

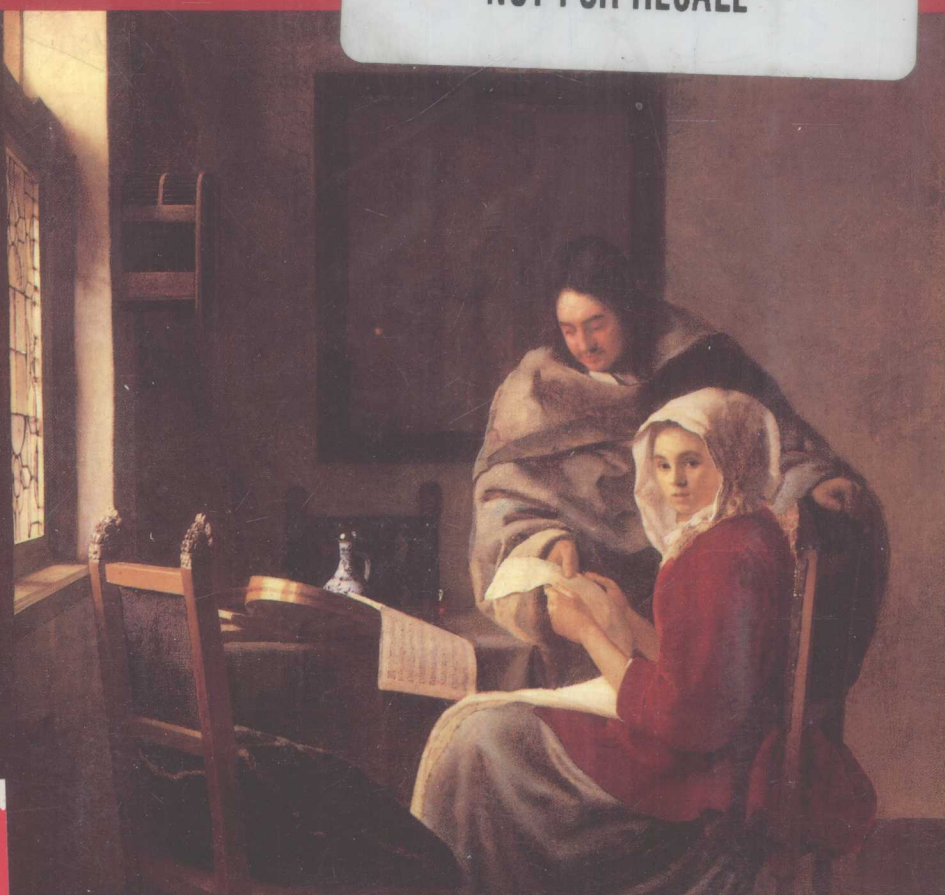
Sharon S. Brehm

INT
REI

THE MCGRAW-HILL COMPANIES
FOR DONATION ONLY
NOT FOR RESALE

HIGHER EDUCATION
13ASA002

THE MCGRAW-HILL COMPANIES
FOR DONATION ONLY
NOT FOR RESALE



Second Edition

Intimate Relationships

Second Edition



Sharon S. Brehm

*State University of New York
at Binghamton*

McGraw-Hill, Inc.

New York St. Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá
Caracas Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan
Montreal New Delhi San Juan Singapore
Sydney Tokyo Toronto

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Copyright © 1992, 1985 by McGraw-Hill, Inc. All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States of America. Except as permitted under the
United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be
reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a
data base or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of
the publisher.

14 15 DOC/DOC 09876543210

ISBN 0-07-007443-7

This book was set in Palatino by Better Graphics, Inc.
The editors were Christopher Rogers and Jean Akers;
the production supervisor was Kathryn Porzio.
The photo editor was Anne Manning.
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company was printer and binder.

Cover credit: Painted by Jan Vermeer: Girl Interrupted at Her Music.
Copyright The Frick Collection, New York.

Credits appear on pages 485-488, and on this page by
reference.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Brehm, Sharon S.

Intimate relationships / Sharon S. Brehm. —2nd ed.

p. cm.—(The McGraw-Hill series in social psychology)

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0-07-007443-7

1. Family life education. 2. Interpersonal relations.

I. Series.

HQ10.B735 1992

306.7'07—dc20

91-14504

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

About the Author



Sharon S. Brehm is Professor of Psychology and Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and of Harpur College at the State University of New York at Binghamton. She received her Ph.D. from Duke University and completed an internship in clinical psychology at the University of Washington Medical Center in Seattle. She has been a Fulbright Senior Research Scholar in Paris and has given talks in England, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, and Switzerland as well as in the United States. In addition to numerous articles and chapters, she has published seven books—including *The Application of Social Psychology to Clinical Practice*, a recognized classic in the field, and a popular textbook, *Social Psychology*, co-authored with Saul Kassin. The first edition of *Intimate Relationships* received wide acclaim for its usefulness in the classroom and as a sourcebook for researchers.

This book is dedicated to Ellen Berscheid and Elaine Hatfield for their pioneering contributions to the study of attraction, love, and relationships. Their intellectual leadership and personal encouragement have made it possible for others to follow in their footsteps.

For love, all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room, an everywhere.

John Donne

Foreword



During the many decades when American psychology was held captive by a limited scientific doctrine of behaviorism, the pathfinders who dared to venture beyond these intellectually limited boundaries and explore new horizons were largely social psychologists. They valued the personal perspectives of the human actor in life's dramas, honored the alternative interpretations of reality held by different observers, and defended the subtle interplay of dynamic forces between and within cultures, social situations, and individual psyches.

Long relegated to a subordinate position within psychology's status hierarchy for these points of view, social psychology has steadily moved to the center of contemporary psychology. It did so by establishing a cognitively flavored brand of psychology, which, in recent years, has become the banner flown by mainstream psychology. Social psychology was the home of generalists within psychology, a haven for scholars interested in understanding the depth and breadth of the nature of human nature. It was neither too shy to ask the big questions that have intrigued social philosophers for centuries, nor too orthodox to venture into alien territories with new methodologies that have provided empirically grounded answers to the more philosophical questions. Finally, social psychologists have become the vanguard of the movement to extend the boundaries of traditional psychology into realms vital to contributing solutions for real-world problems, the areas of health, ecology, education, law, peace and conflict resolution, and much more. Indeed, it is not immodest to declare that nothing of human nature is too alien to social psychological inquiry and concern.

Our McGraw-Hill Series in Social Psychology celebrates the fundamental contributions being made by researchers, theorists, and practitioners of social psychology to a richer understanding of the human condition. The authors of

each book in the series are distinguished researchers and dedicated teachers, committed to sharing a vision of the excitement inherent in their particular area of investigation with their colleagues, graduate students, and seriously curious undergraduates. Taken as a whole, the series will cover a wide path of social psychological interests, allowing instructors to use any of them as supplements to their basic textbook or, for the more daring, to organize a challenging course around a collection of them.

While reading Sharon Brehm's new edition of her successful text, *Intimate Relationships*, I could not help but think of the many people I've met—men and women, young and old, gay and straight—who despite apparent accomplishment and success felt that their lives had become empty and meaningless. If you ask those individuals about their feelings (and, being an inordinately curious person, I do tend to ask), their responses show a striking consistency. The problems they point to, the reason for their season of discontent, almost always involve their intimate relationships. They feel perplexed, bewildered, even, about how relationships are formed, developed, and enriched. They have specific concerns about issues of communication, power, jealousy, envy, expectations, and selfishness. And they long to experience and understand the dynamics of attraction, romance, love, and sometimes sexuality. *Intimate Relationships* deals with each of these topics in depth, and blends Brehm's insights with her analysis of what psychologists have learned from years of systematic study of people as they go into, through, and out of such relationships.

There is no better first step for those who want to establish a life style that builds from a core of enriched friendship and loving relationships than to explore the perspectives and information that Sharon Brehm has gathered for us in this book. What is remarkable is the unique combination of the scholarly and pragmatic that Brehm presents. The breadth of scientific research and current theory on a wide array of issues that are part of intimate relationships is carefully developed as the intellectual scaffolding from which practical advice can be extracted and put to use in building optimal personal relationships.

In her sensitive analysis of this core of human existence, Brehm combines social-psychological theory and research along with a practical focus on ways to improve intimate relationships and cope with their dissolution. Her approach reveals her sophisticated comprehension of the nuances of these complex issues, her ability to pose the right questions, and her appreciation for the appropriate place for a critical reading of the available empirical evidence. She tells us when common sense conceptions about intimate relationships are informative and when they are wrong, though appealing.

The study of intimate relationships is a relatively new topic in social psychology, which typically has dealt with groups and dyads in more structured contexts, as they cooperate or compete, negotiate and bargain, conform or comply. The rising interest among social psychologists in the topics of interpersonal attraction, liking, love, romance, sexuality, and marriage is part of the field's emerging concern for developing the richest possible conception of human actors at play on all of life's stages. But the audience for this book goes

well beyond the student of social psychology. When we enlarge our perspective to consider the social and cultural contexts in which intimate relationships take place, students of sociology are also included, as are those in family studies, home economics, and communication studies. Researchers too will find this a useful volume for keeping them up to date on the latest theory and research in this rapidly expanding area. And those professionals who counsel people experiencing problems in their relationships will find valuable sound guidance in their pursuit of solutions that are too often difficult to find.

So each of these readers will be taken on a fascinating journey where the destination is clear—a comprehensive scholarly understanding of all the elements that go into intimate relationships—and the process of getting there will engage the reader both intellectually and emotionally. In this book, the life of the mind and the cares of the heart lie, quite comfortably, close together.

Philip G. Zimbardo
Series Editor

Preface



The first edition of this text started out under a rather peculiar designation. A “chicken-and-egg book” my first editor called it, meaning that in order to have a healthy commercial life it would need to generate courses that would use it as well as secure adoptions from existing courses. Fortunately, there seem to have been a sufficient number of instructors ready to hatch new courses on relationships or modify existing ones to include a greater emphasis on relationships. This second edition owes its existence to the warm welcome the first one received from instructors, students, and researchers.

In writing this edition, I have kept the original structure of the book as a whole relatively unchanged. The number of chapters (15) remains the same, and Chapters 3 through 13 continue to follow a developmental sequence from the beginning of a relationship to its ending and aftermath. To make this sequence even clearer to the reader, this large middle section is now divided into four multi-chapter parts (Getting Together, Progress and Fairness in the Relationship, Relationship Issues, When a Relationship Ends). As in the first edition, Part I consists of an introduction to the study of relationships and a chapter on research methods, while the final part includes a chapter on therapeutic interventions and then a concluding essay on the present status of intimate relationships in our society and some possible future trends.

Within this basic structure, however, the content of the chapters themselves has changed a great deal. Since the 1985 publication of the first edition, the amount of research and theory on relationships has expanded enormously. Where I once had to stretch to find relevant materials, now I have had to be selective. In general, I have tried to retain enough coverage of previous research to provide an adequate foundation for more recent work. Nevertheless, almost all of the chapters have been extensively revised and some have been rewritten entirely. Although this level of revision requires considerable time and effort from both author and publisher, it allows this edition, like the first one, to function as a comprehensive introductory text, suitable for a range of different approaches to the study of intimate relationships.

As approaches will differ, so too will the audience for this book vary. Researchers will find it a helpful compendium of information and citations; for clinicians, it can serve as a concise overview of developments in the field. But the primary audience for whom this book is intended consists of undergraduate students and their instructors. Written in clear, everyday language, the text provides numerous examples from everyday life. It does not, however, avoid complex issues involving research findings and theoretical interpretations. In short, the text sustains the personal appeal of the subject matter *and* maintains rigorous standards of scholarship.

This combination is, I believe, particularly appropriate for the study of intimate relationships. While teaching my own course on relationships, I have seen the intense curiosity that students bring to such a course and how their curiosity motivates them to master the material presented. They welcome the opportunity to consider new ideas and compare alternative perspectives. Students also appreciate having thorough, well-organized summary sections to help them review after having read a chapter and before taking an exam. The chapter summaries provided in this edition, changed significantly from the summary outlines in the first edition, were developed in response to student feedback about the summary format they found most useful.

In addition to thanking my students for their suggestions about how I could improve this textbook, I would like to express my gratitude to those reviewers who commented on the book at various stages in the revision process: Andrew Barclay, Michigan State University; Kelly Brennan, SUNY-Buffalo; Jeff Bryson, San Diego State University; Scott Fuller, Santa Rosa Junior College; Jane Ellen Kestner, Youngstown State University; Phillip R. Shaver, SUNY-Buffalo; and Robert Weiss, University of Oregon.

I have also enjoyed the great good fortune of having the superb assistance of Christine Averill and Marianne Sharsky in preparing the final manuscript. And, from start to finish, I have appreciated the opportunity to work with Christopher Rogers, Jean Akers, and all the other members of the especially fine editorial staff of the College Division at McGraw-Hill.

Sharon S. Brehm

Contents



FOREWORD

xiv

PREFACE

xvii

PART ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

1	RELATIONSHIPS TODAY	3
	<i>Defining Intimate Relationship</i>	<i>4</i>
	<i>Marriage</i>	<i>6</i>
	Marriage and Happiness	9
	<i>Divorce</i>	<i>11</i>
	Divorce and Stress 12 / Why Has the Divorce Rate Increased? 13	
	<i>Cohabitation</i>	<i>15</i>
	Cohabitation and Marital Outcomes	17
	<i>Being Single</i>	<i>19</i>
	The Problems and Rewards of Being Single	21
	<i>Past and Present: An Overview</i>	<i>24</i>
	<i>Chapter Summary</i>	<i>26</i>
2	RESEARCH METHODS	30
	<i>Finding a Question</i>	<i>31</i>
	<i>Finding Subjects</i>	<i>32</i>
		<i>vii</i>

<i>Finding a Design</i>	35
Correlational Designs 35 / Experimental Designs 37 / Developmental Designs 38	
<i>Finding a Setting</i>	41
<i>Collecting Data</i>	43
Self-Reports 43 / Observations 46 / Couples' Reports 50	
<i>Analyzing Data</i>	51
<i>Being Ethical</i>	52
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	54

PART TWO GETTING TOGETHER

3 INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION	59
<i>Theories of Attraction: A Matter of Rewards</i>	60
<i>Proximity: Liking the Ones We're Near</i>	61
Personal Space: Coming Closer 63 / Familiarity: Repeated Contact 63	
<i>Physical Attractiveness: To See You Is to Like You</i>	64
What Creates the Bias for Beauty? 65 / Who Has a Bias for Beauty? 68 / Adding Up the Gains and Losses 70 / In the Long Run 71	
<i>Similarity: Liking People Who Are Just like Us</i>	72
Demographic Similarity 72 / Personality Similarity 73 / Physical Attractiveness Similarity 74 / Attitudinal Sim- ilarity 77 / Why Is Similarity Attractive? 79	
<i>Attraction as a Balancing Act</i>	79
Complementarity in Personality 79 / Complementarity in Resources 80 / Reciprocity and Consistency 82	
<i>Barriers: Liking the Ones We Cannot Have</i>	83
External Barriers 84 / Barriers in the Relationship 85	
<i>Expectations: Liking the Ones We Expect to Like</i>	86
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	88

4	LOVE AND ROMANCE	92
	<i>A Brief History of Love</i>	93
	Ancient Greece 93 / Roman Antecedents 94 / Courtly Love 94 / A Time of Transition 94 / In Our Time 96	
	<i>Types of Love</i>	97
	Companionate and Passionate Love 98 / Attachment Styles 105 / Colors of Love 108 / Components of Love 109 / An Overview 110	
	<i>Individual Differences in Love</i>	110
	Gender 110 / Age 116 / Personality 118	
	<i>Chapter Summary</i>	122
5	SEXUALITY	125
	<i>Predictors of Premarital Sexual Activity</i>	126
	Contraception and Safe Sex 128	
	<i>Gender Differences in Sexual Attitudes</i>	130
	Men's and Women's Perceptions of Sexuality 131	
	<i>Sex and Satisfaction</i>	132
	Sex and Marital Happiness 133 / Sex and Love among Dating Couples 134 / Sex and Equity in the Relationship 136	
	<i>Relationships between Same-Sex Partners</i>	138
	Relationship Issues 138 / Love in the Time of AIDS 139	
	<i>Sex and Communication: Talk to Me, Talk to Me</i>	142
	<i>Chapter Summary</i>	145
 PART THREE PROGRESS AND FAIRNESS IN THE RELATIONSHIP		
6	RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT	153
	<i>Stage Theories of Relationship Development</i>	154
	<i>A Social Exchange Model of Relationship Development</i>	157
	Rewards and Costs 157 / Expectations 162 / Alternatives 163 / Investments 167	

<i>Commitment to the Relationship</i>	171
When Commitment Fails 173	
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	174
 7 FAIRNESS, SELFISHNESS, AND ALTRUISM	 177
<i>Reciprocity</i>	177
<i>Equity Theory</i>	181
The Distress of Inequity 183 / Ways to Restore Equity 184 / Equity versus Equality versus Reward Level 186 / The Question of Fairness 186	
<i>Terms of Exchange</i>	188
Interpersonal Orientation 189 / Exchange versus Communal Relationships 192 / The Question of Selfishness 194	
<i>Altruism</i>	196
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	198
 PART FOUR RELATIONSHIP ISSUES	
 8 COMMUNICATION	 203
<i>The Role of Communication in Relationship Development</i>	204
The Theory of Social Penetration 204 / Is It Always Gradual? 207	
<i>Gender Differences in Communication</i>	209
Self-Disclosure 209 / Expressive versus Instrumental Communication Styles 213 / Nonverbal Communication 215	
<i>Improving Communication</i>	221
Can Fighting Be Good for a Relationship? 226	
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	228
 9 SOCIAL POWER	 231
<i>Power as a Social Exchange Process</i>	231
The Bases of Power 232 / The Process of Power 237 / The Outcome of Power 242	

<i>Power and Personality</i>	246
<i>Power and Understanding</i>	249
Understanding Stereotypes	251
<i>Power and Violence</i>	252
Why Don't They Leave? 255 / Violence in Premarital Relationships	256
<i>The Uses of Power</i>	258
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	259
 10 JEALOUSY	 263
<i>Jealousy and Envy</i>	265
<i>The Causes of Jealousy</i>	267
Relational Factors 268 / Sexual Exclusivity	270
<i>The Experience of Jealousy</i>	272
Types of Jealousy	278
<i>Gender Differences in Jealousy</i>	279
Becoming Jealous 279 / Coping with Jealousy 280 / Inducing Jealousy and Reacting to Rivalry 281 / Perceiving a Partner's Motives	282
<i>Coping Constructively with Jealousy</i>	284
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	286

PART FIVE WHEN A RELATIONSHIP ENDS

 11 CONFLICT AND DISSOLUTION	 293
<i>Structural Factors in Conflict and Dissolution</i>	294
Gender Differences 294 / As Time Goes By 296 / When Two Become Three or More: Effects of Children on Marital Satisfaction 299 / Role Strain: Who Does What?	300
<i>The Process of Conflict and Dissolution</i>	303
Attributions: A General Scenario 304 / Attributions: Differences between Happy and Unhappy Couples 305 / Volatility: A Problem and an Opportunity	307

	<i>Coping with the End of a Relationship</i>	309
	Cognitive Aspects of Coping 310 / Emotional Aspects of Coping 314	
	<i>Chapter Summary</i>	319
12	LONELINESS	323
	<i>What Is Loneliness?</i>	323
	How Does It Feel to Be Lonely? 324 / Measuring Loneliness 325 / Who Are the Lonely? 328	
	<i>Some Possible Causes of Loneliness</i>	331
	Inadequacies in Our Relationships 331 / Changes in What We Want from a Relationship 332 / Self-Esteem and Causal Attributions 333 / Interpersonal Behaviors 334	
	<i>Coping with Loneliness</i>	338
	What Do People Do When They Are Lonely? 339 / What Helps People Feel Less Lonely? 340 / Loneliness as a Growth Experience 343	
	<i>Chapter Summary</i>	345
13	THE SOCIAL NETWORK	348
	<i>When Parents Get Divorced</i>	349
	What Happens after a Divorce? 350 / Adjustment after a Divorce 355 / What Is a Family? 361	
	<i>Friendship</i>	362
	Gender Differences in Same-Sex Friendships 362 / Individual Differences in Friendship 367 / Friendship and Stress 368 / Social Support: Is It Useful? 369	
	<i>Chapter Summary</i>	373
 PART SIX IMPROVING INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS		
14	THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS	379
	<i>Early in the Relationship: Premarital Programs</i>	380
	An Overview 381	

	<i>Later in the Relationship: Marital Enrichment Programs</i>	382
	An Enrichment Program for Sexual Interaction	384
	<i>Later in the Relationship: Marital Therapy</i>	385
	Formats 386 / Theoretical Orientations 386 / The Effectiveness of Marital Therapy 395	
	<i>When the Relationship Ends: Divorce Therapy and Mediation</i>	397
	<i>Chapter Summary</i>	399
15	RELATIONSHIPS TOMORROW	402
	<i>Changing Roles</i>	403
	<i>Changing the Rules</i>	406
	<i>Changing the Requirements</i>	408
	<i>Changing Reality</i>	410
	<i>Chapter Summary</i>	414
	REFERENCES	417
	CREDITS	485
	INDEXES	
	<i>Name Index</i>	489
	<i>Subject Index</i>	499