Attraction & Love
Binding Forces
Physical Attractiveness

- According to research, physical attractiveness is a key factor when considering a potential romantic or sexual partner.
- Attraction: forces and factors that draw people together.
Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?

- Cultural standards for physical attractiveness exist…what are they?
- Fact vs. Fiction.
- Ex. Across many cultures, some facial features are associated with beauty…
- How do we define physical attractiveness?
- Is our interpretation of physical attractiveness related to our life experiences?
What about nonphysical traits?

- A person’s attractiveness or “beauty” may be enhanced by such traits as familiarity, liking, respect, and sharing of values and goals.
Gender Roles... Attractiveness?

- Gender-role perceptions affect perceptions of physical attractiveness.
- People who act consistent with gender-role expectations typically are viewed as more attractive.
- People's names affect perceptions of attractiveness.
  - Matthew vs. Slyvester
  - Christine vs. Gertrude
What about long-term relationships?

• Physical attractiveness is not the most important quality sought for long-term relationships.

• Physical attractiveness is most important for a sexual relationship.

• Women seek partners with the following qualities:
  • Intelligence, stability, vocation status, earning potential, expressiveness, kindness, consideration, dependability, fondness for children.

• Men seek partners with the following qualities:
  • Youth, attractiveness, cooking ability, frugality
Evolutionary Perspective

• Certain traits provide reproductive advantages:
  • Women are valued for reproductive potential
  • Youth and physical attraction may be markers
  • Men are valued as providers
  • Factors such as reliability, income indicate stability
Attraction-Similarity Hypothesis

• The view that people tend to develop romantic relationships with people who are similar to themselves in factors such as physical attractiveness, cultural background, personality traits, and interests.

• Exceptions occur when lack of attractiveness is compensated for by other factors.

• Matching can apply to similarity in ethnicity, age, educational level and religion.
Who is right for you?

• Do opposites attract?
• Do birds of a feather flock together?
• Similarity in attitudes is important to attraction.
• Propinquity: (nearness) we tend to live near those who are similar to us in many ways.
• Similarity is more important to women than to men.
Reciprocity

• Mutual exchange of feelings and behaviors.
• Potent determinant of attraction.
• Reciprocating positive words or actions can stoke mild feelings into strong feelings of attraction.
Love

• Romantic Love:
  • Western culture idealizes the concept of romantic love.
  • In the U.S, most people believe romantic love is a prerequisite for marriage or other kinds of long-term or permanent relationships.
  • Romantic love involves emotional highs and lows.
  • Women may justify sexual activity with love, but men do not need to attribute love to sex urges and behavior.
Infatuation

- A state of intense absorption in or focus on another person.
- Usually involves sexual desire, elation, general physiological arousal or excitement (passion).
- At first, difficult to differentiate from other enduring forms of love.
- As times passes, begin to view more realistically.
- Can be passing fancy, may develop into more enduring relationship.
- Not necessarily a first step to lasting, mutual love.
Contemporary Models of Love

• Biological Mechanisms:
  • Bodily changes occur when we experience feelings of love.
    • Brain chemistry stimulates pleasure center.
    • Hormones stimulate physiological responses.
    • Heightened levels of nerve growth factors increase awareness.
Steinberg’s Triangular Theory of Love

• **Intimacy:**
  - Feelings of closeness, bondedness, and connectedness.
  - Desire to share one’s innermost thoughts with the other.
  - Desire to give and receive emotional support.

• **Passion:**
  - Intense romantic or sexual desire for another person, which is accompanied by physiological arousal.

• **Commitment:**
  - Commitment to maintain the relationship despite potential hardships.
Consummate Love =
A complete love
Intimacy +
Passion +
Commitment