

CHAPTER 1

Marital Satisfaction in Evolutionary Psychological Perspective

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Formal marriage arrangements between men and women exist in every known culture around the world (Brown, 1991; Buss, 1985; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Epstein & Guttman, 1984; Vandenberg, 1972). Moreover, more than 90% of the world's population will marry at least once during their lifetime (Buss, 1985; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Epstein & Guttman, 1984; Vandenberg, 1972). Equally revealing, however, is that the vast majority of human societies also have instituted formal procedures for marital divorce (Betzig, 1989). Fewer than one in two marriages in the Western world lasts a lifetime; indeed, the majority end within the first 4 years of marriage (Fisher, 1992). This astonishing rate of conjugal dissolution is not peculiar to Western culture (Betzig, 1989; Fisher, 1992).

The cross-cultural ubiquity of marriage and divorce suggest the potential utility of, and insight that can be provided by, an evolutionary psychological perspective (Buss, 1995; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Kenrick, Sadalla, Groth, & Trost, 1990; Symons, 1992; Tooby & Cosmides, 1992). In this chapter, we present a conceptual overview of marital satisfaction and discontent as seen through the lens of evolutionary psy-

chology. We begin by reconceptualizing marital satisfaction from the framework offered by this perspective. Next, we discuss the notion of "mate value," and examine the reasons why a discrepancy in relative spousal mate value is likely to translate into marital dissatisfaction. We then offer an evolutionary psychological personality profile of spouses who evoke in their partners dissatisfaction with their relationships. We then consider the use of "mate-guarding" tactics among married couples, and discuss which of these tactics are likely to promote marital happiness and which are likely to lead to marital decay. Next, we provide an evolutionary psychological prescription for how to guarantee an unhappy marriage, focusing on sources of marital anger, upset, and irritation. We close with a summary of spousal and relationship qualities that promote marital satisfaction, as gleaned from an evolutionary psychological perspective.

Our aim in this chapter is primarily to elucidate the *conceptual* utility of adopting an evolutionary psychological framework for understanding marital satisfaction. Throughout the chapter, however, we provide supportive data, where available, collected from an intensive study of 107 married couples (see Buss, 1991a, 1992).

RECONCEPTUALIZING MARITAL SATISFACTION WITHIN AN EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The marital relationship is in many ways unique among human relationships. Marriage entails processes and expectations not present in other intimate relationships. Rarely is there an expectation of sexual fidelity or romantic/emotional exclusivity, for example, among even the closest of friends (Shackelford & Buss, 1996; Shackelford, 1997). Romantic exclusivity and sexual fidelity are, however, among the expected benefits of participation in a presumably monogamous marriage in all cultures that prescribe this mating arrangement (Betzig, 1989; Brown, 1991; Buss, 1994; Daly & Wilson, 1988). Marriage is a universal human institution; no fewer than 9 of every 10 humans worldwide marry (Brown, 1991; Buss, 1985; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Epstein & Guttman, 1984; Vandenberg, 1972). Given its cross-cultural prevalence, marriage is likely to have posed a recurrent set of adaptive problems for ancestral men and women throughout human evolutionary history (Buss, 1994; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Daly & Wilson, 1988).

Many of these adaptive challenges would have been equally confronted by ancestral men and women. Marriage is fundamentally a reproductive union (Betzig, 1989; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Daly & Wil-

son, 1988), and in this regard ancestral men and women alike would have confronted the basic adaptive challenge of identifying potential marriage partners capable of producing offspring. Those early humans who were less adept at discriminating the reproductively fertile from the less fertile among the pool of potential spouses are less likely to be our ancestors, for they would have been outreproduced by their more perceptive conspecifics. The marital choices and underlying psychological mechanisms of the more reproductively successful among early humans have become instantiated in the human mind over the hundreds of thousands of generations of our evolutionary history. The marital choices we make today are in this respect the marital choices that our ancestors made millennia ago.

Various authors have expanded on the multiplicity of adaptive challenges that men and women confront in the context of marriage (see, e.g., Buss, 1991b, 1994; Daly & Wilson, 1988). These adaptive challenges include the following, in addition to identifying a reproductively fertile spouse: achieving successful conception, or engaging in the necessary sexual and social activities to fertilize or be fertilized by one's spouse; mate retention, or preventing the defection or desertion of one's spouse, as well as preventing encroachment by intrasexual competitors; and parental care and socialization, or acting to ensure the successful survival and reproduction of offspring produced within the marriage.

Other adaptive challenges of marriage are sex-specific and, as a consequence, have selected for sex-differentiated mating psychologies. Ancestral men, but not women, faced the adaptive problem of being certain that the offspring produced by their spouses were indeed their own. Because fertilization occurs within women, men can never be 100% certain that the children their mates bear are their own. Ancestral men, of course, did not have access to DNA-fingerprinting technology, or even to the much less accurate blood-grouping techniques that are now employed today. Women's sexual infidelity placed ancestral men at risk of investing in offspring to whom they were genetically unrelated. Those males who were indifferent to the sexual fidelity of their spouses are less likely to be our evolutionary ancestors, for they would have been outreproduced by males who invested effort in retaining exclusive sexual access to their spouses. A man's sensitivity to and concern about the sexual infidelity of his spouse can be understood as a solution to the adaptive problem of threatened cuckoldry (Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Daly, Wilson, & Weghorst, 1982; Wilson & Daly, 1992).

Although women have not faced the adaptive problem of parental certainty, the sexual infidelity of their spouses probably provided a cue

to the potential loss of other reproductively valuable resources garnered from the marital relationship (Buss et al., 1992; Daly, Wilson, & Weghorst, 1982). A woman may fear that the time, attention, investment, commitment, and resources her spouse contributes will be diverted to another woman and her children (Buss et al., 1992; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Daly & Wilson, 1988). A woman's sensitivity to the sexual infidelity of her spouse can thus be understood as a solution to the adaptive problem of threatened loss of reproductively valuable resources (Buss et al., 1992; Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

From an evolutionary psychological perspective, marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be viewed as psychological states that track the overall benefits and costs associated with a particular marital union. The costs and benefits are gauged psychologically, but our evolved psychological mechanisms for gauging them have been forged over the vast expanse of evolutionary time. At an ultimate level, therefore, the psychological mechanisms track what would have been costs and benefits in ancestral times. A marriage partner who is unfaithful, for example, inflicts a probabilistic cost of lowered paternity certainty or the diversion of resources and commitment to another. Infidelity, therefore, can be expected to lower the partner's marital satisfaction because it is tracking costs of this sort. Thus, marital satisfaction can be regarded as a psychological device that tracks the overall costs and benefits of a marriage. Marital dissatisfaction can serve the adaptive function of motivating the individual to attempt to change the existing relationship, or to seek another one that may be more propitious.

In summary, the marital alliance is a reproductive union forged by nearly every man and woman the world over. It is very likely to have been a recurrent feature of the human "adaptive landscape" (Buss, 1991b) over our evolutionary history. Marriage entails many and varied adaptive challenges, some of which are sex-specific, but many of which are confronted by men and women alike. The adaptive problems of marriage are not static, but change with the fluctuating context of the enduring marriage. It is the *continuously* successful solving of the adaptive problems posed by the marital alliance that produces a state of relative marital satisfaction, happiness, and contentment.

WHEN ONE SPOUSE IS WORTH MORE THAN THE OTHER: "MATE VALUE" DISCREPANCY AND MARITAL DISSATISFACTION

People differ in their ability to attract, acquire, and retain marriage partners. That is, people differ in their "mate value," or their overall attrac-

tiveness (physical and otherwise) as potential spouses, relative to other potential spouses on the current "mating market" (Buss, 1994; Symons, 1979). In a study of over 10,000 people across 37 cultures, Buss (1989a) identified the primary constituents of men's and women's mate value. Cross-culturally, women more than men were found to value cues to resource acquisition (e.g., ambition, industriousness, earning capacity) in a potential spouse. Men more than women were found to value cues to reproductive capacity (e.g., youth, physical attractiveness) in a potential spouse. Because women and not men bear the time- and energy-intensive burden of gestation, parturition, and lactation, more of their value as potential spouses is tied up in their reproductive capacity. Two of the most reliable cues to reproductive value in women are physical attractiveness and age (Buss, 1989a; Symons, 1979). Those early human males who selected as spouses relatively more physically attractive and youthful females would probably have outreproduced those males who did not attend to these cues to reproductive capacity.

Because human offspring can garner tremendous benefits from the additional investment provided by an adult male (Buss, 1989a, 1994), ancestral women who selected as marriage partners men with relatively greater ability and willingness to invest their current and future resources in the women and their offspring would probably have produced a greater number of healthy offspring. Thus, relative to women, more of men's mate value is tied up in their ability and willingness to invest acquired resources in their spouses and children.

Mate value is, of course, much more than the reproductive capacity of women and the resource acquisition potential of men. In his cross-cultural study, Buss (1989a) found that members of both sexes valued intelligence, kindness, and dependability more than any other attributes in a potential spouse. Nonetheless, sex differences in spouse preferences exist.

The mate value of spouses is positively correlated. In general, men with greater resources or resource acquisition potential tend to marry younger and more physically attractive women (Buss, 1994; Elder, 1969; Taylor & Glenn, 1976; Udry & Eckland, 1984). People with a good sense of humor tend to have spouses with a good sense of humor (Buss, 1994); intelligent people tend to marry those of approximately equal intelligence (Buss, 1994); and so on, for a vast array of personality and demographic variables (Buss, 1984, 1994). In our sample of 107 married couples, the spousal cross-correlation of mate value as assessed by two independent interviewers (one male and one female) was .63 ($p < .001$).

Working within an evolutionary framework, we predicted that a discrepancy in mate value within a couple would be associated with marital dissatisfaction in both spouses, regardless of which spouse was

judged to be the more valuable mate. A discrepancy in mate value is likely to produce anxiety in the less valuable partner concerning his or her spouse's possible defection from the relationship or extramarital liaison, in search of someone of more comparable value. This anxiety may translate into marital dissatisfaction. The spouse of higher relative mate value also may express dissatisfaction with an arrangement where the benefits received may be less than the costs of remaining in the relationship to the exclusion of other possible relationships. In our sample of married couples, this prediction was supported, at least in part: The greater the mate value discrepancy, the less satisfied men, but not women, were with their marriages. It is not clear why this prediction held for men but not their wives.

SPOUSAL PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTES THAT SIGNAL TROUBLE FOR A MARRIAGE

In this section of the chapter, we offer predictions regarding spousal personality traits as conceptualized within the five-factor model of personality and the partner's marital satisfaction. The five-factor model of personality (Norman, 1963; Goldberg, 1981) proposes that five major dimensions capture the bulk of significant individual differences in personality. These bipolar factors are Surgency (dominant, extraverted vs. submissive, introverted), Agreeableness (warm, trusting vs. cold, suspicious), Conscientiousness (reliable, well-organized vs. undependable, disorganized), Emotional Stability (secure, even-tempered vs. nervous, temperamental), and Openness/Intellect (perceptive, curious vs. imperceptive, uncurious).

Some research has been conducted on the covariation of marital dissatisfaction with spousal markers of the "Big Five." The most consistent predictor of marital unhappiness for both men and women is a spouse's low standing on Emotional Stability, emerging in nearly every study that has included a marker of this dimension (Buss, 1991a). A spouse exhibiting low Conscientiousness evokes marital dissatisfaction in his or her partner (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Kelly & Conley, 1987), as does a spouse manifesting low Agreeableness (Burgess & Wallen, 1953; Kelly & Conley, 1987). A spouse who exhibits low Emotional Stability, low Conscientiousness, and low Agreeableness is likely to inflict substantial costs on his or her partner, rendering the relationship a much less beneficial and therefore much less satisfying arrangement.

Buss (1991a) found that women married to men who displayed low Agreeableness tended to complain that their husbands were condescending toward them, neglecting, rejecting, unreliable, physically and ver-

bally abusive, unfaithful, inconsiderate, moody, abusive of alcohol, emotionally constricted, insulting of their appearance, and self-centered. Women married to men who exhibited low Conscientiousness complained that their husbands were unfaithful, and those married to emotionally unstable men complained that their husbands were condescending, possessive, dependent, jealous, physically and verbally abusive, unfaithful, inconsiderate, physically self-absorbed, moody, abusive of alcohol, emotionally constricted, and self-centered. Buss (1991a) also found that women married to men who scored low on Openness/Intellect tended to complain that their husbands were neglecting, rejecting, unreliable, abusive, inconsiderate, physically self-absorbed, moody, sexually withholding and rejecting, abusive of alcohol, and emotionally constricted.

Men's complaints about their wives also covaried with their wives' personalities, but less so than was the case for women's complaints about their husbands. Men married to women who scored low on Agreeableness complained that their wives were condescending, unfaithful, and self-centered. Men married to women who exhibited low Conscientiousness complained that their wives were abusive of alcohol and emotionally constricted. Men married to emotionally unstable women complained that their wives were possessive, dependent, jealous, and self-centered. Finally, men married to women scoring low on Openness/Intellect complained that their spouses tended to sexualize other men, abused alcohol, and were emotionally constricted.

Thus, men and women whose spouses exhibit low levels of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness/Intellect are exposed to a variety of significant costs. Early males and females who remained in relationships with spouses imposing such costs are less likely to be our ancestors, for they would have been outreproduced by men and women who either refrained from involvement with people exhibiting these undesirable personality characteristics, or defected from the relationships once they were involved. One facet of the psychological and emotional machinery that may have been selected for over human evolutionary history is the triggering of feelings of dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and discontent with marriage to a spouse exhibiting disagreeableness, undependability, emotional instability, and stupidity or closed-mindedness. These developing feelings of marital dissatisfaction might then have prompted the beguiled spouse to defect from the reproductively costly relationship in search of a more beneficial arrangement. In the sample of 107 married couples, this prediction was supported: Disagreeableness, undependability, emotional instability, and stupidity or closed-mindedness of a spouse were impressively associated with a partner's marital dissatisfaction.

From an evolutionary psychological perspective, one of the most serious transgressions of the presumably monogamous marital alliance is a partner's infidelity. Such unfaithfulness is likely to have imposed serious reproductive costs on ancestral men and women alike (see above). Because of the asymmetry in parental certainty, however, a wife's infidelity is potentially much more costly to her husband than is a husband's infidelity to his wife. The wife of a philandering man stands to lose some portion of his investment to another woman and her children. Even if she loses the bulk of his investment, any children she bears are unquestionably her genetic progeny. The husband of an unfaithful wife stands to lose the entire reproductive capacity of his spouse, for at least one childbearing cycle. Moreover, the unsuspecting cuckold risks investing years, even decades, of precious tangible and intangible resources in a rival's offspring.

Elsewhere (Buss & Shackelford, in press), we examined the relationship between a spouse's susceptibility to varying degrees of infidelity and his or her standings on the Big Five. We found that wives who exhibited a low level of Conscientiousness were more likely to flirt with another man, passionately kiss another man, go on a romantic date with another man, have a one-night stand with another man, have a brief affair with another man, and have a serious affair with another man. No clear relationship emerged between husbands' standings on the five factors and their susceptibility to infidelity. On the basis of these findings, and in conjunction with the asymmetry in parental certainty, we expected to find the strongest marital unhappiness-spousal personality correlation for men married to women scoring low on Conscientiousness. This was precisely what we found: With regard to his wife's personality, the best predictor of a husband's marital satisfaction was his spouse's Conscientiousness.

A powerful selective pressure that would have been differentially confronted by ancestral men and women is damaging physical abuse at the hands of a spouse. Although men and women may be equally likely to engage in physical abuse (as distinct from legal "battering"; e.g., Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992) of their spouse (Buss, 1991a; de Weerth & Kalma, 1993; Dobash et al., 1992), a history of intense sexual selection for intersexual physical competitive ability among men but not women has produced men that today are, on average, substantially larger and stronger than women (Daly & Wilson, 1983; Trivers, 1985). The result is that the physical abuse of a woman by her husband is more damaging than is the physical abuse of a man by his wife (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Daly et al., 1982; Dobash et al., 1992). Physical abuse is one of the greatest costs that men can inflict on their wives (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Daly et al., 1982; Dobash et al., 1992). Buss (1991a)

reported substantial negative correlations between a wife's complaints that her husband abused her and his Agreeableness and Emotional Stability. We would expect, therefore, to find the strongest marital unhappiness-spousal personality correlations between women's unhappiness and their partners' standing on Agreeableness and Emotional Stability. We would expect these results to the extent that modern women are descended from ancestral women who defected from reproductively costly relationships with abusive—that is, disagreeable and emotionally unstable—husbands. This was just what we found upon examining the married couples' data: With regard to her husband's personality, the best predictors of a woman's marital satisfaction were her spouse's Agreeableness and Emotional Stability.

SPOUSAL TACTICS OF MATE GUARDING AND THEIR IMPACT ON MARITAL SATISFACTION

In this section of the chapter, we provide an evolutionary psychological analysis of the impact of various mate-guarding tactics employed by one spouse and the impact of these tactics on the marital satisfaction of his or her partner. We open with a brief discussion of several mate-guarding tactics that evoke marital dissatisfaction in the recipient of these tactics. Next we consider two mate-guarding tactics husbands employ that appear to be successful, insofar as the use of these tactics covaries positively with their spouses' marital satisfaction.

"To Have and to Hold from This Day Forward . . .": Spousal Mate-Guarding Tactics That Evoke Marital Dissatisfaction

Once the initial adaptive problems of locating, attracting, and wedding a suitable marriage partner have been successfully solved, many adaptive challenges follow, not the least of which is guarding one's spouse from encroachment by intrasexual competitors. Those early human men and women who successfully guarded their spouses from would-be poachers probably would have been more reproductively prosperous than were those men and women who did not guard their spouses as successfully. The mate-guarding tactics that men and women enact today are produced by the psychological mechanisms that encouraged successful mate guarding by our ancestors (Buss & Shackelford, 1997).

Remarkably little research has investigated human mate-guarding tactics. What little work has been done has focused almost exclusively on wife guarding by husbands (e.g., Daly et al., 1982; Ghiselin, 1974;

Wilson, 1975). The most comprehensive taxonomy of mate guarding was developed in a series of studies by Buss (1988). Importantly, Buss's (1988) taxonomy includes tactics used by men *and* women in an effort to guard or retain their partners.

From an evolutionary psychological perspective, mate guarding is a tricky business indeed. Excessive mate guarding runs the risk of being interpreted by the object of the guarding as evidence that he or she is of exceptionally greater mate value than is the guarder. Total abstention from mate guarding, however, may send one of two messages to the unguarded spouse:

1. The unguarded spouse is so much *more* valuable a mate than his or her partner that the partner is unwilling to spend limited energy guarding a spouse who is likely to defect from the marriage in search of a more beneficial arrangement. Moreover, the partner who perceives his or her spouse to be of exceptionally greater relative mate value may well decide to cut his or her losses and go in search of a spouse of more nearly equal value.

2. The unguarded spouse is so much *less* valuable a mate than his or her partner that the partner is unwilling to spend limited energy guarding a mate that he or she plans to abandon in search of a mate of greater value. In this case, the unguarded spouse may act to preempt the inevitable rather than squander limited time and resources, and defect from the marriage to seek out a spouse of more nearly equal value.

If excessive mate guarding and total abstention from mate guarding are both likely to prove detrimental to a marriage, this suggests that some level of mate guarding is optimal, from the guarder's perspective. Up to this point, we have discussed mate guarding as if it were a single behavior or collection of behaviors. On the contrary, Buss (1988) identified 19 tactics subsuming 104 acts that men and women employ to guard their partners from intrasexual encroachment. These 19 tactics represent an impressively diverse array of guarding strategies. Each of the tactics has one of three goals: (1) to make the current relationship more attractive or beneficial to the guarded spouse, thereby reducing the likelihood that the guarded spouse will defect; (2) to impose or threaten to impose severe costs on the guarded partner if he or she attempts to defect from the relationship, reducing the likelihood that the guarded spouse will defect; or (3) to dissuade intrasexual competitors from poaching. We would predict that tactics consisting of threatening to impose or actually imposing severe costs on a defecting spouse will evoke feelings of marital dissatisfaction in the guarded spouse. Tactics consisting of bestowing benefits on the guarded spouse to make the cur-

rent marriage more attractive, on the other hand, are likely to evoke feelings of marital happiness.

Four tactics, in particular, appear to represent an imposition or threatened imposition of costs in the event of spousal defection: (1) monopolization of the mate's time (e.g., He spent all of his free time with her so that she could not meet anyone else; She would not let him go out without her; He insisted that she spend all of her free time with him); (2) threatening infidelity (e.g., He talked to another woman at the party to make her jealous; She went out with other men to make him jealous; He showed interest in other women to make her angry); (3) punishing or threatening to punish the mate's infidelity (e.g., He hit her when he caught her flirting with someone else; She threatened to break up if he ever cheated on her; He said that he would never talk to her again if he ever saw her with someone else); and (4) emotional manipulation (e.g., He told her he would "die" if she ever left; She threatened to harm herself if he ever left; He pleaded that he could not live without her). Insofar as each of these four tactics represents an imposition or threatened imposition of costs for spousal defection, the recipient of these tactics should experience less marital satisfaction. This prediction was generally supported in our sample of married couples, regardless of the sex of the guarded spouse. Men and women whose spouses monopolized their time, threatened infidelity, punished or threatened to punish their infidelity, and manipulated them emotionally were less satisfied with their marriages than were men and women whose spouses did not employ these mate-guarding tactics.

"To Love, Honor, and Cherish . . .":

Mate-Guarding Tactics That Evoke Marital Satisfaction

In his cross-cultural study of characteristics desired in a spouse, Buss (1989a) found that women more than men desired spouses who were willing and able to invest resources in the women and their children. Women more than men also value spouses who are willing and able to invest emotional resources, time, effort, and energy in the women and their children (Buss et al., 1992; Shackelford, 1997; Shackelford & Buss, 1996, in press; Wiederman & Algeier, 1993). We would predict, therefore, that women married to men who invest more tangible resources, emotional resources, time, energy, and effort in them will report greater marital satisfaction than will women whose husbands invest less in them. A woman's channeling of tangible and intangible resources to her husband is predicted to be uncorrelated with his marital satisfaction.

Two of the mate-guarding tactics identified by Buss (1988) are relevant to these predictions: resource provisioning (e.g., He spent a lot

of money on her; She bought him an expensive gift; He took her out to a nice restaurant) and expressing love and caring (e.g., He told her that he loved her; She went out of her way to be kind, nice, and caring; He displayed greater affection for her). What do we find in the married couples' data? Consistent with our predictions, women's—but not men's—marital satisfaction was positively correlated with their spouses' resource provisioning and expression of love.

SOURCES OF ANGER, IRRITATION, AND UPSET: HOW TO GUARANTEE AN UNHAPPY MARRIAGE

No marriage is perfect. Conflict between spouses is an inevitable consequence of the many and varied compromises that a man and a woman must make in their efforts to initiate and maintain an effective and efficient reproductive partnership. In an effort to identify the themes and topics that generate the most conflict, Buss (1989b) empirically developed a taxonomy of the sources of anger, upset, and irritation between long-term partners. Buss (1989b) identified 15 categories subsuming 147 acts that a man or woman might commit that would elicit irritation, anger, or upset in his or her partner. Our aim in this section of the chapter is to provide an evolutionary psychological account of which sources of anger, upset, and irritation are likely to be most distressing for husbands and for wives. Some of the relationships we report here have been described in Buss (1989b).

The most costly action a wife can impose on her husband is sexual infidelity. A woman's sexual infidelity places her husband at risk of investing tremendous resources in offspring to whom he is genetically unrelated—an irrevocable catastrophe in reproductive currency, from the husband's perspective. Modern men are descended from an unbroken chain of ancestral men who invested substantial time and effort in ensuring the sexual fidelity of their partners. Ancestral men whose partners were sexually unfaithful probably would have imposed substantial retributive costs on them (including damaging physical abuse), and would have cut their losses and defected from the relationships rather than risk the reproductive tragedy of cuckoldry. Cross-culturally, suspicion of a wife's infidelity is today the leading cause of wife battery and wife killing (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Daly et al., 1982), and the reason most frequently given for a man's decision to divorce his wife (Betzig, 1989). We would therefore predict that among the variety of means by which a woman might upset, anger, or irritate her husband, the best predictor of a man's marital dissatisfaction will be his wife's infidelity.

One of the most costly actions a man can impose on his wife is physical abuse. The minimum obligatory parental investment of women

in their offspring is far greater than the minimum obligatory parental investment of men. In evolutionary psychological terms, women are the limiting reproductive resource (Trivers, 1972). One consequence of this sex difference in minimum obligatory parental investment is that competition among men for sexual access to reproductively valuable women tends to be more intense than is competition among women for access to reproductively valuable men. As noted earlier, greater male than female intrasexual competition for mates has selected over evolutionary history for a significant size and strength differential between men and women. Men, on average, and across a variety of measures, tend to be larger and stronger than women (Daly & Wilson, 1983; Trivers, 1985). Although the sexes do not appear to differ in the frequency with which they inflict physical abuse on their spouses (Buss, 1991a; de Weerth & Kalma, 1993; but see Dobash et al., 1992, for important qualifications), men's abuse of their wives tends to be much more physically damaging than women's abuse of their husbands (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Daly et al., 1982; Dobash et al., 1992). We would therefore predict that among the variety of means by which a husband might upset, anger, or irritate his wife, the best predictor of a woman's marital dissatisfaction will be abuse at the hands of her husband.

Of all the things a wife might do that distress her husband, which is the best predictor of his marital dissatisfaction? We predicted that a wife's infidelity would fit this bill. Looking at the married couples' data, we found that a wife's infidelity was *not* the best predictor of her husband's marital unhappiness; it was, however, the second best predictor. The best predictor of a husband's marital dissatisfaction was his wife's level of moodiness or emotional instability. Interestingly, an excellent predictor of a man's estimate that his wife will commit a variety of infidelities is her level of moodiness (Buss & Shackelford, in press).

Of the hundreds of things a husband might do that evoke anger, upset, and irritation in his wife, which of these actions best predicts his wife's marital discontent? We predicted that a woman's marital satisfaction would be most negatively affected by her husband's abuse of her. This was just what we found in our sample of married couples. It appears, therefore, that abusive husbands and unfaithful, emotionally unstable wives all but guarantee their spouses miserable marriages.

CONCLUSIONS: TAKING STOCK OF THE HAPPY MARRIAGE IN EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this final section of the chapter, we take stock of the ins and outs, the dos and don'ts of a rewarding, satisfying, and generally happy mar-

riage. Each of the insights we present was harvested only after a careful tilling of an evolutionary psychological perspective on human nature in general, and on the marital alliance in particular. Throughout this chapter, we have speculated that feelings of marital dissatisfaction may function as a psychological and emotional trigger of sorts, inducing or encouraging the dissatisfied spouse to take action to render the marriage more satisfying, or to begin considering alternative marital arrangements, or both. In this section we summarize those aspects of the conjugal relationship, spousal personality characteristics, spousal mate-guarding tactics, and spousal sources of anger, irritation, and upset that evoke marital dissatisfaction. The absence of these events, actions, or characteristics define the relatively happy marriage. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 present the predictors of a husband's and a wife's marital satisfaction, respectively, that we have discussed in this chapter.

TABLE 1.1. Predictors of a Husband's Marital Satisfaction as Gleaned from an Evolutionary Psychological Perspective

Mate value discrepancy

Little or no mate value discrepancy between husband and wife

Wife's personality

High Agreeableness

High Conscientiousness

High Emotional Stability

High Openness/Intellect

Mate-guarding tactics employed by wife

Less monopolization of spouse's time

Less threatening to be unfaithful

Less punishing or threatening to punish spouse's infidelity

Less emotional manipulation

Spousal sources of anger, upset, and irritation

Absence of wife's infidelity^a

Less condescension toward husband

Less self-centeredness exhibited by wife

Less alcohol abuse by wife

Less emotional constriction exhibited by wife

Less possessiveness exhibited by wife

Less jealousy exhibited by wife

Less dependency exhibited by wife

Less sexualizing of others exhibited by wife

^aAppears to be the best predictor of a husband's marital satisfaction.

TABLE 1.2. Predictors of a Wife's Marital Satisfaction as Gleaned from an Evolutionary Psychological Perspective

<u>Husband's personality</u>
High Agreeableness
High Conscientiousness
High Emotional Stability
High Openness/Intellect
<u>Mate-guarding tactics employed by husband</u>
Less monopolization of spouse's time
Less threatening to be unfaithful
Less punishing or threatening to punish spouse's infidelity
Less emotional manipulation
More resource provisioning
More expression of love and caring
<u>Spousal sources of anger, upset, and irritation</u>
Less physical and verbal abuse exhibited by husband ^a
Less condescension toward wife
Less neglect exhibited by husband
Less rejection exhibited by husband
Less unreliability exhibited by husband
Absence of husband's infidelity
Less inconsiderateness exhibited by husband
Less moodiness exhibited by husband
Less alcohol abuse by husband
Less emotional constriction exhibited by husband
Less insulting by husband of wife's physical appearance
Less possessiveness exhibited by husband
Less jealousy exhibited by husband
Less dependency exhibited by husband
Less physical self-absorption exhibited by husband
Less sexual withholding and rejection exhibited by husband

^aAppears to be the best predictor of a wife's marital satisfaction.

The spouses in a mutually satisfying, mutually beneficial marriage are likely to be of relatively equal mate value. From our limited research on married couples, the relationship between mate value discrepancy and marital satisfaction appears to be especially true for husbands. When either spouse is much more valuable or much less valuable than the other as a potential mate on the current "spouse market," a husband is likely to report feelings of marital dissatisfaction. It is not clear to us at this time why husbands' but not wives' marital satisfaction is predict-

able from the mate value discrepancy between the spouses. Future research is needed to clarify this finding.

Men and women married to agreeable, conscientious, emotionally stable, and open spouses are happier with their marriages. Because of the substantial reproductive costs involved, we have predicted and found that, in terms of spousal personality characteristics, the greatest predictor of a man's marital satisfaction is his wife's level of Conscientiousness. Women low in Conscientiousness are more likely than women high on this personality dimension to be sexually unfaithful to their husbands. Less conscientious women are thus more likely than more conscientious women to place their husbands at risk of investing substantial resources in another man's progeny. The greatest predictors of a woman's marital satisfaction are her husband's levels of Agreeableness and Emotional Stability. Disagreeable, emotionally unstable men are more likely than agreeable, emotionally stable men to inflict physical abuse on their wives.

From an evolutionary psychological perspective, guarding a spouse from intrasexual poaching is a tremendously important adaptive problem recurrently faced by men and women over human evolutionary history. Mate guarding is a tricky enterprise. We have speculated that either excessive mate guarding or total abstention from mate guarding may evoke feelings of marital dissatisfaction in one's spouse. There may be some optimal level of mate guarding that effectively thwarts intrasexual poachers while maintaining or even increasing the guarded spouse's marital happiness.

Mate guarding is not a single behavior, nor is it even a collection of related behaviors. Mate guarding represents a wide range of strategies; some of these increase a spouse's marital happiness, whereas others decrease a spouse's satisfaction with the marriage. Monopolizing a spouse's time, threatening infidelity, punishing or threatening to punish a spouse's infidelity, and emotionally manipulating a spouse are mate-guarding tactics that impose or threaten the imposition of costs for spousal defection. Men and women whose spouses employ these tactics are less satisfied with their marriages than are men and women whose spouses do not employ these mate-guarding tactics.

Women around the world desire husbands who are willing and able to invest their limited time, energy, love, affection, and tangible resources in the women and their children (Buss, 1989a). Not surprisingly, then, women married to men who employ the mate-guarding tactics of resource provisioning and expressing love and caring are more satisfied with their marriages than are women married to men who do not employ these tactics.

The single best predictor of a woman's marital dissatisfaction is the

extent to which her spouse abuses her. Although we had predicted that the best predictor of a man's marital happiness would be his partner's infidelity, in fact a wife's unfaithfulness ranked second to her level of moodiness or emotional instability. As we discuss elsewhere (Buss & Shackelford, in press), however, a wife's moodiness or emotional instability is one of the most impressive predictors of a husband's estimate that his wife will cheat on him.

The vast majority of men and women around the world will marry at least once in their lifetimes (Brown, 1991; Buss, 1985; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Epstein & Guttman, 1984; Vandenberg, 1972). In no culture, however, is marital satisfaction a given. Divorce, whether formal or informal, appears to be a cross-culturally ubiquitous phenomenon (Betzig, 1989). An evolutionary psychological perspective on marriage brings into clear focus the many roads that lead to conjugal distress between husbands and wives. Careful consideration of the many and varied adaptive challenges that our ancestors successfully negotiated helps us to pinpoint the greatest sources of conflict among modern married couples. Although wedded bliss may be a romantic fantasy of young lovers, some marriages do bring lifelong joy and happiness. An evolutionary psychological framework affords a profitable conceptual backdrop for identifying the constituents of these happy marriages, and provides direction for reducing the sources of conflict that lead to marital dissatisfaction.

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