

recovery. During these interactions, infants learn communicative tools and important information about others' emotional states. Both infants and caregivers are active agents in these interactions, mutually acting to shape the emotions and behavior of the other. These face-to-face interactions wane as infants become more mobile and require communication across larger spaces regarding more complex situations. Infants use pointing to create joint attention, and they combine pointing and other gestures to create shared intentionality with others around interesting and desired objects and events. In addition, infants use others' emotional expressions to guide their behavior in ambiguous situations, evidencing an understanding that others have important information to convey in their assessments of such a complex world. During the second year of life, infants develop a more sophisticated understanding of others' goals and intentions, allowing for action-based communication around the intentions of others. These provide the avenue for more complex imitation and helping behavior, shared pretense, and the development of language.

Infants are thus capable of much more than we once thought in their ability to understand the emotions and information provided by their caregivers through both direct and indirect communicative acts. These communications provide the foundation for psychological growth as infants approach the development of linguistic communication and develop an even more complex understanding of others.

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See also Mother–Child Relationships in Early Childhood; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenting

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## INFATUATION

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Infatuation is a state characterized by intense feelings of passion toward a specific individual. The term *infatuation* typically refers to the early stages of romantic love, before the infatuated individual has had a chance to get to know or develop an intimate relationship with the love object. Colloquially, infatuation is frequently associated with youth and suggests an irrational, capricious approach to love. Although some consider infatuation to be a special, perhaps early or intense form of passionate love, researchers often use the term *infatuation* interchangeably with *passion*, *passionate love*, *limerence*, or being *in love*. Therefore, this entry reviews research and theory on infatuation and these associated terms.

#### Features of Infatuation

When individuals are infatuated with a potential or current romantic partner, they frequently exhibit any or all of an assortment of features. For one, infatuation is often characterized by persistent, intrusive thoughts about the love object. These thoughts may take on a fantasy-like quality, or, alternatively, they can be anxious ruminations that are distracting and distressing to the infatuated

individual. Frequently, the character of these intrusive thoughts will ebb and flow, focusing at one moment on the possibility that one's feelings are reciprocated and the next moment on the possibility that they are not. This volatility contributes to the emotional turbulence experienced by infatuated individuals, who tend toward euphoria when the love object demonstrates romantic interest in them and toward despair when the love object is insufficiently responsive. Infatuated individuals also commonly idealize the love object, worshipping his or her positive qualities while only indifferently acknowledging his or her negative qualities. Finally, infatuated individuals direct their passions toward only one potential partner. Only rarely do individuals experience strong infatuation toward multiple individuals, and, consequently, they yearn for their love object to reciprocate this exclusive desire. Although not all of these features are necessarily present in every infatuation, the more acute the infatuation, the more likely it is that these features will be present and pronounced.

Another important component of infatuation is sexual desire. In most cases, individuals become infatuated with potential romantic partners who are of the sex that they prefer romantically, and sexual fantasies are often present in infatuated individuals' persistent thoughts about their love object. (Exceptions to these rules are also important in understanding the nature of infatuation and are reviewed later.) In one study, participants named people with whom they were currently "in love" and reported that, in 87 percent of the cases, they also experienced sexual desire for these same individuals. However, sexual contact is rarely the central stated goal of an infatuation. Instead, infatuated individuals long for moments of emotional union with the love object; sexual encounters do not necessarily lead to emotional unions, and emotional connections can frequently be achieved through nonsexual means. Also, given that people can feel sexual desire (but not infatuation) for a number of different individuals at the same time, sexual desire alone is insufficient to generate or sustain an infatuation.

Infatuation is more likely to emerge during the early stages of a romantic or potentially romantic relationship. But infatuation is unlikely to last forever: Such intense passion has a tendency to fade

over time in most romantic relationships. There are several reasons for this decline. For one, relationships are initially exciting because people's self-concepts expand to incorporate their romantic partners, but this excitement fades once the self-expansion process runs to completion. In addition, it takes a certain measure of anxiety and uncertainty to maintain the infatuated state, and as time passes, people typically accrue enough evidence to confirm or refute the possibility that a love object desires the self in return. Tumultuous, off-again/on-again relationships that perpetuate confusion about romantic partners' feelings and intentions probably have the best likelihood of sustaining infatuation. (Of course, such relationships probably do a poor job of sustaining interpersonal trust and security!)

### Conceptual Frameworks

Many social-psychological theories have explored infatuation and related constructs. One relevant and well-known theory of love is Sternberg's triangular theory. Sternberg proposes that love has three components: passion, intimacy, and decision/commitment. The passion component refers to the experience of arousal and sexual desire; the intimacy component refers to feelings that promote closeness, bonding, and connectedness; and the decision/commitment component refers to the decision to love a particular individual and the commitment to maintain that love. Different types of love emerge from different mixtures of any or all of these components, and each component may be present in varying degrees. Sternberg suggests that infatuation is a kind of love that exists when only the passion component is present. That is, individuals are infatuated when they experience sexual desire and arousal for a particular romantic interest, but they do not feel bonded to and have not yet committed to the romantic interest. That infatuation is derived mainly from passion is consistent with the characterization of infatuation as an immature kind of love that emerges early in a relationship, before any real intimacy or commitment has been achieved.

In contrast to Sternberg's model, other theoretical perspectives suggest that the complete experience of infatuation or passion does not emerge if sexual desire is the only active motivation.

Attachment theorists posit that the typical experience of passionate love results from the activation of both the sexual system and the attachment system. Although sexual desire frequently accompanies infatuation, as noted earlier, passion can emerge without sexual desire. For example, prepubescent children experience infatuations that evidence all of the adult features of passionate love, minus the sexual component. Attachment theorists propose that many features that are characteristic of infatuation, such as the desire for emotional closeness and concerns about reciprocation, stem from the activation of the attachment system. Just as infants wish to be physically and emotionally close to an attachment figure, infatuated romantic partners want to be physically and emotionally close to each other. Some recent empirical findings have suggested that the attachment system is an integral part of the passionate experience; manipulations designed to activate the attachment system (by triggering the experience of attachment anxiety) with respect to a particular romantic interest have the effect of boosting participants' passionate love for that romantic interest. Given the centrality of pair bonding as a mating strategy among humans, it makes evolutionary sense that initial romantic attraction would emerge at the intersection of the sexual system, which governs the reproductive act, and the attachment system, which bonds reproductive partners together for childrearing purposes.

Although attachment theory and the triangular theory have somewhat conflicting perspectives, there are explanations for the existence of infatuation that draw from both theories. In the early stages of romantic relationships, infatuation is pronounced, and romantic partners typically have not yet developed the intimacy and closeness that they later achieve as the relationship matures. At the same time, the *desire* to achieve a state of bondedness and intimacy may emerge early in a relationship. It is this desire for a bond with a particular partner that indicates the activation of the attachment system and is central to the experience of infatuation. If the sexual system (i.e., the passion component of the triangular theory) is activated without this desire for an emotional bond (i.e., desire for the intimacy component of the triangular theory), this will probably emerge as raw sexual attraction, not infatuation or passionate love per se.

Empirical and theoretical work that has explored the association between passion and intimacy also sheds light on the nature of infatuation. Some theorists have suggested that as romantic partners accumulate knowledge about one another, passion emerges as a result of such increases in intimacy. (In mathematical terms, passion is the first derivative of intimacy over time.) A wide array of research findings lends support to this hypothesis. For example, studies conducted by Arthur Aron and his colleagues have demonstrated that romantic partners experience an exhilarating expansion of the self as they become more intimate, and this self-expansion process generates greater feelings of romantic passion. As a second example, one study required opposite-sex strangers to stare into each other's eyes for 2 minutes—an intimacy-promoting activity. After the staring task, these strangers reported greater affection and passionate love for each other than did control participants who stared at each other's hands. Finally, research on individual differences has found that extraverts tend to disclose more (compared with introverts) about themselves and therefore quickly develop intimacy with potential romantic partners. Not surprisingly, then, extraverts also report greater passionate feelings on average. All of these findings support the idea that passion may emerge as intimacy increases.

Taken together, the theoretical perspectives reviewed earlier paint a coherent picture of the time course of infatuation. First, infatuation is most likely to emerge early in a romantic relationship, as intimacy is just beginning to increase. Soon thereafter, attachment theory predicts that infatuated individuals will start to desire more intimacy and want to feel bonded to the love object. In cases where both partners experience these feelings for each other, this will likely lead to a continued increase in intimacy, which in turn generates greater passion. As intimacy starts to reach an upper limit (once romantic partners have gotten to know one another extremely well), then passion is likely to decline.

### Role of Arousal

Some of the best empirical work on the experience of infatuation has demonstrated the importance of physiological arousal in stimulating passion.

Berscheid and Walster's two-factor theory of romantic love predicts that passion is generated or intensified when people (1) are aroused physiologically, and (2) believe that another person is the cause of this arousal. The classic "love on a bridge" study is the most vivid demonstration of this point. In this study, male participants crossed either a frightening, narrow bridge or a wide, stable bridge and were greeted by an attractive female experimenter on the other side. Men who had just crossed the scary bridge (compared with men who had crossed the stable bridge) were more likely to call the experimenter in the ensuing days. In other words, as predicted by the Excitation Transfer Theory, the men misattributed the source of their physiological arousal: They believed it was the attractive female experimenter who caused them to feel excited, and they experienced greater attraction to her as a result.

Other experimental research has revealed similar results. For example, participants who were anticipating a shock or who just finished exercising reported greater attraction to an attractive romantic target than did control participants. In fact, the valence of the arousal seems to matter little because both positively (e.g., comedy) and negatively (e.g., horror) arousing material can increase passion for an attractive other. In the course of everyday life, the arousal that one believes to be caused by a potential romantic partner typically really is caused by that partner, and thus the romantic attraction that follows is the result of an appropriate attribution. Nevertheless, these experimental misattribution studies were essential to demonstrate the causal role that arousal plays in the passionate experience.

In summary, infatuation is a common experience in the opening stages of potential romantic relationships, one that frequently proves both exciting and terrifying. Infatuation has an important role in the psychological study of attraction as its features, time course, and theoretical underpinnings reveal much about the nature of human mating.

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*See also* Arousal and Attraction; Attachment Theory; Attraction, Sexual; Excitation Transfer Theory; Falling in Love; Initiation of Relationships; Interpersonal Attraction; Intimacy; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Misattribution of Arousal; Self-Expansion Model

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## INFORMATION SEEKING

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Researchers generally agree that individuals have a large appetite for information. Not surprisingly, that appetite is often fed by information about others with whom they have close relationships. This entry begins with a summary of the breadth of relational contexts in which information is sought, discusses predictors of the information-seeking process in close relationships, addresses biases that guide the search for information, discusses consequences of the decision to seek information, and ends with a technological development that is changing the landscape of information seeking in close relationships.

### Contexts of Information Seeking in Close Relationships

Gaining knowledge about someone is a necessary component of initiating a relationship with him or