What is love anyway?

- What do we love?
  - Romantic partners, parents, children, friends, pets, chocolate, coffee, a day in nature, a favorite TV show, really good food, a favorite outfit
- Is the feeling the same for all of these?

Love is not a unified experience

- Varies from target to target significantly
- Fehr & Russell (1991) list as many types of love that you can think of than, which example is the 'best' example of love, then, rate each type on a number of characteristics
  - 'is a giving process'
  - 'has to be worked at'
  - 'is painful if not reciprocated'

- Conclusions
  - Prototypical love occurs in close relationships
  - Prototypical love involves commitment
  - Prototypical love involves accepting faults
  - When we say we love chocolate — we don’t really mean LOVE

Love as an emotion?...

- A comparison: anger/ fear & love
- Notice any differences in these states
  - Love might be viewed more as an attitude
    - Blend of beliefs, feelings, behaviors
    - Long-lasting rather than brief
Affectional Bonds: John Bowlby

- John Bowlby
  Developmental Psychologist
  Interested in Early Attachment

- Relationship & Attachment
  had evolutionary basis

- Universal behaviors promote
  - Parent/child attachment (dependent love)
  - Caregiving (nurturant love)
  - Sexual desire (romantic love)

Attachment/ Dependent love

- Long lasting emotional bond between child and caregivers
  - Desire to be in close proximity
  - Comfort in the company of caregivers
  - Distress when separated

- Facilitated with 'attachment' behaviors
- Facilitated by interactional synchronicity

- Amae – Japanese word for pleasurable dependence on another
  - Positive emotional state for children – in all cultures
  - Considered an ideal even in adult relationships – in Japanese but not western culture

Caregiving/ Nurturant love

- Motivates parents to care for their children
  also can be activated by others: young/ helpless/ needy/ distressed

- Sympathy/ Compassion/ Nurturant Love
  emotions that activate caregiving

- Eisenberg study, 1989
  college students/elementary students
  watched sad video (single mom in car accident)
  how many hours would you help?

  Those offering to help more – heart rates drop
  more sadness in their facial expression
  more concern in body language

Sympathy

- Is it an emotion?
  Seems to have a universal profile: lower HR, facial display of concern

- Recent research suggests it may be well-regulated sadness
  - Requires effortful control to convert sadness to care
  - Individuals who can’t control sadness are less likely to help
**Sexual Love**

- Sexual interest between good reproductive partners
  
  (What do you think of this definition)

- Predictors of sexual attraction
  - Health
  - Waist hip ratio of .70 – for women (not weight)
  - Face similar to others in your culture (averages)
  - Females: large eyes, small nose
  - Males: large eyes, small nose plus square jaw
  - Happy/ kind/ intelligent/ sense of humor
  - When we like someone, we find them more attractive

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**Flirting**

- **Women:**
  - Darting glance
  - Holding a gaze
  - Tossing head/ flipping hair
  - Tilted heads
  - Caressing/ fiddling with nearby objects
  - Licking lips
  - Flirting paces the 'courtship'

- **Men:**
  - Fewer ‘flirting’ behaviors
  - Simply approach when interested
  - Men misinterpret female interest frequently

- During interaction
  - Match non-verbal cues
  - Match language – use similar phrases

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**Oxytocin**

- The biology of love hormone: Oxytocin

- **Attachment love & Nurturant Love**
  - Skin to skin touch releases oxytocin
  - Facilitates nurturant love & attachment – both

- **Sexual Love**
  - In animals, long term pair bonds more likely (gerbils and meadow voles)
  - In humans, same is true
    - Men with more receptors have closer relationships with their mates
    - In conflictual discussions – more positive behavior when given oxytocin

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**Endogenous Opiates**

- Natural endorphins
  - Sudden decrease when separated from loved ones

- Body’s natural painkiller
  - Perhaps why important social losses feel like physical pain
  - MRI studies of physical/social pain same brain areas active (cingulate gyrus)

- Endogenous opiates explain the pleasure of attachment also
  - Having more efficient opiate receptors leads to stronger bonds
  - Mothers release endorphins when viewing photos of their own babies
Empathy

- Emotional empathy: feeling what another feels by matching physiology and display
  - Mirror neurons activity may account for higher skill
  - One study: more mirror neuron activity looking at emotion faces

- Empathetic accuracy: figuring out what another feels using logic and social cues
  - In one study of strangers interacting, empathetic accuracy was highest with
    Partners talk about themselves/ with higher GPA/ people who smile a lot

- Are these skills good for relationships?

Marriage

- Is love necessary for marriage?

- Study of 166 cultures, 89% of them focus on romantic love as important

- Some cultures base marriage on
  - Economic considerations
  - Status considerations
  - Family connections
  - Place no importance on romantic love
  - Are these marriages successful?
    - Parent-arranged marriages in India are happier than love-based marriages in America
    - Reverse is true in China

Stages of Romantic Love

- Often starts with Passionate Love
  - Frequent thoughts/ intense desire to be together/ excitement by attention
  - Idealize the partner/ ignore faults/ self expansion (expanded interests)
  - Photos of the loved one stimulates the dopamine reward centers

- Progresses to Companionate love
  - Increased commitment/ sharing important aspects of their lives
  - Security/ mutual care/ other wishes the best for you
  - Acknowledgement of flaws/ shortcomings
  - Correlated with high satisfaction with life

Adult Attachment

- A: I am somewhat uncomfortable being too close to others; I find it
difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on
them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners
want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.

- B: I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable
depending on them and having them depend on me. I don’t often worry
about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.

- C: I find others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often
worry that my partner doesn’t really love me or want to stay with me. I
want to deep closeness with the other person, and this desire sometimes
scares people away.
Parallels to Infant Attachment

- Rely on partners for safe haven
- Use them as a secure base
- Seek comfort and safety
- Uncomfortable with separations
- Consider the schemas developed early in life

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Adult Attachment Research

- Secure (56%)
  - Longer relationships less likely to have divorced
  - Describe relationships as happy, friendly, trusting
  - Ups and downs in relationship are normal
  - Describe self as likable and others as well-intentioned
- Avoidant (25%)
  - Difficulty accepting a partner’s flaws
  - Don’t think love lasts forever
  - Feel able to be independent and get along by themselves
- Anxious (9%)
  - Obsessively preoccupied with partners
  - Extreme highs and lows in relationship
  - More likely to have love at first sight experiences
  - Intense feeling of oneness very important
  - Tend to feel misunderstood, underappreciated

If you’re curious…

- [http://www.web-research-design.net/cgi-bin/crq/crq.pl](http://www.web-research-design.net/cgi-bin/crq/crq.pl)

Successful Relationships

- Correlates of long marriage
  - Over 20 when married
  - Grew up in two parent homes
  - Dated a long time before marriage
  - Same level of education
  - Good income
  - Happy disposition
  - Live in small town/rural area
  - Have religious affiliation
  - Same age and same attitudes
  - Frequent sexual relations
  - Infrequent arguments