

Interpersonal Attraction

Why do people form relationships with others?

- People are social animals who have a basic “need to belong”
 - Newborns are responsive to human faces
 - Infants engage in social smiling
 - Having close social ties is associated with being happier & more satisfied, and not having them with loneliness, depression, worse physical health, and earlier death.

Why are people initially attracted to each other?

– Exercise:

Proximity/Propinquity

- PROXIMITY/propinquity (or geographical closeness) is one of the most powerful predictors of whether two people will become friends.

Proximity

- **Segal (1974)**
- **Police trainees: Proximity was a better predictor of friendship formation than was similarity.**

Proximity

- Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950
- Proximity and friendship in married student housing. Person most often named as a friend lived next door.

Why would physical proximity increase the chances that we will like someone?

- More interaction:

- Familiarity: General principle (humans, other animals)

Mere exposure effect (Zajonc)

- Mere exposure: The tendency for novel stimuli to be liked more or rated more positively after one has been repeatedly exposed to them.
- Novel stimuli (e.g., Turkish words, Chinese characters, men's faces)

Studies by Zajonc & colleagues (late 70s and early 80s)

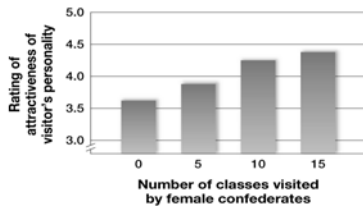
- Women wore headphones and, in one ear, heard a prose passage and repeated the words outloud, checking for errors. In the second ear, they "heard" novel melodies played so softly they were not aware that they had heard them.
- IV: Melodies "heard" below awareness (i.e., subliminally) versus melodies never heard.
- DVs: Recognition of melodies (Have you ever heard this melody before? Yes or No?)
- Liking for melodies (Do you like this melody? Yes or No?)
- Results: Recognition:
- Liking:

Moreland & Beach, 1992

- IV: Four female research assistants attended class 0, 5, 10, or 15 times
- DV: How much liked RA
- Results: The more times a stranger attended the class, the more she was liked.

What Causes Attraction?

- **The Person Next Door: The Proximity Effect**



Physical attractiveness

- Bias to like others who are attractive
- Dion (1972)
- IV: mild vs. severe misbehavior
- IV: attractive or unattractive photo of child
- DV: Rate typicality of behavior
- Results: Severe misbehavior rated _____ when performed by an _____ child than an _____ child.

Physical attractiveness is associated with liking.

- Hatfield et al. (1966)
- Couples randomly paired at “computer dance”
- Assessed personality, aptitude, physical attractiveness
- Results:

What is attractive or beautiful?

- Is it an objective measurable quality, or is it more in the “eye of the beholder”?

Is attractiveness objective?

- Arguments for Objective Standard
- High consensus across countries, race/ethnicities
- Particular features are associated with attractiveness (average, symmetric)
- Babies’ preferences

Is attractiveness subjective?

- Arguments for Subjective Standard
- Cross-cultural differences in ways to look beautiful
- Standards of beauty within a culture change over time
- When we like people, we see them as more attractive.

Attractiveness Standards

- Probably both universal and variable components of attractiveness
- Physical attractiveness predicts more positive evaluations (true in childhood and later in life)

Why are physically attractive people liked more?

- **Aesthetic appeal.** People and objects may be more rewarding when their appearance is pleasing.

Why are physically attractive people liked more?

• **What is Beautiful is Good stereotype:**

The belief that physically attractive individuals possess other desirable characteristics.

- Fairy tales
- Media

Physical attractiveness and self- fulfilling prophecy

- **Self fulfilling prophecy:** If we expect that a person has positive qualities, then we may act more favorably toward that person and, as a consequence, bring out positive qualities.

Self fulfilling prophecy

- (Snyder, Tanke & Berscheid, 1977)
- Men received "background" information about a woman they were about to talk with on a phone, info included a photo. Women received same info, but no photo.
- IV: Photo of woman either attractive or unattractive
- DVs: 1) Men's expectations about the woman 2) Observers' ratings of the woman's behavior
- Results: When men expected that the woman was attractive, she was judged as warmer, more confident, and more animated than when men believed they were talking with an unattractive woman. (self-fulfilling prophecy)

Why?

- Attractive people develop better social skills.
 - Gender
 - Physically attractive men > socially skilled (confident, assertive).
 - Physically attractive women < socially skilled.
 - Beauty may make it harder to avoid sex role stereotype.

Why?

- Social profit: People may be attracted to those perceived as physically attractive because they believe that some of the glory may rub off on them.

Social profit

- Assimilation effects occur when:
 - Both men & women are paired w/an attractive same sex partner and appear at the same time.
 - Men are paired with an attractive female partner and appear at the same time.

No social profit

- Contrast effects occur when the attractive person appears before the less attractive person.

When is attractiveness important?

- Attractiveness is probably very important in first impressions.
 - Attractiveness and grooming predict first impressions in job interviews (Cash & Janda, 1984; Mack & Rainey, 1990; Marvelle & Green, 1980).
- May become less important as we become more acquainted with the other person.

Consequences for physically attractive people...may not always trust praise

- Major et al. (1984): Ps wrote an essay that they believed would be judged by another subject of the opposite sex.
- Quasi-IV: men and women who perceived themselves as either very attractive (physically) or unattractive.
- IV 2: Told evaluator would watch thru one-way mirror while s/he wrote essay or that evaluator could not see them.
- All were given an identical highly positive evaluation of their work
- Results: Unattractive Ps felt _____ about the quality of their work when thought evaluator could _____ them; attractive subjects felt _____ when thought evaluator could _____ them.

What does attractiveness predict?

- Physical attractiveness of college students does not predict adjustment or well-being in middle age.
- More attractive, more likely to marry, but not more satisfied w/marriage and not happier w/life in general.

Summary

- Proximity increases the chances that we'll meet someone.
- Familiarity helps us feel at ease.
- Beauty may increase the chances of a first encounter and provide aesthetic rewards.
- What determines whether people actually develop a longer relationship?

Do birds of a feather flock together, or do opposites attract?

- Similarity is the rule.
- Newcomb (1961): Unacquainted male transfer students. After 13 wks of living together in a boardinghouse, those whose agreement in backgrounds was initially highest were most likely to have formed close friendships.

Similarity

- Griffitt & Veitch (1974) confined 13 unacquainted volunteers (men) in a fallout shelter. By knowing the men's opinions on different issues, the researchers were able to predict significantly better than chance which people each man would most like and most dislike.

Similarity

- Sprecher & Duck (1994) paired 83 student couples on blind get-acquainted dates. The 16% who saw each other for a second date were more similar to each other than those who did not see each other a second time.

Two kinds of romantic love:

- Passionate love (state of high arousal, being in love is ecstasy)
- Companionate love, which is a more stable longer-term love, based on feelings of intimacy and affection.

Passionate love

- What leads to passionate love?
 - Culture must believe in idea of “romantic love.”

Passionate love

- Must come into contact with someone who is an appropriate love object.
 - Role of chance

Passionate love

- *Given a chance encounter*, what increases the probability that you will fall in love?
 - Role of arousal

Passionate love

- Two factor theory of passionate love (Hatfield & Berscheid)
 - First, person must experience a general state of arousal
 - Second, person must attribute this arousal to the potential partner

Passionate love

- Excitation transfer: the process whereby arousal caused by one stimulus (e.g., an anxiety provoking situation) is added to the arousal from a second stimulus (e.g., an attractive potential partner) and the combined arousal is attributed to the second stimulus (e.g., the potential partner)

Excitation transfer?

- Dutton & Aron (1974)
- Quasi M: Walked across a scary suspension bridge (high arousal) or a more standard bridge (low arousal)
 - DV: Later calls or does not call the attractive female E
 - Results:
 - Limitation?
