

# Aggression, Altruism, Attraction, and Altercation

(The Four “A”s of Social Behavior)



**Aggression**

*(hurtful behavior)*



**Altruism**

*(helpful behavior)*



**Attraction**

*(nature's guide to  
procreation)*



**Altercation**

*(conflict and  
peacemaking)*

# Aggression

- **Aggression**: overt, often harmful interaction with the **intention of inflicting damage**

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## – Genetic Influences

- Aggression is **hereditary**
- Associated with the **Y chromosome**

## – Neural influences

- The **amygdala** in the brain causes instant aggressive behavior
- **Brain injuries** can lead to neurological disorders that cause aggression

- *Chris Benoit story, NFL suicides*
- *a high percentage of death row inmates have had brain damage*



# Aggression

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## – Biochemical Influences

- Positive correlation between **testosterone** and aggression
  - *Bulls are known for their extremely high level of testosterone and are often castrated to become more docile*
  - *Testosterone actually increases in sports fans when their team is winning!*
- Alcohol can unleash aggressive responses to frustration



# Aggression

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## – Psychological Influences

- **Frustration-aggression principle**: aggression is the result of blocking a person's efforts to attain a goal
  - *“Malice in the Palace” basketball brawl (2004)*
- **Watching aggression** can cause aggression
  - *Average 10-year-old has watched 8000 murders on TV; average 18-year-old has spent more time watching TV than in school*
  - *Grand Theft Auto story*
- Aggression can be **rewarding**
  - *Classic bullying example*
- **Ostracism** can lead to aggression
  - *Columbine example*



# Altruism

- **Altruism**: **selfless concern** for others
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– True altruism brings helper no benefit

- What is altruism? Donating anonymously
- What isn't altruism? Volunteering for resume

– Why might people help?

- *Social Exchange Theory*: help if it will **benefit you** (cost/benefit analysis)
- *Social Responsibility Norm*: those able to take care of themselves have a social obligation to **help those who cannot**
- Norm of Reciprocity: treat others **as they treat us**
  - *Big Bang Theory Clip* (Gift Giving)



# Altruism

- **Altruism**: **selfless concern** for others
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- Why might people not help?

- **Bystander Effect**: individuals are less likely to offer help **if other bystanders are present**



- Sometimes referred to as *diffusion of responsibility*

- *Kitty Genovese murder (1964)*

- » Kitty arrived home from work at 3:15 in the morning and was attacked by a man in the parking lot, who stabbed her twice. 12-38 people (numbers vary) watched the event happen from their windows, but none helped. The attacker left, returned 10 minutes later, stabbed her several more times, and raped her. She died soon thereafter.

- *In psychological experiments, people are 70% likely to help if they alone witness an incident but only 40% likely to help if others are present.*

# Attraction

- **Attraction**: process leading to romantic relationships

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- **First Factor of Attraction: Proximity**

- Geographic nearness is the most powerful predictor for both romantic relationships and friendships
  - *This should make sense... unlikely to meet your soul mate if they're born on a different continent*
  - *Research shows you're most likely to marry someone in your own neighborhood!*

- **Mere Exposure Effect**: the more you are exposed to something, **the more you like it**

- *Alphabet activity*
- *Face in the mirror research*



# Attraction

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- **Second Factor of Attraction: Similarity**

- Research consistently shows that similarity attracts when it comes to both friendships and relationships
  - *This should make sense as common interests often bring us together*
- Opposites CAN attract initially, but typically only result in **short-term** relationships
  - *The initial excitement at something so different eventually gives way to disharmony*
- People even tend to date those of similar attractiveness!





# Attraction

- **Attraction**: process leading to romantic relationships

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## – Third Factor of Attraction: Physical Attractiveness

- “Good looks” is the number 1 most desirable trait in a partner for both men and women, but women lie about it
  - *When asked, women list it much lower among potential traits in a partner than men, but experiments on physical attraction show otherwise*
- Attractiveness is different across the globe
  - Examples: weight, piercings, feet binding, neck lengthening



# Attraction

- **Attraction**: process leading to romantic relationships

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- **Third Factor of Attraction: Physical Attractiveness**

- Attractive people date more, are more popular, receive favorable initial impressions, are more likely to get hired after a job interview, have more one-night stands, make more money, and are more likely to cheat in relationships
- Babies **gaze longer** at attractive faces
- **Halo Effect**: those who are physically attractive are assumed to **have other positive** personality qualities as well
  - *We perceive them to be healthier, happier, more trustworthy, kinder, more intelligent, more socially skilled, and have higher self-esteem*
    - » None of these are based in reality!



# Attraction

- **Attraction**: process leading to romantic relationships

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## – Third Factor of Attraction: Physical Attractiveness

- Male Standards of Beauty

- *Worldwide: **affluent**, older, **symmetrical** faces and body*
- *United States: **square jaws**, deep voice, tall, prominent limb rings, **v-shape torso** (.9 waist to hip ratio)*

» *Evolutionary reasons?*

- *Women prefer more masculine features when they are ovulating and less masculine features when they are menstruating*
- *Studies show women find men more attractive when they are in a relationship than when they're single*



# Attraction

- **Attraction**: process leading to romantic relationships

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## – Third Factor of Attraction: Physical Attractiveness

- Female Standards of Beauty

- *Worldwide: **youthful**, **symmetrical** faces and body*
- *United States: **small noses**, **full lips**, large eyes, prominent limbal rings, high cheekbones, **hourglass shape** (.7 waist to hip ratio), large breasts, long legs, long hair*

- » Evolutionary reasons?

- *American body shape preferences have changed over time*

- » 1920s: thin and straight
- » 1950s: buxom and curvy
- » Today: combination of both



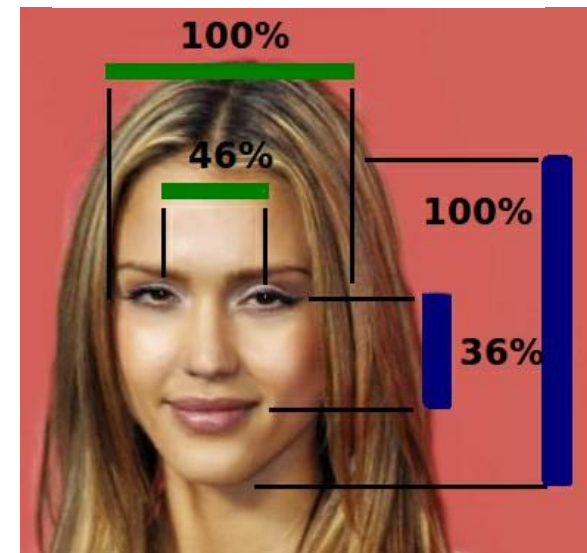
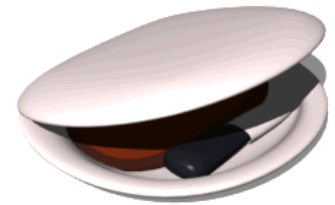
# Attraction

- **Attraction**: process leading to romantic relationships

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## – Third Factor of Attraction: Physical Attractiveness

- Americans spend more on beauty supplies than on education, but females are **more unhappy with their appearance** than ever before
  - *Dove Billboard Clip*
  - *Dove Onslaught Clip*
- Facial beauty has become a science and a formula has been created to determine the ideal face for men and women
  - *Jessica Alba scores highest for women*
  - *Denzel Washington/Brad Pitt for men*



# Altercation

- **Altercation:** a conflict of perceived **incompatibility** of actions, goals, or ideas

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- Most group altercations involve ingroups and outgroups
  - **Ingroup:** a social group you **identify with**
    - How would you describe your ingroup?
  - **Outgroup:** a social group you **don't** identify with
    - 70% of Japanese express an unfavorable view of China and vice versa
  - We are biased in how we view members of our ingroup/outgroup



# Altercation

- **Altercation:** a conflict of perceived **incompatibility** of actions, goals, or ideas

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– **Mirror-Image Perceptions:** **mutual self-serving views** held by both sides of an altercation



- During the Iraq war...

- “[Saddam Hussein is] gripped by an implacable hatred of the United States of America. [He] hates our friends, hates our values, hates democracy and freedom and individual liberty. [He] cares little for the lives of his own people.” - George W. Bush
- “[The United States] is an evil tyrant that, with Satan as its protector, lusts for oil and aggressively attacks those who defend what is right.” - Saddam Hussein



# Altercation

- **Altercation:** a conflict of perceived **incompatibility** of actions, goals, or ideas
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- **Superordinate Goals:** common goals that unite groups in a shared cause to **overcome differences**
  - “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.”
  - Robber’s Cave State Park (1954) example



- **Social Trap:** people acting to obtain short-term individual goals leads to a **loss for the group** as a whole in the long run
  - Tragedy of the Commons
  - Cold War nuclear missile buildup
  - [Prisoner’s Dilemma \(Bachelor Pad\)](#)



# Altercation

- **Altercation:** a conflict of perceived **incompatibility** of actions, goals, or ideas

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## – Social Trap Class Exercise

- Tear out a small piece of paper
- Write your name on it
- You will choose if you want 1 or 5 extra credit points. Write down a “1” or a “5” on your paper. There are no other values possible.
- I will collect all the pieces of paper and read off the values.
- If TWO people or less wrote a “5”, then everyone will get the extra credit they requested. If THREE people or more wrote a “5”, nobody will receive extra credit. **Confidentially will be maintained.**

