ATTRACTION

INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

The desire to approach other people

ATTRACTION

- Refers to anything that draws two or more people together, making them want to be together and possibly to form a lasting relationship.
- Origins of attraction:
  - The need for affiliation, belongingness.
  - Attachment and loneliness.
- Influenced by:
  - Personal characteristics of the individual.
  - Situational factors.
  - Characteristics of other people.
AFFILIATION NEEDS

- Companionship – central and essential components of life.
- The presence of others fulfills one fundamental need – the need for affiliation.
- Stanley Schacter (SS) – affiliation needs could be aroused by fear.
- SS (1959) – participants in fear situation chose to wait others; those who received mild, painless shock chose to wait by themselves.
  - High fear situation (expect a strong shock) – presence of others reduce anxiety through comfort, reassurance and consolation.
  - Social comparison: evaluate own behavior, expertise, abilities and opinions by comparing them with those of other people.

AFFILIATION NEEDS

- The desire to gain knowledge about ourselves and the world through social comparison.
  - Why?
    - Dependent on others for information.
    - Use behavior and view of others to evaluate their own.
    - Need to do this because reality is often ambiguous.
  - Leon Festinger’s (1954) social comparison theory: we possess a strong need to have accurate views, both about our social world and about ourselves.
  - We use social comparison not only to judge --- and improve ---ourselves, but also to judge our emotions and choose our friend.

AFFILIATION NEEDS

- The desire to secure psychological and material rewards through social exchange.
  - Social exchange theory
    - people seek out and maintain those relationships in which the rewards exceed the costs
    - People will be attracted to those who best reward them
The desire to belongingness.
The need to belong is defined as the desire to form and maintain close, lasting relationships with some other individuals.
Our need to belong is a powerful, fundamental and extremely pervasive motivation.
The need for belongingness is the need to establish and maintain at least a minimum number of interpersonal relationship.

BELONGINGNESS

- The desire to belongingness.
- The need to belong has 2 components:
  1. People want some kind of regular social contacts.
  2. People want the stable framework of some ongoing relationship in which the people share a mutual concern for each other.
- Not belonging is bad.
  - Leads to significant health problems

Culture influence affiliation desire

- Although we have inborn affiliation desire tendencies, our culture experiences further shape and direct these tendencies.
- Geert Hofstede’s (1980) study of 22 countries found a positive relationship between a culture’s degree of individualism and its citizen’s affiliation needs.
WHAT CAUSES ATTRACTION?

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITUATION AND ATTRACTION
• Close proximity fosters liking
  – The best single predictor of whether two people will be friends is how far apart they live
  – Propinquity effect --- the more we see and interact with people, the more likely they are to become our friends

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITUATION AND ATTRACTION
• Our affiliation desires increase with anxiety
  – External events can also motivate people
  – Anxiety-inducing events: The desire for social comparison attracts us to similar anxious others
CHARACTERISTICS OF OTHERS AND ATTRACTION

• Physical Attractiveness
• Similarity
• Desirable Personal Attributes

Physical Attractiveness

• We tend to like attractive more
• On reason we like more attractive people is that they are believed to possess other good qualities.
  – In fact, more attractive people may be more socially skilled
  – They are also believed to be more intelligent, dominant, and mentally healthy.

Physical Attractiveness

• In a classic study on the importance of physical attractiveness, college students were randomly assigned to each other as dates for an evening. People who were more attractive were better liked by their date

(Walster et al., 1966)
## Physical Attractiveness

### Other effects of attractiveness
- Physically attractive people are more likely to receive help, job recommendations and more lenient punishment.
- People who are disabled are stereotyped as unattractive.

### People who are obese are stigmatized and face discrimination in the workplace
- The negative view occurs because people are seen as responsible for their weight.

### What is attractiveness?
- Women: faces with large, a small nose, a small chin, prominent cheekbones and narrow cheeks, high eyebrows, large pupils, and a big smile.
- Men: faces with large eyes, prominent cheekbones, a large chin, and a big smile.

### Cultural standards of beauty
- People’s perception of what is beautiful or handsome are similar across cultures.
- People who have “above average” faces are the most attractive.

### Assumptions about attractive people
- In Western culture, where independence is valued, the “beautiful” stereotype includes traits of personal strength.
- In more collectivistic Asian cultures, people are assumed to have traits such as integrity and concern for others.
• We like others who are similar to us in attitudes, interests, values, background and personality

• Newcomb (1961) assigned roommates to either very similar or very dissimilar and measured liking at the end of the semester.

• Results: Those who were similar liked each other while those who were dissimilar disliked each other

• In romantic relationships, the tendency to choose similar others is called the matching principle

• People tend to match their partners on a wide variety of attributes
  – Age, intelligence, education, religion, height

• Why do people prefer similar others?
  – Similar others are more rewarding
  – Interacting with similar others minimizes the possibility of cognitive dissonance
  – We expect to be more successful with similar others

• Limits to similarity
  – Differences can be rewarding
  – Differences allow people to pool shared knowledge and skills to mutual benefit
  – Similarity can be threatening when someone similar to us experiences an unfortunate fate
Desirable Personal Attributes

- There are large individual and cross-cultural differences in the characteristics that are preferred.
- Within the U.S., the most liked characteristics are those related to trustworthiness.
- Two other much-liked attributes are personal warmth and competence.

Desirable Personal Attributes

- **Warmth**
  - People appear warm when they have a positive attitude and express liking, praise, and approval.
  - Nonverbal behaviors such as smiling, attentiveness, and expressing emotions also contribute to perceptions of warmth.

- **Competence**
  - We like people who are socially skilled, intelligent, and competent.
  - The type of competence that matters most depends on the nature of the relationship.
    - e.g., social skills for friends, knowledge for profs.

WHEN SOCIAL INTERACTION BECOMES PROBLEMATIC

- **Social anxiety can keep us isolated from others**
  - Social anxiety is the unpleasant emotion people experience due to their concern with interpersonal evaluation.
  - This anxiety is what causes people to occasionally avoid social interaction.

- **Loneliness is the consequence of social isolation**
  - Loneliness is defined as having a smaller or less satisfying network of social and intimate relationships than one desires.
  - Lonely and nonlonely people do not differ in the quantity of their social interaction, but rather in the quality of such exchanges.
WHEN SOCIAL INTERACTION BECOMES PROBLEMATIC

– Adolescent and young adults are the loneliest age groups.
– As people mature, loneliness decrease until relatively late in life
– The chronically lonely often lack of social skills