The Social Psychology of Intimacy

Psych 240; Fall 2007
Purdue University
Laura E. VanderDrift

Macro Perspectives

- How do society, culture, and gender impact short term mate selection?
- Do these effects carry over into long term mate selection?
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.

Mate Budgets

- Men and women given “mate budgets” to design short-term mates, and asked whether they would actually mate with their constructed partner.

  Physical attractiveness, social status, creativity, kindness, and liveliness

  (Li & Kenrick, *JPSP*, 2006)
How they Budgeted “Mate Dollars”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></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 status</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>

Self Reported Reasons

- Highest rated reason: “I was physically attracted to the person, and I thought it would feel good.”
Forced Choice Method

- By using forced choice method, Li & Kenrick concluded that physical attractiveness was a necessity for both males and females for short-term partners.

Sex Differences in Seeking a Short-term Relationship

- **Whether** to enter into a short term sexual relationship (Hatfield & Clark, 1989)

- What % of men said yes to sex?
- What % of women said yes to sex?
Sex Differences in Short-term Mating: Why?

- Cultural factors
  - Men as Agentic; Women as Passive
  - Cultural Double Standard

- Evolutionary factors
  - Minimum obligatory parental investment (Trivers, 1972)

Micro Perspectives

- What social psychology happens within a relationship (short or long term) that influences intimacy?
The Role of Arousal

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

Lust on a Bridge

- Dutton & Aron (1974)
- Misattribution of Arousal
  - High Suspension Bridge
  - Low Sturdy Bridge
Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love

- Sternberg (1986)
- Intimacy
- Passion
- Decision/Commitment

Nonlove (absence of all three)

Liking (intimacy only)

Infatuated love (passion only)

Empty love (decision/commitment only)
Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love

- **Romantic love** *(Intimacy & passion)*

- **Companionate love** *(Intimacy & Decision/Commitment)*

- **Fatuous love** *(Passion & Decision/Commitment)*

- **Consummate love** *(all three)*

---

**What predicts a “successful relationship?”**

- Doesn’t have to be consummate love
- Both people don’t have to “match”
- 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
Relationship Maintenance – EVLN Typology

- **Exit** – Actively harming or terminating a relationship.
- **Voice** – Actively and constructively attempting to improve conditions.
- **Loyalty** – Passively but optimistically waiting for conditions to improve
- **Neglect** – Passively allowing for conditions to deteriorate
Interaction Principles

- Good Manners
- Accommodation