

Lecture 6 – Love and Attraction

From the Self to the Dyad

Relationships mark a significant shift in psychological experience. We move from focusing on the individual self to experiencing a different psychology as part of a couple. Examples:

- **Relational schema:** We cognitively perceive people in relationship units (e.g., "Keith and Stacey").
- **Transactive memory:** In couples, memory systems are shared. One partner remembers names, the other handles finances.

Tension in relationships:

- A central dynamic is the conflict between **connection and individuality**.
 - Schopenhauer's **porcupine dilemma** illustrates this: getting too close causes pain, but separation brings loneliness.
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Models and Theories of Relationships

Evolutionary Psychology

- Focuses on mating strategies and inherited patterns of behavior.

Attachment Theory

- Secure vs. anxious vs. avoidant patterns that shape adult relationships.

Personality Models

- Big Five traits and interpersonal compatibility.

Social Psychology of Attraction

- Examines environmental, situational, and interpersonal dynamics.
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Western Myths and Love

- **Heroic Individualism:** Love stories like *Romeo and Juliet* and *Titanic* prioritize individual love over family, duty, or social constraints.
- **Cultural narrative:** True love is portrayed as transcending group constraints.

"We don't make Disney movies about arranged marriages that work over 10 years."

What Makes Someone Attractive?

Stated Preferences

- Trust, kindness, humor, confidence, ambition, and positive emotionality.

Actual Behavior

- **Physical attractiveness** is the strongest predictor in dating studies.
- Classic studies:
- 1960s Minnesota computer dating study.
- Speed dating studies: looks dominate over personality traits.

Physical Traits

- **Symmetry, averageness, youth, and health** signal fertility and desirability.
- We prefer a slightly-above-average appearance, not extremes.

Similarity vs. Opposites

- **Similarity wins:** values, interests, lifestyle alignment promote stability.
- Opposites attract mostly in **reactance** (rebellion), not in sustained relationships.

Gender Differences

- **Parental Investment Theory (Trivers):**
 - Women are more selective due to greater biological cost of reproduction.
 - Men more often pursue multiple partners.
 - Egg donation = \$\$\$, sperm donation = \$
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Situational Forces in Attraction

1. Misattribution of Arousal

- **Dutton & Aron Bridge Study:** scary situations increase perceived attractiveness via misattributed arousal.

2. Deindividuation

- **"Dark Room Study":** anonymity increases physical and emotional connection.
- Similar to costuming, parties, Halloween: social masks dissolve norms.

3. Fear and Affiliation

- Fear increases desire for social connection (Schachter study: painful shock = prefer waiting with others).

4. Liminality

- Rituals and sensory experiences (e.g., twilight on a beach) reduce ego boundaries and facilitate connection.
- Romantic settings often reflect liminal thresholds.

"It's hard to fall in love under fluorescent lights."

From Attraction to Love

Reciprocal Self-Disclosure

- Vulnerability in shared dialogue builds intimacy.
- Art Aron's research: 10-minute mutual question sessions can accelerate closeness (sometimes even marriage).

Self-Expansion Model

- Love = integrating the other's knowledge, skills, and perspectives into one's self.
 - Fast growth = passion (e.g., *Twilight*). Slower growth = companionate love.
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Models of Love

Sternberg's Triangular Theory

1. **Passion** (physical attraction)
2. **Intimacy** (deep understanding)
3. **Commitment** (desire to stay)

Types of Love:

- **Consummate**: All three present.
- **Romantic**: Passion + Intimacy
- **Companionate**: Intimacy + Commitment
- **Fatuous**: Passion + Commitment

Lee's Colors of Love (Hendrick & Hendrick)

1. **Eros**: Passionate
 2. **Ludus**: Game-playing
 3. **Storge**: Friendship-based
 4. **Pragma**: Logical/practical
 5. **Mania**: Possessive, dependent
 6. **Agape**: Selfless, spiritual love
 7. Styles map onto emotional maturity, narcissism, attachment styles, and personal values.
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Commitment and Maintenance

Rusbult's Investment Model

1. **Satisfaction** (rewards > costs)
2. **Alternatives** (few viable others = stronger commitment)
3. **Investments** (shared house, children, time, friends)

Relationship Maintenance Mechanisms

- **Cognitive Interdependence:** Thinking in terms of "we."
- **Willingness to Sacrifice:** Moving, job changes, lifestyle shifts.
- **Partner Enhancement & Derogation:**
 - Overvalue your partner
 - Devalue alternatives
- **Accommodation:**
 - Four responses to conflict:
 - Exit (active destructive)
 - Voice (active constructive)
 - Loyalty (passive constructive)
 - Neglect (passive destructive)

"Don't be mean. That's the number one rule of marriage."

Final Reflections

Modern relationships are harder due to:

- **Overabundance of choices**
- **Unrealistic expectations** (e.g., Disney romance)
- **Work and stress draining emotional reserves**

True love, in the long term, is:

- **Discipline**

- **Maintenance**
- **Intentionality**
- **Sacrifice**

"Falling in love is easy. Staying in love is effortful, intentional, and deeply human."

Q\&A Highlights

Where does personality live?

- It's an **estimate**, not a fixed entity. Best understood through self-assessment, 360 feedback, and narrative.

Virtue vs. Lust

- Love may begin in lustful, liminal spaces but can evolve toward **virtue**, **discipline**, and **spiritual transformation**.

"The life of a hedonist is the best preparation for the life of a mystic." – Hermann Hesse
