Dating and Mate Selection

- What is dating like today? Who pays? What are the terms used when you talk about dating?

Meeting Others

- Your book discusses traditional dating, to …
  - Personal Classified Advertisements
    - What would you include in your personal ad, if you were to write one?
    - How do personal ads differ according to gender?
      - Ads tend to seek companions with stereotypical gender characteristics.
        - Men - still valued more for providing
        - Women - valued more for beauty
        - Men - more likely to choose partner based on physical attractiveness (attractive, slender, petite, sexy)
        - Women - place more emphasis on men’s affluence & financial success (secure, affluent, professional, successful)
    - Men and women aware of these expectations, and tend to emphasize traits sought by the other party –
      - Women - say they are attractive.
      - Men - say they are successful.
    - Reflects conventional expectations for men to be providers and women to be objects of beauty.
Choosing Whom We Date: Choices and Constraints

Class exercise: “Most Important Qualities in a Mate”

- How large do you think your individual “range of eligibles” is?
- If you are planning on eventually marrying, do you think that the person in question will be “like” yourself or different?
- If you are already married, consider what demographic ingredients affected your choice: age, race, religion, social class (income, education, occupation, geographic location, your parents’ opinions).
- Our ideal in American society is that we fall in love and marry purely for romantic reasons (romantic ideal of fate), that we overlook the fact that selecting a marriage partner is influenced by social forces outside of ourselves.
- Do you agree with the saying “opposites attract?”
  - Sometimes opposites do attract.
    - In some cases differences between partners can contribute to marital stability, and one makes up for the lacking qualities of the other.
  - The two compliment each other, making up for the other’s weaknesses.
    - For example shy person attracted to loud, outgoing person.
  - In many cases though, the traits that seem attractive at first may become annoying with time.

Example: carefree attitude may seem attractive to someone who is more cautious/thinks things through more carefully.
- It may be fun to hang around this person for some time.
- But after they are married a while, and the routine/mundane sets in, the carefree attitudes may be seen to the other partner as immature and irresponsible.

Ex: It might be sweet & flattering when your partner calls/pages you all the time; after a while, it becomes irritating, suffocating, possessive.

What is HOMOGAMY?
- The tendency for people to date/marry those with similar social characteristics – age, race, religion, education, and even personal traits like body type and personality.

Filter Theory
- What is meant by filter theory?
  - Filter out eligible partners according to certain criteria.
o What social factors influence who marries whom?
  ➢ There is considerable predictability in who gets together with whom and how they go about doing it.

➢ Propinquity; nearness; geographic closeness
  ➢ To begin with, one generally must have close contact with another before falling in love with them.
    o People generally become involved with someone with whom they have regular contact, where they spend most of their time – neighborhood, school, job, church, friend’s house, etc.

➢ Most meet partners at high school, college, work, and local communities. 66% of couples met through friends, coworkers, family members; 32% met at parties, clubs (networks)

➢ When we choose a mate within our social networks rather than picking up a stranger, we begin the relationship with some sort of common ground.

➢ It is also easier to maintain a relationship when the two people live close to each other and see one another on a regular basis.

➢ Propinquity can contribute to marital stability because it is likely that both will have common acquaintances and activities which will help the couple to share more in each other’s lives.
  o This also increases the likelihood of a relationship built on the foundation of a common ground rather than on passion, which can easily fizzle out.

  ➢ Example: A relationship has a better chance of success if two people meet at a common social network, such as school, where they regularly see each other and begin with a shared interest.

  o If two people met once at a bar, they do not necessarily begin with a commonality, and are likely to begin dating based on superficial and shallow attributes, such as physical attraction.
    ➢ This is not a solid foundation on which to base a lasting relationship.
People end up meeting potential mates who are similar to themselves because social gathering places tend to be relatively homogeneous (have a specific crowd; surrounded by similar others) in terms of age, income, race, ethnicity, and sometimes religion, political views, and cultural tastes.

➢ What are some examples?
  o Examples: bars/clubs (cost, music), sports events (wrestling vs. tennis event), music concerts (country vs. heavy metal), work, school, church, the gym, private parties, etc.
Physical Attractiveness

- What was the very first thing that drew you to your partner?
- How important are looks to you?
- Attraction is important because it is usually the attribute which draws two people together in the first place.
- Although it is a large determinant of who one chooses to connect with, it is not a solid base on which to build a relationship.
- Example: Two people may begin a relationship based on attraction, which starts out with a greater amount of passion. Once the two spend more time together and get to know each other’s interests and values, they may find that physical attraction is all they have in common, and friendship is not possible.
- When we are attracted to someone we give people certain characteristics based on their appearance.

QUESTION: What is meant by the “halo effect?”

- The halo effect—we assume good-looking people have other desirable characteristics as well.
  - We think they are more sensitive kind, warm, strong, outgoing.
  - Biggest differences are found between unattractive (“horns effect”) and attractive or very attractive.
    - What the studies have shown about physical attraction:
      - In school, teachers judge cute children to be smarter and more popular.
      - Defendants who are attractive get lighter sentences
      - The same instructor gave a lecture dressed plain vs. attractive, the students found the attractive instructor more interesting
      - University of MI students were set up with blind dates for a dance. How likely were they to see the person again? It depends on how good-looking they were.
    - Beauty/looks won out over IQ, social skills, and good personalities.
- We tend to choose people who are about our equals in terms of looks.
  - If not, an exchange may have taken place—money for beauty.
- Looks are less important in ongoing relationships but
  - physical attraction plays an important role throughout marriage. Those who find their partners attractive are the most satisfied with the relationship and have better sex lives.
 Ethnicity and Race

Most marriages are between members of the same race.

- Even today, over 90% of all marriages take place within the same race.

- Nevertheless, the number of interracial and interethnic marriages has increased significantly since 1970, and attitudes toward intermarriage have become more favorable.

- Most common type of interracial marriages - Native American women (over 50% are interracial, almost even between genders).

- Less than 1% of all marriages are black-white marriages (1998, 64% black men-white women).

- Most likely to occur among highly educated people – Black men who have attended grad school are most likely to have interracial marriages, even further reducing pool of eligibles for black females.

- Cultural ideas of beauty based on white standards – images of thin Caucasian models predominate the media – changing somewhat

- Battle for gender domination – African American women are traditionally independent, not very subservient to men

- Over 40% Asian American women born in U.S. marry outside their ethnic group (mostly white men marrying nonwhite women). Why?

- American military men – Asian culture teaches women to be more passive/subservient to males, dominance for American men

- Rates higher for women because they have more independence if married to non-Asians.
Religion
- There used to be a strong tendency to marry within the same religious faith.
  - Today religious intermarriage rates are much higher.
  - Some researchers have found that religious intermarriages are less stable.
  - Why??
- Less social connections/gathering, with fewer social and religious sanctions.
  - Participation in organized religious life may affirm the couple’s relationship. They have a social network; more communal; more social support.
- Divorce may violate religious values.
- If religion plays a large part in one’s life and he/she shares his/her life with someone who does not hold the same beliefs, disagreements about something one partner greatly values and bases his/her life upon will create friction.
  - Especially when children are involved and there is a decision of how to raise them and the values that are to be enforced.

Age
- Women marry men who are 2-3 yrs older. If big age gap, problems about having children, even generation gap might exist.

Social Class
- People of common social backgrounds usually enjoy shared interests, activities, and acquaintances.
  - This commonality aids in the compatibility of two individuals because they are more likely to understand each other and work smoothly together.
- Our communities are organized by social class: schools, churches, recreational activities (bowling vs polo) work—tend to hang out with those who have a similar job to you.
- What is HYPERGAMY? Women marrying into higher social classes; “marrying up.”
- When there is a difference in social class/education level of spouses, the difference tends to be predictable with regard to gender. Women have tended to use marriage to improve their overall social standing.
- Increasing numbers of educated women make more money than their dating partners and spouses. If women continue to “marry up,” then high-status women will be at a disadvantage in the marriage market.
- Pool of eligibles shrinks. Woman with master’s degree has a very small pool of eligibles.
- **Values**
  - If the partners’ interests, values, and personalities differ to a great degree, it is difficult for the two to build a life together.
  
  - Values, especially religious values become important in a relationship, especially after the birth of a first child.
Why We Choose to Date Each Other: Mate-Selection Theories

- How does the exchange theory approach and analyze love?

- Relationships work best when people feel they are getting a fair exchange.
  - May include attractiveness, social status, personality traits, and admiration of other people around them.

- According to the equity theory (an extension of social exchange theory), when will both members of a couple experience satisfaction with the relationship?
  - When they each perceive a fair exchange for what they offer. People are most happy when they get what they feel they deserve in a relationship.
    - We don’t want inequality on either part.
  - People in an inequitable relationship become distressed, and will try to eliminate distress by restoring equity.

- A healthy relationship involves an equal partnership where the partners contribute fairly.
  - Marital stability is dependent on the giving and taking of two people.
    - One partner may make up for the weaknesses of the other, and vice versa.
    - A relationship is likely to fail if it is one-sided, and only one partner is making an effort.
- Harmful Dating Relationships
  - This is where we talk about major problems in dating – control and manipulation, which may lead to violence.
  - If things in a relationship are not equal in a relationship, there may be power issues.

- AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS
  - We talked about jealousy in chapter 5 – sometimes a partner feels insecure, feels he/she lacks power in the relationship, jealousy and possessiveness may get out of hand…
ACQUAINTANCE AND DATE RAPE

Often acquaintance and especially date rape is taken less seriously than stranger rape.

By far the most common type of rape – The National Crime Victimization Survey indicates that 92% of rapes are committed by known assailants. About half of all rapes and sexual assaults against women are committed by friends and acquaintances, and about one-fourth are committed by intimate partners.

Victims often have to defend themselves, especially if she was raped by a boyfriend. “They just had a fight, and she’s trying to get back at him.”

Culture and society have been blamed for high rates of date and acquaintance rapes.

Myths that women provoke rape or somehow “ask for it” are still widespread, despite evidence to the contrary.

A higher acceptance of rape myths has been found to correlate with sexual aggressiveness, traditional attitudes about gender roles, and low educational and occupational achievement.

Can you think of some rape myths??

1. A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex.

2. Any female can get raped.

3. One reason that women falsely report a rape is that they have a need to call attention to themselves.

4. Any healthy woman can successfully resist a rapist if she really wants to.

5. When women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are just asking for trouble.

6. In the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation.

7. If a woman engages in necking or petting and she lets things get out of hand, it is her own fault if her partner forces sex on her.

8. Women who get raped while hitchhiking get what they deserve.

9. A woman who is stuck up and thinks she is too good to talk to guys on the street deserves to be taught a lesson.

10. Many women have an unconscious wish to be raped and may then unconsciously set up a situation in which they are likely to be attacked.

11. If a woman gets drunk at a party and has intercourse with a man she’s just met there, she should be considered “fair game” to other males at the party who want to have sex with her too, whether she wants to or not.
GENDER ROLE EXPECTATIONS

What are some traditional sexual scripts that may contribute to rape?

Traditional sexual scripts - tell us what is acceptable and unacceptable sexual activity.
  i. Men - supposed to be assertive, confident, and aggressive, take initiative in sexual encounters.
  ii. Women – expected to be accommodating and receptive, give pleasure.

SEX SCRIPTS

Your text says our traditional dating system often sets up conditions where the woman is at risk – she is dependent on him if he picks her up, pays for the date – may expect sex/she may feel she owes sex.

Do you think this is so?
  i. Is the traditional dating system changing? Are men and women “going dutch” when dating today?

MEDIA

- Miscommunication is often blamed for the occurrence of rapes.
  o There may be an assumption that women enjoy rough sex, and they really want it when they say no; they just don’t want to admit it (because sex isn’t for women).

  o Look at the media. Many movies & music videos show forceful sex scenes as exciting and enjoyable – Basic Instinct, Gone With the Wind. They glamorize forceful sex.

  o And misogynistic comedians (contempt for women/ women’s rights) – objectify women, depicted in a degrading manner - encourage their submissiveness.

SOCIALIZATION

- Men’s and women’s different socialization may result in different interpretations of the same behaviors.
  - Some behaviors that women interpret as friendly or showing some interest in a man, men may interpret as an invitation to sex.

  o Can you think of some examples?
    - (Flirtatious behavior, a woman visiting a man’s apartment, accepting a ride home from a party, using drugs/alcohol, wearing revealing clothing, having a reputation of being “sexually free.”)
**PEER PRESSURE/SECRECY**
- Females—pressure to date – more popular
- Males—pressure to have many sex partners
- Most females remain silent – ashamed; want to be independent.
- Role of **male peer support** – masculinity is narrowly and traditionally defined, high degree of group secrecy/loyalty, women are sexually objectified. (fraternities, athletes…)
- Reflecting a continuing **sexual double standard**, it is men who more often initiate sex and women who more often refuse.
  - Is this because men have a stronger sex drive than women, or is it because men have been socialized into the job of initiating sex, and women have been given the prerogative to accept or reject?
- We do know that most people see sexual initiation as “**men’s work**” and refusal as “**women’s work.**”
  - In fact, the norm against women initiating sex is so strong that women who step out of line and initiate sex “too much” often receive a hostile reaction.
  - Is this changing? Is it more acceptable for women to initiate sex?
- Do men and women define rape/attempted rape differently?
  - (Ex: There are still many people who believe women don’t “mean it” when they say no to sex.)

**USE OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS**
- Alcohol and drug use often accompanies date rape – **reduces inhibitions**.
  - Rohypnol/”roofies” – “date rape drug”
  - GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate)-“rape drug”
  - Is it rape if he plans to get her drunk, and she does not resist when having sex??