Interpersonal Attraction: From First Impressions to Close Relationships

Chapter 10
What causes attraction?

- People in close relationships are highly interdependent
- feeling of “oneness”
- another person becomes part of your “self”
Propinquity

- People you see and interact with the most often are most likely to become your friends (and perhaps more)

-  
  "mere exposure” effect: the more we see something (i.e., more familiar) the more we like it
Exercise

• Write down your favorite fruit, vegetable, and letter of the alphabet
Similarity

- match between two people’s interests, attitudes, values, backgrounds, and/or personality, fuels the development of relationships that begin based on propinquity
- similarity in interpersonal style
- similarity in interests and experiences
3 reasons similarity is important in attraction

• we expect similar others to like us and are more likely to initiate relationships

• similar others validate our characteristics and beliefs

• we draw inferences about character based on perceived similarity
Reciprocal Liking

- If we think another person likes us, we’re more likely to like them
- Self-fulfilling prophecy (we act more likable in their presence)
- Low self-esteem people like those who criticize them better!
Physical Attractiveness

- major determinant of liking in studies of first impressions
- both sexes rate physical attractiveness as important
What is attractive?

• Cultural norms transmitted via media
• Features listed in book
• Appears to be some cultural consistency about what is attractive
The power of Familiarity

• Familiarity is a critical variable that explains attraction (why do couples look alike?)

• Familiarity underlies propinquity, similarity, and reciprocal liking

• We like what we know!
What is beautiful is good

• People assume that PA is highly correlated with other desirable traits (”what is beautiful is good” stereotype)

• more sociable, extraverted, and socially competent

• operates across cultures

• kernel of truth (self-fulfilling prophecy; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid (1977) study)
Initial Attraction

- retrospective reports
- Aron et al (1989) found reciprocal liking and attractiveness important for love; similarity and propinquity were less important. For friendships: reciprocal liking, attractiveness, similarity, and propinquity were all important.
- Duck (1994) physical attractiveness and similarity were strongest predictors of romantic attraction.
Theories of Interpersonal Attraction
Social Exchange Theory

- How people feel about a relationship depends on
  - their perceptions of the **REWARDS** and **COSTS** of the relationship
  - the kind of relationships they believe they deserve or expect to have (**Comparison Level** or **CL**)
  - their chances of having a better relationship with someone else (**CL alt**)
Social exchange (con’t)

• Outcome of relationship = rewards - costs
• Satisfaction in relationship depends on CL
• Whether or not you leave depends on CL alt
• Research evidence supports the theory
Long-term relationships

- Rusbult’s investment model of relationships
- Investments = something that would be lost if one left the relationship
- greater the investment, less likely to leave
- Commitment = satisfaction, CLalt, and investments
Exchange Theory

Demonstration

• Need volunteers
Equity Theory

- People are happiest in relationships when rewards, costs, and contributions are equal to those of the other person.
- Under- and over-benefitted persons should be motivated to restore equity (most likely for under-benefitted!)
Long-term relationships

• Exchange relationships (tit for tat)

• Communal relationships (accounting is looser and occurs over time)
Close Relationships
Defining Love

- Companionate Love vs. Passionate Love
- Triangular theory of love
- Love styles
Companionate vs. Passionate Love

• Companionate love: feelings of love and affection we feel for another person, but not necessarily passion or arousal

• Passionate love: intense longing, physiological arousal

• Americans value PL over CL
Triangular Theory of Love
Love Styles

• Basic theories people have about love that guide their behavior in relationships

• Eros (passionate)

• Ludus (love as a game)

• Storge (love from friendship)

• Pragma (pragmatic love)

• Mania (roller-coaster love)

• Agape (self-less love)
• Hendrick & Hendrick (1986) find that men are more ludidc and women more storgic and pragmatic; no differences in eros and agape.

• Real-life couples have similar love styles

• Longer lasting relationships characterized by high eros and low ludus love
Evolution and Choosing a Mate
Attachment Style

- People develop expectations about the trustworthiness of others and lovability of the self from earlier relationships with caregivers (Bowlby, Ainsworth)

- Three attachment styles

- Influence adult relationships
Secure Attachment

• responsive caregivers as infants
• trust, lack of concern with being abandoned
• self is worthy and liked
• others are reliable and trustworthy
Avoidant Attachment

- caregivers were aloof and distant
- suppression of attachment needs because attempts to be intimate were rebuffed
- self is worthy but others are not to be trusted
- Difficult to develop intimate relationships
Anxious/Ambivalent Attachment

- inconsistent and overbearing caregivers
- concerned that others will not reciprocate one’s desire for intimacy
- high levels of anxiety
- self is unworthy, others are trustworthy
Attachment Style

• early relationships develop into schemas for later relationships
• can change over time and in the contexts of different relationships
• see the female anxious/male avoidant pairing often (reverse doesn’t work well)
Ending Relationships

- American divorce rate is 50%
- 2/3 of all current first marriages will end
Duck’s 4 stages of dissolution

• Intrapersonal (focusing on dissatisfaction)
• Dyadic (revealing dissatisfaction to partner)
• Social (announcing breakup to others)
• Intrapersonal (devising accounts of the breakup as recovery begins)
Rusbult

- 4 types of behavior that occur in troubled relationships
- exit (harming or terminating the relationship)
- voice (actively constructively attempting to improve conditions)
- loyalty (waiting for conditions to improve)
- neglect (letting things deteriorate)
Remaining facts

• no gender differences in who initiates breakups

• people who break up feel better, being dumped feels worse, and mutual are in the middle (no surprises there!)

• 30% of breakups in college were “fatal attractions” qualities that were initially attractive became the reasons for the breakup
Breaking Up