Human Sexuality

October 21, 2009
Sexual Attraction and Culture

Final Exam
• Friday, December 18, 2009 from 7-9pm

Continuum
• Attraction
  • Intimacy
  • Love

Who are you attracted to?
Features of attraction
1. Mere Exposure Effect → we are attracted to those we see often

2. Homophily → we are attracted to those similar in social status (race > education > age > religion)
   But opposites can attract with respect to personality style

3. Attractiveness → we are attracted to more physically attractive people (more important for men than women)
But what is considered physically attractive?

• Visual perception (i.e., body shape and appearance sanctioned by the local culture, lack of visible deformity, symmetry, pleasing body posture)
• Audition (i.e., how the other sounds, how noisily they walk, etc.)
• Olfaction (i.e., how they smell – naturally and artificially)

Who are you attracted to?

Theories of attraction

• Reinforcement Theory → a partner’s rewards make us feel good about ourselves. This is *rewarding* and will lead us to want to spend more time with that person

• Sociobiological (Evolutionary) theory → we want to maximize chance of offspring survival so…
  – Seek younger female mates
  – Attractive female partner = healthy
  – Attractive male partner = reproductively valuable
  – Higher male status = able to care for offspring

• But is this still the case for modern women who do not depend on men to provide for them?

Waist-hip-ratio

• Men from western society tend to prefer waist-to-hip ratio of 0.7
  – Associated with lower risk of heart disease
  – Higher reproductive rate
  – Higher female > male hormones

Do children show these same waist-hip-ratio preferences?

• Showed 4 waist-hip-ratio pictures (0.7, 0.8, 0.9, 1.0) by three weight categories (underweight, average, overweight) to university aged and elementary school aged children

• If > age 12: “who is the most attractive?”
• If < age 12: “who looks the nicest?”
Findings

• With increasing age, there is a preference for lower waist:hip
• With very young age (age 6), there is no preferred waist:hip ratio
• The “adult-like” preference for males emerged at age 10

Explanation

• Hormonal changes that trigger puberty may also increase children’s attention to the social norms for attractive body shapes
• Hormonal changes that trigger puberty may directly affect children’s preferences by stimulating the prewired preference for fit mates

Love

• 3 components:
  - Intimacy → emotional
  - Passion/Romance → motivational
  - Decision/Commitment → cognitive

Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love, 1986

Passionate love

• a state of intense longing for union with the other person and of intense physiological arousal

• Biological changes:
  – increase in dopamine (euphoria and craving)
  – increase in oxytocin (correlates with touch, pleasure, orgasm, trust)
  – increase in prolactin

Passionate Love: 13 psychophysiological characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Neural correlate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Feeling the beloved is unique; cant feel this way towards anyone else</td>
<td>Inc. DA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Focus attention on positive attributes and ignore negative ones</td>
<td>Inc DA, Inc NE</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Labile psychophysiological responses (exhilaration, euphoria, energy, sleeplessness, anxiety symptoms, abrupt mood swings, decreased appetite)</td>
<td>Inc DA</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Increased infatuation in times of adversity</td>
<td>Inc DA</td>
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<td>5. Intrusive thinking about the beloved</td>
<td>Decr 5-HT</td>
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<td>6. Signs of emotional dependency</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>7. Experience longing for emotional union with the beloved</td>
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<td>8. Powerful sense of empathy and willingness to sacrifice</td>
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<td>9. Reorder daily priorities, change clothing, mannerisms, habits, etc. to become available</td>
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<td>10. Possessiveness and feelings of jealousy</td>
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<td>11. Craving for emotional union &gt; sex</td>
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<td>12. It is involuntary and uncontrolable</td>
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<td>13. Is impermanent</td>
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Timeline

- starts when one views the other as special or unique
- aggrandizing their traits and overlooking or minimizing flaws
- lovers are emotionally dependent and change their priorities and daily habits to remain in contact and/or impress the beloved
- experiences sexual desire and intense mate guarding and possessiveness

fMRI findings

- Fisher, 2005
- n = 10 women, n = 7 men

40 sec
30 sec

Fisher, 2005

- beloved specific activation took place in: right ventral tegmental area
- VTA is a central part of the reward system associated with pleasure, general arousal, focused attention, and motivation to pursue and acquire rewards
- VTA sends projections to caudate – plays a role in reward detection and integration of sensory inputs to prepare for action
- Thus, romantic love is a motivation system

Passionate love is not the same as sex drive

- sex drive is the urge for sexual gratification
- associated with androgens in humans

- differences between sex drive and passionate drive:
  1. sex drive is focused on sexual union with another; passionate love is focused on emotional union
  2. sex drive can be focused on a range of people whereas romantic love is directed to one person
  3. sex drive can be quelled when satisfied; passionate love is not and can persist unabated for years
  4. can engage in sex with no passionate love and can be in love with someone with whom you’ve had no physical contact
What if passionate love is not reciprocated

- Fisher (2005) studied brains of 10 women and 5 men who were still in passionate love but who were recently rejected
- Compared to those happily in love, rejected lovers showed significantly more activation in the ventral striatum/putamen/ pallidum
- These are areas associated with risk taking for big gains/losses, physical pain, OCD, ruminating on intentions of the rejecter

- **intense romantic love is a cross-cultural universal**
- Jankowiak and Fisher found evidence of passionate love in 147 of 166 societies examined.

Importance of culture

- Value-laden
- Sexuality-related beliefs & values vary across cultures

Importance of culture

- Sexually conservative beliefs and behaviour in Chinese individuals compared to Western norms
- Sex education is minimal; parents & health professionals are reluctant to discuss sexuality
- Chinese culture in general: collectivistic, patriarchal

Durex Study (2005)

- n = 317,000
- 41 countries

Sex Education (Durex Study, 2005)
Age of First Intercourse (Durex Study, 2005)

Number of Sexual Partners (Durex Study, 2005)

Frequency of Intercourse (Durex Study, 2005)

Laumann et al. (2005)
- n = 13,882 women; 13,618 men
- 29 countries (Europe, North America, South America, Middle East, Asia, Australia, NZ)

Lack of Sexual Interest (Laumann et al., 2005)

Inability to Reach Orgasm (Laumann et al., 2005)
Orgasm too Quickly (Laumann et al., 2005)

Acculturation

- Process by which an individual who moves from one culture to another assimilates aspects of the new culture's values and beliefs

- Early research on acculturation assumed:
  - that the longer an individual has lived in the new culture, the more the individual will embrace the values of the new culture (length-of-residency assumption)
  - that as an individual embraces the new culture, he/she simultaneously relinquishes the culture of origin (unidimensional acculturation assumption)

Acculturation & Sexuality

- Brotto et al. (2005)
- n = 349 (173 Caucasian, 176 East Asian)
- female
- university students
- ethnic differences in sexual knowledge, attitude, experience, desire, arousal, frequency

Acculturation Results (East Asian women only):

- ↑ mainstream acculturation → more sexual experiences
- Heritage & mainstream acculturation interact in predicting sexual openness
  - ↑ mainstream acculturation → more sexual openness, but ONLY if heritage acculturation was low
  - ↑ mainstream acculturation did NOT → more sexual openness if heritage acculturation was high

Acculturation & Sexuality

- Bidimensional Model of Acculturation

- Unidimensional Model of Acculturation

- Mainstream Culture

- Heritage Culture

- High

- Low

- Acculturated to new culture while relinquishing prior culture

- Acculturated to new culture while maintaining aspects of prior culture

- Not acculturated to new or prior culture

- Not acculturated to new culture but maintains many aspects of prior culture
History of Sex in China

3 main influences on Chinese sexuality:

- Concept of Yin & Yang
- Confucianism
- Taoism

This section focuses on heterosexual relationships due to the heterocentrism inherent in each of the above influences.

Concept of Yin & Yang

- All objects & events are products of 2 elements:
  - Yin- negative, passive, weak, destructive (female)
  - Yang- positive, active, strong, constructive (male)
- Harmonious interaction of male & female principles is vital
- In traditional Chinese medicine, everything is classified as either Yin or Yang- patient's physical constitution, symptoms, herbal & dietary remedies
  - Yin- deficiency, cold
  - Yang- excess, heat
  - Illness- imbalance of Yin & Yang elements
- Treatment goal- restore balance between Yin & Yang

“"A cold disease should be heated up, a hot disease should be cooled down, a cold disease should be warmed up, a dispersing disease should be constricted, an inhibiting disease should be dispersed…”

~ Nei Jing (“Canon of Internal Medicine”, Chinese medical classic)
- Preventive health care, balanced diet = maintaining balance between Yin & Yang
- Sexual intercourse = opportunity to exchange Yin & Yang

Confucianism

- Confucius (551-479 BC)
- System of moral philosophy & political ideology- Official ideology of the imperial bureaucracy for 2,000 years
- Positive attitude toward human sexuality
  - Eg. “Eating food and having sex is human nature”
  - Eg. “Food and drink and the sexual relation between men and women compose the major human desires”
- Qualifiers: maintaining orderly relationships; context of marriage & filial obligation

Taoism

- Philosophy & religion
- Practical way of life; individual life & tranquility
- Sexual technical books

Names for Male & Female Genitalia

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<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weapon of love</td>
<td>Grotto of Pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrior</td>
<td>Love Anemone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade Sceptre</td>
<td>Valley of Lust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimson Bird</td>
<td>Golden Groove</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yang Pagode</td>
<td>Purple Peony</td>
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Compare with cock, dick, schlong beaver, muff, pussy
History of Sex in China

What happened?

- Neo-Confucianism in 1,000 AD (Song Dynasty)
  - "It is a very small thing to die as a result of starvation, but a very serious evil to lose chastity toward one's dead husband by remarrying" ~ Cheng I, Neo-Confucian

- Since then, successive regimes have maintained repressive sexual policies

History of Sex in China

Recent Changes

- In mid-1980's, government began to acknowledge need for sex education programs. Why?
  - Pressure from politically influential individuals
  - High population growth was a problem. In 1973, implementation of birth control program; needed to provide sexual information essential to understanding and using contraception
  - Teenage pregnancy, juvenile sex crimes, STIs seemed to be increasing; hoped that sex education would address some of these problems
  - Opening up of China to Western cultural influences —› ↑ personal freedoms, expression of desire to improve sexual lives

Excerpt from Secret Instructions Concerning the Jade Chamber (Classical Chinese sex manual, 4th Century?)

(The Yellow Emperor asked) "How can I become aware of the joyfulness of the woman?"

(Replied the Immaculate Girl) "There are 5 signs, 5 desires, and 10 movements. By looking at these changes, you will become aware of what is happening in her body. The first of the 5 signs is called "reddened face"; if you see this you slowly unite with her. The second is called "breasts hard and nose perspiring"; then slowly insert the jade stalk [penis]. The third is called "throat dry and saliva blocked"; then slowly agitate her. The fourth is called "slippery vagina"; then slowly go in more deeply. The fifth is called "the penis transmits fluid" [female ejaculation]; then slowly withdraw from her."

(...) The Immaculate Girl said) "Through the 5 desires, one is made aware of the woman's response, or what she wants you to do to her. First, if she catches her breath, it means that she wants to make love with you. Second, if her nose and mouth are dilated, it means that she wants you to insert your penis. Third, if she embraces you tightly, it means that she is very stimulated and excited. Fourth, if her perspiration flows and dampens her dress, it means that she wants to have her orgasm soon. Fifth, if her body straightens and her eyes close, it means she has already been satisfied."