

Topics in Social Psychology

Interpersonal Attraction

Overview

- Importance of interpersonal relationships
- Affiliation
- Interpersonal relationships
- Love
- conclusions

Importance of interpersonal relationships

- Roommates suffer less from the flu, the more they like each other (Goleman, 1992)
- Happily married couples have stronger immune systems than unhappily married couples (Kiecolt-Glaser et al, 1987)
- The survival rate of elderly people who have had a heart attack doubles if they receive social support from 2 or more people (Berkman et al, 1992)
- Relationship satisfaction affects satisfaction with work, income and general health (Campbell, 1976)

Empirical Questions

- Why do people seek out the company of others?
- What are the determinant of interpersonal attraction?
- Are there specific phases during the course of a love relationship?
- Which factors determine relationship-satisfaction?

Affiliation

- Affiliation = tendency to seek out the company of others
- People spend 50% of their lives in the company of others (O'Connor & Rosenblood, 1996)
- Causes?
 - Biological adaptation
 - Fear, stress (Schachter, 1959)
- What goals does affiliation subserve under stress?
 - Social comparison (“misery seeks miserable company”)
 - Fear-reduction
 - Informational search (preference for knowledgeable company)

Effects of affiliation and social support

- Does affiliation really reduce fear?
 - Amoroso & Walters (1969): Waiting in the company of others (without verbal communication) reduces the fear of electric shocks.
 - Gump & Kulik (1997): Effect depends on the behavior of the other person; *emotional contagion* can lead to more fear.
- Social Support (= feeling of support from another person; 4 components: emotional, appraisal-, informative and instrumental support)
 - Facilitates coping with stressful life-events
 - Serves as a *buffer*

Lack of affiliation:→ loneliness, health-problems

- Two forms of loneliness
 - Emotional loneliness = lack of an intimate partner
 - Social loneliness = lack of social support
 - Shaver & Rubinstein (1980): loneliness as a complex emotional reaction
 - despair
 - depression
 - boredom
 - Low self-esteem
- Health-problems as a function of inadequate social ties
 - Numerous epidemiological studies (see second slide)
 - Persons with more social contacts have higher life-expectancy (cross-sectional study by Berkman & Syme, 1979)

Interpersonal attraction

Which factors determine interpersonal attraction?

Physical attractiveness: *we like people that look good*

Interpersonal attraction

Which factors determine interpersonal attraction?

Physical attractiveness: *we like people that look good*



- *How does physical attractiveness work?*
 - *The attractiveness stereotype:* We assign positive characteristics to attractive people: friendly, cordial, self-confident, socially competent ...
 - Self-fulfilling prophecy: phonecall with an attractive vs. unattractive person determines behavior of the conversation partner (Snyder, Tanke & Berscheid, 1977).
 - Who values physical attractiveness? (e.g., high self-monitors, see evolutionary psychology lecture)

Proximity: *we prefer those close to us.*

- Festinger, Schachter & Back (1950): apartment study: number of friendships as a function of location.
- *How does proximity influence attraction?*
 - Number of Interactions
Insko & Wilson (1977): Three persons A, B and C present; A interacts with B, then B with C, afterwards, liking was measured. Result: A and C like each other less than the other pairs.
 - "Mere exposure" (Zajonc)
Simply the number of contacts with an object (without interaction) determines liking (Saegert, Swap & Zajonc, 1973).
- Contradictory results:
 - If similarity is low, proximity can increase negative feelings (Ebbesen et al., 1976).

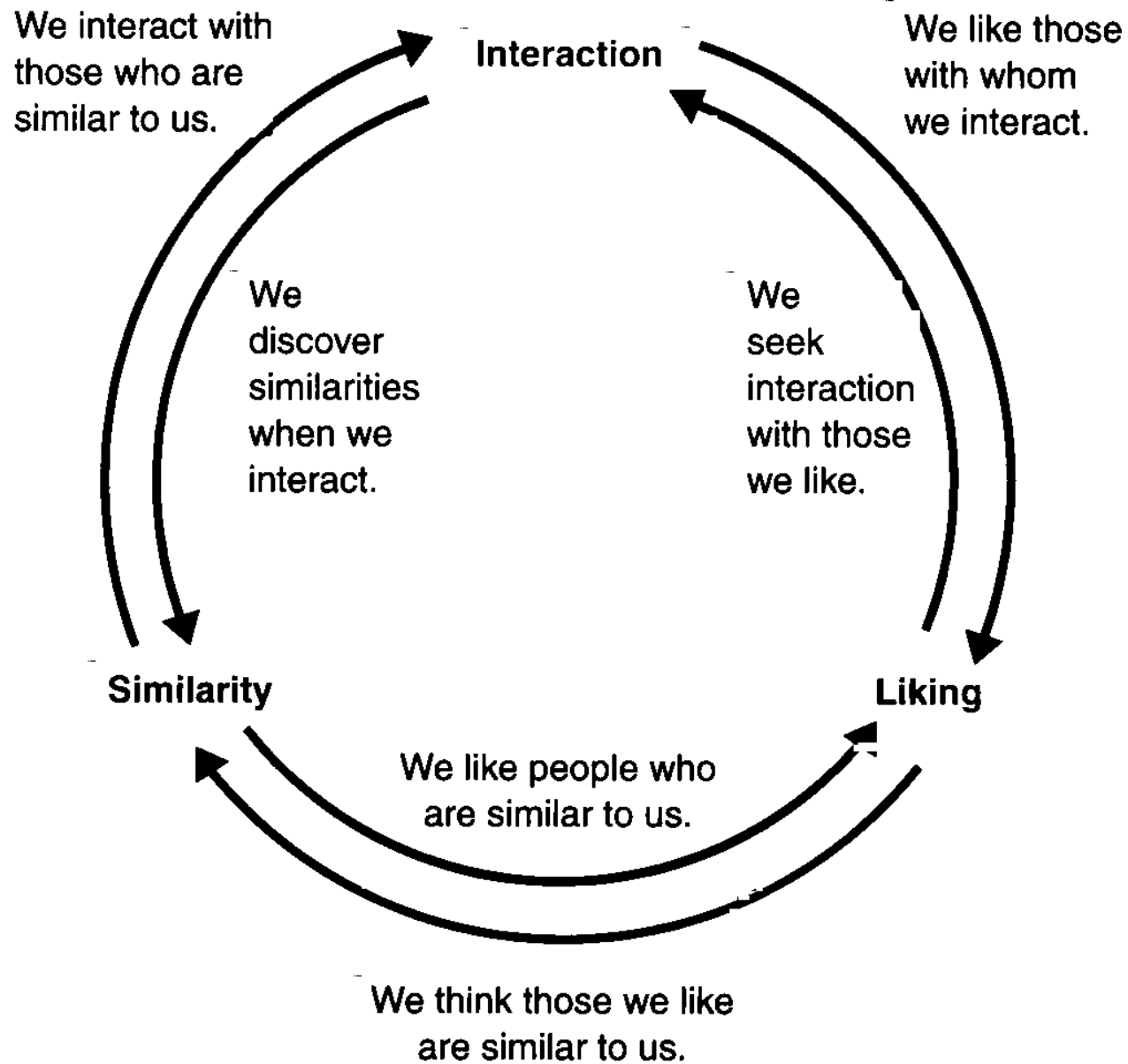
Similarity: *We like people who are similar to us.*

- Friends are more similar to each other than nonfriends, in terms of age, family status, intelligence, etc. (Hays, 1988).
- *Attitude-similarity* is particularly important (Byrne, 1971).
- *How does similarity affect attraction?*
 - Byrne: *classical conditioning* – similar attitudes = positive feelings, which become associated with the person holding the attitude.
 - Social comparison (validity of the attitude is confirmed through social comparison)
 - Attitude similarity increases interaction; we avoid interacting with dissimilar others (Rosenbaum, 1986).
- Contradictory results:
 - *Complimentary behavioral styles* (dominant vs. submissive) leads to higher attraction, compared to similar behavioral styles (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997).

- Do people specifically seek out the company of similar others?
 - Yes, according to proponents of the matching principle Berscheid et al. (1971): Less attractive subjects pick less attractive dating partners, even if there is no chance of rejection (‘computer dating’).
 - No according to the critics: People are looking for maximally attractive partners; matching is a result of rejection (high attractive persons typically reject low attractive persons). This result obtains even when persons are trying to maximize the attractiveness of their dating partners, and are unaware of their own attractiveness (Kalick & Hamilton, 1986).

Conclusions

- Proximity, similarity, and physical attractiveness are highly correlated with the level of attraction
- The effects of these variables may be explained by different processes. E.g., positive confirmation, ability to confide in others, informational gain, cognitive consistency
- The causal direction is not always clear



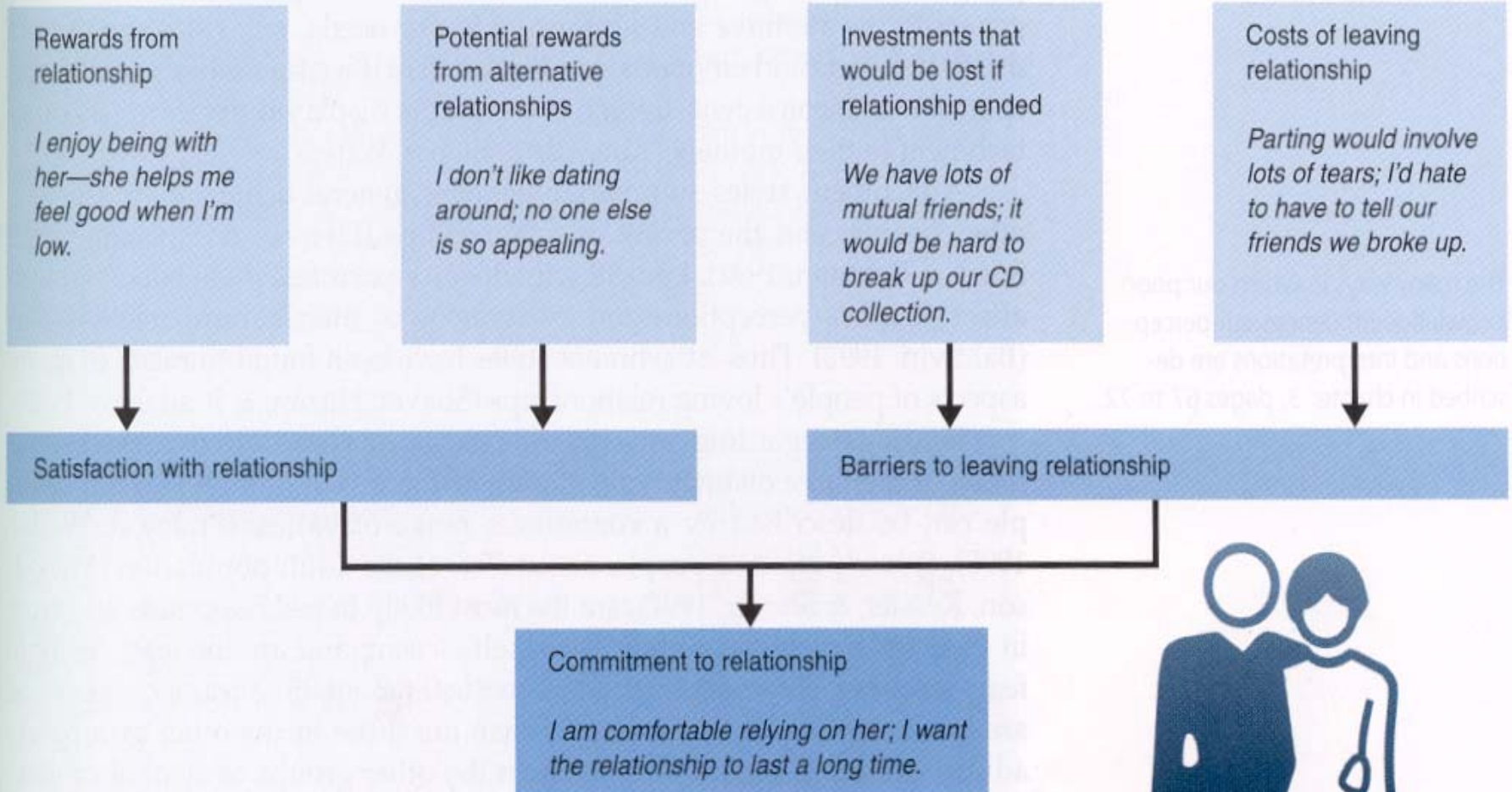
Source: Smith & Mackie
(2000)

Love relationships

- What is love?
 - Multiple taxonomies (e.g., Sternberg's triangular theory of love: intimacy, passion, commitment)
 - Multiple everyday meanings of the word (e.g., motherly love, 'love ya' – friendly love, passionate love, platonic love, brotherly/sisterly love)
 - Love and friendship differ primarily in the desire to have a sexual relationship with the partner (passionate love, romantic love)
 - Love as emotion: physiological arousal + contextual cues, that love is the correct interpretation of the feeling (a la Schachter, Zillmann et al). Transfer of arousal findings support this two-factor model (Berscheid & Walster, 1974)

- Development of Love relationships
 - Same factors that determine the development of friendships, plus *emotional experience of being in love*.
- Characteristics of love relationships
 - *Interdependence*
 - cognitive: partner becomes a part of the self; merging of perspectives; positive attributional bias includes the partner.
 - Behavioral: transformation of the exchange relationship
 - affective: feelings of intimacy
 - The above aspects determine relationship satisfaction

INVESTMENT MODEL: RUSBULT (1983)



- Attachment style as a relationship-determinant
 - basis: *attachment theory* (Bowlby; Ainsworth)
 - assumption: attachment patterns developed in early childhood affect adult relationships (Bowlby: "from the cradle to the grave")
 - 3 attachment styles:
 - secure
 - avoidant
 - Anxious-ambivalent
 - Attachment style includes cognitive schemas (= "internal working models") regarding the self, the partner, and the relationship

Self-description

I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.

I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.

I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.

Attachment style

Secure

Avoidant

Anxious

Basic beliefs about self, others, and love

I am likable. Other people are generally good-hearted. Romantic love can last.

I am not particularly easy to get to know. It's rare to find somebody you can really fall in love with. Romantic love rarely lasts.

I have many self-doubts. I am not particularly easy to get to know. Few people are as willing as I am to commit themselves to a relationship. It's easy to fall in love.

- Study by Hazan & Shaver (1987):

correlational study on the attachment styles of adults

- Stunningly simple measure of attachment style: Give participants a description of the three attachment styles; Participants indicate the one that fits them best
- Additional measures included in questionnaire

Hypotheses:

- Distribution of attachment styles = those in children
- Variables that co-vary with attachment style:
 - Relationship experiences
 - Cognitive schemas regarding the self and the relationship
 - " history of attachment" (Relationship of the parents / with the parents)
 - Experience of loneliness

Results

- Distribution of adult-attachment styles:

Study 1 (newspaper ad): 56% secure, 25% avoidant, 19% anxious

Study 2 (University): 56% secure, 23% avoidant, 20% anxious

Data from studies with children:

62% secure, 23% avoidant, 15% anxious
(Campos et al., 1983)

- Additional predictions that were confirmed; e.g., characteristic relationship experiences
 - secure: friendship, happiness, trust
 - avoidant: fear of intimacy
 - anxious: jealousy, mood swings

Conclusions on attachment:

- Validity of the simple attachment measure was confirmed in these studies: impressive consistency between adult and child populations.
- Correlational findings are not very surprising.
- Theoretical problem: assumption that attachment style is outside of awareness – measure is based on self-reports.