CHAPTER 9: CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 9 introduces you to the dynamics of interpersonal attraction and relationships. The chapter begins with discussions of the need for affiliation, the need for intimacy, loneliness, and social anxiety. The next main topic concerns love relationships. Sternberg’s triangular theory of love is discussed extensively, including discussions of the three components of love and how those components combine to form different types of love. Various types of love are defined as well. The process of relationship formation is covered next and includes a discussion of attachment styles and how those styles affect love relationships. The next major section covers three important factors leading to interpersonal attraction: Physical proximity, similarity, and physical attractiveness. Physical attractiveness is discussed in detail including information on the role of attractiveness in attraction, the attractiveness bias, the matching principle, the dimensions of attractiveness, and attractiveness from an evolutionary perspective. Next, the dynamics of close relationships are explored. Material is presented on relationship formation, evaluating relationships, and sculpting a relationship over time. The chapter also includes information on the role of conflict in relationships and the consequences of how conflict is handled. Gottman’s “four horsemen of the apocalypse” is also presented. The chapter concludes with a section on friendships focusing on gender differences and friendships over the lifespan.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The Roots of Interpersonal Attraction and Close Relationships

Affiliation and Intimacy

Loneliness and Social Anxiety

Loneliness
Social Anxiety

Love and Close Relationships

Love’s Triangle
Types of Love
The Formation of Intimate Relationships

Determinants of Interpersonal Attraction

Physical Proximity: Being in the Right Place
Similarity
Physical Attractiveness

Dynamics of Close Relationships

Relationship Development
Evaluating Relationships
Love over Time
Sculpting a Relationship
Responses to Conflict
Love in the Lab

Friendships

Gender Differences in Friendships
Friendships over the Life Cycle

Gertrude and Alice Revisited

Chapter Review

**KEY TERMS**

**Need for affiliation:** A motivation that underlies our desire to establish and maintain rewarding interpersonal relationships. (p. 317)

**Need for intimacy:** A motivation for close and affectionate relationships. (p. 317)

**Loneliness:** A psychological state that results when we perceive that there is an inadequacy or a deprivation in our social relationships. (p. 318)

**Social anxiety:** Anxiety tied to interpersonal relationships that occurs because of an individual’s anticipation of negative encounters with others. (p. 319)

**Triangular theory of love:** A theory suggesting that love is comprised of three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment—each of which is conceptualized as a leg of a triangle that can vary. (p. 320)

**Romantic love:** Love involving strong emotion and having the components of passion and intimacy but not commitment. (p. 322)

**Consummate love:** Love that includes all three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment. (p. 323)

**Unrequited love:** Love expressed by one person that is rejected and not returned by the other. (p. 323)

**Working model:** Mental representations of what an individual expects to happen in close relationships. (p. 324)

**Physical proximity effect:** The fact that we are more likely to form a relationship with someone who is physically close to us; proximity affects interpersonal attraction, mostly at the beginning of a relationship. (p. 327)

**Matching principle:** A principle that applies in romantic relationships suggesting that individuals become involved with a partner with whom they are closely matched socially and physically. (p. 329)
Physical attractiveness bias: The tendency to confer a number of psychological and social advantages to physically attractive individuals. (p. 331)

Social penetration theory: A theory that relationships vary in breadth, the extent of interaction, and depth, suggesting they progress in an orderly fashion from slight and superficial contact to greater and deeper involvement. (p. 339)

Social exchange theory: A theory of how relationships are evaluated, suggesting that people make assessments according to the rewards (positive things derived from a relationship) and costs (negative things derived from a relationship). (p. 340)

Communal relationship: An interpersonal relationship in which individuals benefit each other in response to each other’s needs. (p. 342)

Accommodation process: Interacting in such a way that, despite conflict, a relationship is maintained and enhanced. (p. 346)

Interpersonal forgiveness: A harmed individual’s decreased motivation to retaliate against and a reduced tendency to maintain distance from one’s relationship partner, and an increased willingness to express conciliation and goodwill toward the partner. (p. 347)

Four horsemen of the apocalypse: Four factors identified as important in relationship dissolution: complaining/criticizing, contempt, defensiveness, and withdrawal from social interaction (stonewalling). (p. 348)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of Chapter 9, you should be able to:

1. Discuss how the needs for affiliation and intimacy are involved in interpersonal attraction.

You should be able to define and compare the needs for affiliation and intimacy. You should know that the need for affiliation is the general need to form and maintain relationships and that the need for intimacy is the need to form and maintain intimate relationships. You should be able to specify how each of the needs relates to interpersonal attraction.

2. Define and discuss loneliness and social anxiety.

You should understand that loneliness is a psychological state relating to a lack of desired interpersonal relationships, and not merely being alone. You should also understand the factors that can lead to loneliness and its outcomes, most notably social anxiety. You should also be able to list the traits associated with social anxiety.

3. Describe the triangular theory of love and the different kinds of love predicted by the model.

You should recognize the three components of love proposed in the triangular theory of love (passion, intimacy, and commitment). You should be able to identify how the various combinations of these components define different forms of love.

4. Compare and contrast the different types of love.

You should be able to define romantic love and distinguish it from consummate love. You should be able to discuss the notion of unrequited love and how people react to it. You should also understand what
secret love is and why it is such an exciting type of love.

5. Define a working model and discuss the three main attachment styles characterizing interpersonal relationships.

You should understand that a working model is a mental representation of what should occur in an intimate relationship. You should be familiar with the psychological, emotional, and physical markers of secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent attachment styles. You should also understand how the different attachment styles relate to the formation of close relationships.

6. List and describe several determinants of attraction.

You should be able to specify the role of physical proximity and similarity in the attraction process. You should be aware of how physical proximity mediates attraction. You should know the role that the Internet plays in the formation of relationships and how Internet use relates to loneliness in a relationship. You should be able to discuss the role of similarity in attraction. You should also be able to discuss the matching principle and articulate the limits of the similarity effect.

7. Discuss the importance of physical attractiveness to interpersonal attraction.

You should be able to discuss how physical attractiveness relates to attraction and how individuals tend to match on physical attractiveness. You should also be able to define and elaborate on the physical attractiveness bias and the dimensions that underlie it. Additionally, you should understand how body physique relates to physical attractiveness and be able to discuss physical attractiveness from an evolutionary psychology perspective and how attractiveness relates to mate selection.

8. Discuss how relationships develop and how we evaluate relationships.

You should be able to describe the stages of relationship formation and discuss social penetration theory. You should understand the role that self-disclosure plays in relationship formation. You should be able to define and compare social exchange theory and equity theory. You should also be able to discuss what happens when a person perceives inequity in a relationship.

9. Discuss the course of relationships over time.

You should be able to discuss how relationships change over time. You should know how relationships are sculpted over time. You should also be able to describe differences in behavior between happy and unhappy couples, and know what kinds of behaviors predict that a relationship will end. Though one can usually recognize the "symptoms" of unhappy relationships, predicting the sustenance or dissolution of couples is more complex. Also, you should recognize the link between a couple's happiness and the couple's tendency to handle interpersonal conflict in a constructive manner. You should understand how stories play a role in handling conflict. You should be able to discuss the accommodation process and how it relates to relationship longevity. You should also be able to discuss the concept of interpersonal forgiveness and the role it plays in the preservation of a relationship. Finally, you should be able to list and describe Gottman’s four horsemen of the apocalypse.

10. Understand friendships and how they form and are maintained.

Here you should understand the components that define friendship. You should be able to discuss gender differences in friendships. You should also be able to discuss how friendships change over the lifespan.
KEY QUESTIONS

These questions appear at the beginning of the chapter. As you read the text, answer these questions as a way to learn the material.

1. What is a close relationship?
2. What are the roots of interpersonal attraction and close relationships?
3. What are loneliness and social anxiety?
4. What are the components and dynamics of love?
5. How does attachment relate to interpersonal relationships?
6. How does interpersonal attraction develop?
7. What does evolutionary theory have to say about mate selection?
8. How can one attract a mate?
9. How do close relationships form and evolve?
10. How are relationships evaluated?
11. What is a communal relationship?
12. How do relationships change over time?
13. What are the strategies couples use in response to conflict in a relationship?
14. What are the four horsemen of the apocalypse?
15. What is the nature of friendships?

PRACTICE TESTS

Multiple-Choice

Choose the alternative that best completes the stem of each question.

1. Individuals who are high in the need for __________ wish to be with friends and act accordingly.
   a. intimacy
   b. affiliation
   c. closeness
   d. association

2. The need for __________ is the need to form and maintain close affectionate relationships.
   a. intimacy
   b. affiliation
   c. closeness
   d. romance

3. Research on loneliness shows that loneliness is
   a. common during adolescence and young adulthood.
   b. a subjective experience and not dependent on the number of people we have around us.
   c. related directly to the number of people we have around us.
   d. both a and b
   e. both a and c

4. People with __________ anticipate negative interactions and think that other people will not like them very much.
   a. a low need for affiliation
   b. a low need for intimacy
5. In Sternberg’s (1986, 1988) triangular theory of love, the three components of love are
   a. romance, limerence, and intimacy.
   b. passion, romance, and intimacy.
   c. passion, intimacy, and commitment.
   d. intimacy, romance, and affiliation.

6. The long-term decision to maintain love over time is the ________ component of love.
   a. commitment
   b. intimacy
   c. romantic
   d. passion

7. Which of the following is true of romantic love?
   a. It is common across a large percentage of cultures studied.
   b. It is unique to Western cultures.
   c. It is possible only in heterosexual relationships.
   d. It is a strong predictor of marriage in all cultures.

8. ________________ love involves all three components of love.
   a. Limerence
   b. Consummate
   c. Romantic
   d. Companionate

9. With ________________ love, the love is expressed by one person who is rejected by the other.
   a. empty
   b. unreciprocated
   c. unrequited
   d. secret

10. According to your text, secret love creates strong attractions between people because
    a. doing something behind other people’s backs is physiologically arousing.
    b. those involved get to lie to others about the relationship.
    c. those involved think obsessively about each other.
    d. none of the above

11. In intimate relationships, a secure attachment style (working model) is related to
    a. high levels of conflict.
    b. dissatisfaction and mistrust.
    c. high levels of social anxiety.
    d. happiness and trust.

12. In one of your first classes as a college student, you instructor seats you alphabetically. You are most
    likely to become friends with a person who
    a. you have a lot in common with, even if you sit on opposite sides of the room.
    b. has a last name beginning with a letter close to the first letter in your last name, regardless of
        common interests.
    c. has a last name beginning with a letter close to the first letter in your last name, but only if you and
        that person have common interests.
    d. none of the above

   c. social phobia
   d. social anxiety
13. According to the ______________ effect, repeated exposure to a stimulus or person tends to enhance liking for that stimulus or person.
   a. mere-exposure
   b. repeated exposure
   c. familiarity
   d. physical proximity

14. Which of the following is true of relationships formed on the Internet?
   a. They are important to the lives of those who form them.
   b. They become integrated into the lives of those who form them.
   c. They tend to be unstable and don’t last as long as conventional friendships.
   d. all of the above
   e. both a and b only

15. Research shows that using the Internet to form relationships decreases __________, but increases __________.
   a. emotional loneliness; social loneliness
   b. social loneliness; emotional loneliness
   c. social anxiety; social loneliness
   d. contact; intimacy

16. Research on the effects of attitude similarity on attraction shows that
   a. the number of attitudes you share with another person is critical in determining attraction.
   b. there is actually an inverse relationship between attraction and the number of attitudes people share.
   c. the proportion of attitudes you share with another person is more important than the number you share in determining attraction.
   d. attitude similarity is unrelated to attraction.

17. Research shows that similarity is most important in relationships that are
   a. important to us.
   b. unimportant to us.
   c. superficial.
   d. formed over the Internet.

18. Research on the role of physical attractiveness in attraction shows that physical attractiveness is
   a. less important at the beginning of a relationship than it is after a relationship develops.
   b. a strong predictor of preference for a dating partner.
   c. affects our desire to be with a person, but not how we interact with him or her.
   d. more important to women than men.

19. Research has shown that __________ is an important factor determining facial attractiveness.
   a. roundness
   b. length
   c. symmetry
   d. configuration

20. The finding that infants as young as 2 months of age prefer attractive over unattractive faces suggests that the physical attractiveness bias
   a. has biological roots.
   b. is completely learned in the first 2 months of life.
   c. is totally innate.
   d. none of the above
21. Research on the evolutionary aspects of mate selection and infidelity shows that women are most concerned with ____________, whereas men are most concerned with ____________.
   a. one-shot infidelity; multiple infidelity
   b. multiple infidelity; one-shot infidelity
   c. sexual infidelity; emotional infidelity
   d. emotional infidelity; sexual infidelity

22. According to Levinger and Snoek’s (1972) stage model of relationship formation, after the state of no relationship the correct order of stages is
   a. surface contact, awareness, mutuality.
   b. awareness, surface contact, mutuality.
   c. awareness, mutuality, surface contact.
   d. mutuality, surface contact, awareness.

23. In social exchange theory, a(n) ________________ is an expectation of what we will obtain from a relationship.
   a. expectation level
   b. comparison level for alternatives
   c. comparison level
   d. equity level

24. According to equity theory, when we perceive inequity in a relationship we
   a. leave the relationship immediately.
   b. try to correct the inequity and restore equity.
   c. ignore the inequity and carry on with the relationship as best we can.
   d. confront our partner and then leave the relationship.

25. In a(n) ________________ relationship, if one partner puts more into the relationship it does not matter that much.
   a. communal
   b. exchange
   c. equitable
   d. collective

26. In a healthy relationship, the partners
   a. ignore conflict.
   b. handle conflict with accommodation.
   c. ignore negative events and focus only on positive events.
   d. rationalize away conflict rather than deal with it through accommodation.

27. According to your text, which of the following is true of interpersonal forgiveness?
   a. Women are more likely than men to forgive.
   b. Men are more likely than women to forgive.
   c. Forgiveness is less likely with a serious infidelity.
   d. both a and c above
   e. both b and c above

28. According to your text, forgiveness is most likely to be used when ____________ is aroused for a transgressing partner.
   a. empathy
   b. sympathy
   c. love
d. guilt

   a. validating
   b. denying
   c. conflict avoiding
   d. validating

30. Research on gender differences in friendships show that
   a. male friends tend to do things together, and female friends tend to share their emotional lives.
   b. males tend to make a sharper distinction between same-sex and cross-sex friends than do females.
   c. females tend to make a sharper distinction between same-sex and cross-sex friends than do males.
   d. both a and b
   e. both a and c

Fill-in-the-Blank

31. The ______________________ is a motivation that underlies our desire to establish and maintain rewarding interpersonal relationships.

32. The ______________________ is a desire for close and affectionate relationships.

33. ______________________ is a psychological state that results when we perceive that there is an inadequacy, a deprivation, in our social relationships.

34. ______________________ occurs because of a person’s expectation of negative encounters with others.

35. According to the ______________________, love comprises intimacy, commitment, and passion.

36. ______________________ love is a type of love where there are strong emotions but those feelings cannot be made publically known.

37. A(n) ______________________ contains our ideas about how close relationships operate.

38. The ______________________ reflects our tendency to be attracted to others close to us.

39. When exposure to a stimulus repeatedly enhances one’s positive feeling toward that stimulus, this is known as the ______________________.

40. When people tend to become involved with a partner with whom they are closely matched socially and physically, this is called the ______________________.

41. According to your text, females look for a(n) ______________________ sexual partner, and males tend to look for a(n) ______________________ sexual partner.

42. Altman and Taylor developed ______________________, which says that relationships vary in breadth, the extent of interaction, and depth, the range of aspects of our lives we discuss and share.

43. ______________________ is the ability or willingness to share intimate areas of one’s life.

44. ______________________ suggests that people make assessments according to the rewards (all the positive things derived from a relationship) and costs (all the negative things derived from a
relationship).

45. When we compare a relationship that we are in presently with other potential relationships, this is known as the _____________________________.

46. ___________________________ deals with the perception of justice in interpersonal relationships and focuses on the concept of fairness in relationships.

47. The concept of ___________________________ states that fairness is achieved when people believe that those who make large contributions should obtain rewards equal to those contributions and those who make lesser contributions should obtain lesser rewards.

48. According to the ___________________________, successful couples actually sculpt a relationship.

49. Research suggests that successful couples handle conflict by using ___________________________.

50. According to Gottman (1995) ___________________________ is the most destructive of the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

Answers

Multiple-Choice

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### Fill-in-the-Blank

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Attachment Styles
The habits of the heart seem to be determined in part by the patterns of our childhood. Researchers have explored the importance of attachment styles observed in childhood on adult close relationships. While childhood patterns are not destiny and it is possible to change these attachment styles, they do seem to have a significant impact on who we are attracted to and how well the relationship goes.

Researchers have used a relatively simple way of determining these attachment styles. Textbook Table 9.2, reproduced in part below, presents the question used to determine attachment styles. You can ask individuals (and yourself) to respond to this question. You might also ask them to judge whether the individuals they have dated have styles are similar to their own.

An additional measuring device concerning the state of the relationship is to ask individuals to respond on a five-point scale as to how satisfactory the relationship is (or was until it ended). If you use this scale, you should find that the “secure-secure” coupling is the best. You should also find that males who are not secure should feel most comfortable with females who are secure.

Adult Attachment Styles

Question: Which of the following best describes your feelings?

Percentage Who Agree
Secure
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 worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me. 56%

Avoidant
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. 25%

Anxious/Ambivalent
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. 19%

(From Shaver, Hazen, and Bradshaw, 1988, p. 80.)

Observation
Find a place where intimate couples congregate. This could be a park, a restaurant or bar, or an amusement park, for example. Bring a friend with you. Try to observe 10 different couples. For each couple you observe, rate each partner on a 1 to 10 scale of physical attractiveness, with 1 being not at all attractive and 10 being extremely attractive. Have your friend do the same.

Your ratings

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<th>Female</th>
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Look at your ratings for each couple. Do partners within the same relationship tend to have similar levels of physical attractiveness? Do the same for your friend’s ratings.

Now, for each couple, look at your ratings compared to your friend’s. Did you tend to agree pretty closely on levels of physical attractiveness, or did your ratings differ a great deal? Differences between ratings illustrate the problem of interrater reliability in observation. Because ratings such as physical attractiveness tend to be subjective to a large degree (“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”), psychologists making observations such as these tend to use several raters and get them to come to some kind of agreement.

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<th>Couple #</th>
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INTERNET ACTIVITY

What do Men and Women Look for in a Mate?
We have all probably heard about how men and women differ. After all, aren’t “men from Mars and women from Venus?” Is it true that men and women look for different qualities in a mate? One way that this question has been addressed is to look at what men and women place in personal advertisements. There are studies showing that men look more for attractiveness and women for economic security. For this exercise, use the Internet personal advertisements (e.g., Yahoo Personals) to see if this is so. Get to some online personal advertisements, and analyze some placed by men and some placed by women (you might want to analyze every 10th or 15th advertisement). Use the categories indicated for your analysis (these are based on a study done by Davis, 1990), and note the number of males and females who mention that attribute in their personal advertisement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTRIBUTE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION: LOOKING FOR A PARTNER WHO IS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>“cute,” “pretty,” “attractive,” etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical appearance</td>
<td>“in shape,” “fit,” “has a good figure,” etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>“sensual,” “high sex drive,” “erotic,” etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>“a professional” (e.g., a doctor, lawyer, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td>“highly educated,” “college graduate,” “well read,” etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial security</td>
<td>“financially secure,” “financially independent,” etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>“intelligent,” “smart,” “bright,” etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>“looking for committed relationship,” “looking for a long-term relationship,” “looking for a relationship leading to marriage,” etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionality</td>
<td>“warm,” “romantic,” “sensitive,” “emotionally responsive,” etc.</td>
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</table>

Use the following tally sheet to analyze the personal advertisements you find.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTRIBUTE</th>
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<th>FEMALE SEEKING MALE</th>
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<td>Physical appearance</td>
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<td>Sexuality</td>
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<td>Professional</td>
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<td>Educational level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial security</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
On which, if any, of the attributes sought did males and females appear to differ? You might want to compare your results to those of Davis (1990). Here is the reference: