

PSY350: Human Relationships 2018

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Lecture Content & Readings

Approaches to Human Relationships

Social Psychology

This approach focuses on the interaction b/w individuals with a strong focus on behaviour, emotion & cognition.

Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1959; 1978)

Reward Perception – intimate relationships are governed by the perception of reward that partners can offer each other across situations. It is defined through comparison level (CL - expectation of deserved benefits) and comparison level alternative (Calt - quality of alternate relationships). If perceived reward is higher than both CL and Calt, relationships are satisfactory and committed. If CL or Calt increase, relationship satisfaction (and perceived reward) may decrease and cause a relationship struggle.

Relationship Co-operation – success of relationships depend on how they deal with conflicting and overlapping interests. Focused on fate control (choosing a decision that will impact their partner, without giving their partner a voice in the decision), and behaviour control (cooperating across decisions as a pair).

Interpersonal attributions - success is defined by levels of trust, commitment, and attitudes towards another partner. The greater these feelings are, the more likely the above two things are going to happen.

Social Cognitive Theory

This looks at the idea of schemas – we generate beliefs and expectations based on our experiences. Strong beliefs become relationship rules. We interact proximally (what are you doing in front of someone) and distally (set of scripts / schemas / beliefs).

Evolutionary Psychology

Darwinian Theory

Evolutionary Theory is where the more successful species members pass on their genes / traits – fitness. Sexual selection is where mates compete for a chance to reproduce. Over time, traits have evolved in animals to indicate ability and health to give someone a better chance to be selected. These differences are called *sexual dimorphism*.

Parental Investment Theory (Robert Trivers 1972)

The female sex (normally) have to invest the most time and resources into producing an offspring and thus are more selective in choosing a mate. Because the male sex (normally) do not have to expend this time, they will compete more with other men and also be less selective about whom they mate with. The situation is also true in reverse (e.g. Seahorses)

Life History Theory

Addresses how humans develop across the lifespan in comparison to other animals. This involves the idea of *trade-offs* over the course of the development (trade-offs occur on a dimension that catches important clusters of a characteristics). Our development to other animals due to the large nature of our brains.

Alloparent → someone who is not the biological parent but takes some responsibility for the offspring's caregiving (i.e. extended family, siblings, community).

Developmental Psychology

Attachment Theory

The Attachment system we develop as children with others determines the type of relationships formed throughout our lives. *Secure* attachments are where we have a consistent and warm parenting relationship, and thus have expectations that relationships are safe and people are trustworthy. *Avoidant attachments* are based on neglectful or harsh parenting, and lead to people believing relationships are not associated with reward and therefore avoid engaging in them. *Anxious attachments* are based on inconsistent parenting and lead to jealousies, hopes, etc etc. Addressed later on in more detail

The Psychology of Beauty

Perceptions of Beauty

Social Construct

Social focus: Naomi Wolf noted the idea of beauty as an 'artificial construct' and argued that we simply find beautiful what we are accustomed to. However, this means that perceptions of beauty should vary considerably between cultures.

Adaptationist

Evolutionary focus: attraction as a mechanism for identifying/mating with an appropriate healthy mate to produce healthy offspring. This means perceptions of beauty should be similar across cultures. Comes from the ideas of sexual selection & heritability.

Health Cues

A health cue has to reflect aspects of real health and has to influence perception (how healthy one appears to be). An evaluation of the following:

Composite faces (Frances Galton) ✓

Galton made composite images of average faces from groups of people: healthy, diseased and criminals. They found the 'average' image for each group to be more attractive than individual faces that contributed. Further, Rhodes et al., (2001) found that distinctiveness was negatively related to attractiveness.

Symmetry ✗

Is reflective of developmental stability (illness / malnutrition would interrupt and cause asymmetry.) This has been proven to be a health cue cross culturally – where a Tanzanian tribe rated symmetrical faces more attractive, and cross-species – where monkeys gazed longer asymmetrical faces, and females exhibited reproductive behaviours. However, ASLPAC's longitudinal study (n = 4000) in SW England found that there was no relationship b/w illness frequency and symmetry. However, a relationship was found for higher SES, higher IQ and symmetry.

Sexual Dimorphism

Testosterone (✗) creates a more 'masculine' appearance in men. However it's been found that not only do women prefer a more feminised male face, but that high testosterone was linked to undesirable traits (aggressive, risky, unfaithful). It increases perceived dominance, but not attractiveness.

Oestrogen (✓) suppresses jaw / bone growth and creates a more feminised appearance. As explained in an above table, makes women appear more feminine and more oestrogen implies more 'health'.

Adiposity ✓

Facial adiposity is the apparent weight on the face. As greater weight is associated with bad health. People who looked heavy based on facial appearances were heavier than those that do not.

Colour ✓

This is *within* populations. Those who have a red pigment to their skin are perceived as healthier and those who have a yellow pigment are perceived as unhealthier. Carotenoids are the yellow-red pigment which makes people look more attractive