UNIT 3 INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

Structure

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Relationships with the individuals around us are key to one's social existence. Any given interaction is characterised by a certain level of intensity, which is conveyed by individual and interpersonal behaviour, including the more subtle nonverbal behavioural information of interpersonal attraction. The words "like" and "love," "dislike" and "hate" are among the most frequently used in the English language. Everyone knows what is meant by these terms. Therefore, when we state that we feel "attracted" to a certain person, it is unlikely that we will be asked to define our use of the verb "attracted." Interpersonal attraction is the attraction between

people which leads to friendships and romantic relationships. The study of interpersonal attraction is a major area of research in social psychology. In this unit we will be discussing how Interpersonal attraction is related to how much we like, love, dislike, or hate someone. We will consider interpersonal attraction as a force acting between two people that tends to draw them together and resist their separation. We would also provide the causative factors to interpersonal attraction, as for example similarity, thinking alike etc.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After completion of this Unit, you will be able to:

- Define Interpersonal attraction;
- Elucidate the factors contributing to Interpersonal attraction;
- Analyse Interpersonal attraction in the light of different theories;and
- Explain how rewarding or complementing in Interpersonal attraction reduces negative emotions.

3.2 INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

To the query why it is that a particular person has evoked our positive regard, probably we will reply by making reference to some of the person's "good qualities" such as the person's honesty, sense of humor, or even the particular hair style that the person sports etc. While explanations referring to qualities which seem to "compel" admiration are frequently given, it must be kept in mind that interpersonal attraction is much more complicated than such explanations would imply.

In some cases, people are attracted to those persons whom they perceive as similar to themselves. The effect is very small for superficial features like clothes or race but very strong for perceived similarity of attitudes.

In certain other cases, we like people who seem to agree with us because

a) we think they're smart,

b) we will probably get along, and

c) they'll probably like us too.

To pretend to agree with someone even when you do not really, for the purpose of getting something they can give you, like a job, is called ingratiation. In general this works best if you pretend to agree in about 70%. Research shows that less is not enough, and more is both suspicious and boring.

Interpersonal attraction has been an important topic of research in psychology, because humans are social animals, and attraction serves an important function in forming a social network, which in turn provides security and satisfies people's need to belong to a social group (Baumeister & Bushman, 2008).

In assessing the nature of attraction, psychologists have used methods such as questionnaires, survey, and rating scale to determine level of one's attraction toward another. Here, the effects of similarity, social reward, familiarity, and physical attractiveness are examined to see how they impact interpersonal attraction. When measuring interpersonal attraction, one must refer to the qualities of the attracted as well as the qualities of the attractor to achieve predictive accuracy. It is suggested that to determine attraction, personality and situation must be taken into account. Many factors leading to interpersonal attraction have been studied. The most frequently studied are: physical attractiveness, propinquity, familiarity, similarity, complementarity, reciprocal liking, and reinforcement. We will discuss each factor one by one.

3.2.1 Physical Attractiveness

Despite the old sayings that "beauty is only skin deep" and "you can not judge a book by its cover", we tend to operate according to Aristotle's 2000-year-old pronouncement that "personal beauty is a greater recommendation than any letter of introduction".

One of the most commonly cited factors influencing attraction is physical attractiveness. It is indeed well known that most people show a substantial preference for attractive persons over unattractive others (Baumeister & Bushman, 2008). Perhaps the advantage of good looks and the inferences people make when they see a physically attractive person are the reasons for getting attracted to another person.

Studies have shown that when people see an attractive person, they believe that there is more than physical beauty that they see, and they tend to assume certain internal qualities within the person, such as kindness, outgoing, etc. (Barocas & Karoly, 1972). To illustrate this factor, let us take the research illustrating this relationship between physical attractiveness and its stereotypes. For instance, a study on popularity among adolescents was carried out by Cavior & Dokecki in 1973. They found that when physical attractiveness was compared to perceived attitude similarity, physical attractiveness had a stronger effect on popularity. These findings suggest that individuals' perceptions of attitude similarity with those of others may be strongly influenced by more automatic judgments of physical attractiveness. Such demonstrations of preferential treatment may have significant implications at the level of society, as well. For example, in one jury task simulation experiment, more attractive defendants were found to be evaluated more positively and with less certainty of guilt than were other less attractive defendants.

Even though physical attractiveness is unrelated to objective measure of internal qualities such as intelligence and personality, many researches indicate that bias for beauty is pervasive in society

3.2.1.1 Research on Physical Attractiveness Stereotype

In one of the first studies of the physical attractiveness stereotype, college students were asked to look at pictures of men and women who either were good-looking, average, or homely and to then evaluate their personalities. Results indicated that the students tended to assume that physically attractive persons possessed a host of socially desirable personality traits as compared to those who were unattractive. Consistent with the physical attractiveness stereotype, it was

also reported from research that beautiful and handsome characters were significantly more likely to be portrayed as virtuous, romantically active, and successful than their less attractive counterparts. Over the past thirty-five years, many researchers have examined this stereotype, and two separate meta-analyses of these studies reveal that physically attractive people are perceived to be more sociable, successful, happy, dominant, sexually warm, mentally healthy, intelligent, and socially skilled than those who are unattractive.

Although the above findings are based solely on samples from individualistic cultures, the physical attractiveness stereotype also occurs in collectivist cultures, but its content is a bit different.

Attractiveness and Job-Related Outcomes

Field and laboratory studies conducted in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures indicate that physical attractiveness does have a moderate impact in a variety of job-related outcomes, including hiring, salary, and promotion decisions. In one representative study, it was found that there was a significant difference between the starting salaries of good-looking men and those with slow average faces. For women, facial attractiveness did not influence their starting salaries, but it did substantially impact their later salaries. Once hired, women who were above average in facial attractiveness typically earned $4,200 more per year than women who were below average in attractiveness.

For attractive and unattractive men, this difference in earning power per year was $5,200. Further, although neither height nor weight affected a woman's starting salary, being 20% or more overweight reduced a man's starting salary by more than $2,000. Overall, the research literature informs us that physical appearance does indeed influence success on the job.

Alan Feingold (1992) conducted a meta-analysis of more than ninety studies that investigated whether physically attractive and physically unattractive people actually differed in their basic personality traits. His analysis indicated no significant relationships between physical attractiveness and such traits as intelligence, dominance, self-esteem, and mental health.

3.2.2 Propinquity/Proximity

According to Rowland Miller's Intimate Relationships text, the propinquity effect can be defined as: "the more we see and interact with a person, the more likely he or she is to become our friend or intimate partner." This effect is very similar to the mere exposure effect in that the more a person is exposed to a stimulus, the more the person likes it; however, there are a few exceptions to the mere exposure effect.

3.2.2.1 Proximity as an Intensifier of Sentiments

A frequently advanced and commonly accepted notion is that propinquity, or proximity, has a strong influence on one's friendship choices. Stated in its simplest form, the proposition is as follows: Other things being equal, the closer two individuals are located geographically, the more likely it is that they will be attracted to each other. Studies demonstrating the impact of proximity on friendship choices are so numerous that we will mention only a few.

Several investigators have collected data which indicate that students tend to develop stronger friendships with those students who share their classes, or their dormitory or apartment building, or who sit near them, than with those who are geographically located only slightly farther away (Byrne, 1961a). Clerks in a large department store and members of a bomber crew have been found to develop closer relations with those who happen to work next to them than with co-workers a few feet away (Zander and Havelin, 1960).

One of the more interesting studies demonstrating the relationship between proximity and friendship choice was conducted by Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950). These investigators examined the development of friendships in a new housing project for married students. The housing development studies consisted of small houses arranged in U-shaped courts, such that all except the end houses faced onto a grassy area. The two end houses in each court faced onto the street. Festinger (1951) arrived at the intriguing conclusion that to a great extent architects can determine the social life of the residents of their projects. He found that the two major factors affecting the friendships which developed were (1) sheer distance between houses and (2) the direction in which a house faced. Friendships developed more frequently between next-door neighbors, less frequently between people whose houses were separated by another house, and so on. As the distance between houses increased, the number of friendships fell off so rapidly that it was rare to find a friendship between persons who lived in houses that were separated by more than four or five other houses.

Festinger, Schachter, and Back also found that architectural feature which brought an individual into proximity with other residents tended to increase that person's popularity. It was found, for example, that the positions of the stairways enabled the residents of the apartments near the entrances and exits of the stairways to make more friends than other residents. Similarity, the position of the mailboxes in each building improved the social life of the residents of the apartment near which they were located.

Another interesting finding has been that integrated housing produced increased racial harmony. Deutsch and Collins (1958), for example, concluded on the basis of their data that integrated housing should be encouraged since such integration helps eradicate racial prejudice. Segregationists, however, have concluded that since the evidence suggests that integration would lead to interracial friendships and "race mixing," segregation should be preserved at all costs.

3.2.2.2 Increased Probability of Acquiring Information

What underlies the often obtained relationship between proximity and sentiment? Proxomity appears to allow, an opportunity to obtain information about the other person and accumulates experience regarding the rewards or punishments one is likely to receive from the other person.

Thus with decreasing distances sentiments such as likes and dislikes, especially the strong sentiments of love and hate, are not likely to be felt for people about whom we have minimal information and with whom we have had little experience.

Hence if we know the degree of proximity between two people, and do not have knowledge of the content of the information exchange such proximity has made possible, we cannot make a prediction concerning whether a positive sentiment or a negative sentiment will develop. Therefore one may state that there are a number of factors which may make such a conclusion erroneous.

It appears that there is a somewhat greater tendency for proximity to breed attraction than hostility. Newcomb has advanced the hypothesis that proximity should produce positive rather than negative attraction. He argued that when persons interact, the reward-punishment ratio is more often such as to be reinforcing than extinguishing. (Newcombe, 1956, p. 576). Thus, he reasons that the information which proximity permits is more likely to be favorable than unfavourable and that liking, therefore, will more often result from proximity than disliking. Since people are to a great extent dependent upon one another for satisfaction of their needs, it seems probable that individuals generally take care to reward others as much as possible in interaction with them.

3.2.2.3 Heider's Balance Theory

The prediction that proximity will more often lead to liking than disliking can be derived from a number of the cognitive-consistency theories. It can perhaps be most easily derived from Heider's (1958) balance theory. The basic tenet of Heider's theory is that people strive to make their sentiment relationships harmonious with their perception of the unit relationships existent between objects.

What does Heider mean by the phrase *"sentiment relationships"?* A "sentiment" is simply a positive or negative attitude toward someone or something. What does Heider mean by the phrase *"unit relationships"?* Separate entities are said to have a unit relationship when they are perceived as belonging together. The members of a family, for example, are usually perceived as a unit, as are a person and his clothing, and so on.

Heider draws upon the principles of perceptual organisation which were formulated by the Gestalt psychologists. The Gestaltists discovered that relationship between objects which is especially likely to lead to unit formation is proximity: Objects which are close together spatially tend to be perceived as a unit. According to Heider's theory, then, if one perceives that a unit relationship with another exists (e.g., the other is in close proximity), this perception should induce a harmonious sentiment relationship (e.g., liking).

To test whether or not unit formation produced by interacting intimately with another increases attraction, Darley and Berscheid (1967) led college women to expect that they were going to discuss their sexual standards and behaviour with another girl, ostensibly participating in the same study. After the expectation of further interaction had been induced, each girl was given two folders. One folder was said to contain personality information about her partner, the girl with whom she would converse and exchange information. The other folder was said to contain information about another girl, who would also participate in the study but whom she would never meet.

The personality information contained in both folders was designed to produce as ambiguous a picture as possible of the girl described. Half of the subjects believed that the girl described in folder A was their "randomly selected" discussion partner; the other half believed that the girl described in folder B was their partner.

Subjects were instructed to read through both folders, form a general impression of both girls, and then rate each of them along a number of dimensions, including liking. The results of this study clearly indicated that the subjects expressed more liking for the girl who had been designated as their discussion partner than they did for the girl who was not. This study suggests, that the factor of proximity, may

produce a feeling of unit formation between two people. This feeling of being in a unit relationship with another may then induce feelings of liking for that person. Knowledge that one will be in close proximity with another may result, then, in an individual's going *into* an interaction situation with increased liking for the other person prior to the actual interaction and prior to actual knowledge of possible rewards which may be obtained in the interaction.

It is interesting that the liking produced by the anticipation of being in close proximity with another may lead a person to voluntarily choose to associate with the other person, even though the original interaction which was anticipated has been cancelled. It was found that even when a subject anticipated interacting with an objectively undesirable person, the attraction induced by the anticipation of close interaction caused subjects to choose voluntarily to interact with that negative person more readily than did people who had not previously anticipated association with that person.

Thus one may summarise this section by stating that actual proximity is probably correlated with attraction (or repulsion) because proximity allows one to obtain an increased amount of information about the other person and to experience rewards or punishments from the other. There is some suggestive evidence that proximity in and of itself, (apart from any information it may provide about another and apart from any rewards or punishments which the other may administer), may facilitate attraction as a by-product of the individual's desire for cognitive consistency.

3.2.3 Similarity

The notion of "birds of a feather flock together" points out that similarity is a crucial determinant of interpersonal attraction. According to Morry's attraction-similarity model (2007), there is a lay belief that people with actual similarity produce initial attraction. Perceived similarity develops for someone to rate others as similar to themselves in ongoing relationship. Such perception is either self serving (friendship) or relationship serving (romantic relationship). Newcomb (1963) pointed out that people tend to change perceived similarity to obtain balance in a relationship. Additionally, perceived similarity was found to be greater than actual similarity in predicting interpersonal attraction.

3.2.3.1 Similarity in Different Aspects

Research suggest that interpersonal similarity and attraction are multidimensional constructs in which people are attracted to others who are similar to them in demographics, physical appearance, attitudes, interpersonal style, social and cultural background, personality, interests and activities preferences, and communication and social skills. A study conducted by Theodore Newcomb (1963) on college dorm roommates suggested that individuals with shared backgrounds, academic achievements, attitudes, values, and political views became friends.

Physical Appearance

Erving Goffman, sociologist suggests that people are more likely to form long standing relationships with those who are equally matched in social attributes, like physical attractiveness etc. The study by researchers Walster and Walster supported the matching hypothesis by showing that partners who were similar in terms of physical attractiveness expressed the most liking for each other. Another study

also found evidence that supported the matching hypothesis: photos of dating and engaged couples were rated in terms of attractiveness, and a definite tendency was found for couples of similar attractiveness to date or engage (Murstein et.al., 1976).

Attitudes

According to the 'law of attraction' by Byrne (1971), attraction towards a person is positively related to the proportion of attitudes similarity associated with that person. It was also raised that the one with similar attitudes as yours was more agreeable with your perception of things and more reinforcing she/he was, so the more you like him/her. Based on the cognitive consistency theories, difference in attitudes and interests can lead to dislike and avoidance (Singh & Ho, 2000) whereas similarity in attitudes promotes social attraction (Singh & Ho, 2000). It was pointed out that attitude similarity activates the perceived attractiveness and favuor-ability information from each other, whereas dissimilarity would reduce the impact of these cues.

The studies by Jamieson, Lydon and Zanna (1987) showed that attitude similarity could predict how people evaluate their respect for each other, and social and intellectual first impressions which in terms of activity preference similarity and value-based attitude similarity respectively. In intergroup comparisons, high attitude similarity would lead to homogeneity among in-group members whereas low attitude similarity would lead to diversity among in-group members, promoting social attraction and achieving high group performance in different tasks Although attitudinal similarity and attraction are linearly related, attraction may not contribute significantly to attitude change (Simons, Berkowitz & Moyer, 1970).

Social and Cultural Background

Byrne, Clore and Worchel (1966) suggested people with similar economic status are likely to be attracted to each other. Buss & Barnes (1986) also found that people prefer their romantic partners to be similar in certain demographic characteristics, including religious background, political orientation and socio-economic status.

Personality

Researchers have shown that interpersonal attraction was positively correlated to personality similarity (Goldman, Rosenzweig & Lutter, 1980). People are inclined to desire romantic partners who are similar to themselves on agreeableness, conscientiousness, extroversion, emotional stability, openness to experience and attachment style (Klohnen & Luo, 2003).

Interests and Activities

Activity similarity was especially predictive of liking judgments, which affects the judgments of attraction (Lydon, Jamieson & Zanna, 1988). Lydon et.al, (1988) claimed that high self-monitoring people were influenced more by activity preference similarity than attitude similarity on initial attraction, while low self-monitoring people were influenced more on initial attraction by value-based attitude similarity than activity preference similarity.

Social Skills

According to the post-conversation measures of social attraction, tactical similarity was positively correlated with partner satisfaction and global competence ratings, but was uncorrelated with the opinion change and perceived persuasiveness measures (Waldron & Applegate, 1998).

3.2.3.2 Effects of Similarity on Interpersonal Attraction

Similarity has effects on starting a relationship by initial attraction to know each other. It is showed that high attitude similarity resulted in a significant increase in initial attraction to the target person and high attitude dissimilarity resulted in a decrease of initial attraction. Similarity also promotes relationship commitment. Study on heterosexual dating couples found that similarity in intrinsic values of the couple was linked to relationship commitment and stability (Kurdek & Schnopp-Wyatt, 1997).

3.2.3.3 Complementarity

The model of complementarity explains whether "birds of a feather flock together" or "opposites attract".Studies show that complementary interaction between two partners increases their attractiveness to each other. Complementary partners preferred closer interpersonal relationship than non-complementary ones. Couples who reported the highest level of loving and harmonious relationship were more dissimilar in dominance than couples who scored lower in relationship quality. (Markey & Markey (2007)).

Mathes and Moore (1985) found that people were more attracted to peers approximating to their ideal self than to those who did not. Specifically, low self-esteem individuals appeared more likely to desire a complementary relationship than high self-esteem people. We are attracted to people who complement to us because this allows us to maintain our preferred style of behaviour (Markey & Markey (2007), and through interaction with someone who complements our own behaviour, we are likely to have a sense of self-validation and security.

3.2.3.4 Principles of Similarity or Complementarity

Principles of similarity and complementarity seem to be contradictory on the surface. In fact, they agree on the dimension of warmth. Both principles state that friendly people would prefer friendly partners (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997) . The importance of similarity and complementarity may depend on the stage of the relationship. Similarity seems to carry considerable weight in initial attraction, while complementarity assumes importance as the relationship develops over time. Markey (2007) found that people would be more satisfied with their relationship if their partners differed from them, at least, in terms of dominance, as two dominant persons may experience conflicts while two submissive individuals may have frustration as neither member take the initiative. Perception and actual behaviour might not be congruent with each other. There were cases that dominant people perceived their partners to be similarly dominant, yet in the eyes of independent observers, the actual behaviour of their partner was submissive, in other words, complementary to them (Dryer 1997). Why do people perceive their romantic partners to be similar to them despite evidence to the contrary? The reason remains unclear, pending further research.

3.3 EXPLAINING INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

3.3.1 Social Exchange Theory

People's feelings toward a potential partner are dependent on their perception of rewards and costs, the kind of relationships they deserve, and their likelihood for having a healthier relationship with someone else. Rewards are the part of a relationship that makes it worthwhile and enjoyable. A cost is something that can cause irritation like a friend overstaying his welcome. Comparison level is also taken into account during a relationship. This suggests that people expect rewards or costs depending on the time invested in the relationship. If the level of expected rewards is minimal and the level of costs is high, the relationship suffers and both parties may become dissatisfied and unhappy. Lastly, the comparison of alternatives means that satisfaction is conditional on the chance that a person could replace the relationship with a more desirable one.

3.3.2 Evolutionary Theories

The evolutionary theory of human interpersonal attraction states that opposite-sex attraction most often occurs when someone has physical features indicating that he or she is very fertile. Considering that the primary purpose of conjugal/romantic relationships is reproduction, it would follow that people invest in partners who appear very fertile, increasing the chance of their genes being passed down to the next generation. This theory has been criticised because it does not explain relationships between same-sex couples or couples who do not want children, although this may have something to do with the fact that whether one wants children or not one is still subject to the evolutionary forces which produce them.

Another evolutionary explanation suggests that fertility in a mate is of greater importance to men than to women. According to this theory, a woman places significant emphasis on a man's ability to provide resources and protection. The theory suggests that these resources and protection are important in ensuring the successful raising of the woman's offspring. The ability to provide resources and protection might also be sought because the underlying traits are likely to be passed on to male offspring.

Evolutionary theory also suggests that people whose physical features suggest they are healthy are seen as more attractive. The theory suggests that a healthy mate is more likely to possess genetic traits related to health that would be passed on to offspring. People's tendency to consider people with facial symmetry more attractive than those with less symmetrical faces is one example. However, a test was conducted that found that perfectly symmetrical faces were less attractive than normal faces.It has also been suggested that people are attracted to faces similar to their own. Case studies have revealed that when a photograph of a woman was superimposed to include the features of a man's face, the man whose face was superimposed almost always rated that picture the most attractive. This theory is based upon the notion that we want to replicate our own features in the next generation, as we have survived thus far with such features and have instinctive survival wishes for our children. Another (non-evolutionary) explanation given for the results of that study was that the man whose face was superimposed may have consciously or subconsciously associated the photographically altered female face with the face of his mother or other family member.

Evolutionary theory also suggests that love keeps two people together so that they can raise a child. Love keeps two people together, and this would help raise a child. For example, a man and a woman who love each other would be together and work together to raise a child. Back in the tribal days—when much of human evolution took place—it would probably require two people to successfully raise an offspring, and a mother with a supporting partner would probably have more surviving offspring than a mother who does not have such a partner. Thus, people with the ability to form love would produce more offspring than those without that ability. And these offspring would have the genes for love. Thus, the genes for love would become common, and that is why most people today have the ability to love.

3.3.3 The Reciprocity-of-Liking Rule

A naive observer from another culture would have little trouble discovering one reward which people in our society spend a tremendous amount of time, money, and effort to obtain. Just a brief glance at a few television commercials would reveal that the desire for the esteem of others must be a very strong and pervasive motivation, for it is often exploited by those who have something to sell. Countless everyday observations provide a great deal of evidence that we value highly the esteem of others and will work hard to obtain this reward. If esteem is indeed a reward, and if it is true that we tend to like those who reward us, it follows that we should like people who like us.

The proposition that esteem will be reciprocated can be derived from several psychological theories. Theorists who take the reinforcement point of view reason that the most general determinants of interpersonal esteem are reciprocal rewards and punishments. Some of these theorists (e.g., Homans, 1961) have specifically noted that one type of reward to which people are extremely responsive is social approval or esteem. Like money, social approval is viewed as a generalised, "transituational" reinforcer because it has the power to reinforce a wide variety of human activities. For example, many experimenters have demonstrated that if one merely nods his head and murmurs approval each time his discussion partner utters a plural noun, he can dramatically increase the frequency with which the recipient of that reward will pepper his discourse with plural nouns (e.g., Dulany, 1961). Stronger demonstrations of approval, such as the roar of the crowd or another's love for oneself, frequently influence lifetimes of activity. Social approval, again like money, is valuable because its possession makes one reasonably confident that a number of his needs will be satisfied; a lack of social approval often indicates that many of one's needs— those which require the good will and cooperation of others for satisfaction— will be frustrated.

In addition to the reinforcement theorists, cognitive-consistency theorists also make the reciprocal-liking prediction. Heider's balance theory (1958), for example, predicts that if Person A likes X (himself) and Person B likes X (Person A), a cognitively balanced state in which Person A likes Person B will be induced. Many correlational data, obtained from a wide variety of psychological studies, have been cited in support of the reciprocal-liking proposition (e.g., Newcomb, 1963). These data provide evidence that individuals tend to believe that the people they like reciprocate their liking. If it is true that we like people who like us, we would expect to find such a correlation. Taken alone, however, these data do not provide conclusive evidence for reciprocity of liking. Either one of two processes, or both, could be responsible for the observed correlation between the extent to which we feel another likes us and the extent to which we like him.

1) A person may come to like another and *then,* as a consequence of his liking, come to perceive that the other person likes him. In such a case, the liking for the other is not induced by the other person's providing the reward of esteem, but rather by some other determinant of interpersonal attraction.

2) One may become attracted to another as a consequence of his discovery that the other person likes him. Such a process would support the notion that esteem constitutes a reward, and we are attracted to people who give such a reward.

3.3.4 Rewarding Reduces Anxiety, Stress, Loneliness and Enhances Self-Esteem

As a strategy of interpersonal attraction if one person in the interaction rewards the other for aomething the latter has done, it enhances the interpersonal relationship. In the process it also reduces many of the negative emotional states of the person concerned. This is being discussed in detail below:

3.3.4.1 Liking Produced By Rewards Others Provide

The psychological principle which is most frequently used to predict interpersonal attraction is the principle of reinforcement. We will like those who reward us, we will dislike those who punish us. Several theorists have elaborated upon the relationship between reinforcement and interpersonal attraction. For example, Homans' (1961) theory rests largely on the general proposition that a necessary condition for receiving esteem from others is the capacity to reward them. He hypothesizes further that

A man's esteem depends upon the relative rarity of the services he provides if we take a larger look at the ways in which a man may help others. If he has capacities of heart, mind, skill, experience, or even strength that they do not have, and uses these capacities to reward others, he will get esteem from them. But if his capacities are of a kind that they also possess, or if these capacities are widely available in the group, he will not get much esteem even if he uses them in such a way as to reward the others.

In other words, there are, according to Homans, rewards and rewards— one who provides rewards which are in short supply is more likely to evoke attraction than one who provides rewards which are relatively common. Homans considers the costs as well as the rewards one can incur in a relationship and introduces the concept of profit. Profit is simply defined as the amount of reward a person receives from an interaction minus the cost he incurs in that interaction. The amount of social approval, or esteem, one has for another is hypothesised to be a function of the profit one obtains from one's interactions with the other.

According to these theorists, then, how much a person will be attracted to another depends upon whether the outcomes the person obtains from the other are above or below his Comparison Level (CL) "If the outcomes in a given relationship surpass the CL, that relationship is regarded as a satisfactory one. And, to the degree the outcomes are supra-CL, the person may be said to be attracted to the relationship. If the outcomes endured are infra-CL, the person is dissatisfied and unhappy with the relationship".

Lott and Lott (1961), extending Hullian learning theory to apply to the case of interpersonal attraction, have reasoned that a person should come to like not only

those who provide rewards, but also those who have nothing to do with providing rewards, but are merely physically present when the individual receives rewards. They have reasoned that, like any other response, response to a reward becomes conditioned to all discriminable stimuli present at the time of reinforcement; another person, of course, may be a discriminable stimulus.

To test whether or not one tends to like those who just happen to be present at the time one receives a reward, Lott and Lott formed three-member groups of children. Each group then played a game in which some members of the group were rewarded and other members were not. Following participation in the game sociometric tests were administered to the children. Specifically the children were asked which two children in the class they would choose to take with them on their next family vacation. The results of some studies indicated that children who had been rewarded chose members of their three-person groups (who were present at the time of reward) significantly more often than unrewarded children chose members of their three-person groups.

Thus, Lott and Lott concluded that the reward of success in the game had been conditioned to the other members of the group and this led to increased esteem for these members. Results of this study were corroborated by a subsequent study conducted by James and Lott (1964). While it is generally accepted that "we will like those who reward us and dislike those who punish us," we must note that this statement does not, to any great extent, increase predictability in the area of interpersonal attraction. We have no equation which will permit us to add up all the rewards a stimulus person will provide and balance them against the punishment which he will inflict and thus arrive at a total reward index which will tell us how much others will like him.

A multitude of things may be rewarding or punishing to any individual at a given time. In addition, it is often the case that "one man's meat is another man's poison"; individuals differ in what they find to be rewarding or punishing. Since it is so difficult to calculate what one individual at one point in time will find rewarding, researchers in interpersonal attraction have been led to consider which behaviours and events most people, most of the time, will find rewarding. By considering some of the specific behaviours that have been found to be rewarding or punishing to people in a number of different situations, that is behaviours which appear to be "trans-situational reinforcers, some predictive insight into interpersonal attraction has been gained.

3.3.4.2 Anxiety

There is much evidence that when individuals feel anxious, afraid, lonely or unsure of themselves, the sheer presence of others is particularly rewarding. Try an experiment: Come to class a few minutes early on a regular school day. You will probably find that few of your classmates approach you. Then, some time when an exam is scheduled in one of your classes, arrive a few minutes early. You may be surprised to see the number of classmates who approach you with friendly remarks or joking comments. There is a good psychological explanation for the observation that students seem friendlier on days when an exam is scheduled than on days when one is not.

Schachter (1959) tested the hypothesis that anxiety conditions will lead to an increased affiliative tendency. He recruited college women to participate in an experiment. When they arrived in the experimental rooms, the experimenter claimed

that his investigation was concerned with the effects of electric shock. The description of the shock experiment was designed to make some of the women highly anxious, while leaving the remainder of the women calm. Specifically, anxiety was produced in the following way:

In the high-anxiety condition, the subjects entered a room to find facing them a gentleman of serious mien, wearing hornrimmed glasses, dressed in a white laboratory coat, stethoscope dribbling out of his pocket, behind him an array of formidable electrical junk. After a few preliminaries, the experimenter began: "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Dr. Gregor Zilstein of the Medical School's Departments of Neurology and Psychiatry. I have asked you all to come today in order to serve as subjects in an experiment concerned with the effects of electrical shock".

To make matters worse, the series of electric shocks the girls were to receive were described as extremely painful. In the low-anxiety condition, both the setting and the description of the experiment were designed to avoid arousing anxiety in the subjects. There was no electrical apparatus in the experimental room. The experimenter explained that he was concerned with extremely mild electrical shocks that would not in any way be painful. The "shocks" were said to resemble more a tickle or a tingle than anything unpleasant.

Once some women had been made more anxious than others, Schachter could examine how anxiety affected their desire to be with other individuals. He assessed subjects' desire to affiliate in the following way. The experimenter claimed that there would be about a ten-minute delay while several pieces of equipment were secured. Subjects were told that during the ten-minute break they could wait in a private cubicle. These rooms were said to be comfortable and spacious; they all contained armchairs and there were books and magazines in each room. The experimenter also commented that some of them might want to wait with other girls. If they preferred to wait with others, they were asked to let the experimenter know. He then passed out a sheet upon which the subject could indicate whether she preferred to wait alone, or with others, or had no preference at all. Schachter found support for his hypothesis that anxious people will be especially inclined to seek the company of others. Sixty-three per cent of the subjects in the high-anxiety condition wanted to wait with other subjects. In the low-anxiety condition only thirty-three per cent of subjects wished to wait with others. Schachter had also asked girls to indicate how *strongly* they desired to be alone or with others. They could give answers varying from "I very much prefer being alone" (scored -2) through "I don't care very much" (0) to "I very much prefer being together with others" (scored +2). These data also support the notion that affiliative desire increases with anxiety.

The finding that the anticipation of stress produces an increased desire to affiliate has been replicated by Darley and Aronson (1966). While anxiety appears to increase an individual's need for affiliation, there is evidence that anxious individuals are selective about the others with whom they wish to affiliate. Anxious people apparently do not wish to be in the company of just any other person. Instead, anxious individuals seem to prefer to associate with people who are in a situation similar to their -own.

Schachter bases this conclusion on a study which is similar in many ways to the experiment just described. Two groups of college women were led to anticipate that they would soon be severely shocked. Then they were asked whether they

preferred to wait alone or with others. How the "others" were described varied. In one condition girls were given a choice between waiting alone or waiting with some girls who were said to be taking part in the same experiment. In the other condition, girls were told they could either wait alone or with girls who were waiting to talk to their professors and advisors. Sixty per cent of the girls who had a chance to visit with similar others chose to spend their time in the company of others. Not one girl who was given the option of waiting with girls who were waiting to talk with their professors chose to wait with others. Scores on the "Over-all Intensity Scale" revealed the same results. Girls did not seem to be especially anxious to associate with other girls unless these other girls were in a situation similar to their own. Schachter notes that this finding puts a limitation on the old saw "Misery loves company." Perhaps misery doesn't love just any kind of company - only miserable company. Once we accept the proposition that when individuals are anxious they have a special desire to affiliate with people in situations similar to their own, the question arises as to why this would be so. Schachter considers several possibilities:

1) *Escape.* When one is in a stressful situation, perhaps he anticipates that talking to others in the same situation may help him figure out a way to avoid the pain altogether.

2) *Cognitive clarity.* There is some evidence that individuals in ambiguous or novel situations will desire to talk with knowledgable others in order to gain some understanding of an otherwise incomprehensible event. Since receiving severe shock in an experimental setting is probably unique in the subject's experience, perhaps anxious subjects desire to associate with others in order to find out if the others know any more about what is going on than they do.

3) *Direct anxiety reduction.* People often comfort and reassure one another. Perhaps highly anxious subjects choose to wait with others in the hope that the others will bolster their courage.

4) *Indirect anxiety reduction.* An effective device for reducing anxiety is to "get one's mind off one's troubles." People may be seen as more diverting than books or magazines. Perhaps subjects choose to wait with others in order to prevent themselves from thinking about the shock which will be forthcoming.

5) *Self-evaluation.* People often use other people in order to evaluate the reasonableness of their own emotions and feelings. In this novel and emotion-producing situation, an individual probably is not quite sure exactly how she should be reacting. (Should she be angry at the experimenter? Slightly apprehensive about the shock? Terrified?) Perhaps high-anxiety subjects seek out others in an attempt to appropriately label and identify their own feelings.

3.3.4.3 Stress

There is some evidence that individuals who are placed in a stressful situation show less severe physiological disturbance if other individuals are present than if they are not. Bovard (1959) developed an intriguing and compelling theory concerning the effect of social stimuli on an individual's physiological response to stress.

A number of recent studies have suggested a reciprocal inhibitory effect between the posterior hypothalamus and the anterior hypothalamus and parasympathetic

centers . . . Stimulation of the latter region would appear to inhibit activity of the former . . .

The simplest hypothesis to account for the observed phenomena at the human and animal levels is, therefore, that the presence of another member of the same species stimulates activity of the anterior hypothalamus and thus, as a byproduct, inhibits activity of the posterior hypothalamus and its centers mediating the neuroendocrine response to stress. Previous interaction with the other person or animal, as the case may be, could be assumed to accentuate this effect.

The evidence that the presence of others may help eliminate an individual's discomfort when he is experiencing stress, provides an additional reason why individuals might learn to affiliate with others in stressful circumstances.

3.3.4.4 Social Isolation

There is evidence that even when not under stressful conditions, people prefer a fair amount of contact with others to being alone for any length of time. The strength of the desire for social intercourse with others was dramatically demonstrated by the results of a social reform experiment conducted in the early 19th century. At this time one of the great prison architects was John Haviland. As the result of the Quakers' religious beliefs and the upsurge of "humanitarianism," an attempt was made in 1821 to reform the prison system. Haviland was commissioned to build a "perfect" and "humanitarian" prison. The Quaker reformers noticed that mingling among prison inmates produced strong friendships among the inmates which caused them to continue their friendships after being released. Such friendships among ex-criminals tended to lead ex-criminals back into a life of crime. In the humanitarian reformation, it was decided to prevent contact among the prisoners. It was thought that total social isolation would prevent harmful corruption, protect the criminal's good resolutions, and give him ample opportunity to ponder on his mistakes and make his peace with God. Haviland's architectural design, which provided for solitary confinement day and night, was extremely popular with prison commissioners and a great many prisons imitated this style. The wardens, however, soon found that great ingenuity had to be adopted to prevent prisoners from talking. For example, new ventilation systems had to be designed, for prisoners soon found that the regular systems could be utilised for purposes of communication. Ultimately the policy of social isolation was found to produce undesirable results. The fact that many inmates became physically and mentally ill as a result of their solitary confinement and their lack of work eventually forced a change of policy. Current psychological knowledge would have enabled us to foresee this outcome. By early childhood a person has usually developed a need for the company of people. Complete social isolation for any prolonged period of time is known to be a painful experience. "Cabin fever" is a familiar expression which epitomizes the discomfort that even brief social isolation brings. Schachter points out that the autobiographical reports of religious hermits, prisoners of war, make it clear that isolation is devastating.

He notes that three trends have been found to characterise the experience of individuals enduring absolute social deprivation.

1) The reported pain of the isolation experience seems typically to bear a nonmonotonic relationship to time. Pain increases to a maximum in many cases and then decreases sharply. This decrease in pain is frequently marked by onset of the state of apathy, sometimes so severe as to resemble a schizophrenic state

of withdrawal and detachment.

2) There seems to be a stronger tendency for those in isolation to think, dream, and occasionally to hallucinate about people.

3) Those isolates who are able to keep themselves occupied with distracting activities appear to suffer less and to be less prone to develop apathy.

The data support the conclusion that complete social isolation is more unpleasant than normal human contact. It is evident that others provide some reward by their sheer physical presence, they stave off loneliness.

3.3.4.5 Self Esteem

What effect does an individual's self-esteem have on his reaction to accepting or rejecting others? Clinicians seem to agree that a high self-esteem person is more receptive to another's love than is an individual with lower self-esteem. For example, Rogers (1951) says that the person who accepts himself will have better interpersonal relations with others. Adler (1926) adds that those who themselves feel inferior depreciate others. Horney (1939) views love as a capacity, she sees love of self and love of others as positively related. Fromm (1939), too, agrees with this notion. Studies supporting a positive relationship between self-esteem and liking or acceptance for others are reported in Omwake (1954). These studies support the contention that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and liking.

A different prediction was made by Dittes (1959). He hypothesised that approval from other people would be especially rewarding to individuals low in self-esteem. He argued that:

A person's attraction towards membership in a group, like motivational attraction toward any object, may be considered a function of two interacting determinants: (a) the extent to which his particular needs are satisfied by the group, and (b) the strength of his needs.

Dittes assumed that the lower the level of one's own self-esteem, the greater would be his need for such supports to self-esteem as are provided by acceptance in a group. From this assumption, Dittes' predictions can be clearly derived: (1) When another person is accepting, he satisfies a greater need in a low self-esteem person than in a high self-esteem person. Thus, acceptance should produce a greater increase in attraction the lower the self-esteem of the recipient. (2) When the other person is rejecting, he frustrates a greater need in the low self-esteem person than in the high self-esteem person. Thus rejection should decrease the other's attractiveness more, the lower the self-esteem of the recipient.

An experimental study provided support for Dittes' proposal. Subjects were college freshmen, who met in small groups of five or six members for a two-hour discussion task session. An attempt was made to make the group very attractive. During the first hour of discussion, the groups' conversation was interrupted three times to allow subjects to rate the desirability of having each of the other members in the group. These ratings were requested by the experimenter as though they were for his own interest. At an intermission, the subject's interest in these ratings was aroused and he was allowed to see privately what he believed to be the ratings of desirability made of him by other members of the group. Actually, the

distributed ratings were fictitious, and had been prepared in advance to lead some subjects (those in the Satisfying condition) to believe that they were highly accepted by the group, and to lead others (those in the Frustrating condition) to believe that the group rejected them. After some additional tasks had been performed, the subject's own attraction to the group was assessed. Individuals were asked if the group met again, how much they would like to continue working with it, how much they enjoyed participating in the experiment, and how disappointed would they be if not invited back to participate. Scores on these questions were summed to form an index of the subject's attraction to the group.

Dittes measured self-esteem in three ways: (1) Before the experimental session, subjects completed a self-esteem questionnaire. (2) At the end of the session, they were asked about their general sense of adequacy among groups of peers. (Since the acceptance manipulation would be expected to affect answers to this question, subjects' scores were computed separately in each experimental condition.) (3) Subjects were rated by the other individuals in the group. The ratings they received were considered to be indicative of their own self-esteem.The extent to which the subject believed he had been accepted by the group had a much greater effect on whether or not he reciprocated the group's liking when his self-esteem was low than when it was high.

3.4 LET US SUM UP

Both personal characteristics and environment play a role in interpersonal attraction. A major determinant of attraction is propinquity, or physical proximity. People who come into contact regularly and have no prior negative feelings about each other generally become attracted to each other as their degree of mutual familiarity and comfort level increases. The situation in which people first meet also determines how they will feel about each other. One is more likely to feel friendly toward a person first encountered in pleasant, comfortable circumstances. People are generally drawn to each other when they perceive similarities with each other. The more attitudes and opinions two people share, the greater the probability that they will like each other. It has also been shown that disagreement on important issues decreases attraction. One of the most important shared attitudes is that liking and disliking the same people creates an especially strong bond between two individuals. The connection between interpersonal attraction and similar attitudes is complex because once two people become friends, they begin to influence each other's attitudes. In conclusion, people tend to be attracted to individuals who are physically attractive, physically accessible and socially available; and similar in terms of purposes, backgrounds, beliefs, and needs. However, interpersonal attraction is not the only factor that affects the building of a strong and health relationship. A good relationship requires communication and the ability to adapt to one another.

3.5 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Define the term interpersonal attraction and discuss its significance in our life.

2) Describe the salient factors that contribute in the development of interpersonal attraction

3) Why do people attracted towards others as they do, critically evaluate.

3.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

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