Self-Esteem: Women in Relationships

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SELF-ESTEEM: WOMEN IN RELATIONSHIPS

BY

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Writing has never been a strong point in my life and writing this research paper has been an extremely demanding task, but all along the path of writing this thesis, I knew that my hard work would pay off. As Margaret Thatcher once said of success, "I do not know anyone who has got to the top without hard work. That is the recipe. It will not always get you to the top, but should get you pretty near" (http://www.womensmedia.com/quote-theme-success.htm, 1999).
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER

| POEM | .......................................................... | 5 |
| I | INTRODUCTION .................................................. | 6 |
| Research Question .................................................. | 14 |
| Purpose of the Study/Hypothesis ........................................ | 14 |
| Definitions of Terms ............................................. | 15 |
| Delimitations ....................................................... | 17 |
| Summary .......................................................... | 18 |
| II | A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: HOW WOMEN'S SELF-ESTEEM CONSTRAINS RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN | 19 |
| The Women's Movement .................................................. | 19 |
| Love Addicted Women and Self-Esteem ................................ | 20 |
| Love as an Essential Need ......................................... | 22 |
| Vulnerability to Personal Risk with Attachment .................... | 23 |
| Perceptions of Low versus High Self-esteem ......................... | 25 |
| Summary .......................................................... | 29 |
| III | A SURVEY SEEKING TO ANALYZE BEHAVIORAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE A WOMAN'S SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-WORTH WITHIN A RELATIONSHIP WITH A MAN | 31 |
| Description of Survey .................................................. | 31 |
| Sample .......................................................... | 33 |
| Purpose of the Survey .................................................. | 34 |
| IV | DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS ..................................... | 35 |
| Analyzing the Results of the Survey .................................. | 35 |
| Cross Tabulations of the Results of the Survey ....................... | 51 |
| Summary .......................................................... | 58 |
| V | ANALYZING THE SURVEY STATEMENTS ................................ | 59 |
| Recommendations and Conclusion ....................................... | 59 |
POEM

"Some people are so comfortable to be with.
They support us to be ourselves.
Some people are truly for us
They honor and respect us.
Some people support and encourage our growth.
They stimulate our growth.
And then there are
Some people who make fun of us.
And we begin to question ourselves.
Some people who criticize us.
And we find it easier to discount ourselves.
Some people who ignore us.
And we wonder if we are invisible.
There are some people we like to be with.
There are some people with whom we like
who we are when we are with them."

Roberta Duncan
Chapter 1

Introduction

You can't touch it, you can't see it, you can't hear it, but it affects how you feel, how you view yourself, and it's there every time you talk about or look at yourself. What is this important and mysterious human condition? It's your self-esteem! Psychologists have been interested in the topic of self-esteem since the earliest days of the discipline to today's current social psychology and clinical psychology.

This thesis started out of personal interests. Each relationship that I have entered into has been a result of a particular time and place, family and social situation, coincidence or physical attribute. Like many women, I had always been more concerned with being liked than with liking. I cared too much of what others thought of me. This was a fault and has led to the demise of numerous long-term relationships. The demise of my last long-term relationship provided me an opportunity to examine and study myself. Over a year and a half, through personal-exploration and dating experiences, I found out more clearly who I am, what I want and what I like about myself; in order to enter a more fulfilling, healthy and adult relationship. I focused on the person that matters the most in my life, my self. Marilyn Sorensen (1998) states that, "Being in a relationship enables us to focus our energy on other people and their goals rather than staying centered on ourselves and our personal mission in life. In other words, being in a relationship can be a substitute for dealing with our own challenges. We can put our energy into the relationship and ignore our own issues (p. 133)."
Several of the relationships that I was involved in ended in heartbreak. Through each experience, I learned valuable lessons regarding my self-worth and self-esteem. Even though during the initial stages of the break-ups, everything looks dismal, eventually the clouds broke free and the sun shone once again "The exquisite agony of heartbreak. We who have experienced it know that romantic love is a fall-in, crawl-out proposition: When you're bonding with that special someone, everything is wondrously effortless; when the relationship hits the skids, getting through an ordinary day feels like climbing Everest without supplemental oxygen. But, every heartbreak can teach us powerful lessons about creating the kind of love we really want" (Beck, M., Feb. 2003). I believe that this quote from Beck characterizes the full circle effect of a relationship that has an end. Ernest Hemingway once wrote, "The world breaks everyone, and afterward many are strong at the broken places" (1957, p.249). A broken heart is a heart that has the opportunity to grow stronger, an ability to become more self-reliant, more receptive to the truth, and more capable of developing a new, positive, and lasting love. However, the development of possible attachment can expose someone to another form of heartbreak, possible rejection.

This paper examines the work and thoughts of two clinical psychologists who wrote several books together. The self-help, relationship book, *Women Men Love Women Men Leave, What Makes Him Want To Commit?* written by Connell Cowan, PhD and Melvyn Kinder, PhD, uses their individual experiences of psychotherapy in a collaborative self-improvement book about relationships. Their own working relationship began in the late 1960's while both completed their post-doctoral training at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, California. The two doctors have lectured together and were directors of the Center for Relationship Studies in
California during the early-to-mid 1980's. Both are trained in psychoanalytic methods and theories, but geared their careers toward developing ways to recognize and guide people with life and relationship problems. Their practice focuses on the problems of families in divorce, human sexuality, and male/female relationships through their treatment center in Beverly Hills, California. Dr. Cowan and Dr. Kinder share their clinical experiences in *Women Men Love Women Men Leave*, and reach out to readers to share the insight and expertise they have gathered over the course of their clinical careers. Their experiences are written confidentially (patient names are changed for privacy) and discuss the struggles and victories of women who have dealt with difficult relationship issues.

The book brings to light many puzzling situations that women with relationship issues do not understand, specifically, why they have not had successful relationships with men. The book explains that many women may have unreal and overly high expectations of men while in a relationship, which places a lot of pressure on their partners to perform and act in certain ways. The pressure some women create for men may cause the demise of the relationship and in the long run cause heartbreak. Most men want to find a friend and a lover in a woman they are in a relationship with. Men are looking for women who do not want them (the man) to change, or for a woman to make a man feel guilty for being who they are. *Women Men Love Women Men Leave* discusses various ways for women interested in improving their relationships and provides real life stories of patients frustrated with relationships. The objective of the book is to change the reader’s awareness of how to make relationships between men and women clearer, more rational, and ultimately to produce a happy, long lasting relationship. Men and women differ in relationships. The differences bring strain between the sexes and create tension that creates
sincere issues and generate questions and uneasiness among the couple in the relationship. The questions and feelings ultimately bring different levels of awareness to each person's self-esteem and self-worth. Dr. Cowan and Dr. Kinder saw a need to write the book since so many people battle to discover ways to carry on mutually fulfilling and loving relationships.

Dr. Connell Cowan and Dr. Melvyn Kinder wrote *Women Men Love Women Men Leave*, to assist women in realizing that not all relationships rise or fall on the demands of the man, but that many issues start directly from how the woman perceives herself. If a woman does not accept, value, or love herself, this can cause problems in any relationship. A woman who doubts herself, or worse, doubts in the love a man may provide her, has a hard time maintaining a healthy relationship. A woman's self-worth and the development of a relationship depend on a woman's self-image or acceptance of herself. The unaccepted feeling a woman gets within a relationship is from not loving and knowing her own self-worth. "In order to feel comfortable being known and loved by another person, you have to accept and love yourself. If you have doubts about your sense of worth, if you feel the hidden facets of your personality or character are bad or unacceptable, you may fear your lover will judge you in the same harsh critical light you turn on yourself" (Cowan & Kinder, 1987, p.31).

Self-esteem is how someone perceives him or herself and how he or she react with co-workers, friends, family and loved ones. Self-esteem in relationships is important to how a relationship blossoms. Many writers are in complete agreement that when low self-esteem is revealed, a woman is not able to feel confident in her relationship (Baumesiter & Leary, 1995;
Desperation is a symptom of low self-esteem and doubt about one's worth. A woman acting in desperation will continuously seek out others' opinions regarding her behavior and merits. Often women with low-self esteem will believe that the "perfect" man will be the solution to her feelings of unhappiness, emptiness or incompleteness. With the "perfect" man by her side, she feels that her emptiness and feeling of insecurity will disappear, when in fact a woman needs to develop trust in her own self, and to accept her own self-image so that she can become aware of herself as a woman worthy of being loved. The significance in overcoming extreme anxiety in a relationship, "is to become more self-confident and allow relationships to unfold gradually and mutually instead of rushing commitment. The containment of emotional hunger is not an easy task. It requires continued faith that success, and thus enhanced self-esteem, will certainly follow— and it does. In fact, the very decision to look elsewhere for ways to bolstering one's confidence acts to contain and diminish desperation" (Cowan & Kinder, 1985, p.61). Whether men and women want to admit it, when in a relationship, both sexes rely on each other.

Although, reliance is an important feature within a relationship, this action may cause and promote both sexes to try and deny their dependencies on each other and also create behaviors that are unbecoming. Cowan and Kinder state that, as a relationship intensifies, needs, desires and insecurities need to be talked about to obtain a healthy, satisfying relationship (1987). A woman needs to learn how to love and know herself first before she can love another person. A quote by Lucille Ball reflects the same thoughts, "Love yourself first and everything else falls into line. You really have to love yourself to get anything done in this world" (Quinn, 1999, p.198).
Research has shown that self-esteem, high or low, plays a vital role in how a woman thinks, acts or reacts while in a relationship. It seems that women who have low self-esteem grew up with negative social interactions and interpersonal relationships, which has caused low self-esteem within their adult life and which has also affected their relationships with men. According to Voss, Markiewicz, and Doyle, maintaining a relationship is considered a human need, and building upon this theory, they also say that a relationship is important for emotional survival, in that it plays a significant role in the way individuals feel about themselves (1999). Voss, Markiewicz and Doyle also maintain that self-esteem is essential for a person’s well being and they explain that sustaining one’s self-esteem comes from a need to look after the self against the effects of social rejection and exclusion (1999). “Self-esteem derives in part from succeeding at what is valued by one’s particular socio-cultural group: that men (more than women) derive their self-esteem from success in situations in which they can assert their independence, whereas women (more than men) derive their self-esteem from success in situations in which they can achieve connection with others” (Block 1983). Men grow up thinking that they must support themselves, and usually a family. They are more career-oriented than women. The work a man does is a source of dignity, refuge, and self-esteem to him. On the other hand, for all the steps women have made in the work place, they still tend to get their security, self-esteem and dignity more from the house, the family and their man (Russianoff, 1981). It is crucial for most women to become less dependent on men. It is a matter either of a fulfilling life or of giving up a woman’s true self and her identity. A woman who revolves her life around the center of security, and builds upon it, learns that she does not need a man by her side in order to feel beautiful, worthy, lovable, acceptable, and whole.
The theory that is based on the reflection of our self through the eyes of others, and how we judge ourselves based on the behavior of others, which allows others to affect our own sense of self-worth is called the looking-glass theory. Charles Horton Cooley's *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1902) looking-glass theory of the self, emphasizes that other people help us define ourselves. The ability to see one's self as a distinct entity is a necessary first step in the evolution and development of one's self-esteem. Cooley's theory is an important insight to a person's social acceptance by society. If someone does not feel good about themselves and does not appreciate their own good qualities, they will look for and find faults within themselves rather than positive features. Given that social interaction is such an important component of one's self-worth and self-esteem, it's likely that communication will also affect the preservation of self-esteem. Social comparisons involve using others as benchmarks for self-evaluation. While you may think that the other person is to blame by not living up to your standards, it is really you who are sabotaging the relationship. Any relationship is only as strong as its weakest link. As difficult as this may be to admit, someone who finds continuous faults, instead of goodness, is the weakest link if he or she cannot appreciate and believe in themselves.

Nobody is born with low self-esteem; it's something that is learned. Low self-esteem is the residue of filtering the attitudes, remarks, looks, suggestions, and events of those around us through a person's own feelings and self-image. For example, if a person grows up with critical, disapproving parents, that person may grow up to believe that he or she can never do well enough. Self-esteem originates from anxiety that resides in a person's beginning interactions with his or her parents and other socially enhanced factors.
"In early childhood, the need fulfillment, love, and protection afforded by parents comprise the virtually helpless child's primary basis of security. Over the course of childhood, these commodities become increasingly contingent on meeting parental standards of goodness and value. As these standards become internalized, this contingency leads to an association between the perception that one is meeting internalized standards of value self-esteem and feelings of safety and security. This association is reinforced throughout life, both directly, through the responses of others to one's behavior, and vicariously, through cultural teachings and myths in which the virtuous are rewarded and the evil are punished" (Greenberg, Solomon, et al., 1992).

This does not mean that an individual with low self-esteem receives only negative comments from those around him or her. It means that, although everyone receives positive and negative messages, a person with low self-esteem shuts out the good and only hears the critical and negative comments. Women with low self-esteem have difficulty forming intimate relationships because they feel too inhibited and insecure, they fear rejection and when people are too frightened to let others see who they really are, they are unable to drive out their feelings of loneliness.

Positive self-esteem is indispensable to happiness and to healthy relationships. A woman must be open and honest with herself and take pride in her own strengths, talents and capabilities. A woman needs to recognize and know she has favorable and positive abilities and talents. She must be aware of her good qualities. If a woman is the weakest link within a relationship, it is because she does not believe in herself. A woman needs to evaluate her own "self", which will take effort and a willingness to be open and honest with her self. Once a woman believes in her "self" and finds her capabilities, talents and abilities, she will be able to have faith in herself and have a honest a rewarding relationship.
Research Question

Based upon the book, *Women Men Love Women Men Leave*, by Dr. Connell Cowan and Dr. Melvyn Kinder, I have formed my Thesis question: How does a woman’s level of self-esteem influence her relationship with a man, either in a dating experience or in a long-term relationship?

Purpose of the Study/Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that women with low self-esteem tend to have unrewarding relationships with men because they have an increased emotional dependency on men and this is caused by self-defeating behaviors and insecurities in relationships. Cowan and Kinder provide great insight regarding women in relationships and how certain behavioral traits will inhibit a healthy and satisfying relationship. The research I have read endorses the information Cowan and Kinder have provided in their book, and shows that their information is not different from other researchers or the best of self-help writers’ opinions or research. Research conducted for this thesis shows that the concepts, theories and definitions provided support the thoughts and opinions of the two doctors. A survey based on ten statements, taken from the theories and concepts in the book was conducted to test if a sample of women “agreed” or “disagreed” with the tenets of the hypothesis.
Definitions of Terms

• **Self-esteem** - Self-esteem is linked in important ways to how people approach their daily lives. Self-esteem is, "An affective component of the self, consisting of a person's positive and negative self-evaluations" (Brehm & Kassin, 1996, p.56). Self-esteem is how much you value yourself and how important you think you are. It is how you see yourself and how you feel about your accomplishments (Lyness, 2000). The most basic need all of us have is to have a sense of personal worth. Self-esteem refers to the value that each of us places on our own characteristics, abilities, and behaviors.

• **High self-esteem** - Someone who has a favorable attitude toward him or her self, is said to have high self-esteem. Those who feel good about themselves tend to be happy, healthy, successful, and productive. They are more accepting of others and less likely to conform to peer pressure (Sorensen, 1998).

• **Low self-esteem** - In contrast, people with low self-esteem are more anxious, depressed, pessimistic about the future, and prone to failure. Those who have an unfavorable or negative attitude toward themselves have low self-esteem (Sorensen, 1998; Brehm & Kassin, 1996).

• **Relationship** - There are many significant relationships in people's lives: adult relationships between friends, dating partners, lovers and spouses. Relationships often involve three basic components: Emotional attachment, feelings of affection and love, fulfillment of psychological needs, such as sharing feelings and gaining reassurance, and interdependence between the individuals, each of whom has a meaningful influence on the other (Brehm & Kassin, 1996, p.201).
• Love-addiction- This term refers to a type of women who is on the constant search for the "perfect man". In the process of finding this man, she feels the need to constantly give to the men she dates. Love addicted women need to feel alive and rejuvenated, and are always on the chase for love. These women become addicted to the search for the "perfect man", and believe that a man will make them feel complete and give them validation (Cowan & Kinder, 1987, p.134).

• Martyrdom or martyr- When a woman chooses to surrender her independence, when she refuses to stand up for her own desires, she is liable to become a martyr (Cowan & Kinder, 1987, p.147-150). Women who develop into martyrs characteristically lack assertive skills; they are afraid of standing up and expressing genuine needs and wishes to their partner. Instead, they hope their distress will make the man feel compassion for the woman. Women who are martyrs tend to romanticize that such sacrificing will provide admiration, and produce harmony within the relationship. Instead of making the man feel better and more secure, martyrdom does just the opposite.

• Controlling- Many women with low self-esteem believe they have little control over their lives, triggering a sense of helplessness. In response, some of these people attempt to take command, becoming authoritarian as they tell others what to do.

• Self-efficacy- Bandura defines self-efficacy as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that control their lives" (Tafarodi & Milne, 2002, p.475, from Bandura 1989, p.1175).

• Socialization- is the process whereby people learn the attitudes, values and behaviors appropriate to the individual members of a particular culture. Socialization helps to develop and discover how to behave properly and what to expect from others if norms and values of society
are followed or challenged.

Delimitations

• Throughout the lifetime of an individual woman, she may maintain different attitudes or behaviors in regard to relationship experiences. Therefore, the way a woman responded to the research survey provided, may be based on her current dating or relationship experience, but not necessarily the way she would respond at another point in her lifetime.

• Sexuality in the 1990's and 2000's has shown to be a complex, yet openly discussed topic. Adding sexual relations to any relationship complicates situations, and has the potential of making a crucial difference in satisfaction with a relationship. When the relationship as a whole is good, sex can be equally as good, but if the relationship is bad, sex can be the same. Since the psychology of sex, relationships and self-esteem is a large issue in itself, this topic will not be discussed in this thesis.

• Homosexual relationships (male/male relationships and female/female relationships) touch on many important topics, from political to legal to religious, and are considered a variation of the sexual development. Since there are so many studies on homosexuality, this aspect of relationships and self-esteem will also not be included in this thesis.

• Women may rely on a chemical dependency or wind up in an abusive relationship due to a lack of self-esteem. This is also a large topic and will not be discussed either.

• Sexually abused women, and abused children experience traumatic and disturbing life experiences, which can drastically influence behaviors in relationships. Since abuse has many
forms and life-altering effects, self-esteem within abusive relationships is a massive subject that will not be discussed.

Summary

A woman's emotional dependency on a man is related to decreased self-esteem and results in behavioral traits such as controlling, demanding expectations, anxiety, insecurity, and a lack of self-confidence and trust which tend to cause bad relationships with men. Self-esteem has emerged as a central hypothesis in psychological theory. One's development and growth is characterized by "who we are," and one's personal success and failures. Without doubt, this raises concerns of one's attitude toward one's self; especially in a relationship. The book, *Women Men Love Women Men Leave*, written by psychologists Drs. Cowan and Kinder describe copious ways to overcome the feelings attributed to low self-esteem within a relationship, as well as tips on knowing how to develop one's self first, before building a relationship.
Chapter II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: HOW WOMEN'S LOW SELF-ESTEEM CONSTRAINS RELATIONSHIPS

The Women's Movement

The 1970's proved to be a time when women strove for greater equality and also a time when men grew to resent and feel threatened by the empowered women that were starting to emerge. "They [men] felt that they no longer had a unique and valued position in the eyes of the women they loved" (Cowan & Kinder, 1987, p.203). The women's movement ended male supremacy in the workplace. Women proved they could handle whatever job a man was capable of doing, and do it well or even better. Women were included in clubs that before had been "men only", and they were appointed to the Supreme Court and even became vice presidential candidates. Women became active participants in every work area from space programs to management and executive positions. When the 1980's arrived, the greatest economic recession surfaced since the Great Depression. It was essential and necessary that many women work in order to provide a two-income family. Men began discussing their financial concerns and fears of financial failure. They suddenly had no choice but to quickly adapt to accepting that their significant other needed to work and become a financial partner. Men were no longer threatened by their partner's career path, they now viewed their partner as an integral part of the family finances. Men now began to share their life experiences, dreams, goals and even frustrations with their female partners.
The 1970's and 1980's emerged a stronger than ever women, she was now not only a wife and financial partner to her husband, but she was now an integral part of the work force, this brought forth an uneasy feeling for women in regards to raising a family. She now had to take care of helping out with the family finances, as well as maintain the house, children and family events. This made for a very difficult time, which also affected a woman's beliefs in herself as a woman. No longer was she relying on a man for her finances and well being. She now had a new purpose, besides raising a family. This brought on a whole new set of insecurities.

Love-Addicted Women and Self-Esteem

Validation is the need to feel worthy about oneself, and this feeling provides the feeling of being connected with a partner, a source of self-esteem. Research has shown that certain women's earlier life encounters had taught them that they were weak, incomplete, or insignificant as an independent individual. Theorists have concentrated on the issue of attachment, from someone as a baby to early school years to adulthood. The affect of an imperfect childhood experience may provoke an unworthy feeling in which one greatly searches for outside or partner validation. When a child is provoked to think for themselves and when they are given the ability to make their own decisions, inevitably a child will value themselves greater than if their decisions were made for them. "But some parents don't encourage self-sufficiency, they keep the child dependent on parental approval. This results in a lifelong quest for external proof of one's value or lovability. Adults who haven't learned to validate themselves hold the strongest potential for becoming love-addicted, forever in search of that person who will make them feel good enough (Cowan & Kinder 1987, p.162). A woman who has been taught to
be love-addicted feels that she must be "... caught up in the drama of romance and the pursuit of love..." (Cowan & Kinder, 1987, p.134) and endlessly searching for the "perfect man" to make her feel safe and self-validation. Women on an endless search for the right man become addicted to finding a relationship in which makes them feel secure and complete. Cowan & Kinder, 1985 discuss that in a romantic love, love addiction is "... a futile and self-destructive way to feel filled up, to create an illusion of love and emotional nourishment." Unaware of her insecurities, a woman will date one man right after another, believing that it is only a matter of time before she finds the love of her life. These women that are continuously searching for self-validation from a man, ignore the fact that her constant search and insecurities are brought on by their low self-esteem. Instead, the immediate pleasure of being with a man masks the worthlessness that a woman with low self-esteem feels not having a man in her life. Cowan & Kinder (1985) believe that "The core satisfaction of love-addiction is not so much the particular pleasure experienced with a specific man, but the escape provided from daily anxiety or frustration. Love addicts are most frequently women for whom the world seems bleak, empty, and fraught with perils." (p.179). Love addicts are women who want "relief" in solving internal self-esteem issues with personal justification with a man. In order for a woman to conquer these feelings, she must be aware of her behaviors and be willing to abstain from the immediate pleasures of dating continuously, and put first the development of a long-term plan that builds up her self-esteem. Inevitably, this will come from putting an end to the frustrating and repetitious dating behavior patterns. This type of change will result in growing her self-worth and having a better sense of being in control of her own life (Cowan & Kinder, 1985, p.179; Sorensen, 1998; Holmes & Kempel, 1989). The more a woman loves and values herself, the less driven she is to search for approval or fulfillment from a man. Ultimately, the cure for love-addicted women is to build up
their personal acceptance, self-worth and self-esteem, and know that they are worthy with or without a man in their life.

Love as an Essential Need

The promise of love constantly surrounds us. You don’t have to look very far in different women marketing mediums to come across the guarantee of finding love—how to get it, who can offer it, and ways to sustain it. The promise is everywhere you look, from magazine covers, newspaper headlines, billboards and even on countless websites. All mediums promise to help achieve healthy, happy and stimulating relationships for women. Most of the messages have a fundamental point: To achieve love and to be loved, you have to know yourself. You have to be happy with who you are as an individual before you can consider a healthy relationship.

Love and affection are essential human needs; the need to belong is considered to be a necessary human need, just as vital as the need to drink, eat, and breathe (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Voss, Markiewicz, & Doyle, 1999, p.106). Women and men both desire to achieve the feeling of being loved. Love is sought after for its outcomes: a sense of belonging, someone to enjoy life with, someone to laugh and cry with, someone who understands an individual’s fears and sadness and someone to make us feel good about ourselves (Cowan & Kinder, 1987, p.150; Voss, Markiewicz, & Doyle, 1999, p.106). Love and acceptance have the ability to heighten one’s self-esteem by making someone feel a sense of belonging and by affirming one’s self-worth. Leary’s research (1995) showed that it is important to maintain self-esteem within a relationship. This will ultimately affect a person as an individual, while being part of a
relationship. Maintaining one's identity will ultimately protect the self against possible social rejection. However, as a relationship begins to form, the progression of becoming emotionally involved with a partner leaves a person exposed to vulnerability and the potential pain of rejection and heart-break.

Vulnerability to Personal Risk with Attachment

Voss, Markiewicz, and Doyle (1999) believe that men mainly get their self-esteem from life accomplishments, whereas women mainly obtain their self-esteem from a connection with others, leaving most women vulnerable to personal risk from attachments. With the opportunity of such risk, most women will guard themselves by regulating their feelings of personal attachment in ways that shield them against the prospect of rejection and heart-break. This means that women tend to be more cautious in allowing themselves to risk the chance of becoming emotionally involved with a partner until they trust that their partner's acceptance and love is secure (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000; Murray, Holmes, Griffin, Bellavia, & Rose, 2001). With the development of emotional ties, intimate couples, either married or dating, find more worth in their relationship the more they feel loved (Murray, Holmes, Griffin, Bellavia, & Rose 2001) and the more positively they believe their partner sees them (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000). On the other hand, separating oneself from a relationship is a defense mechanism for those that do not have complete trust in their partner's commitment within the relationship. Most likely, if rejection seems inevitable, a partner will not consider making an emotional commitment in his or her relationship (Berscheid & Fei, 1977; Bowlby, 1982; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Holmes & Rempel, 1989). Rejection may lead people to conduct themselves in ways that
weaken their chances of sustaining a satisfying and loveable relationship. Women who enter a relationship worrying about the expectation of possible rejection from their significant other may feel insecure and unhappy about their relationship. These women may respond to the fear of rejection with opposition, reduced support, or suspicious, controlling behavior. When these behaviors are unjustified and amplified, these behaviors are likely to weaken even a dedicated partner's happiness with the relationship. “When those with low self-esteem are told that their process of self-evaluation is unrealistically negative and inaccurate, they do not believe it. When they are reminded of other information that contradicts their negative view, they find a way to discount that information; the suggestion that the way they judge themselves might be incorrect is difficult for them to digest” (Sorensen, 1998, p. 20-21). People with low-self esteem separate out and invalidate positive input, they believe that anything less than perfect is perceived as inadequate performance.

Theories of relationship development believe that those within or developing a romantic relationship will guard their levels of feelings and intimacy, not letting themselves risk trust until they feel secure of their partner's shared affections and dedication (Berscheid & Fei, 1977; Bowlby, 1982; Holmes & Rempel, 1989). In addition, women also tend to underestimate their partner's relationship satisfaction and commitment (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Women with low self-esteem have difficulty believing in their partner's acceptance in any type of relationship. In both dating and married relationships, women with low self-esteem misinterpret their partner's view of their personality, character, abilities and even the way their partner loves and shows them affection (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000). On the other hand, women with high self-esteem are much more willing to believe how definite and adoring their partner deems them.
An observation that Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs (1995) made is that low self-esteem people who are loved very much by a loving partner will possibly be the least likely to feel their partner's love. Furthermore, low self-esteem people are viewed as less fulfilled than people with high self-esteem in relationships (Fincham & Bradbury, 1993; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988) mainly for the reason that those with low self-esteem senselessly doubt their partner's commitment and love (Murray, Holmes, Griffin, 2000; Murray, Holmes, Griffin, Bellavia & Rose, 2001).

Perceptions of Low verse High Self-esteem

Women with low self-esteem tend to be more easily affected by life occurrences. They are more apt to feel unloved by a partner over periodic arguments, disapproval or disagreement or even a partner's negative mood. Charles Horton Cooley's (1902) looking glass self theory suggests that people act as a mirror in which one sees themselves. This theory implies that the way one perceives oneself is how others think of one's self, which ultimately can affects one's self-esteem. Women with low self-esteem often search for acceptance from their partner, they feel that the love and affection that is being given from is not true. Theses women are afraid of being rejected, therefore any difficult situation or negative feeling that arises with a partner may consequently lead a low self-esteem woman to feel extremely vulnerable and more likely to question the status of her relationship and where she stands in her partner's life.

On the contrary, high self-esteem people are more secure in their partner's acceptance and are not as vulnerable to negative actions as low self-esteem people. As Sorensen (1998) states,
“When we truly love someone in a healthy way, we allow that person to be an individual, with her own differing opinions. We encourage her to make her own decisions, to determine her own goals, to develop her own interests. We exhibit an interest in her chosen direction, listening to her opinions and ideas, expressing admiration of her progress. We respect her right to make these choices, rather than believing we know what’s best for her. We support her” (p.143-144). High self-esteem people look at themselves and think in a positive way about themselves, and therefore it is not surprising that they consider themselves favorably on most positive qualities. People who feel secure in their relationships will mostly likely respond to a challenging situation by canceling out the incident and psychologically accepting their partner’s commitment to their relationship and “get over” the negative situation. Relationship theorists argue that with self-esteem, the feeling of self-worth shows a sense of connection to others and that low self-esteem reflects a need for support, interpersonal connections and a sense of attachment (Leary, Tambor, Terdal & Downs, 1995; Nezlek, Kowalski, Leary, Blevins, & Holgate, 1997).

Women with low self-esteem continuously feel anxious about being accepted by their partner and are constantly looking for verification of their partner’s commitment and love, analyzing their partner’s actions to determine if they are loved. Leary, Tambor, Terdal & Downs (1995) state that people who have low self-esteem are people who need a partner’s verification and acceptance in almost all situations.

“Thou has not half the power to do me harm as I have to be hurt.” -William Shakespeare, Othello
The passage from Shakespeare’s *Othello* shows a weakness that people with low self-esteem carry into their relationships. In fact, low self-esteem people believe that they are neither loved nor valued by their romantic partners, even when the complete opposite is true (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin 2000; Murray, Holmes, Griffin, Bellavia & Rose, 2001). In search for information regarding their anxiety, women with low self-esteem look for ways to alleviate their self-doubts by finding out if their partners really do cherish them. Since a woman with low self-worth has unclear thoughts, she has a skewed vision of what love is, she is likely to find the information to relieve her anxiety. She is more apt to think that she will be or has been rejected, and does not accept her partner’s acceptance or love; instead she psychologically uses a defense mechanism, and separates herself from her partner in order to protect herself from rejection (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin 2000). For people with low self-esteem, the inclination to interpret signs of rejection into the day-to-day events in their relationship may obstruct their ability to see the best in their partner or relationship in the face of opposition. As an alternative, low self-esteem women may actively separate themselves from their relationship when tension arises or their partner seems someway irritated with them. After all, separating oneself from intimacy will most likely eliminate the chance of any embarrassment brought on by the expected rejection.

When in conflict, women who expect rejection in romantic relationships also act more disapprovingly toward their partner (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Low self-esteem women seem to act in a way of continuously doubting their own abilities and fear their partner’s rejection by protecting themselves from their partner and from the ability to love (Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, & Ellsworth, 1998).

Low self-esteem prohibits women from accepting the fact that their partner’s love is real
and that their partner recognizes their positive qualities. These women psychologically and wrongly presume that their romantic partner sees them in the same pessimistic light as they see themselves (Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, & Ellsworth, 1998; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000). Downey & Feldman (1996) believe that the insecurity about a partner’s love causes low self-esteem people to anticipate rejection from others. Depending on their own feelings of self-worth, a person with low self-esteem may question and not believe the approval and acceptance they receive from others. A blend of a pessimistic attitude and avoidance of risk creates a situation where low self-esteem people tend to overinterpret and overanalyze negative events directed from their partner to them. “When those with low self-esteem are told that their process of self-evaluation is unrealistically negative and inaccurate, they do not believe it. When they are reminded of other information that contradicts their negative views, they find ways to discount that information; the suggestion that the way they judge themselves might be incorrect is difficult for them to digest….This is the enduring and unyielding nature of the dysfunction of low self-esteem” (Sorensen, 1998, p.20-21.)

Upholding the feeling of self-confidence within a romantic relationship is important for sustaining a meaningful, rewarding, and loving relationship (Bowlby, 1982; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). The value of feeling secure in a romantic relationship, along with knowing that your partner is available emotionally and conversationally, provides the kind of interpersonal strength that makes it easy for one to open up emotionally and to trust in one’s partner. Confidence protects and assures those with high self-esteem the love and acceptance a partner will give (Nezlek, 1997). High self-esteem people correctly see the positive picture a romantic partner provides (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000) and how much their partner loves them (Murray, Holmes, Griffin, Bellavia & Rose, 2001). Those with high self-esteem also have a tendency to
see their partner's affection and love for them as being absolute in nature (Downey, & Feldman, 1996). A woman with high self-esteem embraces her femininity and knows the power of feeling like a woman. A positive woman moves towards knowledge. It isn't that this type of woman does not have fears, insecurities, or concerns; she simply has decided not to let them dominate her. If she experiences a setback, she tries to analyze it, then moves forward in life. She seeks a path toward relationships that demands personal responsibility and clarity from herself (Cowan, & Kinder, 1985, p.261). Concerns about being accepted are not as intense with a person with high self-esteem, which allows them to strengthen and maintain their love, and any negative events are simply discounted and will most likely hurt less. For women with high self-esteem, the strong feelings of acceptance weaken any signs of rejection in ways that allow them to confirm the relationship, even against the risk of possible rejection or hurt. In the case of negative situation's occurring within a relationship, a person who has high self-esteem can easily offset rejection by reminding herself of her partner's past kindness and sensitivity or by relying on the fact that family or friends are accepting and loving. As a result, high self-esteem people are more able to compensate for difficult times by emphasizing the strengths of their partner and relationship.

Summary

From the 1970's when women strived for equality to the 1980's when women emerged as strong working women, women nonetheless had many new insecurities to face. Men were thought of as the answer to women's questions and desires, and women were made to feel that the man would protect her and keep her safe. Although love is an essential component of the
human need, a woman still needs to maintain her own identity as an individual, while maintaining a relationship. Low self-esteem prohibits women to accept the fact that their partner's love is real and that their partner recognizes their positive qualities. With rejection as a possibility, leaving people vulnerable, the outcome of opening up one's self to trusting, accepting and loving their partner will help develop a meaningful relationship. Supporting rewarding relationships involves an inferential leap of faith. Women want to feel loved and admired. These feelings add to a woman's self-confidence and lovability. Cowan and Kinder 1985 state, "Expressing strength can create anxiety for some women, as can expressing tenderness. Research has shown that some women may feel very apprehensive about being strong, assertive, or ambitious because they fear their power and autonomy will somehow cause them to be rejected. On the other hand, expressing softness can be difficult too, because when a woman gives of herself freely, she is exposed, vulnerable to rejection, easily hurt. We have found that unless women are certain of their strength, they will not be confident in their ability to avoid old submissive traps as they explore their own softness. Expressing both strength and softness requires courage." (p.232).
Chapter III

A SURVEY SEEKING TO ANALYZE BEHAVIORAL FACTORS THAT

INFLUENCE A WOMAN'S SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-WORTH

WITHIN A RELATIONSHIP WITH A MAN

Description of Survey

The survey, "Self-esteem: Women in Relationships," is derived from key concepts in the self-help book, *Women Men Love Women Men Leave*. The survey (see Appendix A) consists of ten statements that were measured on a Likert scale; a survey system utilizing a five-point, one-dimensional scaling method that rates behaviors, attitudes, or other identifiable factors that need evaluating. Each survey administered asked each woman to respond, using a scale of one to five, one equaling "Strongly Agree" and five equaling "Strongly Disagree". The entire five-point scale equates to "Strongly Agree" (SA) with the statement, "Agree" (A) with the statement, "Neutral" (N) stand on the statement, "Disagree" (D) with the statement, and "Strongly Disagree" (SD) with the statement.

The ten survey statements seek to elicit responses about love, trust, acceptance, self-worth, individuality, love-addiction and martyrdom. Since the statements are derived from the book and the book has strong support in its field, I anticipated that the participants of the survey would be likely to agree with the statements taken from the beliefs of Dr. Cowan and Dr. Kinder. The research performed for this paper also indicated that the information these two psychoanalysts have provided is not exclusive to this study and there is a large amount of research that supports
their theories and concepts.

The second part of the survey contains secondary questions. The first question asks to identify if the respondents are male or female. Since the survey was designed and distributed to women respondents only, this statement verifies that all respondents are women. The remaining five questions within the secondary questions asked demographic questions: age, ethnicity, occupation, and relationship status (either not dating, currently dating someone, or in a long-term relationship with someone either dating, engaged or married status).

The second demographic question, age, breaks down the different ages into groups. Age is divided into five categories, 25-35 years, 36-45, 46-55, 56-66 and 66 plus.

The third secondary question is ethnicity. This category asks the national origin of the participants. The eight categories included: White/Caucasian, Black/African American, Asian, Latino/Hispanic, East Indian, Middle Eastern, Native American and other.

The fourth secondary question inquired about the woman's current occupational status. Nine possible choices included: at-home mother, teacher/professor, business career, retail, military, self-employed, unemployed, retired and other.
The fifth secondary question looks at a woman's current dating status: if she is not dating someone, dating someone or in a long-term relationship, perhaps dating, engaged or married. Question six further investigates the length of the dating and long-term relationship level. The five options for the dating category included: 1-2 dates, 3-4 dates, 5-6 dates, 2-3 months, 4-5 months. The long-term category included: 6 months-1 year, 1-2 years, 2-5 years and 5 plus years.

Sample

The survey, "Self-esteem: Women in Relationships," was distributed to a convenience sampling of women who responded to statements pertaining to behavioral factors that influence a woman's self-esteem with a male/female (heterosexual) relationship. The sample of women surveyed collected a qualitative response. The survey was conducted by e-mailing a Microsoft Word document to family, friends and co-workers. E-mailing the survey allowed me to reach a large, varied sample of women across the United States in a rapid fashion. Initially, the survey was e-mailed to friends, family and colleagues, including men. Then the recipients were asked to pass the survey onto additional female family members, friends or colleagues who would be willing to participate in the survey for this thesis paper. The completed returned surveys were delivered back by either e-mail, fax or mailed back. The total responses tallied to 70 respondents. These surveys came from female respondents that were included in the original e-mail distribution list (women I knew), as well as unknown women (women that were forwarded the survey), and also anonymous women (women who mailed the survey back without a name or women who I could not identify through their e-mail address.) Although the survey was distributed to a countless amount of women, a 70 response outcome was highly welcomed.
Purpose of the Survey

The survey statements are derived directly from the book, *Women Men Love Women Men Leave*. The survey statements are powerful statements that portray the essence of the book and information that guides a woman to enjoy a healthy and lasting relationship with a man. From the authors’ wisdom, I choose ten statements that directly correlate with their beliefs and made them the core of my thesis study.

The initial creation of the survey began from taking 10 specific behavioral statements from the text of the book, *Women Men Love Women Men Leave*, and manipulating them to create the final survey statements, which were distributed to women only. The ten statements in the survey exemplify the behavioral factors that influence the self-esteem in women in relationships. The intended goal of the survey was to determine if the research I have conducted on self-esteem, women, and relationships corresponds with the information provided by Dr. Cowan and Dr. Kinder in the book, *Women Men Love Women Men Leave*. The purpose of this study was to see if a sample of contemporary women had the same beliefs and thoughts regarding self-esteem in relationships as Dr. Connell Cowan and Dr. Melvyn Kinder propose. I also provided five secondary questions that determined the respondents’ gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, and relationship status.

Seventy women answered the survey, resulting in a variety of responses. For the most part, participants answered as expected. Chapter four discusses the results of the survey findings.
DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Analyzing the Results of the Survey

Within two weeks after distributing the survey, "Self-esteem: Women in Relationships," 70 completed surveys were filled out and returned. The respondents returned the surveys in a variety of ways, they either replied to my original e-mail sent out by attaching their MS Word document with the answers filled in, or they mailed, faxed, or hand delivered them. Each woman was asked to respond to the 10 statements, plus six secondary demographic questions. After gathering all of the surveys, the responses were counted and tabulated, incorporating the 5-point Likert scale: "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The results were then tabulated in an Excel spreadsheet in order to compare the results, which in turn were processed by SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Windows ver, 11). (see Appendix B)

Statement one: I believe that to feel comfortable about being loved by another person, you have to know and accept yourself.

Based on the opinions of Dr. Cowan and Dr. Kinder, I hypothesized that a majority of the respondents would respond to this question as strongly agree, with some agreement. Fifty-one respondents (73%) replied that they “strongly agreed” that, “to feel comfortable about being known and loved by another person, you have to accept and love yourself.” While 16 respondents (23%) “agreed” and only two respondents (3%) were “neutral.” Only one
respondent (1%) "disagreed" and zero responses "strongly disagreed." Supporting my prediction, the majority of the women responded with strong agreement.

Sixty-seven women (96%) answered this statement positively a majority of the responses were those who "strongly agreed" and "agreed" to the statement that one needs to know and accept one's self first, before one can feel comfortable about being loved. It is assumed from the point of view of these 77 respondents that it is important for a woman to know herself before she can begin loving or being loved by someone. Her esteem and self-worth are an important factor to carrying out an adult, romantic relationship. Fifteen respondents (21%) answered "neutral".

1. I believe that to feel comfortable about being loved by another person, you have to know and accept yourself.

![Pie chart showing distribution of responses](chart_image)
Statement two: When I am in a relationship, I don't want to be one of those couples that do everything together in a relationship.

I expected the respondents to answer this statement positively and that most of the women would agree with the authors, Dr. Cowan and Dr. Kinder (1987), that women need time away from their partner to spend alone, which plays a vital role in the development and maintenance of any relationship. The number of respondents who answered "neutral" was not expected. In reviewing the results for statement number two, 19 respondents (27%) "strongly agreed" and 26 respondents (37%) "agreed" that, "when in a relationship, they did not want to be one of those couples who do everything together in a relationship." Fifteen respondents (21%) were "neutral", nine women (12%) "disagreed", and only one woman (1%) "strongly disagreed."

Overall, the majority of the women (64%) exhibited agreement. It can therefore be inferred from the opinions and beliefs of these 45 female respondents, that it is important for a woman to separate herself from her partner while in a relationship. It is crucial for a woman to take time for herself and to spend time away from her partner to reflect. However, since 21% of the women were "neutral" regarding the question, it can be insinuated that these women were unsure of their beliefs regarding this statement or they were unsure of how to answer the statement, the neutral answers were neither in agreement or disagreement to the question.
Statement three: I believe there are men who secretly or unconsciously want to date a woman who feels responsible in their relationship first and to themselves second.

Women who have recently acquired a sense of independence may either “strongly agree” or “agree” with this statement. In evaluating statement three, “I believe there are men who secretly or unconsciously want to date a woman who feels responsible in their relationship first and to themselves second,” nine women (13%) “strongly agreed” and 35 “agreed” (49%), while 20 respondents (28%) were “neutral”. Six women “disagreed” (8%) and one respondent (1%) “strongly disagreed”.

Overall, 62% of the respondents showed agreement. It can be suggested that with the viewpoints of theses female respondents believe that there are men who want to date a woman who feels responsible in their relationship first and to themselves second.

Statement four: I believe that acceptance, the feeling of being loved, is perhaps the most important ingredient in the bonding process between women and men.

In assessing statement four, 25 women (35%) "strongly agreed" that they "Believe that acceptance, the feeling of being loved, is perhaps the most important ingredient in the bonding process between women and men." Twenty-nine women (41%) replied that they "agree", while eight women (11%) were "neutral." A total of eight respondents (11%) "disagreed" with the
Statement 5: I believe that your significant other should love you for who you are, rather than being needed for what you do.

The responses for this statement are as follows: 50 females (72%) replied that they strongly agreed that, "your significant other should love you for who you are, rather than being needed for what you do," while 18 respondents (26%) "agreed," and only one respondent (1%) was
"neutral." No one responded that they "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed." Since the majority of the respondents (72%) said that they strongly agree with statement five, it is concluded that the women strongly believe that they need to be loved for who they are, rather than for what they can do.

5. I believe that your significant other should love you for who you are, rather than being needed for what you do.

Statement 6: I believe that when dating or in a relationship, you need to spend time with friends or do things by yourself, such as going to the health club or spending a couple of hours browsing art galleries on a Saturday.

In assessing statement six, 45 women (64%) strongly agree, 21 women (30%) agreed, only one respondent (1%) was neutral, as well as one woman (1%) disagreed. Two women (2%) strongly disagreed.
6. I believe that when dating or in a relationship, you need to spend time with friends or do things by yourself, such as going to the health club or spending a couple of hours browsing art galleries on a Saturday.

Statement 7: I believe to have a healthy relationship it is acceptable for a woman to periodically have uncertainty, distance and tension between a woman and a man.

In evaluating statement seven, nine women (13%) “strongly agree,” 22 women (31%) “agreed” with the statement. Eighteen respondents (26%) were “neutral,” 16 women (23%) “disagreed” and five women (7%) “strongly disagreed.” Statement seven shows a strong contrast in the opinions of the women, and has a considerably higher percentage of “neutral” respondents.
Statement 8: I believe that when I fall in love with someone, my dependency needs become more apparent.

In assessing statement eight, six women (9%) “strongly agreed,” and 22 women (31%) “agreed” with the statement. Eleven respondents (16%) were “neutral,” 23 women (33%) “disagreed” and eight women (11%) “strongly disagreed.” Statement eight also shows a strong contrast in the opinions of the women.
Statement 9: I believe that people feel much better about themselves when they trust their mate.

In assessing statement nine, 36 women (52%) “strongly agreed,” 23 women (33%) “agreed,” eight respondents (12%) were “neutral,” as well as two women (3%) “disagreed.” Zero women strongly “disagreed.” Eighty-six percent of the women who answered this statement “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the statement, supported the idea that the women need time for themselves, time away from their partners.
Statement 10: I believe that women should be admired when they give their all in order to please men in an attempt to win their love.

The insipidity of a woman, along with low self-esteem will eventually lead a man to resenting his partner. In reviewing the results for statement 10, no women (0%) responded that they "strongly agree," only two women (3%) "agreed," three respondents (4%) were "neutral," while 24 women (36%) "disagreed" and 38 respondents (57%) "strongly disagreed" with this statement. Overall, the majority of the women disagreed or strongly disagreed that a woman should be admired when they give their all in order to please a man in an attempt to win their love.
Age: Examining the age category, 36 women (53%) of the respondents were in the 25-35 years old age group, 13 women (19%) were in the 36-45 years old age group and 14 women (21%) were in the 46-55 years old age group. Five respondents (7%) were in the 56-65 years old age category and there were no respondents in the 66 plus years old age group. More than half of the respondents to the survey were in the 25-35 years old age group, and a combined percentage of 40% of the respondents were in the 36-45 and 46-55 years old age group, meaning that most of the respondents fall under the ages of 25-55 years old.
Ethnicity: Analyzing the ethnicity of the women respondents, 59 women (86%) were White/Caucasian, while only one woman (1%) was of Black/African American decent. Only one woman (1%) was of Asian decent and five women (7%) were of Latino/Hispanic decent. None were of East Indian or Middle Eastern decent, while two women (3%) were of Native American decent and only one woman (1%) choose “Other” since her ethnicity was not mentioned in the choices provided.
Occupation: In reviewing the results provided for the occupation category, only one woman respondent (1%) answered from each of the following three occupation categories, at home mothers, retail and retired. Meanwhile, 46 women (72%) answered that they work in some sort of business field, and zero women answered that they are teachers/professors or work in the military. Three women (5%) are self-employed, two women (3%) are unemployed and ten respondents (16%) have other occupations other than the eight mentioned categories.
**Relationship status**: The last two secondary questions analyze the relationship status of the respondents and how long the women respondent has been in the relationship, either being a dating experience or being in a long term experience either dating, engaged or married to their partner. Ten women (16%) are not dating someone, five women (8%) are in the beginning stages of dating someone, and 48 of the respondents (76%) are in a long-term relationship, either dating, engaged or married to their partner for an extended period of time.

**Length of relationship**: The sixth secondary question further breaks down the results in question number five. Question number six breaks down the results for the dating someone and long-term relationship status into time frames. There were five women who responded to the “dating someone category”, and in this category they had five dating time frames to choose from. Out of the five women respondents that responded to this question, one woman (20%) responded that she has been on one to two dates with someone, two women (40%) responded that they had
three to four dates with someone, and the final two women (40%) that responded to this question, answered that they have been dating someone for four to five months. The 48 women respondents who answered that they are in a long-term relationship, either dating, engaged or married, had four time frames to choose from. Out of the 48 women respondents, two women (4%) responded that they have been in a long-term relationship for six months to one year. Seven women (15%) responded that they have been involved in a long-term relationship for 1-2 years, while 11 women (24%) replied that they have been involved in a long-term relationship for two to five years. The largest number of respondents, 46 women (57%) answered that they have been in a relationship for five years or more.
Cross Tabulations of the Results of the Survey

The following seven cross tabulations show similarities in the statements presented in the survey. The tables provided, show the number of responses given for the assertions.

**Key-**

*Selfknow = Statement One:* I believe that to feel comfortable about being loved by another person, you have to know and accept yourself.

*Coupletoo = Statement Two:* When I am in a relationship, I don’t want to be one of those couples who do everything together in a relationship.

*Relatfir = Statement Three:* I believe there are men who secretly or unconsciously want to date
a woman who feel responsible in their relationship first and to themselves second.

Acceptance = Statement Four: I believe that acceptance, the feeling of being loved, is perhaps the most important ingredient in the bonding process between women and men.

Whoare = Statement Five: I believe that your significant other should love you for who you are, rather than being needed for what you do.

Friends = Statement Six: I believe that when dating or in a relationship, you need to spend time with friends or do things by yourself, such as going to the health club or spending a couple of hours browsing art galleries on a Saturday.

Acceptdis = Statement Seven: I believe to have a healthy relationship it is acceptable for a women to periodically have uncertainty, distance and tension between a woman and a man.

Depappar = Statement Eight: I believe that when I fall in love with someone, my dependency needs become more apparent.

Trustself = Statement Nine: I believe that people feel much better about themselves when they trust their mate.

Admirall = Statement Ten: I believe that women should be admired when they give their all in order to please men in an attempt to win their love.
The cross tabulation of statement number one and statement number nine shows that the majority of women who responded positively to the assertion on selfknow, also responded positively to the assertion that they trustslf. As you can see by table one, a majority of the answers in common are in the "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" categories. In fact, 23% of the respondents that responded to statement one as "Strongly Agreed", responded to statement nine as "Agreed", while 40% of the respondents that responded to statement one as "Strongly Agreed", also responded to statement nine as "Strongly Agreed". Meanwhile, 9% of the respondents that responded to statement one as "Agreed", also responded to statement nine as "Agreed", and 11% of the respondents that responded to statement one as "Agreed", also responded to statement nine as "Strongly Agreed".
The cross tabulation of statement number two and statement number six shows that the majority of women who responded positively to the assertion on coupletoo, also responded positively to assertion on friends. As you can see by table two, both statements had the largest response (27%) that answered “Strongly Agreed”. However, 21% of the respondents that responded to statement six as “Strongly Agree”, also responded to statement two as “Agreed”, while 14% of the respondents that responded to statement two as “Agreed”, also responded to statement nine as “Agreed”. Even though the majority of the women responded positively towards assertions coupletoo and friends, 9% “Strongly Agreed” and 13% “Agreed” with statement two, but responded as “Neutral” in statement six.

$$\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Trustslf} & \text{A} & \text{N} & \text{D} & \text{SD} \\ \hline
\text{SA} & 5 & 3 & 1 & 1 \\ \hline
\text{A} & 12 & 7 & 3 & 1 \\ \hline
\text{N} & 9 & 6 & 2 & 2 \\ \hline
\text{D} & 8 & 6 & 2 & 2 \\ \hline
\text{SD} & 3 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\ \hline
\end{array}$$

Table 3

The cross tabulation of assertion number seven and assertion number nine shows that the majority of women who responded positively to the declaration acceptdis, also responded positively to declaration trustslf. As you can see by table three, the largest response (53%) falls under the “Strongly Agreed” column for trustslf, which includes an array of negative to positive responses from assertion acceptdis. Comparing the “Strongly Agreed” trustslf responses with the acceptdis, 24% responded positively, yet 19% responded negatively, and 13% responded with a
neutral answer. In comparison, 33% responded that they “Agree” to trustslf, while only 4% responded “Strongly Agreed” and only 10% “Agreed” to statement acceptdis, which means that 9% of the respondents answered “Neutral” and 10% responded negatively. Even though the majority of the women responded positively towards assertions acceptdis and trustslf, 30% of the women either “Strongly Disagreed” or “Disagreed” to statement seven when compared to statement nine.

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Table 4

The cross tabulation of statement number one and statement number four shows that the majority of women who responded positively to the assertion on selfknow, also responded positively to the assertion acceptnc. As you can see by table four, a majority of the answers in common are in the “Strongly Agree” category. In fact, 36% of the respondents that responded to statement one as “Strongly Agreed”, also responded "Strongly Agreed" to statement four. And, 26% of the respondents that responded to assertion one as “Strongly Agreed“, responded “Agreed” to assertion four. Thus, a majority of the female respondents (61%) responded positively to assertion selfknow and acceptnc. Meanwhile, 9% of the respondents that responded to statement one as “Agreed”, also responded to assertion four as “Agreed”, and 7% of the women that responded to statement one as “Agreed”, responded to statement four as “Neutral”.
The cross tabulation of statement number four and statement number five shows that the majority of women who responded positively to the assertion on whoare, also responded positively to assertion acceptnc. As you can see by table five, the largest number of answers are positive. In fact, 33% of the women responded to statement four and five as “Strongly Agreed,” and 24% of the women that responded to assertion five as “Strongly Agreed,” responded “Agreed” to assertion four. Meanwhile, 14% of the females answered statement four and five as “Agreed”, however, only 4% of the women that responded to assertion five as “Agreed,” responded “Strongly Agreed” to assertion four. Thus, the majority of the female respondents (76%) responded positively to assertion whoare and acceptnc. In the interim, 6% of the respondents that responded to statement five as “Agreed” and 6% responded “Strongly Agreed”, also responded to assertion four as “Neutral”.

### WHOARE & ACCEPTNC CROSS TABULATION

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**Table 5**

### SELFKNOW & DEPAPPAR CROSS TABULATION

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**Table 6**
The cross tabulation of statement number one and statement number eight shows a discrepancy between the two assertions. The largest (29%) of respondents “Strongly Agreed” with statement one, yet “Disagreed” with statement eight. Meanwhile only 20% of the women who answered “Strongly Agreed” in statement selfknow, answered “Agreed” in statement depappar. As you can see by table six, most of the women responded to assertion selfknow positively, however, the women who answered assertion depappar responded across the Likert scale as negatively (44%), neutrally (16%) and positively (40%).

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Table 7

The cross tabulation of assertion number five and assertion ten shows that almost all of the women responded positively to the declaration whoare, yet almost all responded negatively to declaration admirall. As you can see by table seven, the largest response (41%) falls under the “Strongly Agreed“ row for whoare and “Strongly Disagreed“ column for admirall. And, 24% falls under the “Strongly Agreed“ row for whoare and “Disagreed“ column for admirall. Continuing with the same pattern, 14% fall under the “Strongly Agreed“ row for whoare and “Disagreed“ column for admirall, and 9% females responded “Agreed“ for whoare and “Disagreed“ column for admirall. This says that 89% of the women responded positively to assertion whoare and negatively to admirall.
Summary

The survey, "Self-esteem: Women in Relationships," was distributed to women via e-mail. The e-mail was distributed to 120 e-mail addresses, which included 110 female e-mail addresses and 10 male e-mail addresses. The survey was then forwarded to a countless amount of other women who completed and returned the survey. Knowing how many additional e-mails were forwarded to other females is impossible to calculate, but based upon the number of original e-mails sent out (120), and based upon the number of returned completed surveys (70), the estimate return rate of the surveys is 58%.

Many of the women who took part in the survey said they were glad that someone was taking the time to write about self-esteem in relationships. The one thing women aspire is to have is a healthy relationship they love. As Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "Happiness is not a goal, it is a by-product." In order to accomplish the goal of having such a relationship, a woman must know herself, trust herself, and feel good about herself.
Chapter 5

ANALYZING THE SURVEY STATEMENTS

Recommendations and Conclusion

Theories of self-esteem share a common view that people's self-evaluations reflect, in part, beliefs about how they are perceived and valued by significant others. Baumeister and Leary (1995) proposed that people have a fundamental need to belong, such that they are strongly motivated to seek out positive social interactions and avoid interactions that are conflicted or that contain negative affects. Most issues that deal with self-esteem focus on the implications of possessing high self-esteem versus low self-esteem. That is, they tend to focus on differences in people's thoughts, moods, and actions that are associated with possessing self-feelings that are generally favorable or unfavorable. Moreover, these feelings normally are conceptualized as relatively stable qualities that characterize and differentiate people across time and contexts.

The survey's goal was to test the hypothesis that there was a pattern associated with the answers provided and also to test whether the majority of the women who took the survey agreed with the concepts developed most explicitly in the work of Drs. Cowan and Kinder. The following are explanations of the ten statements and the purpose of asking them.

Statement one, "I believe that to feel comfortable about being loved by another person, you have to know and accept yourself," is based on knowing who you are as a person first, knowing
what type of person you are, what you want to strive to be in life, and how you respond to daily events and life events. If a woman has uncertainties about herself, if she feels the characteristics of her personality are unlikable or undesirable, she may well worry that her partner will judge her with the same negativity she has herself. Validation amongst loved ones necessitates that a woman let's go of being a perfectionist and unrealistic about either themselves or their partner. If women are excessively judgmental of her self, she will most likely be that way with her partner (Cowan and Kinder, 1987, p.181). Not knowing yourself and trying to control someone else, does not come from strength, but from a feeling of insecurity. If a woman does not believe that her partner loves her unconditionally, and does not trust that love, the woman is not allowing the man his freedom to do as he chooses. The lack of trust creates a need to constantly know where her partner is, and restricts his activities or even makes him more dependent on the woman.

Statement two, “When I am in a relationship, I don’t want to be one of those couples who do everything together in a relationship,” supports a woman trusting her sense of identity, her unique feeling of independence and value. It is about a women becoming romantically involved with a man without her losing her identity and feeling of self-worth. It's about a woman spending time away from the man in her life to spend with friends or even crucial alone time. This time allows a woman to reflect when she is not with her partner. This time alone can actually strengthen her relationship when spending time away (Cowan & Kinder, 1997, p.51). A woman must trust that she will retain her sense of identity, a feeling of self-worthiness. As stated by Cowan and Kinder (1987), “Typically, (when spending time apart) the first feelings stirred up are like those you may have felt as a child — loneliness and fear. But, as you allow more time to pass without connecting with a man, you will find yourself quickly feeling better, stronger, more
Statement three, "I believe there are men who secretly or unconsciously want to date a woman who feels responsible in their relationship first and to themselves second." This statement is designed to see if a woman has a sense of independence. Some women may feel an anxiety based on their uncertainty about their independence in general. Cowan and Kinder (1987) state that, "Breaking free of that dependent tie requires confronting and overcoming fears of independence, working through the anxiety that inevitably accompanies the process of becoming independent. It also requires a more realistic acceptance of men as they are, not as childhood fantasies would like them to be" (p.33). Women today are not sure just how independent they need to be when in a relationship, and their uncertainty may create anxiety over the loss of identity. Women who doubt their self-worth are resistant to any type of closeness in a relationship. However, when a woman is confident with her independence and with herself, she will experience security in her capacity for closeness with a partner.

Statement four, "I believe that acceptance, the feeling of being loved, is perhaps the most important ingredient in the bonding process between women and men," discusses how the beginning part of a relationship is based on accepting the person for who they are. Initially, partners are thought to be terrific and flawless. The feeling of being accepted by a partner is an important aspect to any relationship. Feeling accepted for what a partner sees brings a sense of security and a feeling of value for who each individual is in the relationship. As a relationship intensifies, acceptance becomes more judicious and constrained, partners become more critical
of one another and it is easier to be disappointed. This is why it is critical to build a relationship on trust, acceptance and open communications right from the beginning of any relationship.

Statement five, "I believe that your significant other should love you for who you are, rather than being needed for what you do," signifies how a man will ultimately lose respect for a woman who is seeking to get close to him by being a savior, rescuer or even a martyr. In the end, he will sense that the woman never really required she be treated fairly, and this may drive the man away. Cowan and Kinder (1987) believe that, "If this woman had more self-esteem and an appropriate sense of entitlement, she would expect and even demand reciprocity. Giving too much and being a rescuer, an unconscious strategy for feeling more secure, never really works" (p.140). When a woman reacts like this with a man, it is encouraged by her insecurities and not by love or compassion. A woman needs to learn her own self-worth before she dedicates herself to a man's needs. She must know she is worthy of a mature and mutual love. A woman needs to be loved for being herself and knowing her own self-worth and accomplishments instead of the way she cares or loves her partner.

Statement six, "I believe that when dating or in a relationship, you need to spend time with friends or do things by yourself, such as going to the health club or spending a couple of hours browsing art galleries on a Saturday," is similar to statement two. These questions look at how a woman feels about her own independence. Statement six identifies if a woman would be willing to spend valuable time away from her partner, with female friends or essential alone time. This time away allows a woman time apart to find out what she feels emotionally about her partner or
on other life occurring situations. This time apart allows a woman to take a step back and evaluate the relationship and her feelings. The time away may help to realize the difference between reasonable and unreasonable expectations. Unreasonable expectations or demands may really be an expression of unresolved personal dilemmas. A partner should not be expected to take responsibility for solving personal problems; therefore it's essential for people to take the time away from their partner to re-evaluate their own personal situations and struggles.

Statement seven, "I believe to have a healthy relationship, it is acceptable for a woman to periodically have uncertainty, distance and tension between a woman and a man," describes how a woman occasionally needs time away from a man. The distance that a woman puts between her and her partner will ultimately create a desire for a man to be with his partner. The physical and emotional separation causes a man to "long" or "want" to be with his partner, which is a much stronger desire than "having" a woman. The occasional separation and suspense that a woman bestows towards her partner keeps a man in suspense, and also keeps him wondering about his partner's love and desire for him. The power to risk separation, if uncertainty can be endured, may warrant a more genuine love and a woman will also discover an inner strength. "The separation of a woman's identity and desires will motivate him to emotionally open up with his partner, which will over all build and develop their relationship" (Cowan & Kinder, 1987, p.145).

Statement eight, "I believe that when I fall in love with someone, my dependency needs become more apparent," is based on when a woman falls for a partner and instead of living life
as an individual, a woman will tend to fall dependent and needy on her partner (Cowan & Kinder, 1985, p.62). Everyone wants to feel appreciated and cherished, which adds to their self-confidence and self-esteem (Cowan & Kinder, 1985 p.62). A woman who chooses to depend on men for solutions on her self-worth issues, need to learn to value themselves and to trust and love themselves for who they are. If a woman seeks a man to fulfill her time, self-worth, and life, she needs to step back and learn how to work on building up her own self-esteem.

Statement nine, “I believe that people feel much better about themselves when they trust their mate,” is based on the subject of a woman’s jealousy in a relationship and how it can allow a woman to be enveloped by distrust. By a woman allowing such feelings, she will feel worse than she should. Jealousy and suspicion creates a sense of distrust, and with these feelings a woman will not only resent her relationship, her partner, but also herself (Cowan & Kinder, 1987, p.120). Women who exhibit these types of feelings are exaggerating negative feelings about themselves and under valuing positive ones. Acting-out in jealousy through doubts and accusations not only amplifies negative feelings, but also may put distance between the woman and her partner. Jealousy underlies the feeling of insecurity, inadequacy, and unworthiness. While some amount of jealousy is normal in a relationship, it can get out of hand and become harmful when fed by self-doubt. Jealousy can hurt not only the object of jealousy, but also one's self, because it corrodes our sense of self-worth.

Low self-esteem is a powerful basis for a woman playing the role of a martyr. Statement ten, “I believe that women should be admired when they give their all in order to please men in
an attempt to win their love” indicates that a woman who is too giving in a relationship may be considered a martyr. Women who relinquish their power and refuse to acknowledge and stand up for their own needs, are vulnerable to becoming martyrs. Some women who are martyrs exhibit an aggressive behavior by trying to exhibit control over their partners, by inducing guilt (Cowan & Kinder, 1987 p.147). Women who choose not to develop personally and refuse to acknowledge and stand up for their own personal psychological and self-needs. Esteem has an impact on all areas of a woman’s life, relationships being a large area. Women often are caring, all giving, and often self-sacrificing for others when it comes being involved in a committed relationship. These actions tie a woman’s self-worth and self-value into how successful she is in relationships (Cowan & Kinder, 1987 p.150). Women often confuse being needed with being loved. This kind of socialization creates beliefs that the more she gives, the more she puts others’ needs above her own, and the more her partner will feel secure. At first, it may appear to look like the woman is being loving and generous, but soon her partner feels guilty with all the self-sacrificing the woman portrays. Women with low self-esteem feel more secure when they are fulfilling their partner's needs. A woman filled with self-doubt and insecurities will sacrifice for him by trying to make a man feel sorry for her, and constantly give in to him (Cowan & Kinder, 1987 p.150). As an attempt of control, this type of sacrifice may lead a woman to believe that her partner would never leave her since she is willing to sacrifice and give.

Conclusion

Healthy relationships are composed of two independent healthy individuals that have
decided to join together for personal interests and add a new feature into their lives. Forming such a bond does not mean that one is “giving up” their individuality, it means that two people become a union, yet each person has individual freedoms, responsibilities to their partner, and responsibilities to the relationship. Thus, each person maintains individuality while agreeing to share a portion of their live with the other. Healthy people form relationships in which there exists mutual respect, a willingness to negotiate fairly, sensitivity to the needs of both partners, a desire and willingness to regularly work on the relationship. They are people who are compassionate, supportive, helpful, motivating, communicative, assertive, and open to change. Their relationships are fulfilling, though not all encompassing in their lives.

Men and women often view relationships very differently. Women are generally more interested in and more focused on the quality of the relationship than men. Women have often experienced intimacy in their friendships with other women and seek to have a similar experience in a relationship with a significant other.

Love allows everyone to carry around a feeling about him or her self that makes he or she believe in being special, desirable, precious, and essentially good. However, these feelings need to come from within one’s self, not from someone else, such as a partner or romantic lover. These feelings are part of every person’s essential being. Women need to choose to believe in these feelings in the context of a relationship. A woman’s happiness, fulfillment and feelings of self-worth center on her own psychological needs. People are influenced to uphold a positive self-image because self-esteem protects them from anxiety. The beginning cause of this
relationship between self-esteem and protection from anxiety live in an individual's childhood interactions with his or her parents and other socializing events. As theorists have noted, in early childhood, the need fulfillment, love, and protection given by the parents make the helpless child's initial basis of security (Bowlby, 1982, Sorensen, 1998). Thus, self-esteem has provided protection from relationship anxiety because it is a condition for feeling loved, safe and secure.

The conclusion that women with low self-esteem tend to have unrewarding relationships with men because they have an increased emotional dependency on men has been shown to be caused by self-defeating behaviors and insecurities in relationships, and this paper and research has been supported by the authors Drs. Cowan and Kinder, their book, *Women Men Love Women Men Leave*, by the research provided by many theorists, and also by the 10 survey statements 70 female respondents answered based upon the book. With the sources used to develop this paper, women with low self-esteem in relationships have been discussed and researched in order for women in relationships to know how to lead a healthy and satisfying relationship.

To end on a personal basis, I have read and researched many journals, books and magazine articles to help support this paper, and it has been amazing the amount of information I have gathered and even more amazing the amount I have learned about growing as an individual first, before I can enter into a relationship. I believe that this paper has not only given me the ability to graduate from my Masters program, but it has also allowed me to blossom into a woman I am proud of today: a mature, worthy, high self-esteem woman who knows her goals and achievements. I have learned over the last year and a half that in order to be loved, I need to love
myself. And that's exactly what I have tried to accomplish. I can see myself more clearly now as an individual, rather than someone who devotes her life to taking care of and giving herself to her partner. We do have choices. And one of the most important of them is to choose to recognize past hurts, understand how they affect current experiences, and allow the future to be different. And with that said, I end by quoting Margaret Thatcher, “Disciplining yourself to do what you know is right and important, although difficult, is the highroad to pride, self-esteem, and personal satisfaction.” (http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/ml20143.html).


Appendix A
Survey
Self-esteem: Women in Relationships

This survey is being conducted for a Thesis project as I complete my Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communications at Seton Hall University. The research topic focuses on the psychological factors of women's self-esteem as part of a male and female (heterosexual) relationship.

All survey responses will be confidential. If you wish to know the results of this survey, a presentation of the research will be given in May 2003 in the Walsh Library at Seton Hall University. Please let me know if you are interested in attending or would like a copy of the survey results.

The following questions are designed to explore the attitudes of agreement in the following statements. This survey should take about 5-7 minutes to complete. Please answer the questions if you are currently not dating, dating or in a relationship with someone. Please participate fully by completing the entire form thoughtfully and returning it to me at the contact information listed below. I would greatly appreciate your response by December 2, 2002.

Your participation in this project is very much appreciated!

Please return completed forms to:
Sandra Stanislowsky
13 Hickory Place
Livingston, NJ 07039
Fax: 973-496-7354
Sunflowers23@juno.com or
Sandra.Stanislowsky@era.com
Self-esteem: Women in Relationships

Key:
SA = Strongly Agree  A = Agree  N = Neutral  D = Disagree  SD = Strongly Disagree

1. I believe that to feel comfortable about being loved by another person, you have to know and accept yourself.

2. When I am in a relationship, I don't want to be one of those couples who do everything together in a relationship.

3. I believe there are men who secretly or unconsciously want to date a woman who feel responsible in their relationship first and to themselves second.

4. I believe that acceptance, the feeling of being loved, is perhaps the most important ingredient in the bonding process between women and men.

5. I believe that your significant other should love you for who you are, rather than being needed for what you do.

6. I believe that when dating or in a relationship, you need to spend time with friends or do things by yourself, such as going to the health club or spending a couple of hours browsing art galleries on a Saturday.

7. I believe to have a healthy relationship it is acceptable for a woman to periodically have uncertainty, distance and tension between a woman and a man.

8. I believe that when I fall in love with someone, my dependency needs become more apparent.

9. I believe that people feel much better about themselves when they trust their mate.

10. I believe that women should be admired when they give their all in order to please men in an attempt to win their love.

Response (Check or circle one)

SA  A  N  D  SD
Secondary Questions:

Please let me know more information about yourself:

1. Your gender (circle one):
   - Female
   - Male

2. Your age (circle one):
   - 25-35 years of age
   - 36-45 years of age
   - 46-55 years of age
   - 56-65 years of age
   - 66+ years of age

3. Your ethnicity (circle one):
   - White/Caucasian
   - Black/African descent
   - Asian
   - Latino/Hispanic
   - East Indian
   - Middle Eastern
   - Native American
   - Other ______

4. What is your current occupational status? (circle one)
   - At home mother
   - Teacher/Professor
   - Business Career
   - Retail
   - Military
   - Self-employed
   - Unemployed
   - Retired
   - Other ______

5. Are you currently? (circle one)
   - Not dating someone
   - Dating someone
   - In a long-term relationship (dating, engaged or married)

6. How long have you been dating? (circle one)
   - Dating:
     - 1-2 dates
     - 3-4 dates
     - 5-6 dates
     - 2-3 months
     - 4-5 months
   - Long-term relationship:
     - 6 months – 1 year
     - 1-2 years
     - 2-5 years
     - 5+ years
Appendix B
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Self-esteem: Women in Relationships