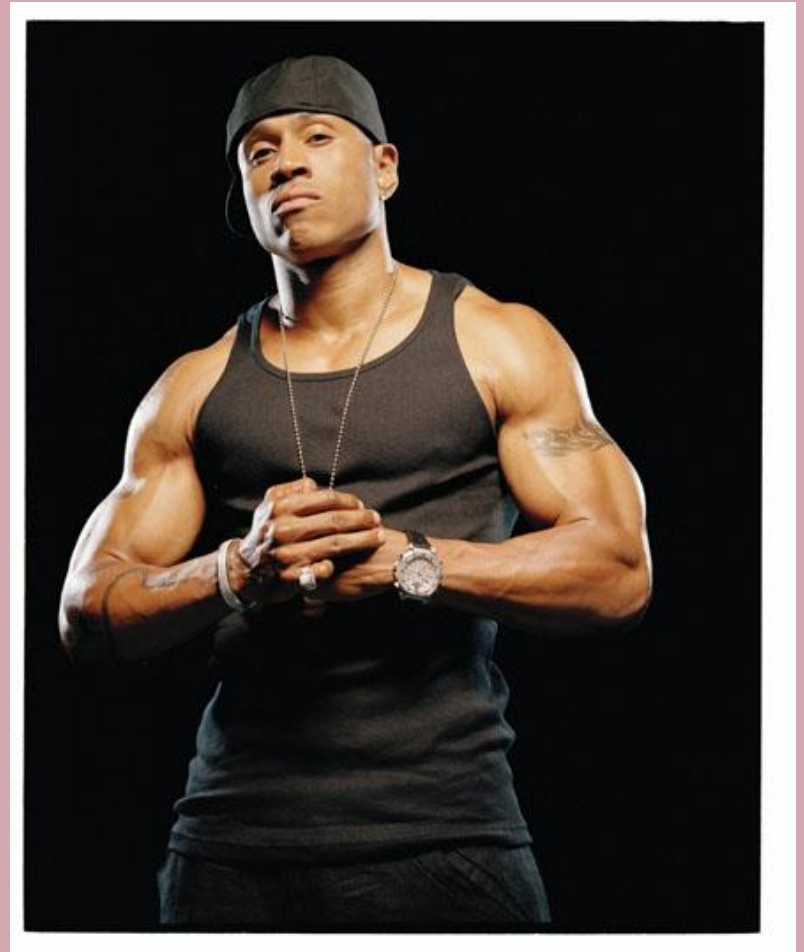


Physical Attractiveness: The Hottie Factor

- Affects one's first impression of another more than any other single factor.
- Positively correlated with popularity / dating frequency.
- Unrelated to self-esteem and happiness
- They are perceived as healthier, happier, more honest and successful than less attractive counterparts.



Does physical attraction effect how we act toward others?
The Halo Effect - We perceive attractive people as also having more attractive personalities.



Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?

Across cultures, men prefer youthful looking women, reportedly because this is a sign of their future fertility.



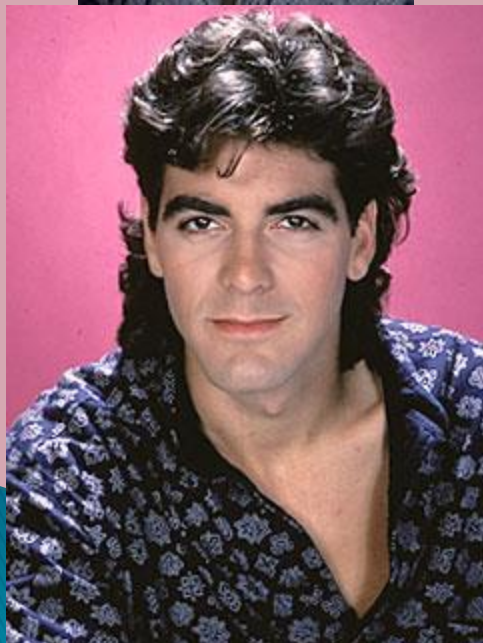
Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?

Discovery

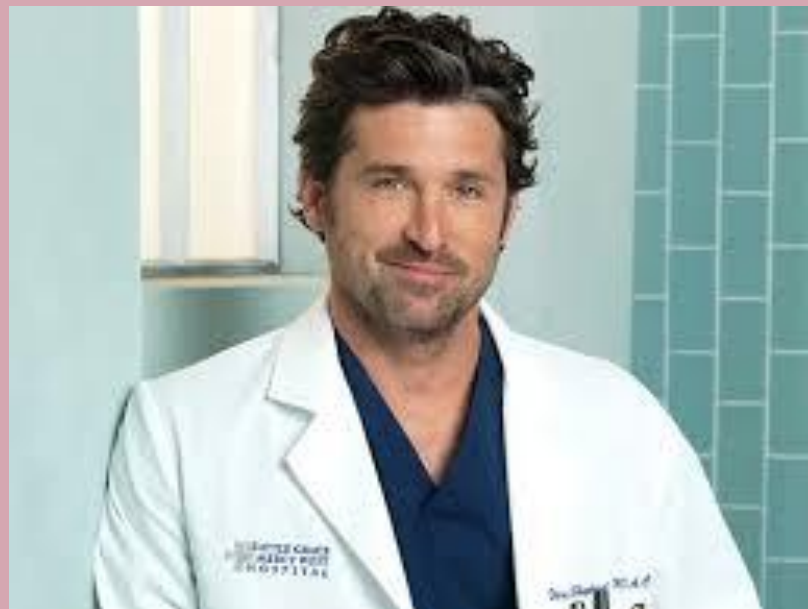
Across cultures, women prefer men with maturity and financial resources to provide for them and children.



1980s



2010s



Evolutionary Theory

- ▶ Primary motive is reproductive success.
 - People who make bad mate choices will have little success.
 - Mate preferences should be shaped by natural selection.
 - We are instinctively attracted to features associated with reproductive success
- ▶ Parental Investment Theory
 - The sex that invests more is more selective.
 - Females look for mate that could
 - Provide resources
 - Was willing to invest resources
 - Protect family
 - Males look for mate that
 - Had good reproductive potential
 - (Young and healthy)
 - Would be faithful
 - Nurturing

- ▶ Geographic nearness
- Mere exposure effect:*
- ▶ Repeated exposure to something breeds liking.

Proximity

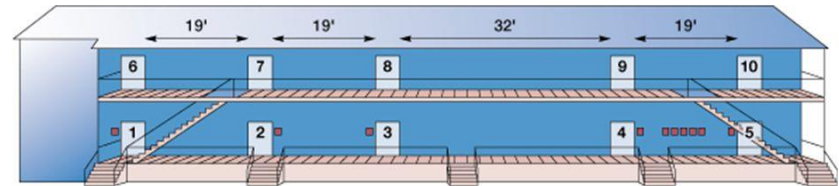


Evolutionary Perspective:

- What was familiar was generally safe and approachable.
- What was unfamiliar was more often dangerous and threatening.

Proximity: Liking People who are Nearby

Westgate West: Housing at MIT ~1950



Close friends:

- Next door neighbors: 41%
- Two doors down: 22%
- Opposite ends of hallway: 10%

- "Contrary to popular belief, I do not believe that friends are necessarily the people you like best; they are merely the people who got there first." (Sir Peter Ustinov, 1977)

Mere Exposure Effect in the College Classroom

- 4 similar looking women posed as students in a large college classroom of over 130 students.
- They attended either 0, 5, 10, or 15 classes.
- They did not interact with students and were not remarkable in any way.
- At the end of the semester, the students were shown pictures of the women and asked questions that obtained scores for perceived familiarity, similarity, and attractiveness.
- Mere exposure had weak effects on familiarity, but strong effects on attraction and similarity.
- **The women who attended more class sessions were perceived overall as more attractive, depending upon how many times they attended class.**



Mere Exposure Effect

Limitations: If topic already has a negative association with it before repeated exposure (such as the annoying kid who always whistles down the hall) then the mere exposure effect may not work.

Then again,
maybe it
will....



“We are attracted to individuals whose presence is rewarding for us”

- ▶ There is reward value in proximity, exposure:
- ▶ Repeated interaction, coupled with physical attraction may be what is needed to begin a relationship. (However, more is needed to hold the relationship together over time.)
- ▶ There is reward in similarity:
- ▶ We tend to prefer and stay with, people and organizations who are most like us, share our ethnic background, social class, interest and attitudes.
- ▶ Reciprocal Liking - “I like you because you like me!” If you know someone likes you it makes you feel good and so is rewarding.

Defining Love

A combination of passion, intimacy, and commitment

▶ Companionate love

- the feelings of intimacy and affection we feel for another person when we care deeply for the person, but do not necessarily experience passion or arousal in his or her presence.

Intimacy
+
Commitment

▶ Fatuous love

- This love can come on quickly, as in "love at first sight," and can last a while, but unless Intimacy develops in the relationship, then the relationship will remain immature and may seem chaotic, manic, and is likely to end in disaster.

Passion
+
Commitment

"Whirlwind marriage"

Romantic Love: The Thrill of It

Passion
+
Intimacy

▶ Romantic love

- is the feeling of intense longing, accompanied by physiological arousal, we feel for another person; when our love is reciprocated, we feel great fulfillment and ecstasy, but when it is not, we feel sadness and despair.
- ▶ Romantic love requires:
 - A heightened state of physiological arousal; **and**
 - The belief that this arousal was triggered by the beloved person.
- ▶ Sometimes one can misattribute pure physiological arousal to romantic love.
 - Process known as excitation transfer.

Passionate Love: Arousal and Attribution

- ▶ Love on a bridge (Dutton & Aron, 1974)



Capilano Canyon Suspension Bridge:

...a tendency to tilt, sway, and wobble, creating the impression that one is about to fall over the side...

...230-foot drop to rocks and shallow rapids below the bridge...



Control Bridge:

Constructed of heavy cedar 10 feet above a small, shallow rivulet
high handrails and did not tilt or sway

Romantic Love: Arousal and Attribution

- ▶ Love on a bridge (Dutton & Aron, 1974)



- Participants were approached on bridge by attractive female experimenter
- Asked to tell story about a relationship
- Told they could call experimenter for results in a few weeks, given number

Romantic Love: Arousal and Attribution

- ▶ **Results of Love on a bridge (Dutton & Aron, 1974)**
- ▶ In suspension bridge condition:
 - Wrote significantly more sexual stories
 - 50% called experimenter
- ▶ In safe bridge condition:
 - Wrote significantly less sexual stories
 - 13% called experimenter
- ▶ ***Excitation transfer!***



Aron and Dutton – Love on a Bridge – Excitation Transfer

