Attraction and Close Relationships

Research on Relationships
- Began in 1960's
- Golden Fleece “award” in 1970's effectively stopped research for ~10 years
- Mid 1980's interest reborn
- Now there are 2 international organizations that study relationships

Relationships?
- Why do we have/need them?
- What are their benefits?

The Need to Belong
- The need to belong is a basic human motive
- May be related to evolutionary significance of group living
- Self-esteem may even be a “sociometer” for how well we’re doing socially

Benefits to Well-Being
- People who are satisfied with their relationships & social support are:
  - Happier
  - Healthier (Physically & Mentally)
  - Satisfied with life
- Reasons?
  - Healthier behavior
  - Improved endocrine and immune function

Close Relationships
- Refers to friendships as well as romantic relationships
- 3 basic components:
  - Feelings of attachment, affection, and love
  - The fulfillment of psychological needs
  - Interdependence between partners, each of whom has a meaningful influence on the other
What Predicts Initial Attraction?
- Familiarity
- Arousal
- Physical Attractiveness
- Similarity
- Reciprocal Liking

The Propinquity (or Proximity) Effect
- The single best predictor of attraction is physical proximity, or nearness.
  - The more we see and interact with people, the more likely they are to become our friends
  - Festinger et. al (1950) “Housing study”

Festinger et al (1950)
- Examined friendship patterns in a married student housing complex at MIT.
- There were 17 two-story buildings, 10 apartments per building
- Couples were randomly assigned to buildings and apartments, and were tracked over time.

Who was described as a close friend?
- 65% lived in the same building
- 41% were next-door neighbors
- 22% lived two doors down
- 10% lived three doors down
- Those on first floor living near the stairs had more upstairs friends!

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.
  - Subliminal exposure to Chinese ideographs influences liking of symbols

Mere Exposure and Attraction
- Moreland & Beach (1992)
  - Female confederate sit in on large college classrooms either 0, 5, 10, or 15 times
  - Never interacted with any of the other students
  - At the end of the semester, students were shown the woman’s picture and asked to rate how attractive she was

Moreland & Beach (1992)
A Note on Familiarity

- If you want someone to notice you, you need to be around and visible
- Happening to be in the same place at the same time helps work “fate” in your favor
- Plan “coincidental” meetings so that your paths inevitably cross
- But remember, there are laws against stalking!

Misattribution of Arousal

- Recall two-factor theory of emotion from the Self lecture
- Arousal
- Participants may mislabel the arousal based on available explanations
- Does this work for attraction?

Dutton & Aron, 1974

- Capilano Canyon Suspension Bridge
  - 5 feet wide, 450 feet long, 230 foot drop
  - Very wobbly and has low handrails
- Experimenter (either male or female) approached male participants on this, or a control bridge
- After filling out questionnaires, experimenter gave his/her number in case there were any questions
- DV: Number of phone calls

Physical Attractiveness

- We like attractive people!
- High levels of agreement for facial ratings across ages and cultures
- Certain physical features of the face are reliably associated with judgments of attractiveness.
  - Women: big eyes, small nose, small chin, prominent cheekbones and narrow cheeks, high eyebrows, large pupils, and a big smile
  - Men: big eyes, prominent cheekbones, large chin, and a big smile

1. Symmetry

- People prefer faces that are symmetrical.
- But the effect is relatively small.
- May be an evolutionary indicator of reproductive success.
2. Being Average

- People seem to prefer faces that are average.
- Computer programs make composites of faces.
  - The more faces included in the composite, the more attractive that averaged person is rated.
  - However, composites of attractive faces are rated as more attractive than composites of unattractive faces.
- May be due to artificial features of morphing.

Composite Faces

- People rate many faces merged together by a computer as more attractive than the individual faces.
- Why?
  - Composites more familiar, more prototypical
  - Composite faces more symmetrical

Situational influences

- Liking → more attraction
- Playboy or Penthouse models or Charlie's Angels → less attractive

Beauty is also in the “Eyes of the Beholder”

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

Universals or Cultural Variation?

- Seems to be agreement on facial attractiveness
- Body ideals often change with other conditions
  - e.g., heavy bodies preferred in times of famine
  - Culture often leads to different ornamentation

Evolutionary Perspective on Attractiveness

- David Buss
  - What is attractive are features which convey the health, youth, and fertility of potential partners
  - Advantageous because these features may indicate a greater likelihood of conception and successful rearing
  - Overall body size standards may change over time, some things are unchanged
**Evolutionary Perspective**

- Men more likely to use features associated with reproductive capacity
  - e.g., waist to hip ratio, attractiveness, youth
- Women more likely to use characteristics associated with ability to provide resources and protect offspring
  - e.g., shoulder to hip ratio, age, status
- Personal ads

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**Why do we like beautiful people?**

- Halo Effect - We tend to associate physical attractiveness with other desirable qualities (we believe that what is beautiful is good)

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**What is beautiful is good...**

- 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."

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**Self-Fulfilling Prophecies**

- Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid (1977)
  - Male Ps talked to Female Ps over the phone
  - Saw a picture of an attractive or unattractive female who they thought they would be talking to
  - How did male Ps act on the phone?
    - Warmer/more sociable to “attractive” females
- How did the women respond?
  - Those talking to male Ps who thought they were attractive were rated by independent coders as more attractive, confident, animated, and warm.

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**Matching Hypothesis**

- Relationship partners tend to be matched on attractiveness
  - Correlation of .4 to .5 between attractiveness of partners
- People are more likely to become romantically involved with others who are equivalent in their physical attractiveness
- Our demonstration showed how/why this can play out
- If one partner doesn’t offer looks, they often offer something else
First Encounters

- All of the factors that make people attractive make you desire contact with a person
- But, what determines the success of that actual first encounter?

Similarity

- We tend to associate with others who are similar to ourselves with respect to demographic variables, opinions, interests, and values

Why do we like similar others?

- We're more likely to meet similar others
  - Similar interests -> similar activities, hangout spots
- They provide us with social validation for our characteristics and beliefs – they make us think we're right
- We make negative inferences about someone who disagrees with us on important issues (e.g., he/she is unpleasant, immoral, weak, thoughtless)

Reciprocal Liking

Liking others who like us

- Curtis & Miller (1986)
  - Ps paired up with each other
  - Experimenter tells a random person in each pair (the target) that the partner does or does not like them
  - Ps meet with their partner again
  - How did the target act?
    - Ps who thought partner liked them acted in a more likable manner
  - How much did they like the partner?

Curtis & Miller (1986) Results

Balance Theory (Heider, 1958)

- Balance theory - People prefer relationships that are psychologically balanced
- When multiple relevant thoughts exist in our head, we desire the relationships between them to be similar.
- This theory is very similar to dissonance theory.
**3 Person Relationships**

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<th>Unbalanced</th>
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**2 Person Relationships**

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**Balance Theory Implications**

- To reduce the discomfort caused by unbalanced relationship you can change the valence of some link, or stop associating with that person.
- In cases where someone likes you that you are indifferent towards, you might just start liking them (reciprocity).

**Flirtation**

- **Nonverbal**
  - Gaze, posture, facial expression, touch, grooming gestures
  - Gender differences?
- **Verbal**
  - Compliments, “pickup lines”
- **Disinterest -> cessation of flirtation**
  - Gender differences
- **Playing “hard to get**”

**Playing Hard-to-Get**

- Utilizing the compliance technique of scarcity (making yourself seem scarce).
- e.g., When parents forbid teenagers to go out with someone. (reactance)
- Caution, this only works if the person has generally positive feelings towards you.
Self-Presentation

- Attempts to create a positive yet plausible image of the self
  - Reveal certain things, conceal others
- Several norms we must consider
  - Decorum
  - Modesty
  - Behavioral matching
  - Consistency

Self-Disclosure

- What individuals verbally reveal about themselves to others
  - Thoughts, feelings, experiences
- Social Penetration Theory
  - Breadth & Depth of disclosure increase with time
  - Relationship development and self-disclosure go hand-in-hand (mutually transformative)

Self-Disclosure Reciprocity

- Matching your partner’s self-disclosures in both topic, intimacy, & valence
  - “tit-for-tat” strategy
  - This approach appears to increase attraction
- “I’m thinking of getting a puppy”
  - “I like dogs”
- “My dog just died”
  - “I once had a hamster that drowned”

Gender Differences

- Single shot interactions
  - Women are more likely to disclose depression, anger, fears
- Expected future interaction
  - Women disclose less (than 1-shot deals)
  - Men disclose more (than 1-shot deals)

Other Moderators

- Mood
  - Good mood – more intimate disclosure
  - Bad mood – less intimate disclosure
- Alcohol (real or perceived intoxication)
  - Men – disclose more
  - Women – disclose less

Types of Relationships

- Exchange Relationships: People expect and desire equity in a relationship
  - Most often exist between strangers and casual acquaintances and in certain long-term arrangements.
- Communal Relationships: People expect and desire mutual responsiveness to each other’s needs.
  - Usually limited to close friends, romantic partners, & family members.
Clark (1984)

- Led male subjects to believe they would be playing a game with a female who:
  - Was married and visiting the college for a short time only (exchange expectation)
  - Was new to town, unattached, and looking for friends (communal expectation)

Game Setup

- It was a number circling task.
- Were told they would be paid based on how many numbers they found.
- The female (a confederate) always went first and always circled the same number with a RED pen.
- The DV was whether the male subject used a RED or BLACK pen when it was his turn.

% Who Used the Red Pen

- Men who used the red pen, the same as the female, were indicating that they didn’t care who got more, they would split the money equally. (a communal behavior)
- Men who used the black pen were indicating that they wanted to keep track of who circled what so they could split the money accordingly. (an exchange behavior)

Why Exchange?

- At first glance, communal would seem to be the most desirable relationship type.
- What benefits are their to exchange relationships?

Exchange Benefits

- Social Capital Perspective
  - Exchange relationships are like social capital. When you are in need of something, you can call on these relationships for help.
  - Studies have suggested that over the past 50 years these have been steadily declining from people's lives – most likely due to the rise of TV and the fall of church attendance and other community activities.
### Finding a Job

- A survey asked people how they found their current job - 56% said a personal contact.
- Of those 56 percent:
  - 17% said they saw the contact often
  - 83% said they saw the contact occasionally or rarely

### Why?

- We tend to have “too much” in common with our communal others, they can't bring us as many new or unique experiences or information as exchange others.

### Passionate vs. Companionate love

- Other models for the multiple nature of love exist, but we will discuss only this distinction
- **Passionate Love**
  - State of intense longing & physiological arousal
- **Companionate Love**
  - Feelings of intimacy, deep caring

### The Social Exchange Theory of Satisfaction and Commitment

- This theory tries to predict how satisfied and committed people will be towards their relationships and, hence, how stable relationships will be.
- “Exchange” means that people calculate costs and benefits.

### Love

- Passionate love is often started and extinguished quickly
- Companionate love takes longer to develop, but is often longer lasting

### Step 1

- Calculate Costs and Benefits
- Are there generally more positives than negatives?
- For example, they might have a temper, but are very kind and funny
Step 2

- Compare difference in costs and benefits to a relevant comparison level (usually past relationships)
  - Do you think you deserve better than what you are getting?
  - Did you have a prior relationship that no one else could live up to?
  - Did you just get out of a bad relationship, and anyone seems better?
  - Do you have low esteem, and don't expect much?

Benefits - Costs - Comparison Level = Overall Level of \textit{Satisfaction}

- However, other factors must be considered to predict commitment to a relationship...

Step 3

- Factor in perceptions of viable alternatives. \textit{(Comparison Level of Alternatives)}
  - Do you feel like this is the only person who would have you?
  - Do you feel like you have 5 good and likely alternatives out there?
  - The more alternatives, the less committed.

Step 4

- Factor in \textit{Level of Investment}
  - The more you have invested in the relationship, the higher commitment will be.
  - e.g., time, money, children, emotional resources, pain and trouble, etc.

Social Exchange Theory

- Overall Satisfaction + Investment - Alternatives = Commitment.

Commitment is like a behavioral intention to continue the relationship.

- The higher the commitment, the more stable relationships will tend to be.
Attachment Theory

- Originally theorized in developmental psychology to explain how a child interacts with his/her parents (Bowlby, Ainsworth).
- Attachment “styles” reflect a child’s expectation of their parents.

Secure Attachment Style

- Caregivers are responsive to child’s needs.
- Display positive emotions.
- Infant trusts his/her caregiver, not worried about abandonment.
- View themselves as worthy and likeable.

Avoidant Attachment Style

- Caregivers are aloof and distant.
- Infant wants closeness with his/her caregiver, but suppresses this to avoid rejection.

Anxious/Ambivalent Attachment Style

- Caregivers are inconsistent and/or overbearing.
- Infants are anxious because they don’t know what to expect from their caregivers.
- May worry that they are unworthy of affection.

Adult Attachment

- Similar patterns of attachment can develop in our adult relationships.
- Often, these are the same patterns developed in infancy, but there can be change.

Attachment Styles (Hazan & Shaver, 1987)

1. Secure (56%)
   - I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don’t often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close.

2. Avoidant (25%)
   - I am somewhat uncomfortable being close; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.

3. Anxious (19%)
   - I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn’t really love me or won’t stay with me; I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.
Attachment: Consequences

**Daily Interaction** (Tidwell, Reis, & Shaver, 1996)
- Secure - Differentiate between romantic & other interactions in emotion/intimacy
- Avoidant - Less intimacy, enjoyment, & positive emotions; more negative emotion
- Anxious-Ambivalent - most variable in emotional reactions to interactions

**Consequences**

**Trust** (Mikulincer, 1998)
- Trust goals salient in interaction context for everyone (esp. Secure Ps)
- Secure Ps also feel more trust, experience more trust-related memories, & deal with trust-violation more constructively
- Avoidant Ps also have control motives
- Anxious-Ambivalent Ps also have security attainment motives

**Conflict** (Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996)
- Had Ps Discuss a relationship problem
- Anxious-Ambivalent Ps perceive partner & relationship negatively; experience stress
- Avoidant men are less supportive/positive

**Attachment: Consequences**

**Relationship Theories**

**Destiny & Growth Beliefs** (Knee, 1998)
- Initial satisfaction predicts relationship length
- Avoidance in dealing with relationship problems
- Take more responsibility in ending relationships
- Long-term approach to dating
- Relationship-maintaining coping strategies
- When relationship ends - disagree that "it seemed wrong from the beginning"

**Destiny Beliefs**
- Potential relationship partners are either compatible or they're not
- Relationships that do not start off well fail

**Growth Beliefs**
- An ideal relationship develops gradually over time
- Challenges & obstacles in a relationship can make love even stronger

**Inclusion of Partner in Self (IOS)**

**Art Aron**
- As we get to know someone, our self-concept expands to include our relationship partner
- "I" becomes "we"
- "Mine" becomes "ours"
Inclusion of Partner in Self

- Reaction Time task
  - Fill out trait ratings for self, partner, and Bill Cosby
  - RT Task: Answer yes/no whether a trait flashed on the screen is self-descriptive or not
  - Prediction: If my partner is included in my self-concept, it should be easier (quicker) to respond to traits we match on and slower when we mismatch

Cognitive Interdependence

- IOS associated with cognitive interdependence (Agnew, et al., 1998)
  - Mental representation of “self-in-relationship”
  - Self-becomes defined by the relationship
    - Partners need each other to be complete

Cognitive Interdependence

- Interdependence associated with greater commitment
- When interdependence is considered, social exchange variables lose their predictive validity
  - Satisfaction
  - Alternatives
  - Investments

Interdependence-related Phenomenon

- Transactive Memory
  - Shared system for encoding, storing, & retrieving information
  - We know what our partner knows

- Wegner, Erber, & Raymond, 1991
  - Memory task in pairs (assigned or dating)
  - Memory structure assigned or not (e.g., P 1 remembers food, P 2 remembers history)
  - Studying & testing done individually
  - DV: number correctly recalled
**Transactive Memory**

![Graph showing assigned expertise and not assigned]

**Jealousy**

- Demo
- Evolutionary Perspective
  - Men are jealous over physical infidelity
    - Lowers their assurance that any children are theirs
  - Women are jealous over emotional infidelity
    - Lowers their assurance that the man will help raise the child

**Attributions in Relationships**

- Much research has looked at attributions in distressed relationships
- Distressed couples make internal, stable, global attributions for partner's negative behaviors & situational attributions for their positive behaviors
- Non-distressed couples do the opposite

**The Cold, Hard Facts**

- In the US, over 50% of all marriages result in divorce
- Divorce rate varies across cultures
  - Almost 0% annually in Bolivia & Spain
  - Almost 5% annually in the US
- Acceptability of divorce varies, as do views concerning what constitutes a “good” marriage

**Predictors of Lasting Marriage**

- Married after age 20
- Both from stable, 2-parent homes
- Lengthy courtship
- Educated
- Stable income
- Small town or farm
- Didn’t live together or have kids before marriage
- Religiously committed
- Similar in age, faith, and education

**Relationship Problems**

- Coping with relationship problems
  - Loyalty
  - Neglect
  - Voice concerns
  - Exit
- Longer relationships – more painful breakup
Breaking up

- Breaking up is a process
  - Do I say anything to them about my thoughts?
  - Confront them about our problems?
  - How/when do I break up with them?
  - Remain friends with them afterward?
  - What do I tell my friends?
  - How do I get over it?

Breaking up

- Who is more likely to initiate the breakup in a heterosexual relationship?
  - Breaker less distressed than breakee
  - Remaining friends?
    - Mutual breakup - men most likely to want to remain friends
    - Female breakee – most likely to want to remain friends

Final Thoughts

- Relationships are dynamic
  - Don’t expect things to remain the same over time
  - Passive coping is generally not successful
  - Relationships provide us with many benefits – socially, psychologically, & biologically