Chapter 6
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Kinds of Support Sought Across Lifespan from Attachment Figures
In need, people seek:
Proximity
Safe haven
Secure base

Can you think of examples of each of these?
Theories of Social Relationships

Social relationships: dynamic, recurrent patterns of interactions with others.
Theories:
- Attachment Theory
- The Convoy Model
- Socioemotional Selectivity Theory
- Evolutionary Psychology

Attachment Theory

Attachment: strong affectional bond formed by an infant to her primary caregiver and inferred by behavior.

Key underlying features:
- Feelings of security
- Increased during times of stress.
- Attempts to avoid, or to end, separation from the attachment figure.

Attachment

Internal working model or attachment orientation

Caregiving orientation
The Convoy Model

*Convoy Model*: ever-changing network of social relationships throughout life.

- Networks serve to shape and protect.
- Networks affect how world is experienced.

Social Networks in the Convoy Model

*Social network*: inner circle, middle circle, outer circle

Convoys differ by individual’s age, race, and SES and may act as stress buffers

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory

*Socioemotional Selectivity Theory*: more meaningful social relationships are preferred with age.

- Why do Carstensen and colleagues say this is both a quantitative and qualitative change?
**Evolutionary Psychology**

_Evolutionary Psychology:_ social relationships play important role in human evolution.

- Relationships provide protection from predation, access to food, and insulation from cold.
- Human species today have biological systems manifested in “need to belong.”

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**Why asking which theory is right might be wrong!**

Theories have more similarities than differences.

Current, active movement in pursuit of _multidisciplinary approach_

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**Intimate Partnerships**

- Married couples
- Cohabitating couples with heterosexual and same-sex partners
- Gay and lesbian couples in civil unions
Match.com comes to college: Mate selection

Fisher’s (2004) mate selection model of distinct emotional systems:
Lust
Attraction
Attachment

How would you define each of these?

Lust

Lust system powered by androgens in both genders and sometimes viewed as “accelerator of romantic love.”

Freud suggested that libido was foundation of all intimate relationships.

What do you think?

Can there be lust without love or love without lust?
Attraction

*Attraction*: romantic love, obsessive love, passion, limerance.

Theories of Attraction

- Filter Theory
- Exchange Theory
- Evolutionary Perspective

But first a little biology…

Attraction associated with increased levels of dopamine and norepinephrine and decreased levels of serotonin (brain neurotransmitters).

Patterns of brain activation for new romantic love different from those associated with sex drive.
Filter Theory:
Begin with large pool and gradually filter out those who do not fit specifications
• Describes mate selection as a series of steps that rule out more and more potential partners until only one is left.

Exchange Theory:
Each person has some assets to offer a prospective partner.
• In choosing a mate, we try for the best exchange we can manage.

What about the evolutionary perspective?
Evolutionary Perspective:
Preferences are genetically-based
Men: someone to bear and feed children; look for signs of good health and fertility.
Women: qualities that signal economic resources, healthy genes, and protector ability.

Different explanations BUT similar conclusions.
What does recent research tell us?

Different preference for mates depends on interest in long-term or short-term relationship.

![Figure 6.1: Men are more apt to say they are looking for potential mate who is physically attractive, whereas women are more apt to focus on earning potential; however, the people they choose to see again in a speed dating session do not always fit those stated preferences.](image)

Researchers suggest that adult romantic relationship styles are reflections of attachment bond the adults had with their parents in childhood.

Bartholomew developed four categories: secure, dismissive, preoccupied, and fearful.
Thinking about Attachment

How does Bowlby’s attachment theory match recent theories that attachment between romantic partners is an evolved mechanism to keep parents together long enough to raise children?

Types of Marriage

Validating Marriage
Volatile Marriage
Avoidance Marriage
Hostile Negative Marriage
Emotionally Unexpressive Marriage

Long-Term Marriages

What makes marriage “work” (Gottman, 1994)?
Validating marriages
Volatile marriages
Avoidant marriages
When marriages fail...

Types of unsuccessful marriages (Gottman & Levenson, 2002)
- Hostile negative marriages
- Emotionally unexpressive marriages

Gottman suggests there are three types of stable or enduring marriages:
- Validating marriages
- Volatile marriages
- Avoidant marriages

Types of unsuccessful marriages:
- Hostile/engaged marriages
- Hostile/detached marriages

Negative patterns can be changed in therapy.

A Quick Review

Cohabitation and Marriage

Cohabitation is increasingly common and does not always lead to marriage.
More cohabitating couples are becoming parents.
Cohabitating relationships are not as stable as marriages.
Same-Sex Partnerships

4-6% of adults in world are exclusively or typically homosexual. Long-term committed relationships are common among gay and lesbian couples, with much the same source of happiness and problems as heterosexual marriages.

Do you know if…?

Do civil unions change relationships for gay and lesbian couples?

What factors are important in relationship satisfaction?

What are the sources of stress for gays and lesbians in a civil union?

Are relationships more alike or more different for homosexual versus heterosexual couples?

What is a “family”? 
Parent-Child Relationships in Adulthood

Bowlby and Weiss
- Parental bonds should attenuate and end.
- Relinquished parental attachment central in individuation-achieving process of late adolescence and early adulthood.

Cicirelli
- Parent-child attachment changes, not declines.
- Communication becomes important.
- Adults substitute symbols of parents and supplement symbolic relationship.

Relationships with Other Family Members

*Intergenerational solidarity theory* states that family relationships depend on:
- Associational solidarity
- Affectional solidarity
- Consensual solidarity
- Functional solidarity
- Normative solidarity
- Intergenerational family structure

The Effects of Late-Life Divorce

Divorce increasing among older adults.
- Effects may be experienced by adult children.
  - Estrangement.
  - Financial challenges immediately after divorce.
  - Financial challenges in parents late life through increased caregiving burdens on children.
Problem Children in Adulthood

Children’s problems primary cause for depressive symptoms for older adults.

Problems include children’s divorce, financial crises, and drug or alcohol problems.

Mixed Feelings…Tears in Heartstrings

Ambivalence felt by over one-half of older adults.

Lack of independence in child.

Serious problems.

Uneven distribution of gifts and help.

Grandparent-Grandchild Relationships

• Age makes a difference and relationships change as ages of both parties increase.
• Racial/ethnic differences.
• Relationships provide important emotional meaning.
• Many adult grandchildren view their relationship with grandparents as a “safety net.”
What is the “grandmother effect”? 

- Presence of grandmothers predictive of children’s survival through recorded history.
- Social groups with more grandparents had more help in birthing, caregiving, and knowledge transmission.

What theoretical perspective underpins this idea?

Relationships with Grandparents

Figure 6.2: Students rate grandparents based on emotional closeness, time spent together, and resources provided.

Relationships with Siblings

Moderate emotional closeness is most common pattern of sibling relationships in adulthood.

Evidence suggests sibling relationships become more significant in later life.

In middle adulthood, life events often bring siblings together (e.g., death of a parent).
Teens, Grandparents, and Single Parent Homes

Figure 6.3: When teenagers live in single-parent home, a good relationship with grandparents is related to fewer difficulties and distress.

Friendships in Adulthood

Friendship: voluntary social relationship carried out within a social context.
- Friends appear to become less central with age.
- Women’s friendships are based on talk; men’s friendships are marked by doing.

Chapter Review

1. _____ theory was originally formulated to explain the relationship between infants and their parents.

2. Other theories of social relationships include the _____ model, which considers the group of significant people who travel with us in our lives at different points in time.
Chapter Review

3. The relationship with an intimate partner is typically the most central relationship in adulthood. The process of partner selection has been explained traditionally by _____ theory and _____ theory.

4. _____ theory has also been used to explain success in creating romantic relationships.

Chapter Review

5. Many couples _____ before marriage, and they have higher divorce rates and lower levels of marital happiness than couples who do not.

6. Most gay and lesbian adults in the United States are in committed relationships, and around _____% of the couples have been together 10 years or more.

Chapter Review

7. Interactions with adults and their parents occur at high and relatively constant levels throughout adulthood. Most adults have at least weekly contact with their parents. Some studies show increased closeness with _____ in middle and late adulthood.

8. The problems of one’s children are always a cause for concern, even when the children are ____. Major causes of distress for older parents are children’s divorces, financial problems, and drug or alcohol problems.
Chapter Review

9. Studies have shown that good relationships with can level the playing field for kids who are at risk for social problems.

10. are important in young adulthood and middle age, with significant gender differences. Family relationships take precedence in the later years.