

# UPDATES AND IDEAS FOR "A LEVEL" PSYCHOLOGY

No.2 - 10 Articles for  
PYA4: Relationships, and  
Pro- and Anti-Social  
Behaviour

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# 1. Cross-Cultural Studies and Research on Relationships

## INTRODUCTION

The vast majority of psychological research takes place in the West, and in particular in the US. Smith and Bond (1993) calculated that of 1767 studies and references quoted in a standard US social psychology textbook (Baron and Byrne 1991), only 47 (2.7%) were from outside North America, Europe, and Australasia.

Smith and Bond also pointed out that of 301 psychology articles published in English in three months of 1991, only 10% were from outside North America and Europe.

The comparison of different cultures around the world through cross-cultural studies should be an important part of psychology. To ignore different cultures is to be "guilty of gross oversimplification" (Jahoda 1994 quoted in Foster 1997). In fact, psychologists know little about the average citizen of the world "with low incomes, little or no formal schooling.. with limited or no access to health facilities or modern media.." (Poortinga 1997).

Van de Vijver and Leung (1997) distinguished a number of different types of cross-cultural research:

i) Generalisability studies - studies comparing the findings in one culture or group with others;

ii) Theory driven studies - studies concerned with validating a theory based upon one culture or group;

iii) Psychological differences studies - studies comparing cultures using the same research instrument, like psychometric tests;

iv) External validity studies - studies attempting to explain cultural differences. In cross-cultural research, culture is treated as the independent variable (Lyons and Chryssochoou 2000) <sup>1</sup>.

As a method, cross-cultural studies have certain advantages and disadvantages, especially for studying

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<sup>1</sup> Technically, culture is a "quasi-independent variable" (Leary 2001) because it is not possible to randomise the participants which happens with a "true" independent variable. In other words, the culture of the participants is fixed, and thus it is a "quasi-independent variable".

relationships.

## ADVANTAGES

### 1. Universality of behaviour.

Cross-cultural studies help to establish if certain behaviour is universal, and thus has a genetic or evolutionary basis.

Hinde (1996) argued that certain gender differences are universal because they have a biological basis - for example, men's concern with the physical appearance of the woman in choice of partner, and women's emphasis on status in the male partner.

Buss (1989) found such gender differences in thirty-seven cultures he studied, and used the evidence to support the Evolutionary Psychology (EP) explanation of relationships. In thirty-six of the 37 cultures, males with earning potential were attractive to women, and in twenty-nine cultures males with ambition were attractive. For males, younger females were attractive to men of all ages in all thirty-seven cultures.

Some aspects of relationships can show both similarities and differences across cultures. Argyle et al (1986) studied the rules of friendships in England, Italy, Hong Kong, and Japan. All four cultures shows similarities in the importance of trust, giving emotional support, and sharing good news in friendships. But the differences included the importance of avoiding loss of face for friends in Hong Kong and Japan.

### 2. Insight.

Cross-cultural studies give insight into other cultures as well as providing a basis for comparison of the home culture's behaviour.

The equity theory (Hatfield et al 1979) proposed that individuals stay in relationships because of perceived fairness - receiving equal benefits to the costs of the relationship. This idea is very much based on Western values of individual costs and benefits within a capitalist framework of profit and loss.

Berman et al (1985) compared students in the USA and India (less individualistic country) for their understanding of equity generally. The Indian students were more likely to allocate rewards in terms of need (rather than equally) in an economics game (ie: more to the poorest). This could mean that understanding relationships based on equity is not applicable to India.

In the equity theory, one partner will care for the other sick partner only if the former receive equal benefits in some other way (eg: the sick partner is still good company). But if the relationship is too one-sided, the "caring partner" will leave the relationship according to equity theory.

In cultures, not dominated by equity theory, the sick partner will be cared for because they need it, irrelevant of what the other partner receives in return.

But even in the West, equity may not hold true. In the Netherlands, participants were more satisfied with their relationships if they were over-benefiting (ie: their partner was putting more into the relationship than them) (Van Yperen and Buunk 1991).

## DISADVANTAGES

### 1. Researcher's interpretation of another culture.

There are problems with the researcher from one culture interpreting the behaviour of another culture. This can lead to the researcher seeing their home culture and behaviour as better or superior, or to misinterpreting what behaviour occurs in the other culture. Where the other culture is seen as inferior to the home culture, this is known as "ethnocentrism".

In the West, for example, arranged marriages are viewed negatively, and as a sign of a less developed culture. But in China (where traditionally marriages were arranged by the parents rather than for romantic love) romantic love was viewed as associated with sorrow and pain because of the unrealistic expectations of couples (Shaver et al 1991 quoted in Eysenck and Flanagan 2000).

The problem of interpreting another culture is not aided by communication difficulties between the researcher and the culture being studied if both parties speak different languages. The concept of love itself, for instance, means different things - three times as many US respondents agreed that "lovers should freely confess everything of personal significance to each other" compared to Japanese (Smith and Bond 1998).

### 2. Cultures not comparable.

Some aspects of the culture may not be comparable. It is difficult to compare LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) relationships between different

cultures, not only because of the varying attitudes towards them, but also the legal position.

In terms of attitudes, a Chinese study of gay individuals found most described themselves as "tongzhi" ("comrade") rather than "tongxinglina" ("homosexual"). This was as much due to cultural views of sexuality as to homophobia (Chou Wah-shan 2000 quoted in Baird 2001).

In legal terms, homosexuality is illegal in a number of countries, and punishable by death (eg: Saudi Arabia, Sudan) or life imprisonment (eg: Pakistan, Guyana). While the Netherlands has an equal age of consent for homosexual and heterosexual relationships, and legal recognition of same-sex partnerships and marriage (Baird 2001).

Smith and Bond (1998) highlighted the problem of comparing scores on love scales between cultures because the scales were constructed in one culture (usually USA). This is the problem of "structural equivalence": whether the observed differences in behaviour are reflections of comparable underlying structures (eg: beliefs or personality) (Lyons and Chrysochoou 2000).

It should also be noted that any culture is not homogeneous (ie: a single thing). Most cultures are multi-racial, multi-religious, and have sub-cultural differences (eg: social class) today. Allan (1996) saw differences in friendship behaviours between working-class and middle-class individuals in Britain since the Second World War.

## CONCLUSIONS

Lyons and Chrysochoou (2000) ended with a note of caution:

Cross-cultural research should not be carried out because there are different cultures and nations out there. It should be conducted only when comparisons are likely to make theoretical contributions and enable us to better understand social phenomena (p146).

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## **2. Understudied Relationships: Adults with Learning Disabilities** (1)

Wood and Duck (1995) emphasised the importance of studying relationships other than the "normal" or socially desirable ones: what they called "understudied relationships" (2).

The research generally shows that individuals are happier having friends and close relationships (eg: Argyle and Henderson 1985). The same is, of course, true of adults with learning disabilities (AWLD), whether they are living independently or not. It is also true to say that not everybody wants a vast number of friends, some people prefer less sociability. The important thing is that individuals (learning disabled or non-learning disabled) have the choice of friends when they want them.

Sadly, a number of research studies have shown that AWLD lack friends. For example, two-thirds of special school leavers in Dublin reported having no friends (McConkey and McGinley 1990), while 81% of participants in another study wanted to have more friends (Froese et al 1999).

One different issue for AWLD is the opportunity of having non-learning disabled friends. This is seen as an indicator of social integration and acceptance by the local community, as well as the practical benefits in terms of help: "Having non-handicapped friends is one means of enhancing their social status - in their own eyes as well as those of others.." (Richardson and Ritchie 1989 p15), and a way to reduce social stigma about being learning disabled. Thus "the acquisition of a friend from the ordinary population was seen as an achievement" (Atkinson 1986 p87).

The ability to make friends will depend upon where the individual lives. For example, Cheseldine and Jeffree (1981) studied over two hundred adolescents with learning disabilities living with their parents in the Manchester area. Opportunities to meet people were limited to day centres or special clubs. Thus, of the 57% who said they had a "special friend", the vast majority were other learning disabled individuals. The exception were friendships developed with parent(s)' friends.

The problem was also exacerbated by parent(s)' concerns to be protective, and a reluctance to expose their children to "inappropriate" or potentially unhappy relationships. Few of the parents in this study felt that a lack of friends was a problem for their child.



Those AWLD who live in the community independently, particularly after leaving institutions, fared better. Studies since de-institutionalisation in the 1980s have looked at "before and after" the move. In the community, simply, individuals meet more people.

Atkinson (1986) studied the "social contacts" of forty-two people moving from an institution to living in the community. "Social contacts", in this study, was defined as "people seen regularly and frequently.. who offer some degree of personal support" (p85). The social contacts were made up of three types:

- i) "Formal supporters" - individuals assigned in a professional capacity (eg: social worker);
- ii) "Informal supporters" - individuals met through "life circumstances" (eg: other AWLD);
- iii) "Competent others" - individuals chosen by the learning disabled individual (eg: non-learning disabled friends).

In this study, the average number of contacts was 13.2, which varied from five to twenty-four (3). Of the categories of social contacts, individuals had an average of 3.3 "formal supporters", 5.5 "informal supporters", and 4.4 "competent others" (but this category ranged from zero to twelve).

Concerning learning disabled and non-learning disabled friends, there were more of the former (32 in total compared to 16). It should be noted that for some AWLD, "formal supporters" can be viewed as friends: "Many people came to regard their social worker as their friend.. a person to share a joke with, to chat to and relax with" (pp99-100).

Richardson and Ritchie (1989) interviewed, either alone, in pairs, or in small groups, over sixty AWLD living in a variety of settings. Two-thirds of the sample had mild to moderate learning disabilities. It was qualitative research, and no attempts were made to count the number of friends.

A number of themes emerged from the interviews:

- i) Despite spending most of the time with other people (eg: at day centres), few of the adults interviewed had "real contacts and connections". This seemed to be most evident for those people living with their parent(s). But such individuals do have firm social networks, which individuals living independently may lack:

"While there is the potential for diversity of

interest or support, there is no guarantee of the company or support more readily gained in staffed accommodation or the parental home" (p23).

ii) The level of disability had some impact on the experiences of friendships. Six of the interviewees had very severe learning disabilities, with limited or no speech, and four of them also had physical disabilities. Lack of speech was restrictive, but not completely.

One of the participants had formed a close friendship with another individual with severe disabilities: "Neither could speak; both were confined to a wheelchair and consequently largely at home. But they spent hours together, communicating in ways that matter and clearly got considerable pleasure from being with each other" (p24).

iii) The patterns of age differences in social activities usually seen in studies of the general population were not found here. The typical pattern is that younger adults go out more with friends, and older adults stay in (Argyle and Henderson 1985). The frequency of seeing friends also declines with age usually. Disability affected social activities more than age in this study.

iv) The functions of relationships. Weiss (1974) described six functions: attachment, social integration, opportunity for nurturance, reassurance of worth, a sense of reliable alliance, and obtaining of guidance.

Richardson and Ritchie focused upon three functions of practical help, company, and intimacy.

a) Practical help - most of the interviewees mentioned relatives, staff or carers as providing this. For Weiss, this was covered usually by kin relationships as a "sense of reliable alliance", and "obtaining of guidance";

b) Company - as mentioned above, many of the participants were rarely alone, but did not necessarily have the company they wanted; eg: Sara, who lived in a staffed house, liked to go shopping for clothes and had no-one to go with. This activity was beyond the remit of the staff. Weiss classed this as "social integration", and emphasised the importance of common interest and social activity;

c) Intimacy - this included the notion of warmth, help, trust, sharing, and fun, and was provided by "special friends" or a partner. Weiss covered intimacy in his categories of "attachment", "opportunity for

nurturance", and "reassurance of worth": relationships as a means to gain "a sense of security and place".

v) Ways to help increase and improve friendships. From the interviews, a number of suggestions were obtained - these included widening the circle of people met, increasing self-confidence, and greater integration with non-learning disabled individuals.

On a larger scale, Emerson and McVilly (2004) measured friendship activities in the preceding month for 1542 AWLD in supported accommodation (ie: living outside the parent(s)' home) in Northern England. Where friendship activities did happen, it was more likely to be with other AWLD rather than non-learning disabled.

For example, "going out for a meal with a friend" with learning disabled friends was reported by 44.8% of participants, but only 14.1% with non-learning disabled friends. This was a significant difference, as was "having a friend to stay over" (1.8% vs 0.5%), "having a friend round for a meal" (15.8% vs 4.1%), "having a day trip out with friends" (44.8% vs 11.1%), and "being visited at home by friends" (22.6% vs 12.6%). The only exception was "staying over with a friend", which occurred more with non-learning disabled friends (1.6% of participants) than with learning disabled ones (1.4%).

For all six activities studied, 65.3% of the participants did them with learning disabled friends compared to 25.3% with non-learning disabled. The median number of occurrences of all friendship activities with friends with learning disabilities was two, but zero for friends without learning disabilities.

Emerson and McVilly (2004) evaluated their study on three fronts:

i) The sample, though large, may not have been representative of all AWLD. This sample may have been marginally older;

ii) The term "friend" was self-defined by the participants;

iii) The six friendship activities were chosen before the study began by a committee of researchers, AWLD, family carers, and professionals, and may not have "reflected the friendship activities or aspiration of people with intellectual disabilities". Furthermore, there was no normative or comparison data from other studies (with or without learning disabilities).

## MAKING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Steve Duck (1991) talked about "friendship skills" in four areas: the ability to take the opportunities of friendship; strategies to encourage people into relationships; knowledge of how relationships grow; and skills to maintain and repair the relationships. These friendship skills can be summarised in the idea of social skills (or social competence).

Social skills can be seen as aspects of an interaction or relationship (like showing interest in the other person) which encourage that interaction or relationship to develop. Argyle and Henderson (1985) felt that lonely individuals often had poorer social skills (eg: asking less questions in social interactions), and had less self-disclosure. But social skills can be taught and improved.

Social skills training based on a behaviourist approach has been used with AWLD to develop their opportunities to make close relationships. This includes modelling of the behaviour by staff, for example, role-playing, and social reinforcements (eg: praise) and feedback (Argyle 1994). Such training often works well in institutions, but may not generalise into the outside world (Wall 1998). Robertson et al (1984) questioned whether there is any link between learning how to make better eye contact (ie: performance), for example, and "successful living".

It is also important not to assume that the problem is one-sided (ie: only with the AWLD), but to look at how non-learning disabled individuals and society as a whole responds. Bogden and Taylor (1989) noted how non-learning disabled friends of individuals with profound and multiple disabilities were actively making positive sense of the individual's behaviour. In other words, getting the non-learning disabled individual to "adapt their behaviour in order to facilitate the social competence of people with learning disabilities" (Wall 1998 p31).

A variation of traditional social skills training is known as "peer-mediated intervention". The focus is upon training a non-disabled peer to interact effectively with a disabled trainee (Moore and Carey 2005). In other words, "peer trainers" rather than professional or staff trainers. One goal of this type of intervention can be friendship between the trainer and trainee. In one study, 22% of the child participants rated their relationships as friends before the intervention compared to 89%

afterwards (Haring and Breen 1992).

The lack of opportunities to form close relationships is an issue for AWLD. One way to deal with this is through befriending schemes (4). This is where volunteers befriend AWLD. More formally, Dean and Goodlad (1998) defined it as: "A relationship between two or more individuals which is initiated, supported and monitored by an agency that has defined one or more parties as likely to benefit. Ideally the relationship is non-judgmental, mutual and purposeful, and there is a commitment over time" (p5).

A number of points, however, arise from such schemes (Wall 1998), and mean that it is not the same as friendship:

- a) Reciprocity - will the AWLD feel indebted to the befriender?
- b) Choice - often the volunteers are matched by a third party;
- c) Equality - is the volunteer getting something from the relationship?

However, not all friendships have these things. Befriending schemes may become a means to practise "friendship skills" for later. The role of befriending schemes in general social integration of AWLD cannot be overlooked, as well as helping "change society by educating its citizens and removing barriers to equality of opportunity" (Heslop 2005).

There are a small number of befriending schemes in England. It has been estimated that about one-third of voluntary sector organisations working with children and AWLD run befriending schemes (Heslop 2005).

Heslop (2005) studied ten befriending schemes run by the Shared Care Network and the National Association of Adult Placement Services (NAAPS) in England for teenagers and young adults. She interviewed forty-two befrienders, forty-six parent carers, and thirty-four people with learning disabilities. Pictorial questionnaires were used for those individuals with limited language abilities. One of the main issues for the befriendees was the ending of the relationship, which had been experienced by 40% of them.

One befriendeed reported a sudden ending of the relationship: "I was very upset and angry. She stopped suddenly - she just wrote and told me she wasn't coming again because she was going to college. Then she didn't answer my letters" (pp31-32). Heslop felt that such

endings should be managed carefully by the schemes including having people for befriendeds to talk about their feelings, and providing another befriender. Generally the research found positive reactions to befriending schemes from the majority of people with learning disabilities.

## SOCIAL NETWORKS

Rather than looking at individual relationships, recent research tends to study the world of relationships - friends, neighbours, colleagues, acquaintances, professionals, and extended family - "enmeshing us in a series of overlapping networks, composed of links between all the people we meet and interact with in different ways during our everyday lives" (Miell and Croghan 1996 p268). Altogether these people are known as the individual's social networks.

Milardo (1992) divided social networks into significant others (eg: partner, parents), exchange networks (those who provide material and emotional assistance), and interactive networks (acquaintances). The whole social network could be in the hundreds.

The size of an individual's social networks will depend upon their degree of social isolation or integration. Work plays a key role in who an individual meets. But very few AWLD work (less than 10%; Department of Health 2001), and this restricts their opportunities to meet people.

However, there is supported employment which helps AWLD to train and work. Forrester-Jones et al (2004) studied eighteen AWLD, over one year, in supported employment in Sheffield. The average social network size increased significantly from 36 (pre-employment) to 42 members. Only three participants had a reduction in network size with employment, and for two people, it was unchanged.

Apart from the total number of people in the social networks, the density also changed. Density is a measure of how many people within the networks know each other. For example, being a member of a large club means knowing a lot of people, but the density is high because people all know each other. A lowered density means knowing more people in different situations. In this study, the average density fell (not significantly though) with employment.

The key finding was that more of the members of the social networks were not related to learning disability

services (over a quarter). Furthermore, increasing social network size was found to be related to overall satisfaction with quality of life. Table 2.1 summarises the main findings.

These figures compare favourably to other studies of AWLD and social networks size. In a large study of 500 people with different types of residential support, the average network size was five (range 0-20) (Robertson et al 2000).

	TIME 1 PRE-EMPLOYMENT	TIME 2 AFTER 1 YEAR OF EMPLOYMENT
WORK/DAY CENTRE	121 (18)	181 (25) *
FAMILY	110 (16)	105 (14) *
CARE WORKER	91 (13)	95 (13)
TOTAL NUMBER	679	734

\* = significant change between time 1 and time 2

(After Forrester-Jones et al 2004)

Table 2.1 - Main areas of life and number (%) of members of social networks.

#### MEANINGS OF FRIENDSHIP

Much research on relationships generally looks at them from the outside. But qualitative research, mainly, attempts to discover "the personal meanings and the modes of action that individuals use to construct their environment and.. the ways in which two or more persons come to agree that they have a relationship of a particular kind" (Duck 1995 pp539-40). There is very little research that asks AWLD about the meanings of their friendships.

One exception is an Australian study by Knox and Hickson (2001). This research took a participatory approach with four AWLD. A participatory approach is a qualitative method using unstructured interviewing "whereby the participants are seen as experts on their own close friendship experiences and the researchers are marshallers of this expertise" (p276). Each of the two men (Michael aged 35 and Sam 26 years old) and two women (Madeline 58 years old and Lucy 42) were interviewed twice.

The interviews produced two themes about friendships:

i) "Good mate" - This was a term used for a particular close (non-intimate) friend (usually an individual with learning disabilities). Good mates were a pivotal relationship, "we do lots of things together" (Michael), and long-lasting: "We grew up together" (Michael).

There are also shared interests - "We like the same things.. we go out together, go out to lunch together, and do lots of other things together" (Lucy), and reciprocal support.

ii) "Boyfriend/girlfriend" - Two of the participants (Lucy and Michael) indicated such relationships. These relationships were intimate, and different to good mates. The good mate relationship was seen as unchanging, while "the boyfriend/girlfriend relationship was expected to change; the intimacy of the relationship was expected to increase and result eventually in marriage" (p284). If the intimacy of the relationship did not increase, then the relationship will be ended.

Also these relationships were talked about in an "idealised romantic manner" with references to love, marriage, and having babies.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Learning disability is the term used here. Some writers use learning difficulty or intellectual disability. Whichever term is used, we are talking about adults with "significant limitations in intellectual functioning" and "adaptive functioning" occurring before the age of twenty-two years old (APA 1987). For convenience, this is often assessed as an IQ score of less than seventy points.

Usually the distinction is made between mild, moderate, severe, or profound learning disability. Mental handicap and mental retardation tend not be acceptable term today.

2. So much of the research pre-1990s focused on the relationships of "Sophomorus academicus Americanus" (US students) (Wood and Duck 1995).

The under-representation of certain types of relationships can be seen by a brief survey of four commonly-used textbooks for A level and undergraduate psychology (table 2.2).



TEXTBOOK	TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES ON RELATIONSHIPS	NUMBER OF PAGES ON UNDERSTUDIED RELATIONSHIPS
Eysenck (2000)	32	4 1 - gay; 3 - cultural differences
Eysenck and Flanagan (2001)	40	10 4 - internet; 1 - gay; 4 - cultural differences; 1 - sub-cultural differences
Gross (2001)	18	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ - internet; $\frac{1}{2}$ - gay; 1 - arranged
Hogg and Vaughan (2002)	48	$1\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ - internet; $\frac{1}{2}$ - love in workplace; $\frac{1}{2}$ - arranged

Table 2.2 - Number of pages on understudied relationships in four commonly-used textbooks

3. Social contacts or networks of under fifty individuals is viewed as "limited" for the general population (Burt and Ronchi 1994). Argyle and Henderson (1985) quoted these figures from studies: "'close friends' about 5, 'friends' about 15, 'members of social network' (including kin) about 20, named 'acquaintances' variable, usually large, over 1000 for some people" (p66).

4. A similar idea is known as the "Buddy programme". Originally from the US, it puts volunteers in touch with individuals with AIDS. The aim is to offer practical and emotional support. The Terence Higgins Trust runs such schemes in this country. Veksner (1993) interviewed three AIDS sufferers and their "Buddies".

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### **3. Understudied Relationships: Women with Physical Disabilities and Romantic Relationships**

In terms of attitudes towards marriage, Bleszynska (1995) found no difference between disabled and non-disabled individuals. This research compared the views of forty-seven non-disabled, thirty-six visually impaired, and forty-four wheelchair users aged between 20-30 years old.

But the actual experiences of individuals with physical disabilities are different to the general population in terms of romantic relationships, particularly for women. For example, such women date, and have their first voluntary sexual contact later than the average (Gill 1996).

Gill felt that women with disabilities had a "romantic disadvantage" because they did not usually fit society's narrow prescriptions of female beauty:

Women who depart from the traditional role and duties delineated for them by society are viewed as incapable partners. Seen as unable to care for their partners and children and/or unable to coordinate social and domestic events, such women may not be seen as desirable partners  
(Szuchman and Muscarella 2000 p328).

Rintala et al (1997) compared the dating experiences of 430 single women with or without physical disabilities. Women with disabilities were disadvantaged on criteria like satisfaction with dating frequency, perceived constraints on attracting partners, and perceived personal barriers to dating, but not on communication problems (no difference here).

Generally disabled women were less likely to marry, more likely to marry later, and get divorced than non-disabled women based on 1985 US population data. For example, 60% of men with disabilities and women without disabilities were married compared to 49% of disabled women.

Further analysis of sub-groups like mildly or severely disabled showed even greater differences, for example in separation rates (table 3.1) (Hanna and Rogovsky 1986).

	MEN	WOMEN
NON-DISABLED	3	4
MILDLY DISABLED	5	6
SEVERELY DISABLED	7	11

Table 3.1 - Separation rates between three categories of individuals in 1985 US population data.

Women do badly compared to men in the same category of disability; eg: "severely disabled" - 14% of men are divorced compared to 26% of women. One explanation for these differences is that more men than women left their marriages if the spouse became ill or disabled (Sandowski 1989).

Women who are disabled and gay faced isolation at two levels - for their disability, and for their sexual preference. This led some disabled women to decide to pass as heterosexual to avoid the extra stigma of being gay (Appleby 1994).

Underlying this whole area of physical disability and romantic relationships is the assumption of the asexuality of disabled individuals. The father of Sharon (disabled in a car crash) summarised the view succinctly: "What the hell difference does it make if she's gay or lesbian or straight because she's laying there in diapers?" (quoted in Thompson and Andrzejewski 1988 p226).

While other disabled women see this assumption of asexuality as liberating. Kate, nineteen when she had a disabling accident, put it like this:

My immediate reaction in hospital, and for months and years afterwards, was of feeling neutered and completely rejected as asexual by men.. Eventually I was able to have my first relationship with a woman without any of the traumas that many of my gay women friends have gone through. I haven't had to face family reactions of "Why haven't you got married?" or Society's reaction of "Why haven't you got a man?" because I'm not expected to have one! (Morris 1989 pp98-99).

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## 4. Understudied Relationships: "Prison Romance"

### INTRODUCTION

"Prison romance" is used here to mean romantic relationships that form between a prisoner and a "civilian" (non-prisoner). It is more often women falling in love with male prisoners, and many times via letter.

In this context, the couple have not met before the one is in prison. Mina (2003) estimated that over one hundred British women were engaged or married to US prisoners on death row. Many had met through anti-death penalty websites.

Such relationships, particularly with famous prisoners and/or murderers, are viewed sensationally:

There is a lot of suspicion surrounding these women who choose to become involved with men already in prison for murder. There is a feeling that they are attracted by the dubious "glamour" of a murder sentence, or that they want a relationship that avoids all confrontation with reality: after all you can promise undying love to a man behind bars but you need never put up with the humdrum everyday details of a life together (McCWire 1994 pxii).

Much of the interest in women who fall in love with prisoners is to find what is wrong with these women. Their behaviour is "abnormal", and thus there must be reasons for it, probably deficiencies on the part of the women.

People are not afraid to make these views known to these women. Xenia King, in love with a US death row inmate, felt that she had to justify herself "like being in front of a jury all the time" ("Real Life: My Death Row Lover" 2005; ITV).

In another case, Lizzie, was "furious when prison staff implied that having MS (multiple sclerosis) made it impossible for her to have a boyfriend on the outside and that she started her relationship with Mark (prisoner) out of despair" (McCWire 1994 p79).

What is interesting from a psychological point of view is to see what the women themselves say about the relationships, as well as others, like experts. In jargon terms, to look at the discourses <sup>(1)</sup> used.

I have drawn from four sources (one book and three television documentaries) for this brief analysis <sup>(2)</sup>:

i) Scarlett MccGwire's book which included case studies of five women (Queenie, Lizzie, Tina, Mary Rutter, and Jane Officer) who were attracted to prisoners (and even married them) through letters or work in the prison system (eg: prison visitor).

ii) "Everyman: Dear Peter, Letters to the Yorkshire Ripper" (2001)(BBC Television) - this is a documentary about three women, among many, who have written to Peter Sutcliffe and formed a relationship with him.

iii) "Four Weddings and an Execution" (2004)(Channel 4 Television) - this documentary tells the stories of women who married prisoners, including a television journalist (Jodie Bell) who met her future husband during filming in a death row unit, and a female prison officer in a male prison who became pregnant. All but one of the prisoners were in the US, where there are specialist websites for those wanting to write to prisoners, and most of the women interviewed were American.

iv) "True Hollywood Story (THS) Investigates: Love Behind Bars" (2005) (E! Channel Television) - this is an American television documentary about women's experiences with male prisoners including Veronica Compton who was "encouraged" to kill by Kenneth Bianchi ("Hillside Strangler") from prison, and she, in turn, met her future husband while serving time for the attempted murder.

## THEMES AND DISCOURSES

A number of interesting discourses or themes can be found in the sources analysed:

### 1. The use of everyday romantic discourses.

Discourses of romantic love influence much of modern life: We are surrounded by film and TV images of true love, young love, adulterous love, love-at-first-sight and unrequited love. Singers sing of it, magazines publish letters about it, and each of us at some time has asked ourselves the question whether we are "in" it, or ever have been or ever will be. As a way of formatting our thoughts, emotions and behaviour the discourse of romantic love must surely be one of the most prevalent in modern society (Burr 2003 p73).

The discourse of romantic love shows itself as a "natural feature" of human experience. Thus the language



used in romantic relationships are socially shared meanings which explain to others (as well as to ourselves) that the relationship is meeting expectations of a certain type of relationship. Meeting expectations is key in society because concepts of "normality", "acceptability", and "appropriateness" underlie all discourses in society (Brewer 2001).

A number of the women interviewed talked about the prisoners (future husbands) in romantic terms (despite possibly having not met them); eg: "I knew he was the one"; "on my wavelength"; "love at first sight" (Jodie Bell) (3); feelings of "connection" or "connectedness" (eg: Queenie said: "I regarded myself as a damaged person and therefore I felt I could understand him as a damaged person"; MccGwire 1994 p67).

Dagmar Polzin (a German women who saw a photograph of US murderer, Bobby Lee Harris) said: "It was something in his eyes.. There was this remorse, sadness. I was attracted. I knew he was the one" (Mina 2003).

By using the everyday language of romantic relationship, their relationships are being "normalised": the women are falling in love in the same way as anybody else.

The use of "talk" to justify behaviour is "rhetoric" (Potter 1996). Talk is "used" to make a point, to counter a real or imagined argument. Whatever is said always has the alternative in mind.

However, if what people say is too obviously countering another view, and is seen as an attempt to influence, it will be discounted as a "stake". An individual holds a particular attitude because it is to their interest. For example, company managers believe that unions hinder progress. The reaction is very much - "they would say that, wouldn't they?"

This is obviously important in advertising. If individuals are to be persuaded to buy certain products, they must not immediately switch off because of "stake". One way around this problem is "stake inoculation". This is a technique to "prevent a claim being undermined as a product of stake" (Potter 1996 p165).

For example, a celebrity endorsing a product is portrayed as initially sceptical about the product's claims, and then is won over. The point of the initial scepticism is to counter the argument - "you would say that you're being paid to say so" of the celebrity.

The justification of the behaviour can be seen in this quote from Saira Ali Ahmed (who married armed robber, Charles Bronson in 2001): "He was not a murderer or a child killer or anything like that. Something within

myself told me that there would be a real person behind the look. This time I was marrying him for love, this time nobody was forcing me like my first marriage" ("Four Weddings and an Execution"; www.channel4.com accessed 21/9/05).

Two things come from this statement:

i) The emphasis that the prisoner is a man not a label (Bronson has been called the most violent man in Britain by the tabloids). Interestingly, Ahmed is pointing out what Bronson is not. In other words, it would be unacceptable to love a murderer or a child killer. This is a rhetorical device to suggest that he is not that bad;

ii) The role of choice in this second marriage. Ahmed's first marriage was arranged by her parents when she was a teenager, but this time she has chosen who to marry. Discourses of choice and control are very important in our society.

The prisoners can be idealised by the women. But this is not unusual because Averill (1985) has argued that idealization of the loved one is a normal part of the social construction of romantic love, and thus self-deception is involved.

## 2. How to deal with the crime

It cannot be ignored that the prisoners had committed crimes, and this had to be explained by the women. Sykes and Matza (1957) described "neutralisations" that criminals used to deny that their actions were wrong. These included denial of injury to the victim ("nobody really got hurt"), or denial of the victim ("the victim deserved it").

Two key types of "neutralisations" can be used:

a) Playing down the crime - the women talked about the man having changed; their crime was in the past ("who has not changed in ten years" Jodie Bell). Each woman "is careful to emphasise that they did not fall in love with a killer, but with a man: a man who had made one mistake - a terrible mistake, an unforgivable mistake, but still a mistake" (McCgwire 1994 pxiii).

b) Denial - the man is innocent and was falsely tried. The woman who married Richard Ramirez ("Night Stalker" who murdered at least seventeen people) while on death row set up a website to campaign for his innocence.

### 3. Psychiatric explanations of the women's behaviour.

All three television documentaries had interviews with psychiatrists who gave reasons for the women's behaviour including:

i) The women had "rescue fantasies" including beliefs about reforming the man.

Sandra Lester (a counsellor), who wrote to Peter Sutcliffe, felt he was isolated, and had personal problems that she could help with. One inmate on a prisoners' website said: "loneliness is a terrible thing", and another offered "a friend is waiting" (Mina 2003).

This is attractive to individuals with high levels of empathy, which can be a characteristic of "rescue fantasies".

ii) The women are disappointed with real life relationships with men.

iii) Both parties start from a position of desperation.

iv) The woman becomes the centre of the man's life and that is very powerful.

Furthermore, the men are more compliant and attentive than on the outside because of the parole advantages of having a partner (Mina 2003):

The authorities are also concerned that these men are making use of slightly naive women: a prisoner is far more likely to be released early if he has a loving wife who will, it is hoped, keep him on the straight and narrow once outside; and while he is in jail, having someone to bring him money and cigarettes and organise things is always useful (McCWire 1994 pxii).

v) The "allure of the bad boy" or the attraction of the macho.

Peter Sutcliffe, for example, still gets many marriage proposals, while at the trial of Ted Bundy (serial killer) many women turned up in the audience deliberately looking like his victims (same hair colour etc).

Isenberg (2000) described the idea of "vicarious murder", or that the woman can become involved without

putting herself in physical danger. The "vicarious murder" idea links to a rare form of paraphilia (4) known as hybristophilia (5), where the individual is sexually aroused by violence performed on others by another person. As opposed to a sadist who is sexually aroused by the violence they perform on others.

vi) The relationship is all delusional, and the women can live out the "fantasy" based on just passionate letters.

There is the assumption that delusions are either present or absent. It is more likely a continuum with degrees of delusion from the extreme beliefs of those with psychosis to everyday self-deceptions. There are many of the latter that take place in ordinary romantic relationships (6).

vii) Belief in a cause.

Many women "meet" the US death row prisoners through campaigning against the death penalty, or through religious organisations, particularly if the prisoner has had a religious conversion experience while in prison.

With the latter situation, there is the definite belief that the individual has changed. Willcox-Bailey (1997) told the story of two Australian sisters who left their marriages to marry "born-again" prisoners. When released one of the men killed one sister, and the other was physically attacked by her husband (quoted in Mina 2003).

viii) Transference.

This is a concept from psychoanalysis where the individual's unconscious desires are placed on to another person. Sigmund Freud (eg: 1912) noticed it first with patients "falling in love" with their doctors or therapists. It is based upon early childhood desires for the opposite sex parent which remain in the unconscious mind in adulthood.

One of the main features of transference (or erotic transference) is "its compulsive quality, we feel possessed by a particular way of being in relation with another person" (Thomas 1996 p171). Importantly, it is an irrational experience, and works best when there is a blank sheet (ie: a person not really known).

This idea can be applied to love for celebrities. Maltby et al (2005) distinguished three levels of "celebrity worship" for adolescents (based on the Celebrity Attitude Scale):

a) "Entertainment-social" value - a low level of interest; eg: "my friends and I like to discuss what my favourite celebrity has done";

b) "Intense-personal" feelings - more involved with elements of obsession; eg: "I have frequent thoughts about my favourite celebrity, even when I don't want to";

c) "Borderline-pathological" - the celebrity is central to the person's life; eg: "If I were to meet my favourite celebrity in person, they would already know that I was their biggest fan".

The authors suggested that celebrity worship can be explained by the Absorption-Addiction model: "a compromised identity structure in some individuals facilitates psychological absorption with a celebrity in an attempt to establish an identity and a sense of fulfilment" (p20). This could easily be applied to "prison romances".

I think that it is also possible to draw a parallel between the women in "prison romances" and those who are in abusive relationships.

For example, Few and Rosen (2005) interviewed in detail twenty-eight women who had been in long-term abusive relationships. Violence occurred in 30% of dating relationships, and half of these relationships remain intact. The researchers were interested in those women who remained in the relationships despite the violence.

Two dimensions of vulnerabilities were discovered:

a) "Relational vulnerabilities" - eg: "caretaker identity" from growing up too fast ("adultified") due to adult responsibilities in the family as a child. This can make the women feel responsible and protective of their partners. Thus they blame themselves for the violence, and/or feel that only they can help that person;

b) "Situational vulnerabilities" - eg: current circumstances like loneliness or the need for a relationship. Thus it is seen as better to stay, however unpleasant the relationship, than to leave.

Taylor and Tipton (1999) included other characteristics of female victims of domestic violence like low self-esteem, expectations of victimhood (often due to child abuse), and beliefs that men have certain rights as a husband (eg: "acceptable to hit wife every once in a while").

## CONCLUSIONS

There are many and varied reasons to explain why women fall in love with male prisoners they have never met. It may be a combination of the explanations given, or it could be other reasons, but whatever it is an interesting area for psychological research.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Discourses serve as a framework to experiences and to understanding them (Burr 2003).

Language "is no longer seen as simply a reflection of "reality" but as playing an active part in constructing versions of the social world and how people make sense and act in that social world" (Marshall 1992 p202).

Language is seen as a social process itself, rather than just a means of communication. For example, the words chosen are not neutral but tell us something about the social world.

Wetherell and Maybin (1996) give three features of language use which challenge the assumption that language is neutral:

i) Language has an "action orientation" - utterances state information, and perform an action. In an argument, individuals are not just stating opposite facts, but are using language to justify their position and undermine the other's. We are doing something with our utterances;

ii) Language is part of the social world - rather than language simply telling us about the social world; it is a "constitutive part of those actions, events and situations" (Wetherell and Maybin 1996 p244);

iii) Indexical property of discourse - all language is defined by the context of its use.

The whole emphasis is away from language as referring to objects "out there" to the idea that language is about building the social reality. The same event can be described in a number of different ways. It is always possible to see how the choice of words can influence the whole understanding of an event. For example, during a news report, the use of words like "murdered", "killed", "slaughtered" - all set the context for understanding the perpetrators as good or bad. Potter and Wetherell (1987) use the example of "terrorist" or "freedom fighter". Taken a step further, with our

language we are also defining ourselves.

Interactions involving language are negotiations where the participants are using their language carefully to establish the meaning of the situation (for example, to show that they are blameless in an argument), and consequently to set the meaning of themselves. Wetherell and Maybin (1996) call this the "double property of talk".

Defining "discourse" can be difficult. Parker (1992) defines it as a "system of statements which construct an object" (p5). For Potter and Wetherell (1987), it is "all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds" (p7). Iniguez (1997) prefers "a set of statements the production conditions of which can be defined" (p149).

But it can mean a number of things to different writers - for some, it is all forms of talk and writing; others see it as the "historically developing, linguistic practices" (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Generally though, we will see it as all spoken interaction and written texts.

Not all discourses are given equal weighting and attention:

Some discourses or constructions of the world are so familiar that they appear as "common sense". If these discourses are deconstructed or taken apart it becomes possible to see how certain dominant ideologies have become "taken-for-granted", and from this point consideration can be given to alternative discourses.. (Marshall 1992 p202).

Discourses fulfill a number of functions:

i) At an interpersonal level, they are used to explain and attribute causes of behaviour;

ii) They have a "political" function of setting out norms and standards against which behaviour is judged. Petkova (1995) uses the example of labelling many women as witches in the Middle Ages as justification for continuing exploitation of them;

iii) Discourses maintain differences between categories of people by making the similarities between these categories invisible and the differences visible. Petkova (1995) argues that today PMS is used, instead of witchcraft, to explain "unusual" (eg: aggressive) behaviour of women, while still reaffirming the

stereotype of them as "feminine" (not aggressive).

Discourses can be known through discourse analysis. Wetherell and Potter (1992) believe that discourse analysis focuses on the "activities of justification, rationalization, categorization, attribution, making sense, naming, blaming and identifying" which are "quintessential psychological activities" (p2).

2. This research is an example of thematic analysis (making order of the data) (Goodley et al 2002) rather than discourse analysis, which is much more formal, and would require complete transcripts to do properly.

3. Jodie Bell told how terrified she was about doing a television report in a death row unit in a US prison. As soon as she entered the unit, she saw Billy Sinclair, who was to be interviewed, and it was "love at first sight" for her. I am reminded of the "Love on a Suspension Bridge" study (Dutton and Aron 1974), which is quoted as support for the Three-Factor Theory of Love (Hatfield and Walster 1981).

The point is that when individuals are physiologically aroused in one way (eg: fear), it can be misinterpreted in another way (eg: love). Saying that, Jodie Bell said she was still in love with her husband after twenty-five years.

4. Paraphilias are conditions of sexual arousal to unusual objects or situations, and the individual is usually unable to become sexually aroused without them (APA 2000).

Money (1984) listed thirty-three different types, which became forty-three under six headings in Money (1986).

Hybristophilia is one of four paraphilia in the category "marauding/predation" ("sex must be stolen, abducted, or imposed by force, for it irrevocably defiles saintly love"; quoted in Feierman and Feierman 2000 p488).

5. John Money defined hybristophilia as "a paraphilia of the marauding/predatory type in which sexerotic (sic) arousal and facility and attainment of orgasm are responsive to and contingent on being with a partner known to have committed an outrage or crime, such as rape, murder, or armed robbery" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hybristophilia> accessed 6/10/05). An example would be the groupies of Charles Manson.

6. Averill (1985) noted that self-delusion is implicit in



romantic love: "I love her for what she is as a person, not for her appearance or behaviour" (p100).

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## 5. Discourse Analysis and Marriage

### INTRODUCTION

Discourse analysis is a qualitative method that "treats the social world as a text, or rather as a system of texts which can be systematically 'read' by a researcher to lay open the psychological processes that lie within them.." (Banister et al 1994 p92). In other words, the researcher is looking for the underlying social assumptions in interactions. In particular, the assumptions seen as "common sense". The ideas that are "common sense" are seen as "dominant ideologies" that have become "taken for granted" (Marshall 1992).

Table 5.1 outlines the main advantages and disadvantages of discourse analysis.

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
- focus on what is actually said	- language given too much emphasis - ie: plays down cognitive processes
- highlight underlying social assumptions in communication	- argues against language as means of communication only
- shows how behaviour is socially constructed	- subjective interpretation by researcher
- shows meanings of behaviour	- problems of reliability and validity

Table 5.1- Advantages and disadvantages of discourse analysis.

### WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

Lawes (1999) performed twenty unstructured interviews with twelve male and eight female volunteers. They were all members of "Generation X" (white British and North American population born between 1961 and 1971). Six participants were currently married, five had been previously though were not now, and four were not "involved in a relationship". The remainder were dating or cohabiting. All the participants indicated that they were heterosexual.

Lawes was interested in how the participants saw marriage, and she used open-ended questions like "Is there anything that all marriages have in common?", "What

is a 'good wife' or 'good husband'?", and "What is a good enough reason for getting divorced?". The interviews were transcribed, and discourse analysis was performed upon them.

It became clear from the analysis that the participants "draw on two possible versions or accounts of marriage which exist in a delicate symbiosis". These versions or "interpretative repertoires"<sup>2</sup> were based around marriage in theory and in practice:

### 1. "Romantic repertoire"

This is marriage in theory or the ideal, and is better than cohabiting. It is better because of the concept of the "right person", and of commitment. Marriage as something special.

Examples:

Karen - "...obviously, if you're going to get married then you're with the right person.. you don't have the need to seek happiness elsewhere.." (p7);

Catherine - "...I think once you're married you know exactly how the other partner feels about you. I think. As opposed to living together, that other person, you might, you might (sic) not know what that other person is thinking in the long term.." (p8).

### 2. "Realist repertoire"

This is marriage in "the real world", and it accepts that relationships "wear out". Here the participants were concerned with "good enough reasons" for getting divorced; eg: "If you don't love the person anymore" or "if there's any abuse" (Catherine).

Both repertoires (or discourses) are used by the participants, even if they were contradictory. Within discourse analysis, there are not fixed opinions, and so these contradictions are less of a problem than for traditional attitude researchers.

Lawes concluded with this example: "the romantic

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<sup>2</sup> Cooper and Kaye (2002) defined "interpretative repertoires" as "The sum of different discourses, and the ways that they can be combined and mixed together, which the individual has at their disposal to construct subject positions" (p101). Subject positions are "options" open to the individual in constructing (or positioning) the self.

premise that a long and happy marriage can be secured by doing the right kind of work is treated by these participants as eminently suitable for countering the realist notion that marriage is a gamble and the most you can do is to hope for good luck" (p14).

Thus the contradictions of guaranteed success with the "right person" (romantic repertoire) versus the reality that one can only hope that the marriage will succeed (realist repertoire).

## NEGOTIATION IN MARRIAGE

Benjamin (1998) interviewed twenty-eight "professional" women (white, middle class, aged 35-50 years old) in England in 1992. All the women worked (seven part-time): ten were chartered accountants, two head-teachers, three social workers, and thirteen marriage counsellors. Each interview lasted two hours, and, among other things, asked about communication patterns between the partners (negotiation). Benjamin was interested in the power that the women had to negotiate change in the relationships, for example, in domestic responsibilities.

Three patterns of negotiation for the women were found:

i) "Limited negotiability" (11 women) - women here used their negotiation skills to maintain the marriage, and few relational or practical issues were discussed. These women were not really able to negotiate change in the relationships.

Examples:

Nora Turner (all names are pseudonyms): "Basically, he gets very aggressive if he feels threatened, and I can't cope with that, so if I say anything he doesn't like, and he attacks like that, I just back off and go away";

Linda Pierce: "..his needs would come first. Not mine";

Diane Patmore: ".."I wasn't very good at confronting. I tended to bite my lip and get on with it.." (p781).

This type of communication pattern "showed how placing women in an inferiorised power position within the marital conversation secures men's home-based

privileges" (p782).

ii) "Beginning of negotiating" (9 women) - women in this group were able to change aspects of the relationships to some degree through negotiation. They "were no longer willing to accept their husbands exclusive control over the marital conversation".

Example:

Zoey Callader: "He found a house.. in the middle of nowhere and he wanted to move there. And I said. 'No. I don't mind moving within the area we're in'.." (p782).

iii) "Negotiation available" (8 women) - these women were able to negotiate fully with their partners about change, and were usually aided by co-operation. "These negotiating relationships are characterised by high levels of trust, mutual understanding and respect for each other's feelings. The partners jointly regulate the boundaries within their marital conversation while constantly aware of the difficulties each of them faces in the process of working on their emotions and accepting new situations" (p788).

What this study shows is the position of women in relationships in terms of their ability (power) to influence the traditional gender roles. Though all the couples were dual income, many of the women were the primary wage earners. However much society has changed, this is going to challenge the traditional role in a family of the man as main earner. Thus the importance of negotiation to deal with this and other conflicts in the relationship.

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## 6. Dark Side of Intimate Relationships

Steve Duck (1998) asked for more research and interest in the "dark side of relationships". Here "dark side" means aspects of intimate relationships that are negative (eg: arguments and conflict) or destructive (eg: jealousy and violence).

### JEALOUSY

When we imagine that we have lost influence over another person's feelings for us or when we are given evidence that they do not care, then we experience jealousy (Duck 1998 p54).

Duck (1998) distinguished jealousy about "what is one's own" (ie: possessive of own partner), and envious of "that which is other people's" (ie: another person's partner). Jealousy may have an actual or imagined basis. It can produce reactions of hurt as much as anger.

Jealousy can be seen as multidimensional, in the same way as attitudes, with three components:

a) Cognitive component - thinking about the partner's infidelity; eg: suspecting that they are secretly seeing someone else;

b) Emotional component - feelings about that behaviour;

c) Behavioural component - eg: secretly looking through the partner's personal things.

Mazur (1977) demarcated five types of jealousy:

i) Possessive - the response to a perceived violation of "property rights"; ie: partner is perceived as belonging to us, and that is threatened. This type of jealousy would link to Hendrick and Hendrick's (1986) "mania" style of love;

ii) Exclusive - feeling excluded from aspects of the partner's life;

iii) Competitive - jealousy towards the partner if they are better at something than us;

iv) Egotistical - a desire not to change or respond

to the wishes of the other person because our way is right;

v) Fearful - a reaction to the threat of rejection.

Whether jealousy is "normal" or "abnormal" (pathological) (1) is a matter of degree, and table 6.1 gives examples of both types with a husband and wife.

TYPE OF JEALOUSY	NORMAL	ABNORMAL
possessive	wife kissing another man in front of husband	wife smiles at stranger on the street being polite
exclusive	wife goes on holiday herself with female friends	wife does any activity that husband not involved
competitive	wife promoted above husband in same company	wife does anything perceived as better than husband
egotistical	husband not wanting to change major beliefs	husband not wanting to change any of their behaviour
fearful	husband left alone while wife on holiday	wife just talking on telephone to another person

Table 6.1 - "Normal" and "abnormal" types of jealousy by a husband.

The likelihood of jealousy within a relationship depends upon the closeness of the relationship, the availability of substitute partners, and the degree to which a third party is perceived as a threat to the current relationship (Berscheid and Ammazalorso 2001). So, for example, gay men who had less exclusive relationships experienced less jealousy (Bringle 1995).

#### MALE POSSESSIVE JEALOUSY

This concept of partner as property is enforced in society by labels for relationships (like "marriage", "girl/boyfriend"), and expectations of exclusivity that go with those labels. There are generally no problems with our friend having other friends, but this is not so for our lover having other lovers.

But for "swingers", jealousy is not about "extramarital sex", "they would feel jealous if the



partner became emotionally involved" (Duck 1998). While male Trobriand Islanders were expected to "offer" their wives to a visitor, and jealousy was not socially acceptable (Malinowski 1929).

Evolutionary Psychology (EP) would see possessive jealousy as having an evolutionary basis as "mate guarding".

Daly, Wilson and Weghorst (1982) noted the violent response of husbands to affairs by their wives (24% of spousal homicides by men were motivated by jealousy compared to 7.7% for women in Canada 1974-83).

As part of mate guarding, sexual jealousy in males has evolved. This would make males more attentive and vigilant of their females. Buss et al (1992) developed a simple experiment to show the difference in types of sexual jealousy shown by males and females.

Students were asked which would distress them most: (a) imagining their mate having sex with another person, or (b) imagining their mate having a deep emotional attachment with another person. Of the women asked, 85% were more distressed by (b), which fits with predictions of sexual selection - loss of male support is most damaging to women. While 60% of men found (a) more distressing, and this is because they cannot guarantee the paternity of their offspring. The results were based upon questionnaires, blood pressure and Galvanic skin response (GSR) measures. As always, this experiment is not without criticisms.

According to EP, males will use a variety of tactics to retain their mates (table 6.2).

TACTIC	EXAMPLE
- vigilance	- call mate unexpectedly
- concealment of mate	- not introduce to male friends
- monopolise mate's time	- spent all time with her
- emotional manipulation	- say "die without her"
- derogation of competition	- criticise her male friends

(After Buss 1992)

Table 6.2 - Male tactics for retaining mate.

Wilson and Daly (1992) listed cross-cultural practices that reflect the male concern of paternity to

include:

- a) Veils/purdah/incarceration (ie: hiding women);
- b) Chaperones;
- c) Foot-binding (to limit movement);
- d) Genital mutilation of women; eg: clitoridectomy;
- e) Status in law of women as men's property;
- f) Menstrual taboos; eg: the Dogon (Mali) send women to the "menstrual hut", thereby forcing them to signal their position in the fertility cycle.

Ussher (1997) was critical of EP that "appears implicitly to condone sexual violence, elevating the assailant to the status of anti-hero; he is primitive man, or super-macho man, a warrior hero, merely following in the footsteps of his primitive ancestors" (p337).

#### SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF JEALOUSY

A social constructionist position argues that "feelings are not substances to be discovered in our blood but social practices organised by stories that we both enact and tell" (Rosaldo 1984 p143). Put simply, this means that the emotions experienced in a particular culture will depend upon how that culture constructs those emotions through the mass media, for example, or through the family during socialisation of the child. Emotions are "bound up with the stories, myths and conventions of a culture which guide people on how to react in different circumstances" (Wetherell and Maybin 1996 p236).

Parkinson (1996) explored the social causes of emotions by emphasising their interpersonal nature. Emotional significance is defined interpersonally (eg: jealousy is dependent on the existence of others), and also culturally (eg: self assertive emotions like anger are more common in individualistic societies).

In addition to supplying an evaluative frame of reference defining what there is to get emotional about, cultures and institutions also promote implicit and explicit expectations about interaction which may influence the ways in which emotional episodes are played out in the interpersonal arena (Parkinson 1996 p666).

This can be seen explicitly in that some advice columns in popular magazines specify the appropriate behaviour concerning relationships.

Emotions cannot be seen outside a social context because people are explicitly trained to appraise emotionally relevant situations in institutionally appropriate ways. This is through the use of discourses, which evaluate the conduct as well as interpret it.

Emotions permeate the fabric of institutions and society; for example, superiors avoid relating and showing emotions to subordinates.

Thus to understand an emotion, we need to look at how it is presented in that culture. Clanton (1989) showed how jealousy was portrayed in popular US magazines between 1945 and 1985. Two distinctive periods and concepts of jealousy emerged from the analysis:

#### 1. "Jealousy as proof of love" (1945-1965)

Articles during this period saw a certain amount of jealousy as "natural, proof of love, and good for marriage".

Advice was given to female readers to keep jealous feelings "under control" and not to succumb to "unnatural jealousy". The women were told to make sure they did not make their husbands jealous, but if the husband did become jealous, this was to be seen as a sign of love.

An example of an article presenting this view was called "Two faces of jealousy" ("McCall's" magazine, May 1962), and written by a marriage counsellor: "Normal jealousy is a protective instinct.. Abnormal jealousy is a destructive obsession.."

#### 2. "Jealousy as a personal defect" (1970-1980)

"Jealousy was no longer seen as proof of love; it was rather, evidence of a defect such as low self-esteem or the inability to trust. Thus, jealousy was not seen as good for relationships; it was bad for them" (p159). For example, a male writer in 1975 (in "Redbook" magazine) described how he overcame his jealousy of seeing his wife talking to other men at a party. (Other research has failed to find an actual relationship between low self-esteem and jealousy).

What this research by Clanton shows is that emotions are not fixed but change with society. The views, and thus the experience of jealousy changed because US society changed in the 1960s with the "sexual revolution" and greater personal freedom for women. The early view of jealousy is based in a traditional society of women as mothers and housewives, and husbands as breadwinners.

"Emotions are shaped by society. Private experiences of emotions are embedded in history, in culture, in social structure" (Clanton 1989 p156).

## STALKING

An extreme darker side of intimate relationships is the behaviour of stalking. Tonin (2004) defined stalking as "behaviour that was unwanted by the victim and caused fear on at least two occasions" (p586)

Bates (1999) distinguished three types of stalking:

i) Intimate partner - This group of stalkers are not usually suffering from mental illness, but are more likely disgruntled (ie: unhappy and unwilling to accept the ending of the relationship) (McGuire and Wraith 2000).

ii) Delusional - This type of stalking can be seen in "morbid infatuation" and "erotomania" <sup>(2)</sup> (Mullen 2000). Both conditions are based on believing a relationship will happen, in the former case (eg: John Hinckley's stalking of actress Jody Foster in 1981; Bates 1999), or does exist (the latter condition) despite no or contrary evidence <sup>(3)</sup>. In the latter case, the victim may be telling the stalker that they do not love them (or even know them) but that is interpreted as a secret message admitting love.

The mentally disordered stalker shows certain characteristics - belief that they are loved by the victim; there is no encouragement, even rejection, by the victim; preoccupation with the victim; belief that eventually the victim will love them; misinterpretation of the victim's words; and repeated attempts at contacting the victim (Mullen and Pathe 1994).

Kienlen et al (1997) sub-divided this type of stalking into psychotic and non-psychotic. The former are suffering from schizophrenia, for example, and tend to visit the victim's home often and/or inappropriately rather than following them. Non-psychotic stalkers may be suffering from a Personality Disorder or substance dependency, and are more likely to be physically violent.

iii) Vengeful - rejection many lead to resentment and rage instead of accepting that a relationship has ended or will not happen. This may include stalking of ex-employers after dismissal, or politicians over their

policies.

Table 6.3 summarises the main differences between the three types of stalkers.

INTIMATE	DELUSIONAL	VENGEFUL
Emotionally abusive and controlling (even during relationship); self-esteem invested in relationship	Loner, unmarried, socially immature, unable to maintain close relationships, little sexual experience; tension of desperate for relationship vs fear of rejection; misinterpretation of kindness or sympathy	Obsessional anger over real/imagined issue

Table 6.3 - Characteristics of three types of stalkers.

More specifically, Sheridan and Davies (2001) interviewed ninety-five victims of stalking who contacted the "Suzy Lamplugh Trust" in Britain. The vast majority of victims were female (87). Three groups of people emerged as stalkers:

i) Ex-intimates - these tend to be the most aggressive, threatening, and intrusive; 49% (47 individuals) of stalkers;

ii) Former acquaintances - 34% (36) of stalkers;

iii) Strangers - this group is most likely to be convicted; 11% (12) of stalkers (4).

Table 6.4 lists some of the significant differences found between the three groups of stalkers in the Sheridan and Davies study.

Stalking does not necessarily have to involve physical harassment because there is also "cyberstalking" (Bocij et al 2003). Disturbingly, Bocij (2005) admitted that "People are also more willing to harm others in cyberspace than in the off-line world, because they are able to distance themselves with their actions" (p30).

Bocij and McFarlane (2002) defined cyberstalking comprehensively as:

A group of behaviours in which an individual or group of individuals or organisation uses information and communication technology to harass one or more individuals. Such behaviours

	EX- INTIMATES	ACQUAIN -TANCES	STRANGERS	OVERALL
physical assault	45%	14	33	31
tried to kill	36%	14	17	22
made silent phone calls	70%	44	42	52
sent begging/ pleading letters	68%	19	17	35
convicted of stalking	39%	14	55	36

(After Sheridan and Davies 2001)

Table 6.4 - Some significant differences between the three types of stalkers found by Sheridan and Davies (2001).

may include, but are not limited to, the transmission of threats and false accusations, identity theft, data theft, damage to data or equipment, computer monitoring, the solicitation of minors for sexual purposes and confrontation. Harassment is defined as a course of action that a reasonable person, in possession of the same information, would think causes another reasonable person to suffer emotional distress (quoted in Bocij et al 2003 p29).

An interesting variation on stalking has been called "reactive stalking" (Bocij 2005). This is where a victim of stalking goes on to employ stalking behaviour against others (ie: becomes the perpetrator or as revenge). This has been noted on anti-stalking message boards, and also with the presence of "revenge sites" on the Internet. Bocij (2005) distinguished two types here - "controlling stalker" (an attempt to regain power lost through being a victim by controlling the lives of others), and "paranoid stalker" (stalking others because of extreme mistrust and suspicion which was engendered by being a victim).

#### CASE STUDY

It is generally felt that initial research on stalking found that stalking was far more common than previously thought. For example, the National Institute of Justice study (Tjaden 1997) in the US found that 8% of women and 2% of men had been stalked in their lifetime.

Goode (1995) called stalking "the crime of the nineties" because of the apparent increase in cases. The Home Office figures showed an increase in prosecutions from 4300 in 1998 in magistrates courts in England and Wales to 5640 in 2003. Of the 2003 figures, 2810 cases were found guilty (2500 of them being men) (Ford 2005).

In an Australian postal survey of 1844 men and women in the state of Victoria, Purcell, Pathe and Mullen (2004) discovered that 23% of respondents (n = 432) met the legal criteria for stalking. Repeated intrusions were perceived as becoming stalking if they continued longer than two weeks. The three most common behaviours, in order, were telephone calls, "intrusive approaches", and "loitering nearby". Assaults occurred in about a quarter of cases, and property damage in about one-third.

There is no doubt that there is a greater publicity in the media about it, particularly relating to "celebrity stalkers" (eg: David Martin who stalked Vanessa Mae; Bird 2004). Violence is a minority occurrence (21-36% of cases), and homicide extremely rare (2% of cases) (McGuire and Wraith 2000).

On Thursday 15th September 2005, the newspapers were full of the story of Michael Pech who shot Clare Bernal and then himself at a beauty counter in Harvey Nichols' Knightsbridge store on Tuesday evening. Pech was a former boyfriend from a brief relationship who had worked in the same store. He had telephoned and texted excessively, followed and threatened her.

Bernal took out a restraining order as well as changing her phone number and moving house. Pech, at the time of the murder, was on bail (on condition that he did not approach Bernal) under section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

Court records showed the progress of the stalking (table 6.5).

What is interesting is to compare how the newspapers reported this event, particularly in terms of the language used (table 6.6).

Jan-Feb 2005 Brief relationship (approximate one month)

28 Feb Harass outside house; endless text messages

26 March Threatens ("If you report I will kill you") and pushes Bernal on London Bridge platform

30 March Formal complaint made to police (5)

4 April Follows her to cafe and sits staring at her

6 April Pech 1st arrest and released on bail

10 April Harass outside house; 2nd arrest; bail refused (later granted); pleads not guilty in court

31 Aug Pleads guilty in court; released on bail while pre-sentence report prepared

13 Sept Murder

(After "Evening Standard" 15 September 2005)

Table 6.5 - Chronology of stalking from court records.

NEWSPAPER	HEADLINES	LENGTH OF ARTICLE	TONE/FOCUS OF ARTICLE
Times	The stalker on bail who brought death to the perfume counter	1 page (p3)	generally factual; photo of smiling Bernal
Sun	Bloodbath at Harvey Nichols; Psycho on bail	2 pages (pp6-7)	emotive language: "bloodbath"; "crazy ex"; "Psycho Pech"; brief comment from "pal" of Pech blaming Bernal for ruining his life; photos of smiling Bernal, and dead Pech
Evening Standard	Harvey Nichols killer was set free twice before he shot ex-girlfriend	1 page (p5)	emphasis on bail granted by court, and lack of effectiveness of restraining order. (6); photos of smiling Bernal, and dead Pech
Daily Mail	If I can't have her nobody else will (front page); killed by a stalker	2 pages (front page and p5)	"embittered lover"; lot about Bernal's life; 2 photos of Bernal, and dead Pech

Table 6.6 - Four newspaper reports of the murder.



## STALKING AND ATTACHMENT STYLE

One model for explaining stalking behaviour is as an "extreme disorder of attachment" (Meloy 1992), and linked to the Preoccupied (insecure) attachment pattern (Bartholomew 1990). Bartholomew (1990) described four adult attachment styles (three being insecure) along the dimensions: approach-avoidance, and autonomy-dependence (table 6.7).

	AUTONOMY	DEPENDENCE
	positive self model - low anxiety	negative self model - high anxiety
APPROACH positive model of others	secure - in relationships, and view of self	pre-occupied - with self; difficulty in relationships
AVOIDANCE negative model of others	dismissing - of others, and remain by self	fearful - of others leaving, yet need them

(After Bartholomew et al 2001)

Table 6.7 - Adult attachment styles of Bartholomew (1990).

Tonin (2004) compared the adult attachment styles of twenty-one individuals detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 in conditions of security with a history of stalking behaviour (experimental group), twenty-four individuals detained without stalking history (forensic group), and thirty-three from a community control group. The experimental group showed significantly more insecure attachments (Fearful, Pre-occupied, and Dismissing) than both other groups on the self-reported Relationship Styles Questionnaire (RSQ) (Griffin and Bartholomew 1994).

The stalkers could be divided into two groups - fixated (following the same person) and serial (followed many different women). The former group had significantly more Pre-occupied attachment styles than the latter.

On a measure of good parenting (Parental Bonding Instrument; Parker et al 1979), the stalking group received significantly more "Father Protection" than the community control group, but no differences in "Father Care", "Mother Care" and "Mother Protection". Good parenting is characterised by high levels of Care and low levels of Protection.

## FOOTNOTE

1. Pathological jealousy at the extreme where it is delusional (ie: there is no infidelity), it is known as the "Othello syndrome" (Gelder et al 1996). While "conjugal paranoia" is specifically the delusion that a spouse has been unfaithful (Sadock and Sadock 2003). Pathological jealousy can also be a symptom of mental disorders, like mood disorders, for example.

Though homicide is rare, violence or threat of violence can occur in a number of the cases. For example, in a survey of eighty-one patients with pathological jealousy in Broadmoor hospital, only three had shown homicidal tendencies (quoted in Gelder et al 1996).

Propensity towards violence by a stalker tends to be related to (Bates 1999):

- i) Criminal record for unrelated crimes;
- ii) Substance abuse history or current;
- iii) Access to and knowledge of weapons;
- iv) Length of time and effort involved in stalking.

2. Erotomaniac delusions can last up to ten years (Meloy 1998). Also known as "Clerambault-Kandinsky complex" (Sadock and Sadock 2003).

3. Such a clear distinction between morbid infatuation and erotomania is not always possible. DSM-IV (APA 1994) preferred to see morbid infatuation as "borderline erotomania", and defined erotomania generally as "a delusion that another person, usually of higher status, is in love with the individual" (p765).

4. Mullen et al (2000) preferred the typology of stalkers as:

- i) Rejected - after breakdown of relationship;
- ii) Intimacy seekers - aiming to form relationship;
- iii) Incompetent - unable to form relationship;
- iv) Resentful - revenge against the victim;
- v) Predator - stalking is "a means to an end, and that end is an attack, usually sexual, on the victim" (p98).

5. Figures show that 80% of stalkers cease at the first police intervention (Nadkarni 1999 quoted in Bates 1999).

6. However, Pech was refused bail on one occasion and was remanded for eight days; given bail because no previous convictions. Blaming the authorities for not knowing that disaster would happen is a common response of the

newspapers, particularly if mental illness is or could be involved (Brewer 2002; 2003).

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Updates and Ideas for A Level Psychology No.2 - 10 Articles for PYA4: Relationships, and Pro- and Anti-Social Behaviour

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## 7. Women's Best Friendships

Research in a feminist tradition has looked at women's friendships as a specific area of study rather than as a comparison to men's friendships.

A lot of research on modern friendships has highlighted clear differences between the same-sex friendships of women and men (table 7.1). Traditionally women share and men do with their same-sex friends.

WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIPS	MEN'S FRIENDSHIPS
Intimacy - sharing feelings	Sociability - sharing jokes
Self-disclosure - high	Self-disclosure - low
Talking together	Doing activities together

Table 7.1 - Traditional differences in same-sex friendships of men and women.

However, these differences can be over-emphasised. Research shows that both men and women valued intimacy, empathy, trust, respect, and enjoyment in their same-sex friendships (Dallos 1996). While Allan (1996) argued that social class differences may be as important as gender differences in same-sex friendships.

There are other differences: for example, "non-conventional" men (eg: gay) are more self-disclosing to their friends (Nardi and Sherrod 1994). This research looked at same-sex casual, close, and best friends among 383 gay men and women in Los Angeles using six categories of friendship (importance, social support, self-disclosure, activities, conflict, and sexual behaviour).

Walker (1994), in fifty-two in-depth interviews with a variety of Americans, found a tendency for men and women to describe their friendships in stereotypical ways initially, but, as the interviews developed, a more equal picture emerged about sharing feelings, for example. In other words, men share more feelings and women less than the traditional picture.

Generally, three views have existed about women's friendships (Jerrome 1984):

i) Women are "naturally incapable" of forming bonds with other women because they are competitive and distrustful. This is the stereotype of bitchiness;

ii) A feminist view is that women do not form relationships "because they have been socialized to be dependent on men at the expense of their relationships with other women" (p710);

iii) More realistically, based on historical, age, and cross-cultural studies, women make and benefit from friendships.

A female best friend is something different to other female friends. Wulff (1988), from her study of twenty adolescent girls in South London, defined best friend as "someone to whom they (girls) could tell secrets and be sure nobody else would find out about them.. But a best friend was also someone have fun with.. (and) a friend comprehends and elucidates you to yourself.." (p74).

Coates (1996) drew out three central themes to best friendship:

- a) Trusting the best friend with secrets;
- b) Having fun with them;
- c) Getting to know yourself better from the friend's reactions.

Each of these themes can be seen in two different age groups of women - a fourteen-year-old in 1957 (Coates 1996) and seventy-nine-year-old Helen (O'Connor 1992) (table 7.2).

TEENAGER (and Gina)	HELEN (and Vera)
Trust	
sharing diary with best friend	"There's nothing I'd do or be ashamed of that I can't talk to Vera about"
Fun	
"Tied our shoelaces together.. Invented word: Ishish = putting on act" (Feb 3 1957)	Bingo on Tuesday evening, whist drives on Wednesday evening
Self	
"Gina explained our row. It was all my fault really" (Feb 1 1957)	"The relationship with Vera is identity enhancing in the sense that Vera sees her as 'the sort I am'" (p133)

Table 7.2 - Best friendship themes in two relationships.

Some female writers have emphasised that female best friendships are very powerful. Raymond (1986) coined the phrase "gyn/affection" to mean female friendship "based on honour, loyalty and affection". It is the deepest emotional bond, irrelevant of whether the woman has a male partner or not. This was supported in interviews by 87% of married women and 95% of single women (Hite 1987).

## EXAMPLES OF WOMEN'S BEST FRIENDSHIPS

### 1. Historical example - intimacy

Carrol Smith-Rosenberg (1975) analysed the letters and diaries of families in America between 1760s-1880s. One strong theme that came out of correspondence between two married women (Sarah Butler Wister and Jeannie Field Musgrove) was the level of intimacy. Friends since teenage years, their letters expressed feelings that would be viewed differently today:

Sarah: "I can give you no idea how desperately I shall want you.."

Jeannie: "How I love you and how happy I have been. You are the joy of my life.. I want you to tell me in your next letter, to assure me that I am your dearest.."

It is important to emphasise that these are the letters of two friends, and there was no evidence of homosexuality. What it does show is the differences in social norms about friendships, particularly here, with the expression of feelings (Coates 1996).

### 2. Cross-cultural example - helping to cope

Robinette Kennedy (1986) spent a year studying a small village on the island of Crete, where gender divisions were strictly controlled. Women spent most of their lives in the home, and their freedom was limited by the husband's permission.

In this environment, women's friendships were a "powerful coping mechanism and a unique expression of special energies", though they may have been relatively secret. The women meet their best friend in the kitchen, while the men were away in the fields, and it was always in the context of doing housework. Whereas the men met in the local coffee-houses, the idea of women specifically stopping their work to talk to friends was socially unacceptable.

The most important finding was the benefit of these

relationships to the women: "Being able to express themselves openly with a friend enables them to express emotional and behavioural congruency, an experience they claim is rare in their everyday lives.. In addition, their identity is affirmed and they may feel understood, believed in, comforted" (p130).

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## **8. Evolutionary Psychology and Relationships: Some Recent Research**

Evolutionary Psychology (EP) argues that the motivation in finding an opposite sex partner will be based upon the principles of evolution. Thus men and women will want different things from a potential mate. Men will want evidence of fertility (shown by youth and physical appearance), and women will seek evidence of resources (eg: finance and status, or potential for them). Analysis of dating ads has found support for these predictions (eg: Dunbar 1995; Kenrick and Keefe 1992).

However, research by Jagger (1998) challenged these universal features in dating advertisements. In her survey of such advertisements in the "Herald", "Scotsman", "Guardian", and "Independent", she found some differences in what is offered and required by each sex.

The research was based upon 1094 heterosexual ads (61%/670 placed by men, and 39%/424 by women) over a four-week period (the first two weeks in March and May 1996).

Coding of the ads was based around:

- i) Lifestyle interests - social (eg: cinema) or physical/outdoors (eg: walking and other sports);
- ii) Resources - occupational (eg: professional), cultural (eg: well-travelled) or educational (eg: qualifications); and economic (eg: rich) or commodities (eg: own house);
- iii) Personality attributes - masculine (eg: ambition, assertiveness) or feminine (eg: nurturing, empathy).

Lifestyle choices were seen as important if not more so than resources in men, and women "marketed" their "masculine" attributes, while selecting "feminine" men. The body was important to both sexes. Table 8.1 gives details of the main characteristics found as important.

Table 8.2 shows the significant differences found between the men and women's ads.

Support for Jagger comes from an "Internet experiment" reported by Cohen (1998). The researchers, Don Strassberg and Stephen Holty, placed fictitious ads on three Internet dating bulletin boards as from a woman (aged 26-28 years old) who was basically easy-going and optimistic.

TOP FIVE CHARACTERISTICS  
OFFERED (% adverts)  
(11 categories)

MEN

1. Body	56
2. Personality	52
3. Resources	35
4. Lifestyle/ interests	34
5. Body size	23

WOMEN

1. Body	58
2. Personality	58
3. Lifestyle/ interests	42
4. Physical attractiveness	32
5. Resources	30

TOP FIVE CHARACTERISTICS  
WANTED (% adverts)  
(8 categories)

MEN

1. Personality	39
2. Body	29
3. Physical attractiveness	17
4. Lifestyle/ interests	15
5. Body shape	12

WOMEN

1. Personality	55
2. Body	25
3. Resources	16
4. Non-smoking	14
5. Moral virtues	13

(After Jagger 1998)

Table 8.1 - Top five characteristics offered and asked for in dating advertisements in Jagger (1998).

The researchers varied certain details, either describing herself as (a) "very attractive", (b) "passionate and sensitive", (c) "financially successful and ambitious" (traditionally masculine characteristics in EP), or (d) none of the above (control condition).

In one week, there were 507 responses of interest: 90 to (b), 103 to (d), 129 to (a), but (c) was the most popular for a date with 185 responses. Cohen questioned the findings as due to the clientele of the Internet sites, who may have been more affluent than the norm and after similar people.

Another method used by EP is to present males with photographs of females to choose those preferred. Singh (1993) introduced the idea of the waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) of 0.7 being the most desirable as seen in "Playboy" centrefolds and "Miss America" winners. It is not the actual weight, but the distribution of the weight that is key.

A WHR of 0.7 is associated with health and fertility. This preferences was shown over sixty years even when the actual weight of models varied.

But Yu and Shepard (1998) challenged the universality of these findings with a study of the Matsigenka people of Peru. They have not been exposed to

SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL	OFFERED	WANTED
0.01	men economic resources more (6% vs 3%)	
	women hair colour more (13% vs 8%)	
0.001	men fitness more (8% vs 3%)	
0.0001	women physical attractiveness more (32% vs 23%)	
0.00001	women body size more (23% vs 11%)	women personality more (55% vs 39%)
		women non-smoking more (14% vs 6%)
		male body shape more (12% vs 4%)
		women resources more (16% vs 4%)

No significant differences:

Offered - body; personality; lifestyle/interests; resources; body shape; non-smoking

Wanted - body; physical attractiveness; lifestyle/interests; moral virtues

(After Jagger 1998)

Table 8.2 - Significant differences between men and women's ads.

the Western media, and live in a hunter-gatherer type environment with food scarcity. The men here preferred women with a WHR of 0.9 (overweight from Western studies). They saw women with a WHR of 0.7 as ill (ie due to lack of food).

Anderson et al(1992) resolved these contradictory results by linking men's body size preference of women to reliability of food supply. The researchers looked at fifty-four cultures, and found that where food supply was unreliable (ie: regular food shortages), heavy female bodies were the ideal (a high WHR) in 71% of cases. Where food shortages did not exist (ie: food supply was reliable), then there was no difference in preference between thin and heavy female body sizes (40% vs 40%, and the remainder preferred medium size).

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## 9. Some Thoughts on the Social Construction of Aggression

Within social psychology the debate about aggression has revolved around its evolutionary benefits, and the social influences upon it. In other words, the belief that there are universal processes underlying aggression, but what if displayed or even experienced aggression varies from culture to culture? And what if aggression was entirely a social product? This is a view argued by some social constructionists.

Defining aggression has always been difficult. One distinction, though, is often made between hostile and instrumental aggression. The latter being the use of aggression as a means to an end (eg: for self defence in an unprovoked attack). This is often not seen as aggression, because to call a behaviour "aggressive" is to give it a negative evaluation.

What is being said is that aggression is an "interpretative construct" rather than just a descriptive term (Mummendey 1996). For example, the police intervening at a demonstration will be perceived differently depending on which side the observer supports.

More specifically in the speeches of George Bush about the "war against terrorism" since 11th September 2001, he emphasised the justifiable nature of the US military reaction. Even when civilians are killed, it is seen as an unfortunate accident (not as aggression against the innocent). Yet those who support the attacks on 11th September believe that their acts are justified and are not aggression, but self defence or retaliation against Western capitalist imperialism.

Language as always is the key, and aggression is in the eye of the beholder:

The genocidal wars of Cambodia, Rwanda and Croatia are littered with language of honour, right and just cause. Ethnic cleansing makes mass murder sound almost clinical and reasonable (Cardwell and Humphreys 1998 p5).

The search is for what factors influence the interpretation of a behaviour as aggressive or not. Mummendey (1996) lists three factors:

1. The specific norms of the situation, and whether the

behaviour violates them.

Within the construction of traditional masculinity in the West, an aggressive response is seen as "normal" in certain situations. To not do so would be "unmanly". Canaan (1996) showed how young working-class males are always reaffirming their "hardness" with verbal and physical aggression. This varies from the "banter" at work to fights after the pub closes.

This is not aggression for the men involved - it is a "normal" part of "being a man".

Similarly, Reilly et al (2004) looked at violence and masculinity among young men in Northern Ireland. Using focus groups, this research explored explanations and attitudes to violence. The "normality" of violence for young men can be seen in extracts from the transcripts of the focus groups:

- "Violence is a natural reaction. If someone runs up behind ye, yer (sic) first instinct is to put your fists up" (young Catholic male);
- "If it's just one on one, it's different to if there was an audience there, and like you were almost like humiliated, then you'd have to do something" (young Protestant male);
- "If you have a disagreement with someone, you wouldn't argue with them, you'd just hit them. Whereas women are more bitchy and they would go on and on arguing for ages" (young offender);
- "People will think you're a 'poof' if you try to talk your way out or something" (young Catholic male);
- "You don't want to be seen to be.. weak, like if you are you're likely to get done over the next time, be walked over by others" (young Protestant male).

These extracts show the "inevitability of experience of violence for young men. There was explicit reference made to a set of expectations that held that young men should behave violently" (Reilly et al 2004 p474).

2. The attribution of cause of the behaviour as situational or dispositional.

Rule and Ferguson (1984) talked about the "is-ought" discrepancy (the discrepancy between what actually happened and what should have happened). If an individual

is badly insulted and provoked, their reaction with a punch will be perceived and labelled differently to an unprovoked punch.

Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) interviewed "punks" who were involved in fights with the police after a concert. One interviewee, MR, portrayed the violence as an ordinary reaction to the provocation of the police:

..(W)e go outside and there they are fucking eight hundred old bill just waiting for the chance, riot shields, truncheons and you're not doing nothing, you're only trying to get down to the tube and go home, so what do they do? You're walking by and they're pushing you with truncheons and they start hatting (sic) the odd punk here and there and what happens? The punks rebe-rebel (sic), they don't want to get hit in the face with a truncheon. Nobody does. So what do you do - push your copper back and then what happens? Ten or twelve of them are beating the pure hell out of some poor bastard who's only tried to keep somebody off his back. Now that started a riot (quoted in Jorgenson and Phillips 2002 p131).

Add to the attribution of cause, the assessment of responsibility, and research shows that people become angry when they feel they are victims of deliberate or unjustified acts. The justification of behaviour is a key area of interest to social constructionists, particularly the feeling of "being in the right".

For example, Reilly et al (2004) found that young men in Northern Ireland saw police behaviour ("like a red rag to a bull like"; sic) the cause of much violence. A young Protestant male felt that the police were "there just to get you out of the road, or to beat you out of the road, one of the two".

3. The position of the individual as actor, recipient or observer.

The use of aggression can be seen as a form of coercive power. Particularly whether a behaviour is legitimate or illegitimate will affect whether it is labelled as aggressive.

Tedeschi and Felson (1994) listed the factors influencing whether individuals choose to use aggression as coercive power - expectancy in achieving goals with aggression; value attached to the goal; and the utilities and costs of behavioural alternatives. Thus the use of force to remove an invading army can be seen as legitimate, and not defined as aggression. Yet the

behaviour of the invaders would be defined as aggression.

Wetherell and Potter (1989) took the example of police activity during protests and fighting at the 1981 rugby matches in New Zealand when South Africa were the tourists. They interviewed white New Zealanders who were spectators. Using discourse analysis of the interviews, they showed how the police actions were "constructed" ("defined") as aggressive or not.

The interviews can be divided into groups based on the justification given for the police violence:

i) The police were antagonised by the protesters, and thus the police behaviour was not seen as violence. Any reports of such violence are downgraded by "minimization of the injury" (Semin and Manstead 1983);

ii) The police action is seen as a response to earlier violence, and is necessary in the situation;

iii) This group accepts the police were violent, but that it was necessary (justified) to keep law and order;

iv) The police behaviour is viewed as a consequence of the situation - eg: "tempers wore thin";

v) The police are seen as only doing their job.

Not all the speakers were direct supporters of the police, but were trying to make sense of the situation. The construction of behaviour as caused by "outside forces" is influenced by, and part of the language used, and consequently the definition of aggression. Aggression is usually seen as negative, and "caused" by the particular individual. Other behaviour (that which is not seen as aggressive) is "caused" by the situation, and usually seen as justified.

## CONCLUSIONS

From a social constructionist understanding of aggressive behaviour, there are no such thing as objective acts of aggression. It is more interesting to see what behaviour is labelled aggression and which is not. The key factors here are:

i) The role of language - eg: "terrorist" or "freedom fighter";

ii) The justification of behaviour as "legitimate" or "normal";



iii) The context of aggression within social structures (like masculinity).

It is always important to be aware of the social structures for social constructionists. For example, Western society today is a particular form of capitalism ("consumer capitalism"; Brewer 2001), and this encourages aspects of aggression as the "normal" way of life - eg: "the killer instinct" is encouraged in sport, or ruthless ambitious in the business world.

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## 10. A SYNTHESIS MODEL TO EXPLAIN AGGRESSION

3

### INTRODUCTION

There is little agreement over the definition of aggression, let alone what are the causes. Gross (1992) simply saw it as the intention to harm another. While the distinction is made between aggression and violence, and between hostile and instrumental aggression (Berkowitz 1993). The latter involves the use of aggression as a means to an end, in, say, self defence.

As to the causes of aggression, they vary from biological and evolutionary explanations through to learning and social constructionist approaches. Whatever the explanation or theory put forward, they tend to be general, and not very good at accounting for a specific act of aggression.

The model presented here attempts to synthesise ideas to account for both the general level of aggression of an individual or society, but also for a specific act. The model is presented in figure 10.1. Table 10.1 lists the different types of factors in the model.

The aim of the model is not to present new research on aggression, but to combine and integrate other theories and research. There are two parts to the model:

a) The general level of aggression of an individual or society, which is a combination of individual, group, and social factors;

b) How this general level is converted into a specific act of aggression. The main factors involved here will be disinhibitions, and/or environmental triggers.

The rest of this article explores examples of the different components of this model. There are disputes and debates about the different theories, but they are not covered here.

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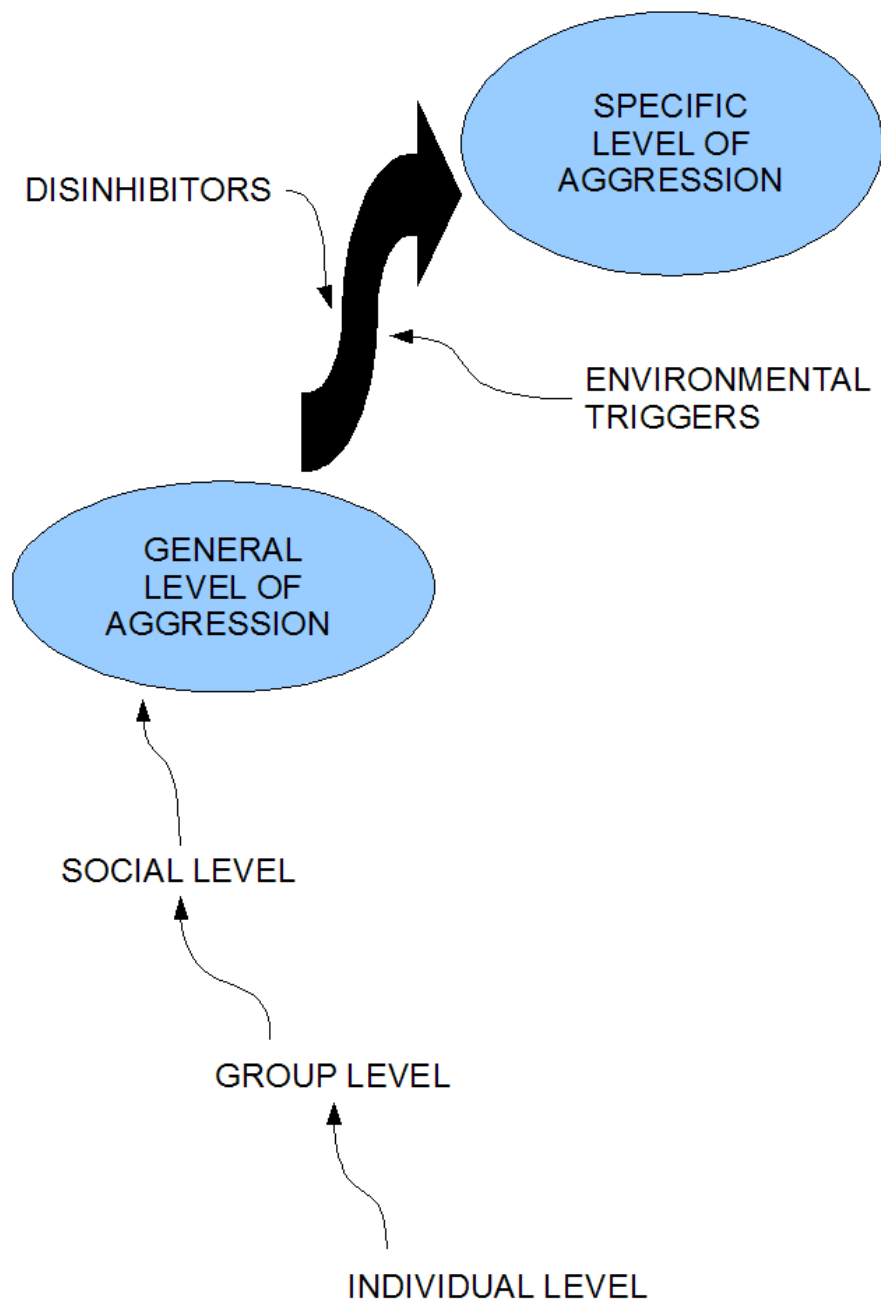


Figure 10.1 - A synthesis model to explain aggression.

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	GROUP FACTORS	SOCIAL FACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- genes</li> <li>- chromosomal abnormalities</li> <li>- attributions</li> <li>- personality</li> <li>- neurophysiology</li> <li>- neurochemistry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- family</li> <li>- peer group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- social construction of aggression</li> <li>- aggression in the media</li> <li>- social identity</li> <li>- economic disadvantage/relative deprivation</li> </ul>
DISINHIBITIONS		ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- aggression in the media</li> <li>- alcohol</li> <li>- deindividuation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- heat</li> <li>- frustration</li> <li>- "weapons effect"</li> <li>- general arousal</li> <li>- overcrowding</li> <li>- noise</li> <li>- pain and discomfort</li> <li>- direct provocation and reciprocation</li> <li>- powerlessness/lack of control</li> </ul>	

Table 10.1 - Examples of different factors in the synthesis model to explain aggression.

#### INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

This group of factors relate to the individual, and include intra-personal aspects like genes or personality. Examples explored here include genes, attributions, and neurophysiological differences.

##### 1. Genes

Selective breeding of animals has shown that it is possible to make certain species more aggressive. This suggests a characteristic of aggression that can be passed on genetically. The exact details of the genetic basis is unclear; ie: there is not a single gene for aggression (certainly not in humans).

Hans Brunner (quoted in Brewer 2000) studying the genetic history of a Dutch family with a history of violence found that many of the males carried a defective gene related to the production of a particular neurotransmitter. This is likely to produce fearlessness, which leads to aggression, rather than simply a gene for aggression.

## 2. Attributions

How the individual makes sense of ambiguous situations, and their perception of threats play a role here. Dodge (1986) talked of the "hostile attribution bias" - the tendency to perceive the actions of others as threatening and thus must be countered with action. For example, accidentally bumping into a person in a crowded situation is perceived as deliberate, and therefore a challenge.

## 3. Neurophysiological differences

Adrian Raine argued for differences in the neuroanatomy of impulsive killers. In PET scans, the frontal lobes (which usually involved in restraining and controlling behaviour) were under-active in these individuals (Raine et al 1997).

### GROUP FACTORS

These are factors related to the groups that an individual is part of, primarily the family and the peer group.

#### 1. The family

The Social Learning Theory (Bandura 1973) placed the emphasis for learning from models that the child observes as they grow up. If the child receives physical punishment, then they will learn that aggression is a good way to resolve situations. The models (ie: parents) are thus observed and copied.

It is probably not as simple as that, but studies of families and delinquency have noted certain factors. For example, the "power assertion" strategy of child rearing involving physical punishment and criticism with little reward or praise was found to be evident in the families of teenagers showing delinquent behaviour (Hoffman 1984).

Adding the factors together of the many studies: poor parental monitoring; poor or inconsistent discipline; lack of family cohesion; large family size; parental drinking habits; parental employment history; and parental criminal behaviour (Farrington 1991; Gorman-Smith et al 1996; Loeber and Dishion 1983). Delinquent behaviour means more than just aggression, but it usually involves aggression. A number of these factors

may also be disinhibitors.

## 2. Peer group

The idea of blaming the peer group for problem behaviour has a lot of public appeal. Sutherland (1939) has suggested a form of learning through association for crime, known as the differential association theory.

While Patterson et al (1989) have noted that children who observe peers using aggression successfully in the playground (ie: to get what they want) may copy that behaviour.

Recently, Harris (1997) has argued that the peer group for children and teenagers is more important than the influence of the parents.

Certainly the peer group can be important for those pupils marginalised at school, particularly in the formation of an "anti-school sub-culture". Finding status within this group may involve excelling in anti-social behaviour (like aggression).

## SOCIAL FACTORS

This group of factors are those causes of general aggression that exist within society as a whole; eg: the social construction of behaviour, and the level of aggression presented through the media.

### 1. Social construction of behaviour

Each society will have a "normal" or "acceptable" level of aggression. Aggressive behaviour is constructed within the "norms" of society; ie: there are situations where it is acceptable to use it.

A survey, of 2000 14-21 year olds, by the Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust in Edinburgh in 1999, found situations where both male and female respondents felt it was acceptable for a man to hit a woman. One in four men, and one in eight women, thought hitting a woman could be justified if she had "slept with someone else" (quoted in Brewer 2000).

Wetherell and Potter (1989) looked at the protests and fighting during the 1981 South African rugby team's visit to New Zealand, and did discourse analysis on the perceptions of the aggressive response of the police to the protesters. The behaviour of the police was justified in a number of interviews, and thus not labelled as

aggressive. For example, when:

- a) The police were antagonised by protesters;
- b) The police action was seen as a response to earlier violence;
- c) The police were seen as only doing their job.

One area of interest is the social construction of masculinity. Coward (1987; quoted in Sparks 1996) has argued that the male hero in Hollywood "blockbusters" present violence as something integral to masculinity. While Sonnenstein (1999) reported work with teenagers in the USA, and how being "tough" was part of traditional masculinity.

Collinson and Hearn's (1996) study of informal shopfloor interactions in a factory showed they were "highly aggressive":

New members are teased incessantly and tested to see whether they are "man enough" to take the insults couched in the humour of "piss taking"...Those who display a willingness to "give it and take it" are accepted into the masculine sub-culture, while those who "snap" have failed this particular test of manhood and are likely to be kept at a distance (p68).

Canaan (1996) noted how young working-class males' leisure activities involve drinking and fighting to confirm their "hardness". Thus there is a certain amount of aggression implicit in "normal" masculinity.

## 2. The level of aggression presented in the media

In particular, we are talking about the amount of aggression shown on television. There is a general concern about this factor being the cause of aggression in society. However, the relationship between what is seen and how individuals act is complex (Cumberbatch 1997).

Similar concerns are being raised with research into aggression and video games (eg: Wiegman and van Schie 1998).

## DISINHIBITORS

The general level of aggression can be converted into specific actions by the presence of factor(s) that reduce the likelihood of not being aggressive. These are known as disinhibitors. Alcohol, television, and

deindividuation are three good examples.

### 1. Alcohol

Alcohol reduces inhibitions generally in all areas of behaviour by its effect on the frontal cortex. Taylor and Sears (1988), in an experiment, found that male students when drunk were more suggestible to social pressure to give a greater number of electric shocks to a victim. With strong social pressure, the drunk group gave five times as many electric shocks as those students drinking a placebo (no alcohol). Even without social pressure, the drunk group gave nearly three times as many shocks.

### 2. Aggression on television

Individuals may not directly imitate the aggression seen on television as a rule (Cumberbatch 1997), but there can be a disinhibition effect. Thomas (1982) found that students who had watched a large amount of aggression on television gave more electric shocks to a fellow student in an experiment.

A high level of television aggression makes aggressive behaviour seem acceptable, and it appears a "normal" way to resolve disputes. Particularly if the aggression shown is "consequenceless"; ie: the victim is not shown, or the aggression is justified: the fact that the heroes of many films "win" by using aggression (Comstock and Paik 1991).

### 3. Deindividuation

Deindividuation is the process by which individuals feel anonymous, have a loss of self identity, and thus a loss of restraint on their behaviour.

Deindividuation has been found with darkness (Gergen et al 1973), disguises or uniforms (Zimbardo 1969), and in crowds (Mullen 1986).

However, deindividuation does not inevitably lead to aggression. In the Gergen et al (1973) experiment, participants were left in groups of strangers in a pitch black room. Participants here tended to show a decline in inhibitions and touched each other more than in a normally lit room.



## ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS

In certain situations, the individual's general level of aggression will be triggered into specific aggression. This will be due to certain things in the environment at the time.

### 1. "Weapons effect"

In a contrived experiment, Berkowitz and LePage (1967) found that the presence of a gun in the room produce more electric shocks given to a victim (the measure of aggression) than the presence of a neutral object. This experiment is not without its critics.

But Berkowitz (1968) is convinced that the presence of weapons induced aggression: "Guns not only permit violence, they stimulate it as well. The finger pulls the trigger, but the trigger may also be pulling the finger".

### 2. The level of arousal

Highly aroused individuals may be more likely to be aggressive. This general level of arousal can come from competitive games, vigorous exercise, or possible erotic situations (Donnerstein and Berkowitz 1981).

Zillman et al (1974) asked participants to do a session on an exercise bicycle. Afterwards, they were insulted and then given the opportunity to be aggressive towards the insulter. Those participants aroused from the exercise tended to show higher levels of aggression. This idea is sometimes known as the "excitation transfer" theory.

## CONCLUSION

It is the combination of many factors that can explain both the general level of aggression in individuals or societies, and the specific acts of aggression. No factors by themselves are sufficient.

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