

Attraction

Need to Belong

A Fundamental Human Motive

The Need to Belong

- We are born with reflexes that orient us toward people.
- The need to belong is a basic human motive.
- We care deeply about what others think of us.
 - We spend much time and money trying to make ourselves presentable and attractive.
 - Can lead to social anxiety in some individuals.
- Those with a network of close social ties tend to be happier, healthier, and more satisfied with life than those who are more isolated.

The Thrill of Affiliation

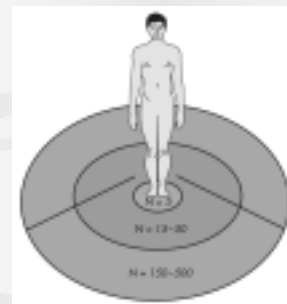
- Need for Affiliation: The desire to establish social contact with others.
 - We differ in the strength of our need for affiliation.
 - We are motivated to establish and maintain an optimum balance of social contact.
- Stress arouses our need for affiliation.
 - But only if being with others is seen as useful in reducing the negative impact of the stressful situation.
 - Others help us gain cognitive clarity about the stressful event allowing us to better cope with the impending threat.
 - “Misery loves the company of those in the same miserable situation” (Gump & Kulik)

The Agony of Loneliness

- Shyness is a pervasive problem with painful consequences.
 - Can be an inborn personality trait as well as a learned reaction to failed interactions with others.
- Loneliness: A feeling of deprivation about existing social relations.
 - Most likely to occur during times of transition or disruption.
 - Loneliest group in America are adolescents and young adults 18 to 30 years old.
 - We employ various strategies to combat loneliness.

The Three Facets of Loneliness

- Intimate, relational, and collective



Theoretical Perspectives That Can Be Applied to Many Aspects of Attraction

- Balance Theory (Recall consistency, dissonance, etc.)
 - Basic assumption is that people prefer consistency in their thoughts, evaluations of others, etc. Inconsistency or imbalance is psychologically uncomfortable.
 - Second assumption is that imbalanced situations shift toward balance.
- Reinforcement (Reward) Theory
 - Basic assumption: We come to like people associated with positive experiences (rewards) and dislike people associated with negative experiences (punishment).
- Evolutionary Perspective
 - All humans exhibit patterns of attraction and mate selection that favor the conception, birth, and survival of their offspring.

Some Determinants of Initial Attraction and the Beginnings of Friendship

- Proximity
- Familiarity
- Personal Qualities of the Person
 - physical attractiveness
 - "liking"
- Rewardingness
- Similarity

The Initial Attraction

Familiarity: Being There

- To whom are we most likely to become attracted?
- Two basic and necessary factors in the attraction process:
 - Proximity.
 - Exposure.

The Proximity Effect

- The single best predictor of attraction is physical proximity, or nearness.
- Where we live influences the friends we make.
 - College students tend to date those who live either nearby or in the same type of housing as they do.

The Mere Exposure Effect

- Contrary to folk wisdom, familiarity does not "breed contempt."
 - Mere Exposure Effect: The more often we are exposed to a stimulus, the more we come to like that stimulus.
- Familiarity can also influence our self-evaluations.
 - We like the face we see in the mirror more than the face others see.
- Limitations:
 - Repeated exposure to an initially disliked stimulus may breed more contempt.
 - A frequently presented stimulus loses impact if it becomes "overexposed."

- **The Mere Exposure Effect:** *Merely seeing someone's face and name makes them more likeable.* You are more likely to develop attraction to someone you've seen a lot.

- This effect probably helped our ancestors survive: What was familiar was more trustworthy, safe.

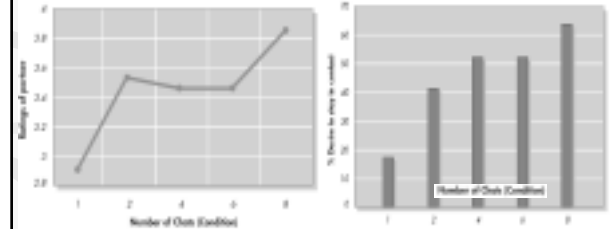
Implications

- In the modern age, thanks to mirrors and photos, the face we are most familiar with is our own; so we are now attracted to people that look like us.



Study:
Voters
preferred a
candidate
whose
picture
incorporated
the voter's
features.

Virtual Familiarity Breeds Liking



Physical Attractiveness: Getting Drawn In

- We react more favorably to others who are physically attractive than to those who are not.
- Bias for beauty is pervasive.

Physical Attractiveness: Getting Drawn In

- Classic “computer dating” studies conducted beginning in the mid-1960s: College students were randomly assigned to dates and later asked how much they liked the date and their desire to go out with date agains. ***Physical attractiveness of date was the best predictor of liking and seeking a second date – for males and females.*** (When dating goes further, similarity prevails)
- But is physical beauty an objective or subjective quality?

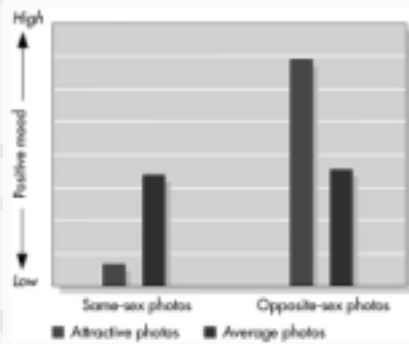
Is Beauty an Objective Quality?

- Some argue that certain faces are inherently more attractive than others.
 - High levels of agreement for facial ratings across ages and cultures.
 - Certain physical features of the face are reliably associated with judgments of attractiveness.
 - Babies prefer faces considered attractive by adults.

Is Beauty a Subjective Quality?

- People from different cultures enhance their beauty in very different ways.
 - What is found attractive in one part of the world is often seen as repulsive in another part of the world.
- Ideal body shapes also vary across cultures, as well as among racial groups within a culture.
- Standards of beauty change over time.
- Situational factors can influence judgments of beauty.

How Does It Feel to See a Perfect 10?

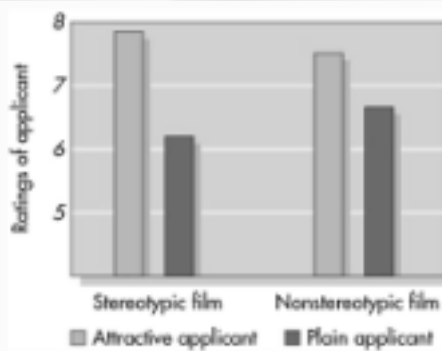


*Effects of physical attractiveness affected posttest judgments when social comparison overrides social reinforcement by Douglas Niven et al (1991). From PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, 61(2), 195-199. Reprinted by permission.

Why Are We Blinded by Beauty?

- What-is-beautiful-is-good stereotype
 - The belief that physically attractive individuals also possess desirable personality characteristics.
- Inherently rewarding to be in the company of people who are aesthetically appealing
 - Possible intrinsic and extrinsic rewards

What Is Beautiful Is Good?



PERSONALITY 31(2) by Niven, 1991. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Inc. Upper Saddle River, NJ.

What-Is-Good-Is-Beautiful Stereotype

- Attractive people are judged to be smart, happy, well-adjusted, socially skilled, confident, and assertive -- though also vain.
- Is the stereotype accurate?
 - Good-looking people do have more friends, better social skills, and a more active sex life.
 - But beauty is not related to objective measures of intelligence, personality, adjustment, or self-esteem
 - The specific nature of the stereotype depends on cultural conceptions of what is "good."

Putting Common Sense to the Test...

True or False?

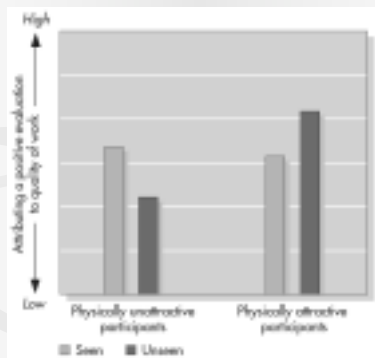
People who are physically attractive are happier and have higher self-esteem than those who are unattractive

Answer: False... Let's see why!

The Benefits and Costs of Beauty

- Being good-looking does not guarantee health, happiness, or high self-esteem.
- Attributional problems with being good-looking:
 - Is the attention and praise one receives due to one's talents or just one's good looks?

When Being Seen Leads to Disbelief



Other Costs of Beauty

- There is a pressure to maintain one's appearance.
 - In America, pressures are particularly strong when it comes to the body.
 - Women are more likely than men to suffer from the "modern mania for slenderness."
- Overall, being beautiful is a mixed blessing.
 - Bersheid et al. (1972): Found little relationship between appearance in youth and later happiness.

Beyond Beauty: Other Personal Qualities That Can Be Seen Before Interaction

- In one study, participants listened to interviews in which someone evaluated many objects (e.g., cities, movies, courses, people). The person was either consistently positive or consistently negative toward the objects. Participants liked the person much more in the former case. (think about in terms of expected rewards.)
- Subsequent studies suggest that the best liked person is someone who is generally positive, but not always (discerning)
- This latter finding extends to how "perfect" the target person is – let me tell you about the "pratfall effect."

Putting Common Sense to the Test...

True or False?

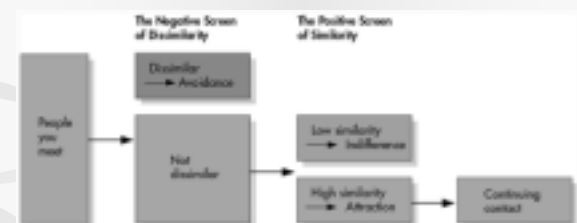
When it comes to romantic relationships, opposites attract

Answer: False... Let's see why!

First Encounters and Getting Acquainted: Liking Others Who are Similar to Us

- We tend to associate with others who are similar to us
- Four types of similarity are most relevant
 - Demographic
 - Attitude
 - Attractiveness
 - Subjective experience

A Two-Step Model of the Attraction Process



Byrne et al., 1986

Matching Hypothesis

- Matching Hypothesis: People tend to become involved romantically with others who are equivalent in their physical attractiveness.
- But don't opposites attract? No they do not!
 - Is there support for the complementarity hypothesis, which holds that people seek others whose needs "oppose" their own?
 - Research shows that complementarity does not influence attraction.

First Encounters and Getting Acquainted: Liking Others Who Like Us

- Heider (1958): people prefer relationships that are psychologically balanced
 - Imbalance causes distress
- A state of balance exists when the relationship is characterized by reciprocity
 - Mutual exchange between what one gives and what one receives
- We like people who like us—if they are selective in their liking

Reciprocity Redux

- The rule that we like people who like us has some qualifications
 - *Low self-esteem*. People with low self-esteem have been found to prefer to interact in laboratory studies with people who earlier criticized them over people who praised them.
(similar relationships with self-esteem may even be found in marriages)
 - *The "gain effect"*: Liking people more that we seem to win over
 - *Ingratiation*. Flattery may not get you everywhere

Mate Selection: The Evolution of Desire

- When it comes to the search for a mate, are men and women similarly motivated?

The Evolutionary Perspective: Mate Selection Preferences

- Men and women by nature must differ in their optimal mating behaviors (Buss)
 - Women must be highly selective because they are biologically limited in the number of children they can bear and raise in a lifetime
 - Men can father an unlimited number of children and ensure their reproductive success by inseminating many women

The Evolutionary Perspective: Conspicuous Consumption

- If women are drawn to men who have wealth or the ability to obtain it, then it stands to reason that men would flaunt their resources the way the male peacock displays his brilliantly colored tail

The Evolutionary Perspective: Jealousy

- Jealousy is a common and normal human reaction
- Men and women may be aroused by different triggering events
 - Evolutionary perspective: men are more upset by sexual infidelity due to concerns about paternal certainty; women are more upset by emotional infidelity due to concerns about loss of support

Challenges to Evolutionary Accounts of Mate Selection: Sociocultural Perspectives

- Research shows that greater gender parity in a culture is associated with less gender differentiation in mating preferences
 - The more economic power women have, the more important male physical attractiveness is to them
 - Women trade youth and beauty for money because they often lack direct access to economic power.
- An alternative explanation for jealousy
 - Men are fearful of sexual infidelity because it represents a threat to the relationship, not fatherhood issues.
- The differences typically found between the sexes are small compared to the similarities.
- Sex differences often observed are not that predictable or universal.

Evolutionary Mate Preferences: In Theory and in Practice

