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
**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

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**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 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, JPS, 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 casually 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”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1 (Li &amp; Kenrick, 2006)</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Attractiveness</td>
<td>40.80</td>
<td>52.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social level</td>
<td>20.20</td>
<td>13.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>17.10</td>
<td>13.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liveliness</td>
<td>15.80</td>
<td>14.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 loave
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

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.