless, from recent research, it is clear that although cultural differences do in fact exist, oft times cultures turn out to be more similar than one might expect. Cultural scholars generally find few cultural differences in how intensely (and frequently) passionate love is experienced by young people (Feybesse et al. 2013; Neto et al. 2000). In most cultures, men and women are equally likely to fall in love (Hatfield and Rapson 1993). And, given the ubiquity of modern-day communication, it appears that the world is getting smaller and cultures are becoming more similar all the time (Levine et al. 1995). There is a swing toward passion being more positively regarded and yearned for more intensely than ever before. So more and

more people, throughout the world, are coming to value passionate love. Is that a good or bad thing? As is usually the case, it depends.

## Passionate Love: The Gift of Angels or Devils

As is clear from our definition, passionate love is a bittersweet emotion. When we accept romantic love, we are accepting the possibility of experiencing a tumble of emotions—joy and ecstasy as well as anxiety, sadness, fear, and anger (Lamy 2011).

### *The Joys of Love*

When people speak of love, they usually associate it with positive emotions such as joy, well-being, and happiness. No one doubts that love is a high, that the joys of love generally spill over and add sparkle to everything else in life.

Neuroscientists have found that there are good chemical and biological reasons for these changes. According to Fisher (2004a, b), three chemicals (dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin), play a crucial role in romantic passion (Takahashi et al. 2015).

Aron et al. (2005) conducted a series of fMRI studies. "Have you just fallen madly in love?" asked the announcement posted on a bulletin board on the SUNY Stony Brook campus. They received a flood of replies. They selected 17 men and women who scored high on the *Passionate Love Scale*.

The authors then asked lovesick men and women to view pictures of their beloved and "a boring acquaintance," while an fMRI scanner recorded the activity (blood flow) in their brains. Fisher (2004a, b) found that when lovesick men and women gazed at their beloved, activity was sparked in many brain areas. Two areas were found to be critically important: the caudate nucleus (a large, C-shaped region deep in the center of the brain) and the ventral tegmental area (VTA), a group of neurons at the very center of the brain. Fisher (2004a, b) observed:

> I had hypothesized that romantic love is associated with elevated levels of dopamine or norepinephrine. The VTA is a mother lode for dopamine-making cells. With their tentacle-like axons, these nerve cells distribute dopamine to many brain regions, including the caudate nucleus. And as this sprinkler system sends dopamine to various parts of the brain, it produces focused attention as well as fierce energy, concentrated motivation to attain a reward, and feelings of elation—even mania—the core feelings of romantic love.
>
> No wonder lovers talk all night or walk till dawn, write extravagant poetry and self-revealing e-mails, cross continents or oceans to hug for just a weekend, change jobs or lifestyles, even die for one another. Drenched in chemicals that bestow focus, stamina and vigor, and driven by the motivating engine of the brain, lovers succumb to a Herculean courting urge (p. 79).

Lucy Brown added: "That's the area that's also active when a cocaine addict gets an IV injection of cocaine. It's not a craving. It's a high" (Quoted Blink 2007, p. 3). These reactions are depicted in Fig. 5.1.

Blink (2007) observes:

> You see someone, you click, and you're euphoric. And in response, your ventral tegmental area uses chemical messengers such as dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin to send signals racing to a part of the brain called the nucleus accumbens with the good news, telling it to start craving. [Certain regions] are deactivated—areas as within the amygdala, associated with fear (p. 3).

(For more detailed descriptions of this research, see Aron et al. 2005; Fisher et al. 2005). Fisher (2004a, b) concluded by observing that the chemistry of romantic attraction generally elevates sexual motivation.

Not surprisingly, these authors' pioneering research sparked a cascade of fMRI research (see Cacioppo et al. 2012; Hatfield and Rapson 2009; Ortigue et al. 2010). Recently, Cacioppo and Cacioppo (2015) conducted quantitative meta-analyses in order to integrate this burgeoning research. Overall, their fMRI meta-analyses revealed that passionate love increased activity in the subcortical brain areas sustaining basic emotions, euphoria, reward, and motivation, and in cortical brain areas involved in more complex emotional and cognitive processing (e.g., embodied cognition, body image, and attention). Not surprising, then, that as our definition of passionate love says: "*Reciprocated love (union with the other) is associated with fulfillment and ecstasy*."

A plethora of studies have documented that for young people passion is associated with a plethora of positive things. In a meta-analysis, Karandashev and Clapp (2015) found that passionate love is associated with idealization of the other, with commitment, with curiosity about the other, caring about the other, a desire to put the other first, and the sharing of intimate thoughts and feelings. Passionate love is important for young people's health and well-being. Data indicate that at any given moment, more than 50 % of young people are passionately in love (Feybesse 2015). College students that are in stable romantic relationships experience fewer mental health problems, have lower overweight/obesity problems, and tend to drink less often than single people. In the same way, married couples are less likely to suffer from long-term medical conditions and have higher life expectancy (Braithwaite et al. 2010).

Passionate love has been found to have an important impact on well-being and health of older people too (Hatfield and Rapson 1996). In one study, Traupmann and Hatfield (1981) interviewed a random sample of women living in Madison, Wisconsin, who ranged in age from 50 to 82. They were somewhat more affluent than is the typical American woman. The authors found that passionate love (as well as companionate love, sexual satisfaction, and financial status) had a significant impact on mental health, physical health, and relationship satisfaction (Hatfield et al. 1989; Wang and Nguyen 1995).

Aron and Henkemeyer (1995) interviewed married couples. They found that for women passionate love was moderately correlated with marital satisfaction and

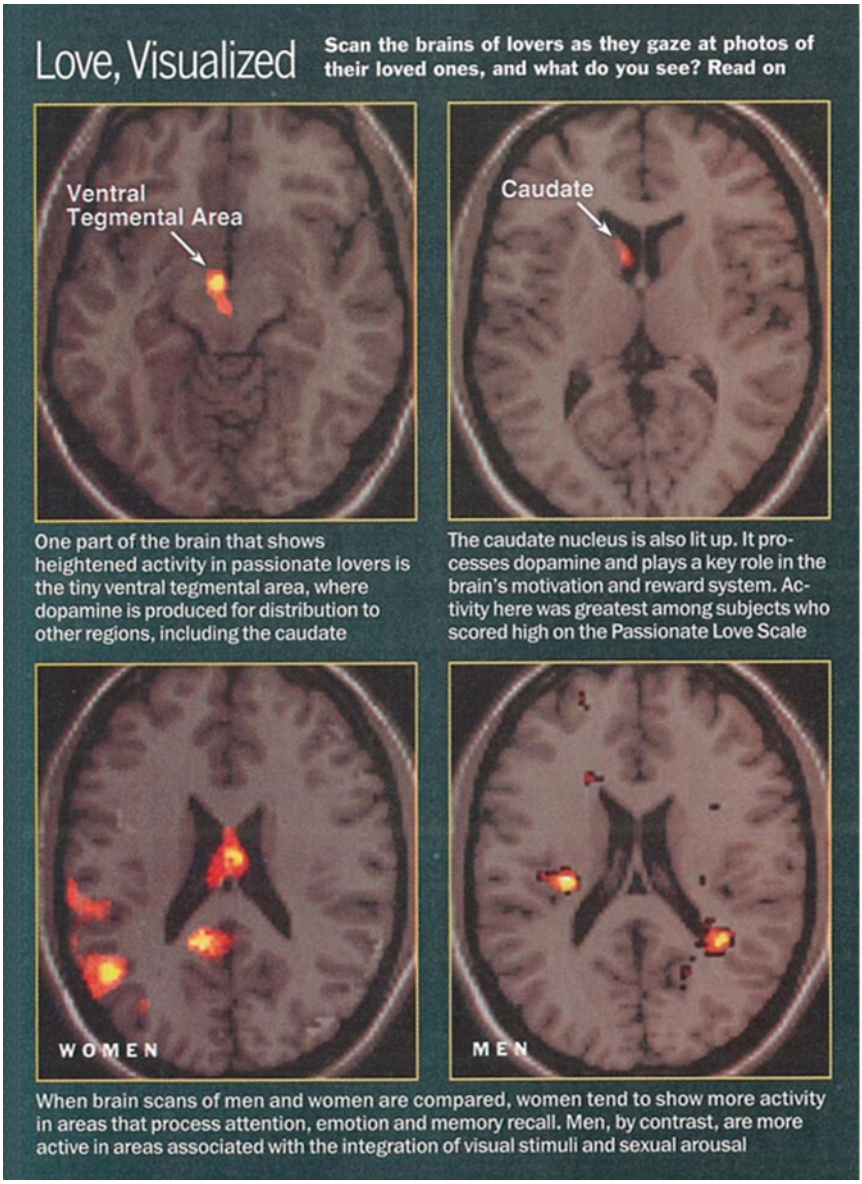


**Fig. 5.1** Clusters of neural activation when viewing a face one passionately loves. Reprinted with permission from: Dr. Lucy Brown

global happiness, relationship excitement, frequency of sex, and shared activities. For men, there were no significant correlations with passionate love.

The presence of romantic love has been found to promote satisfaction in long-term relationships (Acevedo and Aron 2009). As Noller (2005) observes:

> The environment created by romantic love has been analyzed as one of interdependence, equality, and open communication, where each partner supports the other in efforts at growth and self-development (p. 112).

She concludes that:

> relationships that combine the passionate and companionate sentiments of romantic love are conducive to "the [type of] love that supports marriage and family (p. 97).

Love has also been found to be related to patterns of sexual activity. People who are in love are more likely to give and receive oral sex, as well as to engage in sexual activity in general, compared to people who are not in love (Kaestle and Halpern 2007; Regan 2000). Although passionate love typically wanes through the course of a relationship (Hatfield et al. 2008), if a couple is able to sustain passionate love (e.g., by engaging in novel and arousing activities; Aron et al. 2000), then relationship satisfaction will increase.

Marriages based on romantic love also have numerous consequences of mental and physical health and well-being. There is considerable evidence that passion, love, and intimacy can assuage the negative psychological impact of stress (Laurenceau et al. 1998). Neurobiological and psychology studies document that feelings of "Love, compassion, and joy make our immune system function better and help to battle diseases" (Esch and Stefano 2005). Joyful activities such as being in love have been shown to:

> … activate areas in the brain responsible for emotion, attention, motivation and memory (i.e., limbic structures), and it may further serve to control the ANS, i.e., stress reduction … Thus, love and pleasure clearly are capable of stimulating health, well-being and (re) productivity" … [making life] a deeply rewarding and pleasurable experience (p. 265).

Thus, romantic love plays a role in developing and maintaining the overall social and biological well-being of partners.

Companionate love has been found to be a strong predictor of subjective well-being in both collectivistic and individualistic cultural samples, especially for women (Kim and Hatfield 2004). Like passionate love, however, companionate love can also decrease over time in relationships (Hatfield et al. 2008) and then its benefits decline too.

## *The Badlands of Love*

Besotted lovers yearn for love, certain it will bring them joy and fulfillment, but passion has a dark side, too. Sometimes, men and women know that others they love so fiercely do not return their affection. Sometimes they are torn by jealousy.

Sometimes, when things cool down, people discover their lover is not all they'd hoped for (for a discussion of these problems, see Feybesse and Hatfield 2015). Let us consider a few of these problems in more detail.

## Unrequited Love

Country music, novels, and films are filled with stories of lovers who loved and lost. Baumeister and Wotman (1991) asked young people to tell them about times when their love was unrequited and times when someone loved them, but they just did not love in return. They found, to their surprise, that it is more painful to reject someone than to be rejected. How could that be?

For many, unrequited love is a bittersweet experience. At first, the besotted are filled with love and hope. They wallow in the drama of their misery. They view the beloved with incomprehension. How could X not love them when they love X so intensely? They blame X for not reciprocating their love; they feel angry, annoyed, and resentful at X's stubbornness. They feel released from normal moral constraints ("all's fair in love and war"). When it finally sinks in that their case is hopeless, they sometimes feel their heart has been ripped to shreds. Sometimes, the rejected lover's pursuit of the other turns into harassment. In years to come, the unrequited lover remembers the infatuation as a bittersweet affair despite the poison of disappointment.

Things are not so rosy for the beloved. At first, their self-esteem may be slightly bolstered by all the adoration they receive from the supplicant. Soon, however, they find themselves in an impossible situation. They feel guilty for rejecting someone who obviously cares so much about them (it is hard enough to tell someone you are not interested, much less why). It feels even worse to lead someone on. But, if the supplicant persists, guilt soon turns to irritation and then to rage. People begin to feel trapped and persecuted. What could be motivating the besotted lover? Why won't she go away? Is he insane? How could she deceive herself this way? Didn't he see he is driving her crazy?

## Jealously

Cultures differ markedly in what sparks jealousy, in how jealous people get, and in whether they have the power to do anything about their feelings (Fitness and Fletcher 1993; Hupka and Ryan 1990; Hupka 1991).

What sparks jealousy? Men and women can use a number of clues to tell them that someone they love is drifting away and that jealousy is in order. Hupka (1981) illustrated the point that cultures define very different things as threats to self-esteem, relationships, and property with this scenario:

> On her return trip from the local watering well, a married woman is asked for a cup of water by a male resident of the village. Her husband, resting on the porch of their dwelling,

> observes his wife giving the man a cup of water. Subsequently, they approach the husband and the three of them enjoy a lively and friendly conversation into the late evening hours. Eventually the husband puts out the lamp, and the guest has sexual intercourse with the wife. The next morning the husband leaves the house early in order to catch fish for breakfast. Upon his return he finds his wife having sex again with the guest. The husband becomes violently enraged and mortally stabs the guest.
>
> At what point in the vignette may one expect the husband to be jealous? (p. 324–325).

Hupka, an anthropologist, points out that it depends, of course, in which culture we place the husband. A husband of the Pawnee Indian tribe in the nineteenth century bewitched any man who dared to request a cup of water from his wife. An Ammassalik Eskimo husband, as a good host, was expected to turn out the lamp at night, as an invitation for the guest to have sexual relations with the wife. The Ammassalik, however, became intensely jealous if his wife dared to have sex with a stranger without a mutual agreement between two families to exchange mates, and it was not unusual for the husband to kill the interloper. The Toda of Southern India, who were primarily polyandrous at the turn of the century, on the other hand, would consider the sequence of events described in the vignette to be perfectly normal. The Todas had the custom of *mokhthoditi,* which allowed husbands and wives to take on lovers. When, for instance, a man wanted someone else's wife as a lover he sought the consent of the wife and her husband or husbands. If consent was given by all, the men negotiated an annual fee to be paid to the husband(s). The woman then lived with the man just as if she were his real wife. Or more commonly, the man visited the woman at the house of her husband(s).

It is evident from these illustrations that culture is a potent determinant of when people will (or will not) evaluate a rival as a threat to his self-esteem and to the relationship (Guerrero et al. 2004).

Buunk and Hupka (1987) found that there are also cultural differences in the kinds of things that trigger jealousy in modern, industrialized nations. They interviewed 2079 college students from seven industrialized nations—the USA, Hungary, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia (the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia no longer exist as nation). Students were asked to take a look at several statements: *flirting* ("It does not bother me when I see my lover flirting with someone else"); *kissing* ("When I see my lover kissing someone else my stomach knots up"); *dancing* ("When my lover dances with someone else I feel very uneasy"); *hugging* ("When somebody hugs my lover I get sick inside"); *sexual relationships* ("It would bother me if my partner frequently had satisfying sexual relations with someone else"); and *sexual fantasy* ("It is entertaining to hear the sexual fantasies my partner has about another person"). They were then asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with each of these statements.

There were some striking cross-national similarities in the kinds of things that people found threatening. Behaviors such as dancing, hugging, and talking about sexual fantasies were taken in stride. Explicit erotic behavior—flirting, kissing, or having sexual relations with someone else—evoked strong jealousy. There were a few striking cultural differences in *exactly* what people found upsetting, however. US citizens, for example, took "hugging" for granted. In the Netherlands, kissing,

hugging, and dancing evoked less jealousy than in most other countries; but citizens got more upset by the idea of their partner's having sexual fantasies about other people than did others. Hungarians found both hugging and kissing most provoking. Citizens from the Soviet Union were upset by dancing and sexual relations.

The data also highlighted the importance of power in determining how people respond to jealous provocations. In most tribes, women, who were usually physically weaker than men, possess less political and economic power. Although neither men nor women liked infidelity, only the men were in a position to do much about it. In general, women were "supposed" to respond to adultery with only the gentlest forms of aggression. They could express righteous indignation, cry, threaten to walk out, or divorce. The men were allowed to bring out the really big guns when offended: they are allowed to banish or to murder their mates.

Thus far, we have focused on cultural differences in jealousy. Evolutionary psychologist Buss (2000) argues that jealousy is more deeply ingrained in humankind than one might think. Although jealousy is primarily a sad and negative emotion, he argues that it is adaptive because it contributes to romantic relationship maintenance:

> Jealousy, according to this perspective, is not a sign of immaturity, but rather a supremely important passion that helped our ancestors, and most likely continues to help us today, to cope with a host of real reproductive threats. Jealousy, for example, motivates us to ward off rivals with verbal threats and cold primate stares. It drives us to keep partners from straying with tactics such as escalating vigilance or showering a partner with affection. And it communicates commitment to a partner who may be wavering, serving an important purpose in the maintenance of love (p. 26).

## Vengeance

Some jealous lovers react more violently. In the seventeenth century, Burton (1621/1857) wrote, in *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* that "those which are jealous proceed from suspicion to hatred; from hatred to frenzie; from frenzie to injurie, murder and despair" (p. 428). Historically, since men had the most power, they were allowed to let their "frenzie" lead to murder. Women had to be content with more tepid responses.

Arapaho (Native American) men might beat wives they suspected of having sexual relations with anyone else. Occasionally, a suspicious man calmly sent his wife away, either to her paramour (her ilicit partner) or to her home. More often he became angry and jealous. Usually, he whipped her, and cut off the tip of her nose or her braids, or both. According to Kroeber (1902), he also slashed her cheeks. This treatment of an unfaithful wife was conventional and neither her parents nor the tribe did anything about it (Hilger 1952). The king of the Plateau tribes of Zimbabwe executed men caught with any of his wives. The wives were grossly mutilated (Gouldsbury and Sheane 1911).

In Western cultures, men are far more likely to beat or murder their girlfriends and wives than their rivals (White and Mullen 1989). In America, family peace

centers report that about two-thirds of wives who are forced to seek shelter do so because their husbands' excessive or unwarranted jealousy has led them to repeatedly assault the women (Gayford 1979). Male jealousy is the leading cause of wife battering and homicide worldwide (Buss 1991; Daly and Wilson 1988a, 1988b). Until recently, such vengeance was approved or treated leniently. The eighteenth-century English jurist Blackstone commented that killing in a situation where a man or woman is caught in the act "is of the lowest degree of manslaughter; … for there could not be a greater provocation" (Smith and Hogan 1983, p. 288). In many countries, the courts have been sympathetic to such "crimes of passion." Traditionally, it was considered to be a man's right to defend his "honor." In Morocco, for example, the law excuses killing one's wife if she is caught in the act of adultery, but a woman would not be excused for killing her husband in the same circumstances (Greenhouse 1994). In Sao Paulo (Brazil's most populous city), in 1980–1981, 722 men claimed "defense of honor" for murdering their wives. Brazilian women adopted the slogan "Lovers don't kill," and campaigned against allowing such a defense in murder trials. Once again, we see that worldwide, the times they are a' changing (see Brooke 1991, for a discussion of the changes globalization has brought to views of "honor" and crimes of violence in one culture—Brazil).

## Disillusionment

We may start out idealizing our romantic partner, but as we get deeper into the relationship we discover facts about him or her that give us pause. In fact, Felmlee (2001) found that the very things that attract us to a romantic partner often turn sour with the passage of time. The kind and gentle man gets seen as a wimp; the strong, silent type is seen as a tyrannical bore. When asked what constituted "deal breakers" in their own failed romantic relationships, our students could quickly compile a list:

Alcoholism,
Drug addiction,
Opposite wishes on having children,
Mates who turned out to be stupid,
Sloppy/piggy,
Controlling,
Verbally abusive,
Physically violent,
Jealous,
Disparaged my taste and values,
Racist/sexist/homophobic,
Irresponsible or mean to children or a child molester,
Dismissive of my friends,
Dismissive of my work,

Would not share housework/childcare,
Procrastinated/always late/did not pay,
Taxes, et al.,
A cheater,
Broke the law,
Made no money/refused to get a job/lazy,
Spent all my money, and
Admired Donald Trump.

Passion is a fragile flower. A long-term relationship requires a gentle touch. For other traits that turn romance into boredom and disgust and push a relationship into dissolution, see Burkett and Kirkpatrick (2006),

Cunningham et al. (2005), in a series of studies with American college students, identified major categories of behaviors that are often responsible for the termination of a relationship. Among them, *intrusive behaviors*—harmful behaviors that are intentionally directed toward the partner (e.g., physical abuse, being overly controlling, being overly critical of the partner)—best predicted relationship dissatisfaction and termination. *Norm violations*—intentional behaviors that violate societal standards—also predicted relationship dissatisfaction and termination. Having undesirable personality traits may also force the partner to terminate the relationship. In a longitudinal study of American couples followed from courtship (in the 1930s) to the 1980s, the strongest personality predictors for divorce were neuroticism or negative emotionality and lack of impulse control by the male partner (Kelly and Conley 1987). Men and women may possess reproductive interests and sets of evolved sexual strategies that are at odds with each other. It then follows that there should be gender differences in what constitutes a romantic deal breaker, with men and women becoming offended by the other's preferred sexual strategy. Consistent with this assumption, research has found American women to be more upset by their partners' sexual assertiveness and aggressiveness, whereas men are more upset by their partners' sexual withholding. In addition, women were upset by their partners' inconsiderate, neglecting, and condescending behavior, whereas men were upset by their partners' moodiness and physical self-absorption. Across 37 cultures, Buss (1989) found men to have a universal preference for long-term mates who are youthful and physically attractive and women to have a universal preference for long-term mates who are of relatively high status. Given these preferences, being overly homely for females and being penniless for males may both serve as deal breakers in a romantic relationship. Among American married couples, the decline in the wife's physical appearance has more negative consequences for marital sexuality compared to the decline in the husband's physical appearance (Margolin and White 1987).

Of course, at some point, people may decide that no relationship is better than the inferior offerings available to them.

## *The End of the Affair*

Today, most people are fairly optimistic about the fate of passionate love. Yet, the odds are against a youthful romance turning into a serious love affair and then into a long and satisfying marriage are low. Hill et al. (1979) interviewed 231 young Boston couples to find out what happened to love affairs over a two-year period. At the beginning of the study, most couples (60 %) saw each other every day. Most (75 %) were dating exclusively; some (20 %) were living together; a few (10 %) were engaged. The authors interviewed these same couples again six months, one year, and two years later. By the end of two years, 45 % of them had broken up.

Similarly, many people assume that it is "normal" to have a happy marriage. Yet, in most cultures, many marriages end in divorce. For example, the divorce to marriage ratio is 21 % in Brazil, 55 % in France, and 53 % in the USA (Wikipedia 2014; Engel 2014). Nearly everyone has experienced a breakup of an affair that began promisingly, but came to a sad end.

Researchers have documented the devastating array of emotions people feel after a breakup. When an affair ends, young people feel a storm of emotions—elation and relief (if they wanted the affair to end) as well as love, sadness and depression, guilt, anger and bitterness, jealousy, and loneliness (if they did not) (see de Jong-Gierveld 1986; Field 2011, Perilloux and Buss 2008; Perlman and Peplau 1981, for a review of typical reactions).

Fisher et al. (2010) studied men and women who had just been jilted by their beloved. First, they hung a flyer on the SUNY at Stony Brook bulletin board. "Have you just been rejected in love. But can't let go?" Rejected sweethearts were quick to respond. In initial interviews, Fisher found that heartbroken men and women were caught up in a swirl of conflicting emotions—they were still wildly in love, yet feeling abandoned, depressed, angry, and in despair.

But what was going on in their brains? To find out, Fisher and her colleagues followed the same protocol they had utilized in testing happily-in-love men and women—i.e., they asked participants to alternately view a photograph of their one-time beloved and a photograph of a familiar, but emotionally neutral individual. The authors found that jilted lovers' brains "lit up" in the areas associated with anxiety, pain, and attempts at controlling anger—as well as in addiction, risk taking, and obsessive/compulsive behaviors. Jilted lovers did, indeed, appear to experience a storm of passion—passionate love, sexual desire, plus anguish, rejection, rage, emptiness, and despair (for additional information on the brain activity of women grieving from the loss of a romantic relationship, see Najib et al. 2004).

The newly broken up are also vulnerable to a variety of mental and physical health problems (Traupmann and Hatfield 1981). Mearns (1991) interviewed college students who had recently broken up. Almost all of them admitted that they were still feeling strong love for their partners. To some extent, both wished the relationship had been a success. Nonetheless, it had failed. Two months after things had fallen apart, over 40 % of students in these doomed relationships were still experiencing clinically measurable depression. Scores on the *Beck Depression*

*Inventory* (Beck et al. 1996) revealed that 2 % of them were experiencing "severe depression," 10 % were experiencing "moderate to severe depression," 31 % were experiencing "mild to moderate depression," and 1 % were experiencing "minimal depression."

Gardner (2005), a clinical psychologist in Glasgow, said: "People can die from a broken heart" (p. 1). There is evidence he may be right. Field (2011) reviewed the medical literature and found that heartbreak sparked a variety of medical problems. These include intrusive thoughts, insomnia, alcoholism and drug use, heartbreak syndrome (i.e., experiencing faux heart attacks), and a compromised immune system. Bereavement is also known to increase susceptibility to diabetes, heart disease, tuberculosis, and cirrhosis of the liver. Bereavement increases a person's vulnerability to mental illness. It sparks a variety of physical symptoms. These include migraines, headaches, facial pain, rashes, indigestion, peptic ulcers, weight gain or loss, heart palpitations, chest pain, asthma, infections. It predisposes people to engage in risky behaviors—such as smoking, drinking, and drug use. The bereaved are also more likely to die from natural causes, twice as likely to commit suicide, and more likely to be murdered than are the married (Bloom et al. 1979; Hatfield and Rapson 1993).

## Conclusion

Today, most young people go through many relationships and experience the pain of a disappointing love affair time after time. And while in this chapter we have focused not just on the joys of love but also on the pathos of lost love and people's longing for the supposed stable aspects of the past, it is well to remind ourselves of a few truths. First, humans tend to learn through pain. By experiencing many relationships, people possess the opportunity for gaining an understanding of themselves, others, and the complexities of love. Most moderns may be significantly smarter about love, through experience, than were their ancestors. And second, more of us *have* loved. The taste of love can be so sweet (or bittersweet) that lost love only deters us from seeking more love for a short while. Fewer lines of poetry are spoken more frequently, almost to the point of cliche, than those composed in 1850, at the height of the Romantic Movement, by Alfred, Lord Tennyson: "Tis better to have loved and lost/Than never to have loved at all."

But in the last analysis, we wish to leave the reader of this chapter about love, sex, and intimacy with this paradox: The best way to gain a fulfilling relationship lies not in an obsession with love but with greater efforts toward building a balanced life based on one's unique biology, history, personality, and individuality. Romantic intimacy can bestow on us one of the glories of being alive. But there are other kinds of intimacy and other glories as well that form parts of the gift of life and that can enhance romance or even replace it when necessary: fruitful work, family, friends, fun, children, healing, creation, music, sunrises, and sunsets.

We hope that this exposition will help readers gain a better understanding of the nature of romantic love and help them to better deal with its pleasures and its vicissitudes.

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# Part II
# Hate

# Chapter 6
# Your Pain, My Gain: The Interpersonal Context of Sadism

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## Introduction

In order to situate ourselves in the context of the present volume, we must first address the question of how sadism should be conceptualized: Is it love, hate, a perverse alloy of the two, or none of the above? The answer, of course, depends on how love and hate themselves are conceptualized, and we explicitly adopt the motivational framework proposed by Rempel and Burris (2005): Thus, "love" is understood as a motive to preserve/promote the well-being of a target, and "hate" is understood as a motive to diminish/destroy the well-being of a target. Guided by this framework, Rempel and Burris suggested that sadism should be regarded as an *instrumental form of hate*: That is, sadistic motivation is congruent with physical and/or psychosocial harm befalling the target, with the anticipated outcome (i.e., the ultimate goal) of enhancing one's own positive affect (i.e., increased pleasure, satisfaction, excitement, and/or arousal).

## What Sadism Isn't

With this conceptual definition as a backdrop, we can specify a number of phenomena that should not be conflated with sadism (i.e., sadistic hate). For example, we suggest that sadistic hate is essentially irrelevant when acts that harm a target are performed under duress or otherwise coerced. Thus, although Baumeister (1997) cited reluctance to kill during combat and the relatively frequent occurrence of post-traumatic stress disorder among officers following police action shootings as evidence that most people do not want to hurt others, the strong situational press

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toward inflicting harm on a target in such circumstances makes pleasure-seeking—and therefore sadistic motivation—an improbable luxury.

Moreover, sadism should not always be inferred when increased positive affect follows the infliction of harm on a target. For example, consider the hate subtype that Rempel and Burris (2005) labeled redress, wherein the desire to harm a target is congruent with the ultimate goal(s) of justice and restoring order. Positive affect such as satisfaction may certainly result when doling out what are perceived to be just deserts, but this affective outcome is an unintended consequence rather than the ultimate goal—and so sadistic hate is once again functionally irrelevant.

Finally, behavior that is congruent with sadistic hate should be differentiated from superficially harmful behavior that is motivationally congruent with the target's well-being. For example, if a caregiver administers corrective discipline following a child's reckless behavior with the ultimate goal of discouraging similar behaviors that could put the child at physical or socioemotional risk, the temporary physical and/or emotional discomfort that the child may experience should not be taken as evidence of sadistic motivation in the caregiver. In contrast, consider a situation in which a 5-year-old boy carelessly spills soda on a stranger during a family outing at an amusement park. The boy's father responds by announcing that he will spank his son at the end of the day and, ignoring the child's repeated apologies and bargaining attempts, follows through. The father's intentional delay arguably decreases the corrective value of the discipline, and concurrent disregard of the child's persistent entreaties may function to enhance the father's sense of personal power. If this were indeed the case—that is, that the father deliberately sought to boost his own emotional well-being at the expense of his son's by "being the big man"—then the father's motivation should be considered sadistic.

Consensual BDSM play is another example of superficially harmful behavior that is congruent with the target's well-being and hence not an outcome of sadistic motivation as we conceptualize it. In their book *Screw the Roses, Send Me the Thorns*, BDSM practitioners Miller and Devon (1995, p. 3) frame the issue this way: "At the risk of ruining our well-tarnished image, we must tell you that the picture of the evil sadist abusing the cringing masochist is not quite the reality. In fact, no sadist we know would pull the wings off a fly unless the fly said that it would enhance its sexual pleasure." That is, although perhaps counterintuitive at first glance, the "sadistic" behavior practiced in consensual BDSM play contexts is ultimately pretense and in the service of the goal of increasing *the target's* positive affect: It should not, therefore, be regarded as evidence of genuine sadism. With this in mind, we question Baumeister's (1997) suggestion that a partner with submissive sexual interests' difficulty convincing an intimate partner to engage in "pseudo-sadistic" play behavior such as spanking should be taken as prima facie evidence of the rarity of sadistic motivation. The basis for a partner's refusal—fear of appearing deviant, for example (e.g., Burris and Schrage 2014)—could have nothing to do with reluctance to inflict harm. Indeed, our motivational conceptualization of sadism allows for the provocative possibility that refusal to engage in play behavior to gratify one's intimate partner could serve as a means of tormenting

the desirous partner. That is, as an old joke puts it: When a masochist says "Please hurt me!", a *true* sadist says "No!".

## Sadism: One Motive, Many Behaviors

Given these examples of *what sadism is not*, we are better situated to show how our motivational conceptualization can lead to an expanded understanding of *what sadism is*. As we proceed, remember that sadism should be inferred based on neither the extremity of a perpetrator's behavior nor the magnitude of harm suffered by his/her target, but rather on whether the intended harm is in the service of boosting the perpetrator's positive affect. With this in mind, first consider three "obvious" behavioral manifestations of sadistic motivation that have received clinical and/or forensic attention: All three—sexual sadism disorder, animal cruelty, and sadistic personality disorder—are typified by a high magnitude of harm linked to anticipated/actual affective payoff.

**Sexual sadism disorder**. As described in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association 2013), the core feature of sexual sadism disorder is "recurrent and intense sexual arousal from the physical or psychological suffering of another person, as manifested by fantasies, urges, or behaviors" (p. 695). Given the severity of harm often inflicted on non-consenting others in pursuit of sexual gratification, it should not be surprising that much of the existing research related to sexual sadism focuses on criminal populations. For example, Dietz et al. (1990) detailed the crimes of thirty convicted men who had committed sexually sadistic acts. Nearly, all had planned the acts meticulously: They approached their target—a stranger—under pretense and captured, restrained, and beat that person. The victim subsequently would be subjected to such painful indignities as mutilation and forcible penetration, sometimes with objects. Many perpetrators murdered their victims and hid the bodies but kept personal objects or body parts as souvenirs. Some would also revisit the disposal sites to reminisce about the details of the crime.

One striking aspect of such depictions is the temporal expanse in which positive affective payoff is applicable: Pleasurable arousal is seemingly being experienced before, during, and after a specific offense. This apparent magnitude of affective payoff may help account for the often single-minded nature of sexually sadistic motivation, as evident in one offender's reply when asked what could be done to avoid an attack from someone like himself: "[T]here's a lot of steps you can take to help eliminate the average criminal [who is] just spontaneous and reckless and careless…. If somebody wants somebody bad enough… it's nearly impossible [to prevent]…. They could have the best security in the world. They could have guards and dogs and everything else. But if you have the time and the patience, the opportunity is going to arise when you can hit somebody" (Hazelwood and Michaud 2001, p. 107).

A key question, of course, is why the suffering of a non-consenting other functions as a source of erotic gratification among sexually sadistic individuals? A persistent challenge is identifying one or more appropriate comparison groups against which sexually sadistic individuals can be compared. Some studies have pointed to brain abnormalities (e.g., Briken et al. 2005), and the temporal–limbic pathway (which is linked to both sexual arousal and aggressive impulses) in particular has been implicated (e.g., Gratzer and Bradford 1995). The amygdala and anterior insula—brain areas linked to sexual arousal and pain, respectively—have also been shown to be more reactive to images of others in pain among sexual sadists versus controls (Harenski et al. 2012). Chromosomal abnormalities—in particular, the XYY configuration—may occur more frequently among perpetrators of sexual homicide versus controls, although the absolute rate of occurrence appears quite low (e.g., 1.8 % versus 0.01 % in Briken et al. 2006).

The early fusion of sex and aggression—often via victimization by a caregiver—has appeared frequently in the clinical literature concerning sexually sadistic offenders (e.g., Stoller 1975). Moreover, although sexual fantasies with sadistic content are by no means rare in non-forensic populations (e.g., Crepault and Couture 1980), they are, almost by definition, much less likely to yield sadistic behaviors (Revitch and Schlesinger 1981, 1989; Schlesinger and Revitch 1997). Among sadistic offenders, sexual gratification via fantasy depictions of violence appears nearly ubiquitous, whether manifest in literature/image collections (Dietz et al. 1990) or in the pre- and post-offense savoring noted above. It has been suggested that fantasies of sexualized violence may emerge as a compensatory response to intense, sustained experiences of anger and shame (Burgess et al. 1986) and are sustained via subsequent (often masturbatory) reinforcement (MacCulloch et al. 1983). The compensatory potential of sexually sadistic behavior was articulated by one serial rapist/torturer/murderer in Dietz et al. (1990, p. 165) as follows:

> Sadism: The wish to inflict pain on others is not the essence of sadism. One essential impulse: to have complete mastery over another person, to make him/her a helpless object of our will, to become the absolute ruler over her, to become her God, to do with her as one pleases. To humiliate her, to enslave her, are means to this end, and the most important radical aim is to make her suffer since there is no greater power over another person than that of inflicting pain on her to force her to undergo suffering without her being able to defend herself. The pleasure in the complete domination over another person is the very essence of the Sadistic drive.

**Animal cruelty**. The key diagnostic criteria of conduct disorder—often considered the child/adolescent precursor to antisocial personality disorder—in the DSM-5 include aggression toward animals (and people) along with destruction of property, deceitfulness or theft, and serious violations of rules. Animal cruelty research has undergone considerable expansion and diversification over the past two decades (see Ascione 2008, for the most comprehensive overview of classic and recent contributions) but has been generally supportive of the suggestion that animal cruelty in childhood should be considered an indicator of risk for aggression directed toward humans. For example, Sanders and Henry (2015) demonstrated a link between a history of animal abuse and bullying behavior in a retrospective

study involving a large sample of young adult women. Merz-Perez et al. (2001) discovered that violent offenders were nearly three times more likely to report having perpetrated animal cruelty compared to nonviolent offenders in the same maximum-security setting. Walters (2014) in a large longitudinal study demonstrated that childhood animal cruelty predicted subsequent violent (and nonviolent) offending and that this relationship was mediated by interpersonal hostility and callousness. Animal cruelty has also figured prominently in numerous case histories of serial killers (e.g., Wright and Hensley 2003).

In one of the most methodologically sophisticated investigations of etiology—one that made use of a nationally representative, longitudinal, multigenerational US sample—Knight et al. (2014) showed that violence perpetrated between caregivers predicted children's increased likelihood of abusing animals over a decade later, although caregivers' own history of abusing animals did not. Moreover, Flynn (1999) found father-to-son corporal punishment to be a significant predictor of recalled acts of animal cruelty during childhood/adolescence among male undergraduates. Taken together, the latter two findings suggest that animal cruelty may be more a matter of displaced aggression than imitative behavior. Unfortunately, however, two issues constrain the confidence with which such findings can be invoked when attempting to understand the origins of sadistic motivation.

First, much of the extant animal cruelty research has relied on simple (often dichotomous) self-report indices of abusive behavior toward animals, and there have been few efforts to unpack the specific motives driving such behavior (see Dadds 2008). A notable exception is Kellert and Felthous (1985; cf. Hensley and Tallichet 2008), who offered a preliminary taxonomy of nine motives based on forty cases involving "excessive cruelty" (p. 1122): (1) controlling an animal's behavior (via putatively corrective, but often exceedingly severe, physical punishment); (2) retaliating for a perceived offense by the animal; (3) acting out prejudice against a particular species or breed; (4) attempting to elicit greater hostility in the animal; (5) developing one's skills and reputation as an aggressor; (6) shocking and/or amusing others; (7) using the animal as a tool to intimidate and/or terrorize someone; (8) consciously displacing aggression toward another person onto a putatively safer (i.e., non-human) target; and (9) "nonspecific sadism" that is pleasure-focused, "sometimes associated with the desire to exercise total power and control over an animal, and [that] may… compensate for a person's feelings of weakness or vulnerability" (p. 1124). This taxonomy suggests that sadism is but one of a number of possible motivational contributors to any specific incident of animal abuse. Pinpointing the role of sadistic motivation in animal cruelty is further complicated by the fact that perpetrators' actual motivation may not always be consciously accessible (cf. Felthous 1981), so some reasons offered for their behavior may be post hoc rationalizations.

Second, the extant literature not uncommonly normalizes and/or trivializes acts of animal cruelty that appear less extreme and/or are directed toward non-mammals (versus, especially, mammalian pets). For example, Felthous (1981, p. 48) wrote that "[p]lucking wings off of grasshoppers and sticking pins in toads might be considered as cruelties, but these are rather common childhood behaviors of limited

clinical significance. Repetitive purposeless killing or injuring cats or dogs should be considered a more serious behavioral symptom." In a similar fashion, Ascione (2001, p. 7) suggested that animal abuse that is "exploratory/curious" should be regarded as distinct from that which is "pathological" or "delinquent." Targeting insects or amphibians for harm with the intent of satisfying one's curiosity is still arguably congruent with our conceptual definition of sadistic motivation, however: Thus, if sadism is to be understood, these comparatively mundane instances may be just as illuminating as extreme ones.

**Sadistic personality disorder**. One attempt to make mundane sadistic behaviors the focus of clinical attention resulted in the inclusion of sadistic personality disorder—described as "a pervasive pattern of cruel, demeaning, and aggressive behavior directed toward other people, beginning by early adulthood"—within Appendix A of the DSM-III-R (American Psychiatric Association 1987, p. 369). Individuals with sadistic personality disorder were believed to target individuals whom they regard as subordinates (e.g., family members, coworkers) and to take pleasure in their use of physical and psychological tactics to diminish further their targets' perceived autonomy. For example, "a father may severely punish his child for a minor infraction of table manners… a husband may not let his wife leave the house without him, or permit his teenage daughter to attend any social functions" (p. 369).

Sadistic personality disorder has been estimated to occur in approximately 2–5 % of the population (Feister and Gay 1991). One survey of forensic psychiatrists (Spitzer et al. 1991) revealed that half had been in contact with individuals who, in their opinion, met the diagnostic criteria for the disorder: These individuals were overwhelmingly male (98 %), and most had a history of abuse (90 % emotional, 76 % physical, 41 % sexual) and/or multiple losses (52 %). Comorbidity with both narcissistic and antisocial personality disorders (Spitzer et al. 1991), and with mood disorders and alcoholism (Reich 1993), has been demonstrated.

Although sadistic personality disorder was not included in subsequent editions of the DSM, the high level of agreement among clinicians when applying the diagnostic criteria (Freiman and Widiger 1989) suggests that sadistic motivation is a salient aspect of day-to-day interpersonal functioning for some people. Indeed, there is a small but growing empirical literature that supports an individual difference approach to understanding sadism.

A notable recent example is Buckels et al. (2013), who reported two studies offering behavioral evidence of "everyday sadism." In the first, higher scores on O'Meara et al.'s (2011) Short Sadistic Impulse Scale predicted an increased likelihood of choosing to (ostensibly) kill bugs over a number of other presumably unpleasant tasks (e.g., cleaning a toilet). Moreover, this pattern was observed even when controlling for the so-called Dark Triad (i.e., individual differences in narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy; see Paulhus and Williams 2002), and higher dispositional sadism predicted greater self-reported pleasure associated with having made this choice. In their second study, higher self-reported sadism scores predicted delivering unprovoked, intense blasts of white noise to an ostensible rival in a reaction-time competition. Higher sadism scorers were also more willing to

work on a monotonous task to earn the privilege of delivering such blasts, and both of these observed relationships remained more or less intact when controlling for Dark Triad tendencies.

Although no creature was actually harmed or killed in either study reported by Buckels et al. (2013), participants presumably thought otherwise—and high sadism scorers' harm-congruent choices appeared gratuitous and linked to enhancing their own positive affect. Consequently, although some might perhaps dismiss these face-valid outcomes as "just some bugs" or "just a bit of loud noise—no real harm done," we would suggest that both are rather compelling examples of behavioral consequences of sadistic motivation. As such, they set the context for assembling other comparatively mundane (versus a sexual serial killer, at least) manifestations of sadism. We focus on three: internet trolling, organizational hazing, and pranking.

**Internet trolling**. Based on a textual analysis of over 2000 postings on a Usenet newsgroup, Hardaker (2010, p. 237, emphasis added) defined a "troll" as an online "user who constructs the identity of sincerely wishing to be part of the group in question, including professing, or conveying pseudo-sincere intentions, but whose real intention(s) is/are *to cause disruption and/or to trigger or exacerbate conflict for the purposes of their own amusement*." Defined thus, internet trolling appears to be a clear example of a comparatively mundane behavioral outcome of sadistic motivation. Research by Buckels et al. (2014) supports this assertion: In two online studies, Buckels et al. showed that dispositional sadism was the best (i.e., better than Dark Triad variables) predictor of trolling behavior and enjoyment and that sadism's predictive utility did not extend to other online behaviors such as chatting or debating. Indeed, Buckels et al. asserted that the observed relationships were so "strong that it might be said that online trolls are prototypical everyday sadists" (p. 101).

**Organizational hazing**. In contrast to the cloak of anonymity under which internet trolls operate is the often face-to-face practice of hazing, defined by Allan and Madden (2008, p. 2) as "any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate." In their survey of over 11,000 US post-secondary students, Allan and Madden found that over half of those belonging to voluntary groups—including, but not limited to, varsity sports and Greek-letter organizations—reported having experienced at least one incident of hazing. Recurrent elements included "alcohol consumption, humiliation, isolation, sleep-deprivation, and sex acts" (p. 16). The severity of hazing incidents varies dramatically: At the extreme, deaths due to severe beatings or alcohol poisoning have been reported (Parks et al. 2014). Nevertheless, over 9 out of 10 of Allan and Madden's respondents who admitted having experienced at least one hazing episode (based on a list of behaviors that they were subject to or induced to perform) refused to label the experience as hazing. Moreover, the vast majority of those who identified the experience as hazing did not report the episode to officials, citing fear of consequences for group or self, trivialization of harm experienced, and putative positive consequences of the episode such as bonding with the group or a sense of accomplishment.

It is, of course, quite reasonable to assume that not all targets of organizational hazing will suffer equally. At the same time, the potential for organizational hazing to yield aversive—and potentially severe—physical and/or psychological consequences arguably undercuts the credibility of efforts to normalize it and/or tout its benefits. Indeed, hazing appears to be a behavioral outcome of sadistic motivation, at least some of the time. For example, consider Waldron et al.'s (2011, p. 119) composite narrative told in the voice of a male former high school athlete who subjected others to hazing: "It was more just to have a good time, all in good fun; but, it's also humiliation. You want to laugh at somebody else's misfortune. Like, a guy naked out in the hallway, that's funny. You want him to be embarrassed. I don't know why, but, it's just human nature. I guess you want to laugh at somebody else's misfortune. As far as people that initiate it, I think they just do it because they have the power to. They find it fun and they can do it without anybody stopping them." The sadistic theme—subjecting another person to physical or psychological harm in order to boost one's own positive affect—is indisputable here. At the same time, the narrator seems to lack insight as to why sadistic motivation exists in the first place. We will revisit this issue shortly.

**Pranking**. Unlike hazing, which typically allows the target an opportunity for at least token consent based on foreknowledge of the activity, pranking requires an unsuspecting target who cannot provide meaningful consent for what s/he will ultimately experience: If the would-be target decodes the prank beforehand, there is no gotcha, and the prank "fails." Consider these five examples of pranking from the Web site *fmylife.com*, which provides an online forum for users to post brief accounts of unfortunate events that befall them:

> Today, my boyfriend and I went to the beach. I though[t] he was being really sweet by putting sunscreen on my back as I layed on my stomach. I got home later, and felt that my back was sore. Then I saw the giant penis on my back that been burnt in. FML (17 Dec 2009)
>
> Today, I woke up to my Playstation 3 and my laptop missing and window open. My dad faked a robbery to see me freak out. FML (6 Jun 2011)
>
> Today, I woke up to my girlfriend grinning at me, her hand on my junk. I grinned back, then looked down and saw blood smeared all over her hand and my junk. After I started screaming and crying, she laughed and said it was fake blood. She recorded everything. FML (4 Aug 2013)
>
> Today, while I was pulling weeds, my dad thought it would be absolutely hilarious to yell "Hey, son!" then unload his gun at me when I turned around. After I'd screamed like a bitch and pissed myself, he broke down into hysterical laughter and said he'd loaded the gun with blanks. Fuck you, dad. FML (30 Aug 2015)
>
> Today, I found my husband in the bathtub, which was filled with blood-red water, motionless and staring blankly at the ceiling. I started screaming and crying, and he burst into laughter at his "hilarious" prank. He only seemed regretful that his video camera hadn't been recording properly. FML (19 Sep 2014)

In each of these instances, the target appeared to enter the situation unsuspectingly and his/her physical and/or psychological well-being was subsequently compromised: Painful sunburn, screaming, crying, and "freaking out" are mentioned, and humiliation is also implied (e.g., "giant penis on my back," "screamed

like a bitch and pissed myself"). Four of the five incidents involve simulations of what many would regard as severely traumatic events: burglary, shooting, genital mutilation, and suicide. Three explicitly note the perpetrator's laughter in the aftermath of a "successful" prank. Although we cannot know for sure, none of the accounts implies that the victim provoked the perpetrator in any way beforehand. Taken together, these observations suggest that pranking may be motivated, at least some of the time, by sadism: This strikes us as a particularly unsettling possibility, given that all five pranks described above occurred in close relationship contexts, i.e., parent–child, intimate partners.

With this in mind, we were astonished when an October 2015 PsycINFO search using the search terms "prank" and "practical joke" revealed *no* relevant empirical literature. We consequently saw fit to undertake such research ourselves: Given its apparently novelty, our first investigative attempt (Leitch and Burris 2016) was primarily descriptive and made use of mostly open-ended responses of 91 undergraduates (57 % women) who had performed, watched, and/or been subjected to pranks. Most relevantly, we found that the best predictors of pranksters' positive overall evaluation of a memorable past prank were anticipatory and post-event joy/excitement, as well as post-event pride/satisfaction. Peri- and post-event joy/excitement also predicted the desire to prank again. In contrast, although peri- and post-event regret was the best predictor of negative overall evaluations of a specific past pranking episode, regret did not inhibit the desire to prank again. Taken together, pranksters' willingness to subject another person to physical and/or psychological harm appears to be positively reinforced by the accompanying sense of enjoyment and efficacy: Thus, pranking would appear to be one possible behavioral outcome of sadistic motivation.

**Vicarious sadism**. Before attempting to assemble a case for a mechanism that drives sadistic motivation, we should also note that sadistic gratification is sometimes vicarious, such that first-person participation in the harming of a live target is optional. Three examples will suffice. First, consider the popularity of programs such as MTV's/BET's *Punk'd*, wherein the negative reactions of pranked individuals are filmed for entertainment purposes. As in several of the *fmylife.com* accounts above, the pranksters willingly subject their targets to simulated traumas: For example, in a pilot filming for what became the *Punk'd* series, a couple on holiday in Las Vegas walked into their hotel room to find what appeared to be a bloodied homicide victim; the couple subsequently sued MTV and celebrity host/producer Ashton Kutcher ("Couple sue over TV corpse prank" 2002). Second, Greitemeyer (2015) demonstrated that dispositional sadism predicted preference for violent video games over and above the Big Five personality dimensions, the Dark Triad, and a measure of trait aggression. Third, fusing elements of sexual sadism and animal cruelty, there exists a clandestine niche market for "crush" videos that feature the fetishistic mutilation of small animals, typically by the stamping of unshod or stilettoed female feet (see Ricaurte 2009–2010).

## Why Sadistic Motivation?

Throughout this chapter, we have embraced the conceptualization of sadistic hate as motivation that is congruent with physical and/or psychosocial harm befalling a target in the service of the ultimate goal of enhancing one's own positive affect. This conceptualization allows for discernment of sadism based on family resemblance across a wide range of behavioral outcomes. That is, be it private torture inflicted by a serial rapist or public scrotal pain orchestrated by a prankster, intending another's harm as a means to one's own pleasurable end is the signifier of sadistic motivation.

Having made the case for a common motive across the putative behavioral manifestations of sadism described earlier, a key question is why unprovoked harm directed toward a living target is experienced as a source of positive affect. That is, does sadism have a common mechanism? Note that the question of why sadistic motivation develops is different from why people act on it: We will deal with the latter after exploring the former. Let us consider some clues.

Animal cruelty is often part of a larger constellation of violence within a family system: An adult abuser may target a partner or a child as well as a pet, for example. As noted earlier, however, Knight et al. (2014) showed that while violence between caregivers subsequently predicted an increased likelihood that their children would abuse animals, caregivers' own history of animal cruelty did not. Moreover, Flynn (1999) found that corporal punishment by fathers predicted greater cruelty to animals among boys. Sims et al. (2001) showed that individuals who perceive a child as having more control over a negative outcome than they themselves do as caregivers experienced negative affect during brief interactions with a puppy and a cat: Thus, the same "low perceived control" (LPC) attributional style that has been linked to child abuse may also generalize to include animals as possible targets. Indeed, Chin et al. (2008) found LPC individuals to be more likely than non-LPC individuals to endorse the use of harsh punishment (specifically, electric shocks) when training animals.

Taken together, these findings are congruent with the suggestion that animal cruelty can be a behavioral manifestation of compensatory control and/or displaced aggression, a theme that has emerged in previous qualitative research (Kellert and Felthous 1985). Wright and Hensley (2003) took these ideas a step further in their review of cases wherein serial murderers were subject to "episodes of prolonged humiliation" (p. 82) as children: They postulated animal cruelty—and the subsequent, often eroticized torture and/or murder of human victims (cf. sexual sadism disorder)—to be a "means of [killers] venting their frustration to regain their dignity and sense of self" (p. 83). Recall also that a high proportion of individuals identified by forensic psychiatrists as meeting the criteria for sadistic personality disorder report having been victimized (i.e., a combination of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse; Spitzer et al. 1991).

Some organizational hazing findings also point to the possible role of displaced aggression in sadistic behavioral outcomes. Specifically, in addition to an

unsurprising positive correlation between positive attitudes toward hazing and the number of hazing-related acts committed in a survey of members of student organizations, Owen et al. (2008) found a similar positive correlation between positive attitudes toward hazing and *the number of hazing-related acts endured*. These results are best understood against a backdrop of generally neutral to negative attitudes toward hazing across Owen et al.'s entire sample, as well as other results suggesting "that there may be a small number of active perpetrators who are responsible for hazing a larger number of potential victims" (p. 48). If displaced aggression is a pertinent mechanism, hazing victims may have a vested interest in maintaining the practice despite widespread disapproval because new recruits can serve as targets for their own hazing machinations. Waldron et al. (2011, p. 120) similarly suggested that "leaders felt they had the right to haze the younger members of the team because they had 'paid their dues to the team' by accepting the hazing perpetrated against them."

Similar to the Owen et al. (2008) findings and also suggestive of the contributory role of displaced aggression, we (Leitch and Burris 2016) found that victims of pranks rated pranking others more positively than did non-victims. Moreover, consistent with our earlier suggestion that sadistic motivation can be gratified vicariously, pranking victims also rated the experience of watching pranks more positively than did non-victims. More speculatively, we earlier noted a couple's 2002 lawsuit against celebrity Ashton Kutcher for his role in staging a simulated homicide scene in their hotel room. In 2001, Kutcher visited the home of a woman he had been dating, concerned about her silence following a dispute they had been having. He looked inside and saw what he eventually learned was a pool of blood that had seeped from her brutally stabbed, deceased body: She was a victim of a suspected serial killer ("I thought it was red wine" 2010). The disconcerting similarity of Kutcher's prank to his own previous tragic discovery raises the question of whether the former emerged as a means of discharging feelings of powerlessness and anger evoked by the latter.

We propose that sadism can be understood as a *compensatory/restorative motivational response to insults to the self*: Thus, sadistically motivated behavior functions to displace and discharge aggressive impulses provoked by such insults, which both reduces tension and boosts positive affect and self-efficacy (for a partially complementary neurobiological perspective, see Nell 2006). Marcus-Newhall et al. (2000) found strong meta-analytic support for the existence of displaced aggression—that is, "that those who are provoked and unable to retaliate reliably respond more aggressively toward an innocent other than those not previously provoked" (p. 682). Moreover, Miller et al. (2003) have made a strong case that the tendency to ruminate over past provocations facilitates the displacement of aggression across even considerable time spans. Invoking displaced aggression, at least as commonly understood, as an explanatory mechanism for sadistic motivation fails to account neatly for the presumed payoff of harming the target—that is, positive affect in the form of pleasure, satisfaction, arousal, and/or excitement. Speculatively, we suggest that elevation of the self via sadistically motivated behavior following insult may function as the guarantor of positive affective payoffs.

We (Burris and Leitch 2016) recently conducted a preliminary test of our model: In a study involving 133 undergraduates, we included multiple measures relating to respect (i.e., the importance of being respected, hypervigilance for signs of disrespect, feeling disrespected across a variety of interpersonal situations) and a measure of the tendency to ruminate about anger-evoking episodes with the understanding that these would tap vulnerability to insults to the self and an increased likelihood of (displaced) hostile responses, respectively. Congruent with our model, O'Meara et al.'s (2011) dispositional measure of sadistic tendencies was significantly positively correlated with anger rumination and all respect measures, and the relationship between sadism and anger rumination remained even when controlling for the substantial overlap between the former and the Dark Triad.

We also asked our participants whether they had ever pranked someone and, if so, to answer questions about their most memorable prank. Although the 65 % who admitted having pranked someone did not score higher compared to self-identified non-pranksters on any of the individual difference measures (including dispositional sadism), noteworthy relationships emerged between the predictor variables and both motivation and affect among the pranksters. Specifically, at the zero-order level, two of the three respect measures and anger rumination (along with dispositional sadism) predicted participants' willingness to identify their pranking motivation as sadistic (i.e., "I thought it would be fun" and "I had the opportunity," averaged). In a stepwise regression, dispositional sadism and the importance of respect were both significant predictors, and anger rumination was marginally significant; the Dark Triad did not predict.

Moreover, underscoring the importance of fantasy and anticipation in less extreme sadistic acts that has elsewhere been well-documented among sexual serial killers (e.g., Simon 2008), some pranksters reported a cluster of positive emotions (e.g., excitement, amusement, satisfaction, pride) associated with the planning phase of the prank (in addition to inhibitory emotions such as anxiety, regret, doubt, and concern for the target). Consistent with our model, the only significant predictors of this *sadistic affect* in a stepwise regression were anger rumination and the importance of respect; dispositional sadism and the Dark Triad did not explain significant additional amounts of variance. This is a striking finding: Taken out of context, descriptors such as "determination," "happiness," and "playfulness" sound adaptive and life-affirming, and it might be tempting therefore to dismiss the resulting pranks as "all in good fun." But the pranksters most likely to report these positive emotions were those who agreed with statements such as "It is more important to be respected than liked" and "I have daydreams and fantasies of a violent nature." Thus, the apparent displacement of aggression via pranking appears to make oneself feel good, but the costs for victims can be considerable. For example, one participant in Leitch and Burris (2016) wrote about being naked and locked out of a cabin in winter by his peers: He suffered frostbite as well as a cut foot and a repair bill that resulted from his kicking in a window to gain reentry.

We think that our model can also account for vicarious sadism. Specifically, we suspect that third-party exposure to others' physical/psychological harm can restore a sense of self that has been squashed by repeated perceived insults via two

complementary routes. First, the observer can simply identify with and/or take the perspective of the perpetrator: A narrative centered upon an empowered self is thus externally accessed (e.g., in a virtual gaming context, as in Greitemeyer 2015) rather than internally generated, but otherwise seems to differ little from sadistic fantasy. Second, the observer can elevate the self by derogating the victim: For example, an observer might marvel at the imputed stupidity or embarrassing loss of composure of a pranking victim while assuring him/herself that s/he would not be so easily duped or rattled in the same situation. We plan to test these ideas in the near future.

## Making the Choice: Sadistically Motivated Behavior

Throughout this chapter, we have been careful to distinguish sadistic motivation from its behavioral outcomes. The distinction is important, for it seems quite reasonable to assume that some combination of personal and social censure often suppresses infliction of ostensibly gratuitous harm on a living target. The greater the harm, the higher the behavioral threshold is: An intense but brief scare can perhaps be brushed off, for example, but death, disfigurement, and severe psychological trauma cannot. Likewise, the more consensually valued the target, the higher the behavioral threshold is: Rightly or wrongly, the stakes are different when the victim is a bug, a pet, a stranger, or an intimate. Thus, choosing to act on sadistic motivation can perhaps be understood as one outcome of hedonic calculus, however coarsely executed, wherein the salient anticipated rewards for harming a target outweigh the perceived costs.

Techniques for overcoming one's personal censure against acting out sadistic motivation (cf. Bandura et al. 1996) can include: (1) *ignoring or minimizing harm* to the target (potential or actual; sometimes facilitated by a narrowed focus of attention, as in Baumeister 1997); (2) *invoking a justification* in terms of stable target qualities (e.g., "cats are evil") or putative target behaviors, however dubious (e.g., "this is revenge"); (3) *emphasizing the anticipated rewards*, both intrapersonal (e.g., "this is *only* thing that arouses me") and interpersonal (e.g., "this will strengthen the group's bonds"). Two additional techniques can be marshaled to deal with social censure: (4) *collectivizing the sadistic act* (i.e., making it public), so targets can be chided in order to discourage retaliation and/or claims of having been "excessively" harmed, for example; or (5) *concealing the sadistic act* (i.e., minimizing the likelihood of it being or becoming public, possibly via target selection).

Consistent with (1), Buckels et al. (2013) found dispositional sadism to be inversely correlated with perspective-taking and empathic concern. The examples of (2) are illustrative of justifications for animal cruelty documented by Kellert and Felthous (1985). Pertinent to (3) is our (Leitch and Burris 2016) finding that pranksters' retrospective reports of peri- and post-event joy/excitement associated with a specific pranking experience amplified their desire to prank again, whereas incident-specific regret did not inhibit this desire.

Regarding (4), McCreary (2012) found that student fraternity members scored lower on measures of moral judgment and higher on measures of moral disengagement compared to student non-members. Presented with adolescent bullying and fraternity hazing vignettes and asked at what point they would intervene in a pro-victim manner as each situation escalated, fraternity members were slower to intervene in both compared to non-members. Fraternity members were also more likely to recommend dismissal of hazing charges in the fraternity vignette, suggesting a more hazing-supportive attitude than non-members.

Finally, in reference to (5), isolating the victim has long been regarded as a control technique employed by domestic abusers (e.g., Follingstad and Dehart 2000). Having said that, sadistic motivation per se (i.e., pleasure, satisfaction as a desired end) was nowhere mentioned in an up-to-the minute, comprehensive review of research concerning abusers' stated motives for intimate partner violence (IPV; Neal and Edwards 2015). To conclude that sadistic motivation is irrelevant to behavioral outcomes in close relationship contexts would be recklessly premature, however—a point to which we now turn.

## Close Others as "Ideal" Targets of Sadism?

At first glance, the willingness to harm a "loved one" for the pleasure and satisfaction it brings seems so antithetical to trust and safety that we might expect it to manifest only within the most dysfunctional of close relationships. Clinical observation and informal survey responses led Schnarch (1997, 2009) to assert that this experience—which often takes the form of withholding sexual and/or emotional intimacy—is common enough in close relationship contexts to warrant the label "normal marital sadism," however. At the same time, Schnarch was unclear concerning the extent to which such behavioral outcomes are purely gratuitous (i.e., genuinely sadistic) versus retributive—that is, consciously enacted in response to a perceived insult by the intimate target. Earlier we presented anecdotal evidence that impactful pranking can occur between both intimate partners and parents and children, and we also have initial evidence that pranks can be sadistically motivated and a behavioral manifestation of displaced aggression (Burris and Leitch 2016). This raises the question of whether some aspects of close relationships might increase their likelihood of becoming contexts for recurrent, sadistically motivated behaviors. At least two seem particularly important.

First, family/relational units—like exclusive groups centered on voluntary membership (e.g., Greek-letter organizations)—are closed systems, in the sense that there is consensual agreement that at least some aspects of their functioning are private rather than public: This could certainly make it easier for a potential perpetrator to conceal sadistic behavioral outcomes and thereby sidestep social

censure. Pursuant to this point, Schnarch (1997, p. 309, brackets inserted, italics in original) wryly speculated that "psychiatrists favoring this diagnostic category [i.e., the now-defunct sadistic personality disorder] considered marital sadism to be normal: *the diagnosis wasn't applicable if sadistic behavior was directed toward one person, such as your spouse*." Second, to the extent that the target is relationally invested for any combination of emotional and practical reasons, s/he may be less likely to protest or retaliate when on the receiving end of sadistically motivated behaviors—just as organizational loyalty discourages the reporting of hazing (Park et al. 2014).

Under such circumstances, sadistic motivation may be more easily obfuscated, particularly when the resulting behaviors are less extreme. For example, we suspect that burning one's partner with a cigarette would be much less likely to evoke benign attributions than would staging a mock suicide attempt for the partner to discover. Indeed, the import of the latter is much easier to dismiss with statements such as "it was just a joke" and "you're so sensitive." Moreover, unless the harm experienced by the target is sufficiently extreme, we suspect that overt displays of positive rather than negative affect by the perpetrator will constrain the likelihood that his/her intent would be construed as sadistic: It seems easy to imagine attributions of sadism when a perpetrator is laughing hysterically or verbally denigrating a partner while burning him/her; laughing at the target partner's reaction to one's "awesome" prank seems much more ambiguous—perhaps even to perpetrators themselves. Thus, compared to more brazenly abusive acts, subtler behaviors such as pranks may be "ideal" expressions of sadistic motivation because they are easier to mete out, do not require a supporting phalanx of target-directed control behaviors, and are easier to justify to the target, to oneself, and to any third-party observers.

If our assessment is correct, this may help make sense out of the curious absence of sadism (i.e., pleasure, satisfaction as a desired end) as a stated motive for IPV among abusers *or* their victims (Neal and Edwards 2015)—in contrast to sexual sadists (Dietz et al. 1990), animal abusers (Kellert and Felthous 1985), organizational hazers (Waldron et al. 2011), and pranksters (Burris and Leitch 2016). Given that sadistic motivation appears relevant at least some of the time across all of the latter contexts, it seems extremely unlikely to us that it is never relevant to IPV. Instead, we think that the key issue is that the costs of linking extreme behaviors such as IPV to sadistic motivation in a close relationship context are exceptionally high: Attributions such as "control, anger, retaliation, self-defense, to get attention, and an inability to express oneself verbally" (Neal and Edwards 2015, p. 1) are likely to be regarded as more comprehensible and palatable to both perpetrators and victims in (intact) close relationships than the attribution "s/he (or I) thought it was fun." Although this suspected obfuscation dynamic deserves investigation in its own right, it also underscores the value of studying more mundane manifestations of sadistic motivation such as bug-killing and pranking because admissions of sadistic motivation seem much more obtainable in those contexts.

## Sadism: Consequences and Moral Considerations

Two more points seem worth making in closing. First, the negative consequences of sadistically motivated behaviors seem difficult to contain: Gratification of the sadistic motive often seems to involve multiple victims and/or escalation from non-human to human targets (e.g., Buckels et al. 2013; Walters 2014; Wright and Hensley 2003). This is aggravated considerably by sadism's hypothesized mechanism: displaced aggressive impulses, provoked by insults to the self, that often reap powerful affective rewards when expressed. Importantly, if our displacement hypothesis is correct, acting on sadistic motivation leaves the source of that motivation intact, however. Moreover, the salience of positive affect—particularly when anticipating and planning a sadistic act (e.g., Burris and Leitch 2016)—may obfuscate the causal dynamics. Being the target of victimization (sadistic or otherwise) may therefore unleash a wellspring of motivation to perpetrate against an ever-expanding pool of innocents (e.g., Leitch and Burris 2016; Owen et al. 2008). Intimates can be targets and may even be prioritized as such, which can easily set in motion a cycle of revenge (e.g., Schnarch 1997, 2009). Thus, although behaviors that appear to be motivated, at least in part, by sadism are often normalized and rationalized by victims as well as perpetrators (e.g. Allan and Madden 2008), they seem exceedingly difficult to justify from a third-person perspective.

Second, in light of the above, it is perhaps not surprising that the "*wish to inflict harm merely for the pleasure of doing so*" is regarded as one the key features of lay conceptions of "pure evil" (Baumeister 1997, p. 73, italics in original; see also Burris and Rempel 2011). To be clear, none of the hypothesized ends of sadistic motivation (pleasure, satisfaction, arousal, and excitement) is inherently problematic. Rather, moral judgment is an issue of means—that is, when these inherently positive ends are framed as being *contingent upon a living target experiencing harm* and salient alternative means are shunned. Some examples are notorious, as when the Hillside Stranglers tortured a victim to the point of her losing consciousness, resuming only after she had revived (Holmes and Holmes 2010). Other examples, such as this posting from *fmylife.com,* seem insignificantly pedestrian at first glance:

> Today, my parents sat me down and told me that I'm adopted. I took it in stride, and reassured them that as far as I'm concerned, they're my true parents. That annoyed them. Apparently the whole thing was a prank for a YouTube video, which I ruined by not crying or freaking out. FML (29 Aug 2014)

As scandalous as it might sound, we would nevertheless suggest that these two examples are in fact quite motivationally similar. It is therefore probably not an accident that one (now obsolete) meaning of the word *prank* was "an evil deed" (The Chambers Dictionary 1998, p. 1289). Stripped down to its essentials, when "my gain" comes at the price of "your pain"—whether you are a stranger, a partner, a dependent, or a non-human animal—we would heartily agree.

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# Chapter 7
# Hate: Theory and Implications for Intimate Relationships

**John K. Rempel and Siobhan Sutherland**

In the pantheon of social experiences we humans share, few are arguably more iconic than love and hate. Love, as the centerpiece of vast volumes of literature, music, art, and, yes, social science, is as personally relevant and engaging as it is ubiquitous. As the counterpoint to love, hate is equally engaging and impactful—it is often implicated in discussions of political oppression, suicide bombings, gang violence, partner abuse, and "hate" crimes to name but a few—but as a psychological construct, hate has received far less attention, especially in the social sciences. Therefore, in this chapter, we plan to further develop and expand a theory of hate first proposed by Rempel and Burris (2005) by integrating more recent theorizing and research on emotion and motivation. We will then discuss some of the implications that this conceptualization of hate has for intimate relationships.

## Understanding Hate

In all respects, "hate" is a four-letter word, but it remains a confusing and ambiguous term. In Sternberg's (2005) edited volume, hate was discussed in chapters dealing with intergroup hostility (Staub; Sternberg), prejudice (Lerner, Balsano, Banik, & Naudeau; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Pearson), hate crimes (Berkowitz), genocide (Moshman), and interpersonal aggression and violence (Beck & Pretzer; Baumeister & Butz; Opotow). Thus, hate can readily take center stage with some of the most

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heinous, violating, and destructive experiences known to humankind. Yet in the lay lexicon, the word "hate" can also appear in much more mundane, even trivial, contexts—a finicky eater can "hate" broccoli and an irritated employee can "hate" a colleague who speaks with a nasal twang. If we are going to disentangle the breadth of meanings often associated with hate, we not only need to understand the triggers, manifestations, and consequences of hate, we also need to identify a common core. That is, beyond understanding what hate *does*, we need to try and understand what hate *is*.

In a review of the existing literature at the time, Rempel and Burris (2005) noted that despite often radically different starting points, three themes recurred with considerable frequency. Hate was typically regarded as: (1) a relatively stable experiential state, as well as (2) an emotion that has (3) motivational implications. Although each of these themes seems intuitively reasonable, as a set they manifest inconsistencies. Certainly, the idea that hate is something that people *feel* is beyond dispute and numerous theorists and laypersons alike define hate as a variant or subtype of anger (e.g., Ben-Ze'ev 2000; Darwin 1872/1955; Fitness 2000; Fitness and Fletcher 1993; Frijda 1994; Pao 1965; Parens 1992; Shaver et al. 1987; Wiener 1998), whereas others suggest that hate is a composite of anger and fear (Kemper 1978), or anger, disgust, and contempt (Izard 1977). Ben-Ze'ev (2000), on the other hand, included a fear component while distinguishing hate from anger, disgust, contempt, and envy. These varied definitions highlight that although hate is clearly associated with negative emotions, there is little consensus concerning where on the emotional palette it lies. Moreover, claims that hate can be "chronic and stable" (Kernberg 1992, p. 215) or "persistent and enduring" (Litwinski 1945, p. 87) suggest that hate can last long after the emotional intensity of an initiating experience has subsided.

In an effort to resolve these inconsistencies, Rempel and Burris (2005) focused on the one virtually universal point of agreement among theorists: Hate has motivational implications. Specifically, Rempel and Burris (2005) conceptualized hate as a *motive associated with the goal of diminishing or destroying the well-being of the other*. It is important to emphasize that this goal reflects a range of desired outcomes. The desire for the complete destruction of a hated target is likely to only emerge in extreme cases—more often, the goal would be to diminish, not destroy, the hated target. For example, diminished well-being might take the form of having a hated target experience the shame and embarrassment of publicly acknowledging a wrongdoing. The hate goal would be fulfilled when the desired amount of harm has been realized.

Further, Rempel and Burris (2005) suggested that harming the target could be either a means to an end or an end in itself—i.e., either an instrumental or ultimate goal. In all cases, the instrumental goal involves the desire to harm the target, but the ultimate goal for desiring harm may differ. People can want to harm another in order to restore order, elevate the self, obtain pleasure, reassert autonomy, or forestall abandonment. Only in the case of "pure" hate would hurting or destroying be the other the ultimate goal. Based on this premise, they further proposed that the desire to harm associated with each ultimate goal could be produced by different

antecedent emotions and would be experienced as a distinct variant of hate. For example, hate takes a sadistic form when the excitement and anticipation associated with the ultimate goal of obtaining personal pleasure promote the desire to cause another person to suffer.

## Hate Research

In the decade since Rempel and Burris first proposed their theory, research on hate has remained scarce. One relevant study by Zeki and Romaya (2008) examined the neural correlates of hate in 17 individuals who were shown pictures of self-defined neutral and hated targets during an fMRI procedure. Exposure to the hated target revealed a pattern of brain activity that appeared to be unique to hate and distinct from fear, anger, aggression, and danger. The areas activated in response to the hated target were associated with brain regions that are important in producing aggressive behavior and in generating the associated cognitive planning needed to trigger motor activity. Thus, this preliminary neural evidence suggests that the experience of hate is distinct from related negative emotions and is associated with preparation and planning (i.e., a motivational state) geared toward aggressing against (i.e., harming) the hated target.

In their article, Zeki and Romaya (2008) noted as well that two brain regions, the right putamen and the medial insula, were also activated in studies of romantic (Bartels and Zeki 2000) and maternal love (Bartels and Zeki 2004). This observed overlap led Zeki and Romaya to claim: "What is not in doubt is that there is, in the behavioural sense, a strong link between the two sentiments and one can easily transmute into the other (p. e3556)." The notion of a "fine line" between love and hate has popular appeal, but, unfortunately, Zeki and Romaya based their rather strong claim entirely on the shared activation of these brain regions in two groups of unrelated research participants. Thus, there is no evidence that the same participants showed overlapping activity in these regions in response to loved or hated targets and certainly no evidence that the same participants experienced the transmutation of love into hate (or hate into love) toward the *same* target.

In addition, a meta-analysis of neuroimaging studies of love, Ortigue et al. (2010) did not find the right putamen to be consistently implicated in the experience of love. The insula, on the other hand, was found across studies to be active when viewing an image of the loved one. Importantly, the insula is involved in mapping bodily states onto the experience of emotions and conscious goal-directed desires—that is, motives (Damasio 1994). Thus, the brain region should be active during all kinds of emotional and motivational states, including love and hate.

Critically, when considered together with other consistently active brain regions, Ortigue et al. (2010) concluded that love was *not* a basic emotion. Rather, in line with Rempel and Burris (2005), these authors concluded that love is a dopaminergic goal-directed bonding motivation involving the activation of both subcortical reward systems and higher-order cortical brain areas. Thus, the data from

neuroimaging studies indicate that motivational factors feature prominently in both love and hate, but there is no data as yet showing that one can transmute into the other.

In another recent study, Aumer et al. (2015) had 98 participants complete a survey about people that they love and hate. Measures included Sternberg's Triangular Hate Scale (2008) consisting of Negation of Intimacy/Disgust, Passion/Anger and Devaluation subscales and a Motivations Questionnaire that assessed positive, neutral, and negative outcomes that participants could imagine the hated target experiencing. Raw correlations showed strong associations between negative motivations and all three hate subscales (Disgust, $r = 0.52$; Anger = 0.43; Devaluation, $r = 0.54$). When all three hate subscales were entered simultaneously into a stepwise regression, the Disgust subscale, which contains elements of repulsion and an expressed lack of concern for the target's welfare, and the Devaluation subscale, which predominantly measures the need to fight against people like the hated target, continued to predict unique variance in negative motivations. However, the Anger subscale, which mainly assesses the extent to which the target is perceived as a source of threat, did not independently predict negative motivations. Thus, the sizeable correlations between negative motivations and all hate subscales offer further support for a motivational framing of hate. Moreover, the tendency to imagine negative outcomes for a self-selected hated target was most strongly associated with the desire to disparage and combat the actions of the target—but not with the sense of fear or threat posed by the target. This suggests that hate is most strongly associated with the motivational trajectory to act against, rather than to retreat from, a devalued target.

In some of our own research, we have collected data showing that lay conceptions of hate intuitively resonate with a motivational conceptualization. For example, in one study (Fathi et al. 2010), we used a prototype approach to examine how laypeople construe hate. We first collected open-ended definitions of hate from over 200 participants. These definitions were then analyzed for common patterns and elements, resulting in a list of 52 hate-related statements. A second group of 100 participants rated the centrality of each statement to the concept of hate. Results showed that the most highly rated features involved two main components. First, central features of hate involved goals of harm, suffering, and destruction for the hated target, with more extreme negative outcomes such as violence, abuse, and death being seen as more central. Second, the most central features involved wishes or desires for the hated target to incur these negative outcomes. Contrary to the view of hate as an emotion, even intense emotions such as detesting, loathing, and despising were further down the list and less intense emotions such as anger, disgust, and fear were seen as even less prototypical and appeared nearer to the bottom of the list. Lastly, questions having to do with aversion, fear, or exclusion also appeared closer to the middle or bottom of the list. Interestingly, the item "wanting to *exclude* the target from your life" was near the midpoint of the scale (3.91), whereas the more menacing "wanting to *eliminate* the target from your life" was rated as more central to hate (4.46).

In another study (Burris and Rempel 2007), we experimentally tested the idea that, if hate reflects the motivational goal of harming another, then blocking this goal should increase the desire to harm. Sixty-two participants were led to believe that a convicted sex offender was planning to move near the university after his release from prison. Presented as veridical and current, the case described a repeat sex offender with a predilection for sexually abusing young teens of both sexes. Participants were subsequently asked to write a letter expressing their "true thoughts, feelings, and wishes regarding the offender." They were randomly assigned to direct their letter toward either the offender himself or toward the investigators conducting the study. When finished, participants clicked "send," at which point we manipulated the capacity for the letter to harm the target by randomly informing some participants that, for logistical reasons, their letter would not be sent to their designated target. Participants subsequently completed a 10-item measure that directly assessed their desire to harm the offender. Results indicated that participants had a significantly stronger desire to harm the convicted sex offender when their letter was directed toward him and not sent than when the letter was in fact sent or was directed to the researchers.

In sum, although research on hate is limited and clearly more needs to be done, neurological, survey, prototype, and experimental data all point in support of a motivational conceptualization of hate in which the core goal is the desire to harm a target.

## Theories of Emotion and Motivation

In the past decade, there have also been some significant advances in theories of emotion and motivation that can further help refine and enhance conceptual thinking on the nature of hate. Theorizing on the topic of emotion and motivation continues to evolve, and many unanswered questions remain, but recent theories also share numerous important points of agreement. First, there is broad agreement that motives and emotions represent two interactive systems that evolved because they provide survival and reproductive advantages. The emotion system is commonly regarded as a network of survival circuits (e.g., LeDoux 2014) designed to provide people with a rapid, flexible response system that can address common evolutionary issues and problems that humans have faced throughout history.

Second, there is general agreement that the situations or problems that the emotional and motivational systems are designed to address are organized along two fundamental superordinate motivational goals (Elliot et al. 2013). Specifically, from a single-celled ameba onward, organisms have developed systems designed to acquire that which promotes their well-being and avoid or eliminate that which might threaten or cause harm—as noted by Burris and Rempel (2004), all need to "eat, retreat, and excrete." Accordingly, the approach or appetitive system is focused on opportunities and acquisition, and the avoidance or defense system is focused on crises or threats.

Third, many emotion theories include a cognitive appraisal component (e.g., Moors et al. 2013). It is generally accepted that an effective alert system must include the capacity to identify the nature and relevance of a stimulus in terms of its opportunities or threats (e.g., Tracy 2014). A number of theorists (e.g., Frijda 2013; Levenson 2014) have suggested the human brain is constantly taking in information, identifying objects and events, and linking them to existing memories in order to form predictions about what will happen next. When these expectations are challenged or violated with an unanticipated or novel stimulus, the survival circuits are rapidly activated, triggering recursive multi-level processing across various levels of brain functioning. Virtually, all theorists agree that such appraisal processes are oriented toward assessing the personal relevance of a stimulus for achieving appetitive or defensive goals.

Encountering a novel, self-relevant stimulus quickly triggers brain activity that is focused on identifying and refining the relevance of the stimulus event. Scherer (2013), for example, has proposed four levels of processing: (a) an extremely fast initial orienting response that involves low-level *sensorimotor* pattern matching, some of which may be genetically embedded (e.g., Rolls 2013), (b) a *schematic* level involving a largely automatic, preconscious activation of memory traces from social learning, (c) an *association* level in which various cortical areas may be accessed in both an unconscious or a conscious fashion, and (d) a *conceptual* level involving prefrontal cortical areas in which relevant memories and meaning systems are consciously processed (e.g., relevant memories are accessed to check for value consistency, goal conduciveness, and norm compatibility).

Neuroimaging studies have provided some insight as to how this emotional process may unfold (Borsch and Sander 2013). Fairly primitive brain circuits, predominantly the amygdala and hippocampus, are initially activated in order to detect stimulus novelty and perform a basic assessment of personal relevance. However, once the initial change in the environment has been detected, information processing does not progress linearly to more complex levels of analysis. Rather, it appears that large neural networks are simultaneously activated at various levels in parallel, prompting multiple sweeps of activity in a recursive system. Thus, various sources of information regarding goal congruence, norm compatibility, values compatibility, etc., are processed at multiple levels. The additional information regarding the nature and importance of the goal that has been affected by the appraisal-generating event can feed back and modulate the emotional response. Much of this neural activity may occur before the emotional experience is consciously recognized.

Fourth, in addition to the appraisal process, there is also widespread agreement that emotions prompt physiological changes that prepare the organism for action. Autonomic nervous system and hormonal, neuroendocrine, respiratory, and gastrointestinal changes all focus on preparing the organism to take action (e.g., Tracy 2014), and they begin prior to any conscious awareness. However, once they are recognized, these physiological preparations also contribute information that is processed and included in how an individual interprets, plans, and responds to the novel stimulus. Work by Damasio (1994) has identified the insula as the portion of

the brain that integrates various sources of somatic information about the state of the body and relays basic emotional and motivational patterns of visceral responding to higher-order cognitive processes where it coalesces into a conscious representation of a feeling—a feeling that may or may not have a personally or culturally identified label.

Finally, emotions have a social/communicative function: Facial expressions, tone of voice, posture, etc., all reveal how the organism is responding to others or toward some aspect of the environment. This communication also has survival value. For example, an anger response can signal to foes that they will be challenged and it can also alert members of the in-group to the presence of danger (e.g., Rolls 2013).

## The Intersection of Emotion and Motivation

Emotions and motives are typically seen as representing two distinct, albeit interconnected, systems. Indeed, fundamental appetitive and defensive motives are essential, not only for understanding the emotional process, but for making sense of why emotions exist in the first place. Nonetheless, motives are generally regarded as more deliberate (although some of that "deliberation" may still be unconscious), whereas emotions tend to be more impulsive (e.g., Tomkins 1970; Roseman 2008, 2013). More specifically, to the extent that emotions act as rapid alert systems to unexpected changes, there may not always be time for the level of processing needed for a more deliberate response. Thus, in order for the emotional system to allow for flexible responses to the unique aspects of the situation, emotions are designed to rapidly narrow the range of response options that the organism has to choose from before responding, especially in cases where an immediate reaction is required. If the initial appraisal of the novel stimulus calls for immediate action, there will be an impulsive, reflexive response based on simple feature or pattern matching with overlearned memory traces, classically conditioned responses, or even genetically wired reactions. Logically, these options would be constrained to a small number of key reflexive responses (e.g., jumping out of the way of an oncoming object).

If the initial appraisal allows time for further cognitive processing, the range of potential behavioral responses can begin to account for more subtle details, contextual factors, and personal or social implications of the event (e.g., deciding whether it is better to run or hide from a threat). Responses will still occur rapidly, but there is now a somewhat wider range of options. Most theorists agree that emotional processes have inherent motivational implications in that they promote and intensify basic action tendencies toward or away from the emotion-generating stimulus (e.g., Panksepp 2013). By simply decoding a stimulus event as personally relevant to either an appetitive or a defensive goal, a basic motivational trajectory is already established (Rolls 2013). Roseman (2008) has suggested that these action tendencies are integral to the emotional experience and he has labeled them as

"emotivational" components of the emotion system. Theorists continue to disagree about the extent to which there are distinct patterns of somatovisceral information that form unique prototypic emotional experiences (e.g., Levenson 2014; Norman et al. 2013) or whether the primitive components of the survival circuits interact to form a constructed unified conscious field that is then experienced and possibly labeled (Barrett 2013). Nonetheless, the efficiency of an emotivational response is likely to be augmented by the ability to rapidly access a limited number or prototypical emotional patterns (e.g., fear, joy, disgust). Such distinct, well-learned emotional categories would assist in quickly filtering out inappropriate responses from a wider array of options.

If the appraisal allows time for conscious processing and planning, a more deliberate motivational system is then likely to be invoked. More available time will typically allow for the consideration of a wider range of response options. The conscious awareness of which goals have been affected by an unexpected event, and an assessment of the implications that these changes have for goal achievement, can assist in the deliberate selection and planning of responses from a larger number of goal-directed behavioral possibilities. Since goals are hierarchically organized (such that proximal goals may need to be achieved in order to fulfill more distal or ultimate goals), multiple goals may be simultaneously activated and considered.

In summary, unexpected or novel events trigger an immediate appraisal of a situation in terms of self-relevant implications, thus cueing an initial motivational stance (appetite vs. defense). If the initial appraisal indicates that there is little time to react, individuals will rely on prototypical emotional states to generate a quick response. However, with more processing time, the initial motivational stance that is integral to the emotion itself (i.e., the emotivational component of the emotion) will influence which of a larger but still limited number of response options will be selected. With time available for a conscious interpretation and consideration of the unexpected event, the motivational processes can access and integrate information available in the environment and in memory to further refine the behavioral response options.

When refining the appraisal of a situation, people will take into account the personal importance of the situation, which is generally dictated by the significance of the appetitive or defense goals that are invoked. Thus, in a recursive fashion, when the magnitude of the self-relevance of an interrupted goal is assessed, the resulting consciously derived implications can amplify or reduce the sense of opportunity or crisis and feed this information back to the emotional system as a new change in anticipated outcomes. That is, emotions can trigger and modify motivational goals and the subsequent appraisal of motivational goals can further generate or modify emotional responses. Thus, even if the emotional and motivational systems are conceptually and operationally distinct, given their integrated and interactive relationship, there is not likely to be a simple marker for distinguishing when one or the other is operating.

## Implications for a Theory of Hate

If hate is best understood as a motivational process driven by the goal of harming another, how might current theories of emotion and motivation shape our understanding of hate and what are the implications of such a conceptualization for the experience, expression, and acknowledgment of the hate motive?

**Motivational desire**. First, it is important to emphasize that *desire* for harm is the key psychological mechanism underlying the hate process. The focus on desire rather than action is critical. The presence or absence of harmful behavior directed toward the other is by no means a foolproof test for the presence of hate—harmful consequences, especially unanticipated ones, are not always commensurate with intent. Likewise, the absence of harmful consequences in no way ensures that the desire for harm is similarly absent, especially given that social, legal, and moral factors often encourage people to resist acting on their negative or harmful behavioral desires.

Consistent with the idea that the desire for harm is central to people's construal of hate, we (Rempel 2012) conducted a study in which 127 introductory psychology students at the University of Botswana were presented with a series of brief vignettes in which the main character displayed a desire for harm to come to another individual or group. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: (1) Harm was undesirable but unavoidable, (2) harm was necessary and acceptable for achieving a superordinate goal, and (3) harm was the preferred means of achieving the superordinate goal even though less harmful options were available. When the desire to harm was present, either as a preferred outcome or simply as a necessary and acceptable requirement for achieving the superordinate goal, hate judgments were comparable and significantly higher than when the protagonist saw the harm as necessary but *not* desired. Thus, for increased attributions of hate to occur, the desire for harm simply needs to be present—it need not be the ultimate goal, and it does not need to be acted on.

**Motives as conscious and deliberate**. The extent to which motives are more likely than emotions to be conscious and deliberate also has implications for understanding hate. In a study where we compared attributions of hate for impulsive and deliberate acts (Rempel et al. 2010), participants read about a university student who either impulsively or deliberately physically intimidated a striking staff member who he heard derogating students in a public speech to picketing workers. The attacker's actions were seen to be more deliberate in the "planned" than in the "impulsive" condition, but in both conditions, hate ratings were significantly positively correlated with judgments that the student acted intentionally. Thus, the student's level of hatred was judged to be greater when his actions were seen as intentional (i.e., consciously desired), even if they took place on the spur of the moment.

The fact that participant did not regard an impulsive act as devoid of intentionality is instructive. We would argue that impulsive acts can be episodic manifestations of the hate motive. Of course, aggressive acts are not necessarily

motivated by the desire to harm. For example, screaming at or slapping a child may be motivated by a desire to alert the child to impending danger. Yet if the temporary subordination of the child's well-being has motivated such an act, then the mechanism underlying the hate process is operational regardless of how fleeting the desire or how much it is later regretted. We suspect that in these brief spontaneous acts, the desire to harm may be emotivational (i.e., the more impulsive motivational component integrated into an emotional experience) and reflect a rapid response to goal attainment. Thus, if the desire to harm is present, then the same underlying mechanism is operating whether the hate experience is short and highly emotionally charged (e.g., the behavioral intention to aggress) or whether it is more deliberate and consciously planned (e.g., an act of revenge as "a dish best served cold").

Having emphasized how hate can take on an episodic transience comparable to an emotional experience, it equally important to highlight that hate can also endure long after the emotional intensity of the initiating events has subsided, even lasting a lifetime. As a motive, hate should be modified by goal attainment such that actually harming the target to a degree commensurate with the desired goal should decrease the intensity of the hate motive. Data from two related studies (Rempel and Burris 2015) allowed us to test the idea that hate subsides when the desire for a target to be harmed is realized. In the first study, 134 participants wrote about a hate experience, and in the second study, 241 participants were presented with a description of a hate experience that did not include the word "hate" and were asked to write about a personal experience that matched the provided description. Participants were then asked to list what they thought about saying/doing, what they actually said/did, and the extent to which the experience had been resolved.

We tallied the number of hate-related thoughts and actions in each participant's experience and used these to predict the extent to which the participant considered the experience resolved. Neither the number of hate-related thoughts nor the number of hate-related behaviors listed by participants significantly predicted resolution at the zero-order level. However, in both studies, after controlling for the number of harmful behaviors listed, the partial correlation between the number of hateful thoughts listed and ratings that the incident was resolved was negative. Conversely, the partial correlations between the number of hateful behaviors and ratings that the incident was resolved were positive after controlling for the number of hateful thoughts listed. Thus, even though these results involve the use of a coarse tally that does not take into account the severity or extremity of any single thought or behavior, they show that when harmful actions exceed hateful thoughts, the desire to harm is more likely to be regarded as resolved, whereas when people have not acted on their desire to harm, the lack of resolution is associated with a greater likelihood that hateful thoughts will persist.

These results help to explain why hate is often characterized as stable rather than transient (e.g., Kernberg 1992; Litwinski 1945) and in lay contexts viewed as a subset of anger that has been "bottled up inside" (Royzman et al. 2005): The goal of diminishing another's well-being is frequently thwarted by (often severe) social or

moral constraints, thereby keeping the hate motive unfulfilled. Of course, hate that has been constrained will not necessarily always be salient. We suspect that the energy associated with a yet-to-be-discharged hate motive would subside should the goal move out of awareness. Yet as long as the goal remains unrealized and has not been discharged in some other fashion, it could resurface and once again become salient, especially when accompanied by a viable opportunity to accomplish the desired outcome. Moreover, as our research on blocked goals attests, the desire for harm may actually intensify in some contexts when the goal to harm a target is blocked or otherwise unattainable.

**Types of hate**. In their theory of love and hate, Rempel and Burris (2005) argued that intended harm directed toward the other can function either as an end in itself or as a means to some other end—or, in formal motivational language, as an ultimate or an instrumental goal. Based on this conceptual distinction, they proposed the existence of subtypes of hate that are distinguishable based on their respective ultimate goal. At times, harming the other may be intended for its own sake. This "pure" form of hate (which is labeled Nihilism) parallels Batson's (1991) framing of altruistic motivation, wherein the goal of benefiting the other is presumed to be an end in itself. However, for most hate subtypes, the proximal hate-related goal of diminishing the other's well-being acts in service of an ultimate goal such as personal pleasure (Sadism), independence (Mutiny), forestalling abandonment by the other (Tethering), elevating the self by bringing or keeping the other down (Denigration), or restoring order and justice (Redress). In each instance, diminishing the other's well-being can be construed as a means to some other end. Although this list of potential ultimate goals is not necessarily exhaustive, it does provide a reasonably comprehensive catalogue of primary appetitive and defense needs—themes of security, self-efficacy, pleasure, self-worth, and relationship maintenance are all captured in the proposed hate types.

In their theory, Rempel and Burris also suggested that different forms of hate might be elicited by different antecedent experiences. In particular, they identified a number of negative emotions as primary candidates for eliciting desires for specific ultimate goals and, by extension, fueling the motivational engine of hate. Thus, excitement and thrill seeking could elicit and magnify the desire for pleasure at seeing another mocked or humiliated (Sadism), feelings of inferiority or jealousy could elicit the desire to bring down or impair the progress of a successful colleague (Denigration), and so forth. In all cases, the emotional antecedents can energize and amplify the desire for goal attainment. As a rapid alert system, emotions are designed, not only to detect personally relevant opportunities and crises in the environment, but also to prepare the organism to take action in achieving the identified goal. This physiological preparation is likely to take place even when emotions occur in the context of a planned event. Thus, even when goal attainment is consciously orchestrated, the attendant emotions can amplify the likelihood of transitioning from desire to action.

**Hate as a label**. Results described in numerous studies highlight how "hate" is both a psychological process and a label with its own psychological implications. In a study (Burris and Rempel 2006) where people were asked to give an open-ended

description of a time when they felt hatred for someone, fully half claimed that they have never felt hate for another person. Cleary, hate is not something that people will readily use to describe their experiences. When hate is framed as the motive to harm another, we can begin to understand why it might have such negative, even toxic, connotations. To truly hate someone not only means evaluating them negatively and feeling negative emotions toward them, but it implies an action tendency focused on seeing them suffer harm. When the hate label is genuinely invoked, even in the heat of the moment, the impact of such a proclamation has the potential to resonate throughout the relationship and reshape how each partner approaches their interactions going forward. If you are hated, you are a potential victim, and if you hate, you are a potential perpetrator.

We also suspect that the hate label may not be applied, even when the hate mechanism is active, because most forms of hate involve multiple goals. The instrumental goal to harm will often act in service of an ostensibly more benign ultimate goal. For example, in order to create some interpersonal distance and fulfill a need for reduced stress, an adult caregiver may verbally demean and berate their frail elderly parent. Even if the desire to harm was in fact fully present as part of the process for achieving independence (e.g., there may have been a desire to punish the parent for being overly needy), the ultimate goal more easily justifies the behavior to self and others without needing to acknowledge the desire for the parent to be hurt. Indeed, to the extent that the need for time away is more salient, the desire to harm may barely register—it can be more benevolently interpreted as an unfortunate but necessary by-product of achieving the nobler ultimate goal. Although this justification may be not be fully compelling if other non-harmful alternatives would have achieved the same goal, it nonetheless provides at least a partial justification for minimizing the presence of a hate-based impulse.

In addition, if the desire to harm another has not resulted in a harm-inducing action, it is unlikely that people would define the experience as hate. For example, a parent may consciously "overrule" the desire to grab and shake their screaming toddler. We expect that this act of self-regulation would take precedence in how the incident is interpreted. In some cases, these acts of personal restraint do in fact reflect a higher-order goal of caring for the child, in which case the subordinated desire to harm would not be seen as warranting a hate label. However, in other cases, the restraint may have been externally induced (e.g., the child was having a temper tantrum in a public space) and the desire to harm remains as a blocked goal. In this instance, the hate label may be more applicable, even if it is still unlikely to be applied.

For all of these reasons, we suspect that genuine (rather than casual) declarations of hate are a "fine china" event—only brought out for special occasions—and are reserved for times when the motivational drive reaches a self-defined threshold of intensity. Just as the term "starving" is reserved for extreme forms of the hunger motive and the term "craving" is earmarked for extreme forms of an acquisition motive, so too the term "hate" is reserved for extreme forms of the desire to harm. This is not to say that this intensity is irrelevant—as the desire for a goal grows stronger, the felt needs may dominate a person's thoughts and become the

overriding focus of their behavior. Nonetheless, even though the intensity may vary, the fundamental goal, and hence the underlying mechanism, remains the same.

## The Experience and Expression of Hate in Intimate Relationships

It is impossible to imagine an intimate relationship in which no negative emotions occur—people will inevitably disappoint, annoy, and hurt one another over the course of a long-term relationship. Consequently, it is also virtually impossible to imagine intimate relationships that do not include the negative emotions that can potentially fuel feelings of hate. But when do these negative emotions spark the hate motive and generate the desire for a partner to be harmed and what are the consequences when this happens? Data that can address these questions are very limited, so much of the following must, by necessity, be speculative.

At the outset, it is important to reiterate that the focus of any analysis must be on the desire for, rather than the expression of, harm. In any close relationship, people will in one way or another "always hurt the one they love," but the harm may not always be intended, thereby not activating the hate process. At the same time, some harm-inducing behavior will indeed be intentional, and even if people resist acting on their harmful intentions, the motive to harm may still be present. What implications might this have for the partner who wants to harm, the partner who is targeted, and the relationship that they share?

Given our theory of hate, we have identified six aspects of the hate process in intimate relationships that can vary: The desire to harm can be fleeting or prolonged, infrequent or recurring, modest or intense, suppressed or expressed, a means to some other end or an end in itself, and labeled or not labeled as hate. How these various components interact can significantly influence the impact that the hate process can have on a relationship.

**Emotivational experiences of hate**. When the hate motive is activated in a close relationship, we expect that it is often likely to emerge when a disruption of expected outcomes has engaged the emotional system (e.g., during times of conflict). For example, the motive to harm may be embedded in self-protective (e.g., "I want you to know how your criticism is an ignorant and illogical misrepresent of the facts.") or retaliatory (e.g., "I want you to feel what I'm feeling.") responses to perceived threat. In this context, there is a good chance that the desire to harm will be impulsive and emotivational.

To the extent that the hate experience is emotivational, it may not have long-lasting negative consequences for the partners or their relationship, even though the motivational aspect of the emotion, and hence the hate mechanism, will have been activated. First, as an emotive, the desire to harm is likely to dissipate as the emotion subsides and may fade entirely if the conflict is resolved. Second, given

the comparatively impulsive, episodic nature of an emotive and the probable salience of more benign ultimate goals, the desire to harm is unlikely to be labeled by either party as hate, thus avoiding the ensuing stigmas and attributions associated with the "h-word."

A short-lived hate experience may, under some circumstances, even provide benefits to the relationship. As noted earlier, emotions and, by extension, emotives have a communicative function. Thus, an expression of hate can communicate to the partner, and perhaps the self, how important an issue truly is. Second, those expressing hate may also learn the extent to which they are capable of hurting their partner and this knowledge could prompt increased self-reflection or greater efforts at self-regulation. Third, the reaction of the partner who has been harmed can convey both the impact that this has had on them and how they may react to similar experiences in the future. Thus, the communicative aspect of expressions of hate may provide opportunities for both partners to learn potentially important lessons about themselves and each other. Finally, to the extent that an expression of hate engenders guilt, it may also promote relationship benefits by prompting corrective measures such increased displays of caring, affection, and commitment. If these corrective measures result in genuine long-term change, the temporary harm will have indirectly promoted long-term relationship benefits.

However, in extolling the potential benefits of expressing the hate motive, it would be disingenuous to not also highlight the risks. Even brief messages of hate, however short-lived, can still produce serious negative consequences. The extent of the damage likely depends on the frequency and intensity of these brief emotivational episodes—an intense expression of even a single, short-lived desire to hurt a partner has the potential to cause significant physical or emotional injury and could dramatically alter the course of a relationship.

Similarly brief, lower intensity expressions of hate may have negative relationship consequences if they are frequent or recurring. Although it is possible for an injured partner to reinterpret, minimize, or dismiss any single act of harm, such charitable attributions may begin to wear thin if these incidents continue to occur without any accompanying attempts by the perpetrating partner to change the frequency or reduce the harm. Over time the targeted partner will likely begin to entertain more negative attributional options (e.g., "Maybe my partner really doesn't value me as much as I thought."). With a bleaker working hypothesis, an individual would be more open to interpreting new instances of harm as signs of a partner's genuine animosity and the earlier episodes that had previously been downplayed could now be marshaled in support of this uncharitable hypothesis. As the accumulating evidence builds, a close relationship characterized by ongoing hostile interactions risks spiraling into a cycle of negativity for both partners. Given that feelings of hostility activate aggressive cognitions and action tendencies (Topalli and O'Neal 2003), the accumulation of many hostile interactions over time is likely to increase the viability of the attribution, "My partner hates me." Therefore, even without any dramatic displays of harm, relationships may suffer "death by a thousand small intentional acts of harm."

**Persistent hate in close relationships**. Although minor irritating behaviors from a romantic partner may result in fleeting emotivational hate, certain extreme

behaviors may elicit a more longstanding desire to harm one's partner. There are many ways to cause harm in close relationships, and many do not involve physical aggression. For example, one person may hurt another through withdrawing emotional support/affection, denying resources, verbal Denigration, avoidance, threats, humiliation, or shaming (to name a few). Perceived transgressions deemed "unforgivable," such as cheating or lying, are even more likely to result in hate for the transgressor (Fitness and Fletcher 1993).

Hate may also develop in a relationship when one partner feels that the other is blocking them from an important life goal. This is especially likely in committed romantic relationships, wherein one partner's goals depend upon the cooperation and support of the other. For example, if one partner wishes to return to school, change careers, or have children, interference with such major life aspirations could be a catalyst for hate. Importantly, the more significant the goal is to the person, the stronger the sense of hate may become when it is blocked. Unless the couple compromises or goals are redirected, one partner's hate could recur and persist for the duration of the relationship. A number of the hate types identified by Rempel and Burris (2005) could develop into relational patterns of persistent hate.

**Redress**. When wronged, retaliation is a natural response. In Redress, the proximal goal of harming the other is to realize an ultimate goal of attempting to restore order and justice to the relationship. Individuals in close relationships share countless daily interpersonal interactions. For instance, romantic partners may seek emotional support from one another or work together to accomplish tasks throughout day. Interpersonal theory states that one person's behavior during an interaction impacts how the other person will respond and that specific behaviors from one person tend to be reciprocated by the other (Sadler and Woody 2003). Thus, displays of hostility tend to pull for reciprocated hostility. For example, research on relationship infidelity in five different cultures (Nowak et al. 2014) indicates that spousal infidelity was one of the most consistent predictors of personal infidelity, suggesting that in at least some cases, the infidelity was retaliatory (i.e., "revenge cheating"). There is little relational benefit that we can see coming from such reciprocal cycles of mutual harm.

However, such open retaliation may not always be possible or prudent. Yet even if a victimized partner resists retaliating after experiencing an act of betrayal, they may ruminate on their desire to harm the partner long after the situation has passed, and research shows that ruminating about revenge increases aggressive tendencies (Bushman 2002). Thus, suppressed experiences of hate may actually become more chronically accessible, with the risk that people would be primed to interpret a partner's actions as hostile. Even minor triggers could prompt disproportionately intense reactions of hate, such as when festering hate for the partner's past transgressions becomes the "trump card" that gets played during conflict, for example.

People may also use more indirect passive-aggressive strategies to convey hate in strategic, safer ways. Insults, criticism, or sarcasm expressed on a regular basis can undermine the quality of the relationship, becoming yet another way in which a relationship can suffer from "a thousand small hurts." Finally, perhaps one of the most insidious ways in which hate can be passively aggressively expressed is

through indifference—simply doing nothing to actively benefit the partner. Rather than attacking the partner directly, the partner can be hurt with reduced displays of affection, lack of assistance or support, a failure to include the partner, or, in more extreme forms, ostracism (Williams and Nida 2011).

**Mutiny**. In the type of hate Rempel and Burris (2005) labeled Mutiny, the desire to harm a close other emerges as a response to feeling trapped. In a context of enforced dependence, a caregiving or dependent partner may experience the urge to harm the other as an act of rebellion against the inflexibility of the role that they feel forced to fulfill (cf. Beck 2002). The ultimate goal would be to re-establish autonomy or foster an identity that is distinct from the other. For example, within the context of an intimate relationship, many people find themselves caring for an ailing spouse. A full analysis of the complex caregiver–care recipient relationship is beyond the scope of this paper, but with respect to the presence of hate, some points are worth noting.

First, both recipient and caregiver dependency has been associated with increased interpersonal violence (Pillemer et al. 2016), with such violence being most common in spousal relationships (Pillemer and Suitor 1992). Pillemer and Suitor (1992) also noted that caregivers were more likely to aggress violently against a care recipient when the recipient was violent. Thus, mutual, reciprocal expressions of Mutiny may not be uncommon.

Second, the most common expression of Mutiny is likely to take the form of emotional or psychological maltreatment, especially when the partners have limited alternate sources of social support (Pillemer et al. 2016). As such, we would expect acts of Mutiny to be predominantly impulsive, emotivational reactions to stress, fatigue, and limited coping resources. However, to the extent that these precipitating factors are chronic or recurring, the desire to harm runs the risk of developing into a pattern of cumulatively increasing feelings of hate. In a study of family members caring for patients with a dementing illness, caregiver's resentment and depression were associated with the caregiver's belief that the patient was attempting to control things or get their own way (Martin-Cook et al. 2003).

Finally, even though many of expressions of Mutiny in intimate relationships may not be labeled as hate by caregivers or recipients, a sizeable portion of the desires to lash out may be experienced as intentional. The anger felt by depressed and resentful caregivers was found to be associated with an increased risk of engaging in potentially harmful behavior toward the care recipient (MacNeil et al. 2009). Even unintentional acts of Mutiny are likely to be followed by feelings of guilt and remorse, but when caregivers or recipients experience their desires as intentional or make deliberate plans to undermine the emotional, financial, or physical well-being of a loved one, the possibility of added emotional strain to an already overwhelming experience may serve to further destabilize a precariously stressful situation—all the more so if the hate label is invoked.

**Tethering**. The psychological counterpoint to Mutiny is Tethering. Tethering refers to an individual's desire to prevent an intimate partner from abandoning or betraying them by keeping the partner close and dependent. This form of partner control often involves limiting contact with family and friends, insisting on

knowing where the partner is at all times, or changing residences when there is no need to do so, all in order to physically, emotionally, economically, or socially disable the partner's capacity to act independently. It is a type of intimate partner violence termed "social abuse".

The tremendous irony is that this intense desire to emotionally harm an intimate partner in order to maintain control over the relationship can easily be justified as an expression of love. Wanting to be with the partner at all times can be justified as a desire for companionship, showing a deep concern about where the partner is and who the partner is with can be defended as an expression of caring for the partner's safety and well-being, and showing jealousy can be justified as the desire for an exclusive and special relationship. Yet in all cases, these behaviors subjugate the well-being of the victimized partner—they are the form of hate that is most easily justified as love.

Tethering also need not end if the relationship ends—stalking is a related form of abuse in which the controlling partner continues to try and regain a relationship with the former partner. Carney and Barner (2012) have noted a strong link between stalking and other forms of intimate partner violence: 81 % of female stalking victims were physically assaulted, and 31 % were sexually assaulted by a current or former partner.

Tethering, both in terms of emotional abuse and stalking, may be a particularly insidious form of intimate partner violence because the desire for harm may not be readily apparent. Yet the consequences of hate masquerading as love can be dramatic: Mechanic et al. (2008) found that psychological abuse and stalking contributed uniquely to the prediction of PTSD and depression symptoms in victims, over and above the effects of physical violence, injuries, and sexual abuse.

## The Consequences of Hating and Being Hated

Most people would agree that hate is an aversive experience. Very few desire to hate intimate partners and many who do are likely to suppress or deny it. On the other hand, being the target of someone's hate can be even more abhorrent because the target is under constant threat of being subjected to mental, emotional, or even physical harm. What exactly are the consequences of being the perpetrator versus the target of hate? In what follows, we discuss some of the physical, psychological, and relationship outcomes that may be associated with hate in an intimate relationship.

Though it seems obvious how being the target of hate would be detrimental to one's well-being, the negative effects of being a hater are not so obvious. As unlikely as it seems, however, feeling hate may be no less detrimental for one's health than being on the receiving end of hate. The intense emotions that fuel the experience of hate signal to the body that the person needs to take action. This readiness for action results in activation of the autonomic nervous system (ANS; the "fight or flight" system), which increases adrenaline, blood pressure, heart rate, and

respiratory rate. This system is essential for survival in dangerous situations, but when activated on a regular basis, it can cause severe health problems. Research shows that people who exhibit aggressive and hostile tendencies experience increased ANS activation (Demaree and Harrison 1997) and tend to suffer serious, sometimes fatal, cardiac problems including hypertension (Diamond 1982) and coronary artery disease (Hawkins et al. 2011). Thus, ironically, those who wish to harm others may inadvertently end up harming themselves.

Of course, being the target of someone's hate can also significantly damage a partner's sense of relationship satisfaction and personal wellness. Aumer et al. (2016) surveyed 228 people in the USA and 46 in Norway. Participants were asked to rate their intimacy, love, and satisfaction in two relationships—one with someone who they love and have never hated and one with someone who is loved and was at one time hated. Results indicated that even when the hate incident was resolved, participant characterized relationships involving a hate experience as having comparatively higher levels of hate and lower levels of intimacy, satisfaction, and love. Thus, at least for those incidents that people are willing to label as hate, there are significant long-term relationship consequences.

Additionally, Yoon and Lawrence (2013) found that, within marital relationships, gender differences exist with regard to the type of hate that most negatively impact spouses. Specifically, husbands whose wives display hate through Tethering (i.e., controlling and socially isolating their partner) were significantly less satisfied with their relationships than other husbands. In contrast, Denigration (i.e., belittling or insulting) was most strongly tied to wives' dissatisfaction with their marital relationship. It is possible that other individual differences also predict the type of hate that most negatively affects any one individual.

Although abuse has serious negative implications for nearly all victims, research shows that sociodemographic variables play a unique role in predicting the severity of consequences that abuse has on women (Haj-Yahia 1999). One study found that Palestinian women who experienced emotional, physical, sexual, and/or economic spousal abuse suffered from increased psychological distress, fear, and anger compared to those who had not suffered abuse. Thus, victims of hate in the context of close relationships experience a range of negative outcomes including elevated distress, decreased relationship satisfaction, and negative emotionality, and these difficulties may be exacerbated by personal/sociodemographic factors.

## Reducing Hate

Thus far, we have drawn the rather grim picture of hate as the powerful and potentially long-lasting desire to harm another person. If hate persists when ignored or suppressed, but leads to negative consequences when acted upon, what are people to do when experiencing hate for another? In their original paper, Rempel and Burris (2005) made the rather fatalistic statement that "…if hate is elicited, then the behavioral options are much more limited—only behaviors congruent with the

goal of destroying or diminishing the other's well-being would be effective in discharging hate." This statement was intended to emphasize that it may be more difficult to regulate motives than to regulate emotions. Any strategies that can reduce emotional arousal (e.g., counting got ten, going to your "happy place," etc.) may bring down the intensity of an anger response, for example, whereas there are arguably fewer options for bringing down the longing for a desired goal. However, the suggestion that only goal achievement can discharge the hate motive is an overstatement. The potential disparity in the ease of regulating an emotional versus a motivational experience remains an important point to emphasize, but, as we will outline below, people are not simply doomed to either let feelings of hate fester and grow or to actually act on their desire to harm another person. Based on our framing of hate as a desire to harm a target, we have identified several strategies that we expect may be effective in reducing hate, but we contend that all effective hate reduction strategies need to target the theoretical core of hate—the *desire* to harm another person.

**Accommodation**. Research on accommodation (Rusbult et al. 1991)—i.e., the tendency to resist reciprocating in kind when the partner has engaged in a negative act—has been found to enhance and strengthen couple functioning. Thus, when the conscious desire to benefit the partner and strengthen the relationship supersedes the instinctive desire to retaliate, it may be possible to curtail the hate motive. However, if the desire to harm persists after the retaliatory behavior has been suppressed, continued suppression may be difficult to maintain. A motivational drive is a "call to action." The hate motive is designed to push a person to "do something," especially when it is accompanied by antecedent emotions that have already been preparing the body to take action. Suppressing the expression of natural urges is mentally effortful and requires concentration on alternative behaviors. As cognitive resources are limited, a person engaging in active suppression quickly becomes mentally drained and has less capacity to focus on other tasks (e.g., work or school). Consequently, techniques used to disguise hate such as *expressive suppression*—the act of inhibiting the nonverbal expression of internal urges in favor of more desirable behavior (Richards and Gross 2000)—are *not* likely to reduce feelings of hate.

Along with cognitive consequences, expressive suppressive may also have the ironic effect of increasing subjective feelings of hate. People who try to inhibit their negative feelings may end up paying more attention to these feelings in an attempt to actively identify and suppress them. Research shows that this heightened awareness of one's negative feelings actually serves to enhance rather than diminish them as intended (Dalgleish et al. 2009). Thus, there can be enormous relational value in acts of accommodation (i.e., resisting the desire to harm reciprocates a partner's negative acts), but such resistance must be accompanied by a reduction in the motivational drive.

**Forgiveness**. Forgiveness is often simplistically understood as a conscious act of communicating to a transgressor that "it's alright," but a genuine process of

forgiveness also focuses on assuaging the *desire* to harm a target, as opposed to ignoring or suppressing this desire. To understand how forgiveness works to reduce feelings of hate, we first must gain a better understanding of how it operates. Forgiveness has been defined as "an unjustly hurt person deliberately giving up resentment toward an offender while fostering the undeserved qualities of beneficence and compassion toward that offender" (Freedman 2000, p. 88). People often feel hate because they perceive that they have been wronged in some respect. From this definition of forgiveness, we see that forgiving someone is not about accepting a person's hurtful actions; rather, it is about consciously choosing to let go of ill will associated with those actions despite experiencing an injustice. In effect, forgiveness involves subordinating the goal of harming the other in order to further the achievement of other, more valued, goals.

Several strategies for cultivating forgiveness have been identified in the literature and include broadening one's view of the perpetrator and attempting to better understand them (Freedman 2000), exploring notions of justice, acknowledging and accepting pain, and reworking the relationship (Sells and Hargrave 1998). The latter has especially important implications for intimate relationships. In order to achieve forgiveness after damage to a close relationship, it is essential that relationship dynamics be explored and renegotiated so that the problems that sparked the experience of hatred do not recur. Research strongly supports the use of forgiveness in letting go of negative feelings and mending damaged close relationships. A recent literature review by Aalgaard et al. (2016) on the association between forgiveness and relationship outcomes for couples found that forgiveness is an effective means by which relationships are repaired after significant betrayals.

**Cognitive Reappraisal**. Another strategy that has the potential to be effective in diminishing feelings of hate is *cognitive reappraisal*. This technique consists of altering one's perception of a negative event in order to reduce its emotional significance (Barlett and Anderson 2011). To illustrate, imagine that you are involved in a two-car collision and your car is destroyed, while the other person's car incurs little damage. The accident was not your fault, you are not hurt, and insurance is going to cover the cost of your new car. At first, you feel intense anger toward the other driver and wish that you could destroy something of theirs to get back at them for destroying your car. On further thought, however, you reflect on the fact that you now have the opportunity to get a new car. Subsequently, the intensity of your hostile emotions subsides, and your ill will for the other driver begins to diminish.

In this example, your cognitive reappraisal of the situation in a more positive light has reduced your negative feelings about the situation and those involved. Cognitive reappraisal has been used to effectively reduce feelings of vengeance and aggression in young adults by altering their perceptions of instigating events (Barlett and Anderson 2011). Further, this strategy has been shown to reduce displays of aggression in individuals with a history of intimate partner violence (Maldonado et al. 2015). Critically, cognitive reappraisal is a successful hate reduction strategy because it alters one's *motivation* to harm another person by changing the way that situations and interactions are interpreted.

**Rerouting goal achievement**. Finally, in many forms of hate proposed by Rempel and Burris (2005), the desire to harm is present because it is seen as a means to another, more desirable end. It is not unusual for means and ends to become fused, or even confused, such that the intended harm is seen as integral to the achievement of the ultimate goal. Therefore, one approach to reducing many forms of hate may be to help people disentangle means and ends. The focus of such an intervention would be to demonstrate that the ultimate goal is attainable without having to induce harm. For example, for many people, acts of vengeance are seen as a way to re-establish order and justice (i.e., Redress). An alternative to punishing an offending partner by inflicting pain that is commensurate with the pain the partner caused would be to have the offending partner come to truly understand how much their actions hurt and provide a means whereby the partner can make amends and restore the relational balance. Thus, it may be possible to reduce the desire to inflict harm by rerouting the path to the ultimate goal by means of an alternate course that does not include hurting the partner.

## Conclusion

In proposing an elaborated motivational theory of hate and describing the implications that our conceptualization has for intimate relationships, the amount of speculation has run far ahead of the available data. Rarely has the recurring refrain, "more research is needed," been more applicable. Hate is not an easy topic to study—it is unsettling, ethically challenging, and prone to eliciting defensive, socially desirable responses from participants. Yet these very factors underscore the importance of directing more research attention toward at an interpersonal process that, in addition to being at the core of some of the most dramatic and disturbing events in human history, often finds expression in our most intimate relationships. By framing the psychological mechanism underlying hate as a desire for interpersonal harm, we hope that we have offered a generative foundation for future work on this important, but largely overlooked, process.

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# Chapter 8
# Hate in Intimate Relationships as a Self-protective Emotion

**Katherine Aumer and Anne Cathrine Krebs Bahn**

> *Dogs love their friends and bite their enemies, quite unlike people, who are incapable of pure love and always have to mix love and hate.*
>
> *Sigmund Freud to Marie Bonaparte (1936) as quoted by his daughter Anna Freud in the preface to the new edition Bonaparte* (1981/1994) *of the book Topsy: The Story of a Golden-Haired Chow by*
>
> Princess Marie Bonaparte.

Western scholarship's current view is that hate is a bad, evil, and a monstrous emotion. Scholars discuss how hate between groups brings about destruction and war (Ben-Ze'ev 2000; Blum 1997; Eissler et al. 2000; Frijda 1994; Izard 1977; Litwinski 1945; Moss 2001; Reber 1985; Sternberg 2003; Wiener 1998), is primarily a motivation for a person's annihilation (Rempel and Burris 2005), and is "…our biggest handicap to our social species" (Oatley et al. 2006, p. 44). This negative view of hate is not just held by academics and scholars. For most people in the USA, discussing hatred in personal relationships brings about feelings of guilt and shame (Ben-Ze'ev 2000). Children are taught at an early age to change their wording from "I hate him" to "I really don't like him" and are given stern looks when they choose to use such a strong word. But is hate really such a terrible emotion? Might hate serve a useful purpose, especially in the context of intimate relationships? This chapter's primary focus is to investigate these questions and to argue that hate may have a self-protective purpose in our intimate relationships. Despite the Freud quote above, this chapter does not take a psychoanalytic viewpoint. Instead, it examines the current literature and research in progress from a social psychological framework. Through examination of this research, it becomes clear that the extreme position of hate being definitely negative is incomplete.

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Instead, hate appears to have protective purposes that help us navigate our relationships and guide our decisions. Although hate can be destructive, examining other possible utilities of hate may provide better methods of identification and measurement of hate as well as regulation.

## Is Hate an Emotion?

Rempel and Burris (2005) and further empirical research by Fathi et al. (2010) argue that hate is a motivation, while other empirical research argues that hate is an emotion (Sternberg 2003; Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield 2007; Aumer et al. 2015, 2016). To test whether hate is a motivation or an emotion, it is important to understand the differences between motivations and emotions. Roseman (2008) has reviewed key differences between motivations and emotions which have been discussed in emotions research for several decades (Ekman 1994; Kleinginna and Kleinginna 1981; Tomkins 1970). In Roseman's (2008) research, he identified three key differences between motivations and emotions. First, motivations are goal specific, while emotions have more diffuse and general goals. For example, hunger is a typical motivation that is specifically elicited due to a lack of food. When hungry, a person will behave in a goal-specific way to achieve that food, and once the food has been received and eaten, the hunger should subside. Hunger generally is not elicited when one is satiated. Happiness, on the other hand, which is viewed as an emotion, may be elicited when one gets food, when one sees his/her children after a long day, when one finds money on the ground, or when one sees the sunrise or set. The second important difference between motivations and emotions is that motivations are deliberative, while emotions are more impulsive. For example, while hungry, a person will decide and plan (consciously or unconsciously) the way to obtain the food. However, while happy, one does not necessarily need to plan. Even if one takes a more goal-directed emotion like anger, the specific plans one makes while angry are often more impulsive (for example: screaming at one's significant other) than intended. Finally, the third important difference between emotions and motivations is that emotions often preempt or override motivations. For example, one may be incredibly hungry, but if one smells bodily excrement and feels the emotion of disgust, their hungry may suddenly dissipate. Given these conditions for motivations and emotions, let us examine how hate qualifies; is it a motivation or an emotion?

If hate is a motivation, as Rempel and Burris (2005) argue and as Rempel and Sutherland further argue in Chap. 7, we should see that hate is (1) goal specific, (2) deliberate, and (3) easily preempted by other emotions. First, the issues of deliberation and preemptiveness are not the primary focus of this chapter. In terms of deliberation, Fathi et al. (2010) do provide some evidence that people may see hate as more deliberate, but even their research shows that there were no mean differences of hate between hypothetical incidences that were viewed as deliberate versus impulsive. Additionally, we expect to see that hate may be both deliberative and impulsive. Acting impulsively out of hate like one can out of love is definitely a

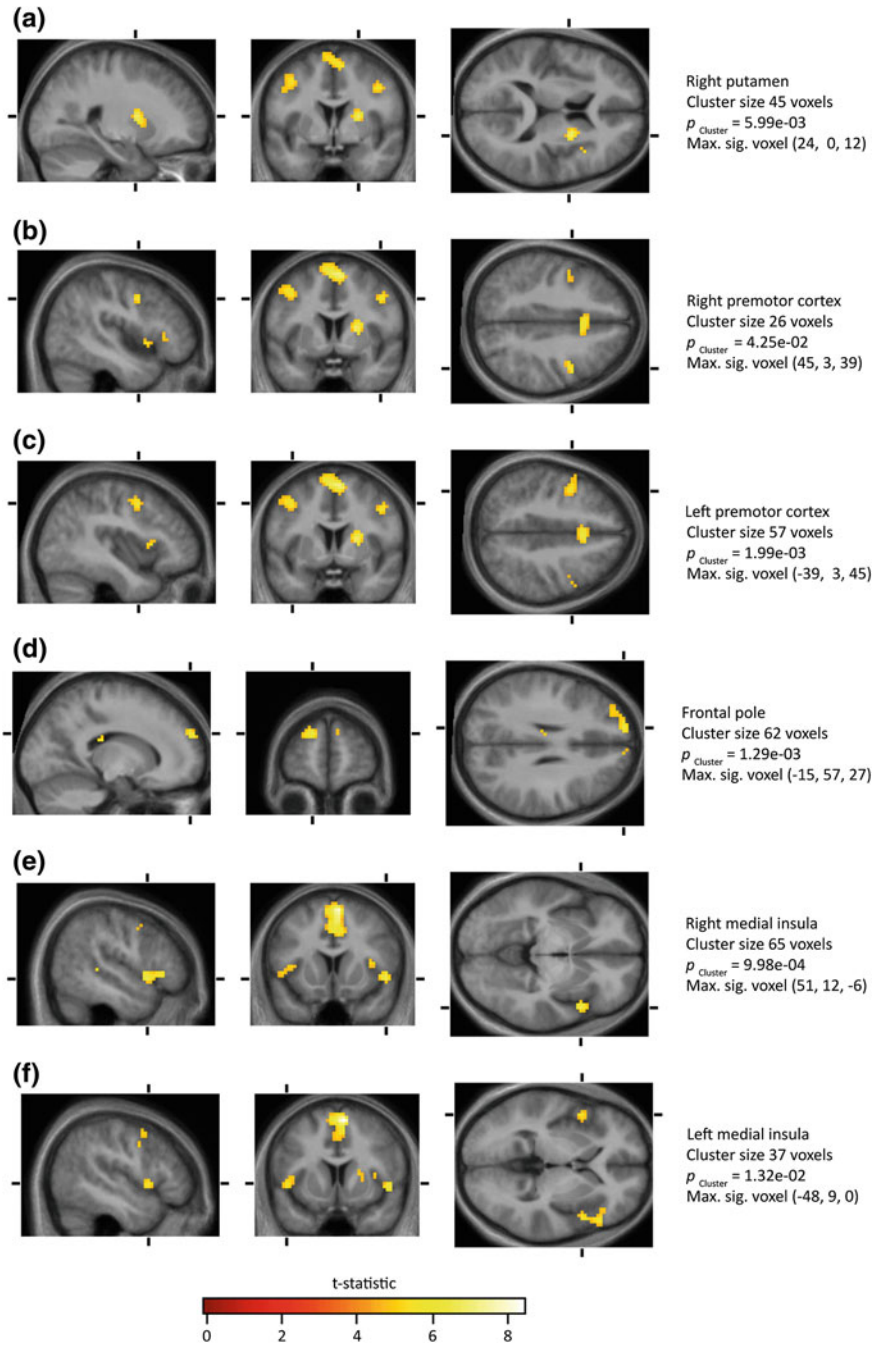
possibility that we hope future research may explore. In terms of preemptiveness, we are not aware of any research testing whether or not hate may be easily preempted as we would expect that to be an important step in demonstrating the possibility of hate being a motivation. However, given our research, we see more evidence from our participants that hate, like a typical emotion, easily preempts motivations. For example, when experiencing motivations like parental protectiveness for one's child, the hate one may have for, say, the child's mother may preempt the protective motivations and possibly even put the child in harm's way (through spousal abuse, revenge, or abandoning the family unit). Finally, in terms of being goal specific, Rempel and Burris (2005) argue that hate is a motivation that specifically focuses on *desiring* harm or destruction for the target of hart. Thus, the specific goal of hate is to want harm or destruction. However, our research suggests that although desire of harm and destruction may be central to hate, it will not be the only goal of hate and is thus not goal specific. We argue that hate is an emotion that is not specific to one goal, but to many possible goals and in response to certain norm violations (Haidt 2003; Rozin et al. 1999; Shweder et al. 1997), that can be impulsive and easily preempt motivations. The remainder of this chapter will specifically focus on how hate may have other important goals: specifically self-protection and that since hate does not have just one specific goal, it should not be considered strictly, a motivation. We contend that the self-protective goals of hate can be most easily seen when observing hate aimed at targets that are also loved, been loved, or are an intimate element in one's life.

## The Reasons and Targets of Our Hate

Studies on anger and the detriments of extreme anger are numerous. A Google Scholar search of titles containing "anger" returns 8330 articles. Many of the results are concerned with the State-Trait Anger Scale (Spielberger et al. 1983) and the issues of experiencing and expressing anger (Bowlby 1976; Beck 1999; Bushman 2002; Bushman et al. 1999; Williams et al. 2000; Averill 2012). This is in contrast to the same Google Scholar search for "hate" in the title, which results in a return of fewer articles: 5040, many of which have nothing to do with the topic of hate itself, for example "Why Americans Hate Welfare" and "Statistics for People who Think they Hate Statistics." An Amazon search for books on "anger" returns 13,075 results. Most of these books are organized under the categories of "Anger Management," "Self-Help," "Religion and Spirituality," and ironically, "Parenting." A similar Amazon search for books on "hate" returns 11,912 books, many of which are organized under the categories "Literature and Fiction," "Politics and Social Sciences," and interestingly, "Romance." The topic of anger seems to have engendered a specific audience with a healthy amount of data from a variety of scholarly and non-scholarly sources. On the other hand, hate seems like the literary redheaded stepchild, whose representation in the current literature has been scientifically neglected and poorly organized.

For many people, anger and hate may seem like similar, if not the same, emotion. For example, Fitness and Fletcher (1993) conducted a series of studies and in one study sampled participants on their ability to identify and recognize love, anger, hate, and jealousy in intimate relationships through hypothetical scenarios. Although their overall results did demonstrate that people tend to view hate and anger as separate and distinct emotions, people often mistakenly viewed scenarios of hate as anger. Interestingly, people rarely confused anger scenarios for hate. Fitness and Fletcher (1993) concluded that people may view anger as a more basic emotion than they view hate and may see anger scripts as part of their concept of hate, which they view as a more complex emotion. Throughout their various studies, Fitness and Fletcher (1993) concluded that the overall concept of hate in intimate relationships involves low levels of control of the situation, with a high level of obstacles, and significant unpleasantness. This contrasts with their findings on anger which showed that people saw instances of anger in their intimate relationships as predictable, with having some control of the situation, and as primarily their partner's fault. The issue of control is pertinent as it relates to the idea that hate may be elicited when feeling a threat and hate therefore may be used as a form of protection. Additionally, participants in Fitness and Fletcher's (1993) studies saw withdrawal urges and behavior as indicative of hate in a relationship, albeit their accuracy for identifying hate was still very low in comparison with the other three emotions of anger, jealousy, and love. When Fitness and Fletcher (1993) attempted to replace withdrawal behaviors in their hypothetical scenarios with abusive behaviors, participants actually identified those behaviors as more indicative of anger in a relationship than of hate. This suggests that—at least when it comes to recognizing emotions in intimate relationships—abusive and destructive behaviors may not be the most prototypical or at least definitive aspect of hatred. In contrast to the theories of hate (Sternberg 2003; Rempel and Burris 2005) which view hate as primarily destructive or a desire for destruction, hate may be a response to situations that seem to threaten one's sense of self and be used as a form of protection of that self. If hate is a response to a threat, then escaping that threat—as was indicative of withdrawal behaviors in Fitness and Fletcher's (1993) studies—would be as plausible as attempts to destroy one's target of hate (which would be a more permanent withdrawal) (Fig. 8.1).

Looking at other research concerning hate, the general consensus is that hate is a negative emotion (Sternberg and Sternberg 2008) or motivation (Rempel and Burris 2005). Whether one observes models utilizing discrete theories of emotion (e.g., Larsen and Diener 1992) or dimensional approaches (e.g., Russell 1980), hate, or the more often used word of "contempt" tends to be categorized as having a negative valence (Ben-Ze'ev 2000; Contempt 2015; Hate 2015; Ortony et al. 1988; Parish 1988; Sokolowski 1992). Current neuroscientific research has suggested that the valence of emotions may activate specific brain areas (i.e., insular activity) and hatred has been found to activate parts of these areas associated with negative valence (Anders et al. 2004; Zeki and Romaya 2008). Thus, it appears that our brains categorize hate as a negative emotion. This should not be surprising since most Western cultures view hate negatively, our brains, if functioning normally,


(a)
Right putamen
Cluster size 45 voxels
$p_{Cluster}$ = 5.99e-03
Max. sig. voxel (24, 0, 12)
(b)
Right premotor cortex
Cluster size 26 voxels
$p_{Cluster}$ = 4.25e-02
Max. sig. voxel (45, 3, 39)
(c)
Left premotor cortex
Cluster size 57 voxels
$p_{Cluster}$ = 1.99e-03
Max. sig. voxel (-39, 3, 45)
(d)
Frontal pole
Cluster size 62 voxels
$p_{Cluster}$ = 1.29e-03
Max. sig. voxel (-15, 57, 27)
(e)
Right medial insula
Cluster size 65 voxels
$p_{Cluster}$ = 9.98e-04
Max. sig. voxel (51, 12, -6)
(f)
Left medial insula
Cluster size 37 voxels
$p_{Cluster}$ = 1.32e-02
Max. sig. voxel (-48, 9, 0)
t-statistic
0
2
4
6
8

◀ **Fig. 8.1** Neural activity while viewing photographs of hated people versus neutral individuals. From Zeki and Romaya (2008), this is an open access article distributed in accordance with the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license, which permits others to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon this work, for commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited. See: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0

should be receptive to our cultural environments and reflect our culture's norms. But more interestingly, research by Zeki and Romaya (2008) has shown that love also shares similar neural activity with hate. Zeki and Romaya (2008) did not provide a clear rationale for why these areas (i.e., the putamen and insula) would be activated for both love and hate; however, the current research on hate suggests that love and hatred may share a similarity: their targets. Research has shown that hate is often directed toward those we love or have loved (Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield 2007; Fitness and Fletcher 1993; Shiota et al. 2010). Although Zeki and Romaya's (2008) study did not have participants identify the relationship nor measure the love they may have had for the participants, we do suggest that the neural connections of love and hate may be similar and part of that similarity may be evident when investigating the targets of our love and hate. When people are surveyed about their feelings of hate and are asked to describe why they hate someone, participants readily described their feelings toward a loved one:

> I hate my son's mother because of her inability to show any emotional connection to my son because of the priorities that she sets in front of him to avoid any type of responsibility. There is no push for her to come back into his life and it angers me to see that he is going to be the only one that suffers because his mom left and it is as if it is his fault. Hate is a truly strong word, but when it involves the people I love I have great animosity towards them.
>
> 21-year-old male explaining why he hates his ex-girlfriend and mother of his child (Aumer et al. 2015; unpublished excerpts of dataset).
>
> Evil and manipulative. Selfish and determined to putting others down for their own personal gain or even attention. Emotionally unstable. Gold digger, liar.
>
> Doesn't take sympathy unless it is for their own personal gain. Will manipulate children. The worst fucking person in the world, but at least now she has found God so she can't feel so bad about the things she has done.
>
> 21-year-old female explaining why she hates her step-mother (Aumer et al. 2015; unpublished excerpts of dataset).

As the above two statements demonstrate, when people are asked to identify a person they hate and why they hate that person, they do not describe an outgroup member (i.e., someone that is part of a social group in which one does not identify; for example, if Tom identifies with being "male," Susan who is "female" would be a member of his outgroup) or some random stranger on the street. Instead, people describe their families, their lovers, their exes, and how these people have hurt them. In these cases, hate is a reaction to people we love, have loved, or are invested in.

Current research investigating factors that instigate hate suggests that hate tends to manifest when one has violated or betrayed an agreement that is essential to the maintenance of the relationship (Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield 2007; Aumer et al. 2015; Haidt 2003; Rozin et al. 1999; Shweder et al. 1997). In the above quotation, the 21-year-old male describing his ex-girlfriend and mother of his child sees her as

having violated basic principles of motherhood which will directly impact the welfare of their son. Her lack of involvement violates his norm of motherhood, and this violation causes significant suffering, especially for their son. Consistent with the findings in Fitness and Fletcher's (1993) studies, this man's quotation reflects a low level of control, as he cannot control the type of mother the target of his hate has become. Given that they also have recurring interactions with each other, there seems to be significant unpleasantness involved. Similarly, the second statement above by the 21-year-old female discussing her stepmother expresses her hate for a woman who has betrayed her beliefs of how a stepmother should behave. Although being evil and manipulative alone are considerably negative traits, those qualities in one's stepmother may disrupt one's schema or conceptions of "stepmother." Such disruptions may be so hurtful that they make having a working relationship not just difficult, but damaging to one's self. In her statement, the 21-year-old female describes various qualities of her stepmother, several of which might be considered dangerous to one's well-being: "selfish," "gold digger," and "liar." All of these qualities suggest that having a relationship with this woman would elicit significant self-sacrifice, a loss in money, and a persistent confusion given the lying. Again, as found in Fitness and Fletcher's (1993) studies, this woman expresses a low level of control in the situation, with significant obstacles to overcome and much unpleasantness.

From these two excerpts, it seems plausible that hate is a self-protective reaction against people to whom we are vulnerable, who have the ability to do us harm. This harm is specifically elicited when one's norms for the relationship have been violated. However, it may not be necessary to do harm or destructive behaviors to the person hated in order to mollify the hate. Rempel and Burris (2005) suggest that destruction is the only way to end one's hatred: "…if hate is elicited, then the behavioral options are much more limited—only behaviors congruent with the goal of destroying or diminishing the other's well-being would be effective in discharging hate" (p. 301). However, if hate is intended to protect an individual during transgressions of relationship norms or standards, then destroying the well-being of the target of hate is only one of a variety of methods for protection. One could also end the relationship, move to another state or country, or accept the individual and their behaviors as part of what should be expected in the relationship. This last option may seem extreme, but one could imagine that if the threat is removed; if the norm violation were "normalized," then hate would not manifest. For example, if the 21-year-old male who hates the mother of his child were to accept her lack of involvement (or stopped being concerned with her lack of involvement) in their child's life and if the 21-year-old female who hates her stepmother believed that manipulativeness and "evilness" were just normal aspects of her stepmother that she cannot change and she should no longer be concerned about changing then the hate would dissolve. There is qualitative evidence that acceptance, distance, and no longer investing concern or care into changing the target of hate does lead to ending one's hate which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Given the above quotations, it becomes clearer that hate is a negative emotion, in that it causes significant distress and suffering, but its destructive and terrible reputation may not be completely deserved. The idea that hate elicits destructive

behavior is still suspect. Instead, the possibility that hate can elicit self-protective behaviors (which can manifest as withdrawal or removal from the target of hate)—which come from transgressions in one's relationship standards (e.g., being a good mother or stepmother)—is still possible. However, it is one thing to draw conclusions about hate from a couple of statements by people who took a survey and another to look at data supplied by larger samples. Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield (2007) took a grounded theory approach to studying hate and asked participants to report how, when, why, and who they tended to hate throughout their lives. Of the 433 people sampled, most people (70 %) reported hating their friends, acquaintances (usually friends of friends), family members, romantic partners, or exes. Rarely did people report hating strangers (4 %) or groups of people (5 %) like rival fans of a sports team, racial groups, or the other gender. Interestingly, although several people did mention hating their mothers ($n$ = 11) and fathers ($n$ = 20), only one person reported hating her child. Participants were asked to rate how often they felt each of the following statements toward the people they have ever hated: "I wish they were dead," "I would like to get violent with this person," and "I wish I would never have to see them again." Participants could answer from a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (always). These data were collected in the Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield's (2007) study, but was not published in the paper, and we analyze the data here. If, as several scholars theorize (Ben-Ze'ev 2000; Blum 1997; Eissler et al. 2000; Frijda 1994; Izard 1977; Litwinski 1945; Moss 2001; Oatley et al. 2006; Reber 1985; Rempel and Burris 2005; Sternberg 2003; Wiener 1998), hate is an emotion or motivation intended to destroy or hurt the target of one's hatred, then the majority of these participants should readily admit their desire that the targets of their hatred be dead, violently confronted, and/or gone from their lives. However, the results do not suggest that people solely desire destruction for the targets of their hate. As is shown in Fig. 8.2, the desire for the targets of one's hate to be dead is not unanimously shared. Over 50 % of participants reported never having a death wish for their targets of hate, and only 9 % of participants reported wishing their targets of hate was dead "a lot" to "always." Similarly, over 60 % of participants never wished to violently confront their targets of hate, and only 15 % of participants thought of violently confronting their targets of hate "a lot" or "always." However, a majority (67 %) of participants did desire to never see their targets of hate "a lot" or "always," while only 3 % of participants "never" had this feeling toward the targets of their hate.

It may be that hate helps to "dismantle" or dissolve relationships, but using destruction or aggression as a method of relationship dissolution may be dependent on a variety of other factors independent of one's hatred. For example, previous history of aggressive tendencies, opportunities for destruction, social acceptance of actions, and the relationship to the target of one's hate may all contribute to how much destruction is desired. One could conceive that a person would be less likely to want to hurt their family members, even if they hated them, than a friend or an ex, because the person may have a shared destiny with the individual (e.g., desiring physical harm to one's romantic partner may not be in one's best interest especially when it comes to sharing the care and medical costs as a consequence of that harm).

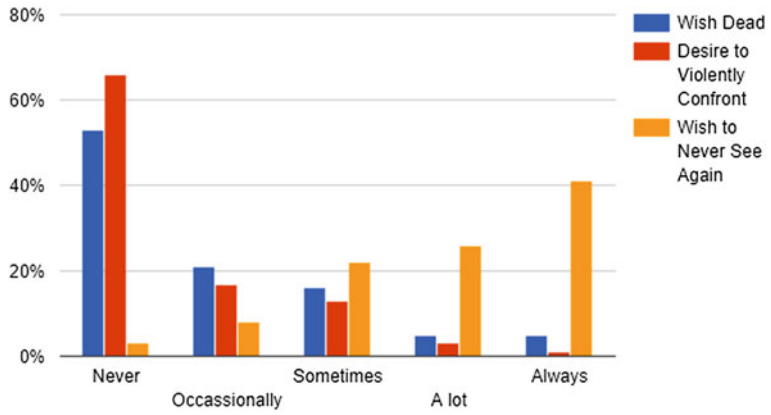



**Fig. 8.2** Desired outcomes for targets of hate

On the contrary, significant others and family members may be easier and more convenient targets for such physical harm because one may share physical residence or just have more opportunities to interact with the individual. Given that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men experience some form of spousal abuse in their lifetime within the USA (NCADV 2015), the probability of doing harm or wanting harm to one's family or significant other who is hated may be higher than the probability of doing harm or wanting harm to one's friends or coworkers who are hated.

To test whether someone would be more likely to desire harm to one's family and romantic partners who are hated than to one's friends who are hated, Aumer et al. (2015) asked 148 participants to identify people they hated and people they loved and their desires of negative or positive outcomes for these individuals. As with previous research (Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield 2007), they found that most participants (58 %) identified a family member (i.e., mother, father, sister, brother, cousin, uncle, or aunt), friend, or ex (i.e., romantic partner) as a target of their hate. Surprisingly, no one identified a romantic partner (e.g., boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, or wife) as a target of hate. To measure their negative intentions, participants were asked to mark their agreement ("1 strongly disagree" to "5 strongly agree") with 10 statements like "I can imagine wanting this person to live with severe distress" and "I can imagine being ok knowing this person was no longer alive" and "I can imagine doing physical harm to this person." To answer the question of whether relationship may lead to more or less violence toward those we hate, only the aforementioned three statements will be examined. A three-way MANOVA with relationship (family, friend, and ex) as the predictor and the three statements as stated above measuring negative intentions as the dependent variable revealed that relationship was important in predicting "I can imagine doing physical harm to this person," $F(2, 74) = 8.95$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.19$. Pairwise comparisons, using Bonferroni adjustment, showed that participants were more likely to agree that they could imagine doing harm to their family members ($M = 2.54$, SD = 0.21) than to

their friends ($M$ = 1.46, SD = 0.16,) and exes ($M$ = 1.42, SD = 0.30). It should be noted that the overall desire to do harm to anyone (whether a family member, friend, or ex) hated was relatively low ($M$ = 1.79, SD = 1.19) demonstrating, once again, that the destructive reputation of hate may not be well deserved. Additionally, the evidence that people are more likely to imagine doing harm to hated family members as opposed to hated friends or exes suggests that the harm that can be inspired by hate may be dependent on other important factors: type of relationship and opportunity.

One of the possible reasons people report hating people that they have once loved or currently love could be that love and hate according to Sternberg (1986, 2003) can be described as two sides of the same coin—or triangle. Both emotions are visualized as triangles with each vertex or point accompanying a component of love or hate. Thus, love is comprised of intimacy (or in the case of hate: negation of intimacy), passion (anger), and commitment (commitment to devalue and diminish the person), but while love is expressed as a positive emotion where each sub-emotion causes the subject to seek increased interaction with the loved one, hate is expressed as a desire to avoid the hated one. However, what should happen if we were to have both love and hate for a specific person? How do we reconcile both the need to increase contact and the need to decrease contact? How does such ambivalence work in an intimate relationship? Additionally, there may be specific aspects of hate that would make it more probable for someone to desire harm or negative intentions. Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield (2007) showed some evidence that the relationship between destructive behavior and hate may be tenuous; however, hate was not directly measured by any validated hate scale. To address this limitation and to learn more about the relationship between hate and destructive behavior or negative motivation, Aumer et al. (2015) not only measured participants' negative motivations toward those they hated (as described above), but also measured participants' hatred with Sternberg and Sternberg's (2008) hate scale. Sternberg and Sternberg's (2008) hate scale measures three components of hate: disgust, anger, and devaluation. Participants rated their hate for an identified target of hate using Sternberg and Sternberg's (2008) scale and scores for disgust, anger, and devaluation were summed. Aumer et al. (2015) found that people who hate a particular person are much more likely to want to do negative things to that person (e.g., inflicting pain, having them go through a bad breakup, or lose their job), but only if they felt strong devaluation and disgust for that person. Interestingly, anger did *not* predict one's negative motivation or desire to do negative things toward a hated individual.

Ample research suggests that anger may not be the best indicator of negative intentions. Harmon-Jones and Allen (1998) and Carver and Harmon-Jones (2009) have found that anger may be an approach-related affect. This means that when feeling anger, people tend to want to correct the wrongs or obstacles that caused their anger; there is a motivation to *approach*, solve, search, or find a solution to the problem (Harmon-Jones et al. 2013). This is in contrast to withdrawal motivation, which tends to be associated with wanting to remove oneself or escape a situation (Davidson 1983) and is often seen in relation to emotions like fear (Wacker et al. 2003) or disgust

(Davidson 1983). Given that anger is associated with neural activity that is involved in approach motivation (Carver and Harmon-Jones 2009; Harmon-Jones and Allen 1998; Spielberg et al. 2008), it may be that wanting the target of one's anger to suffer is not the best "approach" or method of resolution. This is especially true if the target of the anger is a close relative or a loved one: someone with a shared destiny. People we love tend to have relationships with us that would necessitate sharing the outcomes of their lives; even if we were angry with them, their distress or misfortune would, indirectly, involve consequences we would have to share. Thus, Aumer et al.'s (2015) finding that anger was not positively correlated with negative desires and motivations suggests, again, that hate may only be accompanied by negative desires and motivations if it involves aspects of hate more closely related to disgust and devaluation—not anger. Given these observations and the definition of contempt (2015), we would expect a desire for destruction and destructive behaviors to be associated more with contempt then other subcategories hate.

Other research concerning anger in intimate relationships and its predictiveness of destruction (e.g., intimate partner violence (IPV)) has been mixed. Some suggest that a trait state of anger and insecure attachment styles may be strong predictors of IPV (Dutton 2010; Dutton et al. 1994). One review of the literature on anger and IPV has shown that anger is a good predictor of moderate to high levels of IPV, but not of low levels (Birkley and Eckhardt 2015). It may be that aggressive and subsequent destructive behaviors toward significant others are best predicted not just by anger alone, but by a combination of negative emotions, such as anger, disgust, and devaluation or what Sternberg (2003) calls "burning hate." However, given the current research, it is suspect to contend that destruction is the primary goal of hatred. Earlier research by Fitness and Fletcher (1993) demonstrated that most people do not consider destructive or abusive behavior to be an indication or necessary component of hate in hypothetical intimate relationships. Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield (2007) showed that few people desire destruction or death for those they hate, and Aumer et al. (2015) provided further evidence that other factors, such as relationship type and the components of hate, may be important indications of destructive behavior outside of one's hate. If destruction is not the natural outcome for hatred, what purpose does hate serve?

## The Purposes of Hate

Current research looking into what people want from their hatred suggests that hate may have other purposes (Janicki et al. 2016). Two hundred and eighty participants were asked to complete a survey about their current or past hate, current or past dislike, or being a target of current or past hate and dislike. Out of the 280 participants, 10 % chose to discuss someone they currently hate and 20 % chose to discuss someone they previously hated, but no longer hate. We asked these participants: "What do you think would need to happen for you to no longer hate this person?" or "What happened that helped you stop hating this person?" Participants could select

as many of the following answers that applied: "They ask(ed) for forgiveness," "I forgot what they did," "I forgive (forgave) them," "I (got/get) revenge," and/or "Other, please describe." Interestingly, people who discussed someone they currently hated provided a variety of answers, but most chose "Other" and specified what would need to happen for them to stop hating their current target of hate. A general theme concerning what people wanted from someone they currently hate seemed to emerge: Most people wanted the person to change, "own up" to their mistakes, and/or no longer be involved in their lives. For example, an 18-year-old female noted that for her to stop hating her father, he would need to "completely change who he is." Another 18-year-female who hated a girl for sleeping with her boyfriend said she would "never see them again." "Amending what they did," "Sincere apology," and "Forgive, but never forget" were other common responses participants had when discussing how their current hate could be dissolved. Generally, there seems to be a desire for the target of one's hate to change or for that person to no longer be involved in his/her life. Rarely did people mention "Revenge" (17 % of people discussing someone they currently hate vs. 4 % of people discussing someone they no longer hate) or any type of violent confrontation, which would support the idea that the purpose of one's hatred is to "destroy" or "annihilate" one's target of hate. Rempel and Burris (2005) contend that if the goal of hate, a desire for destruction, is fulfilled, then the hate should cease. However, when asked what helped them alleviate their hate for people they once hated, but no longer hate, rarely did anyone mention revenge (4 %). Instead, most participants (67 %) reported that "distance" and "removal" were the best methods for resolving their hatred. For example, one 19-year-old female said about her ex-boyfriend who broke her heart: "Over time we both stopped caring about each other so hatred faded." Another 25-year-old female who hated her coworker said: "I moved away so I wasn't forced to be around her everyday, which led me to stop caring." Other common statements all involved "distance" and no longer caring about the individual's behaviors: "I just didn't care anymore," "No longer seeing them," "moved on," "left the job," "no longer cared," "stopped caring," and "I graduated, moved away, and moved on." It seemed that with the combination of both distance and exoneration of the target of one's hate, many people found that their hate ceased.

Of course, discovering methods of ending hate is not necessarily the same thing as understanding the purpose of hate. It still could be that hate's primary purpose is to destroy one's target of hate and that ending one's hate is not necessarily a fulfillment of its purpose. Considering how difficult and illegal it is to actually harm people, most people are not likely to fulfill any purpose of hatred if it involves destruction—there are too many undesirable consequences. Nevertheless, if one truly desired such harm to another individual—even if that harm could never come into fruition—there should be little to prevent one from admitting wanting such harm onto another individual if certain circumstances are met. Previous research has shown that data concerning violent behavior (especially in relation to partner abuse) are less likely to be biased if collected anonymously and with confidentiality (Moffitt et al. 1997). Considering all of our research has been conducted anonymously and confidentially, there is no reason to contend that participants are not

admitting their destructive desires (as seen in Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield 2007; Aumer et al. 2015). However, it is possible that people may feel they could not acknowledge their destructive desires—even on an anonymous survey—because of social desirability issues. Research on reports of violent behavior and social desirability has been mixed (see Sugarman and Hotaling 1997 for a meta-analytic review). If social desirability is an issue, then creating a study which would allow social desirability issues to be less of an issue may be able to identify any destructive tendencies, if they should exist, that hate engenders. Additionally, discovering if hate is similar to fear and disgust, in that it has a self-protective purpose, may provide further insight into the understanding of hate. If hate elicits self-protective actions or desires, we might expect that hate could affect perceptions or expectations of the target of hate, sensitizing a person to the possible dangers or threats the target could pose to the self.

The idea that emotions influence thoughts is not a recent conception. Aristotle was among the many who first noted how emotions affect judgment: "The Emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgements, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure" (Aristotle, 367-347 or 335-322/1984 B.C.E.). However, scientific measurement of how emotions impact our judgment is much more recent (e.g., Isen et al. 1978), and the theory of feelings as information has just recently been articulated and empirically demonstrated (Schwarz 2011). Keltner et al. (1993) did several experiments to examine how participants might judge the likelihood of various events after being assigned to conditions that either evoked anger or sadness. Although hate is not the same as anger or sadness, noting the effect that other negative emotions have on judgment can provide insight into how hate may operate. Their experiments revealed that anger tends to orient people toward finding causes of events in human factors, while sadness makes people prone to finding situational causes for events, suggesting that negative emotions orient individuals to perceive the environment in such a way that the possible causes of one's feelings are identifiable and an adaptive response more probable. Given that Keltner et al. (1993) elucidated the impact of anger and sadness on one's judgment by using scenarios (both imagined and explicit), we conducted a similar experiment with hate. In this experiment, we also strove to remove any social desirability consequences that may occur when participants discuss hatred toward their loved ones by presenting them with scenarios of hatred. Imada et al. (2016) conducted an experiment in which participants were assigned to one of three conditions: personal hate, impersonal hate, and no hate. In the personal hate condition, participants were introduced to Bob:

> Bob severely hurt you and threatened to do more harm to you and the rest of your family. The harm Bob has done to you has caused significant grief and anguish for you and your family. For various reasons, you cannot legally pursue justice for the harm done and the harm he could possibly do in the future. Bob is living a good life without any repercussions for his actions and he does not see his past actions as wrong or dangerous.

Scenarios were similarly worded for each condition. In the impersonal hate condition, participants were introduced to John, who: "severely hurt a member of your family (who you love and like) and threatened to do more harm to the rest of

your family." The remaining 1/3 of participants in the no hate condition were introduced to Tom, who: "embezzles (stealing from a company and using it for private use or for other non-approved uses) money from his company. His embezzlement has caused people to lose their jobs and the company to lose profits." Participants were explicitly told that they did not know Tom personally, and none of his actions affected them or anyone they knew. Hate was measured by asking: "how much of the following emotions do you feel towards Bob/John/Tom?" Ten emotions were listed including hate and participants could answer on a 1–5 Likert scale with 1 being "not at all" to 5 being "completely." Post hoc analysis with Bonferroni correction of 0.017 (0.05/3) after conducting a one-way ANOVA with condition as the predictor and hate as the dependent variable confirmed that participants in the personal (Bob) ($M = 4.33$, SD = 0.89) and impersonal (John) ($M = 3.92$, SD = 1.06) conditions reported higher feelings of hate toward Bob/John than participants in the no hate (Tom) ($M = 3.06$, SD = 0.99) ($F(2.189) = 27.86$, $p < 0.001$, *partial eta squared* = 0.23) condition. Participants were then presented with various ambiguous situations. In one situation, participants learned that Bob/John/Tom was taking gun lessons. In another scenario, participants found themselves at a party where a fire suddenly breaks out and they see Bob/John/Tom running out of the door. Participants were then asked to explain the actions of Bob/John/Tom in each scenario. For example, in the gun scenario, participants could select a non-threatening explanation when learning that Bob/John/Tom was taking gun lessons: "He is learning self-defense techniques" or "He is learning a new hobby." Or they could select a more threatening explanation: "He is learning to shoot a gun to attack me and/or my family." Similarly, in the fire scenario, participants could choose from: "He is running out of the house to escape the fire" or "He is running of the house to escape the fire he started." Of the 184 participants who took the survey, the ones in the personal and impersonal conditions of hate (Bob and John) were much more likely to describe his actions as threatening (gun lessons: $2(2, N = 187) = 57.90$, $p < 0.001$; fire: $2(2, N = 178) = 26.81$, $p < 0.001$), while those in the non-hate condition (Tom) were much more likely to describe his actions as non-threatening (Figs. 8.3 and 8.4).

Participants' heightened suspicions of their hated target (Bob and John) versus a target with far less hate (Tom) suggest that hate may orient people to see possible threats from the target of hate, providing more evidence that hate is a product of a social violation or interpersonal agreement that is intended to protect the individual from further possible harm. The increased surveillance one may have of someone who is the target of one's hate may be justified or unjustified, probable or improbable, but the increased surveillance is a consequence of having hate. If hate is actually intended to protect an individual from potential harm from a hated target, then Rempel and Burris' (2005) theory that hate is intended to invoke destruction may not capture the full capacity of hate. Destruction may still be a viable option if one hates, after all a destroyed target of hate is far less of a threat than a still living, non-destroyed target of hate. However, this is strategy not emotion. It may be a good strategy to destroy one's target of hate, as it would nullify the target as a possible threat, but that may not be the purpose of hate. After all, theoretically, we could want

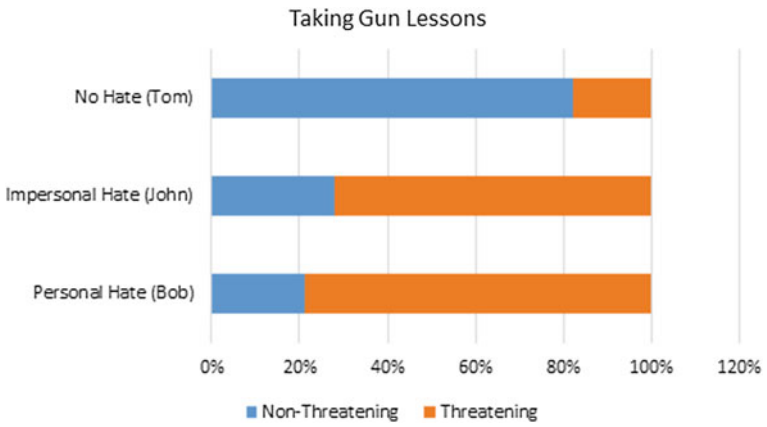



**Fig. 8.3** During this ambiguous scenario in which the participant learns that Bob/John/Tom is taking gun lessons, participants in the personal and impersonal conditions of hate (Bob and John) were much more likely to describe his actions as threatening (learning to shoot a gun in order to kill the participant and/or family) versus the non-hate condition (learning to shoot as a hobby) (Tom)

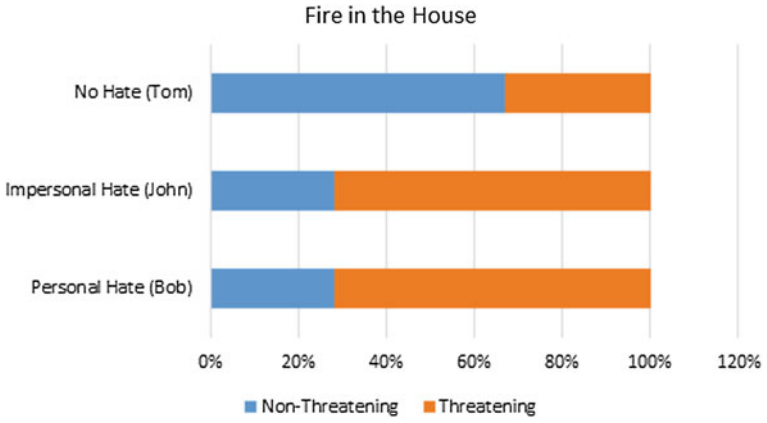



**Fig. 8.4** During this ambiguous scenario in which the participant learns that Bob/John/Tom is running out of a burning house, participants in the personal and impersonal conditions of hate (Bob and John) were much more likely to describe his actions as threatening (having started the fire) versus the non-hate condition (trying to escape the burning house) (Tom)

destruction for someone, but have no feelings of hate toward them (e.g., supporters of the death penalty and many other forms of justice may believe destruction is fair or justified given certain crimes.). Similarly, one may desire death for someone and it may be out of love and compassion and not hate, as when someone is seeing a loved one suffer and desires their death in order to stop the person's suffering. Additionally, we may hate people and *not* want them to suffer, die, or be destroyed.

The desire for suffering, destruction, or death does not seem to be a necessary condition for hate to be experienced. From the empirical research (e.g., Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield 2007; Fitness and Fletcher 1993; Aumer et al. 2015), it seems that hate is a self-protective emotion intended to keep a person from future suffering that involves avoidance and heightened suspicion of the target of hate. From the empirical research, it appears that the purpose of hate is to make us vigilant of the probable dangers in our *social* environment and to protect us from these dangers. Hate is not necessarily logical, and obviously, people in Imada et al.'s (2016) study were much more likely to think that violence and arson were more probable from a target of hate than people who were not assigned a target of hate. Nevertheless, emotions are not necessarily logical, but intended, to "activate, orient, and organize" an organism to what is pertinent in the environment and what is pertinent in the social environment, at least for hate, is the person hated (Dix 1991, p. 5).

## Why We Hate the People We Love

Love and hate are not destined to manifest together in all intimate relationships. However, when people are asked about someone they hate, people tend to report people they know, love, and/or previously loved. (Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield 2007; Aumer et al. 2015). People tend to report family members, friends, and lovers (both past and current) to explain their feelings of hate. In the quotation from Freud at the beginning of this chapter, it is apparent that others (at least in the psychoanalytic community) have noted the congruency of love and hate; the ambivalence that seems to infiltrate our intimate relationships. Ambivalence does not seem uncommon, albeit we may find it disturbing and non-ideal. After all, generally speaking, few people *want* to be in relationships where there is hate. If hate is, as we contend, an emotion intended to help protect ourselves and keep us vigilant of harm from our target of hate, then this emotion is probably very taxing. Although, there are some exceptions to this view, for example, some relationships seem to thrive off of hatred as one could say about the relationship between Gore Vidal and William Buckley during the 1968 United States (US) presidential debates. One could even suggest that there is a feeling of "healthy hatred" as when one uses the term "enmity" to describe feelings friends may have for each other when competing in a game or sports (Enmity 2015). However, for the most part, the presence of both love and hate in a relationship (and ambivalence in general) seems antithetical to Western thought. The ability to experience opposing emotions has been termed *emotional complexity*, and researchers have noted its paucity in Western samples (Larsen et al. 2001, 2004). The lack of emotional complexity in Western samples may be a result of cognitive differences that are culturally dependent (Nisbett et al. 2001). Peng and Nisbett (1999) discuss three classical laws of thought based on Aristotelian logic that Westerners tend to follow: (1) the law of identity (A is A; or A exists because it has knowable characteristics specific to A), (2) the law of non-contradiction (A cannot equal not A), and (3) the law of the

excluded middle (statements must be either true or false). Of all the laws, the second law seems the most likely candidate for why many people in the West may see the presence of love and hate disquieting or uncomfortable. If love and hate are seen as opposites, to have them coexist in a relationship seems illogical, at least to Westerners. However, there are other principles of thought that are more prevalent in other cultures, which do allow for contradictions. Again, Peng and Nisbett (1999) observed that East Asian (specifically Chinese) culture lends itself to *naive dialecticism* which has very different (if not opposite) laws of thought: (1) principle of change (reality is a process, constantly changing and in flux), (2) principle of contradiction (reality is in contradiction: There is old and new, ugly and beautiful, and good and evil in everything), and (3) principle of holism (everything is connected and nothing is independent). Given how Westerners and Easterners may differ in the principles of thought they tend to practice and endorse, they may also report different levels of emotional complexity and the degree to which they experience love and hate in relationships. Shiota et al. (2010) found a stronger negative correlation for European–American couples when reporting the presence of love and contempt in their relationship. Interestingly, there was a stronger positive correlation for love and contempt with Asian–American couples, suggesting that the experience of love and hate or the reporting of love and hate in an intimate relationship may be culturally dependent. These findings may also reflect differences in methodology, as participants who come in for a relationship study, especially if they are from the West or follow Western cultural conventions of thought, may be less inclined to admit or acknowledge their feelings of contempt or hate for their significant other. That being said, if these couples were asked to discuss their degree of hate or contempt, so that the hate or contempt is assumed to be already present in the relationship, then they may have reported things differently. After all, much of the research by Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield (2007) and Aumer et al. (2015) saw that participants were readily able to discuss hate in their romantic relationships if they are asked in a way that assumes the presence of hate. Culture obviously plays a role in how hate is reported or expressed; however, any cultural differences in the degree to which it is experienced are still unanswered.

More importantly, may be the question of why love and hate, which seem to have very different characteristics, be so readily present in any intimate relationships. Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield's (2007) analysis identified that betrayal and personality differences seem to be the most reported reasons for why people report hating someone. If we think about intimate relationships and the nature of intimacy, it depends on vulnerability (Hatfield and Rapson 1994). In an intimate relationship, one exposes both physical and psychological qualities about oneself that may not be represented in other less intimate relationships (e.g., with strangers, acquaintances, or coworkers). Exposure of our dreams, expectations, hidden thoughts, and bodies to a person that we love may lend itself to a stronger more loving relationship. However, such vulnerability also allows for ridicule, betrayal, and a weaker relationship. Someone who knows our dreams and expectations can now be a source of betrayal when they do not help those dreams come true or fail to meet our expectations. Building a stronger intimate relationship depends on some amount of

vulnerability; however, given the degree to which people report hate in their intimate relationships, it seems prudent to expect that some of that vulnerability may leave one feeling less loved and possibly fuel one's hatred. Current Western culture does not offer many stories or examples to help construct a script or schema for how love and hate can operate in an intimate relationship without it envoking destruction or violence. Currently, we seem more dependent on social psychological research to help elucidate the operation of hate in intimate relationships, and such research is only in its nascent stages. Although psychoanalytic theory has provided some information, much of its theoretical nature seems dependent on unobservable unconscious processes or therapeutic relations (e.g., Epstein 1977), which do not lend themselves readily to the scientific method. That being said, Freud's observation that unlike dogs, we seem to mix our love and hate does appear to be supported by some of the empirical research (e.g., Fitness and Fletcher 1993; Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield 2007; Shiota et al. 2010; Aumer et al. 2015). However, much of our expectations of love seem to necessitate happiness and a lack of hate. What the current research does show is that expectations of love without hate in our intimate relationships are unfounded. Better preparation for how we can handle our hate and identifying hate as a normal emotional experience in a relationship may help create more lasting and beneficial relationships. Research on contempt in romantic relationships has already shown how contempt is one of the signs of relationship dissolution (Gottman & Krokoff 1989), however, very little research has gone into how to deal with that contempt or other forms of hate. Demonizing hate and seeing it only as a form of destruction may limit our ability to better understand its more nuanced goal of self-protection. By recognizing how hate can affect our perceptions of people and expectations of threat, we may become better at identifying when we engage in such misperceptions, aiding in our ability to see how others, like ourselves, are responding to their own environmental pressures and predicaments. That being said, just because hate may make us more vigilant of possible dangers from a target of hate, it does not necessarily mean this vigilance is unjustified. Hate's vigilance may be necessary in many social situations, so desiring it to be gone may actually be dangerous. Nevertheless, many of our current intimate relationships may benefit from not only identifying when we hate, but how that hate can affect our perceptions. Awareness of the presence and effect of hate in our intimate relationships may provide essential information in how to help ourselves and our relationships be more content, productive, and satisfying.

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# Chapter 9
# We Hate What We Fear: Interpersonal Hate from a Clinical Perspective

**Jerrold Lee Shapiro**

The experience of hate is most often perceived as uncomfortable and debilitating. Hatred ties individuals to that which is offensive, and it blocks them from moving on with life. It seems that the sooner and more completely hate can be eliminated from life, the better. Yet feelings of hate, anger, and the accompanying desire for revenge are resistant to change and not easily lost.

If we make the common clinical assumption that all behavior and emotion have some functional value, hate is no exception. In this chapter, hate is explored from the perspective of a psychotherapist, dealing with clients who are blocked by those difficult feelings. Hateful feelings are explored for their positive function and any underlying motivation.

Although all hatred, including animosity toward groups resulting in bigotry and prejudice, may share common precursors (Hamilton and Sherman 1996; Sternberg 2005), those hatreds lie beyond the current scope, that of hate in intimate close relationships. The primary focus here is interpersonal hate and the confluence of love and hate from a clinical perspective. The common generator underlying these hatreds is anxiety.

There are at least two reasons to support this distinction. First and foremost, those that hate others because of their group membership are very unlikely to appear for psychotherapy. It is incomprehensible, for example, that clinical work would be requested by a fundamentalist crusader because of a hatred of "infidels." Secondly, research supports the notion that the subjective experience of hate occurs primarily in close interpersonal relationships (Aumer et al. 2015; Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield 2007).

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When it comes to hate in relationships, it is hard to overstate the case for Medea as the poster girl. Biblical Cain and real-world characters like Charles Manson, Lorena Bobbitt, and the Borgia clan aside, Medea is the true overachiever. In Euripides' (1963) play, the myth of Medea and Jason contains most of the elements in which hate continues to be viewed today: a close relationship, betrayal, lingering anger and rage, and a lust for revenge. As a "warm-up" to hate-murders, Medea killed her brother to distract her father while she ran away with Jason. When Jason subsequently betrayed her, she responded by killing his new lover and her father, before murdering her own two sons.

Thankfully, most of the hate expressed in psychotherapy falls far short of Euripides' fiction, although the themes expressed in the myth have modern-day relevance.

## Clinical Literature on Hate

As dramatic as expressions of hate in relationships may be, the topic has been surprisingly understudied. As part of the preparation for this chapter, I explored 41 texts on couple therapy, intimacy, and relationships. The word "hate" appears only once in the index of all these texts. Similar psychotherapeutic writing on the phenomenon most often focuses on hate in transference (i.e., Winnicott 1947), splitting in treatment of borderline personality disorders (i.e., Ogden 1993), and in post-divorce adjustment. Empirical studies of hate-oriented treatment are similarly quite limited.

From this, it might be easy to conclude that hate has a relatively rare occurrence. However, texts that have come down through the ages, such as those of the Greek myths or of the bible, indicate quite clearly that hatreds, revenge, and traumatic reactions are neither uncommon, nor unworthy of a clinical investigation. Reflecting this are the plentiful expressions of interpersonal hate in literature and the arts.

So, why is interpersonal hate so little studied in the psychological literature? One reason has to do with how disquieting hate is to a civilized society, especially in the context of close relationships. Although the bible is rife with stories of jealousy, betrayal, and hate, the overall message in most religions is that hate is at best undesirable and could be far more problematic. Because of the injunctions about feeling hate, there is likely great underreporting of the emotion and shame when it is acknowledged. As Ben-Ze'ev (2000) reported, people readily admit to anger, but they were less inclined to admit that they hate someone. Could such a destructive emotion as hate be too unseemly or shameful to justify scientific inquiry?

## A Working Definition of Hate

Dictionary definitions of hate (i.e., Merriam-Webster, Thatcher and McQueen 1962) commonly center on "intense dislike, often in a way that evokes feelings of anger, hostility or animosity." Many definitions focus on the intensity of the hostile feelings and intent. Wikipedia (hatred 2015) defines hate as, "a deep and emotional extreme dislike. It can be directed against individuals, groups, entities, objects, behaviors, or ideas." Hatred is often associated with feelings of sufficient anger and disgust that it includes a desire for harm to come to the hated party. Atypically, the first definition of hate in the Merriam-Webster (n.d.) online dictionary adds a crucial causal dimension "intense hostility and aversion *usually deriving from fear, anger, or sense of injury*" (italics added).

It is important to distinguish between simple anger, an evident component of hate and hatred per se. There are major differences in intensity and duration. Anger might come and go, and can coexist with other reactions to a person. Anger may be expressed in non-hurtful ways, and anger seeks expression, not necessarily revenge or an accompanying wish for harm to come to the object. Unlike for hate, anger dissipates with expression or confrontation.

By contrast, hatred is more pervasive, less nuanced and requires a desire to hurt the presumed offender. Hatred may overwhelm the hater and obscure any other feelings. Unlike anger, hate emerges from a feeling of intense threat. Often, the threat may be existential or perceived as such. Confronted with a serious primitive threat (annihilation or desertion), the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) kicks in, generating impulses for fight or flight. From a survival perspective, hate mobilizes us to battle the threat. In an interpersonal realm, the danger of suffocation/annihilation or desertion/abandonment (existential threats to helpless dependent infants) may be activated (i.e., Klein and Riviere 2013). In short, we may experience a relational rejection and danger to self-esteem with primitive responses (to a perceived life-threatening situation). This is particularly evident when we feel shamed. In short, individuals experiencing SNS activation require a physical or psychological defense. In such situations, basic anxiety is converted into hate as a defense against greater fears.

Sternberg (2005) theorized that the experience of hate has three core elements:

1. passion,
2. negation of intimacy, and
3. commitment.

To Sternberg's core, additional factors are added here for clinical relevance:

4. a psychologically intolerable level of anxiety,
5. a loss of empathy for the other person(s), and
6. a need to keep the hated object present and alive in one's psychological/emotional experience.

The combination that generates hate requires high levels of affect (initially anxiety), a perceived betrayal that generates an alteration in the level of relationship connection, includes greater, but not complete distance, and no dissipation with expressed anger.

This relationship between fear and hatred did not begin with psychoanalysis or psychotherapy. In Act I, Scene III of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare (1985) wrote, "In time we hate that which we often fear."

## *Hate as a Secondary Emotion*

According to Greenberg and Johnson (1988), there are both primary (biologically based) and secondary (socially derived) emotions. Although there are many categorizations of the experience of hate, it is best considered an emotional state: in particular a secondary emotion. In the *Urban Dictionary*, Southern (2004) describes hate as "an unnatural emotion (i.e., hate is something that is derived from natural emotions such as anger or fear); learned dislike or loathing of another person, group, or thing."

Secondary emotional reactions tend to be defensive coping strategies. From a clinical perspective, it is heuristic to consider hate to be a defense against the primary emotion of fear or anxiety. In the context of an intimate relationship, exacerbation of these fears may turn to hate as vulnerability increases. Shaw (1907) famously wrote, "*Hatred is the coward's revenge for being intimidated*" (p. 77).

What kinds of anxieties can produce that kind of vulnerability? The greatest fears are those that disrupt the process status quo in a significant relationship. For example, an alteration in interaction that is more distant than expected can elicit fears of abandonment or rejection. Conversely, greater closeness than desired or anticipated can lead to fears of suffocation or annihilation. Each of these can be experienced as a betrayal and elicit anxiety about the unknown. Because the fear of the unknown can become intolerable to contain internally, it is unconsciously projected onto the presumed source of the threat to one's safety. Hatred of that person then replaces the less tolerable anxiety of isolation or non-being (May 1969; Yalom 1980; Shapiro 2016). In their classic article, Bugental and Bugental (1984) describe having to change in facing the unknown as "a fate worse than death" (p. 543).

## *Theories of Emotion*

Since the late 1800s, three theories of emotion have dominated psychological study: James-Lange (James 1890), Cannon (1927, 1931), and Schachter and Singer (1962). In 1890, James argued that:

> the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur *is* the emotion (p. 449).

This theory has often been depicted simply as "I am afraid because I am running."

By contrast, Cannon (1929, 1931) presciently argued that each emotion had a different locus in the brain. Only recently, several decades later, have technology-driven fMRI studies begun to demonstrate some of the differences he predicted.

In a series of ingenious experiments, Schachter and Singer (1962) attempted to explain differences between the James-Lange and Cannon perspectives. They offered a significant step in consolidation with their two-factor theory of emotion. Noting that once there is generalized state of arousal,[1] an individual immediately:

> labels, interprets, and identifies this stirred-up state in terms of the characteristics of the precipitating situation and one's apperceptive mass. Thus, an emotional state may be considered a function of a state of physiological arousal and of a cognition appropriate to this state of arousal. The cognition, in a sense, exerts a steering function. (p. 380).

By using artificial epinephrine-based sympathetic nervous system arousal, they were able to produce states of euphoria or anger based on cognitive manipulations. Although there have been critiques of the methodology of the studies over the past 50+ years and questions about how well it compared to Cannon's hypotheses given modern-day technology, there is considerable heuristic value of the two-factor theory today.

## *Clinical Implications of the Two-Factor Theory*

The model that emotion contains two stages and two components is particularly germane to understanding and working with hate in the clinical setting. First of all, there is awareness that all emotion requires a basic system activation—a primary emotional reaction, such as anxiety.

Secondly, the two-factor theory allows a clinician to both understand the emotional state of a client and to make effective context-driven interventions. Interventions that utilize an aroused state generated within the context of an intimate therapeutic relationship and subsequent reinterpretations of that affective reactivity may be especially suitable to dealing with feelings of hate.

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[1]The terms arousal and anxiety are used interchangeably in hundreds of experimental studies of learning and performance (cf. Shapiro 2016). In the clinical literature, the major definitional difference between "anxiety" and "fear" is that the latter has a clear object, whereas anxiety is untied to the specific context.

## Hate from a Clinical Perspective

As the Chinese general and military strategist, Sun-tzu (c.400 BC), whose "*Art of War*" became popular in business workshops in recent times, noted "Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer" (Kaufman 1996, p. 105).

Aside from military strategy, what possible benefit could there be in keeping the hated object close? If my goal is to rid myself of the person who betrayed me, what benefit is there in keeping her or him in my awareness. The need for emotional closeness and distance with a hated individual may seem paradoxical and a challenge for a therapist.

Before probing the essential connection between love and hate, it is of use to briefly anticipate how clinicians may work with this emotion contextually and intrapsychically. Clinically, two salient factors in interpersonal hate are the presence of anxiety *and the need to keep the object of hatred in one's perceptual field.* This latter aspect is crucial if we consider the consequences of the hate. To the clinician, the core question involves discerning the function or consequence of the hatred (unconscious motivation in psychodynamic approaches). What purpose does it serve, despite contrary beliefs and protestations of the client? Almost invariably, the function of hate, as opposed to apathy, for example, is to keep the person only partially distant. They may be pushed away, reviled, even attacked, but they are psychologically kept close by the client.

Maria is a 36-year-old, American-born, self-described "Latina" who has reportedly been deserted by her husband, Paul. Prior to leaving her and their two children for another relationship, he also gambled away most of the family's savings.

When she first came into therapy, 18 months after his leaving, she was still very distraught, frightened about her future, worried about finances, and furious at the betrayal. Her initial goal was to get help from the therapist in getting "back on my feet and moving on with my life!" In the first session, she described her situation, her continuing interactions with her husband over the children, and provided a lengthy litany of his numerous "sins."

After ascertaining the details and evaluating for potential of domestic violence, the therapist began to probe her specific desires for therapy.

Therapist: "What would you like as an outcome of our meetings?"

Client (in a very angry tone of voice): "I want your help getting away from this bastard who is ruining my life."

Naturally, the therapist explored specific details of any intrusions Paul was making into her life. She described a number of inconsiderate actions and irresponsibility about bringing the children home on time, or of providing agreed-upon child support. She also revealed that she had not filed the divorce papers and that she was constantly thinking of ways to "get even" with him.

Although it would be premature and inappropriate to bring this up in an initial session, the therapist was asking himself a question internally, "What would you have to face if you didn't have this hated being in your world?" Indeed, it is only in

the context of a deep personal therapeutic relationship that this question may be successfully explored. For the therapist, however, that internal query helps him understand some potential value of the hatred she was expressing.

In this situation, Maria's fear of being alone was far greater than her feeling hurt and betrayed. Her hate served two functions: It allowed her to express anger and keep him at a distance and simultaneously kept him present enough to avoid her worse fear of a major life change. In short, the unrelenting hate toward Paul was supporting her sense of security, keeping her safe from dealing with the new context of her life as a single mother.

Underlying this clinical assumption is the notion that hate has the consequence of maintaining both passion and distance. The particular way that it works for individuals is salient for the direction of the therapy, both for insight and for behavior change. Had the therapist simply taken her at her word and tried to help her cut off the relationship entirely, he would be in essence threatening her security. In response, she would be forced to resist the change by maintaining the status quo. It is only once the client can experience sufficient emotional security through the therapeutic relationship can she develop the courage to understand the usefulness of expending so much energy to keep her ex in her emotional life.

At that juncture, Maria may be able to face some of her fears of the unknown. This is usually accomplished by the therapist holding the "keep Paul available" position and allowing Maria to experience the fears of making her new life with therapeutic support.

Maria's dilemma is treated here in part by increasing awareness of the underlying anxiety and by accepting her fears of the unknown as a core component of therapy and of life. For this form of therapy, anxiety is seen as the engine for change and is welcomed as part of the therapy.

## *Two Forms of Anxiety*

Anxiety comes in two flavors: existential and neurotic. The former, existential anxiety is defined as a normal healthy component of life related to awareness of life's true limits. May (1969) argued that awareness of one's limits, ultimately mortality, was the *sine qua non* of growth, freedom, and responsibility. Similarly, Spiegel et al. (2007) opined that facing the big questions and experiencing angst about the unknown is healthier than denying mortality and other unknowns and in the process becoming stagnant, hopeless, and despondent.

By contrast, neurotic anxiety occurs when individuals unconsciously defend against facing the fears of the unknown. This avoidance of healthy (existential) anxiety reflects an (albeit unconscious) effort to maintain the status quo, regardless of the discomfort, pain, or other deleterious impact. Husserl (2008) referred to this avoidance as "automatic responses," phenomena also known as "defenses" or "symptoms." However, these are observed or theorized about they reflect a pressure

to maintain the status quo. In Maria's case, the known demon—her misery about her ex—was less threatening than facing the unknown fears of life alone.

## *Hate and Neurotic Anxiety as a Defense*

Hate is considered a particularly powerful manifestation of neurotic anxiety. It arises from an unconscious defense against facing the anxiety. By keeping the level of affect high, altering anxiety into anger, pointed toward a particular person or action and keeping it alive (not letting the person or emotion go), hate maintains the status quo, regardless how painful it may seem. From this perspective, hate toward another (or toward self in the form of self-loathing) reflects avoidance by giving into the gravitational pull of security, consistency, and predictability of the status quo, avoiding the risks of freedom and facing fears of the unknown.

Thus, a predominant goal of therapy is to help clients become more aware of both the core anxiety and the smokescreen engendered by their automatic reactions. Clients may then choose to continue the avoidance consciously or to opt for the freedom to experiment with and challenge their existential fears of the unknown which their automatic responses obfuscate.

Therapy for symptoms such as unrelenting hatred does not attempt to directly alter or reduce its expression until the client is ready to face those unknowns in her or his life. The example of Maria who cannot stop hating Paul is far from unusual in a therapy practice. The interlinked emotional need to keep the hated object close enough to despise is hardly atypical and an effective method of avoiding the fears attendant in new intimacy.

## *A Social Media Tale of Love and Hate*

The following is a transcription of a series of text messages between my client, Joy (J), a 58-year-old woman, and Bob (B), a man with whom she recently ended a relationship. They had been lovers and close friends when they were college students. Both married others and had long-standing marriages. Over the years, they remained friends, primarily through e-mail. Her marriage ended in divorce about six years ago. About a year ago, his did also. After a month of increasingly intimate conversations and his visiting her, they decided to live together to "test the waters." Their initial agreement was that she would move across country to live with him on the East Coast for a year, until he retired and then he would return to the Bay Area with her. After ten months together, she became dissatisfied with their relationship and gave him an ultimatum, and they mutually agreed that she should return home, while they maintained contact through visits, video calls (Skype), and regular texts and e-mails.

After she left however, he felt primarily relieved and was less avid about phone calls, messages, and video calls. He described the frequent ongoing contact as becoming more of a chore than a pleasure. This is a transcript Joy (J) brought into a therapy session (sans identifying material and somewhat edited for language) covering approximately 48 h of social media contact.

B (in an email, Sunday 5: p.m.). I am having trouble retiring (finances) and my daughters are now living with me (temporarily) while they try to get jobs. I think we may have to delay any permanent move until my life gets a little more financially stable. I'd like to come to visit in July (about six weeks hence) to talk this over with you.

The remainder of the interactions were via text messages, unless otherwise specified.

J (5:15 p.m.) just email me or text me what your thoughts are. I do not want to wait a month and a half to get the news.

B (5:25 p.m.) not necessarily bad news. I just need to get my financial house in order and help my daughters.

J (5:27 p.m.) They are out of college and should be able to live on their own. You are always enabling them to be dependent.

B (Monday 7:04 a.m.) They are both trying to find work to support themselves and as you know, their mother cannot help.

J (7:06 a.m.) Bullshit!!!!!

J (7:12 a.m.) Why can't you respond and be honest with me?

(7:21 a.m.) Bob got an email that Joy's Facebook page had changed from "in a relationship" to "single"

J (7:26 a.m.) This is intolerable don't you care at all about my feelings. Just forget the whole thing.

B (7:55 a.m.) Just got out of the shower and found your messages and change in your Facebook page. What the hell is going on?

J (7:58 a.m.) I am done with you. Don't ever contact me again. You have destroyed my life. I hate you and what you have done to me. I have no options left now.

J (9:45 a.m.) I guess you don't even care enough to communicate. You are a deserter!

B (9:55 a.m.) You told me never to contact you. I am trying to be sensitive to your wishes.

J (10:15 a.m.) If you cared about me or my needs, you wouldn't betray me like this.

B (10:45 a.m.) I didn't change my FB relationship status!

J (10:48 a.m.) You waited 30 min, and that's the best you can do. You want to know why I hate you so much. That's it.

J (4:40 p.m.) I thought you loved me. Don't you know how much I love you and have since we were 20 years old back in college? I am willing to give up my life to be with you. Please tell me you even care just a little bit.

B (4:58 p.m.) Wait a minute Joy. You moved out and went back home. This morning you told me you hate me. What the hell is going on?

J (5:01 p.m.) I love you and I am very angry and hurt by your rejection and betrayal.

At 5:14, Bob got an email that Joy's Facebook page had changed from "single" to "in a relationship with Bob X."

J (5:22 p.m.) That's why I hate you so much! I tell you I love you and you ignore me.

B (6:28 p.m.) Sorry. I was on a conference call for work. Just got your last 2 messages. You know I Iove you. I am just not ready to move in at this point.

J (6:30 p.m.) Yeah a conference call! Screw you! Where are your priorities!!! You just put me last and expect me to be there for you. Screw off. I am done with you.

At 7:55 p.m. Bob got an email that Joy's Facebook page had changed from "in a relationship with Bob X." to "single."

J (Tuesday 5:12 a.m.) I've been trying to call all night. Where are you? Are you caller-id rejecting me? You know what happened when my dad and my husband left. Why do you torture me with avoidance?

B (8:15 a.m.) Was at my dad and step mom's place for a family dinner with the girls. Got home late and crashed. Didn't see your VM?

J (8:18 a.m.) I don't leave messages. Look at your logs and you'll see I called.

Bob called her and they talked by phone for several minutes, during which she apologized and told him she was changing her FB relationship status back. Later that day, he received a series of text messages. Joy told him that if he did not follow the original plan of coming to live with her, she was no longer available for a relationship with him. According to Joy, somewhere around the tenth message she wrote, "eat shit and die!"

It may be easy to dismiss Joy's reaction as, extreme, overemotional and impulsive, but for current purposes, it is important for us to explore the close juxtaposition of love and hate and the perceived betrayal that generated those apparently contradictory feelings for Bob. Of course, we could look at how Bob does not reply to the feelings being expressed, only the content. That is likely how he protects himself?

In Joy's situation, the absence of a response for what she considered an inappropriately lengthy period of time caused her to become anxious. Her cognition quickly clicked in that Bob was rejecting her like her felt rejections and betrayals of the past. As her anxiety was cognitively relabeled (due to contextual cues), it turned into an expression of anger. Even with expression, the anxiety subsided only temporarily and subsequently morphed into a less threatening (secondary) emotion, hate of Bob and blame toward him. Her feelings of hate also have the functional value of keeping him active in her life, reinforcing that she does not have a problem as a lover. Indeed, as Joy described it in a later session, "If it weren't for his

frailties, fear and some bad timing with his daughters, everything I've always wanted would be (vouchsafed)."

Joy's hate of Bob is not particularly unique in psychotherapeutic practice. Often, members of couples express hatred for one another. Whether it is in an intact relationship or a former romantic, friendship, or work relationship, it is almost invariable that the interpersonal hate arises out of a betrayal or perceived betrayal. A curious characteristic of hatred is that the anger and desire for revenge expressed do not seem to diminish, even over lengthy time frames. Those emotions appear as strong each time they arise as if it were a fresh insult, hurt, or betrayal. They are partially fueled by the reduction of anxiety that they replace.

It was only several sessions later that Joy could begin to explore her responsibility in both having the relationship with Bob and of fearing consequences of its continuing or ending.

From a therapeutic perspective, Joy's hate and its functional value are valuable assets that are not to be diminished incautiously. In short, the therapist does not want to end hate but to use it to get to the more primitive underlying fear.

When Joy came into her ninth session, she was crying, reporting that she had undoubtedly driven Bob away for good this time. As her therapist, I focused only temporarily on her report that Bob was not living up to his end of their "bargain." Instead, I refocused on Joy to discover the essence of her explosive emotion.

T Are you aware of similar feelings in here as those just before you sent the last text?
J Yes, but much less strong.
T What emotion are you feeling now?
J I am furious with Bob for betraying me. I love him so much. How could he do that to me?
T The anger and sense of betrayal is clear. I'm wondering what else you might be experiencing.
J Well, I don't know what will happen to me. I'll probably be alone forever now. Bob was my last chance of happiness?
T So it's really scary! If somehow Bob doesn't come through as you'd like, you feel doomed to misery and loneliness.
J Yeah! No! Yeah! Do you think?
T That's a lot of mixed emotions. Let's focus for a moment on the scary parts. What's more fearful, losing Bob, feeling abandoned…?
J I don't know. It's just scary.
T Here I (Joy) am. I am closing in on 60, and I don't know what the future holds.
J (after a lengthy silence) So you think this isn't about Bob. It's me
T From what you have told me, Bob is unpredictable. I think it's more fruitful to focus on the parts of this equation that we can do something about. That puts more pressure on you, but it also gives you more say over the part of your situation that is under your control.
J (deep sigh) I know that's right, but it's easier to be angry with him.

T It is! And we can continue to look at his disappointing behavior, but I don't think that will get us to Joy. How do you understand that much fear about rejection and loneliness?

When they can redefine the situation as anxiety-based vs hate-based, progress is far more likely and potentially long-standing.

## Love and Hate: Strange Bedfellows

Joy is not alone when it comes to feeling both love and hate for a lover or former lover. Liz was 33 when she began therapy. Her expressed goal was to get over a relationship she had in her twenties. Liz met Joe when they were seniors in college. She knew he was married at the time, but got involved with him regardless. She described a passionate, but troubling "on-and-off" relationship that spanned almost eight years. During the time with Liz, Joe (now divorced) had several other sexual relationships. In response, Liz also had sexual encounters with two other men during the relationship years. However, the relationship finally ended when she caught him in bed with another woman when she visited him by surprise.

Early in therapy, she called Joe, "the love of my life," "my soul mate," and my "one and only." She also described a lengthy history of agony, mistrust, and pain and ruefully added "actually for the last several years, the sex wasn't really that good." Her sense was that she was "addicted" to Joe and the relationship and wanted to stop thinking of him all the time. The adjectives she used when describing her feelings about Joe and his current fiancé were decidedly derogatory. She was also consumed with hate for the new woman in his life and had a stalker's level of knowledge about her and her family. She did acknowledge "checking up on the bitch—you know, google… and beyond."

Prior to her current therapy, she had tried mindfulness meditation, a twelve-step program (sex and love addicts anonymous), and anger management treatment to get over her feelings of hate for Joe and his fiancé. None had been successful and she reported, "I think I am worse off now. I am more angry and I am thinking of following him to see if he's cheating on her now." She continued, "if this doesn't work, I am thinking about taking a job in Taiwan."

Liz was locked into a betrayal of her fantasy about, rather than the reality of the Liz–Joe relationship. Joe was not the imagined person with whom she fell in love. Her fantasy of Joe was of a faithful lover who put her first and loved her passionately and unconditionally. By contrast, the real Joe had not changed much from the time she met him. Her hurt however was about the violation of the fantasized relationship. Although she complained, sometimes bitterly, about how she was unable to move on with her life, she continued to hold onto the hate and hurt. Of course, by being stuck, she could keep the familiar pain alive and avoid the unknown fears of vulnerability to a new relationship.

It is interesting that those very fears initially propelled her into a relationship when she was twenty, with a man who already had a girlfriend and was willing to cheat.

The close juxtaposition of feelings of love and hate is not a newly discovered phenomenon. That thin line has long been celebrated in literature and philosophy. Gaius Valerius Catullus, the Roman poet (circa 60 B.C.) in his poems to his beloved, and classically unattainable, "Lesbia," wrote, "I hate and love. And why, perhaps you'll ask. I don't know: but I feel, and I'm tormented" (Boardman and Griffin 1986, p. 489). In 1971, Leonard Cohen's album "Songs of Love and Hate" expressed poetically the interactive drama of these emotions.

In the Def Leppard song, recently covered by Taylor Swift, "When Love and Hate Collide," the singer declares that a single night without "you" is like a year, followed by the desire to stop fighting and the plaintive question, "do you have a heart of stone?"

Many have commented on the kind of hatred that is reserved for someone previously loved. Reik (1972) indicated that indifference was the enemy of relationships. Hate, he described as "the silent (and sometimes not so silent) partner to love" (p. 100). One of the reasons that many theories of interpersonal attraction spuriously show love and hate to be opposites is the nature of the dependent measures that are common in attraction research, rather than the phenomenon itself (Berscheid 1986).

Other studies seem to buttress the evidence of the close connection between love and hate. In their FMRI-based study of hate, Zeki and Romaya (2008) noted that two (of 4) parts of the brain that light up under conditions of "hate" (putamen and insula) also light up during love conditions. Zeki and Romaya call brain activation of the medial frontal gyrus, the right putamen, the medial insula, and the premotor cortex, as the "hate circuit." When this "hate circuit" is firing, jealousy, rage, and attacks on a rival or on a recent lover are likely. This is enhanced because along with increased putamen activation is a corresponding inactivity in the superior frontal gyrus (associated with both self-awareness and laughter). These abilities to look at oneself, to treat oneself with humor and kindness, or to have empathy for the other, disappear in the more primary SNS activation designed for self-preservation.

In love, we shut off negative judgment. In hate, we turn off the ability to reflect on self in order to focus on demonizing the other. In hate, the focus is on negative judgment, self-protection, and "fight."

Technologically advanced indices showing the close link between love and hate is new, but the acknowledgment of the interconnection of these emotions is hardly novel.

Writing without benefit of an MRI, Oscar Wilde (Westwood 2011) wrote, "Hatred is blind, as well as love."

One might argue that the experience of love while exhilarating is also a state of great vulnerability. In love, interpersonal boundaries diminish and one is more protective of the other than of self. There is a sense of becoming one with another as if stretching an emotional skin out and around the object of love. In lovemaking, bodies become one, at least temporarily. The French have a powerful saying,

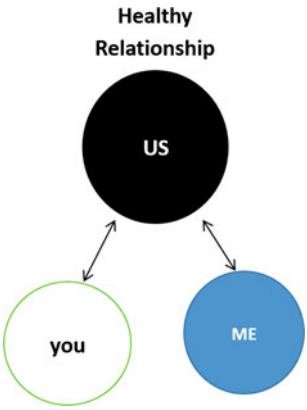


**Fig. 9.1** Pictorial representation of a healthy relationship

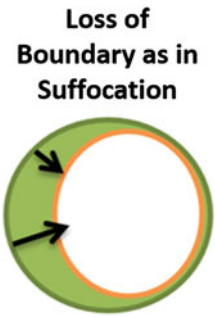


**Fig. 9.2** Pictorial representation of suffocation in a relationship

reflecting orgasm and the separation after such intimate connection, *le petit mort* (the little death). Hurts to my beloved are hurts to me, your joys are my joys.

Healthy relationships have two independent individuals and a shared piece Fig. 9.1. In the Venn diagram depicting healthy relationship, there are three interdependent entities. Each individual and the couple unit.

The boundary between individuals in love may be violated in either direction. One person may lose one's self by being overtaken or overwhelmed. In this case, a sense of suffocation or even annihilation may be experienced. One person becomes hidden in another. An example of the loss of boundaries is when one partner feels completely dependent or under the control of another is depicted in Fig. 9.2. This is poignantly described in the lyrics to *The War You Left* by the 1970s music group, The Joy of Cooking. Describing how to lose oneself in love, the lyrics tell of memories of lying beside one another followed by, "Now I know you only meant to hide me" (Brown 1971).

By contrast, one can also feel violation by abandonment. When a part of the perceived me/we is torn away, there is a gaping hole and great vulnerability. There is no surprise that to defend against such psychic pain, the hole must be covered for protection—often the projection of hurt onto the other is experienced as "look what you have done to me" or the more insidious, "Look at what you made me do." What

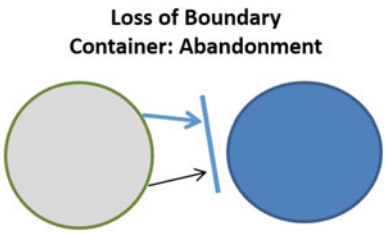


**Fig. 9.3** Pictorial representation of abandonment in a relationship

was previously experienced as love readily slips into hate. The refrain from the classic song, "Me and Bobby McGee" by Kris Kristofferson (and more famously Janis Joplin) expressed that pain in singing, "freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose" (Kristofferson and Foster 1970).

When love is lost, the trauma may be so great and yet the intensity is still present (Fig. 9.3).

For many, hate is a natural result of love betrayed. When an individual has loved and experienced the vulnerability of such a loss of personal boundaries, they are psychologically relatively defenselessness when their passion is not returned or rejected. By transforming unconsciously into feelings of hate, their protective walls can be reestablished (perhaps with a new moat, filled with allegorical emotional monsters that are programmed to hurt the offending former partner). In this fashion, passion continues, but without intimacy or commitment.

In his classic treatise, *I and Thou,* Buber (1970) posits a difference between the two intense feelings. In addition to an acknowledgment that hate and love are closer than indifference, he postulates that love represented and defined by "being in relation" with another is directed at the whole of another person. Hate, by contrast, is directed at only parts of another. This notion coincides with the loss of empathy in our definition of hate.

## Long-Term Lingering Hate

At times, hate can be a dominant factor in a person's life. By demonizing another person or persons, an individual can effectively avoid self-reflection. For example, for Lewis, a former client of mine, the hatred attached to others, not the person who presumably hurt him the most.

In the mid-1970s, Lewis and Ellen tried to fix their failing marriage by "experimenting" with open marriage. He had a number of inconsequential dalliances with other women that "meant nothing." By contrast, he perceived Ellen's sexual liaisons as very serious. He became intensely jealous, often pumping her for details that inevitably upset him more. As their relationship deteriorated, he blamed her sexual partners for alienating his wife. About two years into their experiment, she divorced him and continued on her path of sexual experimentation and a subsequent second marriage. Unable to explore his personal part in the marital strife, Lewis

sank into a depression and began contacting her ex-lovers with hate-filled, threatening letters.

He was referred for therapy 25 years later, when two of these men filed for restraining orders to escape from his rage-filled letters and e-mails. When discussing his ex-wife, he could describe the situation fairly logically and conclude that they tried to overcome a major marital rift and it failed, but when he mentioned the names of the other men, he became as angry he was a quarter century prior. He blamed the other men and one in particular, for "stealing" her from him, although none of them had any contact with Ellen for decades. As therapy progressed, he would frequently opine, "If she is truly stolen, I have nothing. I will die lonely and pathetic." As his therapist, I was struck by the way in which he held onto her as a lifeboat against the raging seas of terror. As long as he maintained his rage at one other man, he kept his (obsessive) "love," stayed connected to her and avoided facing himself. To keep his psychological safety net, he continued to deny that she had voluntarily left him (she was seduced away), that he had any responsibility for their failed relationship or the "open marriage" idea, or that she had been now remarried for almost twenty years and refused to talk with him.

What was most compelling about Lewis as a client was that he was terrified at letting go of his hate for fear of having to face his personal feelings of helplessness, isolation, and responsibility for his own life.

In the course of the therapy, as he began to let go of his anger toward the other men and expressed some lesser anger at Ellen, he became quite suspicious and angry at me, his therapist, for trying to get between "me and my one true love." When I accepted the anger, empathized with his great loss and remained ready and able to be supportive, Lewis began taking the risk of dealing with his fears of emptiness, grief, and loss.[2]

## *My Dissertation Advisor Used and Abused Me*

While we see hate most frequently in lost love relationships, it can also occur in other relationships in which a person experienced dependency. If hate can preserve an emotional status quo, it protects against facing the unknown.

Long after he had developed a fine career as a chemistry professor and researcher at a major medical school, Charles would still talk with great emotion about his desertion by the head of his doctoral committee twenty years prior. He experienced himself as "tortured" by professor X who "used me for his research and then blew up my oral committee by withdrawing at the last moment." He described this faculty member as being notorious for publishing without attribution his doctoral students work and of "treating me like an indentured servant."

[2]Psychodynamic therapists would call this working through projective identification in the transference relationship.

Although Charles said he knew Professor X's reputation before signing on as a graduate assistant, he was willing to put in the "slave-labor to get X's imprimatur and recommendation for jobs." When this was pulled away at the last moment, Charles had the fantasy of his entire career being ruined. In fact, the hated professor had not followed through on many promises, nor did he recommend Charles for a position in a desirable laboratory after graduation. Although Charles had overcome the insult and broken promises and had a career that surpassed that of his betrayer, it did not diminish Charles' feelings of hate over the years.

He came into therapy after "having to restrain myself from punching out this old man at a national conference." As he described his feelings, they seemed as though they were being reported by a dependent graduate student, rather than a nationally recognized scholar, and full professor at a prestigious research university.

He was careful to tell me that one of the reasons he chose me as a therapist was that I was a generation older than himself. Early sessions focused on both his historical experience of abandonment by his father at a very early age and subsequently his feelings of being a graduate student at risk of rejection (and perceived destruction) by Prof X. At one point, it became clear that if he were to lose that sense of being an underling, he would emotionally have to accept that he had become the senior faculty member. He worried aloud about how his own students might hate him for being a demanding researcher and supervisor.

When I queried, "What if some students did find you too tough," he responded, then they would hate me and I would become Prof. X." He began to focus on the implications of facing his fears of rejection by his students as a huge risk. Subsequently, he spoke of his legacy and how important it was for him to be loved by everyone. I asked, "even X? He replied, "especially that prick!"

As we explored the reasons for his need for universal affirmation especially from older men, he began to explore tentatively his many insecurities about being a father, a father figure at work, and a good man.

In the process, he was able to continue to acknowledge that he was betrayed by Prof. X, even intentionally, but he was able to let go of the hate that was blocking his own personal growth. Charles also reported that his blood pressure which required medication had dropped into the normal range for the first time in years and his "tension headaches were less frequent.

## The Price of Hating

As described above, hate in an interpersonal relationship is protective, but problematic. It self-generates, self-incites, and continues without relief. One of the dominant qualities of hate is that it often does not diminish in intensity without some internal shift or significant external intervention. Unlike anger, it does not dissipate with overt expression. Psychologically, hate hurts the hater more than the hated.

The emotional price of the protection hate offers is often quite high. Showing a remarkable flash of insight, former president, Richard M. Nixon, a man who was deeply affected by both his paranoia and hate, remarked in his good-bye speech to the white house staff,

> Always remember, others may hate you, but those who hate you don't win unless you hate them – and then you destroy yourself (Kutler 2013).

## Pathological Indices of Hate

Most examples of hate described heretofore in this chapter are inconvenient, disruptive, and problematic. There are also pathological conditions in which hate is a dominant symptom.

Expressions of hate are fairly common in people diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (BPD). Although diagnostically, BPD is quite complex and controversial, there are some characteristics that relate to both self-hate and hatred of others. Several diagnosticians including Kreisman and Straus (2010) provide descriptive characteristics of individuals who suffer from BPD: a shaky sense of identity, unstable relationships including sudden outbursts of anger, hypersensitivity to real or imagined rejection, brief, turbulent love affairs, intense feelings of emptiness and worthlessness, self-destructive and risky behaviors such as eating disorders, drug abuse, indiscriminate and unprotected sex, an irrational fear of abandonment and an extreme fear bordering on terror of being alone, impulsivity with frequent loss of temper or physical fights, and psychological splitting.

These experiences of those with BPD (often also described as "emotional dysregulation") are fertile ground for anxiety-fueled hatred. The ubiquity of hypersensitive triggers, unpredictable mood swings, and accompanying inability to self-soothe makes it likely that strong negative feelings will not dissipate. When emotional dysregulation is present, a natural defense to the anxiety about the emotional unpredictability is splitting and hatred of those who are viewed as "bad."

### *Splitting: A Primary Defense for Coping with Anxiety-Fueled Hatred in BPD*

Instead of the normal ambivalence that may occur in relationships, there is a tendency in some people to bifurcate experience and people into "all good" or "all bad." Klein (1946) and Quatman (2015) relate this to normal infantile states prior to development of the self. When infantile attachment needs are unmet for infants (and later for adolescents and adults), anxiety dramatically increases. When it becomes unbearable, splitting–dividing the world of others into black and white, good and bad, may provide some relief.

Of course, this relief comes at a high cost. There is a loss of empathy for others. In addition, feelings of betrayal occur with some regularity as others do not live up to the fantasized "good person" in all situations, and the person is perpetually on alert for instances of hurt or shame. Similarly, once another is labeled as "bad," there is considerable (often unrelenting) hatred directed toward them.

One common example relevant for this chapter may be seen in a common experience of former romantic partners. In responding to both the hurt and shame of his wife leaving him for another man, Ken reported "I hate Mary and even more, I hate her for making me feel this way." Ken is describing his wound of rejection, shame at her leaving and his further shame of feeling hatred. He was also facing tremendous anxiety at being alone again after a two decade marriage. Shortly later, he stated "I can find nothing good about our years together. It was obviously all a sham. She was just waiting until she could move up in the world to someone with more money."

It is important to note that splitting, and the loss of tolerance for ambiguity or ambivalence is often present in hate in individuals who may have borderline-like defenses, but do not qualify for diagnosis as BPD.

It is interesting that the opposite of splitting has been described as "wisdom" in a famous observation by Fitzgerald (1993),

> The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function. (p. 69)

## Self-hatred

A special form of hatred is that of self-loathing: when the subject and object of hate are the same.

Certain individuals report extreme dislike or hatred of themselves, often because of circumstances of their birth or demographic identity such as their family, socioeconomic class, or prejudicial social stereotypes of a group with which they identify. They may suffer from ethnic self-hatred, disabilities, perceived deficits, such as in body dysmorphic or eating disorders (Hornbacher 2014), PTSD (O'Bryan et al. 2014), or feeling exiled from the larger society. This is often seen in hatred of one's own race (i.e., McWhorter 2000), gender identity (Bodlund 1994), nationality, sexual orientation (i.e., Herek et al. 2009), or any other non-optional group of which one may be a member.

Hatred toward oneself may be particularly convoluted. It is much easier distancing oneself from a hated other than to distance from a part of one's own identity, especially when the identity involves a minority status that is in disfavor from an antagonistic larger society. Often, the prejudice against hate for the group becomes internalized.

Because one cannot distance from oneself as a means of ending the hate in self-loathing, therapy is far more complex. Certain types of behavior or cognitive

behavior therapy and prayer or mindfulness meditation may be used to provide relief by minimizing the self-loathing, but as has been discussed above, they may have only minimal or shorter-term impact on the feelings of hate, because they do not address the motivational value of the hate.

One of the factors working against successful reduction of self-hate is potentially physical or emotional self-harm. Often, individuals trapped in a cycle of self-hate may injure themselves, take extreme risks, put themselves in abusive relationships, or even attempt suicide.

When I first saw Lori, she was 19 and a veteran of inpatient facilities. She was verbally abusive and erratic in coming to her appointments on time, sometimes testing the therapy by in her words, "blowing (sessions) off completely." Lori's childhood was very difficult. Adopted at 18 months, she was subsequently "un-adopted" and sent to a series of different foster homes, before being found and reclaimed by her biological father when she was 13.

Lori had a history of risky sexual encounters that began at age 15, and she was hospitalized with a variety of diagnoses through the years. She was referred to me, while she was in a partial hospitalization program at a local psychiatric facility. Among her collection of diagnoses were conduct disorder, bipolar disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder. She was also described as promiscuous and sexually seductive with hospital staff. The referring psychiatrist reported that she thought Lori was one step from incarceration in the penal system, although her criminal record to that point was limited to a couple of misdemeanors involving self-medicating with marijuana and prescription drugs.

After several months, Lori began confiding in me. She told me that she had been molested in a foster home when she was 12 or 13 and beginning puberty. Over time, she reported that she could use sex as a way to get better treatment from offenders in the household. Her stories of abuse were reified when during treatment, a news report broke that the foster home had been raided and three people indicted for child sexual abuse.

Although Lori had many times talked about turning off her body (dissociating), she also described hating her body, especially her breasts, because "when they started to show, that's when my foster brothers started to come at me."

She became very agitated after news of the arrests and showed extreme anger and hate toward both the abusers and the arresting officers. Shortly thereafter, two events occurred that underscored the level and impact of her self-hate. After a session in which she described being disgusted with her body, she arrived for the next session disheveled with two buttons on her blouse undone and obviously wearing no undergarments.

When I commented that I thought her blouse had become unbuttoned, she quickly and angrily queried whether I also hated the sight of her "rack." I asked her what made her think I would find her body or herself unsightly. She responded that she felt that way and then blushing, buttoned the blouse. Shortly later, she revealed a plan to go out that evening in a notoriously dangerous section of town. I asked her if she was planning on being raped. She answered affirmatively, and I asked whether she told me this before the fact as a way to get me to stop her. When she

seductively said "maybe," we devised a plan for her to stay with her father until the feeling passed.

Lori's self-loathing of her adult physical sexual characteristics and anxiety about sex in a loving relationship led her to find ways to be harmed in sexual ways. Whether it was being inappropriately seductive, or in unconsciously arranging to be sexually violated, she kept the hate intact.

Lori was my client for almost three years. It was only when she could trust me enough to contain and address the underlying terror she felt in almost any interpersonal interaction was she able to risk developing a more positive self-image and be more vulnerable in safe relationships, including the one with her father. Today, roughly twenty years later, she is married and has two biological children. She and her husband also take in foster children from time to time, and she is working as an advocate for children now in the system.

Lori's self-hatred came from a history of neglect and abuse and resulted in both physical and emotional self-punishment. Augie's self-loathing led him to avoid all situations in which he could find either harm or pleasure.

## *Internalized Homophobia*

When LGBTQ individuals are "in the closet," they often face a conundrum, feeling that they do not fit into society because of their sexual orientation and a combination of recognizing their minority status and also fearing and becoming angry at the nature of their biology. Sometimes, the internalized homophobia can turn to self-hate, and at other times, it can evolve into external homophobia and hatred of all things gay (i.e., Walch et al. 2015).

When I first met Augie, a 29-year-old Asian man, he had never been in a romantic relationship. He worked in Silicon Valley as a programmer and manager at a small, successful technology firm. In his "rare free time," Augie was a set designer for theater groups in the Bay Area.

Augie initially became aware of his homosexual feelings in childhood. It was particularly problematic because in his family and subcultural group, homosexual behavior was viewed as unacceptable and an object of great shame. He described an early experience of playing around with childhood friends and putting on one of his sister's dresses. When his parents saw him in the dress, they beat and shamed him and sent him to an uncle for more punishment. He reported, "I never did that again in front of them… I am not even a cross-dresser, but I think their reaction was too extreme."

When he presented for therapy, he described himself as attracted to other men, but "very inactive." He described feeling very anxious in any romantic setting and tended to avoid chances to engage with others who might be attracted to him. He also described in greater depth a few minimal attempts to date women that his family approved.

Augie's self-hate came out in two ways. First, he acknowledged some risky, self-defeating behavior, such as going to gay bars in the city, and attending gay pornographic movies that were notorious pickup spots. Yet "I always came home alone and never engaged in any sexual behavior in the theater or afterward." Second, he believed that he was damaged goods and unable to be in a long-term relationship.

For a while, he was able to justify avoidance by his fears of AIDS or other STDs. He often described himself as "mostly a virgin." When asked what that meant, he became flushed and flustered and with great difficulty said that he had engaged in kissing and petting with other men and some brief oral sex with a friend when he was in high school.

On two occasions, he was tormented in gay-bashing episodes. When he described other homosexuals, he spoke primarily about the men he observed in gay bars and in the movie houses. He described their behavior as "licentious" and "gross," implying that were he to give into his homosexuality, he would do so in the same way as he perceived their behavior—more at the pornography, rather than loving level. During sessions, he spoke of "glory holes" and bath houses and anonymous sexual encounters and described them with disdain.

As Augie and I talked more, he reported hating the gay parts of himself and always saw becoming sexually active as something shameful and disgusting. In short, by creating the straw man of extreme public homosexual behavior, he was repulsed by it. He derided his sexual orientation as "not Augie." In this way, he came to hate gayness in general and himself in particular.

In this way, Augie was in a self-defeating loop. Hating an image of homosexual behavior he creates, he then backs away, protecting himself from facing the anxiety of self-acceptance, yet ending up isolated and lonely and craving that which he is internally denying himself.

Over a three-year period in therapy, Augie worked on coming to grips with his homosexual feelings, cultural demands from his family of origin, and his projections of the nature of gay life. He has now begun to confront his own discomfort at being associated with his extreme caricatures of gay life and subsequent hate of any parts of himself that reflect those extreme images.

As can be seen in both examples of Lori and Augie, the clinical approach to self-hatred may be more complicated. However, the same approach involving the underlying primary emotion is useful. Thus, self-hate does not require a unique focus of therapeutic attention.

## Summary

It is not hard to find expressions of hatred in romantic, friendship, and work relationships. Hate is an emotion that is both commonplace and often denied as inappropriate or shameful. At first blush, it is difficult to see any redeeming value in hatred. Feeling hate toward someone is commonly an uncomfortable and

disquieting experience. It is a feeling that keeps one on edge with a likely activated SNS and prevents movement away from some very unpleasant and hurtful experience. Because of the discomfort, it is natural to try to help clients by directly trying to reduce or eliminate the feelings of hate.

Yet for the clinician who is working with clients to help them gain insight and to alter the process by which hate-inducing betrayal is felt, the issue is complex. Characteristically, direct attention to the hate is fairly ineffective, because as an emotion, hate is best viewed as a secondary, arising from defending against a more primary feeling of overwhelming anxiety that threatens the status quo. The crucial therapeutic question is how the hate is functional for the person? Most often, hate has a consequence of maintaining both passion and distance. The particular way that it works for individuals is salient for the direction of the therapy, both for insight and behavior change.

As a psychotherapist, I have to be concerned not only with the reason for hate, but also for what it gets the hater into or out of. For example, hate often serves as a shield against greater intrapsychic fears. As long as the hatred persists, a client may avoid confrontation with some far greater unknown fear (isolation, loneliness, mortality, responsibility, etc.).

The method of choice in working with this complex emotion is providing sufficient relational support for the "hate defense" and gently easing the client into a focus on the larger existential anxiety.

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