



Introduction

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*I*t is amply documented that day-to-day well-being, overall happiness and psychological adjustment, physical health, and even the length of life itself are all significantly influenced by the quality of our closest relationships. Indeed, our continuation as a species depends on the formation and maintenance of social bonds. As helpless infants, we require nurturance and protection for our very survival; as adults, we must find and retain mates long enough to reproduce; and as parents, we must provide adequate care to our offspring so that they too survive to reproductive age. Dependence on and interdependence with our conspecifics is a fundamental fact of the human condition.

The central aim of this book is to provide an integrative, science-based overview of human bonding across the lifespan. To achieve this goal, we draw from the large, heterogeneous and multidisciplinary field of theory and research that defines contemporary relationship science. Topics include infant–caregiver attachment, human social nature, child and adolescent social development, mate selection, love and sexual desire, “hooking up” and online dating, keys to relationship success, predictors and consequences

of relationship dissolution, and the role of social connectedness in morbidity and mortality. Together, the chapters tell the fascinating story of how and why humans bond with each other and how they enable, enrich, and, yes, complicate the unique experience of being human.

The book is organized into four major parts. Part I covers early bonding experiences from infancy through adolescence. The chapters in this part address the basics of ethological attachment theory, the coevolution of infant–caregiver behavior systems, and the normative developmental transition from parental to peer to partner attachment. Part II addresses three different perspectives on mating phenomena. The chapters in this part examine mating through the lenses of social psychological processes, evolutionary trade-offs, and animal models. Part III highlights new topics, ideas, and developments in the relationship field. The chapters in this part explore the changing nature of romantic relationship initiation via hooking up and online dating, links and distinctions between love and lust and their implications for same-sex sexuality, and the latest findings on the conceptualization and measurement of adult attachment styles. Part IV emphasizes the profound and pervasive impact of interpersonal relationships in everyday life. The chapters discuss the key role of perceived partner responsiveness in relationship well-being, the predictors and consequences of relationship dissolution, and the effects of social connectedness on morbidity and mortality.

BONDING PHENOMENA FROM INFANCY THROUGH ADOLESCENCE

The book begins with babies for two reasons. First, there is overwhelming evidence that the quality of relationships with primary caregivers during infancy can have lasting effects on how one subsequently relates to others. Second, in terms of their functions and dynamics, infant–caregiver attachments and adult pair bonds have much in common.

The first chapter of Part I (by Dykas and Cassidy) provides a detailed overview of John Bowlby’s ethological attachment theory, which grew out of his attempts to explain the distress of infants and young children in response to separation from their primary caregivers. A central concept of the theory is that attachment is regulated by an innate behavioral system designed to ensure that helpless and vulnerable infants will maintain proximity to and resist separations from the adults who care for and protect them. All normal human infants, provided the opportunity, form an emotional bond with at least one person before their first birthday. This predisposition to bond is one of several basic, hardwired human universals. Many animal species are capable of walking within hours after birth, and some

of our closest primate relatives reach sexual maturity by age 4. In stark contrast, human infants are completely helpless at birth. It takes weeks just to develop the strength to hold up our own relatively large heads, a year or more to walk, and another decade beyond that to reach sexual maturation. Simply stated, we would not survive if we did not form close ties with adult caregivers and protectors.

While forming such bonds is the norm, there are nonetheless differences in the quality of these relationships. In testing Bowlby's normative theory, Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues observed distinct patterns of individual differences in infant-caregiver attachments. Specifically, the patterns they identified—one secure and two insecure—reflect systematic variation in how infants feel and behave in relation to their primary caregivers. Further, the different patterns were found to be systematically related to the quality of care the infants had received in the first few months of life. Subsequent studies have shown these patterns of attachment to be related to a wide variety of developmental outcomes.

The attachment system is one evolved mechanism that serves to bring infants and adults into bond-promoting contact. Chapter 2 (by Zeifman) describes the role played by other coevolved characteristics (i.e., features of one individual that evoke a particular response in another individual). For example, infant faces are typified by bulging foreheads, large eyes, and receding chins, and these features elicit caregiving responses from adults. Another example is that in interacting with infants adults spontaneously modify the pitch and intonation of their speech in a manner that the infants find appealing. Chapter 2 addresses additional coevolved characteristics as well as the many ways in which early brain development is shaped by infant-caregiver interactions.

Chapter 3 (by Campa) serves as a bridge between infant-caregiver attachment and adult romantic attachments, which are the focus of subsequent chapters. Among the many developments between infancy and adolescence, two have special significance for bonding. The first is a steady increase in the balance of time spent with peers versus parents. The second is the physical transformation associated with puberty. Both developments enhance the salience of gender. Children self-segregate on the basis of sex, boys and girls have distinctly different patterns of peer play, and physical changes associated with puberty serve to differentiate male from female.

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO MATING

Part II offers three distinct perspectives on mating. The first—introduced in Chapter 4 (by Günaydin, Selcuk, and Hazan)—is a social-psychological

approach to the factors that influence mate selection. In essence, it is a process of narrowing a large pool of potential mates down to “the one.” Factors such as propinquity and similarity reduce the pool significantly. Within this smaller pool, some people are judged more appealing than others on the basis of such characteristics as physical appearance, personality, and social status. As a result of an inherent aversion to social rejection, the pool is narrowed still further to those individuals who are judged to be responsive or attainable. Perceived reciprocal liking on the part of an appealing other is a common trigger for romantic infatuation whereby one individual becomes the sole focus of attention.

The second perspective is based in evolutionary psychology and, more specifically, the question of whether to adopt a long-term, pair-bonding mating strategy or not. Traditionally, evolutionary models of human mating emphasized sex differences, especially the differential costs of reproduction for men versus women. The typical woman produces an average of one egg per month from puberty to menopause. In contrast, a typical man produces 500 million sperm cells per day, and for many more years. Additionally, including gestation, lactation, and offspring care, the reproductive cost for women is years of investment, whereas the minimal investment for men is a few minutes. This asymmetry is hypothesized to affect every aspect of mating psychology, including interest in long- versus short-term mating, what qualities are most desired in a potential mate, and the strategies one employs to attract and retain mates. Chapter 5 (by Eastwick and Tidwell) summarizes the multiple evolutionary forces that have shaped the extent to which individuals invest in parenting effort versus mating effort. Importantly, the chapter includes more recent advances in evolutionary models of human mating. The newest findings underscore the value of hormonal and physiological evidence (compared with self-reports) and the magnitude of within-sex (compared with between-sex) differences.

The third contemporary approach looks to animal models for potential clues and fruitful avenues of research on the underlying mechanisms of human bonding. For example, monogamy is exceedingly rare in the animal kingdom. Humans typically equate monogamy with sexual exclusivity, whereas ethologists use a variety of behavioral and physical features to determine the mating pattern of a species (e.g., whether ovulation is overt or covert, the degree of sexual dimorphism, the extent of paternal offspring care, and especially the presence or absence of a pair bond between reproductive partners). As noted in Chapter 6 (by Curtis), it is exceptional for two unrelated adult animals to form a close, enduring bond. However, much has been learned from studying the tiny proportion of species in which pair bonding is the norm. Specifically, there is strong evidence that

social bonding—whether between parents and offspring or between reproductive partners—involves essentially the same mechanisms and the same neurobiological and neurochemical underpinnings.

NEW TOPICS, IDEAS, AND DEVELOPMENTS

Part III is devoted to new topics of study, new ways of thinking about some old topics, and new developments in an established but evolving area of research. Chapter 7 (by Sprecher and Metts) addresses two new ways of initiating interpersonal relationships or meeting potential mates: online dating and hooking up. In Western cultures, the average age at marriage continues to go up, which often translates into more years of uncommitted relationships. Technological advances have made it easy to meet lots of people with whom encounters would otherwise be unlikely, thus expanding the pool of potential mates. New terms for these new arrangements have entered the lexicon, like *booty calls* and *friends with benefits*. Researchers have begun to investigate these changes, but more work is needed to understand their full impact on relationship trajectories and outcomes. In the meantime, it appears that romantic attraction is still a key factor in relationship initiation.

Love, desire, and sexual orientation are not new topics, but the perspective on them that is offered in Chapter 8 (by Diamond) is significantly new. Kinsey advanced our understanding of sexual orientation by viewing it as a continuum rather than a discrete category. More recent research has shown that sexual orientation can and should be conceptualized in terms of multiple dimensions and that individuals may vary independently on these dimensions. Specifically, a person can be sexually attracted to one gender yet romantically attracted to the other. What is new here is the hypothesis that a key to understanding sexual orientation is to view it through the lens of distinct social behavioral systems. If romantic love and sexual desire are rooted in different systems, their targets (whether same sex or other sex) need not correspond. Additionally, each system serves a unique function, but they can and often do influence the activation of other systems. For example, the close interpersonal proximity inherent to the attachment system can trigger the activation of the sexual mating system, or vice versa. Sexual desire can lead to romantic love or follow from it. Further, differences in the likelihood of one system acting as a trigger for another might also help explain important differences between female and male sexuality.

Chapter 9 (by Shaver and Mikulincer) reviews the latest developments in the measurement of adult attachment. The initial measure was simply

a translation of Ainsworth's three patterns of infant-caregiver attachment into terms appropriate for adult romantic relationships. In the 25 years since, countless studies have found systematic associations between attachment styles and the way people think, feel, and behave and in their closest social relationships. What is new in the area of adult attachment is how individual differences are conceptualized and measured. Based on the results of taxometric analyses, the three-category model of attachment styles was replaced with a two-dimensional model. One dimension is attachment anxiety, the core of which is fear of abandonment; the other dimension is attachment avoidance, which is essentially avoidance of interpersonal closeness. Chapter 9 details these developments in the conceptualization and measurement of adult attachment as well as the theoretical implications. In addition, it sheds considerable light on why some romantic relationships endure and others do not.

RELATIONSHIP EFFECTS ON MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY

Long before there was a field of relationship science there was awareness and even empirical evidence of powerful links between relationships and health. The famous Hammond report on the health effects of cigarette smoking is a great example. During the multiyear study, smokers were twice as likely to die as nonsmokers. However, the rate of death was also associated with relationship status. Even though in every relationship category—married, single, widowed, divorced—the death rate for smokers was double the rate for nonsmokers, the death rate for married smokers was not different from the death rate for divorced nonsmokers. Part IV is devoted to three very different but equally important ways in which relationships impact psychological and physical health.

Chapter 10 (by Reis) tackles the big question of what makes relationships happy and satisfying. Rather than simply reviewing the many research findings and theories about relationship well-being, it offers an integration of the various conceptualizations. Most important, it identifies the common core. What is it that concepts like felt security, belonging, connectedness, and social support share? It turns out that the key to relationship well-being is the perception that a partner is responsive to one's most important needs, goals, and values. We want to be understood and accepted and, as Victor Hugo put it, "loved not just for but in spite of ourselves."

Another angle on understanding the importance of relationships is to examine the effects of and reactions to relationship dissolution. From an outsider's perspective, the dissolution of a romantic relationship appears

to be a sudden event. “I just heard that so and so broke up!” However, it is usually the culmination of an extended process of uncoupling, and it is typically unilateral. That is, one member of the couple wants the breakup and the other does not. Moreover, the initiator begins working through the process long before the partner has any real inkling that anything serious is going on. Likewise, there is evidence that reactions to breakups can also be characterized in terms of a process that unfolds over time, and includes systematic variations in emotional valence and intensity as well as differences in adjustment to the loss. Chapter 11 (by Lee and Sbarra) makes the case that relationship scientists have identified, on the one hand, the predictors of breakup and, on the other, successful and unsuccessful patterns of coping, but thus far have failed to integrate the two. A theoretical framework is offered that spans predictors and consequences of breakup and suggests promising directions for future research.

It is a well-documented fact that highly socially integrated people are happier, healthier, and longer lived! It is also now established that the morbidity and mortality costs of social isolation are equal to those of smoking. Chapter 12 (by Hawkey and Cacioppo) provides a detailed overview of the psychological and physiological pathways by which relationships influence health and well-being. It also underscores the importance of perceptions. It is not the quantity but rather the quality of social relationships that matters most, and quality boils down to perceptions of the responsiveness of others. When we feel hungry, we drop what we are doing and look for something to eat. When we are thirsty, we orient our attention to finding something to drink. Imagine what would happen if we became so engaged in other activities that we completely forgot to eat or drink. Social bonding is as vital to our survival as food and drink, and it is why when our relationship needs are unmet we get such a strong feeling that something is wrong. Social bonding is a fundamental fact of the human condition.

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