

The Laws of Attraction

February 20, 2015



A half-century ago, psychologists considered the study of love and attraction unworthy of study. But [Ellen S. Berscheid](#) helped make the science of love one of the most vibrant areas of inquiry in modern social science. Berscheid and her collaborator Elaine C. Hatfield helped pioneer an empirical approach to understanding different facets of romantic relationships, including physical attraction, relationship satisfaction, sexuality, and emotional intimacy. She has also studied the importance people place on physical attractiveness, not just when searching for romantic partners but also in other interactions. In one classic experiment, she demonstrated the preferential treatment that male subjects showered on women they perceived as sexually appealing. Most recently, Berscheid has examined the influence that physical and social environment has on relationship quality and satisfaction. In 2012, she received the APS William James Fellow Award for her contributions to the basic science of psychology.

[Watch Berscheid's Award Address](#) with her colleague, Elaine C. Hatfield, at the 24th APS Annual Convention.