What Do Men Want? Gender Differences and Two Spheres of Belongingness: Comment on Cross and Madson (1997)

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In response to S. E. Cross and L. Madson's (1997) suggestion that men's behaviors reflect a desire for independence and separateness, the authors propose that those same behaviors are designed to form connections with other people but in a broader social sphere. Women's sociality is oriented toward dyadic close relationships, whereas men's sociality is oriented toward a larger group. Gender differences in aggression, helping behavior, desire for power, uniqueness, self-representations, interpersonal behavior, and intimacy fit this view.

How do men and women differ? Many researchers have identified small to moderate differences in the social behavior of men and women. In a thoughtful and provocative review of these differences, Cross and Madson (1997) proposed that one basic and sweeping difference is that women have interdependent self-schemas, whereas men have mainly independent ones (from Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Many empirical findings can be explained on the basis that women generally seek to form intimate connections with other people, whereas men prefer separateness and independence.

The purpose of this commentary is not to question Cross and Madson's (1997) findings but rather to suggest a partial alternative interpretation of the differences between men and women that they documented. In other words, we think Cross and Madson have largely succeeded in establishing an important network of interrelated gender differences. We do not, however, concur entirely with their interpretation of the network of differences. We propose not a contrary view but a serious shift in emphasis in the theoretical meaning of the male pattern.

The main thrust of our position is as follows. Cross and Madson (1997) portrayed the self-construal patterns among men in a way that suggests that men are fundamentally less social beings than women, as if social bonds and interactions are more important to women than men. In contrast, we suggest that men and women are equally social and care equally how they relate to others—but within different spheres. Women, in our formulation, mainly orient toward and invest in a small number of close relationships, whereas men orient toward and invest in a larger sphere of social relationships.

Thus, the point on which we differ from the analysis offered by Cross and Madson (1997) is how to understand men. According to Cross and Madson, the distinctive behaviors by men are designed to set them apart from others and keep them free

of social connections. Men may even be perceived as less driven by a "need to belong" (cf. Baumeister & Leary, 1995) than are women. In contrast, we suggest that the distinctive behaviors by men are also driven by a need to belong and indeed often constitute vital means to connect themselves with others. Hence, in our view, men and women are more similar than different, and their behaviors should not be construed as pursuits of radically different goals. Instead, both men and women pursue belongingness, but they pursue it in different spheres and (hence) with different strategies and by different criteria.

Although commentaries such as this are often perceived as contentious, we wish to acknowledge frankly our considerable debt to Cross and Madson (1997). In our view, they did the crucial work of assembling the evidence and constructing the theory, and we only seek to alter one feature of it. Even if our view were to turn out to be completely correct, most of the credit would still go to Cross and Madson because they put together the empirical basis and stimulated our thinking—which, again, diverges from theirs only with respect to this one point.

Two Views of Male Self-Construal

Cross and Madson (1997) borrowed the concept of *independent self-construal* from Markus and Kitayama (1991) to characterize men. The male pattern is described by Cross and Madson (1997) in these terms: "The central principle directing the development of the self is self as 'separated from others' " (p. 6). They say men are mainly motivated to "be true to one's own internal structures of preferences, rights, convictions, and goals" (Markus & Kitayama, 1994, cited in Cross & Madson, 1997, p. 7). Men, in their view, are trained to be autonomous and independent. They went on to say that, when men desire relationships, the relationships are merely means to serve the self: "as mirrors for the individual's comparison of the self with others, as backdrops for the self-enhancing display of abilities or attributes, or as a means to demonstrate uniqueness by an assertion of dominance over others" (p. 7). Interpersonal relations are thus a means by which the man's individualistic project is pursued.

In contrast, our view is that men, like women, are powerfully

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and deeply driven by the need to belong—only that men tend to understand and realize this need within the context of a broad sphere of social relations (unlike women). Whereas the female view focuses narrowly on a small number of intimate dyadic bonds, the male view embraces a broader social structure with a larger number of people. This larger number of people entails that the male orientation cannot pursue intimacy as effectively as the female approach. As a partial replacement for intimacy, the male quest for belongingness may emphasize hierarchies of status and power. Indeed, status and power structures may be almost inevitable issues in larger groups (unlike communal dyads, perhaps), which cannot avoid certain problems of social organization that such hierarchies may solve.

Status and power raise issues of dominance, which are quite relevant to the difference between our view and Cross and Madson's (1997). Power is repeatedly discussed by Cross and Madson as if its main appeal and essence were separateness from others. To us, this contradicts the essential nature of power, which is control over other people: Power is desirable because it connects you with others; moreover, it does so in a generally pleasant and advantageous fashion. The powerful man typically enjoys an ample share of social interactions, and these are on his own terms, which help satisfy his needs.

The equation of power with separateness would be true if powerful people used their power mainly to distance themselves from others and achieve aloneness. We think, however, that powerful people (esp. men) use power to bind others to them. Powerful people do not need to worry about being left alone in the end because people seek them out constantly. When aloneness does come with power, powerful men are more likely to complain about it (hence the expression, "it is lonely at the top") than to celebrate and welcome it.

Political scientists have long acknowledged the social nature of power. In a well-known essay, Morgenthau (1962) proposed that the desire for love and the desire for power both spring from the same root, namely loneliness. In his analysis, love is a mutual merger of selves, whereas power is a one-sided merger (in which both parties embody the self and will of the more powerful person), but the end result of an interpersonal merger is common to both.

The theoretical basis for our view can be only briefly summarized in this limited space. There are three bases for the proposition that men socially orient toward a broader sphere of interpersonal relations than do women. First, and most important, the achievement of dominant status has long been a way for men (but not women, outside of the domestic circle) to achieve power over others and hence gain satisfying interpersonal connections. People by nature and culture strive for group life (e.g., Barchas, 1986; Hogan, 1983). The reigning conditions of group life throughout most of history have been different for men than women. Men competed directly for status in the larger society, whereas women acquired status indirectly by virtue of being connected to high-status men.

Second, even if desire for heterosexual love were precisely equal in both genders, men would orient toward the broader social group because the rise of status and power increases their access to women. For women, intimate attraction is the main route to social acceptance; even if a woman gains power, it does not necessarily enhance her sex appeal. Third, the view that

male sexual desire is more promiscuous than female desire would also orient male social patterns toward a broader network of social relations.

In summary, we propose that men and women are equally social, but their sociality is directed differently. To caricature, female sociality is dyadic, whereas male sociality is tribal. In other words, men seek social connection in a broad group with multiple people, particularly by competing for a good position in a status hierarchy; women, in contrast, seek social connection in close personal relationships based on mutual, dyadic intimacy.

Evidence and Interpretation

We now turn to examine relevant evidence. In our view, Cross and Madson (1997) did an effective job of documenting differences between men and women, and there is no need for us to repeat their efforts. For the purpose of this commentary, our goal is to determine whether the evidence about men points toward the pursuit of separateness and independence (as Cross & Madson, 1997, proposed) or toward the pursuit of connection in a broad sphere (as we propose). Of particular relevance to our view is whether men and women show similar, parallel patterns within the different spheres.

Because many of the relevant findings discuss interactions with strangers, some clarification of the concept of *stranger* is important. Many researchers contrasted strangers with intimates, implying that strangers are people with whom no social bond exists or is foreseen. Interactions with strangers can, therefore, be regarded as utterly free of any hint of concern with social connection. In empirical fact, however, most studies fall far short of this in their operationalizations. Typically, two participants in a laboratory experiment may be unacquainted, but they do share certain features that can constitute an incipient bond. They typically have some bonds in terms of university affiliation, student status, or gender (in same-gender interactions), and there is some evidence that students may take seriously this shared link to their university community (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1976; Hoyle & Crawford, 1994).

Hence, it is not safe to dismiss men's interactions with strangers and nonintimate acquaintances as asocial. These interactions are usually with fellow members of an important social group, and they are certainly important to the men. Behaviors with such so-called strangers differ, in the final analysis, from what one would do alone. In particular, if men are concerned about their standing in their community, they may care quite seriously about how strangers perceive them. The stranger in such a situation is not important as a special individual (the way an intimate partner would be) but rather as, for example, a representative of the community in which the man seeks to gain a secure and desirable place.

Aggression

From laboratory studies to street crime, men are more violent and aggressive than women. The meaning of this difference is debatable, however. Cross and Madson (1997) proposed that women avoid direct aggression because, as interdependent beings, they fear that aggressive acts will jeopardize their relationships with others. Men, who in Cross and Madson's view desire

separateness anyway, are undeterred by the fear of alienating others by aggressive action.

This conclusion does fit the simple and broad pattern that men are more aggressive than women. Yet it is precisely contradicted by further analyses that distinguish among spheres of aggression. Women are plenty aggressive toward relationship partners; in several major studies of family violence, researchers have found that women aggress as much as men do (e.g., Straus, 1980) or even more (Arias, Samios, & O'Leary, 1987). Contrary to Cross and Madson's (1997) suggestion that "women and girls tend to shy away from direct, physical violence" (p. 22), women reported perpetrating significantly greater physical aggression (e.g., shoving, hitting, kicking) toward dates and marriage partners than did men (Breslin, Riggs, O'Leary, & Arias, 1990; O'Leary et al., 1989). More recent work suggests that women anticipate more social approval for physical or verbal aggression that retaliates against an angry spouse and are less likely than men to feel guilty over spousal aggression (Harris, 1994). The broad gender difference in aggression is accounted for almost entirely by aggression toward strangers, which is rare among women but relatively common among men.

In other words, the deficit in female aggression is almost entirely due to the sphere where there is no intimate relationship to be jeopardized. This contradicts the view that women are nonaggressive because of a reluctance to jeopardize a relationship. Women beat their children and their older relatives, and they are even more likely than their husbands to initiate marital violence. Physical abuse in lesbian relationships, far from being nonexistent, resembles wife battering in heterosexual relationships to a degree that even women with a feminist orientation find depressing (see Renzetti, 1992). Moreover, female aggression in the intimate circle might be even higher, except for women's reluctance to risk retaliation. For example, women tend to beat their young children more than their teenagers, presumably because the teenagers make more formidable and potentially dangerous targets of aggression (as opposed to the assumption that teenagers are so much better behaved and more pleasant to get along with than young children).[1]

The different sphere analysis fits the aggression data much better. People use aggression as a way of relating to others, including altering the behavior or attitudes of others. Men do this within the broader social network, whereas women do this within the family and intimate circles. In agreement with that analysis, Campbell and Muncer (1987) found that women's stories about anger and aggression focused on intimate partners, whereas men's stories were more likely to involve acquaintances and nonintimate friends.

The differences in aggression reviewed by Cross and Madson (1997) also seem to fit the different sphere argument rather than the interdependent versus independent construal analysis. Cross and Madson cited evidence that women are more likely to use ostracism and similar techniques than are men. These techniques seem to contradict their earlier point that women avoid aggression because it threatens their relationships. Ostracism and other forms of exclusion fail to avoid relationship damage—the relationship damage is the essence of such strategies, and such damage does ensue (Asher & Coie, 1990; Geller, Goodstein, Silver, & Sternberg, 1974). These strategies are, however, much better suited to aggressive intentions within an intimate circle

than a larger society circle. If one person tries to ostracize a casual acquaintance, the target may not even realize it, given the ample opportunities to interact with multiple others. In contrast, the silent treatment may be quite devastating within a family or small group.

Meanwhile, men may lean more toward physical aggression within the larger sphere because it is more viable and effective for them than for women. Again, women are willing to turn physically violent within intimate relationships and with small children and older relatives. Cross and Madson (1997) reported that women tend to regard aggression as a loss of self-control, whereas men treat it as a means to gain control over others who threaten their superiority. We believe this finding is consistent with the view that aggression has less practical use for women than men. Campbell and Muncer (1987) found that men regarded some acts of aggression (e.g., championing self, family, or neighborhood against stronger and more threatening opponents) as positive, desirable, and even heroic—a view that was absent from women's descriptions of their own aggression.

Helpfulness

Two seemingly contradictory sets of findings exist on gender differences in helping behavior. Some researchers of laboratory and field studies on helping have found, in general, that men are more helpful than women. Not all researchers have found differences, but in his meta-analytic work Eagly (1987; Eagly & Crowley, 1986) found that men are in general more helpful than women, by about .33 SD.

Also note that one large moderator of the effect of gender on helping behavior is the presence of an audience (Eagly, 1987). Men are especially more helpful than are women when onlookers are present. Hence male helpfulness is motivated not only by concern for the person needing help but also by concern over how one is perceived by other people in general, which points toward the broader sphere.

In contrast to the laboratory evidence of male helpfulness, research on caregiving and domestic chores (all of which seem to be an important form of helpfulness) typically show a large preponderance for female helpfulness. Women perform more housework, child care, elder care, sick care, and so forth than do men (e.g., Hochschild, 1989; Lerner & Mikula, 1994).

Chauvinists of either gender can point to one or the other of these patterns of findings to argue the moral superiority of their preferred gender. In our view, however, the differences merely reflect the different sphere orientations. Researchers of laboratory and field studies typically examine helpfulness toward strangers. Hence men, whom we have described as socially oriented toward the broad social matrix, are more active and hence

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[1] Cross and Madson (1997) cited a gender difference in "aggressive acts that produce physical injury" (p. 21), but this confounds motivation with outcome. When domestic conflicts degenerate into fistfights, husbands are more likely to cause injury simply because they are larger, stronger, and harder than their wives, not because the wife holds back to preserve the relationship. When the analysis was conducted more properly, such as a look at aggression that is intended to cause injury or aggression with potentially harmful weapons, wives were again just as aggressive as husbands (Straus, 1980).

more helpful in these terms. Meanwhile, the domestic chore literature tends to focus on helpfulness within the family and intimate circle, so women take the lead in providing help in that sphere.

We find it particularly persuasive that the findings for aggression and helping behavior converge so neatly. Given the general view that aggression is destructive whereas helpfulness is constructive, convergence between these two phenomena is powerful evidence. Men both help and hurt strangers—members of the broader social group—far more readily than do women. In contrast, women direct their helpfulness and aggression within close relationships.

Uniqueness

It is clear that many U.S. men are highly motivated to pursue uniqueness (or at least distinctiveness), particularly in terms of cultivating unique abilities—as Cross and Madson (1997) made clear. But why? Cross and Madson repeatedly discussed uniqueness as if it were aimed at the achievement of separateness. In their view, a man may want to become unique, such as by having an ability that no one else can match, so he can separate himself from others and reduce social contact with them.

In contrast, we see the appeal of male uniqueness in precisely the opposite terms: Uniqueness serves belongingness. Men with unique qualities, especially unique abilities, can more easily make themselves indispensable to the group. A man might strive to become the best tracker, hunter, fighter, or wealth accumulator, not to separate himself from the group, but because the group could not then afford to lose him. Even if he lacks social skills, physical attractiveness, or other desirable traits, this lack becomes irrelevant to how the group treats him because the group needs him for his irreplaceable ability. As long as he can do something useful that no one else can do, there will be a place for him in the group, so he will be free of the anxiety of potential social exclusion.

If men really wanted to pursue separateness and autonomy, it would be best to cultivate uniquely bad traits, which can be expected to drive others away. But men do not seem to show any signs of such cultivation. They seem to want only the kind of uniqueness that will increase their social appeal.

It is also risky to generalize about uniqueness per se from the pursuit of unique abilities. As suggested, ability is a traditional male ticket to social acceptance, so a distinctively high ability may be a particular male obsession. In contrast, the traditional female ticket to social acceptance is physical attractiveness. So if our analysis is correct, we would propose that women would in general pursue uniqueness (or at least distinctiveness) in physical appearance more than do men. Consistent with this view, a standard observation is that women exhibit and cultivate much greater variation in physical appearance than do men. Traditional formal dress, for example, permits women a wide assortment of colors and styles, whereas men tend to wear identical black and white outfits. Women make themselves distinctive with a broad variety of jewelry, hairstyles, and makeup, whereas until quite recently such variations were absent from a man's appearance.

Hence, it may be unwarranted to assert that men seek social separation by making themselves distinctive. More likely, both

men and women seek to stand out in positive ways that are most relevant to gender-specific criteria for social acceptance.

Self-Representations

To support their hypothesis, Cross and Madson (1997) presented evidence that girls and women spontaneously describe themselves in terms of relationships with specific other people, whereas boys and men are more likely to describe themselves in relation to people in general (McGuire & McGuire, 1982). Along the same lines, girls tend to speak of specific family members, whereas boys tend to refer simply to "my family." As before, we think that an allusion to people in general does not indicate a deficient sociality among men but rather an orientation toward a broader social sphere. A man sees himself as connected to the social unit rather than individual persons.

Male boastfulness is also treated by Cross and Madson (1997) as part of the pursuit of independence. Men exaggerate their abilities more than do women. Again, though, the assertion of a high ability may be a means by which men promote their social appeal, as opposed to seeking to be alone. Moreover, an assertion of one's good traits is part of the dominance game, and almost any attempt to rise competitively in social status— an ongoing and, we think, essentially social preoccupation of young men—is inherently for self-enhancement. Many a man has achieved greater success despite lesser talents because of more effective self-promotion and self-assertion.

In fact, female modesty and boastful male self-enhancement may simply be the optimal strategies for the different spheres. Regardless of gender, people tend to be modest in the company of close friends but resort to self-enhancement in the presence of strangers (Tice, Butler, Muraven, & Stillwell, 1995). If men orient toward interactions with a broader sphere of people, this results in more partners and less intimacy, so they should in general adopt a more boastful style. Boastfulness is not, in our view, an antisocial strategy designed to separate the self from others; rather it is a way to present one's good traits, which are likely to make one appeal to others who do not know any better.

The evidence about boasting that Cross and Madson (1997) reviewed pertains mainly to abilities (see p. 12). As suggested, however, ability may be crucial to the male strategy to make him attractive to the broad social group, whereas it is largely irrelevant to the interpersonal appeal of women. Multiple studies show that men exhibit the false uniqueness pattern more than do women. This pattern consists of the regard or description of one's abilities as unusually high, beyond what the facts would warrant. We concur with Cross and Madson about this pattern, and we differ only as to what it signifies. They suggest it fits the male pursuit of separateness. To us, however, it reflects the male approach to social acceptance. There is ample evidence that men can become modest when it is more appealing to others. Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) found that male percentile self-ratings dropped substantially in the presence of an interactive partner who seemed to prefer modesty.

Interpersonal Patterns

Many small differences in interpersonal behaviors have been documented. Again, we agree with Cross and Madson (1997)

about the existence of these patterns but disagree as to whether they signify a movement toward or away from other people. Women do show greater smiling, deference, attention to others, and other ingratiating patterns, but possibly these are simply adaptations to the lower power that has often been women's lot. Such patterns may be less common among men because of the central importance of power and status in male sociality. The greater male (than female) preoccupation with power is clear, but it signifies a form of sociality rather than a quest for separateness and independence. Concern over power may simply be an unavoidable by-product of the broader social sphere orientation of men because equality and mutuality are relatively rare in large groups.

The range of interactive partners is relevant. Preferences for dyadic versus group interaction offer a fairly direct test of our hypothesis. Benenson (1993) compared how children responded to a single puppeteer (dyadic) versus three puppeteers (group). Across two studies, the girls preferred the dyadic interaction, whereas the boys preferred the group interaction. Benenson also surveyed social networks among children, and the results confirm that girls have smaller social networks (i.e., fewer frequent interactive partners) than do boys.

The idea that girls are more social than boys is contradicted in a subsequent study by Benenson, Apostoleris, and Parnass (1997). Boys and girls spent an equal amount of total time in dyadic interactions. Boys had these interactions with many different partners, however, whereas girls tended to have longer interactions with fewer partners. Furthermore, boys at Age 6 engaged in significantly more coordinated group activity than did girls at the same age. Other evidence that boys have larger social networks than girls do is reviewed by Belle (1989). All these results point toward the different sphere hypothesis.

Differences in empathy are relevant. Women give more empathy than do men, and many relationship findings support this greater empathy of women. In studies that used objective measures and stranger interactions, however, no gender differences emerged (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). Thus, the female advantage in empathy may be confined to the small sphere of dyadic intimacy.

The transition from dyad to group interaction was tested experimentally by the measurement of how pre-existing same-gender dyads responded to the introduction to a new (third) person (Feshbach, 1969; Feshbach & Sones, 1971). The pairs of boys were more willing to accept and include a third person than were the pairs of girls. Thus, when one moves from the dyad to the larger group, men abruptly appear to be the more social gender. Women are only more social as long as sociality is defined in dyadic terms.

As for emotion, Cross and Madson (1997) reviewed evidence that men are less emotionally expressive than women (except for anger and similar emotions). As before, we concur with their evidence but question their interpretation. On the one hand, they suggested that "men may be more hesitant than women to express their emotions . . . primarily because sharing their feelings may jeopardize their sense of separateness and autonomy" (p. 16). On the other hand, we suggest that a restriction of emotional expression may simply be an adaptation to the broader social orientation of men. Disclosure of emotion may convey images of weakness and vulnerability that could be

counterproductive in competition for status. Disclosure of emotion may also exceed the bounds of appropriate self-disclosure for nonintimate relationships. Meanwhile, of course, high emotional expressivity would be quite adaptive to maximize mutual understanding and communication within intimate relationships.

Anger is an exception, as Cross and Madson (1997) noted. Anger expression does not strengthen intimate bonds, but it may be useful in a competitive status hierarchy. We proposed earlier that aggression is more adaptive for men than women because men can use aggression to get their way more successfully than can women (given the physical advantages of men). If expressions of anger are understood as warnings of potential physical aggression, then again one would assume that anger expression is more useful for men than women because the threat of violent coercion is more credible. It is not surprising that women have historically felt more pressure to inhibit anger expression (Cross & Madson, 1997; also see Stearns & Stearns, 1986).[2]

Campbell and Muncer (1987) found that attacks on personal integrity were the strongest cause of anger for both men and women. The second strongest cause differed by gender, however, and in a way that seems consistent with the different sphere view. Women's second strongest predictor was jealousy, which points to the concern with close relationships, whereas for men it was threat of harm, violation of personal space, or both, which suggests concern with status and territory.

Fabes and Eisenberg (1992) showed that boys were more likely than were girls to vent their anger, which is consistent with our argument. Moreover, verbal and physical assertiveness was positively correlated with popularity for boys, and even pure venting itself carried no cost. Among girls, however, venting of anger predicted lower popularity. In another study, the ability to communicate anger effectively was a positive predictor of peer popularity for men but not women (Coats & Feldman, 1996).

All these results suggest that the expression of anger is more adaptive for men than women in terms of status within the group. Put another way, anger may well be antisocial and counterproductive for women, but it seems to be social for men. The opposite effects found for the expression of anger versus the expression of other emotions may simply reflect that anger is socially useful within a broad sphere of social relations, whereas other emotional expression is better suited to foster intimacy.

Conformity patterns are also relevant. If Cross and Madson (1997) were correct in stating that men are more motivated than are women to remain autonomously true to their inner beliefs and values, then men should resist conformity more than women do. Some research supports this view (Eagly, 1987; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). To test the moderating role of group surveillance, however, Eagly, Wood, and Fishbaugh (1981) manipulated whether deviant group members had surveillance over participants' opinions. In line with Cross and Madson (1997), Eagly et al. had predicted that women's concerns with group harmony would increase their conformity when under surveillance, whereas the male pattern of being true to one's opinions would

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[2] This includes not only the physical threat but also the use of other forms of power that high status men may use to punish those who offend them. Again, throughout history women have lacked many of these forms, so again anger was less credible as a warning.

render them relatively indifferent to surveillance. Contrary to that prediction, however, women's conformity remained the same regardless of surveillance, whereas men's conformity actually decreased under surveillance. When opinions could not be monitored by the rest of the group, men and women were equally likely to conform to the opinions of the other group members. These findings suggest that the male quest to stand out and be unique is more an interpersonal, self-presentational strategy than an inner need: Men cultivate an image of autonomy to make a proper impression (strong and dominant) on others.

Intimacy

Cross and Madson (1997) struggled with evidence that both men and women have a high desire for intimate relationships. They conceded that men desire intimate relationships with women but suggested that the interdependent orientation of women somehow does not threaten the independence of men. We are confused by their reasoning. If men mainly desired autonomy, then they would be more threatened by closeness with a woman (who presumably does not want to let go) than by closeness with another man (who, in the final analysis, wants independence also).

The idea that women avoid behaviors that could endanger or break up a relationship was put forward by Cross and Madson (1997) to explain the gender differences in aggression. We have already noted that this hypothesis does not fit the research findings, insofar as the main difference in aggression pertains to strangers rather than intimates. Still, their hypothesis that women are more motivated than men are to avoid anything that would disrupt a relationship is plausible by itself, even if it is irrelevant to aggression.

The most direct way to ascertain whether women are more likely to avoid acts that could break up a relationship is to look at data on relationship breakups. Several findings directly contradict the view that women avoid damaging relationships. In an early, landmark study on relationship dissolution among dating couples, Hill, Rubin, and Peplau (1976) found that women were more likely than men to initiate breakups. They also found that women, unlike men, would break up the relationship even when their own emotional involvement was greater than their partner's. The idea that breakups bother men less than women is also contradicted by their data, in which they found that men suffered greater distress than did women after the breakup. It is also noteworthy that female-initiated breakups were more thoroughly destructive of the social bond than male-initiated ones: Couples often reported remaining friends when the man ended the romance, but this rarely happened when the woman ended the romance. Similar findings are reported by Albrecht, Bahr, and Goodman (1983), who found that women initiated divorce more often than did men but that men remarried more often and more quickly.

Recognizing that these patterns contradict their theory, Cross and Madson (1997) suggested that women reject men because they grow tired of being abused and exploited by them. There is, however, not much evidence to support this. We think their efforts to dismiss these findings are unconvincing. In our view, the data clearly contradict the view that women are more reluctant than are men to do anything that would break a social bond.

Relevant evidence is provided in a longitudinal study by Blumstein and Schwartz (1983). If women initiate breakups mainly because they have been exploited by men, then lesbian relationships should be exceptionally durable because no men are involved. On the contrary, Blumstein and Schwartz found that lesbian relationships had the highest frequency of breakups over an 18-month period, higher even than gay male relationships. If women habitually avoid acts that threaten relationships, then relationships between women would presumably be by far the most durable, but the evidence contradicts this prediction.

In view of such findings, it seems unwarranted to assert that women avoid "behaviors that threaten existing relationships" (Cross & Madson, 1997, p. 21). If anything, women are more likely than men to perform behaviors that explicitly and deliberately lead to the termination of close romantic relationships. That such breakups distress men more than women is also difficult to reconcile with the view that men are threatened by intimacy or are nonsocial beings in any way.

Conclusion

The core of our disagreement with Cross and Madson's (1997) fine article concerns the male quest for independence. *Independence*, by definition, means to be free of connection with other people, and this is readily elaborated into a desire for autonomy and social separation. We have proposed, in contrast to this view, that men are conditioned by both culture and nature to seek social attachments within a broader sphere than are women and that such a quest requires a man to compete for an advantageous place within a hierarchy of power and status. In general, we agree with Cross and Madson about the main behavioral facts. The difference is whether to regard men as moving away from social connections or toward them.

The view that men are less social than are women has been advocated either explicitly or implicitly by a broad variety of researchers in various contexts (e.g., Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Josephs, Markus, & Tafarodi, 1992; McGuire & McGuire, 1982). It forms one way to interpret the work compiled by Cross and Madson (1997). At some points in their article, they made such conclusions explicitly; whereas at other times, they also rejected such a view and acknowledged the sociality of men. Such inconsistency suggests the need to refine their conceptual formulations, and we hope that our comment will help to make a step in that direction.

Two theoretical distinctions may help resolve this conceptual problem. The first is between sociality and intimacy. We concur with Sennett (1974) that Western researchers in general, and social science researchers in particular, have fallen into the habit of confusing sociality with intimacy. Intimacy is undoubtedly one way to make a connection with other people. There are, however, other important forms of social connection, such as status and power, and these may satisfy some of the same needs. Although (as Cross and Madson, 1997, said) men want intimacy too, they may be far more oriented than are women toward nonintimate social connections, such as in status hierarchies of groups. The view of men as less social than are women may derive from the mistaking of the nonintimate sociality of men for a nonsocial orientation.

The other distinction is between self-construal and motivation.

Simply put, men may have a separate idea of themselves without wanting to be socially separate beings. That is, men may be more prone than are women to conceptualize themselves without thinking simultaneously of other people and relationships, but they, nonetheless, have a strong need to belong.

Meanwhile, though, the discrepancy between our view and Cross and Madson's (1997) shows that male psychology can plausibly be regarded in sharply different ways. Researchers of the study of gender differences have in more recent decades tended to see the most pressing task as developing an understanding of the psychology of women. Given the substantial progress that has been made in that direction, it may be timely to recognize that the field also needs to address some basic questions about the psychology of men. The issue of whether men are driven by a need to belong or a drive for independent separateness may well be a central one.

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