Hurting the Ones We Love

Relational Transgressions

Ava and Logan get into a big argument and he storms out of her apartment. After a couple of days pass, Ava tries to get a hold of Logan to work things out, but he doesn’t answer his cell phone or text her back, so Ava knows he’s avoiding her. Later that week, Ava is at a party with friends trying to get her mind off Logan when she runs into an old boyfriend, Marc. One thing leads to another and they have a one-night stand. Ava feels guilty—she isn’t sure if Logan broke up with her or not—and she feels even worse when he calls her a couple of days later, says he’s sorry, and wants to make up. Ava panics. She loves Logan and doesn’t want to lose him. She only hooked up with Marc because she was feeling miserable about Logan not talking to her. Ava thought he didn’t love her anymore. Now she doesn’t know what to do. Should she tell Logan what happened? Will he still want to be with her if she does? She wants to be honest, but she is afraid that if she tells him he’ll break up with her.

If you were in Ava’s place, what would you do? And if you were Logan, would you understand or not? Either way, you would probably feel betrayed. Research on the “dark side” of relationships suggests that Ava and Logan’s situation is not unusual. People commonly experience problems such as infidelity, jealousy, and deception in their close relationships (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1994; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1998). Hurtful words are sometimes exchanged, and people say things that they don’t mean or wish they never said. No relationship is perfect, so understanding these kinds of events can help people navigate the turbulent waters than can flood even the best of relationships at times. Later in this book, we also discuss how people can repair some of the damage that these turbulent times can cause (see Chapter 14).

In this chapter, we focus on understanding various aspects of the dark side of relational communication—with an emphasis on how partners hurt one another. First, we discuss hurt feelings in the context of relationships. Then we review research related to hurtful messages, deception, infidelity, jealousy, obsessive relational intrusion (ORI) (which are stalking-type behaviors), and violence.
Hurt Feelings in Relationships

Think about the last few times you felt emotional pain. Chances are that you had close relationships with the people who directly or indirectly inflicted that pain. In one study, people described a situation that led them to experience hurt feelings (Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998). Of the 168 participants in this study, only 14 described situations involving strangers or acquaintances; the other 154 all described situations involving close relational partners, such as romantic partners, family members, or good friends. Scholars have noted the paradoxical nature of hurt—the people with whom we share the strongest emotional connection have the power to hurt us in ways that other people cannot. Dowrick (1999) put it this way:

It is one of life’s most terrible ironies that betrayal can be as connective as love. It can fill your mind and color your senses. It can keep you tied to a person or to events as tightly as if you were bound, back to back—or worse, heart to heart. The person you want to think of least may become the person you think of constantly. (p. 46)

The most intense hurt feelings arise when a partner’s words or actions communicate devaluation (Feeney, 2005). Devaluation involves feeling unappreciated and unimportant. A person can feel devalued at the individual or relational level. For example, if a good friend says she’s not surprised that you failed an exam because you’re not very smart, you might feel hurt because your friend does not value your intellect. At a relational level, devaluation is a perception that one’s partner does not perceive the relationship to be as close, important, or valuable as one would like (Leary et al., 1998). Examples of relationship devaluation include someone breaking up with you, saying “I don’t love you anymore,” or choosing to spend time with other people instead of you. Researchers have focused on two particular forms of behavior that inflict hurt feelings: (1) relational transgressions and (2) hurtful messages.

Relational Transgressions

Relational transgressions occur when people violate implicit or explicit relational rules (Metts, 1994). For example, many people believe that romantic partners should be sexually faithful and that all close relational partners should be emotionally faithful, loyal, and honest. When people violate these standards of faithfulness, loyalty, and honesty, they also devalue the partner and the relationship (Feeney, 2005). Transgressions can cause irreparable harm to a relationship. In Jones and Burdette’s (1994) study, 93% of people who had been betrayed by their partners said that their relationships had been damaged as a result of the transgression. Therefore, Ava is right to worry about Logan’s reaction. Leary and his colleagues (1998) examined a wider variety of hurtful events than betrayals. Nonetheless, 42% of their participants said that the hurtful event had permanently harmed their relationships. In friendships, betrayal leads to less acceptance, trust, and respect (Davis & Todd, 1985). In fact, when people are betrayed by a friend, they often recast the friend’s entire personality to frame the friend in a more negative light (Wiseman, 1986).

Many different kinds of behavior qualify as relational transgressions—they key is that the behavior violates a relational rule in a way that inflicts hurt on the partner. The top relational transgressions identified by college students are (1) having sex with someone else, (2) wanting to or actually dating others, and (3) deceiving others about something significant (Metts, 1991). Other transgressions include flirting with or kissing someone else, being physically violent, keeping secrets from the partner, becoming emotionally involved with someone else, and betraying the partner’s confidence (Jones & Burdette, 1994; Roscoe, Cavanaugh, & Kennedy, 1988). Many of the topics discussed later in this chapter, including infidelity, deception, and violence, are considered to be relational transgressions, as are many hurtful messages.

Hurtful Messages

Hurtful messages refer to words that elicit psychological pain. As Vangelisti (1994b) argued,
“Words have the ability to hurt or harm in every bit as real a way as physical objects. A few ill-spoken words . . . can strongly affect individuals, interactions, and relationships” (p. 53). People report more distancing and less relational closeness when their partner frequently uses hurtful messages (Vangelisti, 1994b; Vangelisti & Young, 2000). Messages perceived to be intentional are especially hurtful and damaging to relationships (McLaren & Solomon, 2008; Mills, Nazar, & Farrell, 2002; Vangelisti, 1994b; Vangelisti & Young, 2000). For example, if you think someone said something to purposely hurt your feelings, you are likely to be more upset than if you thought the comment was not intended to hurt you. You are also more likely to distance yourself from someone who frequently uses hurtful messages (McLaren & Solomon, 2008). Messages are also more or less hurtful based on the topic they address and the form of communication they take. One study showed that hurtful messages are less psychologically painful when they are lightened through humor (Young & Bippus, 2001). Another study suggested that messages focusing on relationship issues are even more hurtful than those focusing on personality traits (Vangelisti, 1994b).

**Types of Hurtful Messages**

To determine the specific types of messages people find hurtful, Vangelisti (1994b) identified 10 types of hurtful messages (see Box 13.1) from college students’ reports. The most common were

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**Box 13.1 Highlights**

**Hurtful Messages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Negative judgments of worth, value, or quality (e.g., “This relationship has been a waste of my time”).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accusation</td>
<td>Charges about a person’s faults or actions (e.g., “You are a selfish and rude person”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative statement</td>
<td>Disclosure of unwanted information (e.g., “I only dated you because I was on the rebound”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>Directions or commands that go against one’s desires or imply negative thoughts or feelings (e.g., “Don’t call me anymore”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressions of desire</td>
<td>Statements about one’s preferences or desires (e.g., “I wish you were more like your brother”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>A declaration of intent to inflict punishment under certain conditions (e.g., “If you see him again I’ll break up with you”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Inquiry or interrogation that implies a negative judgment (e.g., “Aren’t you finished with school yet?”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joke</td>
<td>A witticism or prank that insults the partner (e.g., “I guess your wife wears the pants in the family and you wear the skirt”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deception</td>
<td>A statement that is untrue or distorts the truth (e.g., One partner says, “Trust me, I didn’t do it” when the other partner knows this is false).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Definitions adapted from Vangelisti (1994b).
evaluations, accusations, and informative statements (Vangelisti, 1994b). Research has also examined hurtful messages between parents and children. In one study, children (ages 7 to 10) and parents were asked to describe a time when a hurtful message had occurred in the context of their parent-child relationship (Mills et al., 2002). Children described situations involving discipline or disregard, whereas mothers described situations involving misconduct or disregard. Under the category of disregard, children mentioned issues such as sibling favoritism, teasing, criticism, rebuffs, and statements showing disrespect. Similarly, mothers wrote about times they felt criticized, rebuffed, or disrespected. Together, these studies demonstrate that feeling devalued is a central component of hurtful messages for young children as well as adults.

Responses to Hurtful Messages

Research has examined three general ways people respond to hurtful messages: (1) **active verbal responses**, (2) **acquiescent responses**, and (3) **invulnerable responses**. These responses occur in both adult relationships (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998) and parent-child relationships (Mills et al., 2002).

**Active Verbal Responses**

Active verbal responses focus on confronting one’s partner about hurtful remarks. Some active verbal responses are more positive than others. For example, questioning the partner and asking for an explanation are active verbal responses that may help partners understand one another. Other active verbal responses, such as sarcasm and verbal attacks on the partner, can lead to an escalation of negativity. Active verbal responses are the most frequently reported response in both adult relationships and parent-child relationships (Mills et al., 2002). People may be especially likely to use active verbal responses when they are in satisfying relationships (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). Couples in satisfying relationships may talk to one another more, which could help them repair the psychological damage caused by hurtful messages. Couples in happy relationships may also be better able to withstand the use of more negative active verbal responses than couples in unhappy relationships.

**Acquiescent Responses**

Instead of talking about the hurtful message, people sometimes use acquiescent responses, which involve giving in and acknowledging the partner’s ability to inflict hurt. For example, people might cry, apologize (“I’m sorry I make you feel that way”), or concede (“Fine, I won’t see him anymore”). People use acquiescent responses when they are deeply hurt by something a close relational partner said (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). To that end, the quickest way for people to stop emotional pain may be to give in and acknowledge their feelings.

**Invulnerable Responses**

Invulnerable responses also avoid talking about the hurtful message and involve acting unaffected by the hurtful remark. For instance, you might ignore the hurtful message, laugh it off, become quiet, or withdraw. Both acquiescent and invulnerable responses may be more likely than active verbal strategies when people become flooded with emotion and have difficulty talking about their feelings.

**Deception**

As noted previously, deception has been mentioned as a type of hurtful message. Deception has also been cast as a major relational transgression that often leads to feelings of betrayal and distrust (O’Hair & Cody, 1994). Therefore, if Ava keeps her one-night stand secret, she will double her betrayal—in addition to having been unfaithful, she would also be concealing her actions, which is considered to be a form of deception. Deception violates both relational and conversational rules and is often considered to be a negative violation of expectancies (Aune, Ching, & Levine, 1996). Most people expect friends and loved ones, as well as strangers, to be truthful most of the time. In fact, McCormack (1992) argued that expecting others to be truthful is a basic feature of conversations (see also Grice, 1989). If people did not expect that most conversations are
truthful, talking to others would simply be too difficult and unproductive. For example, if you were always suspicious and had to question the veracity of every statement you heard, it would be virtually impossible to get to know people.

On a given day, however, it is highly likely that you or someone you are talking to will engage in some form of deception. Studies have found that people report lying in approximately 25% of their daily interactions in both face-to-face (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996) and computer-mediated communication situations (George & Robb, 2008); although some studies suggest that deception is slightly higher in face-to-face than mediated contexts (Lewis & George, 2008). Other research suggests that people lie about different things when meeting in person versus online. Specifically, Lewis and George (2008) found that people were most likely to lie about where they lived and their salary in face-to-face contexts and their physical appearance and interests in computer-mediated contexts. In another study that defined deception more broadly (as more than just lies), people were asked to keep a log of their conversations. Remarkably, only one third of these conversations were completely truthful (Turner, Edgley, & Olmstead, 1975). Some degree of lying, exaggeration, or intentional concealment of information characterized the other two thirds of conversations.

Types of Deception

Lying is only one way relational partners deceive each other. Deception includes all communications or omissions that serve to distort or omit the truth. Buller and Burgoon (1994) defined deception as intentionally managing verbal or nonverbal messages so that a receiver will believe or understand something in a way that the sender knows is false. Notice that the word intentionally is part of this definition. For example, if you truly believe that the big basketball game between your college and a rival school starts at 6:00 p.m. when it really starts at 7:00 p.m., it would not be deception if you told your friend the incorrect time. Instead, this type of misinformation might be termed a mistake. But when people intentionally mislead others or conceal or misrepresent the truth, deception has occurred.

There are five primary types of deception: (1) lies, (2) equivocations, (3) concealments, (4) exaggerations, and (5) understatements. Lies, also called falsifications or fabrications, involve making up information or giving information that is the opposite of (or at least very different from) the truth (Ekman, 1985). For example, if you are single and someone you find unattractive approaches you at a bar and asks if you are married, you might say you are. Equivocation or evasion (Bavelas, Black, Chovil, & Mullett, 1990; O’Hair & Cody, 1994) involves making an indirect, ambiguous, or contradictory statement, such as saying that your friend’s new hairstyle (which you hate) is the “latest fashion” when you are asked if you like it. Concealment or omission involves omitting information one knows is important or relevant to a given context (Buller & Burgoon, 1994; O’Hair & Cody, 1994; Turner et al., 1975). Ava would be doing this if she decided not to tell Logan about her one-night stand.

The last two forms of deception are opposites. Exaggeration or overstatement involves stretching the truth a little—often to make oneself look better or to spice up a story (O’Hair & Cody, 1994; Turner et al., 1975). The prototypical example of exaggeration involves job interviews: People often make their skills and experiences sound better than they actually are. Understatement or minimization, on the other hand, involves downplaying aspects of the truth. For instance, Ava might tell Logan she met up with her old boyfriend but not tell him details.

Motives for Deception

People engage in deception for many reasons. Metts (1989; Metts & Chronis, 1986) described three major motivations for deception in close relationships. First, relational partners have partner-focused motives, such as using deception to avoid hurting the partner, to help the partner maintain self-esteem, to avoid worrying the partner, and to protect the partner’s relationship with a third party. For example, if you say that your best friend’s new hairstyle looks great when you really think it looks awful, your deceptive behavior probably has a
partner-focused motive. Sometimes partner-motivated deception is seen as socially polite and relationally beneficial. Indeed, not engaging in deception when you hate your friend’s new hairstyle might violate relational expectations and hurt your friend’s feelings. Partner-focused deceptions also tend to be altruistic. In other words, they benefit someone else rather than the deceiver. People report using more partner-focused lies with close relational partners than strangers (Ennis, Vrji, & Chance, 2008). Similarly, people are more likely to use partner-focused lies in relationships characterized by high levels of interdependence (Kam, 2004).

Second, people deceive due to self-focused motives, such as wanting to enhance or protect their self-image, or wanting to shield themselves from anger, embarrassment, criticism, or other types of harm. So if a job applicant exaggerates his qualifications during an employment interview or a child avoids telling her mother that she failed an exam because she doesn’t want to be punished, deception is based on self-focused motives. This type of deception is usually perceived as a much more significant transgression than partner-focused deception because the deceiver is acting for selfish reasons rather than for the good of the partner or the relationship. Indeed, across different cultures, self-motivated deception is perceived as more unacceptable than partner-motivated deception (Mealy, Stephan, & Urrutia, 2007; Seiter, Bruschke, & Bai, 2002). People also report feeling more guilt and shame when deceiving to benefit themselves rather than their partner (Seiter & Bruschke, 2007).

Finally, people have relationship-focused motives for deceiving a partner. Here, the deceiver wants to limit relational harm by avoiding conflict, relational trauma, or other unpleasant experiences. For example, Ava’s primary reason for concealing her one-night stand might be to safeguard her relationship. She is scared that if Logan finds out he will break up with her. Notice, however, that in this case, as well as in other cases involving relationship-focused motives, partner- and self-focused motivations may also come into play. By not telling Logan, Ava may also be protecting herself from judgment and possible abandonment (a self-focused motive) while protecting Logan from feeling hurt and jealous (a partner-focused motive). The key is whether someone is using deception primarily to protect the relationship, rather than only to protect either oneself or the partner.

People associate different motives for deception with different levels of acceptability and guilt. Deception is perceived as the most acceptable and the least guilt-provoking when it is motivated out of concern for others. In contrast, deception is perceived to be less acceptable and more guilt-provoking when people use it to affiliate with someone, benefit someone else, protect their privacy, or avoid conflict (Seiter & Bruschke, 2007; Seiter et al., 2002). There are cultural differences in the motives and acceptability of deception as well, as shown in Box 13.2.

Sometimes, relationally motivated deception is seen as beneficial within a relationship. Other times, however, such deception only complicates matters. Metts (1994) used the following excerpt from an advice column to illustrate how deception can make a bad situation even worse:

Dear Abby: My husband and I were planning a 40th anniversary celebration, but I called it off three months ago when I learned from someone that my husband had had an affair with a young woman while he was stationed in Alameda, California, during World War II. The affair lasted about a year while he was waiting to be shipped out, but never was. When I confronted him with the facts, he admitted it, but said it was “nothing serious.” . . . I am devastated. I feel betrayed, knowing I’ve spent the last 37 years living with a liar and a cheat. How can I ever trust him again? The bottom has fallen out of my world. (p. 217)

In this situation, even if the deception was motivated by relational concerns, such as wanting to avoid conflict and even divorce, it compounded the problem in the long run. As Metts (1994) observed, “In this case, the act of infidelity is only the first blow; the 37 years of omission is the second, and probably more devastating, hit” (p. 217). Logan might feel the same if he found out that Ava had a one-night stand years after it happened. Even if Logan understands that his actions led her to think he no longer loved her and that the one-night stand didn’t mean anything to her, he would feel doubly betrayed because she hadn’t trust him enough to confide in him.
Deception in Individualistic Versus Collectivistic Cultures

Do people around the world share the same values and beliefs about deception? Research suggests that the answer to this question is yes and no. Most studies looking at cultural differences in deception have compared people from North America (the United States and Canada) with people from Asian cultures, such as China and Taiwan. People from the U.S. mainland have also been compared to people from American Samoa. Taken together, this research suggests that people from collectivistic cultures generally view deception as more acceptable than do people from individualistic cultures like the United States (Seiter et al., 2002).

People from collectivistic cultures value group harmony and belong to strong integrated groups. They also prioritize group needs and social norms over individual desires and preferences. By contrast, people from individualistic cultures value personal freedom, privacy, and the right to speak one's mind. Individual goals and beliefs guide behavior more than social norms (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1989). The United States is the most individualistic culture in the world. Many Asian cultures, as well as American Samoa, are considered to be collectivistic cultures.

Research suggests that people's motives for deception vary by culture. In a study by Aune and Waters (1994), American Samoans reported more motivations for deceiving than did North Americans. Specifically, American Samoans were more motivated to deceive when they thought deception would benefit their family or group, appease an authority figure, protect their relationship, protect their image, and avoid conflict, among other motivations. The only motivations for deception that were endorsed more by North Americans than American Samoans were concern for a partner's physical or mental state and wanting to keep information private.

People may experience different emotions when deceiving depending on their culture. In one study, people from China and the United States read a number of scenarios involving deception and were asked how much guilt and shame they would feel if they used deception in each situation (Seiter & Bruschke, 2007). The scenarios included many different motivations for deception (as described previously) and many different relational contexts (e.g., boss, parent, teacher, friend, spouse, stranger). Across all of the relationships except for those with teachers, people from China reported that they would feel less guilt and shame than did people from the United States. In another study, children from Taiwan and China were more likely than Canadian children to feel good after lying about good deeds that they had done (Lee, Xu, Fu, Cameron, & Chen, 2001). These findings may explain why Cody, Lee, and Chao (1989) found that Chinese people did not communicate many negative feelings while lying. Studies have also shown that people from collectivistic cultures such as Korea are more likely to engage in deception, both in business negotiations and other forms of face-to-face communication (Lewis & George, 2008; Triandis et al., 2001).

What can we learn from this? Does this research mean that people from the United States tend to be more honest? No, that would be an overly simplistic analysis of these findings. People from Asian cultures such as China and Korea may be more concerned with "providing the appropriate information at the appropriate time and context with the appropriate persons" than engaging in "honest and truthful communication" (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998, p. 64). For people from collectivistic cultures, goals such as maintaining group harmony, protecting one's family, showing respect for authority figures, and avoiding conflict may be valued more than direct and open communication. In contrast, people from individualistic cultures such as the United States may see truthful communication as paramount (Seiter et al., 2002). It is also critical to recognize that cultural differences related to deception are small. The reasons people engage in deception are a far better predictor of how acceptable and guilt-provoking deception is than culture is (Seiter et al., 2002).
Deception Detection

The letter about the husband who cheated on his wife might spark questions about how he got away with deceiving her for so long. One might think that there must have been clues that he had had an affair or that he was concealing something from her. In reality, however, it is difficult to detect deception in everyday conversations with relational partners unless one partner says something that is blatantly false or that contradicts information the other partner knows. This is not to say that most people can successfully deceive their partners all the time. In fact, it is difficult to hide serious relational transgressions such as infidelity over a long period. However, in day-to-day conversations about relatively minor issues, deception often occurs without one partner suspecting that anything is amiss.

Detecting deception is difficult because there are no completely reliable indicators of deception. Although behaviors such as speech hesitations and body shifts often accompany deception, these behaviors can indicate general anxiety, shyness, or discomfort in addition to deception (Andersen, 2008; Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2010). Also, stereotypic behaviors such as eye behavior are often controlled during deception. When people lie to you, for instance, they know to look you straight in the eye, which makes eye contact an unreliable cue for detecting deception (Hocking & Leathers, 1980).

Perhaps the most reliable method for detecting deception is to compare a person’s normal, truthful behavior with that individual’s current behavior. If the person’s behavior is noticeably different—either more anxious or more controlled—perhaps deception is occurring. There is not, however, a foolproof method for detecting deception.

It may be easier to detect deception in certain contexts than others. In one study, people were instructed to deceive or tell the truth using face-to-face communication, videoconferencing, audioconferencing, or text. Receivers did the best job discriminating between truthful and deceptive messages in the audio- and videoconferencing contexts. They did the worst job when the message was delivered via text (Burgoon, Stoner, Bonita, & Dunbar, 2003). It may be difficult to detect deception in text-only contexts because it is easier for deceivers to control what the say. Also, deceivers do not have to worry about leaking emotions through nonverbal communication when they are using e-mail or text messaging.

Despite this, research suggests that people actually prefer engaging in deception using face-to-face communication rather than computer-mediated communication (Carlson & George, 2004), perhaps because they can better monitor their partner’s reactions and make adjustments if their partner seems suspicious.

People often assume they are better able to detect deception by close relational partners than strangers or acquaintances. Research, however, suggests that this is not the case. Comadena (1982) found that friends and spouses are better at detecting deception than acquaintances. However, Comadena also found that friends are superior to spouses, suggesting that the ability to detect deception does not increase as a relationship becomes closer. Other studies have shown that romantic partners have trouble detecting deception; accuracy rates are only slightly better than chance (Levine & McCormack, 1992; Stiff, Kim, & Ramesh, 1992). In one study, people reported that their romantic partners accepted about half of their deceptive messages as truthful (Boon & McLeod, 2001). People in close relationships experience both advantages and disadvantages when it comes to detecting deception.

Advantages of Relational Closeness

Because comparing “normal” behavior to deceptive behavior is important in the deception detection process, close relational partners have an advantage over strangers: They have knowledge of the partner’s typical communication style. Burgoon and her colleagues (2010) called this type of knowledge behavioral familiarity. Close friends, family, and romantic partners are familiar with one another’s honest behavior; therefore, deviations from this behavior can tip them off that something is amiss. Relational partners also have the advantage of informational familiarity (Burgoon et al., 2010). In other words, you know certain information about your relational partner, so your partner cannot lie to you about that information. You can tell a stranger that you have three children instead of one, but obviously you cannot get way with telling such a lie to family members or friends.
**Disadvantages of Relational Closeness**

Despite these advantages, deception is difficult to detect in close relationships for at least two reasons. First, people have a **truth bias**. People expect others to be honest, so they enter conversations without suspicion and do not look for deceptive behavior. Truth biases are especially strong within close relationships and with people whom we like. People who are socially attractive are generally seen as less deceptive, and when they are caught deceiving, people usually attribute their motives for deception to more benign causes (Aune et al., 1996). McCornack and Parks (1986) argued that the truth bias makes close relational partners overly confident in the truthfulness of each other’s statements, causing them to miss much of the deception that occurs. Even in the face of seemingly deceptive information, relational partners can be influenced by the truth bias (Buller, Strzyzewski, & Comstock, 1991; McCornack & Parks, 1986). Indeed, Kam (2004) found that relationship interdependence was associated with a stronger truth bias and lower accuracy in detecting deception.

The second reason close relational partners might have trouble detecting deception is that the deceiver may exert **behavioral control**. People try to control their nervous or guilty behaviors to appear friendly and truthful. Several deception researchers have demonstrated that regardless of whether deceivers are interacting with friends or strangers, they try to control their behavior so that they seem honest (see Ekman & Friesen, 1969; Zuckerman, DePaulo, & Rosenthal, 1981). However, this may be particularly true for close relational partners, who have more to lose if the deception is discovered. Buller and Aune (1987) found that when people deceived friends or romantic partners, they became friendlier and showed less anxiety as the interaction progressed than when they deceived strangers. In comparison to deceiving strangers, people tried harder to look truthful when deceiving relational partners—in part by “putting on a happy face” and hiding nervousness. Another study suggested that people may feel less guilty when deceiving spouses and friends compared to parents or teachers (Seiter & Bruschke, 2007). Therefore, romantic partners and friends may not have to work as hard to hide guilty feelings.

**Effects of Deception on Relationships**

Paradoxically, research shows that deception can help people develop and maintain relationships, but it can also lead to conflict and relationship breakup. Most people believe that honesty is an absolutely essential ingredient in the recipe for close, healthy relationships. Yet people can identify situations where it is important, even ethical, to deceive their partner (Boon & McLeod, 2001). For example, if Logan overhears someone saying something really negative about Ava, he might decide not to tell her because it would hurt her feelings too much. Partner-focused deceptions such as these are often regarded as acceptable and appropriate, and can help maintain positive relationships.

Cole (2001) discussed two other ways that deception is associated with the development and maintenance of relationships. First, deception may help couples avoid arguments, thereby promoting relational harmony. For example, a mother who is mediating an argument between her two sons may try to sound even-handed even though she thinks one of the sons is more to blame. Similarly, your best friend might understate how hurt she feels when you receive an honor that she wanted so you won’t feel badly.

Second, deception allows people to downplay their faults and accentuate their virtues, which may help them develop and maintain relationships (Cole, 2001). Two lines of research support this idea. Work on the benefit of positive illusions (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996) suggests that people who hold idealized images of one another are most satisfied in their relationships. So if Ava exaggerates by telling Logan, “You are ten times more attractive than Marc,” her exaggeration would contribute to his positive illusions and perhaps lead him to feel less threatened by Ava’s former relationship with Marc.

Work on date initiation also supports the idea that people use deception to emphasize their positive qualities and minimize their negative qualities.
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According to research reviewed by Rowatt, Cunningham, and Druen (1999), 46% of men and 36% of women admit that they have lied to initiate a date with someone. In study on deception in the early stages of dating (Tooke & Camire, 1991), men were more likely than women to exaggerate (or lie about) how successful they were and to act more committed and sincere than they actually were. Women, in contrast, were more likely to try to enhance their appearance by engaging in behaviors such as wearing clothing that made them look thinner and using makeup to exaggerate desirable facial features. Furthermore, people are most likely to lie when initiating dates with potential partners who are very physically attractive (Rowatt et al., 1999).

With Internet dating on the rise, people may have more opportunities than ever before to deceive dating prospects on these issues. A study by Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs (2006) looked at how people present themselves in online dating situations. Online daters reported feeling a tension between wanting to be accurate and truthful yet also wanting to present a positive image that is attractive to others. To resolve this tension, online daters often present images that reflect their ideal self or a potential future version of themselves. For example, a woman might say that she is a world traveller when she has only been to a couple of countries in Europe, or a man might say that he is an avid skier and golfer even though he only does these types of activities occasionally.

Of course, deceiving a partner about one’s positive versus negative qualities can backfire. Eventually a deceiver is seen more accurately, which may lead to disappointment and disillusion. It is thus important to remember that deception can have negative consequences for relationships. When people uncover a significant deception, they usually feel a host of negative emotions, including anxiety, anger, and distress (e.g., McCornack & Levine, 1990). People who use deception frequently in their relationships report lower levels of commitment, intimacy, and closeness. Similarly, when people perceive their partners as dishonest, they report less relational satisfaction and commitment (Cole, 2001). Deception is also a leading cause of conflict and relationship breakup (see Chapter 15). Finally, some deceptions are not only harmful to people’s relationships but also to their health. Lucchetti (1999) found that one third of sexually active college students avoided talking about their sexual history with their partners, even though many of them knew that talking would help them have safer sex. Around 20% of these same college students reported that they had intentionally misrepresented their sexual history to their partner. As discussed in Chapter 9, people lie about their sexual history for a variety of reasons, including not wanting to appear promiscuous (especially if one is female), wanting to appear more experienced (especially if one is male), and not wanting to talk about past sexual partners.

Infidelity

Another reason people misrepresent their sexual history is that they want their partner to see them as someone who will be faithful to them. This is because fidelity and sexual exclusivity are highly valued in most committed romantic relationships in the United States. Thus, when infidelity occurs, it is especially hurtful. Feeney (2004) studied a number of hurtful events and found infidelity to have a particularly strong negative effect on relationships. In another study, sexual infidelity, along with relationship breakup, were rated as the least forgivable of several hurtful events in dating relationships (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006b). The way people discover sexual infidelity also makes a difference. Afifi, Falato, and Weiner (2001) compared four methods of discovery: (1) finding out from a third party, (2) witnessing the infidelity firsthand, such as walking in on the partner with someone else, (3) having the partner admit to infidelity after being questioned, and (4) having the partner confess without being asked. People who found out through a third party or by witnessing the partner’s infidelity firsthand were the least likely to forgive their partners and the most likely to say that their relationships had been damaged. People were most likely to forgive their partners when they confessed on their own. This research suggests that it might be wise for Ava to
tell Logan what happened. If he found out later through a third party or got suspicious and questioned Ava until she confessed, he would be less likely to forgive her than if she had come to him and confessed on her own.

Types of Infidelity

Researchers have made a distinction between sexual and emotional infidelity. Sexual infidelity refers to “sexual activity with someone other than one’s long-term partner” (Shackelford & Buss, 1997, p. 1035). Most people in the United States disapprove of sexual infidelity (Weinbach, 1989; Weis & Slosnerick, 1981), yet studies suggest that around 20% to 40% of dating and cohabiting relationships are marked by at least one incident of sexual infidelity (Guerrero, Spitzberg, & Yoshimura, 2004; Wiederman & Hurd, 1999). Rates of sexual infidelity are lower for married couples; estimates suggest that between 13% and 18% of married individuals admit to having at least one extramarital affair over the course of their marriage (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Across all types of romantic relationships, men are more likely than women (Blow & Hartnett, 2005; Sprecher & McKinney, 1993), and gay men are more likely than lesbians or heterosexuals, to have sexual affairs (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Emotional infidelity, on the other hand, refers to emotional involvement with another person, which leads one’s partner to channel “emotional resources such as romantic love, time, and attention to someone else” (Shackelford & Buss, 1997, p. 1035). Suspecting that your partner loves or confides in someone else more than you, if confirmed, is an example of emotional infidelity.

Researchers have also discussed the concept of communicative infidelity (Tafoya & Spitzberg, 2007). Communicative infidelity occurs when people engage in sexual activity with a third party to communicate a message to their partner. People sometimes use communicative infidelity to send messages related to jealousy, sex, or revenge (Tafoya & Spitzberg, 2007). For example, suppose that Ava purposively tried to make Logan jealous by sleeping with her ex-boyfriend. Or maybe she was mad because he was ignoring her, so having a one-night stand seemed like a good way to get his attention and get back at him at the same time. Other times, people engage in communicative infidelity as a way to signal to their partner that they are dissatisfied with the sexual activity in their current relationship. Tafoya and Spitzberg’s work also showed that communicative infidelity is more acceptable and justifiable under certain circumstances—such as engaging in infidelity in response to one’s partner having sex with someone else or partners saying that they are no longer in love.

Given the prevalence of infidelity, it is important to ask why people engage in acts of infidelity in the first place. Research on sexual infidelity suggests that dissatisfaction with the current relationship is the leading cause (Hunt, 1974; Roscoe et al., 1988; Sheppard, Nelson, & Andreoli-Mathie, 1995). Other common causes of infidelity include boredom, the need for excitement and variety, wanting to feel attractive, sexual incompatibility with one’s partner, and trying to get revenge against the partner (Buunk, 1980; Fleischmann, Spitzberg, Andersen, & Roesch, 2005; Roscoe et al., 1988; Wiggins & Lederer, 1984). Less research has examined causes of emotional infidelity, yet it is likely that emotional infidelity is related to feeling dissatisfied with the communication and social support a person is receiving in the current relationship.

Behavioral Cues to Infidelity

Researchers have uncovered specific behavioral cues that trigger suspicion about infidelity. In one study (Shackelford & Buss, 1997), undergraduate students described the cues that would lead them to suspect that their partners were (1) being sexually unfaithful (sexual infidelity) or (2) falling in love with someone else (emotional infidelity). Fourteen types of behavior were found to trigger suspicion. As illustrated in Box 13.3, some of these cues were associated more with suspicions of sexual infidelity, while others were associated more with suspicions of emotional infidelity. Still other cues were associated with sexual and emotional infidelity about equally.
Examples of Cues to Infidelity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors Leading Primarily to the Suspicion of Sexual Infidelity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect physical signs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct revelations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Changes in sexual behavior</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exaggerated affection</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual disinterest</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors Leading Primarily to the Suspicion of Emotional Infidelity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship dissatisfaction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional disengagement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive rejection</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Negative communication</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reluctance to spend time together</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reluctance to talk about a certain person</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guilty communication</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors Leading to the Suspicion of Both Sexual and Emotional Infidelity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apathetic communication</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increased contact with third party</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** Information compiled and adapted from Shackelford and Buss (1997).

While most of the behaviors that trigger suspicion about sexual infidelity are related to observed changes in a partner’s sexual behavior, most of the behaviors that trigger suspicion about emotional infidelity are the opposite of those that people use to maintain their relationships. As discussed in Chapter 10, self-disclosure, routine talk, and positivity are key behaviors that help keep a relationship satisfying. Thus, when partners stop using these behaviors and instead act emotionally distant, apathetic, and argumentative, people suspect that something is amiss. Integrating social networks and spending time
together are also important maintenance behaviors (see Chapter 10), so when partners start spending more time with a third party (and less time with you), suspicions are likely to arise. In short, it appears that when people feel their partners are no longer working to maintain the relationship, they may suspect this lack of effort is due to emotional infidelity, or worse yet, both emotional and sexual infidelity.

There are also sex differences in how people perceive possible cues to infidelity. In Shackelford and Buss’s (1997) study, women were more likely than men to see suspicious behaviors as indicative of infidelity (see Box 13.3). Perhaps this is because, in the United States, men are somewhat more likely than women to have extradyadic affairs (Sprecher & McKinney, 1993) or because women are better encoders of information than men (Burgoon et al., 2010).

Sex Differences in Reactions to Infidelity

Research has also examined sex differences in reactions to sexual versus emotional infidelity. Much of the research, which comes out of evolutionary psychology (Buss, 1989, 1994), suggests that men and women react to emotional and sexual infidelity differently because they have different priorities related to reproduction. Women know they are the parent of a child, but men are sometimes uncertain about paternity and therefore are more concerned about sexual infidelity. Women, on the other hand, according to this perspective, should be more worried about emotional infidelity because they are especially concerned with protecting their most important resource, their relationship. Thus, the evolutionary hypothesis for infidelity predicts that men should get more upset over sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity whereas women should get more upset over emotional infidelity than sexual infidelity.

Studies supporting this evolutionary hypothesis have generally used one of two methods (Guerrero et al., 2004). The first of these methods involves having men and women imagine that their partner either engaged in sexual activity or was in love with someone else and then measuring their level of distress. In these studies, men show greater psychological and physiological distress when they imagine their partner engaging in sexual infidelity, whereas women display more distress when they imagine their partner in love with someone else (Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992; Wiederman & Allgeier, 1993). The second method involves having people choose which would make them more upset—their partner having a one-night stand or their partner falling in love with someone else. When this method is used, men identify sexual infidelity as more upsetting whereas women identify emotional infidelity as more upsetting (Becker, Sagarin, Guadagno, Millevoi, & Nicastle, 2004; Trost & Alberts, 2006). Also consistent with principles from evolutionary psychology, men get less upset about a female’s lesbian affair compared to a heterosexual affair since pregnancy would not be an issue; however, women get more upset about a partner’s homosexual affair (Confer & Cloud, 2010).

Despite these findings, the evolutionary hypothesis has been challenged. Some researchers have argued that sex differences in reactions to sexual and emotional infidelity are better explained by the double-shot hypothesis than the evolutionary hypothesis (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996). According to this view, both men and women get most upset when their partners have engaged in both sexual and emotional infidelity. Therefore, when people are forced to choose between whether sexual or emotional infidelity is more upsetting, they will choose the event that is most likely to imply that both types of infidelity are occurring. Men choose sexual infidelity as more upsetting because they assume that their girlfriends or wives would not have sex with a man unless they were also connected to him emotionally. According to this reasoning, if Logan found out that Ava had a one-night stand with Marc, he would likely think that she still had strong feelings for her ex, thereby leading him to suspect both sexual and emotional infidelity. Women, on the other hand, choose emotional infidelity because they believe that their boyfriends or husbands are likely to have had sex with a woman with whom they have a strong emotional attachment. By this reasoning, if the situation was reversed and it was Logan who had the one-night stand, Ava would not automatically assume that Logan was attached to the other woman on an emotional level. But if she found out he was
in love with another woman, she would suspect that he was having sex with her.

Researchers supporting the double-shot hypothesis have also argued that the sex difference only emerges when using a forced-choice format (DeSteno, Bartlett, Salovey, & Braverman, 2002). In other words, if people report how jealous or upset they are on a scale (e.g., from 1 to 10 with 10 being the most jealous), instead of choosing which type of infidelity is more upsetting, then the sex difference disappears. DeSteno and associates had people use scales and found that both men and women reported more jealousy in response to sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity. Similarly, Parker (1997) found that both women and men perceived sexual infidelity as more threatening than verbal intimacy when people rated the degree of threat for each situation using a scale. These findings suggest that the evolutionary hypothesis should be revised so that it does not predict that men or women will be higher on sexual or emotional infidelity, but instead predicts that men, in comparison to women, will perceive sexual infidelity as worse than emotional infidelity (Edlund & Sagarin, 2009). In other words, both men and women rate sexual infidelity as highly upsetting, women rate emotional infidelity as highly upsetting, and men rate emotional infidelity as moderately upsetting.

**JEALOUSY**

When people suspect or discover infidelity, jealousy is a common reaction. Interestingly, jealousy is often the result of a relational transgression such as a partner having an affair or spending extra time with someone else. But jealousy is also seen as a transgression in its own right when a partner’s suspicions are unwarranted (Metts, 1994). For example, imagine that Ava told Logan about her one-night stand, explained that she thought he was breaking up with her, apologized, and promised it would never happen again. Months go by and Ava is completely faithful, yet Logan is always suspicious and checking up on her. If this possessive behavior continues, Ava might see Logan’s lack of trust as a relational transgression.

**Characteristics of Jealousy**

Now imagine that Ava confesses. Would Logan be jealous? According to the literature, it depends on whether or not he believes Marc is a threat to their relationship. Romantic jealousy occurs when people believe that a third party threatens the existence or quality of their romantic relationship. This threat can be imagined or real. There are also different types of jealousy. The first two forms of jealousy shown in Box 13.4 pertain to romantic relationships. The remaining five forms of jealousy, which were identified by Bevan and Samter (2004), can occur in romantic relationships, friendships, and family relationships. Jealousy can be triggered by a multitude of behaviors. When people notice that their partner seems interested in others, spends more time away, communicates with former romantic partners, or seems preoccupied with work, jealousy may ensue (Sheets, Fredendall, & Claypool, 1997).

Scholars have also discussed how social networking sites, such as Twitter and MySpace, can trigger jealousy. When asked to describe their jealousy experiences on Facebook, young adults mention that the accessibility of information and the lack of context on Facebook can lead to jealousy (Muise, Christofides, & Desmarais, 2009). On Facebook and other social networking sites, information is typically exchanged openly. People can see pictures that their partner is tagged in, comments that their partner makes, and comments made about their partner—among other information. Such information highlights the various social connections that a person has, which can lead to jealousy. The lack of context, or ambiguity, of messages on Facebook is another issue. Many Facebook messages can be interpreted a number of different ways. For example, if someone ends a message with a smiley face or series of hearts, what does that mean? One of the young men in Muise and colleagues’ (2009) study explained how both the amount and ambiguity of information on Facebook affects him by writing, “I have enough confidence in her [his partner] to know my partner is faithful, yet I can’t help but second-guess myself when someone posts on her wall . . . . It can contribute to feelings of you not really ‘knowing’ your partner” (p. 443). These kinds
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS of thoughts can lead to what Muise and colleagues referred to as a feedback loop, where exposure to information on a partner’s social networking site leads to increased surveillance (e.g., checking their site more often), which then leads to even more jealousy. In the study by Muise and colleagues, just over 10% of the young adults they surveyed wrote about having a Facebook addiction—in part because they felt compelled to check their partner’s page for information about her or him.

Jealousy is different than two related constructs: (1) envy and (2) rivalry (Bryson, 1977; Guerrero & Andersen, 1998a; Salovey & Rodin, 1986, 1989). Jealousy occurs when people worry that they might lose something they value, such as a good relationship or high-status position, due to interference from a third party. The prototypical jealousy situation involves fearing that someone will “steal” a romantic partner away. Envy, by contrast, occurs when people want something valuable that someone else has. Prototypical envy situations involve feelings of resentment toward someone who seems to have a better life—often because the person has stronger relationships; is better looking; is intelligent and talented; or has more stature, money, or possessions. Rivalry occurs when two people are competing for something that neither one of them has. A prime example of rivalry involves siblings who are competing to be seen as “best” in the eyes of their peers, parents, and other adults (Dunn, 1988a, 1988b). As these examples and Figure 13.1 illustrate, who possesses the desired relationship or commodity differentiates jealousy, envy, and rivalry.

The triangle of Ava, Logan, and Marc helps illustrate the differences between jealousy and envy. Imagine that Ava comes clean and tells Logan what happened. Logan gets upset. He knows that Marc was Ava’s first love and remembers her saying that he is ambitious and smart. The thought of her being with him again drives him crazy. On the basis of the previously given definitions, would you characterize Logan as jealous or envious? Logan would be experiencing jealousy if he is worried that he might...
lose Ava to Marc. However, Logan might also be experiencing envy because he wishes he could have been Ava’s first love. He might also worry that Ava thinks Marc is more intelligent than he is. Assuming that Marc is still in love with Ava, he might be jealous of Logan’s relationship with her. Now pretend that Ava is not currently in a relationship with either man and that they both want to date her exclusively. If this were the case, Logan and Marc would be experiencing rivalry. As this example shows, jealousy, envy, and rivalry sometimes coexist within the same set of relationships.

Experiencing Romantic Jealousy

When people perceive a third-party threat to their romantic relationships, they are likely to experience a number of cognitions and emotions. On the cognitive side, jealous individuals typically make appraisals regarding the source and severity of the threat. On the emotional side, jealous individuals tend to experience a cluster of jealousy-related emotions.

**Jealous Thoughts**

White and Mullen (1989) described primary and secondary cognitive appraisals that tend to occur as jealous feelings develop. **Primary appraisals** involve general evaluations about the existence and quality of a rival relationship, including the degree of the threat from the third party. For example, Logan might ask himself questions like this: “Has Ava been seeing Marc behind my back?” and “Could Ava still love Marc?” **Secondary appraisals** involve more specific evaluations of the jealousy situation, including possible causes and outcomes. White and Mullen (1989) described four types of secondary appraisals that people use to gather information and interpret the situation. First, jealous...
people assess motives ("Why did Ava hook up with Marc?"). Second, they compare themselves to the rival ("Marc might be smarter than I am, but I’m more athletic and caring"). Third, they evaluate their alternatives ("If Ava dumps me for Marc, who would I want to date? Would I rather be on my own than date someone who has been unfaithful to me?"). These questions would help prepare Logan—or anyone else dealing with jealousy or infidelity—for a possible breakup or reconciliation. Finally, jealous people assess their potential loss ("How devastating would it be if Ava and I broke up?").

According to White and Mullen (1989), jealous individuals make appraisals so that they can plan coping strategies and assess outcomes. For example, if Logan decides that Ava could be attracted to Marc because he is ambitious and likely to be successful, he might compensate by putting more effort into his own career. If Ava responded favorably to Logan’s intensified career pursuits, Logan would likely continue those behaviors. But if Logan’s behavior change does not have the desired effect (perhaps Ava complains that Logan is so focused on his career that he is ignoring her), he is likely to try a different strategy.

**Jealous Emotions**

In addition to making cognitive appraisals, jealous individuals usually experience combinations of emotions. The emotions most central to jealousy are fear and anger (see Guerrero & Andersen, 1998a, 1998b; Sharpsteen, 1991). People are jealous because they fear losing their relationship, and they are often angry at their partner for betraying them. Sometimes jealous individuals are also angry at the rival, particularly if the rival is someone they know; other times, they feel irritated or annoyed but not really angry (Guerrero, Trost, & Yoshimura, 2005).

Beyond fear and anger, other aversive emotions such as sadness, guilt, hurt, and envy often mark jealousy (Fitness & Fletcher, 1993; White & Mullen, 1989). Sadness occurs near the end of some jealousy episodes when people are feeling gloomy and lonely because a breakup seems inevitable or has just occurred (Sharpsteen, 1991). Sometimes jealous individuals feel guilty because they wrongly accused their partners of misdeeds. Other times, people feel guilty because they think that their own negative qualities or actions caused the partner to become interested in someone else. For example, Logan might think that if he hadn’t been so cold and ignored her for so long, she never would have been with Marc. Envy can be part of the jealousy experience, especially when the rival has positive qualities that the jealous person does not possess.

Sometimes jealousy leads to positive emotions such as increased passion, love, and appreciation (Guerrero & Andersen, 1998b; Guerrero et al., 2005). For example, think about how you might feel if you saw someone flirting with your romantic partner. The fact that someone else sees your partner as attractive might make you feel more passionate and loving toward your partner (Pines, 1992; White & Mullen, 1989). Recent research shows that people sometimes intentionally induce jealousy to achieve two goals: to make their partner value the relationship more and to get revenge (Fleischmann et al., 2005). Pines (1992) also argued that jealousy can lead people to appreciate their partners more, to become more committed to the relationship, and to work harder to maintain the relationship. Other researchers have argued that jealousy is closely related to love because people would not get jealous if they did not care about their partners (Salovey & Rodin, 1985). However, inducing jealousy is a dangerous strategy because jealousy often leads to relationship dissatisfaction and sometimes even violence (Guerrero & Andersen, 1998a).

**Communicative Responses to Jealousy**

Just as jealousy can involve a wide range of thoughts and emotions, so, too, can jealousy be expressed in many different ways. Guerrero and her colleagues have identified many different communicative responses to jealousy, which are summarized in Box 13.5 (Guerrero, Andersen, Jorgensen, Spitzberg, & Eloy, 1995; Guerrero, Hannawa, & Babin, 2011). The most commonly reported responses are **integrative communication** and negative communication. In addition to these specific responses, it is important to consider how much emotion people express when communicating jealousy. For example, a person could be cold and stoic when using integrative communication or show anxiety and sadness.
### BOX 13.5 Highlights

#### Communicative Responses to Jealousy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructive Responses</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integrative communication</strong></td>
<td>Direct, nonaggressive communication about jealousy with the partner (e.g., disclosing feelings and trying to reach an understanding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compensatory restoration</strong></td>
<td>Behavior aimed at improving the primary relationship or oneself (e.g., trying to look more physically attractive, giving the partner gifts or extra attention)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destructive Responses</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative communication</strong></td>
<td>Direct and indirect aggressive communication with the partner (e.g., arguing, being sarcastic, giving cold or dirty looks, withdrawing affection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violent communication</strong></td>
<td>Threats or actual physical violence against the partner (e.g., threatening to harm the partner, hitting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counterjealousy induction</strong></td>
<td>Engaging in actions to make the partner feel jealous (e.g., flirting with others, talking about a rival in front of the partner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoidant Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denial</strong></td>
<td>Pretending not to be jealous (e.g., denying jealousy, acting like nothing is wrong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silence</strong></td>
<td>Decreasing communication (e.g., getting quiet, not talking as much as usual)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rival-Focused Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Signs of possession</strong></td>
<td>Publicly displaying the relationship so people know the partner is “taken” (e.g., kissing the partner in front of rivals, introducing the partner as one’s “girlfriend” or “boyfriend”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Derogating competitors</strong></td>
<td>Negative comments about potential rivals to the partner and to others (e.g., telling the partner about the rival’s bad traits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surveillance</strong></td>
<td>Behavioral strategies designed to find out about the rival relationship (e.g., checking the partner’s cell phone or e-mail, spying on the partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rival contacts</strong></td>
<td>Direct communication with the rival about the jealousy situation or rival relationship (e.g., telling the rival the partner is already in a relationship)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** Adapted from Guerrero et al. (2011).
People use different communicative responses to jealousy based on their goals and emotions (Bryson, 1977; Guerrero & Afifi, 1998, 1999; Guerrero et al., 2005). When people want to maintain their relationships and feel annoyance rather than anger, they report using constructive responses. People who fear losing their relationships tend to report compensatory restoration. In contrast, people who are more concerned with maintaining their self-esteem deny their jealous feelings. When people are motivated to reduce uncertainty about their relationship, they report using integrative communication, surveillance, and rival contacts, which all represent ways of seeking information. People tend to use destructive responses when they feel jealous anger and want revenge against their partners.

Jealousy and Relational Satisfaction

Although jealousy can be a sign of love and attachment, it can also be both a symptom and a cause of relational distress. In fact, research has shown that jealous thoughts and feelings generally are associated with relational dissatisfaction (Andersen, Eloy, Guerrero, & Spitzberg, 1995; Buunk & Bringle, 1987; Guerrero & Eloy, 1992; Salovey & Rodin, 1989). However, jealousy is experienced in many relationships that remain satisfying. The key seems to be managing jealousy in a productive way such that the jealous individual shows care and concern without seeming overly fearful, aggressive, or possessive.

Among the many communicative responses to jealousy listed in Box 13.5, only the two constructive responses appear to be consistently associated with relational satisfaction. All the other responses usually make the problem worse; although some studies have shown that counter-jealousy induction and signs of possession can be effective in certain circumstances (Buss, 1988a; Fleischmann et al., 2005). Integrative communication involves talking about jealousy in a constructive manner, often by disclosing feelings and renegotiating relational rules and boundaries. Rusbult and Buunk (1993) suggested that this type of communication is critical for maintaining relationships when jealousy occurs. Similarly, Afifi and Reichert (1996) found a positive association between integrative communication and relational satisfaction in jealous situations. Research by Andersen et al. (1995), however, found that integrative communication was only associated with relational satisfaction when people expressed their emotions while communicating with their partner. Showing that one is hurt and upset but still making an effort to talk issues over in a fair and rationale manner may be the key to preserving relational satisfaction in the face of a jealous threat. Expressing negative emotions honestly and openly may also cause the partner to feel empathy. Unless used too excessively and seen as a desperate move, compensatory restoration is also associated with relational satisfaction. Individuals who try to improve themselves and their relationships may become more desirable to their partners. Indeed, Buss (1988a) reported that strategies such as demonstrating love and caring for one’s partner were highly effective in keeping couples together after jealousy had occurred.

Sex Differences in Jealous Emotions and Communication

Research findings on sex differences in jealous emotions are mixed, but some studies suggest that women experience more hurt, sadness, anxiety, and confusion than men perhaps because they blame themselves for the situation more often (Becker et al., 2004; Bryson, 1976). By contrast, men have been found to deny jealous feelings and to focus on bolstering their self-esteem more than women (Buunk, 1982; White, 1981). These differences are small, but they suggest that women are somewhat more focused on the relationship whereas men are more focused on individual concerns.

Sex differences in communicative responses to jealousy are more consistent, although relatively small. Jealous women report using integrative communication, expressing emotion, enhancing their appearance, and using counter-jealousy inductions more often than jealous men. In contrast, jealous men more often contact the rival, restrict the partner’s access to potential rivals, and spend extra money on the partner (Buss, 1988a; Guerrero & Reiter, 1998). An evolutionary perspective can partially explain these findings: Men focus
on competing for mates and showing resources whereas women focus on creating social bonds and showcasing their beauty (Buss, 1988a).

**Unrequited Love**

Jealousy occurs when people are worried about losing a relationship that they have. Other times people are worried that they will never have a relationship with the person they desire. Such is the case with unrequited love, whereby one person, the would-be lover, wants to initiate or intensify a romantic relationship, but the other person, the rejector, does not (Baumeister & Wotman, 1992; Baumeister, Wotman, & Stillwell, 1993; Bratslavsky, Baumeister, & Sommer, 1998). Unrequited love can characterize several types of situations. Sometimes the two people do not know one another well even though one of them feels “in love” with the other; other times, they may be good friends but one person wants to intensify the relationship further and the other person does not; and still other times unrequited love occurs in the initial stages of a relationship or after a breakup. For example, after going on a few dates, one person may fall in love, but the other might want to stop dating altogether (see Chapter 15). Unrequited love also occurs in established or de-escalating relationships when one partner ceases to love the other. Rejection is usually more unpleasant and hurtful when it comes from a romantic partner as opposed to a friend or acquaintance (Young, Paxman, Koehring, & Anderson, 2008).

When unrequited love strikes, the would-be lover has two general options: (1) to keep quiet about the feelings or (2) to try to win the partner’s love (Baumeister et al., 1993). Either way, there are considerable risks for the would-be lover. On the one hand, approaching the loved one could lead to rejection, humiliation, or, in the case of an established friendship, the de-escalation or termination of the relationship. On the other hand, keeping quiet could cost the person any opportunity to win the other person over or escalate the relationship.

Situations of unrequited love are difficult for both people, but perhaps surprisingly, Baumeister and his colleagues discovered that rejectors typically report experiencing more negative emotions than do would-be lovers. According to their research, would-be lovers perceive the situation as having either extremely positive or negative outcomes whereas most rejectors perceive only negative outcomes. Although it is flattering to be the object of someone’s affection, the rejector typically feels guilty for being unable to return the would-be lover’s sentiments. If the would-be lover is persistent, the rejector may feel frustrated and even victimized (Baumeister et al., 1993). The appropriate way to communicate rejection is also unclear, since it is difficult to reject advances without hurting the would-be lover’s feelings. Would-be lovers, by contrast, have a much clearer script for how to behave. Baumeister and colleagues (1993) put it this way:

The would-be lover’s script is affirmed and reiterated from multiple sources; for example, one can probably hear a song about unrequited love in almost any American house within an hour, simply by turning on the radio. A seemingly endless stream of books and movies has portrayed aspiring lovers persisting doggedly to win the hearts of their beloveds. Many techniques are portrayed as eventually effective. If one is rejected in the end, the familiar script calls for heartbroken lovers to express their grief, perhaps assign blame, accept the failure, and then go on with their lives. (p. 379)

For example, songs like Taylor Swift’s 2009 hit “You Belong With Me” include storylines where the underdog would-be lover eventually prevails. The rejector, however, does not have a clearly defined cultural prescription for how to deal with the would-be lover. Movies and novels often portray rejectors as “aloof, casual, teasing, or sadistic heartbreakers,” but in real life, most rejectors are concerned with helping the would-be lover save face (Baumeister et al., 1993, p. 391). Thus, many rejectors resist making harsh statements such as “I’m not attracted to you” and instead rely on polite, indirect communication strategies, such as saying that they value the friendship too much to ruin it by pursuing a romantic relationship or that they are too busy to date anyone at this time. Folkes (1982) found that rejectors try to let other people down easily and avoid hurting their feelings.
The problem with polite or indirect messages is that they can be misinterpreted (Cupach & Metts, 1991). Would-be lovers may cling to the hope that since the rejector did not dismiss them directly, a love relationship is still possible. For example, would-be lovers who receive a message such as “I’m not interested in dating anyone right now, but I want to stay friends” might hear this as “There might be a chance of a love relationship in the future since I like you.” Eventually, the rejector may have to resort to harsher and more direct messages if the would-be lover persists (Metts, Sprecher, & Regan, 1998). When clear sexual advances are made, women are likely to be verbally direct, and most men accept their refusals (Metts et al., 1998).

Although there is not a clear script for how to best reject someone, research suggests that some rejection messages are more inappropriate than others depending on the relationship between the would-be-lover and the rejector. A study by Young et al. (2008) examined several types of rejection messages, including ambiguous or “off-record” strategies (e.g., “I like you, but I’m really busy right now”); direct “on-record” strategies that blame situational constraints for the rejection (e.g., “I’m interested in someone else”); and direct “on-record” strategies that blame the self for the rejection (e.g., “It wouldn’t work because I’m not right for you”). The would-be lovers in this study rated the ambiguous off-record strategies as especially inappropriate for friends to use, perhaps because such messages left them wondering whether or not to pursue a romantic relationship in the future. Friends may also expect more directness in their relationships. When the rejector was a romantic partner, would-be lovers rated on-record strategies that blamed situational constraints as the most inappropriate. Given that they are already in a romantic relationship, would-be lovers are often surprised to have their attempts at escalation rebuffed, and perhaps even more surprised that the rejector blames external factors such as a third party. Finally, would-be lovers rated on-record strategies that blamed the self as the most inappropriate message for acquaintances to use. Since the two people don’t yet know one another well, it may seem premature for the rejector to assume that something personal (age, disposition, values, etc.) would stand in the way of the desired relationship. The would-be lover may feel that the potential relationship was rejected without giving it a fair chance.

**Obsessive Relational Intrusion**

Sometimes the would-be-lover does not accept rejection and instead persistently pursues the object of her or his affection. This type of persistent pursuit has been called ORI. ORI refers to unwanted behaviors that invade someone’s privacy and are used for the purpose of trying to get close to someone (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1998). ORI includes annoying behavior, such as repeated calls or texts; malicious behavior, such as spreading false rumors; stalking behaviors, such as following someone everywhere; and even violent behavior, such as kidnapping or assault. As this list suggests, stalking is a form of ORI behavior. Stalking behaviors constitute repeated and unwanted contact that is threatening and/or fear-provoking (Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002). Not all stalking is ORI behavior because ORI centers on the pursuit of intimacy, and stalking can be used for other purposes, such as trying to scare an enemy. Similarly, ORI behaviors that do not threaten or produce fear are not stalking.

Cupach and Spitzberg (1998) surveyed 876 people to determine what types of ORI behaviors are most common. The top five behaviors were (1) calling and arguing, (2) calling and then hanging up, (3) constantly asking for “another chance,” (4) watching or staring at the loved one from a distance, and (5) making exaggerated claims about affection for the loved one. Stalking behaviors were much less common. According to Spitzberg and Hoobler (2009), the most extreme cases of ORI, such as stalking, tend to occur when the people involved are former relational partners. So it is more likely that Ava would be stalked by Marc (or another former relational partner) than a stranger. Researchers have also examined ORI behaviors in mediated contexts, such as e-mail or Facebook, and found that many of the messages are similar; they are just delivered in a different format. See Box 13.6 for more information on ORI in these mediated contexts.
Reasons People Use Obsessive Relational Intrusion Behavior

Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) developed relational goal pursuit theory to help explain ORI. According to this theory, people expend energy to develop or reinitiate relationships to the extent that they perceive a relationship is desirable and attainable. When a relationship is perceived to be unattainable, people abandon their original goal and seek an alternative. Unfortunately, however, people sometimes continue to believe that a relationship is
attainable even though it is not. In these cases, ORI is likely to occur. In fact, episodes of ORI typically increase in intensity as the object of attention tries to fortify privacy boundaries, for example, by taking pains to avoid the pursuer. At first, ORI behaviors are usually prosocial, indirect, and only mildly annoying (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004, 2008). The pursuer might act flirtatious, try to spend time with the desired partner, and telephone or e-mail frequently. If these ORI behaviors are unsuccessful, the pursuer will sometimes employ more invasive violations of privacy, such as surveillance, harassment, and infiltration into the desired person’s social network. Such behaviors are typically perceived as aggravating and inconvenient. Finally, in some cases, ORI becomes particularly volatile, frightening, and creepy—with pursuers stalking their victims and engaging in coercive and even violent behavior (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004).

So why do some pursuers continue to use ORI behaviors rather than abandoning their goal and seeking an alternative relationship? Cupach and Spitzberg (1998, 2004, 2008) suggested four general reasons: (1) cultural scripts, (2) the ambiguity of communication, (3) rumination, and (4) a shift in motivation. First, cultural scripts often portray people as “playing hard to get.” Cultural scripts also suggest that if people try hard enough, they will eventually win the affection of the person they love. Together, these cultural scripts work against the realization that a relationship is unattainable. Second, ambiguous communication related to the initiation, reinitiation, and rejection of relationships may also keep hope alive. As noted in Chapter 9, during courtship people engage in ambiguous flirtatious behavior that is safe and helps them save face if they are rejected. Similarly, as noted earlier in this chapter, people often use indirect strategies to reject people because they worry about hurting their feelings. Rather than seeing these strategies as polite ways of rejecting them, pursuers may fail to correctly interpret rejection signals and continue to believe that the desired relationship is attainable.

Third, when people are having trouble obtaining a goal, they often ruminate about it. In these cases, rumination may lead pursuers to redouble their efforts to get close to the desired partner as a way to alleviate the negative affect they are feeling. Finally, people’s motivation for ORI behaviors can shift from relationship pursuit to the desire for revenge if the pursuer feels humiliated. This shift sometimes marks the beginning of more aggressive ORI behaviors (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2008). When this shift occurs, ORI sometimes escalates to stalking, wherein someone repeatedly harasses another person in a way that threatens the individual’s safety (Meloy & Gothard, 1995).

Research suggests that anywhere from 2% to 13% of men and 8% to 32% of women have been stalked in their lifetime (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). This wide range is likely a function of the various definitions given for stalking in different studies. For example, Kohn, Flood, Chase, and McMahon (2000) found that 15% of the women in their sample reported that they had been “stalked, harassed, or threatened with violence for more than one month by someone who would not leave [them] alone” (p. 653). In comparison, 45% of Elliott and Bradley’s (1997) sample reported having been stalked or harassed with obscene phone calls. Studies also suggest that the vast majority of stalkers (i.e., about 75%) have had a previous relationship with their victims (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). And, strikingly, the average stalking episode lasts nearly 2 years. One individual described her experience as “pure hell” that “just kept going on and on and on and on” (Draucker, 1999, p. 478).

Consequences of Obsessive Relational Intrusion Behavior

Not surprisingly, the toll that this sort of constant threat takes on victims’ psychological and physiological health is tremendous. Even moderate forms of ORI, though, can have devastating psychological consequences for the person being pursued (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2000). The most obvious consequence of ORI episodes is extreme and repeated experiences of fear associated with the target’s loss of control over individual physical and psychological privacy (Mullen & Pathe, 1994). This fear often results in the target making drastic attempts to regain privacy, including equipping house and car with alarm systems, changing phone
numbers and addresses, and even changing jobs. In fact, Wallace and Silverman (1996) argued that the effects of stalking are often similar to those experienced by victims of posttraumatic stress disorder.

A key question, then, is how can the desired person thwart ORI behavior? Cupach and Spitzberg (2008) identified five general ways that people cope with ORI behavior: (1) passive (waiting for the pursuer to tire of the target, lose interest, or give up), (2) avoidant (not answering phone calls and staying away from the pursuer), (3) aggressive (being mean or rude, threatening to harm the pursuer if the target is not left alone), (4) integrative (communicating disinterest directly, negotiating relationship rules and boundaries), and (5) help seeking (asking others for assistance in preventing ORI behavior). Cupach and Spitzberg (2008) concluded that the success of each strategy varies dramatically but found that confrontation and the clear outlining of relationship rules and boundaries (i.e., integrative strategies) had the greatest likelihood of success. If ORI becomes violent or crosses the line into stalking, it is usually imperative to seek help from others.

**RELATIONAL VIOLENCE**

Violence can occur in the context of ORI when one person wants a relationship and the other person does not. Indeed, the media details sensational cases where scorned lovers decide that if they cannot have the person they love, no one else will either. Despite the attention these cases receive, violence is one of the least common ORI behaviors, and violence is more likely to occur in established relationships than in relationships between a would-be-lover and a rejector. Research suggests that about 16% of married couples, 35% of cohabiting couples, and 30% of dating couples can recall at least one incidence of interpersonal violence in their relationship over the past year (Christopher & Lloyd, 2000). Gay and lesbian couples report violence rates that are about the same as married couples; although they report using milder forms of violence than straight couples (Rohrbaugh, 2006). The most common types of interpersonal violence in romantic relationships include pushing or shoving one’s partner, forcefully grabbing one’s partner, and shaking or handling one’s partner roughly (Marshall, 1994). Sibling relationships also tend to involve violence. Around 36% of siblings report engaging in acts of moderately severe violence during childhood and adolescence, such as kicking and hitting with objects. Even more siblings (around 64%) report that they have engaged in less severe forms of violence, such as shoving and pushing (Straus & Gelles, 1990).

Next, we discuss two patterns of violence—common couple violence and intimate terrorism—that have been studied in the context of romantic relationships.

**Common Couple Violence**

Common couple violence occurs when conflict spins out of control and partners resort to using violence as a way to vent their emotions and try to control the conflict (Johnson, 1995; McEwan & Johnson, 2008). This type of violence tends to be reciprocal—one person commits a violent act and the other person retaliates with more violence (Hamel, 2009; Johnson, 1995). Because common couple violence is reciprocal, men and women tend to engage in this type of violence about equally (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Hamel, 2009; Johnson, 1995; Olson, 2002b). Most of the time, common couple violence includes less severe forms of violent behavior, such as throwing objects, grabbing, shoving, pushing, or slapping (Johnson & Leone, 2005; Olson, 2004). Other times, common couple violence gets out of control, escalating into more severely violent behaviors, including hitting, beating, or using a weapon against the partner (Johnson & Leone, 2005).

There are two general patterns of common couple violence in relationships. Some couples show a pattern of repeated common couple violence. Episodes of this type of violence occur once every 2 months or so (Johnson, 1995). For these couples, conflicts that are especially serious tend to escalate into violence on a fairly regular basis. More couples, however, report a pattern of isolated common couple violence. These types of episodes are rare and only occur when a conflict gets especially emotional and aggressive. To examine these patterns, a large national survey about violence against women
was conducted. Only 1% of people who reported that common couple violence had occurred at some point in their relationship said that an incident had occurred within the past 12 months (Johnson & Leone, 2005). In other words, some people could recall at least one time when they had experienced common couple violence in their relationship, but it was rare enough that it had not occurred in the past year. Some of the couples who experience isolated common couple violence discuss their violent behavior, deem it inappropriate, and vow that it will not happen again. These types of discussions decrease future episodes of common couple violence (Olson, 2002b).

Common couple violence often occurs alongside other aggressive forms of communication or when people feel ignored (Olson, 2002a, 2002b; Olson & Braithwaite, 2004). Hamel (2009) concluded that common couple violence occurs when partners are motivated to communicate rather than control their anger but have trouble communicating effectively. Emotions often take over, and people have trouble controlling their behavior. Similarly, Olson argued that people often resort to this form of violence when they get frustrated and feel that they cannot communicate what they want to their partner (Olson, 2002b; Olson & Braithwaite, 2004). Common couple violence can also surface when people use violence to gain their partner’s attention or keep their partner from leaving the scene of the conflict (Olson, 2002a, 2002b; Olson & Braithwaite, 2004). This can result in a struggle with one partner using violence to try and keep an argument going, either to try to win the argument or out of frustration of the issue remaining unresolved, and the other partner using violence to try to get away and end the argument.

**Intimate Terrorism**

Whereas common couple violence is spontaneous and often fuelled by emotion, intimate terrorism is a strategic and enduring pattern that involves using violence to control a partner (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). For example, an individual may use violence to keep a partner from talking to rivals, control what a partner wears, or force a partner to engage in certain sexual behaviors. Common couple violence is also reciprocal, meaning both partners
become violent. In contrast, intimate terrorism is unidirectional; one partner is the perpetrator and the other partner is the victim. If victims of intimate terrorism engage in violence, it is usually to protect or defend themselves from being attacked.

The classic movie, *Sleeping with the Enemy*, provides a good portrayal of a relationship marked by intimate terrorism. In the movie, Julia Roberts plays Laura, a woman who is controlled by her violent husband. After Laura is polite and friendly toward a waiter at a restaurant, her husband beats her for being flirtatious. He also expects her to keep his house immaculately clean to the point that the towels in the bathroom have to be hung just right and the food in the pantry and cabinets has to be perfectly organized with the labels facing outward. If things are out of order, Laura knows he will hurt her. Laura’s husband also has sex with her after beating her. Laura does what he wants out of fear, until she fakes her death and (at least temporarily) escapes. Eventually he finds her, and she shoots him before he can kill her.

The scenario depicted in *Sleeping with the Enemy* also illustrates another common aspect of intimate terrorism—perpetrators of intimate terrorism often cycle between being violent and being especially nice, apologetic, and generous (Shackelford, Goetz, Buss, Euler, & Hoier, 2005; Walker, 2000). For example, after hurting their partner, perpetrators might buy their partner flowers or expensive gifts, like the jewelry that Laura’s husband gives her in the movie. They also tell their victims that they get violent because they love them so much and don’t want to lose them. These kinds of explanations feed into fairy tale notions of love as all-consuming, which can, unfortunately, lead some people to accept some level of violence in their relationships because they see violence as an inevitable side effect of having strong feelings for someone (Wood, 2001). One study showed that violent husbands were especially likely to engage in certain types of behavior, such as pleading for their partners to stay with them, saying that they can’t live without their partners, and monopolizing partners’ time so rivals do not have access to them (Shackelford et al., 2005). These behaviors, which simultaneously communicate love and control, are often part of intimate terrorism.

Consistent with the storyline in *Sleeping with the Enemy*, men are more likely to use intimate terrorism than women. In a study by Graham-Kevan and Archer (2003), 87% of intimate terrorism cases involved men as the perpetrators and women as the victims. Of course, there are times when women are the perpetrators (Hines & Douglas, 2010). The key to defining intimate terrorism is not that men tend to be the perpetrators and that women tend to be the victims but rather that one partner is using violence to try to control the other. Another key to defining intimate terrorism is that it is an enduring pattern (Johnson & Leone, 2005). Studies have shown that violence occurs about once a week in relationships characterized by intimate terrorism (Johnson, 1995), which is about eight times more often than in relationships characterized by repeated common couple violence. Even more disturbingly, intimate terrorism tends to become more frequent and more severe over time as perpetrators become more controlling and possessive (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000).

**SUMMARY AND APPLICATION**

In a perfect world, people would never hurt one another. But the world is full of imperfect people leading imperfect lives. Coping with relational transgressions and hurt feelings is a difficult challenge that many relational partners face. Sometimes the damage from infidelity, deception, or other transgressions is too great, and the relationship ends. Other times, people work out their problems and improve their relationships. Chapter 14 addresses some of the ways that people can repair their relationships following hurtful events.

For now, you should understand that close relational partners, including romantic couples, friends, and family members, sometimes hurt one another by what they say and do. People are especially likely to experience hurt if they feel devalued. Criticism,
insults, and other evaluative statements threaten a person’s self-esteem, especially when delivered by someone who is supposed to love and care for you. Similarly, actions like deception and infidelity violate trust and relational rules about how people should behave in close, caring relationships. Infidelity is one of the most serious and upsetting relational transgressions, so Ava should be concerned about Logan’s reaction. She should also be concerned about concealing this information from him. Even if she believes she is keeping her one-night stand secret to protect their relationship, she is also protecting herself from Logan’s anger and the possibility of a breakup, which could be construed as a self-focused motive. Research in this chapter also suggests that Logan will be less likely to forgive Ava if he finds out from a third party rather than hearing it from her.

Regardless of how Ava tells him, if Logan finds out, he is likely to feel upset and jealous. Indeed, finding out that your partner had a one-night stand with an ex-lover may be especially threatening. Research has shown that men (as well as women) react strongly to sexual infidelity. Men do not react as strongly to emotional infidelity, but given that Marc and Ava used to have an emotional connection, Logan may assume that Ava still has feelings for him. This is consistent with the double-shot hypothesis, which predicts that men view sexual infidelity as especially threatening because they assume that their female partners wouldn’t have sex with another man unless they also had an emotional connection to him.

If Logan feels jealous and wants to work things out, he should use integrative communication and express his feelings rather than destructive responses such as negative communication and violence. He should also appraise the situation to determine the level of threat that Marc actually poses. He might conclude that there were extenuating circumstances, and that if they had never argued, or if he had stopped ignoring her sooner, Ava would never have had the one-night stand. In this case, Logan might realize that Ava loves him and not Marc, so the threat would dissipate. On the other hand, Logan may conclude that a part of Ava is still in love with Marc and that their temporary separation was an excuse for her to try to get back together with him. In that case, the threat would intensify. The larger the perceived threat, the stronger jealous emotions are, and the more difficult it is to use constructive forms of communication, like integrative communication, as opposed to destructive forms of communication, like yelling or counter-jealousy inductions.

Finally, we could imagine endings to Ava’s story that would involve ORI or violence. Perhaps Marc is still in love with Ava, and their one-night stand renews his desire to try and get back together with her. Although Ava tells him that she loves Logan and not him, Marc may continue to hope that they could get back together. He might use mildly intrusive behaviors, such as calling or texting her repeatedly or stopping by her work. Eventually it could escalate with Marc telling Logan about their one-night stand, spying on her, or even becoming violent. Violence has no place in a relationship. Some are fooled into thinking that violence can stem from love and wanting to be with someone so much that you can’t control yourself. But a healthy relationship is built on prosocial communication and effective conflict management (see Chapters 10 and 11). By using these tools, as well as the repair strategies discussed in Chapter 14, couples like Ava and Logan can try to work through relational transgressions and get their relationships back on track.

**KEY TERMS**

- acquiescent responses (p. 327)
- active verbal responses (p. 327)
- ambiguous communication (p. 346)
- behavioral control (p. 332)
- behavioral familiarity (p. 331)
- communicative infidelity (p. 334)
- concealment (p. 328)
- cultural scripts (p. 346)
- devaluation (p. 325)
- double-shot hypothesis (p. 336)
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Under what circumstances, if any, do you think it is okay to deceive a friend or relational partner? When would you feel betrayed if your friend or partner deceived you?

2. Think about the last time you or someone you know was jealous. Which of the communicative responses to jealousy did you or the person you know use? Did these responses make the situation better or worse?

3. On television and in the news, we often hear about cases involving ORI or stalking. Have you or people you have known ever experienced this problem? What strategies might you use to stop such behavior? Why is stopping such behavior so difficult?

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