Initial Attraction: What matters at first?

- Propinquity (we like those who live/work near us; mere exposure)
- Physical Attractiveness (we like those who are physically attractive; halo, rewards, kernel of truth; evolutionary signs of health and reproductive advantage)
- Similarity/Complementarity (we like those who are similar to us—it’s rewarding; complementarity of needs)
- Responsiveness (we like those who are responsive to us; signals belonging, worth, and control)
- Reciprocal liking (we like those who like us—it’s rewarding)
Propinquity

- Festinger, Schachter & Back (1959)’s “Social pressures in informal groups: A study of human factors in housing”
- Zajonc’s (1968) “Attitudinal effects of mere exposure” (JPSP)
  - “Mirror exposure” - we like our reflection view better than the view that others see of us; and vice versa.
  - Moreland & Beach’s (1992) “Exposure effects in the classroom…” (JESP)

Physical Attractiveness

- Walster, Aronson, Abrahams & Rottman, 1966: Computer Dating paradigm
  - Take a battery of measures of
    - personality
    - SES
    - interests
    - physical attractiveness
  - Randomly pair college students with person of opposite sex.
  - Asked them to rate their date
  - Only one factor predicted liking and intention to ask out again…physical attractiveness (for males & females!)
  - How about after the fifth date? (Mathes, 1975)
Physical Attractiveness

How ubiquitous?

- In the courtroom
  - Less likely to be found guilty; if guilty, lighter sentence (except if used to commit crime)

- In job applications
  - More likely to be hired even for jobs in which appearance could have no conceivable relationship to job performance
  - Class project (High, Med, Low Phys Attractiveness X High, Med, Low Qualifications)
    - Which matters most?

Physical Attractiveness

How ubiquitous?

- With children
  - They are more popular, better liked by parents, teachers, and peers.
  - Dealt with less severely if they commit a transgression
  - Teachers give them more information, better evaluations, more opportunities to perform, and more support for their educational endeavors.
Physical Attractiveness

- How ubiquitous?
  - With infants
    - Langois, 1991 - infants (6 month olds) smile more at attractive than unattractive photos of adults (regardless of race of child and race of photo)
    - and, the other way around...

Explanations:
- Learning - we are taught that what is beautiful is good. Good witches are pretty; bad witches are ugly...
- Halo effect - we are attracted to the positive characteristics associated with physical attractiveness.
- Kernel of truth - attractive people have higher self-concepts, better mental health, are more assertive and more confident. Preferred even on telephone!
- Rewarded by association - if we are with a physically attractive person, we’ll be rewarded, too
- Evolutionary Psychology - We are attracted to that which is evolutionarily related to reproductive success and successful rearing of the children. Physical attraction matters with lower animals, too.
Physical Attractiveness Stereotypes

- What are they?
  - Different for cultures (Wheeler)
    - Western cultures (high in individualism) attribute potency to physically attractive people (assertive and dominant)
    - Eastern cultures (high in collectivism and group harmony) attribute high concern for others and integrity to attractive people
  - But, there are stable factors
    - Waist-to-hip ratio: ~.75 (25in waist; 34inch hips or 63cm hips to 86cm waist)
    - Men also prefer neotenous (child-like) characteristics in women. Why?

Singh’s waist-to-hip ratio

- .67 - .80 (hips roughly a third larger than the waist)
- more likely to be healthy
- health is predictive of reproductive success
Neoteny is a desirable facial characteristic

Youthful = Reproductively Healthy?

Other stable characteristics of physical attractiveness

- Men prefer “neotenous” characteristics in females
  - baby-like features
    - round mouth, full lips, big eyes
- Women, on the other hand, tend to prefer V-shape in men
Interpersonal Attraction

**Similarity/Complementarity**

- Byrne (1971) “The attraction paradigm” - We like those who believe what we believe
- Similarity-attraction or dissimilarity-repulsion (Rosenbaum, 1986)
- *When do opposites attract?* Need complementarity

**Responsiveness**

- Rats like responsive rats (Latane)

- People like responsive people (Davis, Bernieri)

- Chartrand (nonconscious mimicry)
Reciprocal liking

- We like people who like us. We also…
  - comply more
  - help more
  - attribute more positive characteristics to
  - and judge their actions more favourably

Love & Lust

- Do short-term influences affect long-term liking and love?
- Are there other factors and issues that make long-term attraction worth studying?
The Role of Arousal

- Feelings that include arousal or passion go beyond simple liking.
- Arousal is relatively undifferentiated
  - arousal
  - label

Lust on a Bridge

- Dutton, & Aron (1974) *JPSP*
- BC, Vancouver, Canada,
  - a high suspension bridge over a river.
  - There is also a Low sturdy wooden bridge over the same river
  - Misattribution of Arousal
- Relevance and Applications
Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love

- Sternberg (1986), Psych Review

**Intimacy**
- closeness, bondedness, connectedness. Sharing of inner thoughts and feelings.

**Passion**
- arousal, sexual attraction

**Decision/Commitment**
- short-term decision that one loves the other
- long-term commitment to maintain the love

Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love

- Eight combinations:
  - **Nonlove** (*absence of all three*) - casual interactions
  - **Liking** (*intimacy only*) - in absence, miss, but not dwell
  - **Infatuated love** (*passion only*) - love at first sight; easy for others to spot
  - **Empty love** (*decision/commitment only*) - found in stagnant relationships
  - **Romantic love** (*Intimacy & passion*) - liking and being ‘turned-on” by the other
  - **Companionate love** (*Intimacy & Decision/Commitment*) - long-term committed friendship after passion fades
  - **Fatuous love** (*Passion & Decision/Commitment*) - “Hollywood” romance; burns out quickly
  - **Consummate love** (*all three*) - difficult to maintain, must work at it
**Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love**

- What predicts a “successful relationship?”
  - Doesn’t have to be consummate love
  - Both people don’t have to “match” on what they believe love to mean to them
  - But, what does predict success, is that the partner’s conception of love matches what s/he *thinks* is the other partner’s conception of love
  - This is nice--it’s an “other-oriented” factor of love, rather than a “self-oriented” factor.