

## Module 10: Social Psychology

### Topic 3 Content: Attraction

#### Introduction



Click the **NEXT** button to learn how proximity, physical attractiveness, and similarity influence attraction.

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#### Proximity

PROXIMITY	shared interests	spend more time and form connections
	mere-exposure effect	applies to many stimuli

Physical proximity is one of the best predictors of friendships and other relationships. This is because you have to be around someone, and know he or she exists, in order to discover whether you have shared interests. In fact, the more time you spend with someone, the more likely you are to develop a connection. This is called the **mere-exposure effect**. Interestingly, the mere-exposure effect applies to all kinds of stimuli, not just people. For example, a new song on the radio may seem annoying to you at first, but after hearing it a few times, you could find yourself humming along, or even enjoying it.

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#### Proximity and Evolution



The mere-exposure effect may be an evolutionary strategy. When humans were hunter-gatherers, they identified unfamiliar groups as dangerous competition. Within the last several thousand years, which biologically speaking is recent, humans have shifted to living in settled groups and cities. The recent development of the Internet may be changing the patterns of human interactions just as profoundly as the shift away from hunter-gatherer bands. The Internet enables people around the world to connect in a way never before possible. This is especially evident through online dating.

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#### Proximity and Online Dating

<b>PROXIMITY &amp; ONLINE DATING</b>	extension of potentially proximate partners	used by millions
	longer relationships	question remains about happiness level

As online dating platforms become more common, the ability to extend the number of potentially proximate partners has increased dramatically. Now that millions of people have used online dating, the question becomes whether or not the attraction enabled by the Internet will result in more lasting partnerships. In a study done by McKenna (2002), the results were mixed. While online relationships were found to last two or more years longer than those formed in face-to-face settings, this may not necessarily lead to greater happiness.

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#### Physical Attractiveness

<b>PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS</b>	plays a role in perceptions	influences initial impressions
	more attractive leads to positive judgments	workplace benefits

Social psychologists have found that physical attractiveness plays a large role in how people perceive each other. Research has discovered that it influences initial impressions when dating for men and women. In addition, attractive people are judged by others as happier, healthier, and more successful than unattractive people. Also, studies done in the workplace have shown that employers deem physically attractive people more favorably, which often leads to higher incomes.

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#### Limits to Physical Attractiveness

LIMITS	little correlation to happiness and self-esteem	suspicious about praise
	desire to improve physical appearance	a lot of money on beauty supplies

Contrary to popular belief, studies have found little correlation between physical attractiveness and happiness or self-esteem. In addition, physically attractive people often feel suspicious that praise for their work may be due to their appearance rather than their skill or effort. Even with such limitations, people go to great lengths to improve their physical appearance. According to the American Society for Aesthetic and Plastic Surgery, Americans spend more money on beauty supplies than the combined amount they spend on education and social services.

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#### Standards of Beauty

<b>STANDARDS OF BEAUTY</b>	continually changing	gauged using historical artwork
	trending with plump, pale, flapper, curvy, and thin	facial hair for men

Throughout history, standards of beauty have continually changed. For example, artwork from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe shows feminine beauty as plump and pale figures. In the 1920s, beauty was depicted in the “flapper,” and in the 1950s with curvy women like Marilyn Monroe. Standards shifted in the 1960s to women who were dangerously thin, but may now be trending in an opposite direction. Beauty for men is often defined by beards, mustaches, or other facial hair.

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#### Cultural Staples of Beauty

CULTURAL STAPLES	tatoos	foot binding
	exaggeration of features for health, wealth, and status	warmth and kindness

Beauty varies from culture to culture. For example, tatoos have become commonplace in the United States, but two hundred years ago, were only common in Polynesia. In China, foot binding has led many women to disfigure their feet to create what they believe is a delicate, small shape.

Across cultures, people tend to exaggerate desirable features, which allow them to be viewed for health, wealth, and status. Furthermore, across time and place, an “hourglass” figure for women is considered beautiful, masculine features for men, and symmetrical faces for both sexes. People also feel greatly attracted to those they think like them, which means warmth and kindness also influence attraction.