Attraction and Close Relationships

Discussion Questions

1. Why do we need to affiliate?
2. What factors lead us to be attracted to someone?
3. How do men and women differ in mate selection?
4. What is an intimate relationship?
5. How does attraction transform into intimate relationships?
6. What is love?
7. What does the research say about various relationship issues?

Why do we need to affiliate?

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- **Need for affiliation:** A desire to establish social contact with others
- People with a network of close social ties tend to be happier, healthier, and more satisfied with life.

Why do we need to affiliate?

- Stress arouses the need for affiliation
  - Fearful misery loves company
  - Embarrassed misery seeks solitude
  - Misery loves the company of those in the same miserable situation

What factors lead us to be attracted to someone?

What factors lead us to be attracted to someone?

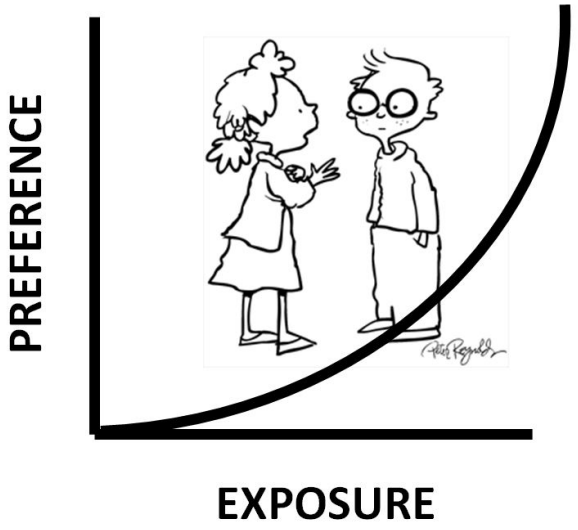
- Rewards
- Survival of offspring
- Proximity
- Familiarity
- Physical attractiveness
- Similarity
- Reciprocity
- Playing hard to get

How does proximity lead us to be attracted to someone?

- Best predictor of attraction
- More attracted to people who live, work, and play near us

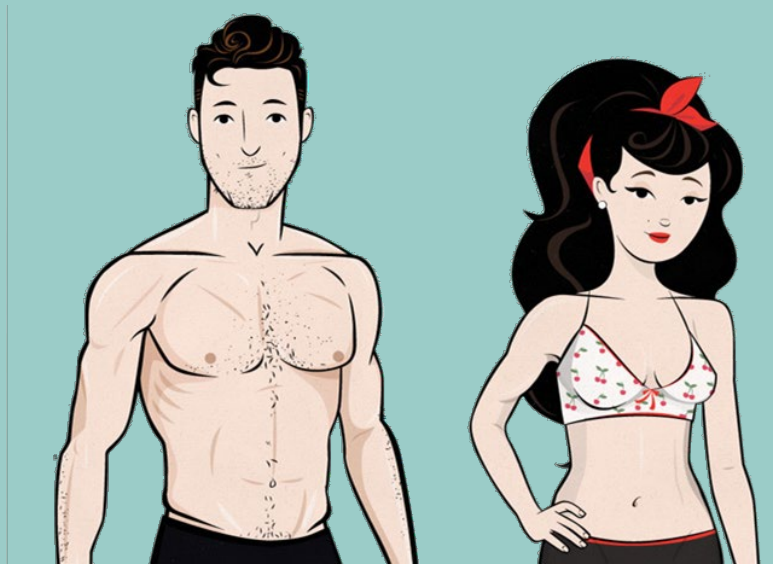
How does familiarity lead us to be attracted to someone?

- **Mere exposure effect:** Occurs when we come to like something because we are exposed to it often
- Do not have to be aware of exposure



How does physical attractiveness lead us to be attracted to someone?

- More favorable reactions to attractive people
- **What-is-beautiful-is-good stereotype:** A belief that attractive people possess other desirable qualities
  - Tend to have more friends, better social skills, and a more active sex life.
  - But do not score higher on intelligence, personality, adjustment, or self-esteem measures!



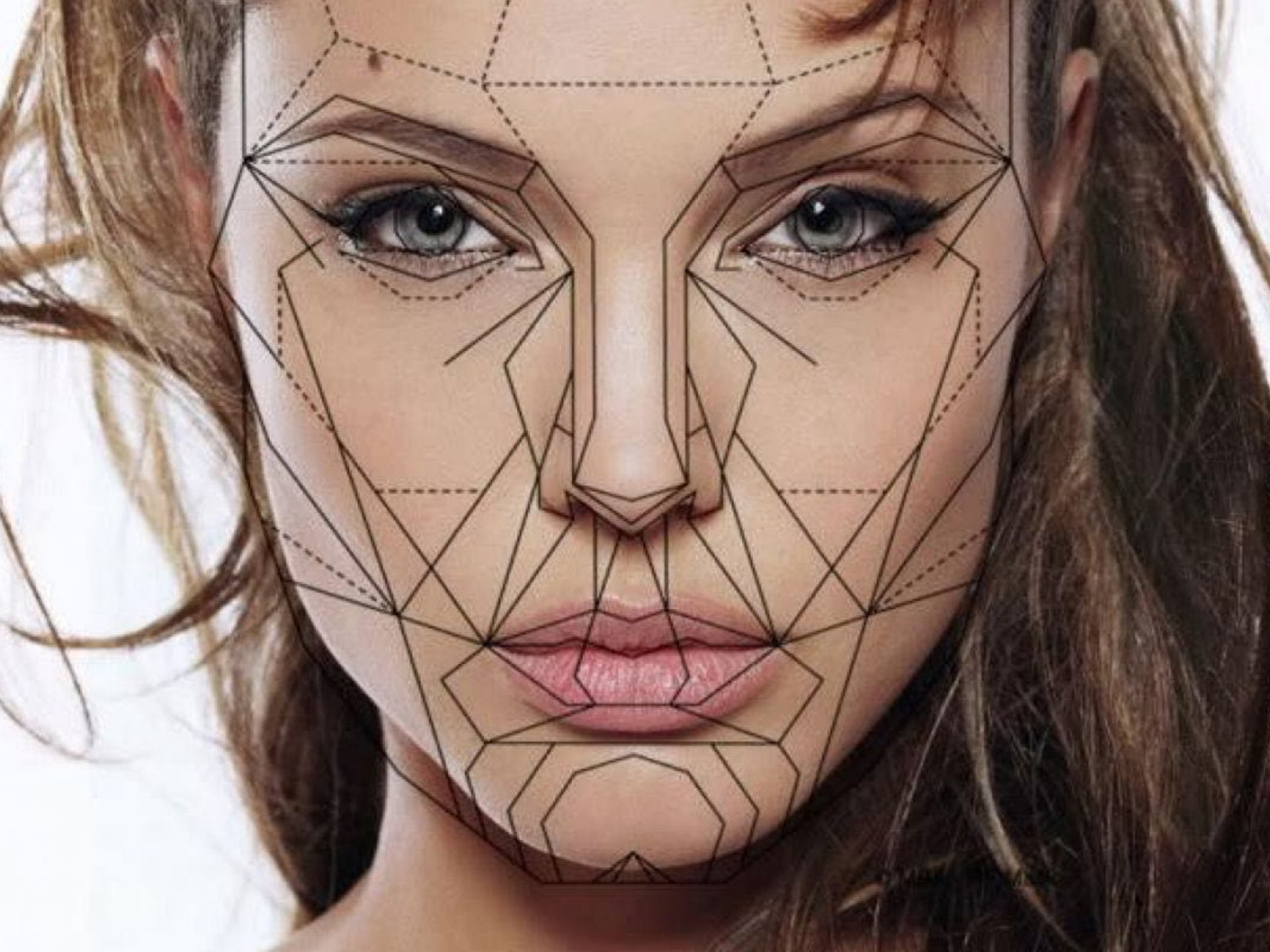
How does physical attractiveness lead us to be attracted to someone?

Objective Beauty

- High agreement for facial ratings across ages and cultures
- Facial features correlate with attractiveness ratings

Subjective Beauty

- Beauty enhanced differently across cultures
- Beauty standards vary across time and cultures



ORIGINAL
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BANGLADESH
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SRI LANKA
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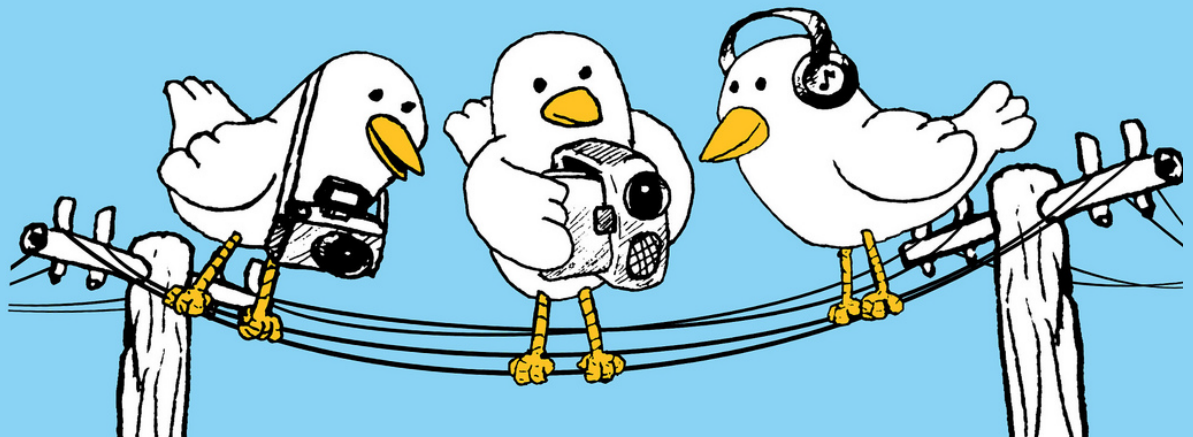
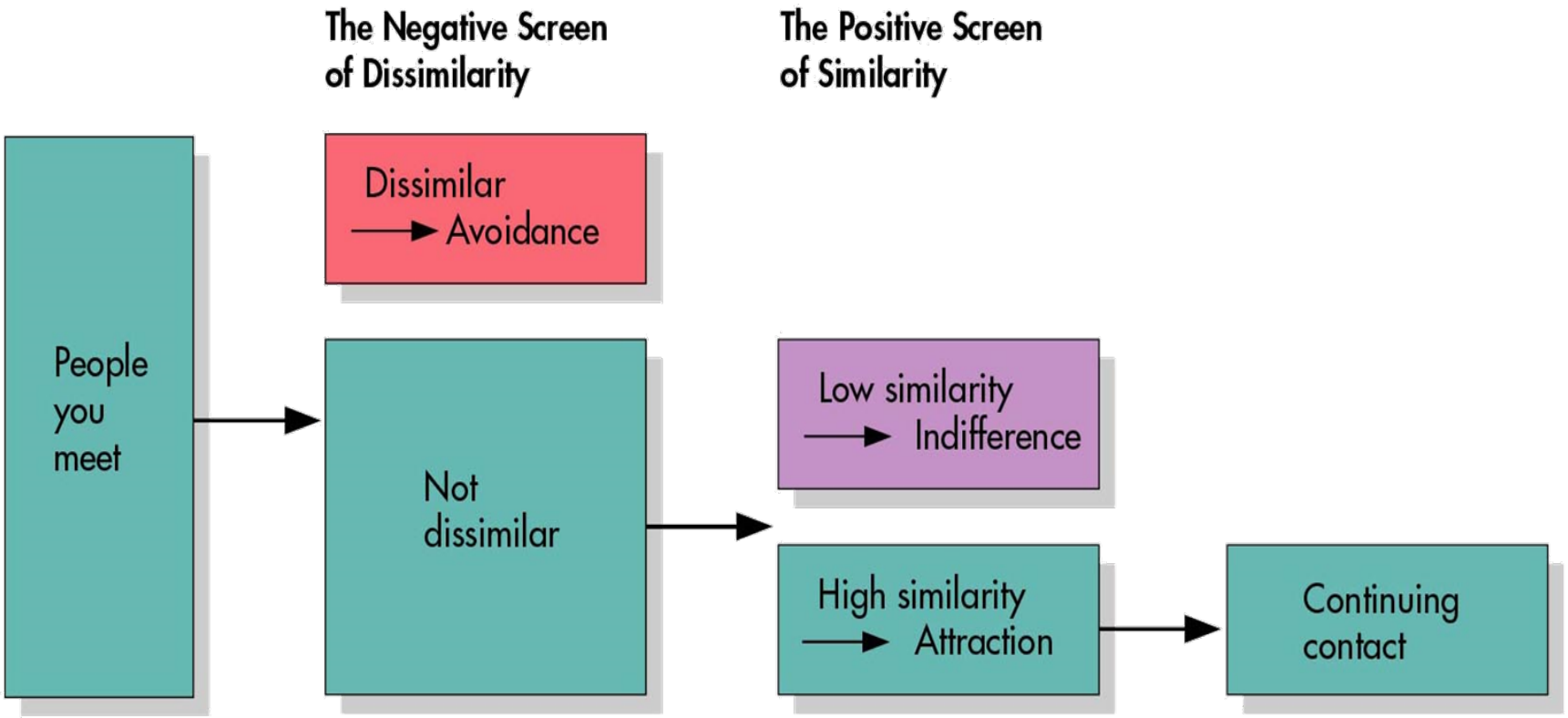
How does similarity lead us to be attracted to someone?

- Associate with people who are similar to us
  - E.g., demographics, attitudes, physical attractiveness, and subject experiences
- Little support for complimentary hypothesis ("opposites attract")

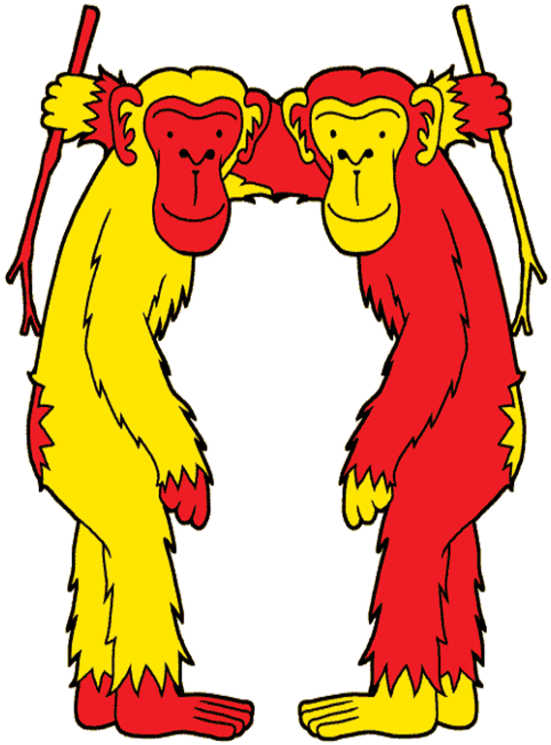


How does similarity lead us to be attracted to someone?



How does reciprocity lead us to be attracted to someone?

- Prefer psychologically-balanced relationships
- **Reciprocity:** A mutual exchange between what one gives and what one receives
- Tend to like others who indicate they like us, too



How does playing hard to get lead us to be attracted to someone?

- Prefer people who are *moderately* selective over those who are not selective or too selective
- Turned off by those who are readily available or those who reject us

How do men and women differ in mate selection?

How do men and women differ in mate selection?

- Pro-evolution approach
- Women are more selective because they are limited in the number of children they can bear.
  - Seek older, successful men
  - Jealous of emotional infidelity
- Men are less selective because they can father an unlimited number of children.
  - Seek younger, fertile, faithful women
  - Jealous of sexual infidelity

How do men and women differ in mate selection?

- Pro-sociocultural approach
- Small gender differences
  - *Stated* preferences ≠ *actual* preferences
  - Not predictable or universal
- Women seek resources because they lack direct access.
- Men fear sexual infidelity because it represents emotional infidelity.

What is an intimate relationship?

What is an intimate relationship?

- **Intimate relationship:** Interpersonal relationship that involves 3 basic components

Feelings of attachment, affection, and love

Fulfillment of psychological needs

Interdependence between partners

What is an intimate relationship?

- Exchange relationships – Strict reciprocity
- Communal relationships – Mutual responsiveness

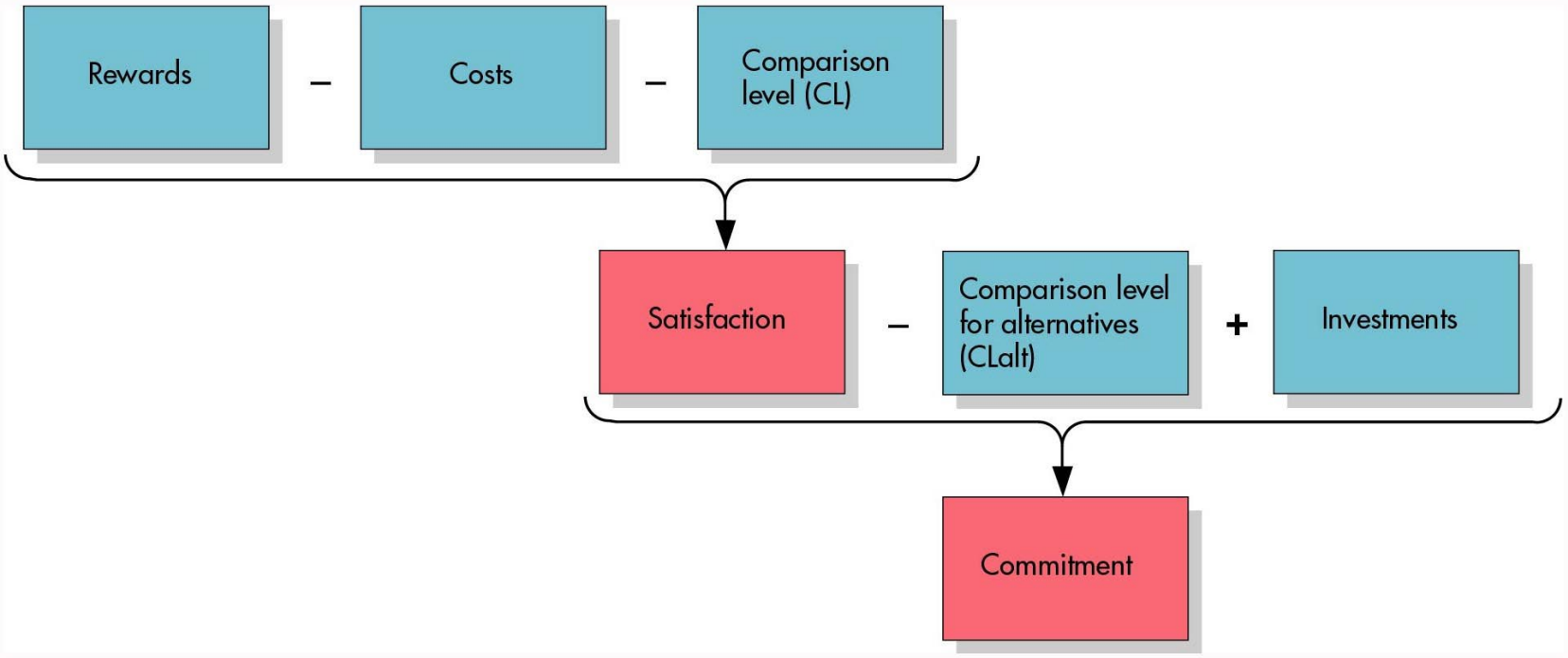
What is an intimate relationship?

- Secure attachment – Happy, friendly, mutual trust, enduring
- Avoidant attachment – Fear of intimacy
- Anxious attachment – Emotional highs and lows, obsessive, extreme sexual attraction and jealousy

How does attraction transform into intimate relationships?

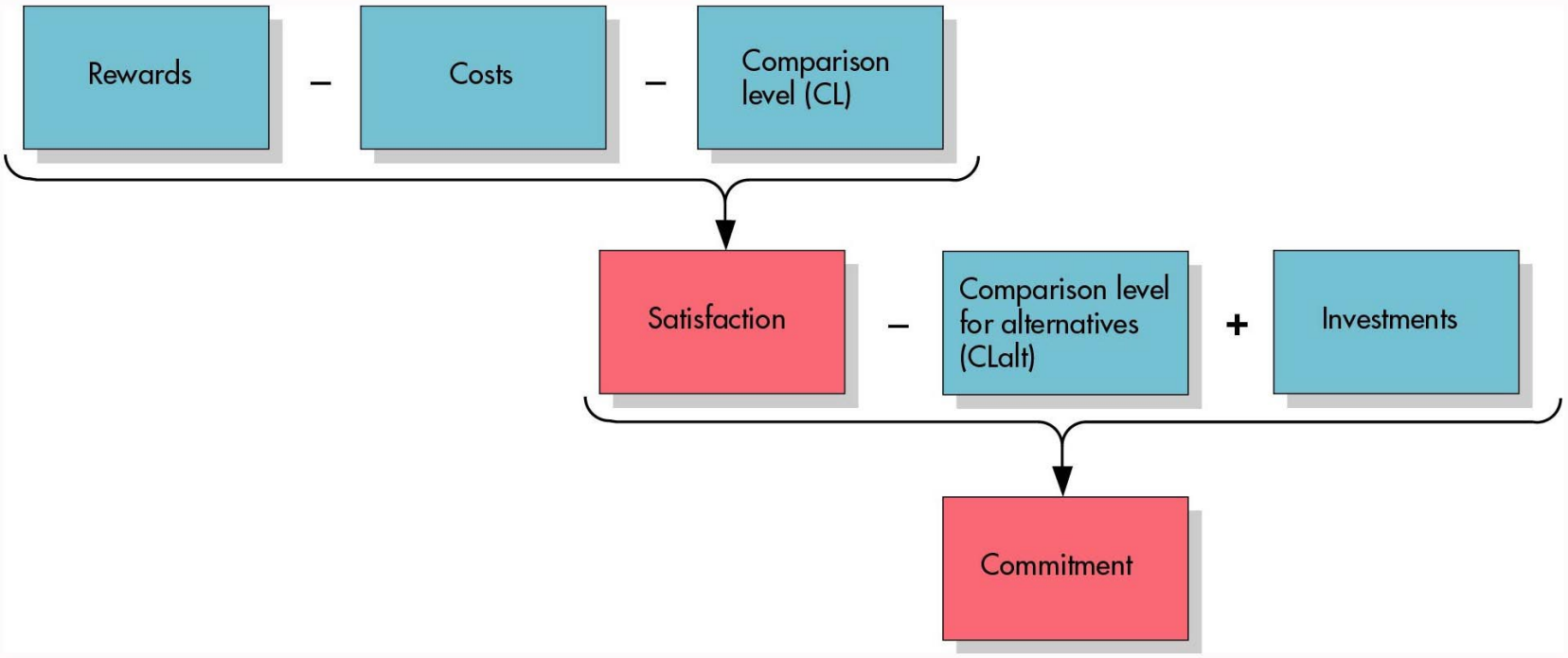
How does attraction transform into intimate relationships?

- **Social exchange theory:** Suggests we are motivated to maximize benefits and minimize costs in our relationships



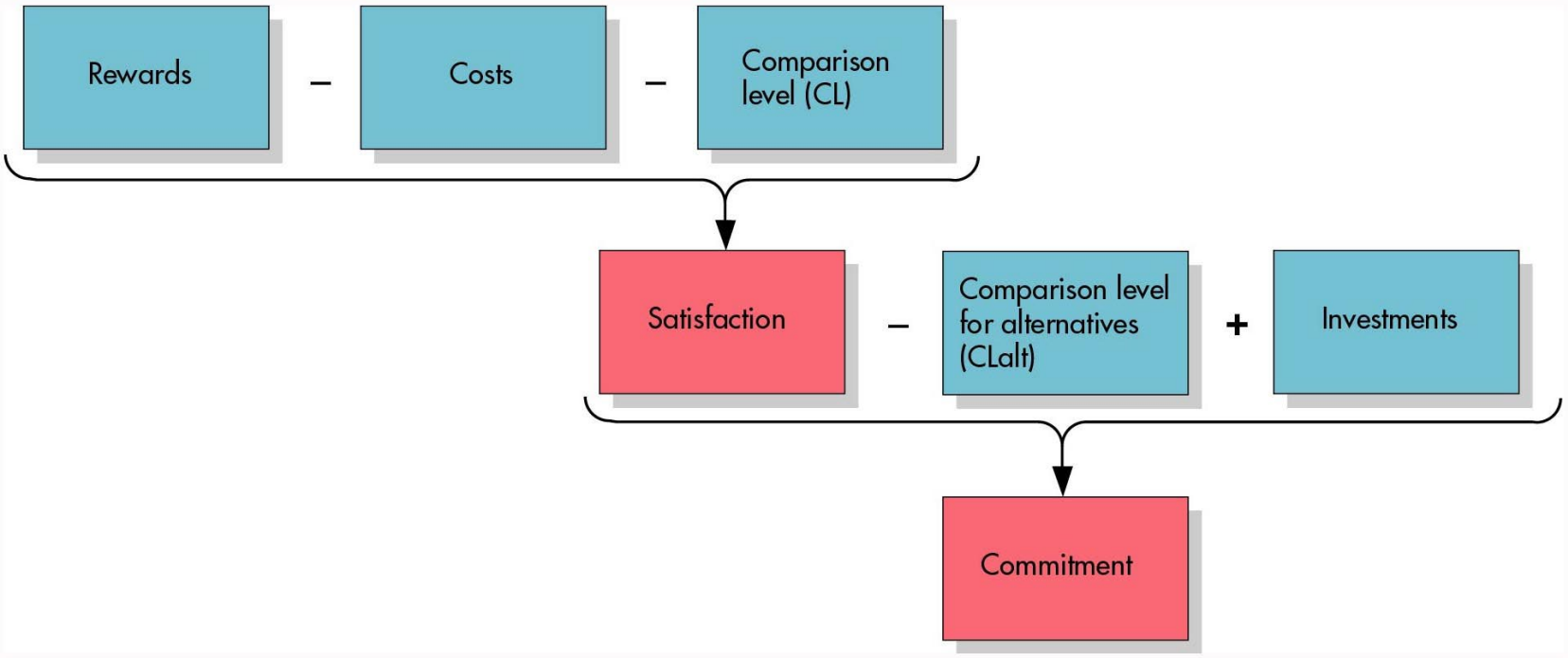
How does attraction transform into intimate relationships?

- **Comparison level (CL):** Average expected outcome
  - High CL = Expects relationships to be rewarding



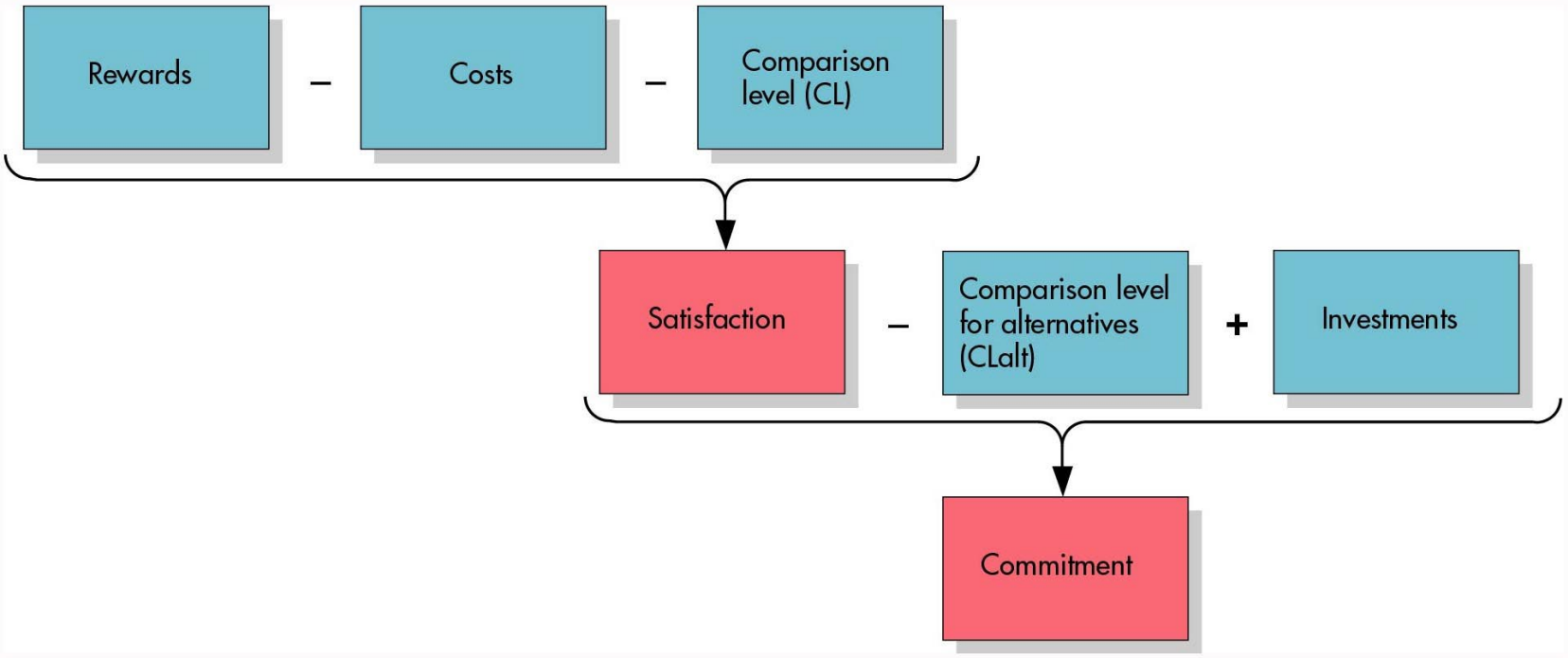
How does attraction transform into intimate relationships?

- **Comparison level for alternatives (CLalt):** Expectations about rewards in other relationships
  - High CLalt = Low commitment



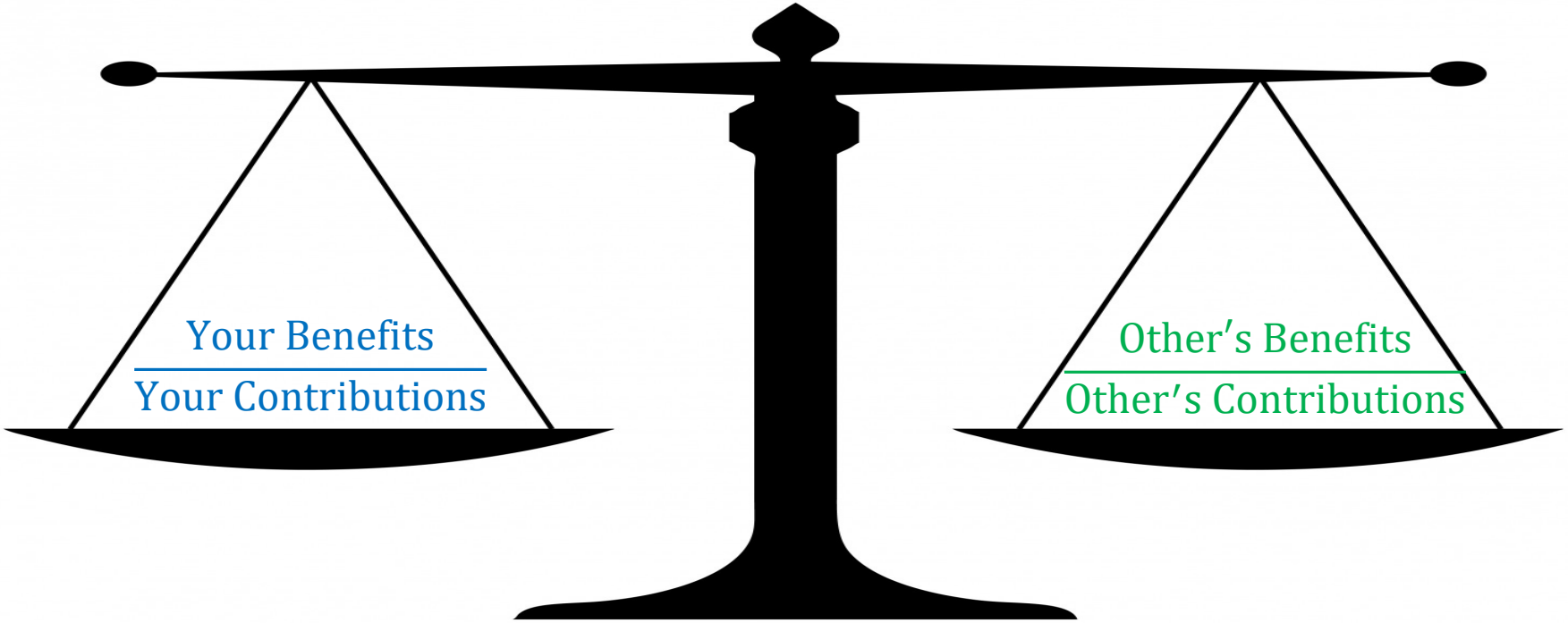
How does attraction transform into intimate relationships?

- **Investments:** Something put into a relationship that can never be recovered
  - High investments = High commitment



Equity Theory

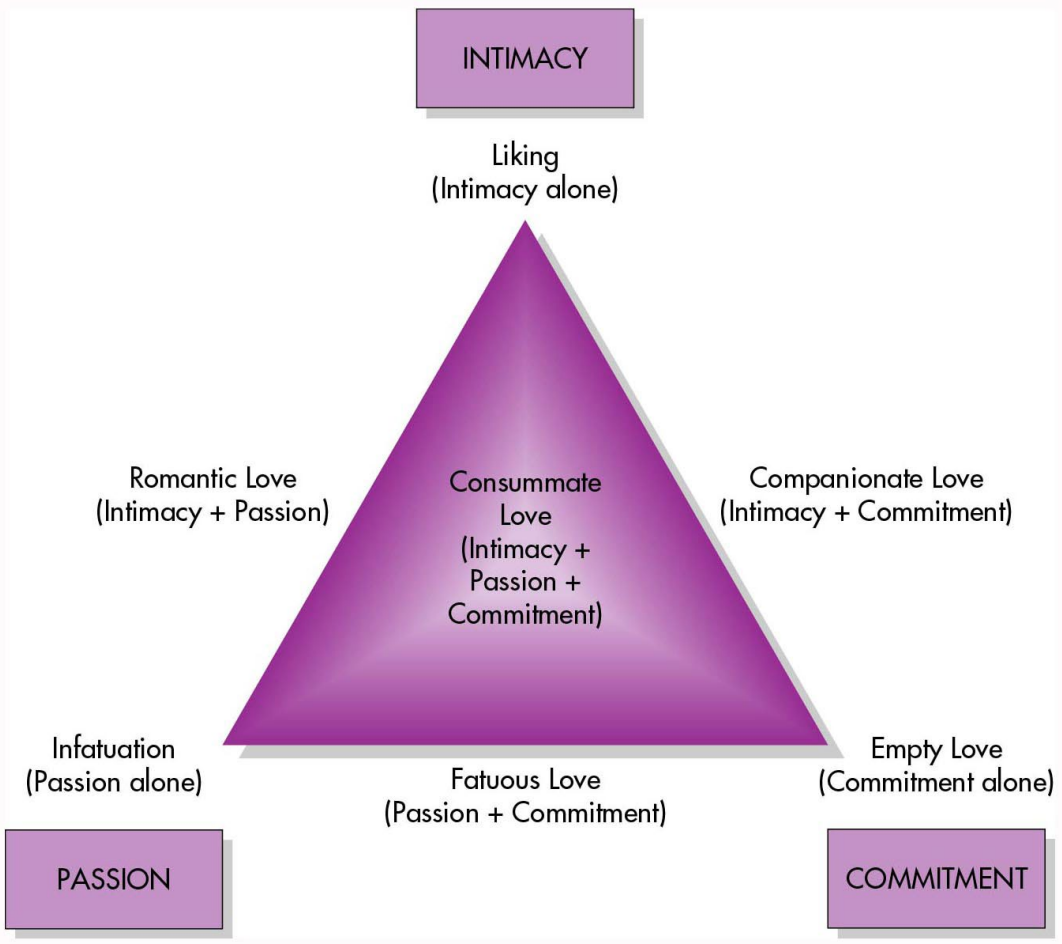
- **Equity theory:** Suggests we are most content with a relationship when the ratio between the benefits and costs is similar for both partners



What is love?

What is love?

- **Sternberg's triangular theory of love:** Proposes 8 combinations of 3 basic components (intimacy, passion, and commitment)



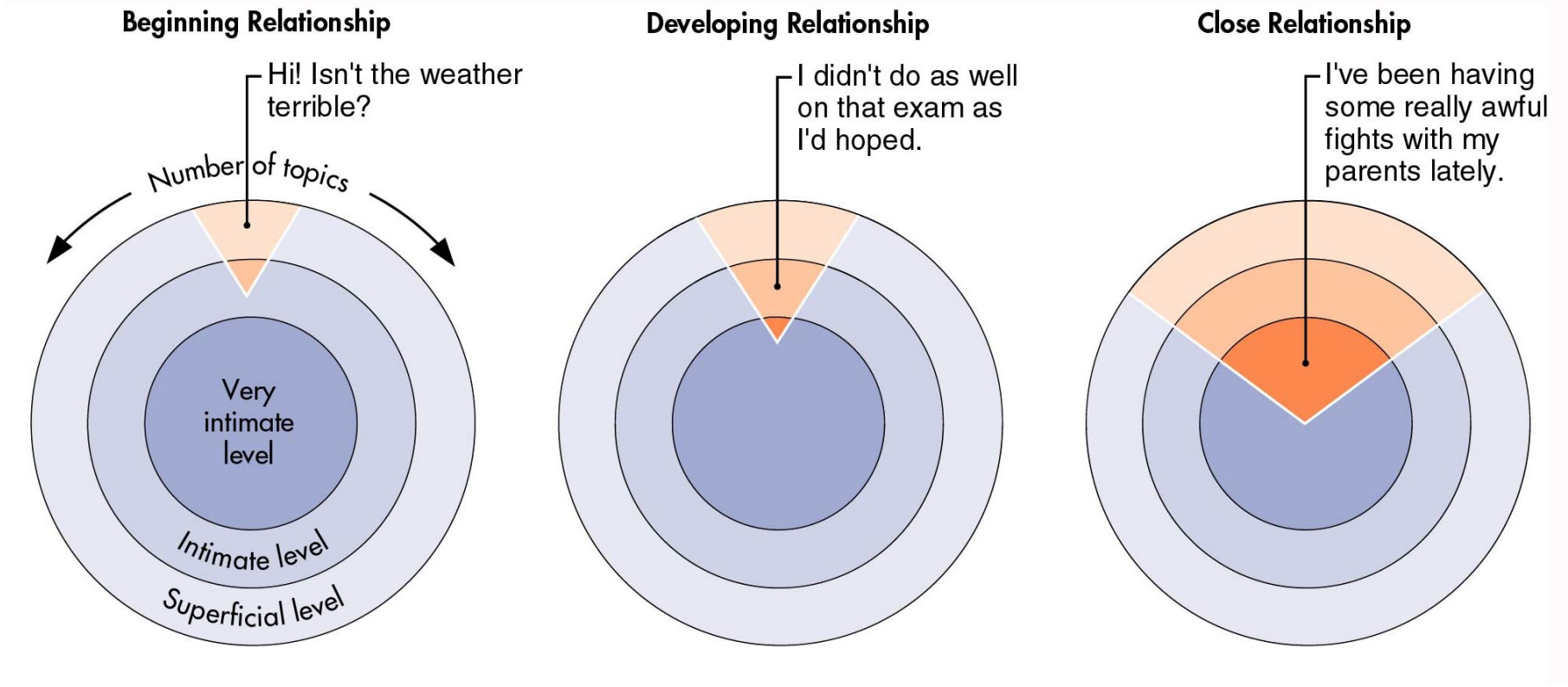
What is love?

- **Passionate love:** Romantic love characterized by high arousal, intense attraction, and fear of rejection
- Tends to diminish over time
- Not required for marriage universally

What is love?

- **Companionate love:** Secure, trusting, respectful, stable partnership
- **Self-disclosure:** A willingness to open up and share intimate facts and feelings
- Found between close friends and lovers
- Less intense, but deeper and more enduring than passionate love

What is love?



Theory of Social Penetration

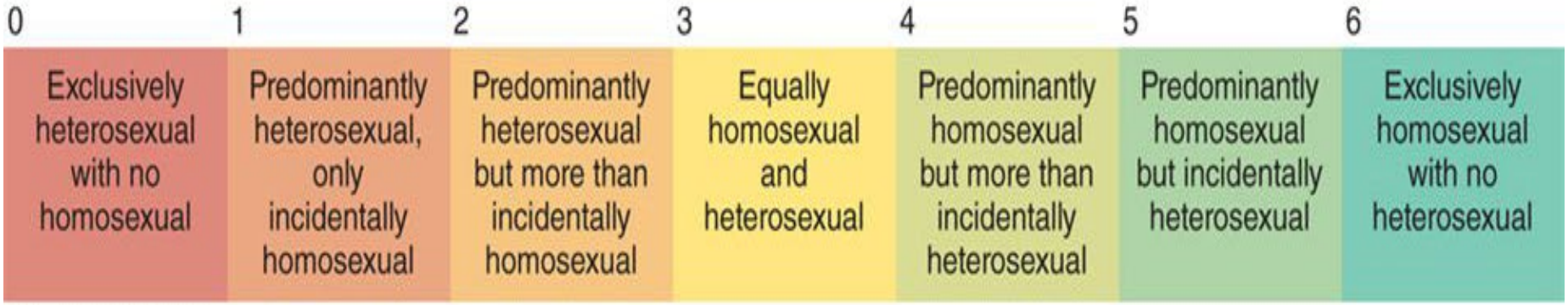
What does the research say about various relationship issues?

What does the research say about sexuality?

- Difficult to study systematically
  - Self-report accuracy
  - Interpretation of survey questions
- Gender differences common in self-report surveys
  - Men tend to view the world in more “sexualized” terms

What does the research say about sexual orientation?

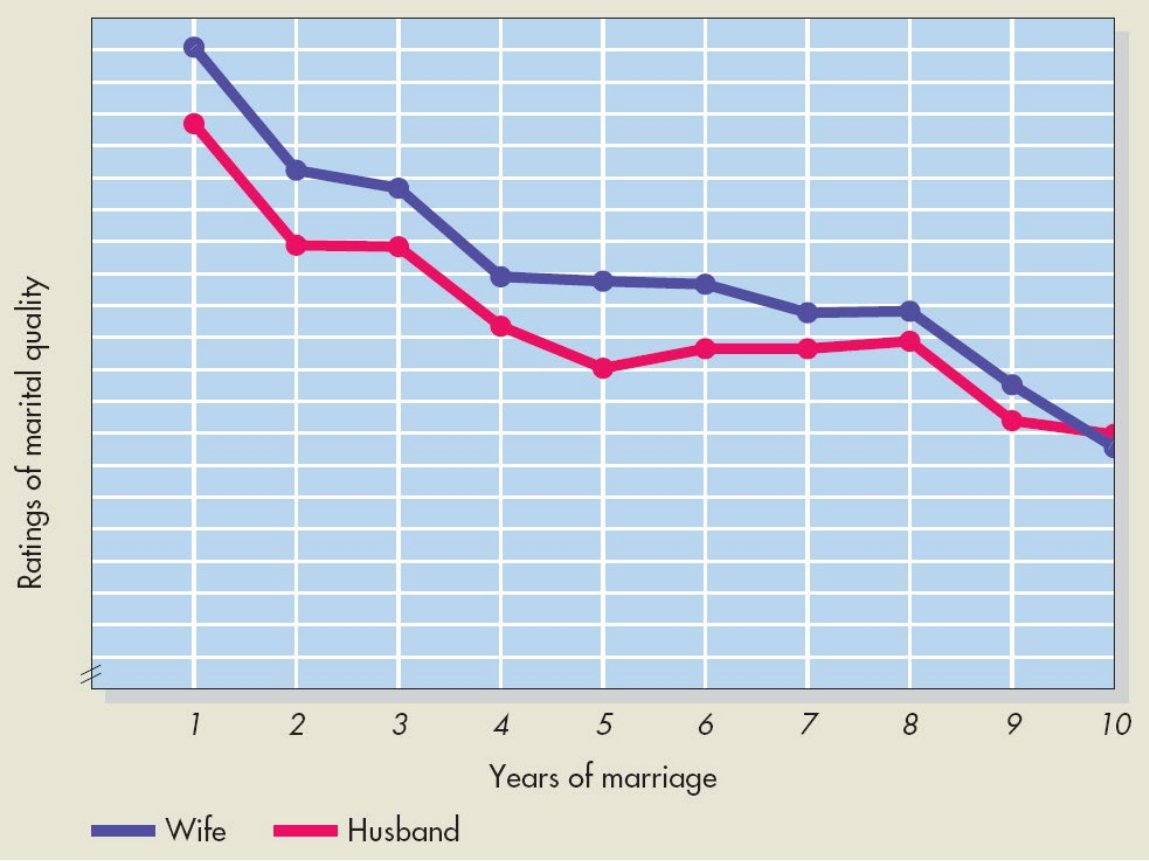
- **Sexual orientation:** Preference for members of the same sex, opposite sex, or both sexes
- Attraction process similar for all orientations



What does the research say about marital trajectory?

- Satisfaction ratings tend to decline over time
  - “Honeymoon stage”
  - “Seven-year itch”
- Predictors of marital dissatisfaction
  - Steep initial decline
  - Boredom

What does the research say about marital trajectory?



What does the research say about communication and conflict?

- Communication patterns in troubled relationships
  - **Negative affect reciprocity:** Tit-for-tat exchange of negative feelings
  - **Demand/withdrawal interaction pattern:** One partner demands resolution, while the other withdrawals
- Reducing negative effects of conflict
  - Reward behaviors in other aspects of the relationship
  - Try to understand the other's point of view