

## 4 Psychological Attraction

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The physical attractiveness of another person is certainly a strong basis for the initiation of intimate relationships, as the previous chapter has shown. At the same time, the popularity of matchmaking services that tout the importance of compatibility suggests that attraction may be influenced by characteristics and processes that operate beneath the epidermis. In that regard, romantic relationships can be quite similar to same-sex friendships that are frequently based on principles that have very little to do with physical appearance. Of course, the question is: what are these principles? And exactly how do the 29 eHarmony dimensions of compatibility lead to success in long-term relationships? Over the years, psychologists have discovered a number of answers to these questions. Some of these answers were obtained by extending psychological theories to the issue of relationship initiation. Other answers were obtained by trying to make sense of seemingly odd and surprising relationship phenomena. This chapter looks at the kinds of answers generated by both sets of approaches.

### Theory-Driven Approaches

#### *Implicit Egotism*

When asked to explain why we like the things we like, most of us would probably be tempted to point to specific features of items that are dear to us. In the process, we might ignore that many of our preferences are shaped by a variety of processes that operate outside conscious awareness. Chief among those is our proclivity to like things that are superficially associated with an aspect of ourselves. Such **implicit egotism** manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, we often like things for no other reason than their connection to letters in our names (Pelham, Mirenberg, & Jones, 2002). In support of this idea, people tend to live in cities that resemble their names. There are a disproportionate number of Jacks in Jacksonville, Phils in Philadelphia, Virginias in Virginia Beach, and Mildreds in Milwaukee. Dentists in the United States are more likely to be named Dennis, Denise, and Dena. Likewise, hardware store owners are especially likely to be named Harold or Harris, and roofers are especially likely to have names like Rashid, Roy, or Ray.

Interpersonal preferences are similarly influenced by implicit egotism. Consider, for example, our colleague Christine who moved to Chicago, married Chuck, and had two children: Charlie and Cassandra. Archival studies show that her choices are no coincidence. People are more likely to marry others whose first or last names resemble their own. And experimental studies show that participants are more likely to be attracted than usual to participants whose experimental code resembled their own birthday and whose surnames shared letters with their own (Jones, Pelham, Carvallo, & Mirenberg, 2004). If these findings don't match your experience, don't be alarmed. Name-letter effects are generally small, and there is some disagreement about whether they exist at all (Pelham & Carvallo, 2011; Simonsohn, 2011).

### Learning Principles

Social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram allow us to share our thoughts, feelings, and experiences with others who can respond to us without having to be physically present. Assume that you have a number of friends who reliably indicate their liking for the photos and videos you post. Chances are that your liking for these friends will be higher than those who don't respond to your posts with a "like." The reason is that being liked, or rewarded, for what we do makes us feel good. And these good feelings become associated with the person who delivers this kind of reward. This, in essence illustrates the principles of operant conditioning of liking (Skinner, 1938) which considers learning as resulting from associating behavior with its consequences.

Associations also figure prominently in the **classical conditioning** of liking that has its roots in Pavlov's (1927) pioneering work on conditioning in animals. In the course of collecting saliva from his subjects (i.e., dogs), one of Pavlov's lab assistants noticed an increase in the dogs' rate of salivation not when they were presented with food, but just a little earlier, when he turned on the light in the lab. The unheralded assistant's discovery changed the course of psychology forever.

Pavlov reasoned that salivation in response to food is something that neither humans nor animals can easily avoid. He called this reflexive response an *unconditioned response* (salivation) to an *unconditioned stimulus* (food). However, in the case of the lab light being turned on repeatedly and predictably just prior to each meal, Pavlov's dogs learned an association between the two events (i.e., light and food). Pavlov termed the light-induced salivation the *conditioned response* to the light (i.e., the learned or *conditioned stimulus*). Note that the unconditioned stimulus and the conditioned stimulus refer to different events—namely, the food and the light.

How does classical conditioning operate in human romantic attraction? Essentially, it suggests that we will come to like those with whom good things are associated (Lott & Lott, 1974). That is, we should like someone better if we meet the person on a sunny day or in an interesting class rather than on a rainy day or in a boring class. Supposedly, the positive feelings induced by one's surroundings become conditioned to the person in question, resulting in increased liking. Not surprisingly, numerous experimental studies support this seemingly commonsense idea (e.g., Byrne, 1971; Byrne & Rhamey, 1965; Clore & Byrne, 1974; Lott & Lott, 1974).

At the same time, there is evidence for the idea that we will come to dislike others whom we meet under adverse conditions (Gouaux, 1971; Griffit, 1969; Griffit & Veitch, 1971; Veitch & Griffit, 1976). In these kinds of experiments, research participants typically evaluate fictitious others while they are in lab rooms ranging from hot and crowded to comfortable and roomy (Griffit & Veitch, 1971). Consistent with predictions from the

classical conditioning model, the fictitious strangers are evaluated less favorably as the conditions deteriorate. Again, it appears that the negative affect induced by the adverse situation becomes conditioned to the person being evaluated, leading to a decrease in liking.

One noteworthy feature of the studies on the conditioning of negative affect is their reliance on rating a fictitious rather than a real stranger. In the case of the Griffit and Veitch (1971) study, one might wonder what would have happened if the research participants had been asked to evaluate the other people who were in the room with them, rather than the “bogus stranger.” There is good reason to raise this question. In June of 2004, when the former World War II allies celebrated the 60th anniversary of the invasion of Normandy, newspapers carried stories about friendships that had been forged among soldiers who participated in the Allied landing. In most cases, these friendships survived the test of time and geographical separation. What is equally remarkable is the fact that they developed among people who met each other in a highly aversive environment. At least one laboratory study (Rotton et al., 1978) reports increased attraction among research participants who met in an environment polluted by ammonium sulfide.

These kinds of phenomena are not overly conducive to an explanation in terms of classical conditioning, as it would predict that the negative affect induced by being fired at or inhaling polluted air would somehow carry over to the others present in the situation. Then again, the research using the aversive conditioning paradigm shows this happening primarily for fictitious strangers. Perhaps the soldiers on the Normandy beaches would have given less favorable ratings of their enemy’s kindness or Ronald Reagan’s acting ability had they been asked to do that. The people who share their fate are an entirely different matter. There is good reason to predict that adverse environmental conditions may actually lead to an increase in liking rather than a decrease, as predicted by classical conditioning. Experiencing fear and uncertainty heightens our need for affiliation (Schachter, 1959). The presence of others helps reduce both, and this may explain why we find ourselves more attracted to people with whom we share adversity.

It is possible to make sense of the competing predictions for the influence of adversity on liking of fictitious versus real strangers within the context of learning theory. Negative affect becomes associated with bogus strangers, just as classical conditioning would predict. Real strangers, however, have rewarding qualities because their mere presence can help us deal with whatever adverse conditions might be present. Our increased attraction to these people can be explained within **operant conditioning** as a result of *escape conditioning* (Kenrick & Johnson, 1979). In other words, we can come to like others because their presence can help us escape an aversive situation.

Of course, there is something unsettling about a set of theories that predict that we would be equally likely to be attracted to a stranger we meet at a bus stop on a balmy, sunny day (classical conditioning) or a cold, stormy day (operant conditioning). It appears that attraction will always increase unless the situation is neutral—that is, not perceived as either pleasant or unpleasant. It is hard to conceive of situations that are in fact truly neutral, and thus, the predictive power of learning theories is diminished by virtue of explaining too much. This does not mean that pleasant or aversive situations cannot lead to increased attraction to a stranger. Instead, it means that we may have to look elsewhere for an explanation.

### *Attraction as Misattribution of Arousal*

If one accepts the prevailing view of humans as active information processors who try to explain their behavior in the context of the world around them (e.g., Fiske & Taylor,

1991), it becomes possible to reexamine why particularly pleasant as well as aversive situations might stimulate attraction to a stranger. Generally, this type of situation increases our level of *physiological arousal*—our general level of activation. And our subjective experience of this arousal depends on what kind of explanation or attribution we make for them (Schachter & Singer, 1962).

Inherent in this idea is the assumption that increases in physiological arousal—i.e., increased heart rate, perspiration, and breathing—are initially unspecific and equally characteristic of both positive and negative emotions. What ultimately determines how we *feel* depends on the type of attributions we make for our arousal, which, in turn, may be suggested by the situation. For example, if you notice an increase in arousal and realize that crummy weather has prevented you from your usual outdoor exercise routine, you may explain your arousal in terms of the weather and label it “irritation.” If, on the other hand, that same increase in arousal is coupled with the realization that spring is around the corner, you may label it “happiness.” The point is that arousal alone is not specific to any emotion. Rather, the subjective emotional experience is determined by cues in the situation as to the possible causes for our arousal (Schachter & Singer, 1962).

In many cases, the situational cues are unambiguous and readily available (e.g., winning the lottery, death of a pet). Further, we are also pretty good at figuring out what kinds of things make us happy, sad, and irritated. Thus, the process of labeling our arousal is not exactly a mysterious task, proceeding instead with apparent ease and even lack of awareness. Yet there are situations in which such labels or attributions can be harder to come by. This happens when situations contain multiple cues about the origin of one’s arousal. To return to our bus stop example, if we stand there alone, we may attribute our increased arousal to the fact that it is raining and our bus is late. If, on the other hand, someone whom we find attractive is also awaiting the bus’s arrival, things get more interesting: The presence of the other person adds a novel cue to explain our arousal: Instead of irritation . . . love at first sight!

Empirical support for the idea that attraction can result from **misattribution of arousal** comes from a field experiment on men who had just crossed either a shaky or a sturdy bridge (Dutton & Aron, 1974). The men were approached by a male interviewer or an attractive female interviewer who asked them to fill out a short questionnaire and gave them the opportunity to contact her (or him) in the future if they had further questions. The differences between the two bridges, and thus the two experimental conditions, were fairly dramatic in terms of their respective fear-arousing qualities. The shaky (experimental) bridge was a 5-foot-wide, 450-foot-long suspension bridge constructed of wooden boards attached to wire cables, crossing a 230-foot-deep canyon. It had a tendency to tilt, sway, and wobble. These characteristics, along with low handrails of wire cables, gave the impression that one was about to fall over the side at any moment. The sturdy (control) bridge was 10 feet wide, ran only 10 feet above a shallow creek, and was constructed of heavy cedar, making it wider and firmer than the shaky bridge.

The researchers were primarily interested in the number of research participants who accepted the interviewer’s phone number and availed themselves of the opportunity to call. Consistent with their expectations, 9 out of 18 participants who had crossed the shaky bridge ended up calling the attractive *female* experimenter. Of those who had crossed the sturdy bridge, only 2 out of 16 called. Hardly any of the research participants called the *male* experimenter regardless of whether they had crossed the shaky (2 out of 7) or the sturdy (1 out of 6) bridges. Evidently, participants who had crossed the shaky bridge attributed any residual arousal to the presence of the attractive female interviewer.



Confederate Gender \ Bridge Type	Low and Sturdy 	High and Shaky 
Male	.17	.13
Female	.125	.50

Figure 4.1 Percentage of Men Who Called the Experimenter After Crossing the Bridge

No such misattribution occurred when there was little arousal present to begin with or when the interviewer was male and thus provided a relatively poor cue to participants' arousal. Figure 4.1 depicts the percentages of participants in the experimental conditions who called the experimenter.

Dutton and Aron's (1974) finding that romantic attraction can be explained in terms of arousal brought on by external stimuli being attributed to a potential object of attraction has proven to be a fairly robust phenomenon. A number of experiments manipulating research participants' level of arousal have yielded similar results. For example, male participants expecting a painful electric shock became more attracted to an attractive female confederate than did participants expecting to receive only a mild shock (Dutton & Aron, 1974, Experiment 3). Similar results were obtained in experiments that manipulated participants' arousal through exposure to erotic material (Stephan, Berscheid, & Walster, 1971) or through unflattering feedback on a personality test (Jacobs, Berscheid, & Walster, 1971).

Perhaps the most revealing evidence for the notion that "adrenaline makes the heart grow fonder" comes from a study on young dating couples asked to rate (1) the extent of romantic love they felt for their partner and (2) the amount of parental interference to which their relationship was subjected (Driscoll, Davis, & Lipetz, 1972). Not surprisingly, from a misattribution view, the study found a positive relationship between the amount of love and the amount of parental interference. In other words, the more parental interference existed, the more couples felt that they were in love. According to data reported by Rubin (1973), dating couples from different religious backgrounds reported more romantic love than couples with similar religious backgrounds. Presumably, in both instances the arousal produced by parental interference or the conflict with respect to different religious orientations was attributed to the partner, resulting in more subjectively experienced love.

Some (Kenrick & Cialdini, 1977) have argued that increased attraction resulting from increases in arousal may just as easily be explained in terms of operant conditioning: Increases in attraction may be due to the other person's fear-reducing qualities rather than to a misattribution of arousal produced by the situation. Thus, if the arousal can be explained easily as stemming from the anticipation of a painful electric shock, increased attraction to a stranger may in fact be the result of that person's propensity to reduce fear. On the other hand, if the source of the arousal is ambiguous, increased attraction may be a result of misattribution (White & Kight, 1984).

So what about the men on Dutton and Aron's (1974) shaky bridge? It appears that their attraction to the attractive female confederate was a result of misattribution and not operant conditioning for two reasons. First, the source of their arousal was probably at least somewhat ambiguous. It may have been due to the swaying of the bridge, but at the

same time, participants may have discounted this as a likely cause: After all, grown men are not scared of crossing a bridge open to the general public. Indeed, if crossing it were truly dangerous, it would have been closed. Second, participants' increased attraction was limited to the attractive female interviewer whose presence could constitute a reasonable source of arousal. If operant conditioning were all that mattered, participants should have been just as attracted to the male interviewer because his presence should have been just as fear reducing as the presence of the female interviewer.

The misattribution view on attraction has some clear-cut implications about how one might want to proceed in the early stages of dating. Rubin (1973) pointed out that courtship experts in Roman times advised men to take their would-be lovers to the arena to watch the gladiators. Supposedly, the generalized arousal initially created by watching the contests would eventually be misperceived as having its source in the woman's suitor and be labeled as love. The ancient Romans have been gone for a long time, leaving us with no solid evidence for how well it actually worked. Would contemporary women and men benefit from taking their dates to see a scary movie or competitive sporting event? The answer appears to be a qualified yes. First, there are indications that the arousal created by an exciting and competitive sporting event is most likely to carry over to a situation that bears some similarity (Cummins, Wise, & Nutting, 2012). In other words, it is more likely to influence a subsequent period of play rather than romantic pursuits. Moreover, watching a frightening movie may lead to attraction because the arousal it creates encourages women and men to behave in gender-stereotypic ways, promoting closeness and offering a prescription for interaction (Harris et al., 2000). Not surprisingly, then, taking a date to see a romantic movie appears to have similar effects on attraction (Harris et al., 2004).



### Thinking Critically About Relationship Issues, Theories, and Research

- Classical and operant conditioning theories predict that attraction will always increase unless the situation is neutral—that is, not perceived as either pleasant or unpleasant. Yet we know that in reality we do sometimes take a dislike to some people. Can you think of a set of conditions in which conditioning will predict decreased liking for a stranger?
- Dating couples who come from different religious backgrounds and couples who suffer interference from parents report more romantic love. This finding is attributed to an increase in the overall arousal that is interpreted as love. Can you think of alternative explanations for this phenomenon?

### *Characteristics of Others (Part I): The Gleam of Praise*

To this point, the discussion of the psychological bases of attraction has been limited to situational variables. Clearly, whether we come to like another also depends in large part on the nature of that individual's behavior toward us. All else being equal, it is probably the case that we like those who act to reward us. Praise for our thoughts, emotions, and actions is one kind of reward that is specifically tied to others and may itself stem from a more general need for approval. From this point of view, it is probably fair to say that we like more those who praise us than those who derogate us or act indifferently toward



us. Based on this simple principle, Dale Carnegie (1936) advised that heaping praise on someone is the most foolproof means to ascertain that person's friendship. In reality, the role of praise in interpersonal attraction is considerably more complicated than that. Several hundred years ago, Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1981) provided an important insight into this issue through proposition 44 of *The Ethics*.

Hatred which is completely vanquished by love passes into love: and love is thereupon greater than if hatred had not preceded it. For he who begins to love a thing, which he has wont to hate or regard with pain, from the very fact of loving feels pleasure. To this pleasure involved in love is added the pleasure arising from aid given to the endeavor to remove the pain involved in hatred, accompanied by the idea of the former object of hatred as cause.

With respect to the role of praise in attraction, Spinoza's insight suggests that we would like others more who first derogate us and then subsequently praise us. Social psychologists have gathered evidence for this idea. Aronson and Linder (1965) created an experimental situation in which research participants overheard a confederate talk about them following several brief interactions. In one condition, the confederate consistently conveyed a positive impression of the subject (e.g., intelligent, good conversationalist, outstanding person). In another condition, the confederate consistently conveyed the opposite impression. Needless to say, there were marked differences in terms of how much participants liked the confederate in either one of these conditions, as one would expect. Most interesting, however, were the outcomes in which the confederate started out conveying first a negative impression and then changed it to become more positive. Under these conditions, participants liked the confederate even more than when she had been positive all along. Not surprisingly, when the confederate's evaluation went from initially positive to negative, participants liked her even less than when she had consistently conveyed a negative impression.

Why would we like someone more who first thinks poorly of us and later becomes more favorable than someone who likes us all along? One reason is that we perceive the switch from negative to favorable evaluations as a relative gain just as Spinoza (1981) had suggested. By the same token, we like someone less who switches from a positive evaluation to a negative one. Compared to people who have hated us all along, we perceive the switch as a relative loss, which then adds to our dislike of that person. To some extent, these gain-loss effects may be due to the kinds of things we do when we receive praise from others. We often engage in an attributional analysis to discern the other person's motives. Others may use praise to cull favors or gain approval from us. Not surprisingly, when we perceive praise as resulting from an ulterior motive, it leads to a decrease rather than an increase in attraction (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Jones & Wortman, 1973). Given these considerations, the realization that someone changes his or her mind about us in a positive direction may lend credibility to the praise and hence increase attraction. When this change occurs in the opposite direction, we may conclude that the initial praise was perhaps not sincere, and consequently attraction would decrease.

Dispositions on the part of those on the receiving end of praise further complicate the picture. Despite the appeal among laypeople and therapists (e.g., Rogers, 1961) that people are motivated by a need for approval, the idea has not figured very prominently in the psychological literature. In fact, when Murray (1938) proposed that there were 39 needs underlying human behavior, need for approval was not among them. It has been proposed

that, rather than seeking approval, people seek feedback that is consistent with their self-conceptions, even if these self-conceptions are negative (Lecky, 1945). This striving for **self-verification** implies that people with positive self-concepts prefer positive feedback, including praise. On the other hand, people with negative self-concepts prefer negative feedback (Swann, 1983). Consistent with this idea, people with positive self-views tend to choose partners who evaluate them favorably, whereas people with negative self-views prefer partners who evaluate them unfavorably yet confirm their own views of themselves (Swann, Hixon, Stein-Seroussi, & Gilbert, 1990; Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992). Similarly, married couples report a higher level of commitment when they feel their spouse really knows them, including their shortcomings and flaws (Swann, Hixon, & De La Ronde, 1992).

### *Characteristics of Others (Part II): Agreement Is Everything*

On some level, praise may be a specific, if exaggerated, form of agreement. Someone who compliments us on our choice of wardrobe or political opinions essentially communicates agreement about these choices. Obviously, disagreement can be detrimental for the initiation and maintenance of close relationships. If two people cannot agree on what comprises a fun date, their relationship is not likely to develop much further. A couple whose relationship is marked by frequent disagreements over issues of more or lesser importance is likely to experience conflict, which can turn in to dissatisfaction and to an eventual breakup.

Agreement, on the other hand, produces attraction, and attraction can produce agreement. This was first recognized by Heider (1958) and further elaborated on by Newcomb (1961) in their respective formulations of **balance theory**. According to this theory, to fully understand attraction in interpersonal relationships, one first needs to recognize that a relationship between two people involves sentiment relationships among three distinct units or elements. First, there is a relationship between a person (P) and another (O) characterized by mutual liking or disliking. Second, both P and O can have a relationship with regard to some issue (X), which could be an attitude, object, behavior, or personality trait. This unit relationship can take on many forms. It could involve perceptions of who is the best soccer player of all time (an attitude), a particular ice-cream flavor (an object), nose picking in public (a behavior), or honesty (a personality trait). The respective relationships could be marked by overt agreement (e.g., Pele is the best soccer player ever) or by mere association (e.g., the fact that P frequently picks his nose in public). These relationships among the elements of the P-O-X triad can be formally represented as triangles where a + denotes liking, agreement, or the presence of some attribute (see Figure 4.2).

By and large, people gravitate toward balanced triads. A triad is a state of balance when “the perceived units and the experienced sentiments coexist without stress” (Heider, 1958, p. 176). Formally, this is obtained when the multiplications of the signs result in a positive outcome, as is the case for Triad I, where two people like each other and evaluate something positively. Balance also exists for Triad II, where two people like each other and evaluate something negatively. In either case, the sentiment and unit relationships coexist in perfect harmony, and there is little reason for P and O to do anything other than to enjoy their relationship and reaffirm each other in their mutual dislike of some issue.

The story is different for Triad III. It is marked by a state of *imbalance* created by the fact that P and O have different sentiments about issue X. The resulting tension is hypothesized to motivate P to restore balance. This could be accomplished in a number of ways:



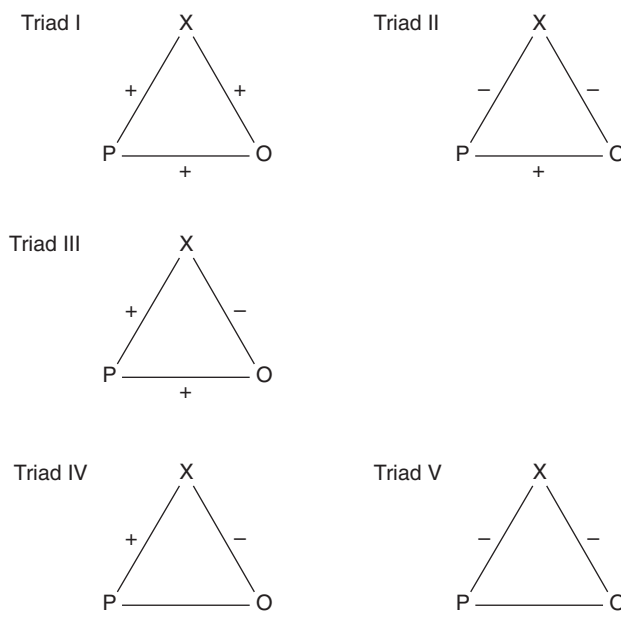


Figure 4.2 States of Balance, Imbalance, and Unbalance Among a Person (P), Another (O), and Sentiments Toward an Issue, Object, or Person (X)

(1) a change in P's attitude toward X, (2) a change in P's perception of O's attitude, (3) a reduction in the importance P assigns to X, (4) a reduction in the attraction of P for O, and (5) a reduction in the common relevance assigned to X by both P and O (Newcomb, 1961). Which of these paths is chosen depends to some extent on the nature of the relationship and the situation. A change in P's attitude toward X may be most likely when P is not heavily invested in X. On the other hand, if P has a strong and entrenched belief in X, a change in perception regarding O's attitude may more easily restore balance. However, people tend to avoid states of *unbalance*, marked by a mutual dislike between P and O (Triads IV and V), and thus a reduction in the attraction of P and O may be the least likely way to restore balance (Tashakorri & Insko, 1981). This appears to be especially true for relationships that are formed in the absence of free choice (such as relationships among coworkers and tenants, for example). In such situations, we even tend to increase our attraction for people whom we initially disliked (Tyler & Sears, 1977).

Speaking of people we dislike, balance theory can explain why we sometimes like those who dislike the same people we do. Remember that people gravitate toward balanced triads. Our enemy's (X) enemy (O) becomes our friend (Aronson & Cope, 1968) because in light of the shared dislike of X, balance can be obtained only by rendering the sign for the relationship between P and O positive (see Triad II). In a similar vein, balance principles can explain the unique experience of *Schadenfreude*, a German term for taking delight in another's misfortune. If Lukas is poor and likes his neighbor who is rich, the relationship is imbalanced. Finding out that the neighbor lost her fortune in the stock market restores balance: The multiplication of the signs now results in a positive outcome, meaning that now Lukas and his neighbor share a common fate.



### Thinking Critically About Relationship Issues, Theories, and Research

- Striving for self-verification implies that people will seek feedback consistent with their self-image, even when it is negative. But self-enhancement theory predicts that we will try to enhance, or at least protect, our self-evaluations. How would you reconcile the two theories?
- According to balance theory, we tend to form balanced triads, but the way to achieve balance depends on a number of factors. How would you explain the influence of free choice on liking in this context?

### *Similarity: Do Birds of a Feather Flock Together?*

The common observation that we like those who agree with us prompts the speculation that we might more generally be attracted to others who are similar to us in terms of their attitudes as well as their personal characteristics. In some ways, nothing could be truer. There is overwhelming evidence that we like others who are similar to us in age (Ellis, Rogoff, & Cramer, 1981), religion and race (Kandel, 1978), emotional experience (Rosenblatt & Greenberg, 1988), sense of humor (Murstain & Brust, 1985), intelligence (Lewak, Wakefield, & Briggs, 1985), performance and skill level (Tesser, Campbell, & Smith, 1984), and being a morning person versus an evening person (Watts, 1982). To some extent, similarity on such dimensions may promote the ease with which two people communicate and interact. Morning people and evening people may simply have a hard time coordinating their activities. The proposition that “Led Zeppelin was the greatest heavy metal band ever” is more likely to be endorsed by, shall we say, “mature adults.” Among people currently of college age this same proposition elicits condescending smiles at best and outright head shaking at worst.

The importance of attitude similarity for attraction was empirically established by Byrne and his colleagues (Byrne, 1971; Byrne & Nelson, 1965; Byrne & Rhamey, 1965; Clore & Byrne, 1974). In a nutshell, the research testing the **similarity-attraction hypothesis** shows that a stranger with similar attitudes is liked more than a stranger with dissimilar attitudes (Byrne, 1961). Degree of attraction is determined not by the total number of agreements, but by the *proportion* of attitudes on which two people agree. In other words, a stranger who is similar to us with regard to 5 out of 10 attitudes is liked just as much as a stranger who agrees with us 50 out of 100 times (Byrne & Nelson, 1965). The degree of attraction is further determined by the magnitude of similarity. In general, a stranger who is similar to us on attitudinal as well as personality dimensions is liked more than a stranger who is similar to us on only one dimension (Byrne & Rhamey, 1965). Finally, proportion and magnitude of similarity combine multiplicatively to produce the highest levels of attraction.

It is hard to disagree with the notion that, all else being equal, we will be more attracted to people who agree with us than to people who disagree with us. At the same time, some research casts doubts on the pervasiveness of this phenomenon, and other research raises issues in terms of how the similarity-attraction relationship should be explained. Most of the experimental work in support of the importance of attitude similarity relies on paper-and-pencil measures of attraction. When behavioral measures of attraction are employed,

a somewhat different picture emerges. In one study (Gormly, 1979), research participants' self-reports indicate that they liked attitudinally similar others more than attitudinally dissimilar others. However, when participants were asked to choose one of the two for a continued discussion, a whopping two-thirds selected the one whose attitudes were *dissimilar* to their own. A number of studies employing paper-and-pencil measures of attraction report findings that seem to qualify the similarity-attraction relationship in important ways. For example, similarity seems to matter primarily for people with favorable self-concepts (Leonard, 1975). In romantically tinged relationships, physical attractiveness is often more important than attitude similarity (Kleck & Rubenstein, 1975). When physical attractiveness is held constant, romantic settings can produce attraction to a dissimilar individual (Gold, Ryckman, & Mosly, 1984). Attitude dissimilarity leads to more attraction during the early stages of friendship formation than does attitude similarity, although established friends were most attracted to similar partners (McCarthy & Duck, 1976). In a similar vein, others (Sunnafrank, 1984) have argued that attitude similarity and attraction are mostly related in atypical communication settings, such as the psychological laboratory.

However, a more recent study of 291 newlyweds (Luo & Klohnen, 2005) suggests that similarity reigns when it comes to both attraction and relationship satisfaction in actual couples. Moreover, attitudinal similarity appears to be more important than being similar in personality. Specifically, *similarity in attitudes* along with religiosity and values predicted *attraction* better than similarity on dispositional dimensions such as personality traits and attachment styles. Similarity on *dispositional dimensions* was the best predictor of *relationship satisfaction*. A couple's attachment style and their degree of Agreeableness and Openness (two of the Big Five personality dimensions) contributed significantly to relationship happiness. This is not entirely surprising if one considers that attitudes are much more amenable and susceptible to change than personalities. In the rub of day-to-day existence, having similar personalities eases interactions of all types and on all levels.

A more recent study provides a more clear-cut picture of similarity and dissimilarity in attraction. The extent to which similarity and dissimilarity increase or decrease attraction also depends on individuals' commitment to their relationship (Amodio & Showers, 2005). Over a year's time, dating partners reported on their commitment to and satisfaction with their romantic partners and indicated how similar they perceived themselves to be to each other. Level of commitment interacted with similarity in several ways as depicted in Table 4.1. As predicted, level of commitment to the relationship had an effect on the relative importance of similarity. However, when the researchers categorized couples along their level of commitment and degree of similarity they found two surprising results.

First, similarity was not universally beneficial. Although similar partners in *committed* relationships were highly satisfied with their relationships, similar partners in *uncommitted* relationships were not. Similarity paired with commitment was associated with stability and control of the relationship, accurate partner appraisals, and acceptance of one's partner. However, although initially high, liking resulting from similarity in committed couples decreased over time. Similarity between less committed partners (i.e., relationships of convenience) resulted in low initial liking and even greater decreases over time. These individuals, although probably drawn together because of their similarities, did not like each other and used the relationship to meet other needs (Amodio & Showers, 2005).

Likewise, dissimilarity was also mediated by commitment. Dissimilar partners in highly committed relationships held unrealistic and idealized appraisals of their partner's faults, turning a blind eye to troubling partner qualities. This strategy of imposing a false degree

Table 4.1 Relationship Styles by Level of Commitment and Perceived Similarity

		Commitment to Relationship	
		Low	High
Perceived Similarity	Low	<b>Exploration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Novelty seeking</li> <li>Similar to self-expansion (Aron &amp; Aron, 1997)</li> <li>Liking: Moderate with no decrease over time</li> </ul>	<b>Fatal Attractions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on positive “extrinsic” qualities (not on similarity) and reluctant to recognize negative partner attributes, qualities</li> <li>Liking: Moderate with substantial decreases over time</li> </ul>
	High	<b>Convenience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unattractive or little-liked partners bonded via similarity</li> <li>Liking: Low with substantial decreases over time</li> </ul>	<b>Prototypic Committed Relationship</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Realistic appraisal of partner, recognition of both positive and negative traits</li> <li>Liking: High with decreases over time</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Amodio and Showers (2005).

of similarity on the partner proved inadequate, and these relationships faltered over time. Dissimilar partners in low commitment relationships revealed a second noteworthy outcome: Although initial liking was only moderate, this group of couples had the most stable level of liking among all the groups! Amodio and Showers (2005) suggest that these couples are comprised of “Explorers” who view dissimilarity as growth opportunities and a chance for self-expansion (e.g., Aron & Aron, 1997).

Together, these findings suggest that similarity and dissimilarity interact with relationship type to produce attraction and repulsion. Specifically, it appears that “committed birds of a feather flock together.”

### Complementarity: Do Opposites Attract?

Given the widespread support for the importance of attitude similarity, it may seem pointless to ask whether opposites attract. After all, they couldn’t both be true at the same time. Or could they? One could argue that **complementarity** may be important when it comes to meeting each other’s needs. A person who is shy and retiring might be better off with someone who is outgoing because of the complementarity in their respective needs. This general idea has intuitive appeal and, until recently, has been largely supported by observations from family therapists (Kubie, 1956; Mittelman, 1956). One of the early, more systematic and ambitious attempts to study the role of need complementarity comes from Winch (1958), who tried to reconcile the seeming importance of similarity with that of complementarity. He reasoned that similarity was perhaps most important for meeting someone in the first place: Someone who spends every weekend playing soccer is unlikely to meet someone who enjoys the theater. However, once two people have met on the basis of similar interests, whether their relationship succeeds depends in part on how they meet each other’s needs.

Winch went to Murray’s (1938) list of psychogenic needs and extracted those he felt were most relevant to human mate selection: abasement (a tendency to yield dignity and prestige), achievement, approach, autonomy, deference, dominance, hostility, nurturance,

succorance, recognition, status aspirations, and status strivings. In addition, Winch included the personality dimensions of anxiety, emotionality, and vicariousness. Two types of complementarity exist for these needs and traits. Type I complementarity exists when one partner is high on a need and the other partner is low (e.g., one partner is high on achievement and the other is low on this need). Type II complementarity exists when one partner is high on one need and the partner is high on a different need. This would be the case then one person is high in hostility and the other is high on abasement.

To find out about the dimensions on which couples might be complementary, Winch (1958) selected 25 married couples who attended Northwestern University. He assessed their needs and personalities through a battery of objective tests, the outcomes of which he subjected to a number of statistical procedures. His conclusions were that the couples did indeed show complementarity, especially on such needs as achievement-passivity, nurturance-dependence, and dominance-deference. He further concluded that most of the marriages he studied could be classified by the degree of dominance and nurturance present in the husband and wife. This combination of dominance-submissiveness and nurturance-receptiveness yields four categories of marriage, as depicted in Table 4.2.

Winch conceded that his classification scheme was not exhaustive enough to account for all types of marriages and that it had other shortcomings, as well. For example, it is impossible, in Winch's system, to properly classify individuals and their relationships when opposing overt and covert needs come into play *simultaneously* (e.g., a person who is dominant and self-assured on one level, but who might be dependent and needy on another). Further, Winch's sample of 25 couples was fairly small and perhaps atypical, given that the couples were comprised of married college students. Not surprisingly, subsequent tests of the complementarity model provided a mixed bag of evidence concerning its role in close relationships. Some early studies found support for Winch's ideas in context of friendship choices (Schutz, 1958) and relationship development (Kerckhoff & Davis, 1962), while others found no evidence for complementarity in dating couples, newlyweds, and veteran couples (Bowerman & Day, 1956; Murstein, 1961).

Given the strong evidence for the importance of similarity and the relatively weaker evidence for that of complementarity, are we to conclude that birds of a feather flock

Table 4.2 Dimensions and Types of Complementarity According to Winch (1958)

		Nurturance-Receptiveness	
		Husband nurturant/ Wife receptive	Husband receptive/ Wife nurturant
Dominance-Submissiveness	Husband dominant/ Wife submissive	<b>Ibsenian:</b> Husband protector, caregiver; Wife passive, incompetent	<b>Master-Servant Girl:</b> Husband dominating but dependent; Wife as competent, "worthy servant"
	Husband submissive/ Wife dominant	<b>Thurberian:</b> Husband passive with latent and guarded hostility; Wife dominant, active	<b>Mother-Son:</b> Husband seeks maternal succor from wife; Wife is nurturing

together and opposites don't attract? The answer is both yes and no. On the one hand, the similarity hypothesis has withstood the test of time very well. On the other hand, many of the inconsistencies in the findings regarding complementarity stem from disagreements over how to measure needs in the first place: Projective tests tend to tap into more *covert* needs, whereas objective, paper-and-pencil tests tend to tap into *overt* needs. Distinguishing between covert and overt needs helps clarify when and how complementarity matters. Someone with a covert need for dominance may not seek submissiveness from others at all times and under all circumstances, for example. Shawna may feel conflicted about her desire to dominate Tyrone and may therefore camouflage her wish behaviorally. Alternatively, Tyrone's behavior may indicate that he does not wish to be submissive, which may lead Shawna to refrain from overt behaviors that would elicit such submissive behavior.

To predict attraction from *need* complementarity we need to take into account differences in interpersonal style and interpersonal goals. From this perspective, interpersonal behaviors *invite* complementary responses. Because people can refuse such invitations, one would expect to find the most satisfactory relationships when the wish of one partner to dominate is met by the desire of the other to be submissive. To test this idea, Dryer and Horowitz (1997) identified participants' interpersonal style with regard to dominance. They were then paired with a confederate who interacted with them according to either a submissive or dominant style. Throughout the scripted interaction, participants used a button to indicate their satisfaction with their partner. As expected, participants who endorsed a dominant interpersonal style were happiest when the confederate had acted in a submissive fashion. Analogously, participants who endorsed a submissive interpersonal style were happiest when the confederate had acted in a dominant fashion.

Research on the mechanisms and outcomes of Thurberian complementarity in dating couples adds another qualification (Swann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2003). This type of complementarity can actually lead to relationship *problems* rather than to increased compatibility when dominance and submission are located in the wrong sexes. Retiring and verbally inhibited men who are paired with outspoken, verbally expressive women make for a precarious couple likely to see its relationship coming to an end. These men do not find their complement in their partner's expressiveness, but rather are alienated by their criticalness. This alienation, in turn, exacerbates their verbal inhibition, and relationship satisfaction and quality suffer. Interestingly, this "precariousness" did not exist for couples in which women were retiring and verbally inhibited and their partners more expressive and critical.

Thus, while it is important to examine whether couples are complementary on particular dimensions, it is equally important to examine the specific processes that result from the complementarity. On the face of it pairing an expressive person with someone who'd rather listen seems like a good thing, but pairing outspoken and expressive women with verbally inhibited men is not.

Complementarity may have its most beneficial effects on close relationships when it comes to performance and expertise. Competing with one's partner in a domain that is important to the self can have negative consequences for an individual's self-esteem and may adversely affect the relationship (Erber & Tesser, 1994). At the same time, a close other who does well in a domain that is not important to the self provides for opportunities to bask in his or her reflected glory. From this perspective, as a couple Pat and Chris benefit from a balanced performance ecology where Pat outperforms Chris on dimensions relevant to Pat but not to Chris and where Chris outperforms Pat on dimensions relevant



to Chris but not to Pat (O'Mahen, Beach, & Tesser, 2000). One way to achieve this balance is to invoke complementarity (Beach, Whitaker, Jones, & Tesser, 2001). If Pat does better than Chris in their English courses while Chris does better than Pat in their Science courses, they can increase their happiness as a couple by convincing themselves that their strengths complement one another's—Pat is a word warrior while Chris is a number wizard! Not surprisingly, then, romantic partners tend to think of themselves as complementary across a wide range of activities (Pilkington, Tesser, & Stephens, 1991).

Complementarity in a romantic partner's expertise benefits couples because it allows them to make the most of their respective strengths. If Pat has a knack for finding the best bargains at the grocery store while Chris is an expert at removing even the most stubborn stain from their laundry, they will have lower grocery bills *and* cleaner laundry than if they are both experts at the same thing. Transactive memory systems of this sort further simplify a couple's functioning because partners need only remember what the other knows and is good at rather than knowing everything themselves (Wegner, Erber, & Raymond, 1991).

Among other things, findings such as these indicate that the relationship between complementarity, attraction, and satisfaction is far more complicated than Winch (1958) had assumed. Further, complementarity seems to exert its strongest impact on performance dimensions. Research continues to support the importance of similarity for attraction and relationship satisfaction. Complementarity, although not unimportant, exerts its influence in more complex and indirect ways. Perhaps the idiom that “opposites attract” stems from the salience of a few couples who seem to defy similarity, rather than from a preponderance of this type of attraction and couple.



### Thinking Critically About Relationship Issues, Theories, and Research

- In one study about liking (Gormly, 1979) the participants rated attitudinally similar others more likable than dissimilar ones. However, they chose the dissimilar ones for a continued discussion. The choice was considered a behavioral measure of liking. How would you explain the discrepancy between the two types of answers? Could the behavioral measure indicate something else besides liking? How would you design an experiment to test your hypothesis?
- Amodio and Showers' (2005) study on liking found some surprising results about similarity and commitment. For example, they found that dissimilar couples low in commitment had moderate liking for each other, but their level of liking was the most stable of all. They dubbed this group the “Explorers.” Does this term suggest to you another variable that may interact with commitment and similarity to influence liking? What do you suppose such a variable might be?
- Similarity, dissimilarity, and complementarity are all concepts related to liking and attraction. What is the difference between dissimilarity and complementarity?
- Complementarity in expertise presents objective advantages for a couple. But merely thinking that they complement each other seems to promote satisfaction, which is why couples tend to think of themselves as complementary over a great domain of activities. Why do you think this type of complementarity is so important for satisfaction?

## Phenomenon-Driven Approaches

To this point, our discussion of the psychological underpinnings of attraction has focused on phenomena that can be explained by extending existing theories into the realm of attraction. The following section looks at research that was primarily driven by the existence of relationship phenomena in need of an explanation. Specifically, it will focus on proximity, the hard-to-get phenomenon, and the allure of secret relationships.

### *Proximity: Marrying the Boy or Girl Next Door*

That friendships, dating relationships, and marriages are not the result of random pairings was discovered long before psychologists embarked on systematically studying the psychological bases of attraction. As far back as the 1930s, there was evidence that people tended to marry those who lived in close spatial proximity. For example, one study (Bossard, 1932) revealed that of the first 5,000 marriages formed in Philadelphia in 1931, one-third of the brides and grooms had lived within 5 blocks of one another, and slightly more than half had lived within 20 blocks. Studies of friendship formation in college dormitories (Lundberg & Beazley, 1948; Lundberg, Hertzler, & Dickson, 1949) as well as studies in housing projects (Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950; Nahemow & Lawton, 1975) showed that spatial proximity was the most important predictor of who became friends with whom.

There are several explanations for why something as seemingly trivial as spatial proximity might promote attraction. First, people who live in close proximity are likely similar on some important dimensions. For example, neighborhoods are often defined in terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Thus, spatial proximity connotes cultural proximity (Hofstede, 2009).

Second, we may become attracted to others in close spatial proximity because of **mere exposure**. This idea has its roots in experimental demonstrations showing that people come to evaluate everything from a character in the Chinese alphabet to a political candidate more favorably the more they are exposed to it (Moreland & Zajonc, 1982; Zajonc, 1968). This mere exposure effect holds for attraction to other people, as well. In one study (Brockner & Swap, 1976), research participants were exposed to others who were either attitudinally similar or dissimilar at a rate of one, two, four, or eight times. Consistent with the mere exposure hypothesis, there was a tendency for the most frequently seen other to be rated more favorably. This effect was more pronounced when the other person was attitudinally similar, suggesting that mere exposure leads to more attraction primarily when the initial evaluation is positive or neutral (Grush, 1976).

Finally, being physically close to others provides increased opportunities for interaction, which can further promote attraction and liking. Of course, 21st-century information and communication technologies can foster attraction through *virtual proximity* (Coughlan, 2010, 2014). Text messaging, for example, can promote the formation of emotional bonds with others independent of their location. At the same time, there are some limits here as well. For obvious reasons, text messaging does not allow for the communication of emotions via nonverbal channels, like facial expressions and gestures. Although an ever-increasing supply of emojis remedies this shortcoming somewhat, there is reason to believe that—given a choice—people might still gravitate toward physical proximity. One study (Lomanowska & Guitton, 2012) had participants create avatars to navigate a virtual world (Second Life). Participants could place their avatars just about anywhere in a large and variable space and were able to communicate with other avatars through an instant

messaging system. As it turned out, avatar placement was not random. Rather, as the avatar population increased, the number of avatars within communication range (shout, talk, whisper) increased as well: 98 percent of avatars in regions with a population of four or more were within shouting, talking, or whispering distance of their nearest neighbor. In other words, participants chose close physical proximity in a virtual world!

### *Playing “Hard to Get”: Do We Love Those We Cannot Have?*

Throughout the ages, one of the cardinal rules of dating held that a person who appears hard to get is a more desirable catch than a person who seems overly anxious to forge a union. There are at least two sets of social psychological theories that would similarly predict an advantage for those who play hard to get. Dissonance theory (Festinger, 1956) as well as personal equity theory (Seta & Seta, 1982; Seta, Seta, & Martin, 1987) hold that when one has to expend a great deal of effort toward achieving a goal, the goal increases in value, perhaps in part to justify the effort (Aronson & Mills, 1959). Alternatively, frustrated efforts may result in increased physiological arousal, which then becomes misattributed as love or desire (Dutton & Aron, 1974).

Interestingly, experimental investigations have shown the hard-to-get phenomenon to be more elusive than one might expect. In five different studies that varied the ease with which women were available for dating, Walster, Walster, Pillavin, and Schmitt (1973) found no evidence for the idea that playing hard to get made the women more desirable dates. The reason for this became clear when the investigators looked at how the women were perceived. Both the easy-to-get woman and the hard-to-get woman were perceived to have interpersonal assets as well as liabilities. The easy-to-get woman was perceived as friendly, warm, flexible, yet unpopular and unselective. The hard-to-get woman was perceived as unfriendly, cold, rigid, yet popular and selective. Clearly, one woman's assets were the other woman's liabilities, and when research participants added them up, there was no difference in desirability. Interestingly, a sixth study showed that a woman who is selectively hard to get (relatively easy for the subject but hard for everybody else) was perceived to have no liabilities. She turned out to be the most desirable date because she was considered friendly, warm, flexible, selective, and popular. These findings suggest that playing hard to get is fraught with pitfalls, as it seems to work only when the game is played selectively. However, even when playing hard to get is done properly, motivational and affective dynamics between the “players” can undermine its efficacy. Specifically, Kalei playing hard to get with Brandon is likely to increase his wanting but decrease his liking for her if he is committed to seeking a future relationship with her. In the absence of such a commitment, Kalei playing hard to get will decrease both Brandon's wanting *and* liking (Dai, Dong, & Jia, 2014).

### *The Allure of Secret Relationships*

Frequently, an initial attraction for someone can be amplified by the need to keep it secret from others. This is often the case in settings that have institutional prohibitions against dating, such as universities and workplaces. When students fall in love with their teachers or when employees find themselves drawn to fellow employees, the resulting relationships may need to be hidden from others. At the same time, the allure of secrecy often renders the relationship more exciting than it would otherwise be.

Why would the need for secrecy increase attraction? There are two possible answers. First, keeping a relationship secret from others may produce additional arousal, which

can be misattributed to the object of one's desires. Another answer can be found when one looks at the cognitive operations required to maintain a sense of secrecy. To hide a relationship from others requires that all thoughts about the other are banished from consciousness, especially in situations where one might be tempted to blabber about it. As it turns out, suppressing any kind of thought is more difficult than one might think. People may succeed for a time but usually at the expense of a massive rebound in which the suppressed thought returns with an even stronger force (Wegner, Schneider, Carter, & White, 1987). Moreover, the very attempt at suppressing a thought often renders it hyper-accessible to consciousness even during the suppression attempt, especially when attention needs to be allocated to other things (Wegner & Erber, 1992). Either way, suppressing thoughts about someone to whom we are attracted can well lead to a preoccupation with that person, resulting in increased attraction (Lane & Wegner, 1994).

This phenomenon is more than mere speculation, as the topic has been demonstrated in the psychological laboratory. In one study, for example (Wegner et al., 1994), mixed-sex pairs of research participants were asked to play a card game. One pair was asked to make foot contact under the table as a form of communication; the other pair received no such instructions. Furthermore, some research participants were told to keep the foot contact a secret from the other pair, whereas other research participants were not required to maintain secrecy. As one might expect, research participants who had been required to maintain foot contact in secrecy felt more attracted to their partners than any other group in the experiment. They were more likely to see themselves going out with their partner, to think their partner would be a good romantic match, and to feel close to their partner. Furthermore, these same research participants reported to have more intrusive thoughts about their partner at the conclusion of the experiment. These results suggest that having to keep a relationship secret can indeed increase attraction and that this increase is produced by a preoccupation resulting from the need to keep the relationship a secret.

However, this heightened attraction can come at a price. Studies that have looked at real couples found that the anxiety associated with concealing their relationship led to decreased levels of relationship satisfaction (Foster & Campbell, 2005) and decreases in commitment and self-esteem along with a higher incidence of health-related problems (Lehmiller, 2012).



### Thinking Critically About Relationship Issues, Theories, and Research

- According to the mere exposure effect we tend to like stimuli to which we have been exposed previously. From what you know, what mediates the effect of exposure on liking?
- Playing hard to get should increase desire in a suitor according both to popular belief and to some psychological theories. However, research found that some hard-to-get potential dates were not rated more favorably or regarded as more desirable. How do you account for the discrepancy? Under what specific conditions does playing hard to get increase attraction?
- How could you go about increasing your chances of initiating and maintaining an intimate relationship?

**Summary**


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<b>Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the factors that lead to liking? We discussed the following:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Praise and agreement</li> <li>• Proximity</li> <li>• Similarity vs. complementarity</li> <li>• Playing hard-to-get</li> <li>• Why are secret relationships so alluring?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Theories</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implicit egotism</li> <li>• Classical and operant conditioning—Praise</li> <li>• Agreement</li> <li>• Misattribution of arousal</li> <li>• Balance theory</li> <li>• Similarity</li> <li>• Complementarity</li> </ul>
<b>Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants evaluate a fictitious target under either pleasant or aversive conditions—and both can increase liking</li> <li>• In face-to-face research, participants showed increased liking for strangers when in aversive situations</li> <li>• Explains increased liking for others under aversive conditions</li> <li>• Participants do not break up with others with whom they disagree, but change their own attitudes to achieve balance</li> <li>• Similarity of attitudes and other superficial characteristics leads to greater attraction</li> <li>• Precarious couples (complementarity) are in doomed relationships (Swann et al., 2003)</li> <li>• Similarity/complementarity is mediated by commitment—those in committed relationships who are similar may not be as happy as those in uncommitted relationships who are dissimilar (i.e., “Explorers”) (Amodio &amp; Showers, 2005)</li> <li>• Similarity on attitudes is important in the initial stages of relationships; similarity on personality dimensions is key to relationship satisfaction (Luo &amp; Klohnen, 2005)</li> </ul>

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**Key Terms**

*Implicit egotism*: liking of things or people who are associated with ourselves in superficial ways.

*Classical conditioning*: a form of associative learning in which an unconditioned stimulus that evokes an unconditioned response is paired with a neutral stimulus. After repeated presentations, the two stimuli become associated such that now the initially neutral stimulus (now called a conditioned stimulus) will come to evoke the same response (now called a conditioned response) in the absence of the unconditioned stimulus.

*Operant conditioning*: a form of learning in which a behavior becomes associated with its consequences.

*Misattribution of arousal*: a theoretical model according to which undifferentiated physiological arousal whose source is ambiguous is attributed to the presence of an attractive person, which results in liking or attraction to that person.

*Self-verification*: people's desire for feedback that is consistent with their self-conceptions, even when they are negative.

*Balance theory*: a theory that explains attraction in terms of people's tendency to form balanced triads formed by a person P, the other O, and an issue X and their respective relationships.

*Similarity-attraction hypothesis*: a theoretical idea that holds that people are attracted to others with similar attitudes.

*Complementarity*: a characteristic of relationships in which partners complement each other in terms of their needs, personalities, performance, and expertise.

*Mere exposure*: a process through which people come to like stimuli to which they had been exposed previously.