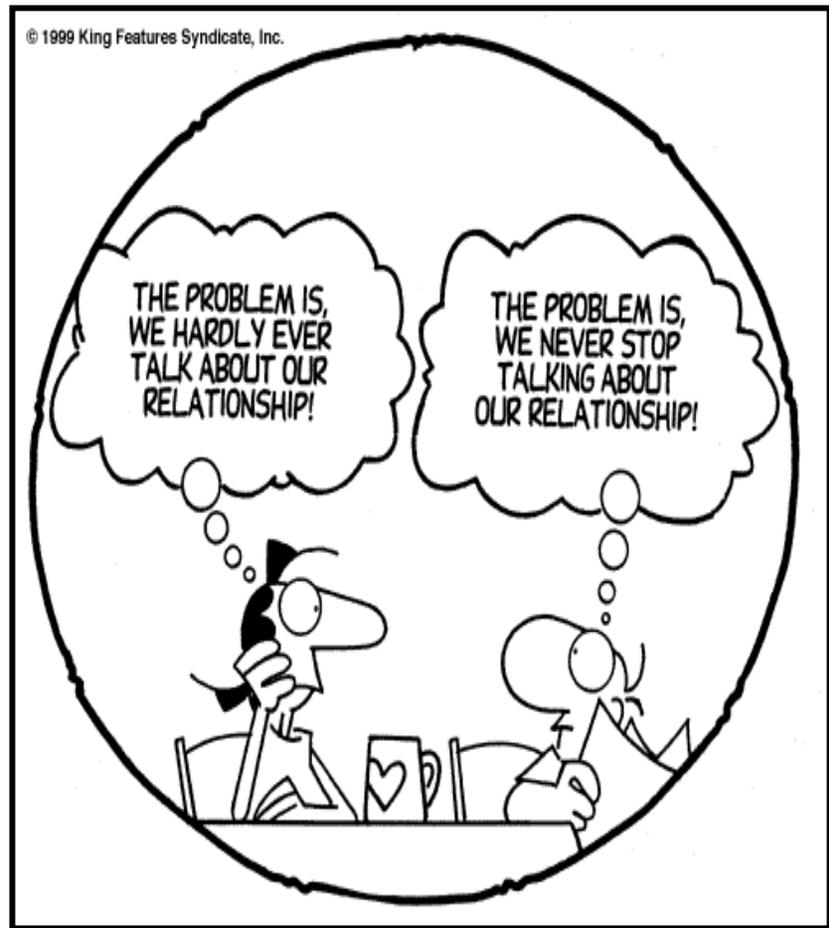


Lecture 12: Men and Women: Romantic Conflict

- Part I: Patterns
- Part II: Origins
- Part III:
Resolution and
Dynamics



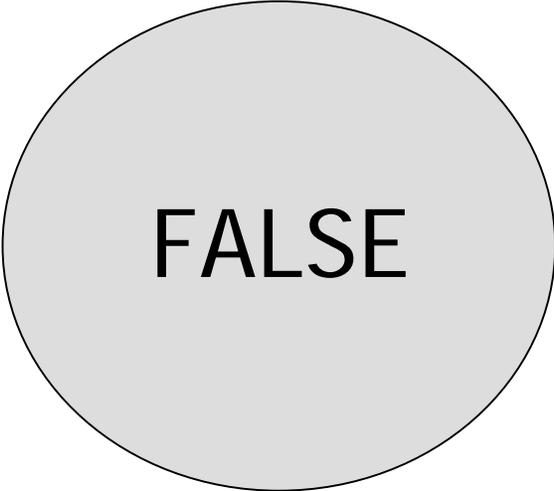
Part I: Pattern of Conflict

“My wife and I were happy for twenty years. Then we met.”

Rodney Dangerfield

True or False:

Those Married Under Age 20 are more likely than average to get a divorce?
(USA population)



FALSE

- Percentage of marriages that end in divorce: 50%
- Percentage of people that married under the age of 20 who eventually get divorced as of 1995: 40%



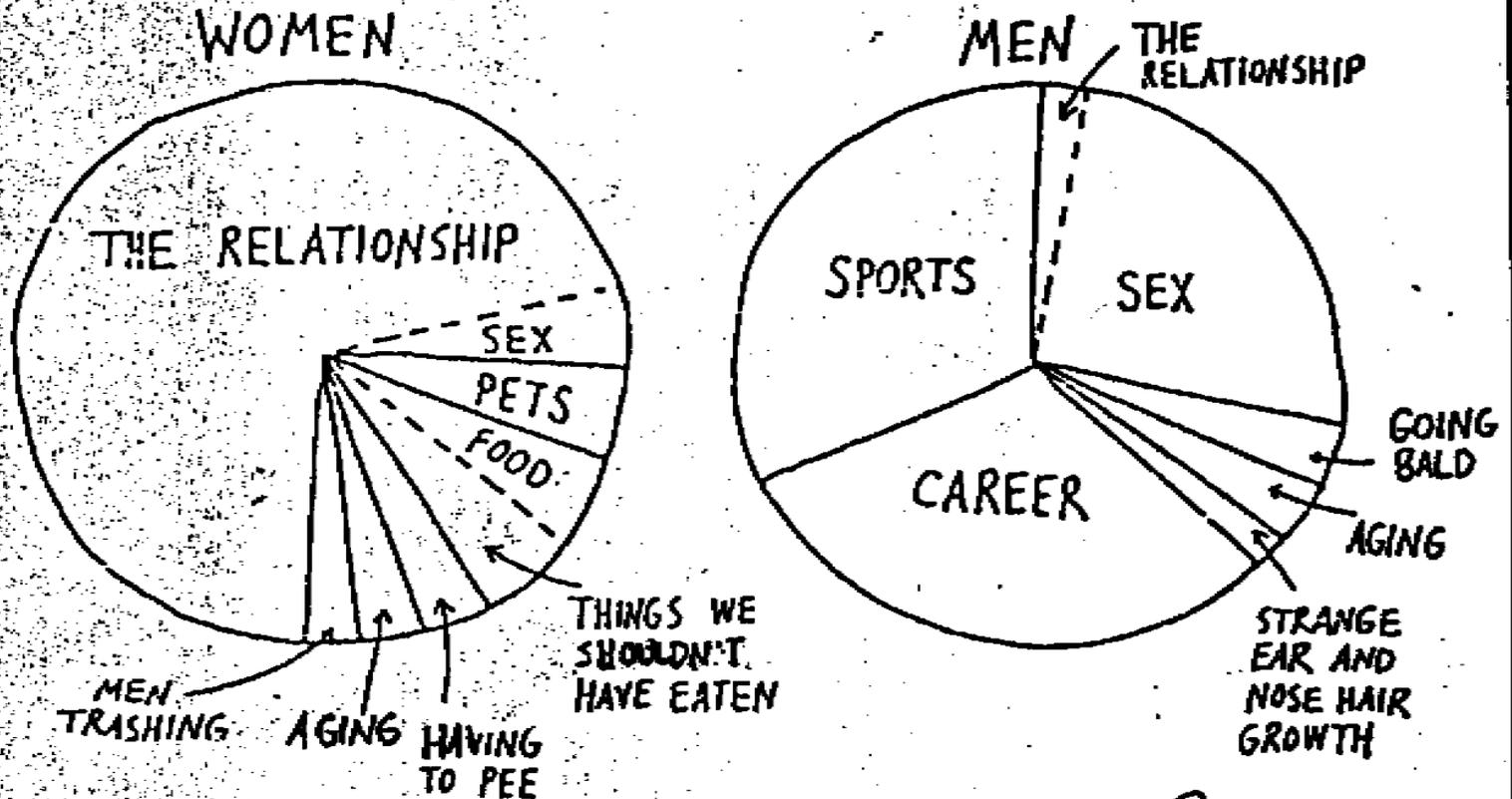
From “Divorce Magazine: Help for the Generation Ex”

- In the USA: 1,163,000 received a divorce (1997)
- State with the highest divorce rate: Nevada. Rate per 1,000 population: (1997) 9.0
- Median Age at Divorce (1997) Males : 35.6, Females : 33.2
- Median Duration of Marriage: 7.2 Years
- Number of women who are stalked by a husband or ex-husband every year as of 1997: 380, 000
- Number of men who are stalked by a wife or ex-wife every year as of 1997: 52, 000

What Are Marital Conflicts About?

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THOUGHT FREQUENCY AS PIE CHARTS



Quincy Bell
©1971

What do couples fight about?

Child rearing practices: women overall wanted more change in child-rearing practices than men

- Housework: Women would like men to assist in housework more often
- Closeness: expressed love and affection
- Sex: complaints about frequency, time, location

What is the most common example
of a Conflict of Interest that
couples may argue about?

Closeness



Closeness

- Definition of closeness: frequent, diverse, and intense interdependence that exists over a substantial period of time
- Why might this be a frequent conflict of interest?

One person may want more time together, want more love and affection and the other would like more independence and privacy

Seekers of independence have more power than the seeker of closeness and therefore may be seen as the person who withdraws in the interaction

A conflict of interest over closeness is associated with greater demand/withdraw interaction



Marital Conflict

- No matter how satisfactory a marriage seems to be, conflict is inevitable in marriage.
- Marital Conflict can go undetected by one of the partners and have minimal impact on them.
- Perceived conflict of interest, different goals, and expectations are all starting points for conflict.
- Conflict episodes change over time.



Why Is Marital Conflict Important?

Mental Health

- Implications for individual well-being
- Well established link with depression, eating disorders
- Associations with physical and psychological abuse
- Alcohol Abuse

Physical Health

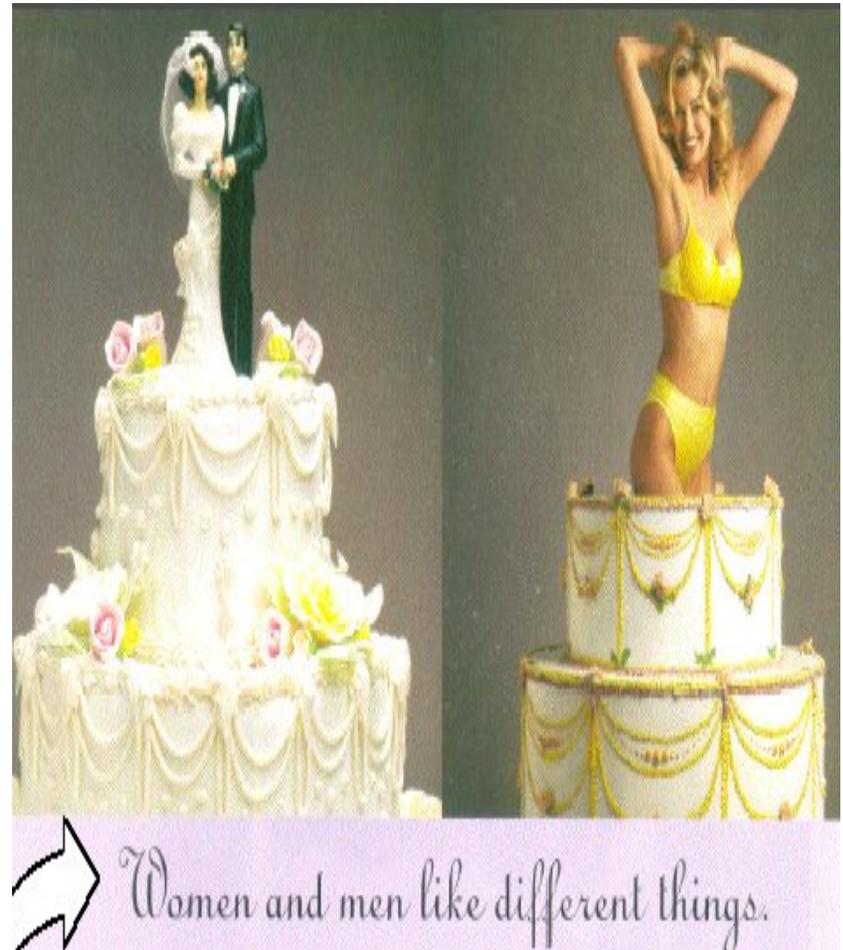
- Conflict is associated with poorer health
- Increased health problems for wives



WHY?

Part II: Origins of Conflict

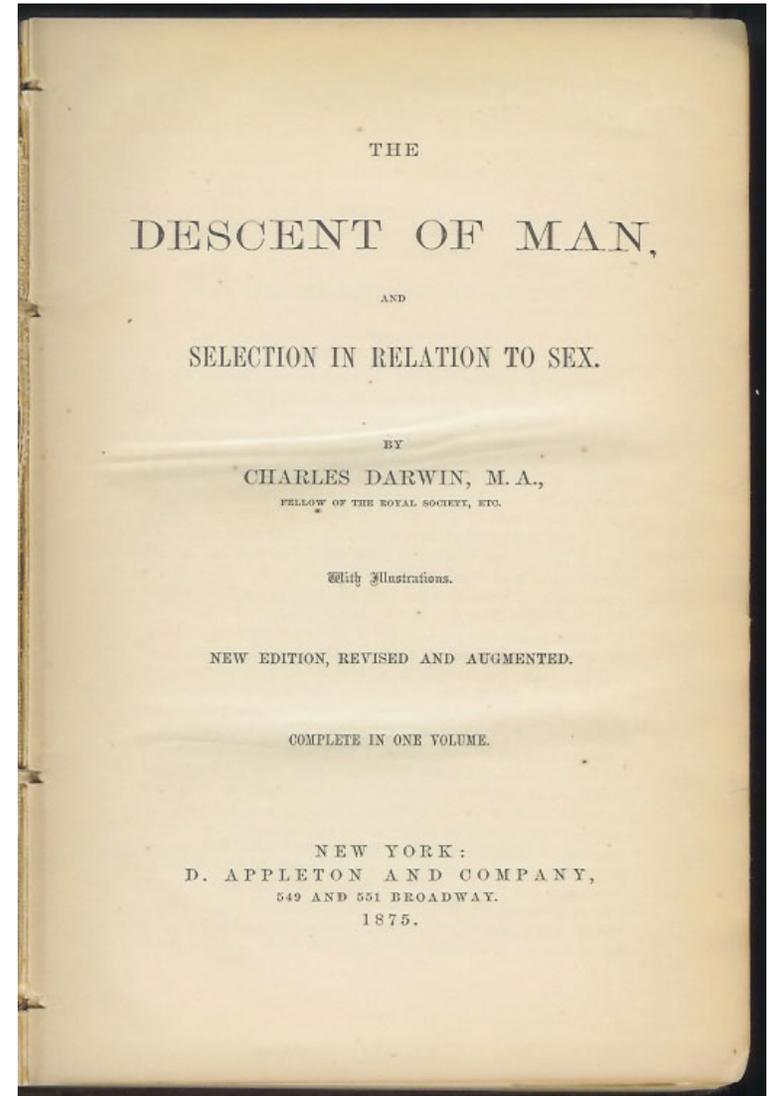
- We will come back to Darwinian theory.
- However, this is only a start, and other theories are important.



Sexual selection

Darwin (1871, p256):

“We are, however, here concerned only with that kind of selection, which I have called sexual selection. This depends on the advantage which certain individuals have over other individuals of the same sex and species, in exclusive relation to reproduction.”





Size dimorphism

- Intersexual sexual selection has been used to explain why males are often larger than females



Natural Selection vs Sexual Selection

- Utilitarian, functional
- Solves a problem
- Sensible
- Economical
- Fixed
- Constructive
- Dull
- Showy, elaborate
- Impresses an audience
- Whimsical
- Wasteful
- Changeable
- Destructive
- Exciting

Sexual selection

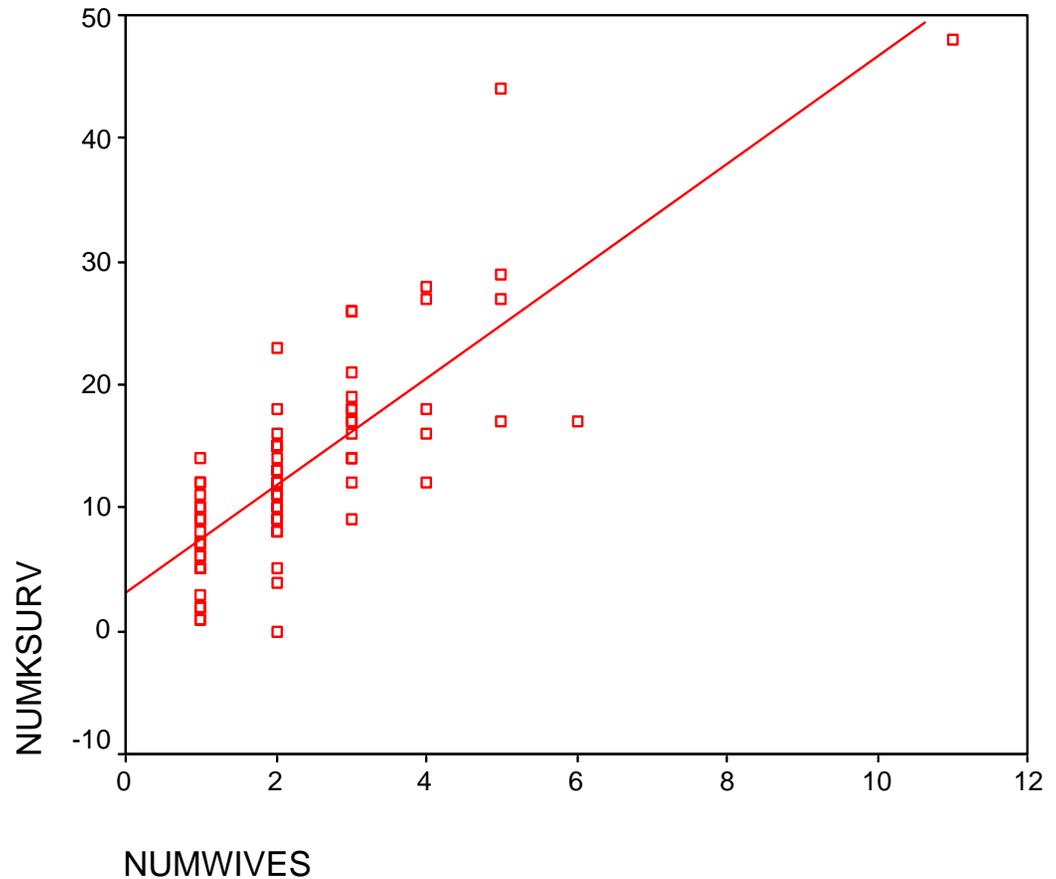
- Bateman's Principle: Although the average lifetime reproductive success must be equal between males and females (why?), the variance is much higher for males because males are able to produce more children across the lifespan.

Sexual selection

- When the variance in one sex is smaller than that in the other sex – the sex with the smaller variance will benefit from being more “choosy” in their mate choice
- In humans this is females
- We can say then that females are a “*scarce resource*” using biological jargon.

Sexual selection

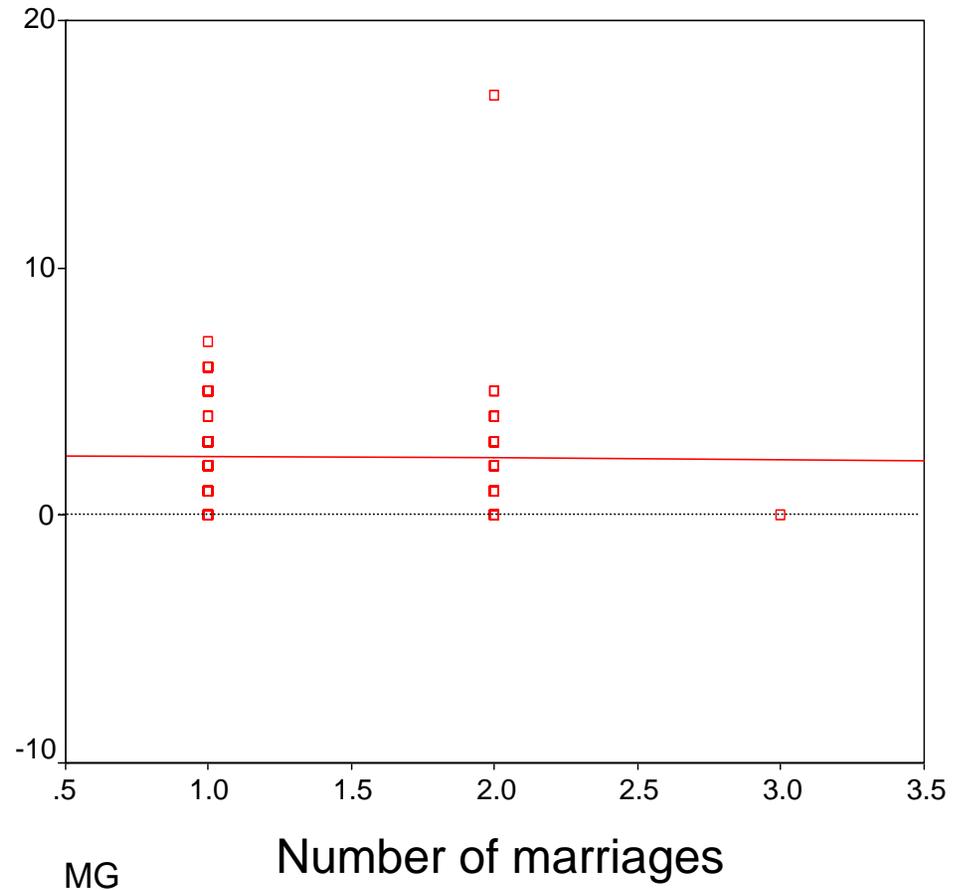
“A male can increase its reproductive success by finding and fertilizing many different females.....”



Sexual selection

“...but a female can only increase her success by turning food into offspring at a faster rate.”

Thus - we can pose gendered mate choice strategies as a simple oppositions of interests



Sexual selection and parental care

- Trivers (1972) noted the relationship between sexual reproduction and other forms of care. He pointed out:

“Where one sex invests considerably more than the other, members of the latter will compete among themselves to mate with members of the former”

Sexual selection

- This implies that human females will be more **choosy** than human males about who they will mate with & males will compete amongst themselves for access to females (or access to resource to attract females).
- Also implies that human females will desire those qualities in mates that will increase their reproductive fitness
 - These generally can be thought as:
 - Resources – material
 - Health – good genes

Sexual Selection cont.

- In many species, some males can amass more wealth or territory than others. These extra resources and power can be attractive enough to attract more than one wife. As a result, the variance of successful mating and fitness is higher among males than females.

Preferences for Resources

- Resources - such as food and wealth (that can be used to purchase health) are clearly related to offspring health.
- Females who selected mates on the basis of the wealth/resources they could give to children could be at a clear survival advantage.
- Abundant evidence for a link between resources and child survival in traditional economies

Good genes

- Females select males on the basis of indicators of overall health and well-being (“good genes”)
 - Possessing a trait that females find attractive (this need not confer any survival advantage but it must increase the likelihood of securing mates)

The evidence

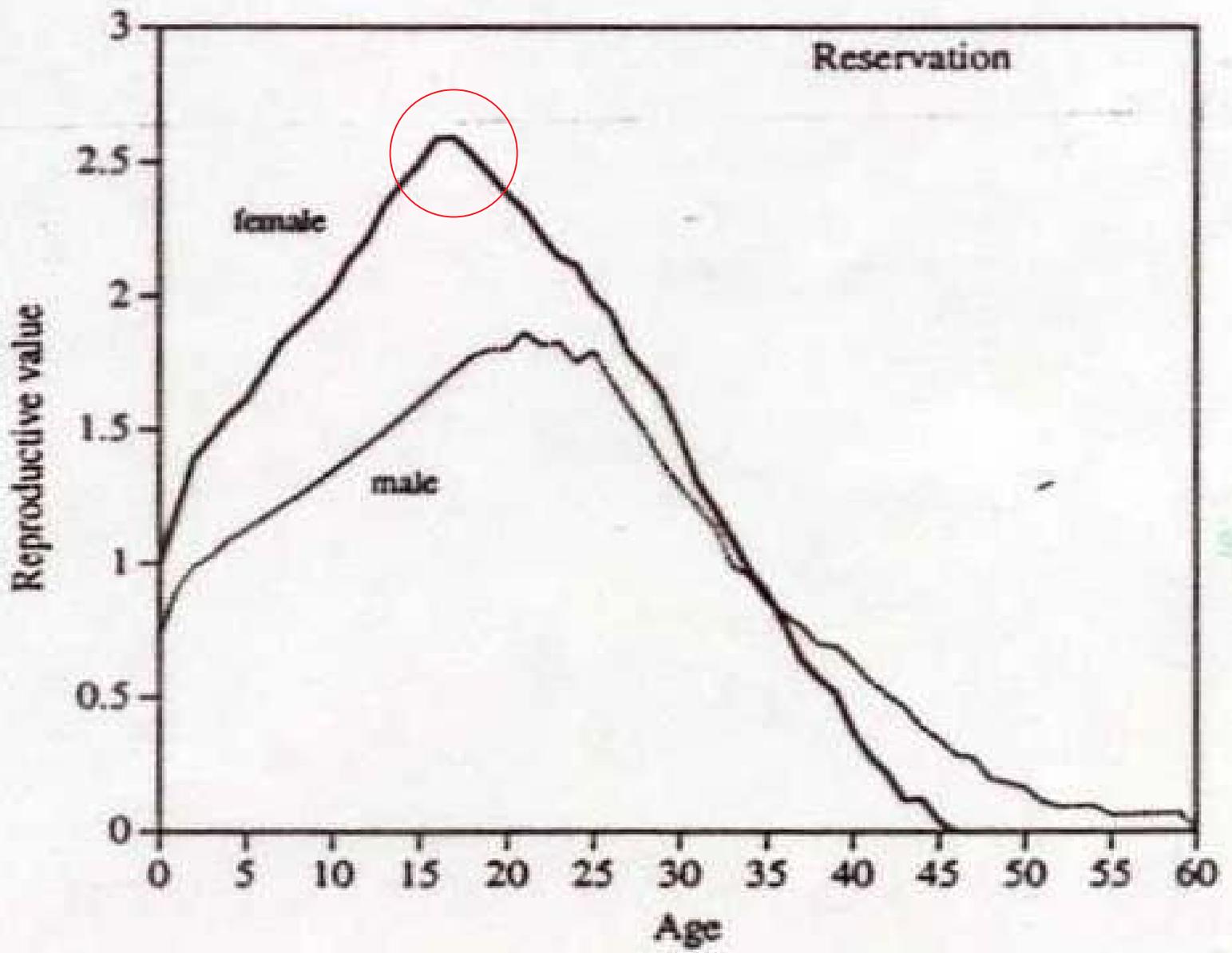
- The dominant research strategy in this line of inquiry is to look for sex-differences in preferences
- Lonely hearts advertisements and undergrads in developed countries- key data sources!

Lonely hearts adverts

- Women more likely to place adds seeking:
 - Wealth (“house owner, well off, solvent...”)
 - Commitment (“dependable, family-oriented..”)
 - **Men react to this by advertising these traits**
- Men more likely to place adds seeking:
 - Physical attractiveness
 - **Women react to this by advertising these traits**

Lonely hears adverts.

- Women generally seek men slightly older than themselves
- Men generally seek women in their late 20 or early 30's.
- Recall our measure of reproductive value

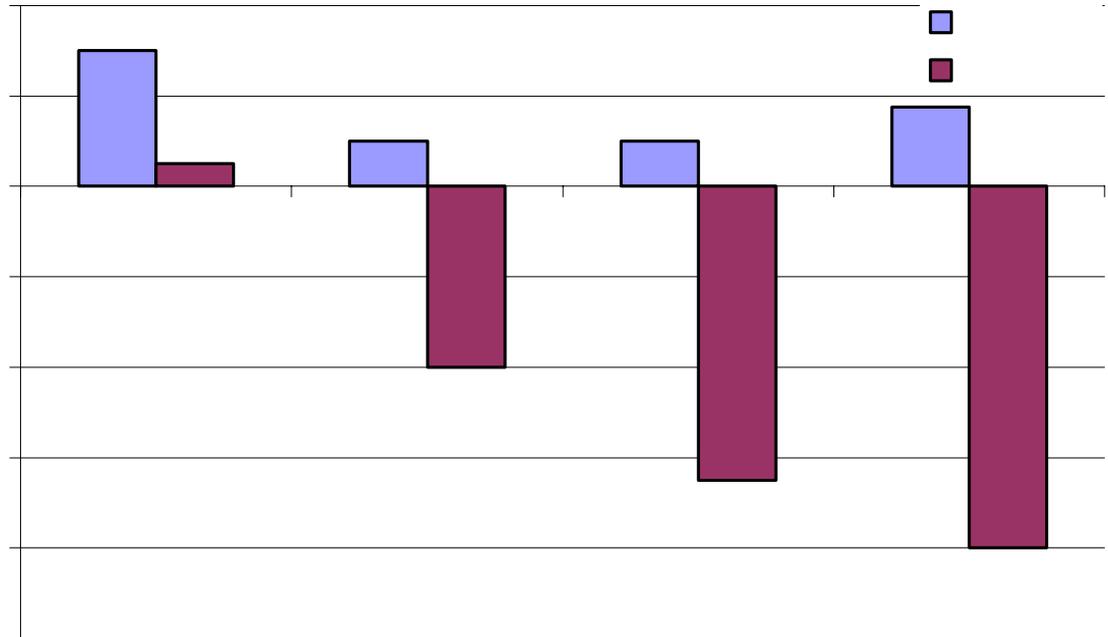


Lonely hearts adverts.

- Women generally seek men slightly older than themselves
- Men generally seek women in their late 20 or early 30's.
- However....

Lonely hearts adverts

Age preferences for women are invariant, but decline in a predictable fashion for men



Lonely hearts

- Finally, women typically seek more traits than do men.
- “SWF - 35, seeking mature, professional, well-off man (36-40 years), who is dependable and family oriented, laughs a lot, prefers holidays abroad and lives in a nice neighborhood and home, and is into monogamy”
- “M - 35, seeking 20-30 year old attractive woman.”

But are they willing to pay for it?

- As the theory predicts, the data appear to show that men value younger women as mates, but the lonely hearts data only tell us about preferences, not actual behavior.
- In many cultures men (or their families) pay a bridewealth to the family of the bride
- To assess whether men pay more for younger women Borgerhoff Mulder looked at what factors best predicted how much bridewealth a woman received.

Bridewealth payments

- Kipsigis agropastoralists in Kenya
- Polygynous
- Men paid more for a wife when she:
 - Reached menarche earlier – long RC
 - Was “plumper” – higher fertility?
 - Not pregnant – lower RV; father non-biological

Spousal Homicides

- Males face the problem of being a cuckold, or raising a child that is not theirs.
- Because of problems with paternal certainty, males are likely to be *jealous* and *protective* of their mates.

Table 9.1. Police Attribution of Motive in 1060 Spousal Homicides in Canada, 1974–1983

	Killer is the husband	Killer is the wife	Total
Argument	353	160	513
Jealousy	195	19	214
Anger/hatred	84	22	106
Mentally ill/retarded	59	7	66
Revenge	27	7	34
Self-defense	0	10	10
Inadvertent act	6	3	9
Robbery	1	2	3
During other offense	2	1	3
Rape	1	0	1
During escape	0	0	0
Other motive	38	9	47
No motive attributed	46	8	54
Total cases	812	248	1060

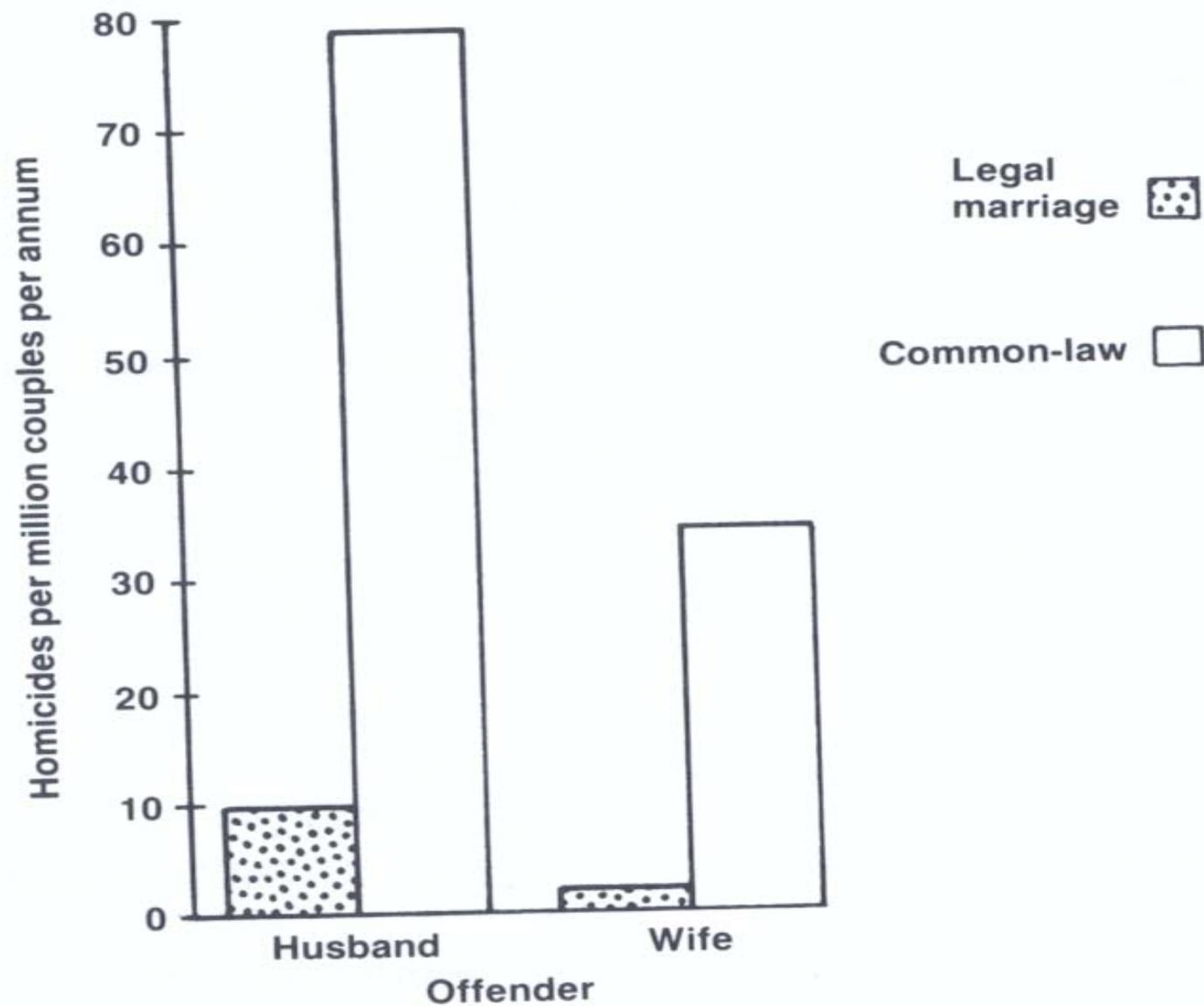


Figure 9.4. Rate of spousal homicide in legal versus common-law marriages. Canada, 1974-1983.

Table 8.3. Two Hundred Twelve Closed Social Conflict Homicides in Detroit, 1972, in Which Victim and Offender Were Unrelated (Friends, Acquaintances or Strangers), Classified by Conflict Typology and by the Sexes of the Principals^a

Conflict typology	Male killed male	Male killed female	Female killed male	Female killed female
Escalated showing-off contests	26	0	2	1
Retaliation for previous verbal or physical abuse	75	9	6	5
Jealousy conflicts	20	5	6	3
Business conflicts	10	1	2	0
Intervention in family dispute	5	0	0	0
Miscellaneous unique disputes	2	0	1	1
Insufficient information	<u>26</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Total social conflicts among nonrelatives	164	19	18	11

^aFrom Wilson and Daly (1985), Table 3.

Cultural Evolution also Important

- In the reader, one paper talks about how people with different “love stories” can come into conflict.
- Where do these stories come from?
- Is love partly a cultural phenomenon?

Part III: Dynamics and Resolutions

- Evolutionary theory, cultural theories, and many others illustrate why we expect conflict between people in romantic relationships; relationships are difficult and require work.
- How do disputes emerge out of such conflict, and how can these be resolved?

When the Honeymoon is Over . . .

Holmes (2002)

Why Is Conflict Minimal in Newlyweds?

- Defensive Cognitive Strategies
 - Situational Attributions: negative behavior of the partner is attributed to the situation, rather than the person
(Bradbury & Fincham, 1990)
 - Denial: the partner views only behavior that they want to see

Taking Off the Rose Colored Glasses

Holmes (2002)

- Unable to continually make situational attributions or excuses for partner's behavior.

Therefore:

- (1) Modify Personal Theories
- (2) “Yes, but” Arguments
- (3) Compensation



Communication Orientations

Although we must be careful with generalizations...

Women

- Comfortable expressing negative feelings
- More demanding and critical

Men

- Practical and problem oriented
- Withdrawal and avoid issues

Communication Orientations

Expressive

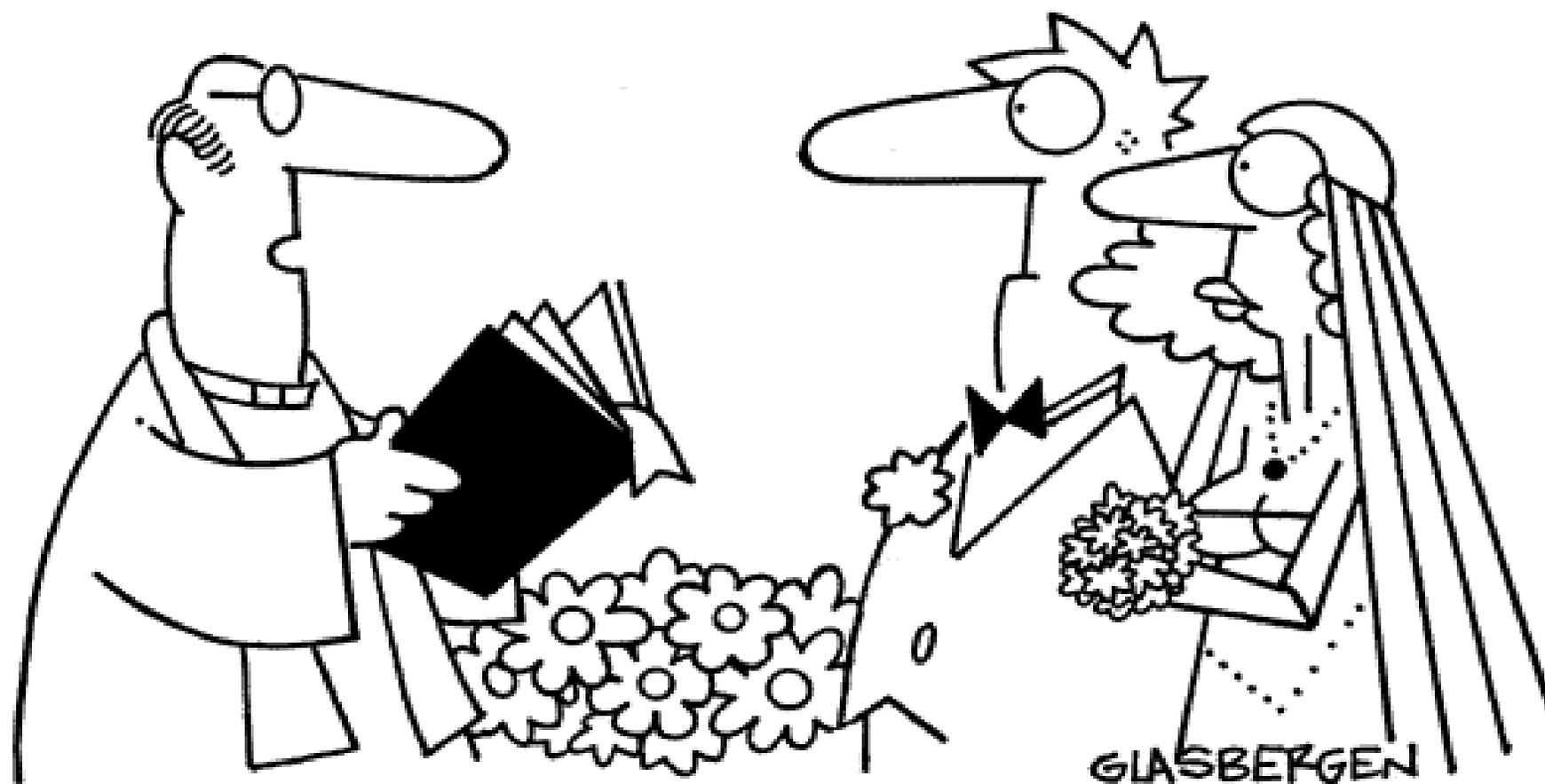
- Interest in feelings, achieving a sense of closeness with ones partner.

Instrumental

- Interest in pragmatics, getting things accomplished.

Effects marital satisfaction in three ways:

- (1) Couples with partners high on both orientations are the happiest.
- (2) Couples who are high on expressiveness are the next happiest.
- (3) The traditional instrumental husband and expressive wife is the least happiest.



**"You have the right to remain silent.
Anything you say may be used against
you until death do you part...."**

Avoiding and Engaging

- Avoiding Issues

Couples may avoid issues with the intention of showing loyalty and tolerance.

- One partner will “edit” or censor his/her negative reaction, waiting for a better time or place.
- Fight avoidance can create phony relationships where grudges can build up and explode all at once (Brehm, 1992).
- If resentment builds up and is not expressed, the “victim” may eventually start to feel uncertain about commitment.
- Meta-conflict develops (conflict over the conflict process itself)
- By not communicating, partners are unaware.

Avoiding and Engaging

- Engaging in Issues

Engaging in issues is crucial, irrespective of whether couples adopt a constructive approach or not .

- Couples whose discussions were openly conflictual were typically more unhappy at the time, but several years later, their satisfaction had increased more than couples who avoided issues.
- Successful conflicts increases confidence about handling future conflicts, increase trust and intimacy
- Short-term pain for long-term gain.
- Wives would prefer that their husbands “fight for the relationship” rather than sit back and withdraw.

Demanding:

- The “demander” pattern of behavior is defined as the tendency to be more ready to engage issues and initiate discussions, to “nag” and demand, and to be more critical and blaming of the partner.
- The pursuer
- The one that nags

Withdrawing:

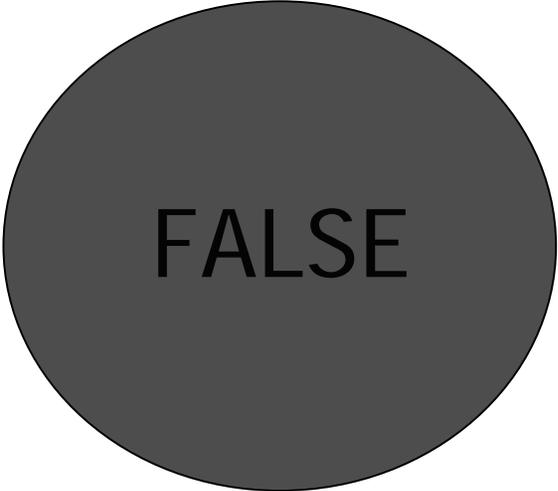
- The “withdrawer” pattern consists of avoidant behavior around discussing serious issues, “stonewalling,” (disengaging) disengaged behavior during interactions, and stubborn, defensible reactions to criticism.
- The distancer
- The one that pulls away

Problems with This Interaction Pattern:

- There is a significant negative relationship between self-reports of demand/withdraw interaction and self-reported marital satisfaction
- Clinic and divorcing couples had significantly more demand/withdraw interaction than non-distressed couples
- Vicious circle: “I will withdraw because you nag” and “I nag because you withdraw”
- Note: Self-Reported measures
 - May be exaggerated results
 - If unhappy with the relationship, more likely to report negative results on ANY test of their relationship

True or False:

Men are more likely to be the demanders while their wives are the ones that withdraw?



FALSE

Differences Between Husband and Wife

- Women tend to be the demander(60% of the time) and men are more withdrawing
 - Especially for distressed couples (clinic, therapy and divorcing couples)
- when looking at just the issue that men would bring up, there was no difference between women and men in the withdraw/demand role
- Wife Demand/Husband Withdraw interaction was negatively associated with later marital satisfaction, but only for the WIFE

Differences Between Husband and Wife

- Husband demand/Wife withdraw was positively associated with the wife's satisfaction one year later
 - No results for husband
- Women are more likely to listen to men's complaints than men are to listen to women's complaints
- Men present their complaints in a less negative way than the women do

Why might Women more likely to be the Demanders?

- Traditionally looked at as “Women’s work” :
Women need co-operation from husbands, and therefore take on demanding role



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**“Of course I can accept you for who you are.
You are someone I need to change.”**