

Sexuality in Marriage, Dating, and Other Relationships: A Decade Review

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Sexuality in Marriage, Dating, and Other Relationships: A Decade Review

In this article, we review the major research advances made during the 1990s in the study of sexuality in marriage and other close relationships. More specifically, we provide a critical review of the empirical findings from the last decade on such sexual phenomena as sexual behavior, sexual satisfaction, and sexual attitudes within the context of marriage, dating, and other committed relationships. After highlighting the major theoretical and methodological advances of the 1990s, we focus on the research literatures of: (1) frequency and correlates of sexual activity in marriage; (2) sexual satisfaction, including its association with general relationship satisfaction; (3) sexuality in gay and lesbian committed relationships; (4) trends in sexual behavior and attitudes in dating relationships; and (5) the role of sexuality in dating relationships. We also incorporate brief reviews of the past decade's research on sexual assault and coercion in marriage and dating and on extramarital sex. We end our decade review with recommendations for the study of sexuality into the next decade.

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Sexuality is woven into the fabric of many close relationships. It is sanctioned in marriage; it is often explored in dating; and it is an intricate part of other committed romantic relationships. The past decade saw a marked increase in scholarly interest in sexuality within a relational context. This increased interest posed a challenge for us as we developed the foci of this review. In deciding what areas of research to review, we considered the interests of family scientists balanced with the sexual phenomena explored by scholars from a variety of disciplines, including but not limited to family studies, sociology, psychology, communication, public health, and women's studies. More specifically, the purpose of our review was to identify, summarize, and critique theoretical, methodological, and empirical breakthroughs in sexuality research from the 1990s as they relate to marriage and other relationships that occur prior to or outside of marriage.

We open by identifying major theoretical and methodological advancements in sexuality research of the 1990s that have relevance to marriage, dating, and committed relationships. In the second section, we review the empirical literature from the 1990s on sexuality in marriage and other committed relationships. In the third section, we review the past decade's literature on sexuality in dating (premarital) relationships. Although most of our review concentrates on sexuality's positive aspects, sexuality also has a "dark side" involving sexual coercion and assault. Hence, our review of

the literatures on marital and dating sexuality includes findings on this aspect of sexuality. We end the review with recommendations for research on sexuality for the coming decade.

Because of page limits, we could not review all topics relevant to sexuality. For example, we did not include a review of adolescent sexuality, contraceptive use, or teenage pregnancy (for reviews see Gullotta, Adams, & Montemayor, 1993; Moore, Miller, Gleib, & Morrison, 1995). Furthermore, although the 1990s saw an increase in research on risk behaviors and individual and family outcomes related to AIDS, these topics are also beyond the scope of this review (see Kelly, 1995, for a review). Moreover, the topics we were able to cover were limited primarily to research conducted in North America, although advances were also made in sexuality research in other countries and cross-culturally.

ADVANCEMENTS IN THE 1990S

We wish to identify several advancements in sexuality research in the 1990s that have relevance to family science. These can be aggregated broadly into two areas: (1) advancements in conceptualization and theory involving sexuality-related phenomena and (2) advancements in methodology.

The 1990s witnessed an increased focus on sexuality within a relational context, which broadened the concepts, topics, and theories linked to sexuality (e.g., McKinney & Sprecher, 1991). The science of interpersonal relationships is one of the most rapidly growing areas in behavioral sciences (Berscheid & Reis, 1998), and it is now chronicled in two multidisciplinary journals (*Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* and *Personal Relationships*) that have published several articles on sexuality. Scholars from the close relationships field have examined how sexuality is related to such relationship phenomena as attraction, satisfaction, intimacy, equity, love, communication, and stability. Reflecting the general lack of government funding for research on intimate relationships, most of these investigations are based on smaller convenience samples (Gierveld, 1995). However, because the issues examined by relationship scholars have not, in general, also been examined in the larger, national studies, we highlight some of their findings in this review because of their insights and heuristic promise.

Overall, theoretical advancements in sexuality research were somewhat limited during this past decade. However, there was an increase in the

number of scholars who employed an evolutionary perspective, either as an explanation for their findings or to test a priori hypotheses derived from this perspective. Evolutionary approaches focus on distal causes of sexual behavior and argue that current patterns of sexual behavior, including gender differences in these behaviors, exist because they have been associated with reproductive success in our ancestral past. According to this perspective, current gender differences in a variety of sexual behaviors can be traced to the smaller investment that men, relative to women, need to make in order to create offspring, balanced against women's more limited access to resources needed to ensure their offsprings' survival. In particular, evolutionary perspectives were used to explain gender differences in extramarital behavior, jealousy reactions to extradyadic affairs, sexual conflict in marriage, and choice of sexual influence tactics in dating. Despite the increase in evolutionary-based research, more of the research on sexuality in the 1990s was atheoretical than theoretical (see discussion by Weis, 1998). There is little reason for this to continue. Near the end of the decade, *The Journal of Sex Research* devoted a special issue to theory, which included reviews and critiques of social constructionism (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998), sexual strategy theory (Buss, 1998), social exchange (Sprecher, 1998), symbolic interactionism (Longmore, 1998), social learning theory (Hogben & Byrne, 1998), and systems theory (Jurich & Myers-Bowman, 1998) as they apply to sexuality. This collected work provides a solid reference for informing sexual research in the coming decade.

A number of methodological advances were worthy of recognition. First, there was an increased availability of large-scale national studies that included sexuality data. Knowledge of patterns of sexual behavior was increased significantly with the publication of data from the National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, & Kolata, 1994). For this study, a probability sample of 3,432 Americans, aged 18 to 59, was interviewed, and respondents completed a brief questionnaire with more sensitive questions about sexuality. Approximately 54% of the sample were married, and another 7% were in cohabiting relationships. Several other ongoing and first-time large-scale probability studies provided data about adult or adolescent sexuality in the 1990s (e.g., General Social Survey—GSS, The National Survey of Men—NSM,

The National Study of Adolescent Health—Add Health). In general, it became more legitimate to ask about sexual behaviors and attitudes in national studies because information on sexual patterns was relevant to the AIDS crisis. More government and private funding was placed into this type of research.

Another methodological advancement was the maturation of several longitudinal studies conducted with married or committed couples. Researchers who began longitudinal studies in the 1980s continued to follow the couples over several years and multiple waves, which allowed them to examine, when sexuality data were available, how sexual phenomena change over time and how the sexual health of the relationship at one time might be related to a future outcome of the relationship. Two longitudinal studies in particular have included measures of sexuality over time: The Early Years of Marriage Project, based on a sample of Black and White married couples in the Detroit area (e.g., Oggins, Leber, & Veroff, 1993); and the Marital Instability over the Life-course Project, which was based on a national sample of married individuals obtained through random digit dialing (e.g., Edwards & Booth, 1994).

A final methodological advancement we want to note is an increase in the sophistication and accessibility of information on particular methods and measurement. For example, a recent issue of *The Journal of Sex Research* was devoted to methodological advances (Catania, 1999a). Several of the works will likely prove valuable to family scientists into the next decade. Gribble, Miller, Rogers, and Turner (1999) reviewed the advantages of incorporating new technologies into survey work, including computer-assisted personal and telephone interviewing; these are technologies that, when compared to traditional survey and interview methods, appear to increase respondents' reports of engaging in sensitive sexual practices. Morrison, Leigh, and Gillmore (1999) provided a useful comparison of three different methods of daily data collection: individual-initiated phone calls, investigator-initiated phone calls, and self-administered questionnaires. Two papers focused on reporting bias. Wiederman (1999) identified volunteer biases among college students who typically participate in sexuality research. Catania (1999b) provided a thoughtful analysis of the origins of reporting biases in interviews. Finally, Binik, Mah, and Kiesler (1999) examined ethical issues connected with conducting research

using the Internet, a practice that will likely increase in the coming decade. In addition to the special journal issue, several methodological issues were discussed in an edited volume sponsored by the Kinsey Institute (Bancroft, 1997). Furthermore, Davis, Yarber, Bauserman, Schreer, and Davis (1998) published a handbook of over 200 sexuality measures, including information on their reliability and validity. The advances in methodology, coupled with an increased accessibility of measures of sexuality-related variables, will likely increase the volume of research conducted on sexuality in the next decade.

In addition to advances in conceptualizations, theory, and methods, scholars' empirical investigations revealed new insights into the sexuality of adults in relationships. We begin our review of these findings by examining sexuality in marriage and other committed romantic relationships.

SEX IN (AND OUTSIDE OF) MARRIAGE AND OTHER COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

The most socially approved context for sexual activity is the marital relationship. Because sex and marriage are legally and morally linked, marital sex is generally not viewed as a social problem or as a phenomenon likely to lead to negative outcomes. As a result, marital sex has not been the central focus of much research in the past decade. This scarcity of research on marital sex has also been noted in previous decades (Greenblat, 1983). Nonetheless, several studies were conducted in the 1990s that included data on sexuality in marriage or other committed relationships, as described below.

Descriptive Information about Sexual Activity

One issue that received research attention, before and during the 1990s, is the frequency of couples' sexual activity. Scientific interest in frequency of marital sex is based in part on its association with both fertility and quality of marriage. Although data collected on this topic prior to 1990 were based on nonprobability samples (e.g., Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Hunt, 1974; Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953), this past decade yielded data on sexual frequency from national probability samples.

Because the national samples included respondents from across the life-span, how sexual frequency is associated with marital duration or age,

two passage-of-time variables that are highly confounded, was examined. The National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), based on interviews conducted in 1987–88 (Wave 1) with a randomly selected sample of over 13,000 Americans, included a question on frequency of sexual intercourse in the self-administered questionnaire completed by the respondents. Call, Sprecher, and Schwartz (1995) reported that the NSFH Wave 1 married respondents had an overall mean frequency of sex of 6.3 times per month. Couples under the age of 24 had a mean frequency of 11.7, but the frequency declined with each subsequent age group. For example, in the 75 and older age group, the mean frequency was slightly less than once per month. Call, Sprecher, and Schwartz (1996) reported a similar negative association of sexual frequency with age at Wave 2 (1992–1994) of the NSFH. With slightly different foci and subsamples from the NSFH Wave 1 data, Rao and DeMaris (1995), Marsiglio and Donnelly (1991), and Donnelly (1993) published similar findings about marital sexual frequency. The decline in sexual frequency seems to be due to both psychological and biological factors associated with the aging process. Any decreases due to habituation resulting from being with the same partner seem to occur early in the marriage (Call et al., 1995). A habituation perspective can also explain the finding from NSFH (Call et al.) that a remarriage was associated with an increase in marital sex, controlling for other factors including age.

Measures of sexual frequency were included in the National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSL) (Laumann et al., 1994; Michael et al., 1994), the large-scale national study referred to earlier. The researchers provided data on the sample members' frequency of sexual activity in various ways, but, for our interests, reported a mean frequency of sexual activity per month of 6.9 for married men and 6.5 for married women. The cohabitators had a higher level of sexual activity (which was also found in the NSFH data; e.g., Call et al., 1995; Rao & DeMaris, 1995), whereas the single individuals had the lowest level of sexual activity. Laumann and colleagues (1994) also reported the ubiquitous decrease in sexual frequency with age, although the data were presented for the entire sample, married and unmarried.

The General Social Survey (GSS), an interview study on a variety of attitudes and experiences conducted biennially by the National Opinion Research Center with probability samples of Americans, also contains data on sexual frequen-

cy. As reported in Smith (1994b, based on 1993 GSS data), married respondents engaged in sexual intercourse an average of 67 times per year, or slightly over once a week. The frequency rates were highest among the young and those married less than 3 years.

Only a few longitudinal studies were conducted in the 1990s that included information on sexual frequency, but their findings confirm a decrease in sexual frequency with marital duration. In a longitudinal study of newly married couples selected randomly from central Pennsylvania, Huston and Vangelisti (1991) found that a decrease in sexual activity and interest began in the first 2 years of marriage. Preliminary analyses based on both waves of the NSFH data (Call et al., 1996) indicated that the younger couples in the original sample experienced a decrease in sexual frequency between Waves 1 and 2. In a four-wave longitudinal study conducted with 570 pregnant women and their husbands or partners, Hyde, DeLamater, Plant, and Byrd (1996) found that the respondents reported having sex 4–5 times per month during pregnancy, had almost no sex in the first month post-partum, said they resumed sexual intercourse approximately 7 weeks postpartum, and had a sexual frequency rate at 4 and 12 months postpartum that was similar to the rate during pregnancy (4–5 times per month). More long-term longitudinal studies are needed to examine the pattern of sexual activity with the passage of time and with other family transitions, including the launching of children and retirement.

The rates of marital sexual activity found in the national probability samples of the 1990s appear to be similar to, and in some cases slightly lower than, those reported in nonprobability samples conducted in previous decades. The major advancement in the 1990s on this topic was the examination of a wide range of possible predictors of sexual frequency through multivariate analyses. Passage of time (i.e., age, duration of marriage) was found to have the strongest (negative) association with frequency of marital sex, although marital satisfaction also had a unique and strong (positive) association with sexual frequency (e.g., Call et al., 1995; Laumann et al., 1994; Smith, 1994b). Social and background characteristics, such as race, social status, and religion, were generally unrelated to marital sexual frequency, with the exception of a few modest associations, such as a Catholic background being associated with a lower frequency (Call et al., 1995). The multivariate results conducted in the 1990s on predictors

of sexual frequency indicated only a modest amount of variance in marital sexual frequency explained, despite a notable number of predictor variables (e.g., 20% was explained in Call et al. [1995], using the NSFH data and 18 predictors), suggesting that future research needs to broaden the type of predictors considered.

There was very little discussion in the 1990s of measurement issues associated with sexual frequency. The sexual frequency question varied slightly in format across the studies described above. For example, the question in the NSFH referred to "sexual intercourse" and was open-ended, whereas the NHLS asked about "sex" and elicited closed-ended responses. Responses might vary in systematic ways as a function of the format of the item, although we suspect not by much. The NHLS study further explored what couples do when they have sex and found that almost all of the married men and women (95%) had vaginal intercourse in their last sex act. Although a majority of the respondents had engaged in oral sex in their lifetime, less than one-fourth of the married respondents reported having oral sex during their last sex act. Anal sex was even less common—1–2% reported having had it during their last episode, although 9.7% of married men and 7.3% of married women reported engaging in anal sex during the past year. Oral and anal sex were more common among the more highly educated and the White respondents.

A continued focus on documenting frequency of marital sex and its predictors might not be as fruitful as examining other issues about sexual frequency, including how married respondents believe their frequency compares to that of other couples and to what they desire or expect, and the implications of these comparisons. In addition, we suggest that the focus of research move from how often couples have sex overall (e.g., each week on average) to the degree of variation, week to week, both in frequency of sexual activity and in the specific behaviors engaged in and the length of time sex lasts. This intracouple variation (over time) is likely to be linked in complex ways to relationship phenomena, including balance of power, conflict, and communication. We encourage research on this issue, possibly through daily diaries kept by married individuals, a method used infrequently in the 1990s.

Sexual Satisfaction

Married individuals' assessments of the quality of their sexual relationship also received research at-

tention in the 1990s. Consistent with findings from previous decades (e.g., Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983), married couples were generally sexually satisfied. For example, Laumann and colleagues (1994), in the NHLS, found that 88% of the married individuals in the sample were either extremely or very physically pleased in their relationship. When asked about the specific feelings they experienced after having sex, a majority of the participants reported positive feelings (i.e., felt "loved," "thrilled and excited") and only a small minority reported any negative feelings (e.g., "anxious and worried"). Married respondents, particularly if they were monogamous, reported the highest level of sexual satisfaction; cohabiting and single (i.e., dating) respondents had slightly lower levels of sexual satisfaction. Greeley (1991) also found high sexual satisfaction among his married respondents, obtained from the 1988 and 1989 GSS and from telephone interviews conducted by the Gallup Organization using a national probability sample of married couples. High levels of marital sexual satisfaction were reported in several other studies as well (e.g., Edwards & Booth, 1994; Lawrance & Byers, 1995; Oggins et al., 1993). Couples who become sexually dissatisfied, however, might be less likely to be in these studies because of their greater risk of having divorced early in marriage.

Less consistent information is available on how sexual satisfaction might change with marital duration or age, although the accumulating evidence suggests that it does not decline as rapidly or as dramatically as does frequency of sex. For example, Laumann and colleagues (1994) reported that most of their respondents, regardless of age, were happy with their partnered sex. Although physical pleasure was found to be lower for women over the age of 40 than for women under 40, their analyses were based on all respondents, married and unmarried. Men did not experience the same drop in physical pleasure with age, which, as explained by the authors, might be due to divorced and widowed men's greater likelihood of obtaining new and younger sex partners, relative to their female counterparts. Edwards and Booth (1994), in their national sample of married individuals, found no differences in sexual happiness as a function of age, although wives in their late middle years (48–60) were more likely than younger wives to say that loss of interest in sex was a problem in their relationship (nonetheless, only a small minority had this view). Men and women tended to agree that it was the wife who

was more likely to lose interest. Their longitudinal analyses revealed a significant decrease in happiness with sex and a significant increase in loss of interest in sex in the sample over 9 years of marriage. Greeley (1991), in a cross-sectional analysis based on a national sample of married couples, also found a decline in sexual satisfaction with age (and therefore marital duration).

Not surprisingly, sexual satisfaction is associated with sexual frequency. Couples who have the most frequent sex are the most sexually satisfied (Greeley, 1991; Laumann et al., 1994). This past decade, however, did not yield any findings of import about this association. For example, no significant knowledge was gained about how the quantity and quality of sexual activity influence each other over time (is one more likely to lead to the other?), the specific processes that might mediate the association, and the degree to which the strength of the association differs based on other characteristics of the couple such as their ages and relationship duration. That sexual frequency appears to decline more rapidly than sexual satisfaction with age (and marital duration) suggests that the association between the quantity and quality of sex might change with the passage of time. These are issues that need more investigation in the next decade.

In the previous section, we reported that social and demographic characteristics are generally unrelated to frequency of sex. Research conducted in the 1990s indicated that social and demographic variables also are generally unrelated to the degree of sexual satisfaction (e.g., Davidson, Darling, & Norton, 1995; Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994; Laumann et al., 1994; Oggins et al., 1993). An exception is that at Wave 1 of the Early Years of Marriage Project, Black spouses reported more sexual enjoyment than White spouses, controlling for other demographic variables, including income (Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994; Oggins et al., 1993). These researchers also found that higher household income was associated with less sexual satisfaction for women and speculated that higher family income is associated with one or both partners working longer hours or having more work stress, which might be detrimental to women's sexual satisfaction. However, with a national sample, Greeley (1991) reported that after controlling for age there was no association between the wife working and sexual satisfaction in marriage. Another work variable, working different shifts, was found to be associated with sexual problems or

sexual dissatisfaction in a national sample of married individuals (White & Keith, 1990).

Investigations designed to identify predictors of sexual satisfaction have been generally atheoretical and focused on personality attributes (as noted by Lawrance & Byers, 1995); these studies are beyond the scope of this review. More relevant to this review, however, are investigations that have focused on how sexual satisfaction might be predicted by behavior and affect in sexual and nonsexual aspects of the relationship. Lawrance and Byers (1995) developed a model of sexual satisfaction that focuses on the interpersonal context and is based on exchange theory. Their Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction states that sexual satisfaction is affected by rewards, costs, comparison level, comparison level for alternatives, and equality within the sexual area of the relationship, as well as by relationship satisfaction. Evidence for components of this model was found in a study of married and cohabiting men and women (Lawrance & Byers, 1995), a study of daters (Byers, Demmons, & Lawrance, 1998), and a study of Chinese married men and women (Renaud, Byers, & Pan, 1997). Sexual satisfaction also has been found to be associated with other aspects of the interpersonal environment, including quality of sexual communication (Cupach & Comstock, 1990), sexual self-disclosure as mediated by relationship satisfaction (Byers & Demmons, 1999), and equity (Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994).

Investigations in the 1990s that focused on predictors of sexual satisfaction most often were based on smaller, geographically limited samples, although their strength was the frequent use of either multi-item scales with known reliability and validity, multidimensional measures, or both (e.g., Lawrance & Byers, 1995; Oggins et al., 1993), in contrast to the use of single-item global measures of sexual satisfaction typical of national studies. Ideally, research in the future will combine good sampling techniques with sophisticated measures of sexual satisfaction. In addition, more theoretically driven research is needed to identify how factors associated with the individual, the relationship, and "the environment" might interact to affect sexual satisfaction.

In the next section, we discuss how sexual satisfaction, as well as level of sexual activity, are related to overall relationship satisfaction and other relationship outcome variables.

The Association Between Sexual Dimensions of the Relationship and Relationship Quality

In our discussion, above, of findings from the 1990s on sexual frequency, we noted that sexual frequency was found to be associated positively with general relationship satisfaction in married couples (e.g., Call et al., 1995; Donnelly, 1993; Smith, 1994b). What appears to be a more important predictor of marital satisfaction, however, is sexual satisfaction or other feelings about sex (Greeley, 1991). Several studies conducted in the past decade have demonstrated that sexual satisfaction is associated with higher marital satisfaction (Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Edwards & Booth, 1994; Greeley, 1991; Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 1997; Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994; Kurdek, 1991; Lawrance & Byers, 1995; Oggins et al., 1993). The quality and quantity of sex also appear to be associated with feelings of love for one's spouse or partner, especially a passionate or erotic type of love (e.g., Aron & Henkemeyer, 1995; Grote & Frieze, 1998; Marston, Hecht, Manke, McDaniel, & Reeder, 1998; Sprecher & Regan, 1998). Sexual intimacy, however, has been found to be a weaker predictor of love or of general relationship quality than have other forms of intimacy, including degree of affection expressed (Huston & Vangelisti, 1991) and supportive communication (Sprecher, Metts, Burleson, Hatfield, & Thompson, 1995).

In the examination of how a sexuality variable (e.g., sexual satisfaction) is associated with a general relationship construct (e.g., relationship satisfaction), caution must be exercised so that the two variables do not overlap in measurement content (e.g., Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). For example, several marital satisfaction scales (e.g., Roach, Frazier, & Bowden, 1981; Spanier, 1976) include an item or two about sexual activity. Measures of other relationship dimensions, including intimacy, love, interdependence, maintenance strategies, and exchange, have also included elements referring to sexuality (for a discussion, see Sprecher & McKinney, 1993). One solution has been to delete from the scale measuring the general relationship construct any items that refer to sexuality (e.g., Kurdek, 1991).

On a broader conceptual level, researchers must determine whether the sexuality variable is the independent or dependent variable. One's theoretical framework guides the determination of the specific causal connections between partners' feelings about the sexual relationship and the

overall evaluation of the relationship. In most research, the focus has been on a sexuality variable as the predictor and on a general relationship quality measure as the variable to be explained, often within a multivariate framework (e.g., Edwards & Booth, 1994). However, the reverse causal direction is proposed in some models, such as the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction described earlier (e.g., Lawrance & Byers, 1995). Furthermore, Henderson-King and Veroff (1994), among others, have speculated that marital well-being and sexual feelings are reciprocal and that both causal directions operate over time. More multiple-wave, longitudinal investigations are needed to adequately address the possible reciprocal relation between these variables over time.

Research in the 1990s also examined whether sexual satisfaction predicts marital stability versus dissolution. Oggins et al. (1993), using data from the Early Years of Marriage Project, reported that sexual dissatisfaction at Year 1 predicted marital dissolution by Year 4 of marriage. Based on later analyses, however, Veroff, Douvan, and Hatchett (1995) found that sexual (dis)satisfaction measured in the 3rd year of marriage was not a significant predictor of later relationship dissolution. In their longitudinal study of married individuals, Edwards and Booth (1994) found that a decline in sexual satisfaction over time was associated with the increased likelihood of divorce. Furthermore, in a national study of married individuals (White & Keith, 1990), a measure of sexual problems or dissatisfaction at Time 1 was associated positively with the likelihood of divorce by Time 2, controlling for general marital happiness and other variables. Thus, these limited findings suggest that sexual satisfaction contributes to marital stability. To our knowledge, however, no research has examined the effects of frequency of sexual activity on the likelihood that marriages dissolve over time.

In the next section, we discuss extramarital sex, which has also been found to be associated with negative outcomes for the relationship.

Extramarital Sex

Although sex in marriage is the most socially approved form of sexual outlet, sex by married persons with someone other than their spouse is one of the most stigmatized. The GSS has included an attitudinal question on extramarital sexuality, and, consistently through the years, 70–80% of Amer-

icans express complete disapproval of a married person having sex with someone other than his or her spouse, and most others express at least some disapproval (e.g., Smith, 1994a). The NHLS (Laumann et al., 1994) included a similar attitudinal question and found that 77% of participants said extramarital sex was always wrong. Considerable research has been done to examine predictors of attitudes about extramarital sex, although most of this research was conducted in the decades prior to 1990 (for reviews, see Glass & Wright, 1992; Sponaugle, 1989; Thompson, 1983). Among the variables that have been found to be associated with permissive attitudes toward extramarital sex are: premarital sexual permissiveness, high education, low religiosity, and being male.

Research conducted in the past decade on the incidence of extramarital sex has yielded rates lower than those reported in earlier studies based on nonprobability samples (for a review of the earlier research, see Thompson, 1983). In the NHLS study (Laumann et al., 1994), approximately 25% of married men and 15% of married women reported having engaged in extramarital sex at least once. Less than 4% of married respondents reported having engaged in sex with someone other than their spouse in the prior year. Similar low rates have been found in other national studies, including the GSS (e.g., Greeley, 1991; Smith, 1994b; Wiederman, 1997), the 1991 National Survey of Men (Billy, Tanfer, Grady, & Klepinger, 1993), the 1991 National Survey of Women (Forste & Tanfer, 1996), and a national sample based on the National AIDS Behavioral Study (Choi, Catania, & Dolcini, 1994). Nonetheless, these percentages translate into a significant number of Americans who have experienced sex with someone other than their spouse at least once. Furthermore, individuals who divorce are less represented in married samples but perhaps more likely to have experienced sex with someone other than their spouse.

Cohabitants have a higher rate of nonmonogamy than do married couples (Forste & Tanfer, 1996; Laumann et al., 1994). In addition, a higher lifetime incidence of extramarital sex is found among men, Blacks, remarried individuals, those in the lowest and highest education categories, those in urban areas, and those low in religiosity (e.g., Laumann et al., 1994; Wiederman, 1997).

Perhaps because of the relatively low incidence of extramarital sex, few studies in the past decade have focused on its association with marital sat-

isfaction. There are two major issues that can be examined, however, about this association: First, does marital dissatisfaction lead to extramarital sex? Second, what are the effects of a partner's infidelity on one's marital satisfaction?

The limited research from the 1990s on the first issue suggests that marital dissatisfaction might play only a small role in married individuals' decision to engage in extramarital sex. For example, Greeley (1991) reported that marital dissatisfaction has only an indirect influence on the likelihood of extramarital sex, mediated by such factors as premarital sexual permissiveness and a lower value placed on fidelity. However, several studies prior to 1990 (reviewed in Bringle & Buunk, 1991, and in Edwards & Booth, 1994) did show an association between extramarital sex and marital dissatisfaction, especially for women. Opportunity and having a reference group that supports nonmonogamy also seem to be important factors leading to the behavior.

Concerning the second issue, research suggests that spouses become upset with a partner's infidelity. Not all spouses find out about a partner's infidelity, but those who do tend to have negative reactions (e.g., Bringle & Buunk, 1991) or say they would if it were to happen (Shackelford & Buss, 1997). Gender differences in negative reactions to partner's real or hypothetical infidelity have been a focus of several studies conducted in the 1990s. This research suggests that men become more upset by the sexual aspect of a partner's infidelity, whereas women become more upset by the emotional aspect. These gender differences are explained most frequently from an evolutionary perspective (e.g., Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992; Buunk, Angleitner, Oubaid, & Buss, 1996). In the aggregate, however, it appears that marital satisfaction is rarely affected by the threat of extramarital sex. For example, in their national study of married individuals, Edwards and Booth (1994) reported that only about 5% of the sample reported that extramarital sex caused a problem in their marriage. However, those who perceived it as a problem were more likely to be dissatisfied in their marriage.

Although laypersons and family scholars alike might not agree on the extent to which extramarital sex is a social problem, most can agree that forced sex in marriage or other committed relationships is indeed a problem and a dark side to human sexuality. We discuss sexual assault and coercion in marriage next.

Husbands' Sexual Assault and Coercion of Wives

In spite of important foundational studies in the 1980s (e.g. Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russel, 1982), husbands' sexual assault and coercion of their wives remains one of the most understudied areas of marriage and sexuality. Perhaps this reflects society's struggle with accepting that sexual assault in marriage actually occurs. The American Law Institute's Model Penal Code recommends exempting spouses from sexual assault laws (Posner & Silbaugh, 1996). Four states follow this recommendation by exempting spouses from sexual assault statutes if a married couple coresides. In addition, many states' statutes allow spouses partial exemptions from their sexual assault laws when a spouse is mentally incapacitated or disabled or, in one state, no penetration occurs.

Knowledge about the exact prevalence of marital sexual assault and coercion remains elusive. Laumann et al. (1994), in their national survey, asked women whether they had been "forced to do something sexual they did not want to" (p. 334). Twenty-two percent of the women had been sexually forced by a man and in 9% of these cases the women referred to a spouse. Extrapolating from these percentages suggests a rate of 2% for married women, although the wording of this item is at best a rough indicator of sexual assault, a problem readily acknowledged by the investigators. The 2% rate is notably lower than the marital rape rates of 10% (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985) and 14% (Russel, 1982) found in earlier investigations that used area-probability samples and more exact measures.

Knowledge about the marital dynamics associated with sexual coercion and assault in marriage remained equally elusive. Using the first wave of NSFH data, DeMaris (1997) found that the monthly sexual frequency of couples with violent husbands was 2.5 times higher than that for couples with nonviolent husbands, when controlling for other factors. Based on previous findings of an overlap between husbands' physical and sexual abuse of their wives, DeMaris hypothesized that violent husbands sexually coerced their wives into this higher frequency of sexual activity. Unfortunately, the data set contained no direct measures of sexual coercion, although indirect measures provided some support for his hypothesis. Additional work with Swinford (DeMaris & Swinford, 1996) using the National Family Violence Survey also provided partial support for the

hypothesis. DeMaris and Swinford's analyses revealed that husbands' previous attempted or completed rapes of their spouses significantly predicted wives' fear of being hit. Hence, husbands' sexual and physical violence co-occur in some marriages. DeMaris (1997) provides insights into these wives' mental states; couples' coital frequency was positively related to wives' depression if husbands were violent, or, in instances where both spouses were violent, if wives but not husbands suffered physical injuries.

The lack of empirical and theoretical attention to sexual assault and coercion in marriage in the 1990s is striking. Work in the 1980s that combined qualitative and quantitative methods painted compelling and vivid pictures of patriarchal terrorism (see Johnson, 1995, for a definition) and of the long-term effects of these women's experiences (e.g., Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Russel, 1982). The role of social, familial, couple, and individual factors in sexual coercion and assault in marriage is unclear at this time. Moreover, investigations have centered primarily on wives and have excluded husbands' reports. We echo the call of others in noting the great need for scholarly attention to this area.

Research also documents that forced sex occurs in other committed relationships, including gay and lesbian relationships (e.g., Waldner-Haugrud & Gratch, 1997). The more positive aspects of sex in gay and lesbian relationships, however, will be discussed next.

Sex in Gay and Lesbian Committed Relationships

Although considerable research was done in the past decade on the sexual behavior of homosexuals, particularly gay men, the focus of most of this research was on risky versus safe-sex behavior (e.g., Barrett, Bolan, & Douglas, 1998). Very little research focused on sexuality in committed, long-term homosexual relationships. Furthermore, the national probability studies conducted on sexuality (e.g., Laumann et al.'s [1994] NHSLs) did not include enough homosexual participants to systematically analyze their results separately. Thus, the Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) study from the 1980s continues to be the most extensive study on the sexuality of gay and lesbian couples to date.

The research that did include gay and lesbian samples and a focus on sex in a relational context (e.g., Deenen, Gijs, & van Naerssen, 1994; Kur-

dek, 1991; Lever, 1994, 1995) suggests that sexuality in committed lesbian and gay relationships is similar to sexuality in heterosexual married couples. For example, Kurdek (1991) found no differences in sexual satisfaction across four types of couples: gay, lesbian, heterosexual cohabiting, and heterosexual married. He also found that in all four couple types, sexual satisfaction was associated with general relationship satisfaction. Lesbian couples might have sex slightly less often than women in heterosexual marriages (Lever, 1995), and gay couples might have sex slightly more often than other couples, at least early in the relationship. However, sexual frequency declines with relationship duration in lesbian and gay relationships, just as it does among heterosexual married couples. One characteristic that continues to distinguish gay male couples from both heterosexual married couples and lesbian couples is their higher rates and acceptance of nonmonogamy (Kurdek, 1991; Lever, 1994).

The reliance on volunteer samples, including magazine surveys (e.g., Lever, 1994, 1995), for data on sexuality in committed gay and lesbian couples is problematic because sexuality in couples open about their sexual orientation might differ from those who are less public. National probability samples have oversampled for other groups in society with small populations (e.g., Blacks, Hispanics, certain religious groups) and then allowed for a weight adjustment based on probability of selection when the data are analyzed in the aggregate; future national studies could also oversample homosexual couples. In addition, studies of married couples should not automatically exclude committed gay and lesbian couples simply because they do not have a legal tie. Realistically, however, it can be expected that most of the research on sex in gay and lesbian relationships will continue to rely on nonprobability samples. We encourage such research because it is through the accumulation of such findings that we can build a knowledge base about the role of sexuality in committed gay and lesbian relationships.

SEXUALITY IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS

General Trends in Sexual Behavior and Attitudes in Dating

Then-current and representative studies in the 1990s attested to a striking shift in coital incidence of adolescents during this decade. Four cross-sectional, national probability samples of high school

students from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, collected between 1991 and 1997, showed an 11% increase in the incidence of virgin adolescents (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1998*). Change was not uniform; male but not female youths, and White and Black but not Hispanic youths contributed to this increase. This represents a significant reversal from the higher incidence of nonvirginity among adolescents during the 1970s and 1980s.

Such decreases in coital experiences were not evident for the single adult population. Analysis of the National Survey of Men ages 20–39 indicated that 88% of never-married men were coitally experienced (Billy et al., 1993). When investigators asked about the previous 1.5 years, most of these men had a single coital partner, but 18.3% had four or more partners. Laumann and colleagues (1994) reported similar findings. When they queried never-married men ages 18–29 about the previous 12 months, they found that 40.7% had one partner, 30.5% had two to four partners, and 14.2% had five or more.

Comparable findings were reported for women. Tanfer and Cubbins' (1992) use of the National Survey of Unwed Women (NSUW) ages 20–29 showed that 80.75% were nonvirgins. Seidman, Mosher, and Aral's (1992) examination of the 1988–1996 GSS data indicated that 7.9% of never-married women ages 15–44 had two or more partners over a 3-month period. Using a 12-month period, Laumann and colleagues (1994) reported that 56.6% of never-married women ages 18–29 had one partner, 24.2% had two to four partners, and 6.2% had five or more. Taken together, these findings from multiple sources suggest that young, single, adult men and women continue to be sexually active. Possibly this is an outgrowth of the delay in marriage that characterizes this age cohort (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988), combined with the overall acceptance of engaging in sex before marriage (Smith, 1994a).

In light of this coital activity, some scholars have investigated predictors of having multiple intercourse partners. Bogaert and Fisher's (1995) smaller scale study suggests age, hypermasculinity, sensation seeking, and testosterone levels are associated positively with men's experiences of high numbers of coital partners. Youthful coital experiences and low levels of religiosity predicted number of partners for Black and White women, and living in a major city was an additional and positive predictor for Whites (Seidman et al., 1992).

Other scholars have examined predictors of coital frequency among unmarried young adults. Analysis of the 1983 NSUW data demonstrated that single Black and White women engaged in coitus more frequently if they experienced early onset of coitus, were in a relationship, and were protected from pregnancy (Tanfer & Cubbins, 1992). Living independently, not being religious, and being in the early stages of dating additionally predicted coital frequency for White women. Comparable analyses were unavailable for single men and represent a well-defined gap in our knowledge.

As in much research from previous decades, a general correspondence continued to be found between the coital activity of singles and societal attitudes about sex before marriage (Roche & Ramsbey, 1993; Smith, 1994b). Using data from the 1972–1991 GSS, Smith notes fewer respondents have rated sexual relations before marriage as *always wrong*, and more have rated them as *not wrong at all*, in recent as compared to earlier years. Smith interpreted these changes as a shift towards being morally neutral about engaging in coitus prior to marriage. Nonetheless, Smith demonstrated that societal approval of premarital sexual relationships has generally remained stable since 1982. Since 1982, roughly 38% of respondents have rated sex before marriage as *not wrong at all*, with an approximate 23% seeing it as *only sometimes wrong*. Smith found that predictors of such sexual permissiveness paralleled pre-1990s findings. Multivariate tests revealed that greater acceptance corresponded most strongly with low religiosity, with not having teens in the household, and with being young, politically liberal, Black, male, single (Smith, 1994b). Roche and Ramsbey's more limited study does show, however, that young adults' sexual permissiveness for dating varies with the commitment level of those involved; higher levels of dating commitment coincide with greater approval for engaging in sexual intercourse. Sprecher and Hatfield (1996) found similar results.

Although these findings collectively demonstrate that most never-married young adults accepted premarital coitus and were sexually active, they concurrently demonstrate that some young adults remain virgins. There are at least four groups of reasons, derived from factor analysis, for this choice (Sprecher & Regan, 1996): (1) not experiencing enough love, (2) feeling fearful (of AIDS, STDs, pregnancy), (3) holding beliefs supportive of virginity, and (4) feeling inadequate or

insecure. Women rate the first three of these as more important than men do; the reverse holds for the final group of reasons.

Empirically scrutinizing the general trends in singles' coital behavior and sexual attitudes highlighted in this section continues to be important in light of these variables' association with the increased incidence of STDs such as chlamydia and AIDS among single heterosexuals. Aside from this compelling need, however, this research additionally points to ethnic differences that are not well understood. Researchers typically investigate ethnicity either by making comparisons across ethnic groups or by calculating separate models for each ethnic group. Although these practices increase our knowledge about the similarities among ethnic groups and uniqueness within them, scholars have yet to grapple with the larger question of why ethnic subcultures approach sexuality before marriage uniquely. Measuring ethnicity by using categorical variables fails to capture the richness and complexity that is inherent in ethnicity as a variable. The time is ripe for scholars to take a more comprehensive, possibly qualitative look at the relationship between ethnicity and sexuality, rather than simply to continue documenting commonalities and differences.

Besides ethnic influences, investigations in the last decade revealed that relationship and sexual experiences are often interrelated. We review the findings in this area in the next section.

Sexuality and Dating Relationship Experiences

The 1990s witnessed scholars' increased recognition that sexual and relational experiences covary in myriad ways. This recognition translated into different empirical foci. Issues of sexual influence and consent, including initiating sexual involvement, sexual resistance, and complying with a partner's sexual wishes, constituted one empirical focus. For instance, Greer and Buss (1994) identified sexual initiation tactics that men and women perceived were effective and were commonly used. There was considerable overlap in the tactics men and women used and had used on them, including the tactics of implying commitment, increasing attention, and displaying status cues. Men initiated sexual activity more frequently than women, although no gender difference appeared to exist in how frequently men and women considered initiating sex (O'Sullivan & Byers, 1992). There were more frequent sexual initiations

in steady as compared to less committed dating relationships, and these initiations involved both indirect verbal messages and nonverbal behaviors for both men and women.

Some investigations of sexual compliance focused on singles who consent to unwanted sexual acts without sexual coercion or aggression. Women most often comply unwillingly with partners' sexual wishes as a form of relationship maintenance (O'Sullivan & Gaines, 1998; Shotland & Hunter, 1995). In later dating stages, compliant women did not want to disappoint their partners or risk damaging the relationship. Men resist their partners' sexual initiations at times. In fact, examinations of women's attempts to influence reluctant male partners found these to be common experiences, especially in steady dating relationships (O'Sullivan & Byers, 1993). In such instances, men more than women offered the inappropriateness of the relationship as the reason for their reluctance, whereas women more than men identified problems with the time or place.

Scholars have additionally focused on token resistance, as when individuals say "no" but mean "yes" to intercourse. Sprecher, Hatfield, Cortese, Potapova, and Levitskaya (1994) sampled college students in the United States, Russia, and Japan and found that the U.S. samples had the lowest incidence of token resistance among nonvirgins. Gender comparisons that included virgins and nonvirgins revealed that more men than women engaged in token resistance; comparisons within nonvirgins only revealed no gender differences. O'Sullivan and Allgeier (1994) asked singles why they used token resistance, and found that the most frequently offered reasons reflected emotional, relational, and practical concerns. Only a small minority of individuals offered control or game-playing reasons for their actions. Token resistance might also be a sign of ambiguity in coital decision making. Shotland and Hunter (1995) revealed that the use of token resistance was more prevalent among women who had previously engaged in coitus with their partners and might have involved women changing their coital intentions from "no" to "yes" over the course of a date. Such ambivalence about engaging in coitus is often associated with more general concerns about the relationship (O'Sullivan & Gaines, 1998).

This collection of studies demonstrates that issues of influence and sexual consent are complex. Although the use of force by a dyad partner is a clear index of sexual aggression, it is not always clear whether the lack of forceful influence by one

dating partner corresponds with the other partner's willing consent to engage in sexual activity. Given that initiations and consent usually involve nonverbal signals, opportunities for miscommunication that can affect the relationship exist. Hence, it is important to continue this line of research into the next decade. Operationalizing variables of influence and consent, however, must be done carefully. For instance, Muehlenhard and Rogers' (1998) recent work demonstrates the need to provide respondents with multiple memory cues, such as asking about incidents with current and past partners, when measuring token resistance. Similarly, O'Sullivan and Allgeier's (1998) careful conceptualization and operationalization of sexual consent demonstrates the importance of differentiating undesired from nonconsensual sexual involvement.

Another research focus during the 1990s centered on motivations, and beliefs about motivations, for sexual expression for singles. Hill and Preston's (1996) examination of motivations for engaging in coitus revealed that feeling nurturing towards one's partner, emotionally valuing one's partner, and experiencing pleasure all predicted individuals' engagement in vaginal, oral, and anal intercourse. Emotionally valuing a partner, however, motivated women more than men to engage in coitus. Women's sexual motivations might be important for predicting sexual involvement for dating couples. Cohen and Shotland (1996) found the concordance between individuals' sexual expectations and actual experiences holds more strongly for women than for men. Thus women's desire to pair emotional and sexual experiences played a more direct role in couples' sexual interactions. Research has consistently shown such a gender difference across pre-1990s studies, so it is not surprising that Oliver and Hyde's (1993) meta-analysis found women less accepting of casual sex than men.

Findings that women link their relationship experiences with their sexual expression resonates with young adults' belief that single women's sexual desire is keyed by professing love and that women's sexuality is strongly related to their relationship experiences (Regan, 1997; Regan & Berscheid, 1995). Women's sexuality, however, might actually be more complicated than this. In a series of studies, Cyranowski and Andersen (1998; Andersen & Cyranowski, 1994) showed that young women's sexual schemas, or self-views, include not only estimations of how romantic and passionate they are—clear indicants of

relational experiences—but also self-judgments about how sexually open and direct or how embarrassed and sexually conservative they are.

Additional work points to a range of relationship properties that are related to different facets of couples' sexuality. Regan and Berscheid (1999) combined previous conceptualizations of love with empirical evidence to argue that sexual desire is a component of romantic love and that sexual desire is popularly perceived to be part of the experience of being in love. Long, Cate, Fehsenfeld, and Williams (1996) found sexual conflict related negatively to sexual and relationship satisfaction and positively to dyadic conflict and feelings of obligation to engage in intercourse. Byers and colleagues (1998) found dating individuals' sexual satisfaction strongly related to their relationship satisfaction, as was perceived equality of sexual costs and comparisons of sexual rewards to such costs. Lally and Maddock (1994) proposed that the meaning couples assign to their sexual involvement (i.e., affection, communication, recreation or play) is important. They showed that engaged couples were more apt to develop a joint meaning when those couples cohabited, had attained higher education levels, had the same religious affiliation, and agreed on family planning options.

Although the above investigations focused on relationship experiences that either preceded or were concurrent with sexual involvement, other investigations during this decade explored the effects of sexual involvement on short- and long-term relationship outcomes. For instance, Cate, Long, Angera, and Draper (1993) examined the impact of first coitus in a dating relationship on later relational development. Relationships improved for men and women when relationship quality played a role in coital decision making and when they were sexually satisfied. Being sexually permissive was an additional predictor of improved relationship quality for men. Other investigators looked beyond dating to consider outcomes of sexuality in family and marriage. Using data on women from the 1982 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), Miller and Heaton (1991) examined the relationship between age at first coitus and the later timing of marriage and childbirth. They showed that after controlling for other factors, early onset of coitus among adolescents corresponded with earlier age at forming a family and with an increased probability that the family would begin with childbirth as opposed to marriage. Finally, Kahn and London (1991) que-

ried whether engaging in premarital sexual intercourse would put women at risk for divorce. Using White respondents from the 1988 NSFG data, and controlling for other factors, they revealed that women who were virgins at marriage were less likely to be separated or divorced than nonvirgins 10 years into marriage. This difference disappeared when potential differences between virgins and nonvirgins were taken into account (mother's education, strictness of rules, and religiosity at age 14). Kahn and London speculated that women who are virgins at marriage might find divorce less acceptable than would women who are nonvirgins, although this hypothesis could not be directly tested with the data.

These findings extend the previous body of research in this area (see Sprecher & McKinney, 1993, for a review) by illustrating different ways in which sexuality is intertwined with relational experiences for singles and ways in which premarital sexual experiences potentially influence marital and familial experiences. For instance, these studies reveal that singles' relationship satisfaction is associated with a number of sexually related variables. There is a need, however, to develop theory-based models for how sexual cognitions, evaluations, and interactions are intertwined with the relationship dynamics for dating individuals. Byers and colleagues (1998) take important steps in this direction with their use of social-exchange theory, but more comprehensive models are needed.

Sexual Coercion and Aggression in Dating

Scholarly interest in sexual coercion and aggression in dating flourished during the 1990s. The corpus of work developed to the point where a number of general reviews and critiques were written (i.e. Koss & Cleveland, 1997; Marx, Van Wie, & Gross, 1996), and midlevel theoretical models were proposed (Byers, 1996; Craig, 1990; Malamuth, 1998; Porter & Critelli, 1992; Shotland, 1992; Thornhill & Thornhill, 1992). Space limitations prevent us from reviewing all advances in this area. Instead, we highlight new research directions generally not included in previous reviews.

The first of these areas reflects early experiences with and influences on sexual coercion. Evidence continued to accumulate that some adolescents fall victim to sexual coercion (Erickson & Rapkin, 1991; Jordan, Price, Telljohann, & Chesney, 1998). Sexually coerced teens were more

sexually active, had poorer peer relationships, and had more same-sex friends who also were sexually active than those who had not suffered coercion (Vicary, Klingaman, & Harkness, 1995). Those who experienced unwanted coitus also were older, experienced less parental monitoring and more parental sexual abuse, and conformed more to peers (Small & Kerns, 1993). A number of investigations pointed to the role that early developmental influences play in later acts of sexual coercion. These include experiences of family violence (Dean & Malamuth, 1997), early history of behavior problems (Lalumiere & Quinsey, 1996), and delinquency (Calhoun, Bernat, Clum, & Frame, 1997; Malamuth, Lintz, Heavey, Barnes, & Acker, 1995).

A second new area of research further illuminated the role that dating experiences play in men's sexual coercion. Sexually coercive men, when compared to noncoercive men, were more apt to endorse a Ludic love style—a style characterized by a noncommittal, manipulative, game-playing approach to love (Kalichman et al., 1993; Sarwer, Kalichman, Johnson, Early, & Ali, 1993). They experienced conflict and ambivalence with their coerced partners; experiences that directly predicted their acts of sexual coercion (Christopher, Madura, & Weaver, 1998; Christopher, Owens, & Stecker, 1993a, 1993b). Such men might also lack skills for communicating well in a relationship. Based on responses to videotapes in which women respond in a variety of ways to a man's sexual advances, Malamuth and Brown (1994) suggest that sexually coercive men use cognitive schemas that discount the truthfulness of women's rejection messages. Hence, sexually coercive men might have a propensity to inaccurately decode women's sexual rejections.

Research evidence also reveals that sexually coercive men are different from noncoercive men in their approach to relationships and sexuality. They date more frequently (Byers & Eno, 1991), begin sexual activity at an early age (Malamuth et al., 1995), and have high numbers of sexual partners (Christopher et al., 1993a, 1993b; Lalumiere, Chalmers, Quinsey, & Seto, 1996), especially in uncommitted dating relationships (Lalumiere & Quinsey, 1996). They also prefer novel and casual sexual encounters (Lalumiere et al., 1996). Koss and Cleveland (1997), in reviewing such findings, speculate that sexually coercive men take a predatory approach to their sexual interactions with women.

Finally, a limited number of investigators in

the 1990s focused on female-initiated sexual coercion. Studies comparing single women's and single men's coercion experiences reveal that fewer women are sexually coercive, and when women are coercive, they use less forceful techniques (Christopher et al., 1998). Moreover, when men are victims of coercion, they experience less and shorter term emotional upset as a consequence of their experiences than women (O'Sullivan, Byers, & Finkelman, 1998). These results must be interpreted carefully, because few men in these studies experienced violent sexual aggression. Comparing men who experienced no coercion to those who experienced pressure or violence reveals that men who experienced violent sexual coercion were angrier and more depressed than men in the other two groups (Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997). Examination of the sexual outcomes of coercive acts showed that men's experiences with being coerced most often do not advance beyond kissing or fondling whereas women's experiences most often result in intercourse (Waldner-Haugrud & Magruder, 1995).

Attempts to identify correlates of female-initiated sexual coercion revealed that women who use coercion see themselves as more open, and rate themselves higher in self-esteem and in relationship satisfaction, than female victims of coercion (Busby & Compton, 1997). They also feel hostile towards men, possess a brooding anger, have a history of being sexually coercive, and experience relational conflict with and ambivalence about their coerced partners (Christopher et al., 1993b; Christopher et al., 1998).

Of the new research directions we have highlighted, two are particularly noteworthy. First, the corpus of our knowledge about sexual coercion and aggression in dating relationships is largely limited to what occurs among college students. Sampling from early and middle adolescent populations represents an important first step in breaking out of this limitation. The next decade should see an expansion of investigations into the more general single adult population. Second, research to date has focused primarily on individual-level predictors of sexual aggression. We are encouraged that investigators have tested models that additionally included relational (e.g., conflict) and social (e.g., peer association) variables (Christopher et al., 1998). Such integrated approaches will likely continue to prove useful in advancing our understanding of this phenomenon.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Throughout this review, we have suggested possible areas for research in the coming decade. In closing, we want to highlight three directions that hold heuristic promise and represent important next steps in the study of sexuality.

We identified new and noteworthy findings about marital sexuality in this review. More is known about sexuality in marriage at this time than has ever been true in the past. Yet we still have only a limited view of how sexuality is integrated into the normal flow of married life—how it influences and is influenced by other marital phenomena. Thus there exist several viable research questions for the coming decade. Does sexuality play a role in maintaining marital relationships? Does it contribute to couples' commitment or to family cohesion? How is sexuality related to dyadic conflict? How do married couples communicate about their sexuality, and does this communication play a role in relationship functioning? Addressing these and similar questions will provide a better understanding of sexual expression in its most socially approved context.

This review additionally attests that research that includes close relationship and sexuality constructs provides useful insights into sexual phenomena. Sexual interaction takes place in a dyadic context, so it should not be surprising that relational and sexual variables covary. To date, however, this developing literature suffers limitations common to many fields, including small samples that disproportionately represent college students, cross-sectional designs, and a high number of atheoretical investigations. Nonetheless, the findings generated from these empirical efforts are intriguing and should be investigated further, albeit with better designed investigations. We encourage sexuality researchers in the coming decade to include relational constructs in their investigations while simultaneously addressing current shortcomings.

Finally, the 1990s saw theoretical and methodological advances in the study of sexuality. Although the advances in theory were moderate, important foundational and exemplary work now exists (Weis, 1998). Methodological advances were more robust and included insights into survey design and the increased use of national data sets. We end our review with the perennial but necessary comment of other reviewers of social science advances. We encourage sexuality researchers to build from these advances. We en-

courage the increased use of theory, probability sampling, and longitudinal designs. Incorporating these advances into new research in the coming decade will allow researchers to test causal models that more accurately reflect complex influences on sexual expression and will thereby extend our understanding of sexuality in close relationships.

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