Love, Attraction, Attachment, and Intimate Relationships

What gets us together and then keeps us that way
Love

- What exactly is it?
- An attitude?
- A phenomenon?
- Hard to define – can it be measured?
Rubin tried by having hundreds of couples respond to a questionnaire.

The *Love Scale* had three components:

- **Attachment** – the desire for another’s presence and emotional support
- **Caring** – concern for the other’s well being
- **Intimacy** – desire for close, confidential communication
Is the *Love Scale* meaningful?

- Maybe, couples who scored high spend more time looking in each other's eyes.
Types of Love

- **Passionate**
- A state of extreme absorption with and desire for another
- Intense feelings – sexual desire, then vacillating from anxiety to ecstasy
- wide-spread physiological arousal
- Ignorance is bliss
Passion’s Rapid Course

- Typically hits fast
- Logic is pushed aside
- Can lead to premature commitments
- Or, *the big fade*
Companionate Love

- Based on friendly affection and deep attachment due to extensive familiarity
- Less intense
- Knowing and forgiving
- Willing to work
- Endures after passion evaporates
Sex is rich, mature, communicative, willing to take risks

While occasionally passionate love can reemerge as companionate love, sometimes the reverse happens and old friends or co-workers can see their affections ignite sexually
Sternberg’s Triangular Theory

- Love’s Three Faces

- Passion
  - Fuels romantic feelings and desire for sexual interaction and unification
  - Similar to an addiction, intensity causes a powerful craving
More Sternberg

- **Intimacy**
- The *emotional* component
- A sense of bonding
- Warmth, sharing, emotional closeness
- Willing to help and share private essence
The Triangle’s Third Side

- **Commitment**
- The *cognitive* aspect
- A conscious decision to love another
- The choice to maintain a relationship despite challenges
That’s How It Works!

- Putting it all together
- Sternberg explains the *transition* from passionate to companionate love

*Passionate* love develops rapidly and intensely, then declines. *Intimacy* and *commitment* grow. If they don’t, the drop in passion likely signals the relationship’s end.
Taking It Apart

- The interplay of these three components and their varying power over time results in differences in how we experience love.

- Isolating and combining the three faces gives us informative labels for differing types of love.
Labels

- **Infatuation** – just *passion*

- **Empty** (love) – *commitment* only

- **Companionate** – *intimacy & commitment*

- **Romantic** – *passion & intimacy*

- **Consummate** – *love that has it all*
Support for the Triangle?

- Research shows that:
  1) the presence of *intimacy* and *commitment* predict stability and duration,
  2) married have more *commitment*
  3) *intimacy* continually rises in long term relationships
  4) *passion* drops more sharply for women
Falling in Love

- Why do we fall in love?
- Is it to escape loneliness?
- To answer our deepest need?
- The ultimate extension of our social network?
Proximity

- Geographic nearness
- The Mere Exposure Effect – *repeated contact with novel stimuli tends to increase liking for the stimuli*
- People also tend to meet in locations engaging in activities that reflect common interests – the NHSLS confirms this
More Proximity

- Work and school – offer much time shared together and many shared common interests

- Frequent chances to appraise and predict
Similarity

- Lovers often share beliefs, values, attitudes, interests and intellect
- Usually they have similar levels of physical attractiveness
- **Homophily** – *tendency to have relationships with those of equal education, social status, age, religion, etc.*
Reciprocity

- We tend to like people who like us

- Couples who show equal levels of affection last longer
Physical Attractiveness

- Attractive people are both sought as friends and lovers and perceived as possessing many desired qualities.
- We like to look at them.
- We think they have more to offer.
- We like being seen with them.
- Maybe they are more confident.
- We think they are healthier.
Heloise and Abelard

- Plenty of *proximity*
- Similar interests
- Same social class
- Abundant *reciprocity*
- Both *physically attractive*
Why are Looks so Important?

- Is this preference innate?
- Men, world-wide, are especially influenced by physical attractiveness in particular *youth* and *healthiness*.
- Desire to maximize reproductive capabilities?
- But as time goes on the importance of beauty fades.
Attachment

- An intense emotional tie between two individuals, usually, but not always, mother and child

- Three major styles
  1) **Secure** – Mom as base for exploration, only moderately distressed when she leaves, reassured at return, then more exploration
Insecure Attachment

2) **Anxious-Ambivalent** – marked by extreme *separation anxiety*

3) **Avoidant** – cannot decide if they want to be close to Mom or not

- Both *styles* result from child’s *temperament* and Mom’s parenting
Adult Effects of Attachment Styles

- Children with *secure attachment* show much greater social competence
- Easier to get close to people
- No fear of abandonment
Anxious-ambivalent children show great uncertainty responding to others.

- Marked by a poor *self-image*
- Insecure in relationships
- Fear rejection
Avoidant children often have negative views of others and avoid intimacy.

- Reluctant to trust

Overall, 50 to 60% of American adults are secure, 25% avoidant, and 20% anxious-ambivalent.

These patterns seem to follow into adulthood and recur with romantic partners.
In a study involving 354 couples:

1) In over half, both had been securely attached

2) There were no anxious-ambivalent or avoidant couples!

Securely attached also communicate better
Relationship Issues

- Loving, sexual relationships have their downside, more:
  - criticism
  - conflict
  - ambivalence, and
  - talk
- If that wasn’t enough – less tolerance
Why?

- There is a complex interplay between love and sex.
- For while most of us can be sexually attracted to someone we do not love, feelings of love and sexual attraction are usually both present and desired.
Sex: Good thing? Bad thing?

- Does sex strengthen a relationship?

  - Sometimes, but often sex before intimacy can create emotional distancing.

  - Also, some justify sex by entering into premature commitments.
Mars vs. Venus?

- Do the sexes view sex and love similarly?
- Men rate romances on the quality of sex but do not think that love is necessary for sex.
- But both sexes value love/affection in sexual relationships and more & more men think that sex suffers w/out love.
Gays & casual sex

- Are gays more casual about sex?
- A widespread belief that research has established as false.
- Gay men, at least some, engage in casual sex because they are MEN not because they are gay.
- Lesbians often wait until *intimacy*. 
The Ultimate Test

More importantly, since many have same-sex relations in late childhood and adolescence, it is *falling in love* with someone of their own sex that cements their gay identity.
Sexual Expression in 2006

- The times, they are a changing
- How should we choose our own personal, sexual *style of life* in such fluid and chaotic times?

- Our text provides some guidelines since traditional rules and norms seem wanting to many.
Know Yourself

- Evaluate your expectations and needs
- Think about your values
- Decide how you will protect yourself (and your partner) from STDs and unwanted pregnancies.
The Ultimate Question

- Will the decision to engage in a sexual relationship – with this person, right now – increase positive feelings about myself and my partner?

- If the answer is NO – communication is a must.
Ending Relationships

- Most of us want it crisp and clear.
- The one *breaking off* the relationship suffers more?
- *Perhaps* they initially feel guilt, discomfort, etc.
- But who feels worse two weeks later?
Coping with **Rejection**

- **unrequited love** – 90% have loved someone who *doesn’t feel the same way.*
- Is it an appraisal of your worth/value?
  - No, usually just personal preference
  - “Better to have loved and lost than ...”?
  - But what about that withdrawal effect?
Jealousy

- An unpleasant emotional reaction brought to life by a *real or imagined* relationship involving one’s partner and a third party
- Is it a necessary sign of love?
- Or is it a sign of someone losing what they control or possess?
- A blow to self-esteem?
More Jealousy

- Can be increased by envy of “the rivals” characteristics:
  - Females – attractiveness & popularity
  - Males – wealth & fame
Who is most prone to jealousy?

- People with low esteem
- Those who see a big gap between who they are and who they would like to be, an *idealized self image*
- People who highly value status and physical attractiveness
Jealousy and Violence

- Can cause violence both in marriages and dating relationships
- Usually it is directed against lover/partner rather than the rival
- Mix in alcohol ....
Sex Differences

- **Women** - more likely to acknowledge focus on emotional aspects

- **Men** - often deny focus on sexual implications
Why are we jealous?

- All due to evolution?
- Men fear that “their” children are really someone else’s?
- Women fear that emotional “betrayal” will soon be followed by abandonment, jeopardizing her children’s future?
- Does perceived parenting ability play a role?
Coping with jealousy

- Difficult since problem often does not stem from relationship
- If motivation to change is present, strong communication can help solve, or lessen, the problem
Jealousy’s Inherent Irony

- It produces negative emotions

- It is *self-defeating* since it damages what it tries to protect.