



**2025-26 FALL**

# **SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Faculty of Sciences & Arts

**WEEK 15**

# **Attraction and Intimacy**

# PREVIEW

- How important is the need to belong?
- What leads to friendship and attraction?
- What is love?
- What enables close relationships?
- How do relationships end?

# How Important Is the Need to Belong?

- **Need to belong:** a motivation to **bond with others** in relationships that provide ongoing, positive interactions
- We **pursue** belonging **when we don't have** it, and **seek it less** when our **needs are fulfilled**
- When we do belong, we tend to be healthier and happier
- Our sense of well-being comes from a balance of **three needs: autonomy, competence, and belonging**
- When our need to belong is blocked by **ostracism**, the **social pain** is keenly felt
- **Ostracism:** acts of **excluding or ignoring**

# How Important Is the Need to Belong?

- **Ostracized** people show **deficits in brain** mechanisms that **inhibit unwanted behavior**
- **Rejection by peers** may encourage **self-defeating** behaviors
- **Rejected children** are found to be more likely to have **self-regulation** issues and more likely to act **aggressively**
- Even “**cyber-ostracism**” by faceless people gives harm
- **Exclusion hurts** longest for anxious people; for younger than older adults; and even when it comes from a group the **rest of society spurns**

# What Leads to Friendship and Attraction?

- **What factors** nurture **liking** and **loving** for you?
- Does **absence** make the heart grow fonder?  
Or is someone who is **out of sight** also **out of mind**?
- Do **likes** attract? Or **opposites**?
- **How much** do good looks **matter**?
- **What** has **fostered** your close relationships?

# Proximity

- **Proximity** powerfully predicts **liking**
- **Proximity**: geographical nearness; functional distance
- **Less** often breeds **hostility**
- Those who **interact frequently** are far more likely to **become good friends** than enemies
- **Anticipating** interaction also **boosts** liking
- Anticipatory interaction is **adaptive**, increasing the chance of forming a rewarding relationship

# Proximity

- **Proximity** leads to liking not only because it **enables interaction and anticipatory liking** but also because **familiarity breeds fondness** (rather than contempt)
- **Mere exposure**: the tendency for **novel stimuli** to be liked more or rated **more positively** after the rater has been **repeatedly exposed** to them
- Even stronger when people receive stimuli without awareness
- Effect **violates the commonsense prediction** that **repeated exposure leads to boredom**
- With incessant **repetition**, however, **liking eventually drops**



# Physical Attractiveness

- Research shows that **appearance** does **matter**
- **Physical attractiveness predicts dating frequency**
- **Moderately** good predictor **for women**; **modestly** good **for men**
- **In longer-term heterosexual relationships**, a wife's **physical attractiveness predicts the husband's marital satisfaction** (better than the husband's attractiveness predicts the wife's)
- In studies of **speed-dating**, a prospect's **attractiveness** was similarly **important to both** men and women
- Once people have gotten to **know each other** through jobs or friendships, they **focus more on unique qualities**

# Physical Attractiveness

- Looks even **influence voting**
- **Gender matters:** men are more likely to vote for **physically attractive female candidates**, and women are more likely to vote for **approachable-looking male candidates**
- **Matching phenomenon:** the tendency for men and women to **choose as partners** those who are a “**good match**” in attractiveness and other traits
- People **invest more** in pursuing someone whose attractiveness roughly **matches their own**

# Physical Attractiveness

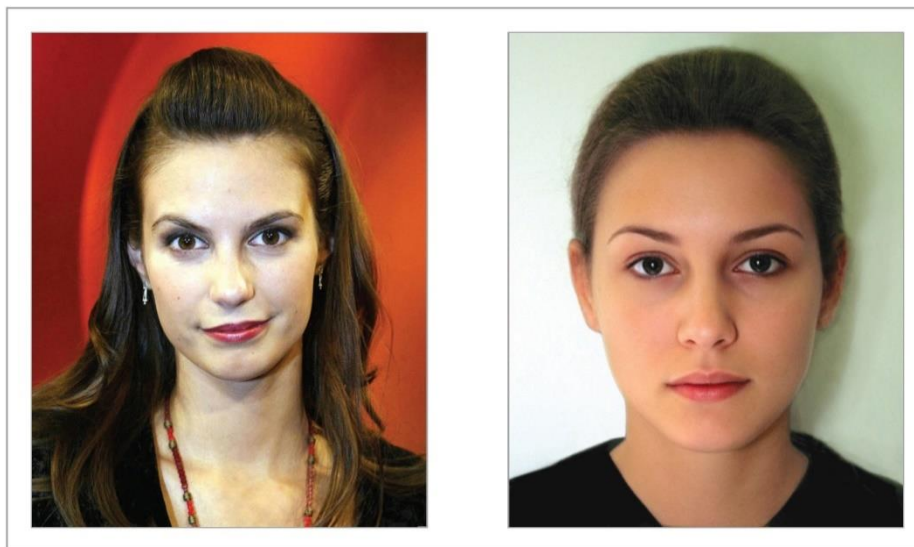
- **Physical-attractiveness stereotype:** the presumption that **physically attractive people possess other socially desirable traits** as well
- **What is beautiful is good**
- Adults of both sexes will **avoid sitting next to** an otherwise attractive person who is **facially disfigured**
- Adults show a similar **bias when judging children**
- **Children learn the stereotype early**
- **After cosmetic surgery**, women are often judged **more attractive** but also **kinder, more likeable**, and so on

# Physical Attractiveness

- Attractiveness most affects **first impressions**
  - Facebook, job interviews
- Despite perceptions, physically **attractive people do not differ** from others in basic **personality traits**
  - **Attractive children and young adults** are, however, somewhat **more relaxed, outgoing, and socially polished**
- Small average **differences** between **attractive and unattractive** people probably result from **self-fulfilling prophecies**

# Physical Attractiveness

- Who is attractive?
- **Attractiveness is subjective**—it is whatever the people of any given **place and time** find attractive
- Ironically, to be really attractive is to be **perfectly average**
- From an **evolutionary perspective**, beauty signals **health, youth, and fertility**
- What's attractive also **depends on social comparisons**—and this works the same way on our **self-perceptions**
- Not only do we **perceive attractive people as likable**, but we perceive **likable people** (and those we love) as **attractive**



Each year's selection of "Miss Germany" provides one country's answer. A University of Regensburg student research team, working with a German television channel, offered an alternative. Christoph Braun and his compatriots (Gruendl, 2005) photographed the **twenty-two 2002 "Queen of Beauty" finalists, without makeup and with hair tied back, and then created a "Virtual Miss Germany" that was the blended composite of them all.** When adults in a local shopping mall were shown the finalists and the Virtual Miss Germany, they easily rated **Virtual Miss Germany as the most attractive** of them all. Although the winning **real Miss Germany (left)** may have been disappointed by the news that everyone preferred her virtual competitor to herself, she can reassure herself that she will never meet her virtual competitor.

# Similarity versus Complementarity

- Birds that flock together are of a feather
- *(The meaning is that humans of similar type, interest, personality, character, or other distinctive attribute tend to mutually associate.)*
- **Friends, engaged couples, and spouses** are far more likely to **share common** attitudes, beliefs, values, and traits
- Greater the **similarity between husband and wife**, the **happier they are** and the **less likely to divorce**
- **Likeness begets liking; dissimilarity breeds dislike**
- Example: Whether people perceive those of **another race** as similar or dissimilar **influences** their racial attitudes

# Similarity versus Complementarity

- **Complementarity:** the popularly supposed **tendency**, in a relationship between two people, for each to **complete what is missing in the other**
  - Researchers have been **unable to confirm** that **opposites attract**
  - Some complementarity may evolve as a relationship progresses; but **people** seem slightly **more prone to like and marry** those whose needs, attitudes, and personalities are **similar**



# Liking Those Who Like Us

- **Liking is usually mutual**
  - Those told that certain others like or admire them usually feel a **reciprocal affection**
- We are **sensitive** to the slightest **hint of criticism**
  - Students like another student who says **eight positive things** about them better than one who says **seven positive things** and **one negative thing**
- We often **perceive criticism as more sincere than praise**
  - **Ingratiation**: the **use of strategies**, such as **flattery**, by which **people seek to gain another's favor**

# Relationship Rewards

- **Reward theory of attraction:** the theory that we like those **whose behavior is rewarding** to us or **whom we associate with rewarding events**
- Reward theory helps explain some of the influences on attraction
  - **Proximity**
  - **Attractiveness**
  - **Similarities**
  - **Mutual liking**

# What Is Love?

- **Loving is more complex** than liking and thus more **difficult to measure**
- Influences of liking also influence long-term, close relationships; nevertheless, **long-term loving is not merely an intensification of initial liking**
- Psychologist Robert Sternberg views love as consisting of **three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment**

# Love is Almost Universal

- H. Neanderthalensis (350 thousand-30 thousand years ago) pollens in the grave.
- Evidence of romantic love was found in **147 of 166** populations.
- Appropriate questions could not be asked in the remaining 19 cultures (Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992).



# Psychological Theories of Love

- **Freud:** glorification of sexuality
- **Harlow:** attachment behavior
- **Fromm:** interest, responsibility, respect and understanding
- **Maslow:**
  - a) “deficiency love” developed by one’s insecurity, or
  - b) “to be in love”, which expresses the desire to realize oneself and the other at a high level.
- **Tennov:** temporary addiction, which disables cognitive activity, and the body's sensitive response to a loved one

# Levinger and Snoek's Four Levels of Relationship

- According to this theory, relationships can vary forward and backward between these four levels.
- In this theory, the relationship is handled in the foreground and different types of relationship levels are mentioned.
- **zero contact:** **two** people who are **unaware of** each other's **existence**.
- **awareness:** **no** interpersonal **relationship**. Only **one** person is **aware** of the other's **outward appearance**.
- **first contact:** the **superficial** level of **relationship** between two people.
- **reciprocity:** mutual relations which can vary in the intensity of two people's interactions.

# The Evolutionary Meaning of Passionate Love

- Love is an **adaptation mechanism** that enables people to **reproduce successfully**.
- Because love **existed in the past**, it **still exists** in individuals who are able to reproduce.
- Love **binds two people** together to become the parents of a baby in need.
- Love leads to **loyalty and protection, attachment and marriage, sex and reproduction, resource sharing and parental investment**.

# The Evolutionary Meaning of Passionate Love

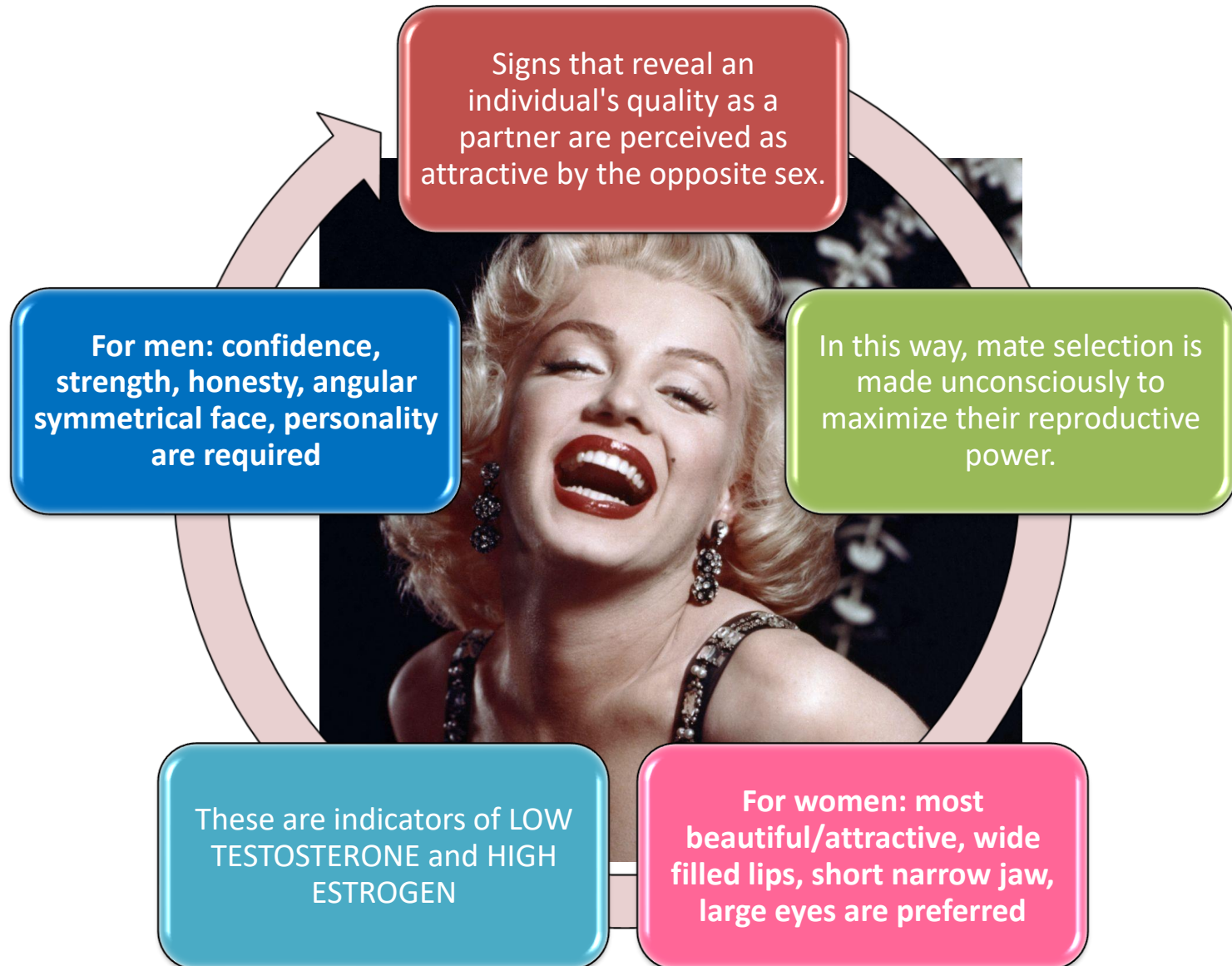
- In **sexual selection**, it is possible for the selected individual (male) to be favored by the selective partner (female) and to gain an advantage in being selected in two ways (Grammer, 2003):
  1. to **build up weapons** such as horns, fangs, etc., which will increase the probability of winning in a battle with his fellow.
  2. to **be equipped** with various accessories such as peacock tail, lion's mane, which show high gene quality.



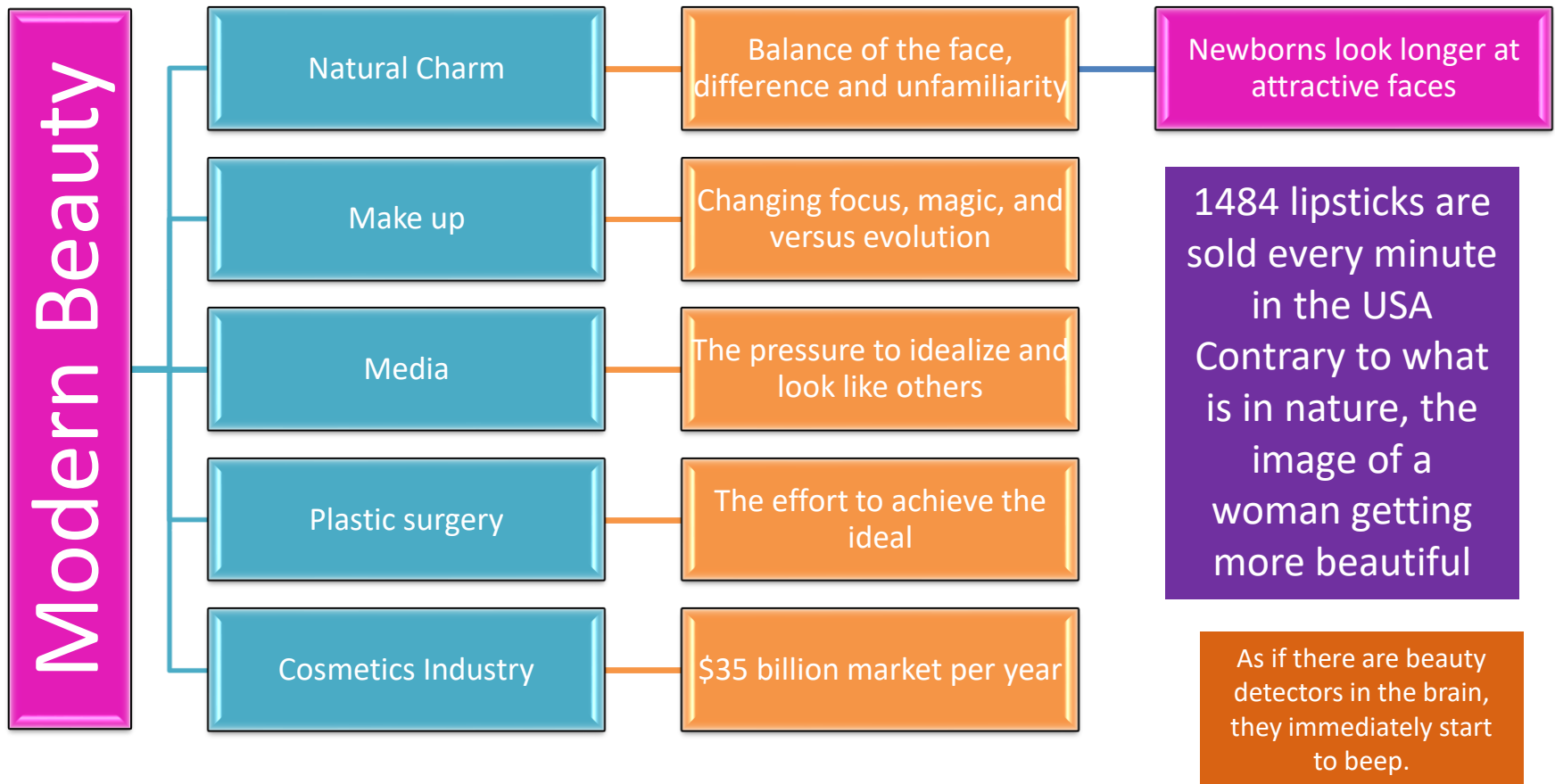
# The Evolutionary Meaning of Passionate Love

- With these, individuals of one species give **three types of messages** to the opposite sex.  
(Cornwell RE. Proc Biol Sci 2004; 271:635-640):
  1. I am **healthy**, my genes are of good quality,
  2. I have more estrogen (or testosterone), so my **reproductive potential is high**,
  3. I will **make a good father/mother**.

# The Evolutionary Meaning of Passionate Love



# evolution vs change



# Passion & Logic

Joe DiMaggio

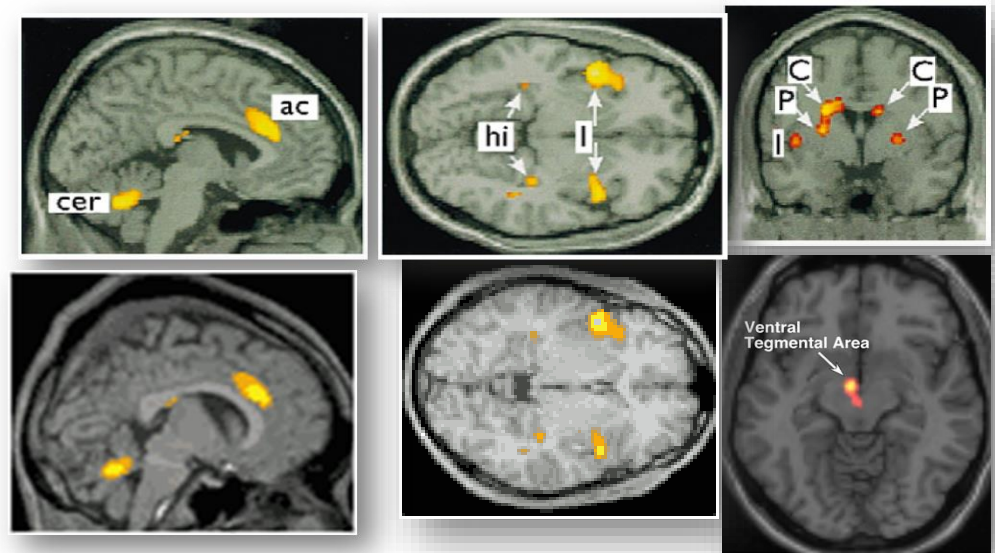


Arthur Miller



# what happens in our brain when we fall in love

“What happens in someone's brain when they are shown the photo of the person they are in love with?” (Semir Zeki et al., 2003). The first study had a major impact. 18 participants were included in the study. Photos of their loved ones were shown to understand what was going on in the brain with fMRI. Brain's subcortical reward system was working very hard. The caudate, putamen, insular cortex, hippocampus, anterior cingulate cortex, cerebellum and ventral tegmental area were activated. Some brain regions specifically respond to events that offer rewards. A reward you receive will likely cause you to repeat behaviors that result in rewards. Like food, water, sex, cigarettes, cocaine, positive social interactions. Finally, there is subjective satisfaction.

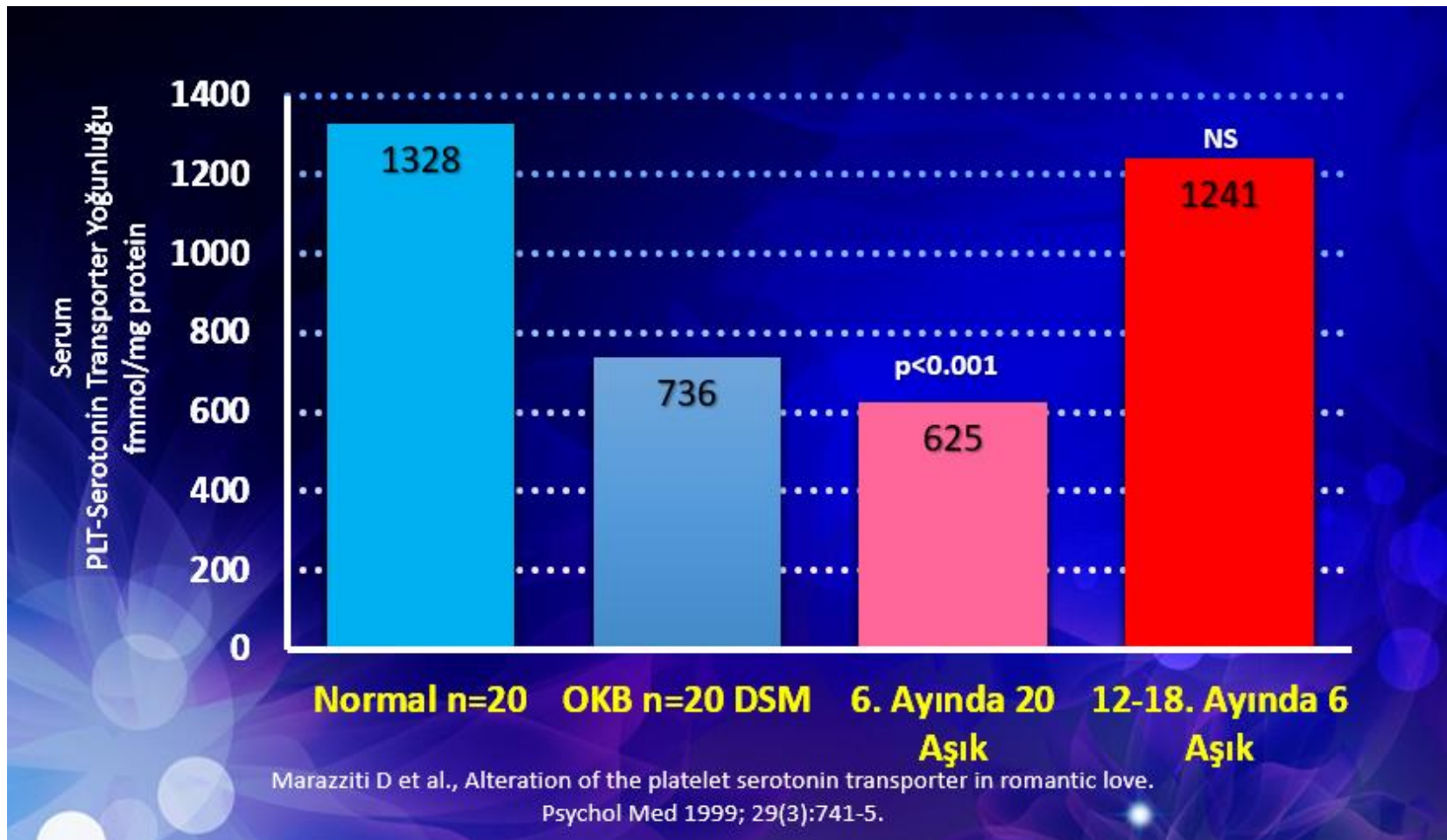


# Functions of Brain Regions

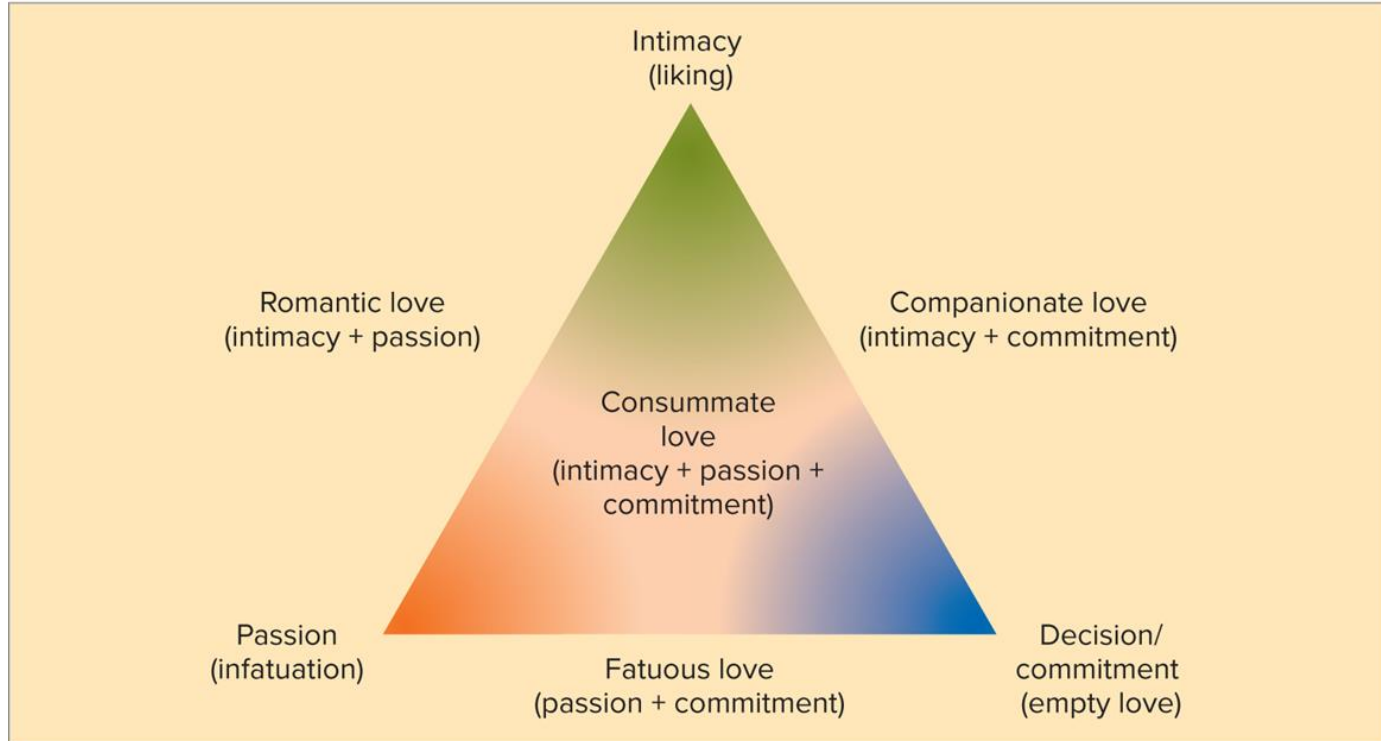
- **Ventral Tegmental Area:** rich in dopamine, reward, pleasure, unity, alertness, attention, motivation and effort for reward
- **Pallidum-Kaudat:** integrates sensory input for movement, reward detection and purposeful behavior
- **Anterior Singulat:** emotional responses to internal and external stimuli, decision-making, risk analysis, self awareness
- **Insular cortex:** being fidgety, the reflection of the emotion, speedy heart rate, autonomous effect



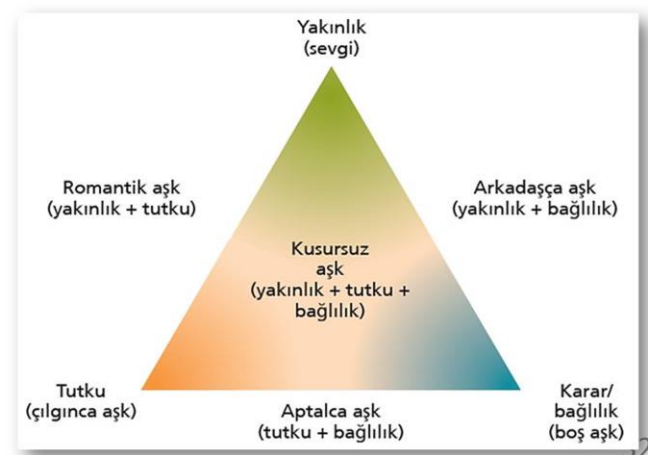
# Is Love a Temporary Obsession?



# Robert Sternberg's (1988) Conception of Kinds of Loving as Combinations of Three Basic Components of Love



Myers (2010), Social Psychology





# What Enables Close Relationships?

- **Close relationships** are enabled by:
  - **Secure attachments**
  - **Equitability**
  - **Intimate self-disclosure and disclosure reciprocity**

# Attachment

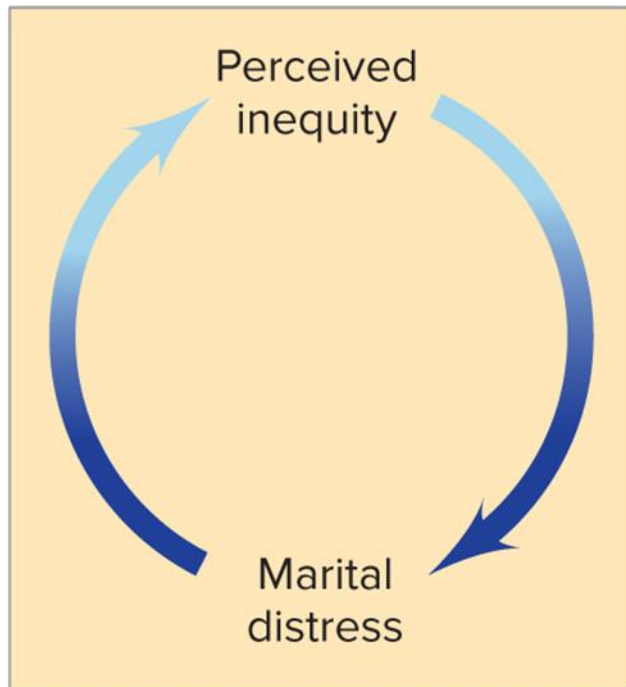
- Our **need to belong** is adaptive
- **Strength in numbers**
- **Genes and hormones** together trigger pair bonding
- **Our dependence as infants** strengthens our human bonds and **contributes to social responses**—fear, anger, but especially love
- **Love and attachment** are a part of various close relationships but take on added features in passionate love

# Attachment

- **Infant attachment styles** seem to lay a foundation **for future relationships**
- **Secure attachment:** rooted in **trust** and marked by **intimacy**
- **Avoidant attachment:** marked by **discomfort** over, or **resistant** to, being close to others; an **insecure** attachment style
- **Anxious attachment:** marked by **anxiety** or **ambivalence**; an **insecure** attachment style

# Equity

- **Society** teaches us to **exchange rewards** by the **equity principle of attraction**
- **Equity**: a condition in which the outcomes people **receive from** a relationship are **proportional** to what they **contribute to** it
- Equity outcomes **needn't always be equal** outcomes
- Those involved in an equitable, long-term relationship are unconcerned with short-term equity
- **Perception of equity is important to relationship satisfaction**

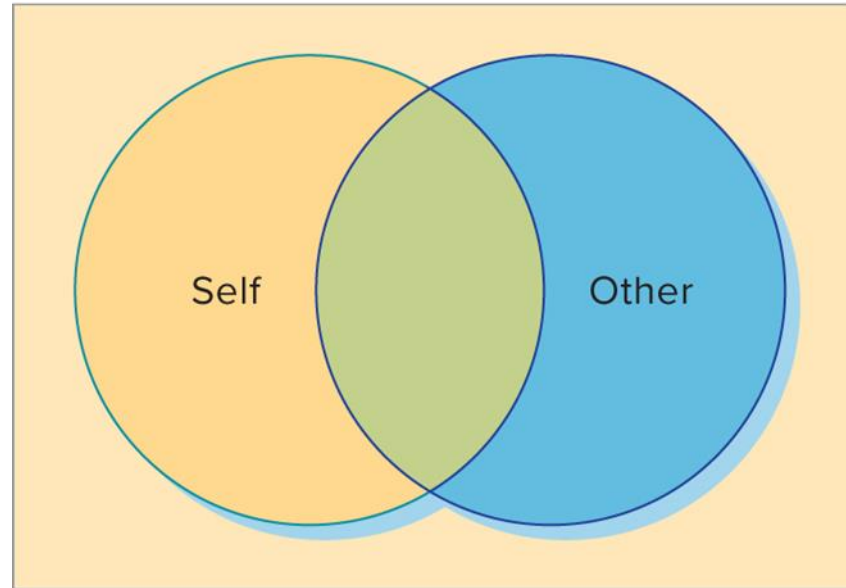


Perceived **inequity triggers marital distress**, agreed Nancy Grote and Margaret Clark (2001) from their tracking of married couples over time. But they also report that the **traffic between inequity and distress runs both ways**: Marital distress exacerbates the perception of unfairness.

**Perceived Inequities Trigger Marital Distress, Which Fosters the Perception of Inequities**

# Self-Disclosure

- **Deep, companionate** relationships enable us to be known as we truly are and to **feel accepted**
- They are characterized by **self-disclosure: revealing intimate aspects of oneself to others**
- **Disclosure reciprocity:** the tendency for one person's intimacy or **self-disclosure to match** that of a conversational partner
- **Self-revealing dating and married couples** tend to enjoy the **most satisfying and enduring relationships**



**Love: An Overlapping of Selves—You become Part of Me, I  
Part of You**

# How Do Relationships End?

- Comparing their **unsatisfying relationship** with the **support and affection they imagine** available elsewhere, many **relationships end**
- Each year, Canada and the United States report **one divorce for every two marriages**



# Divorce

- **Individualistic cultures have more divorce than do communal cultures**
- **Individualists expect more passion and personal fulfillment in a marriage, which puts greater pressure on the relationship**
- **Risk of divorce is higher for some personalities and also depends on who marries whom**

# The Detachment Process

- Much as we experience life's best moments when relationships begin, we experience **life's worst moments when they end**
- **Severing bonds produces a predictable sequence: agitated preoccupation with the lost partner, deep sadness, and the beginnings of emotional detachment**
- **Detaching is a process, not an event**
- Among **dating** couples, **the closer and longer the relationship, the more painful the breakup**
- Among **married** couples, **breakup has additional costs**

# The Detachment Process

- Those **without better opportunities** or who **feel invested** will **seek alternatives** to exiting the relationship
  - **Wait for conditions to improve**
  - **Ignore the partner** and allow the relationship to **deteriorate**
  - **Take active steps** to improve the relationship
- **Healthy marriages are not devoid of conflict**; but they are marked by an ability to **reconcile differences** and **overbalance criticism with affection**

<b>Constructive or Destructive?</b>	<b>Passive Responses</b>	<b>Active Responses</b>
<b>Constructive</b>	<i>Loyalty:</i> Await improvement	<i>Voice:</i> Seek to improve relationship
<b>Destructive</b>	<i>Neglect:</i> Ignore the partner	<i>Exit:</i> End the relationship

## **Responses to Relationship Distress**

## conclusion

We need to **belong to someone** in order to **feel** ourselves **fulfilled**.

**Close, enduring** relationships are hallmarks of a **happy life**.