



Harmonic Connections PLUS LEGACY INSTITUTE

"An educated individual is an empowered individual."

P.I.E.S. Dimensions of Romantic Partnerships

“WE’ve Got the POWER!”

GENDER ROLES in romantic partnerships can be very complicated. Deciding what model to follow and what is needed to help both partners feel comfortable is not easy for most people. The **PIES Dimensions of Romantic Partnerships** allows couples to distinguish between different parts of their relationships and manage them as well.

There is no one size-fits-all standard for gender roles that works for all couples. While considering different ways to look at roles in relationships, it may be intimidating for some and overwhelming for others to think outside the box about what men and women are able to contribute to their romantic partnerships.

The truth is that each individual couple has the power to determine how they will set up their romantic partnerships. For some couples, there will be a preference for more traditional roles, while for other couples traditional gender roles are not practical.

To consider how the PIES Dimensions can work for your relationship, first recognize that **romantic partnerships are like organizations** - *an organized group of people working toward a common purpose*. Often, romantic partnerships are considered the foundation of the home where the couple serves as the leaders in the home who determine the structure of the organization.

Using the same structures used in organizations, couples can consider new ways to navigate their partnerships. For the purpose of this resource, **partnership** is defined as: *the state of being “a person who takes part in an undertaking with another with shared*

risks and profits.” Consider this partnership in four areas or *dimensions* that affect romantic partnerships.

- **Power Dimension**
(power & decision-making)
- **Individual Dimension**
(values - about manhood & womanhood)
- **Economic Dimension** (educational & employment positioning)
- **Social Dimension**
(domestic roles & responsibilities)

Viewing your romantic partnership through the PIES Dimensions will help make the structure of your romantic partnership more simple and divide them into manageable chunks. This will also give both of you an opportunity to discuss, investigate and analyze the traditional and non-traditional parts of your romantic partnership.

Within romantic partnerships, gender role expectations influence power structures; beliefs about manhood and womanhood; economic stability based on education and employment opportunities; and domestic roles and responsibilities.

What individuals believe about manhood and womanhood, who earns money, and who should do what in the home influences the Power Dimension within the romantic partnership. Likewise, changes that happen in the other **PIES** Dimensions affect how couples distribute power and make decisions within their relationships. It affects the type of **POWER COUPLE** you will be.

Let's look at each dimension more closely.

PIES DIMENSION	DESCRIPTIONS	TRADITIONAL BELIEFS
Power Dimension	Positioning in power and decision making	There is hierarchical male leadership decision making; wives support decisions
Individual Dimension	Personal views about manhood and womanhood	There are innate/inborn differences between men & women for specific gender roles
Economic Dimension	Attainment of education, employment, and income	Husband: financial provider, higher education & outside employment
Social Dimension	Contributions to domestic roles and responsibilities	Husband: handle business; Wife: handle meals, housekeeping & childcare

Power Dimension

The Power Dimension deals with the **decision-making** in the relationship. It is all about where the power and influence lie between partners. Shared decision-making is most often seen in contemporary households and helps stabilize and improve the quality of the relationship. Traditionally, women have been positioned as subordinates to men; while men are positioned as the head or leader of a household and are entitled to have more power than women when making decisions. It is an asymmetrical perspective that grants more power and freedom to men than women.

Individual Dimension

The Individual Dimension is about people's **personal beliefs** about manhood and womanhood. It deals with what an individual believes that a man or a woman ought to do or how they should act. The way people are raised and their individual perspectives about what it means to be born a boy or a girl will shape their views about gender roles and have a profound effect on their romantic partnerships. Traditionally, there are beliefs about the personal characteristics of men (i.e. aggressive, dominant, leader, etc.) and women (i.e. docile, gentle, emotional, etc.) that shape expectations for relationships.

Economic Dimension

The Economic Dimension involves considering where the **financial resources** come from in a couple's household. Education levels influence employment and the income that comes into a household. Formal education influences the opportunities for the

gainful employment of individuals and incomes as well. Traditionally, men were expected to be responsible for total provision of home, while women were dependent on men's income.

Social Dimension

The Social Dimension involves the roles individuals play with each other **socially within their households**. It involves consideration of domestic roles and responsibilities within the romantic partnership relationship. For example, who is responsible for the household chores or caring for the children? Or who deals with car repairs? Traditionally, women have been expected to take care of the inside of the household, while men took care of responsibilities outside of the home that are needed to keep the household functioning.

The Importance of Understanding P.I.E.S. Dimensions

In order to have a mutually satisfying relationship, each partner needs to deal with their individual beliefs and be willing to discuss them with the other. Some believe that if you are in a romantic partnership there must be specific gender role distinctions. However, in many modern romantic partnerships, people have to learn how to deal with fulfilling roles in their households that do not fit neatly into the traditional expectations for men and women.

Often there is an expectation that ideals that are comfortable for one person should be comfortable for their partner. That is most often not the case. Because we bring different *experiences, exposure,*

expertise, and *education* to our partnerships; and we come from unique *environments*, we should expect that the two people in a romantic partnership will see the world differently. And if we are to open up ourselves to new possibilities in our relationships, then we need to make room in our perspectives to consider new ways of thinking about things and fulfilling roles.

Cognitive Dissonance

When we do not understand the different facets of our relationships, we can experience *cognitive dissonance*. Cognitive dissonance occurs whenever there is a contradiction between someone's knowledge, opinion, or belief about something and the reality of the person's life, behaviors or environment. Simply put, it is the internal discord that can be birthed when *a person believes one thing, but seeks to do another*.

This often happens in romantic partnerships when one or both partners have individual beliefs that do not line up with their behaviors. For some, the internal discord may cause partners to try harder to fit themselves or their partners into expected roles. However, this dissonance can also provoke individuals to seek new ways to relieve the tension and disharmony in their relationships.

Slicing P.I.E.S. in Your Relationship




To decrease cognitive dissonance when thinking about gender roles, more

information is needed for those who do not fit into traditional gender roles. The P.I.E.S. Model offers opportunities for unique couple solutions to dissolve cognitive dissonance. The P.I.E.S. Model offers couples a way to study their partners, consider one another's strengths and limitations, and uniquely construct gender roles to fit each other's needs.

In the 21st century, having dual incomes is often a necessity and there is less negativity about men and women who share non-traditional roles in their partnerships. Roles are less traditional than they have ever been and the need for men and women to know how to function in different roles in their romantic partnerships is necessary for many to find relationship satisfaction and success. The P.I.E.S. Model deals with diverse types of gender roles to address those found among non-traditional couples. It adds insights to seemingly incompatible perspectives about gender roles.

***Power Couple Mentoring** was developed to provide additional information and objective educational tools that couples can use to effectively structure their unique household situations.*

PIES Dimensions of Romantic Partnership

	CLASSIC COUPLE 	CROWN COUPLE 	ALLIANCE COUPLE 
Type of Power	Traditional Hierarchical	Hybrid Titular	Interdependent Shared Powers
Leadership Style	Hierarchical Leadership	Servant Leadership	Co-Leadership
Headship Structure	Man is the head where headship means leader, commander, or supervisor; the one who is "in charge"	Nominal (name only) leadership that may exclude responsibilities; man perceived to have innate and intrinsic leadership abilities	Interdependent; flexible; head viewed anatomically as a metaphor for the husband as the "head" and the woman as the "body"
Power Dimension (power & decision making)	Husband makes decisions	Decisions likely made together, with greater weight on the husband's perspective	Both man and woman are decision makers
Individual Dimension (values about manhood & womanhood)	"Man and woman innately created with certain characteristics to fulfill predetermined roles"	"God-given" or innate characteristics of male headship/ leadership	Emphasizes mutuality and partnering that highlights each partner's strengths, while acknowledging physical differences
Economic Dimension (educational & employment positioning)	Man holds economic responsibility for the household	Man expected to be the financial provider and the woman may assist	Either man and/or woman may contribute to household finances
Social Dimension (domestic roles & responsibilities)	Man focuses outside the home; wife is in charge of domestic affairs	Man and woman have greater responsibility in the home	Domestic responsibilities likely to be determined based on strengths, abilities, time, etc. of individuals
Pros	Hierarchical leadership is pre-established and there are fixed gender roles, when both spouses willingly accept roles, conflict about gender roles is reduced	Reduces conflict about leadership positions in the home	Allows each spouse to operate in his or her own strengths to function within the household; allows compromise and flexibility about gender roles
Cons	Man or woman may not naturally fit or be equipped to fulfill the traditional expectations of the gender roles	Potential conflict about expectations for leadership duties; dependent on woman's compliance and agreement to view the man as the leader of the home	Requires continual communication and problem solving to maintain agreement and make adjustments in relationship roles

©2013 Andrea Little Mason

The

PIES Dimensions of Romantic Partnerships Model is based on research titled [Non-Conventional Gender Roles in Relationship Education Curricula for African Americans: A Content Analysis](#)

conducted by Dr. Andrea Little Mason for [Harmonic Connections PLUS](#).