

Interpersonal Attraction



Psych 240; Fall 2007
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Initial Attraction: What matters at first?

- *Proximity* (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)

Proximity

- 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.

NYTimes.com - Health

Ugly Children May Get Parental Short Shift



Illustration by David H. Smith

By NICHOLAS BAKALAR
Published May 3, 2005

Parents would certainly deny it, but Canadian researchers have made a startling assertion: parents take better care of pretty children than they do ugly ones. Researchers at the University of Alberta carefully observed how parents treated their children during trips to the supermarket. They found that physical attractiveness made a big difference.

The researchers noted if the parents belted their youngsters into the grocery cart seat, how often the parents' attention

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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...



Physical Attractiveness

- **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

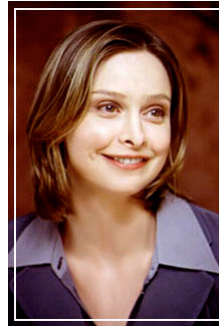
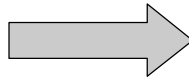
- What are they?
 - ◆ Different for cultures (Wheeler)
 - ✦ **Western cultures** (high in individualism) attribute potency to physically attractive people (assertive and dominant)
 - ✦ **Eastern cultures** (high in collectivism and group harmony) attribute high concern for others and integrity to attractive people
 - ◆ But, there are stable factors
 - ✦ Waist-to-hip ratio: $\sim .75$ (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



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 (Latané; Werner & Latané)
- People like responsive people (Davis, Bernieri)
- Even when they aren't consciously aware of it (nonconscious mimicry - Chartrand)

Reciprocal liking



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

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?



Short-Term Mate Selection

- Males are more likely to report that they would enter into a short-term sexual relationship than are females.
- The sexes are more similar in what they prioritize in their partners for such relationships.
- Five studies (Li & Kenrick, *JPSP*, 2006)
 - ◆ Men and women given “mate budgets” to design short-term mates, and asked whether they would actually mate with their constructed partner.
 - ◆ Mate screening paradigm
 - ◆ Reported reasons for having casual sex.



Sex Differences in Short-term mating

Whether to enter into a short term sexual relationship?

- Men have lower thresholds for entering into short-term mating relationships
 - ◆ More willing than women to engage in sexual relations after any length of acquaintance
 - ✦ 1 hr to 5 yrs
 - ✦ 75% say “yes” to opposite sex strangers proposal for casual sex; 0% for women (Clark & Hatfield, 1989)
 - ✦ Both have high standards for long-term partners, but men lower their standards for short-term partners (especially one-night stands).
 - ◆ Why?

Sex Differences in Short-term mating: Why?

- Cultural factors
 - ◆ Societal norms influence men to be more agentic and women to be more passive across all behaviors, including sex
 - ◆ Cultural double-standard, with promiscuous sexuality more acceptable for men than women
 - ◆ But recent research suggests these differences in acceptability are closing
- Evolutionary factors
 - ◆ Minimum obligatory parental investment (Trivers, 1972)
 - ✦ Men are physiologically required to contribute only a few sex cells to offspring, women must provide substantial pre- and postnatal resources if offspring are to survive
 - ✦ Short term mating has higher cost-to-benefit ratio for women than men

Short-term casual sexual relations

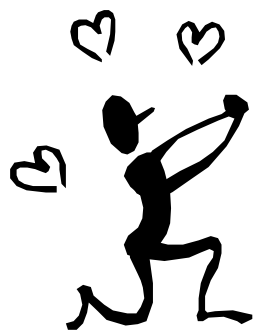
What characteristics are valued?

- ◆ A strong preference for physical attractiveness for both sexes; it is more important as hypothetical relationship becomes shorter
- ◆ High status/resources least important (physical attractiveness and warmth/trustworthiness more important).
- Is physical attractiveness regarded as a *necessity* or *luxury*
 - ◆ *Necessity*: an item that is initially desirable but, once obtained in sufficient quantity, yields to other items
 - ◆ *Luxury*: Becomes important once sufficient levels of necessities have been obtained
- By using forced choice method, Li & Kenrick concluded that physical attractiveness was a necessity for both males and females for short-term partners

How they Budgeted “Mate Dollars”

Study 1 (Li & Kenrick, 2006)	Women	Men
Physical Attractiveness	40.80	52.30
Social level	20.20	13.30
Creativity	6.10	6.00
Kindness	17.10	13.70
Liveliness	15.80	14.70

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.