

Managing Differences: Conflict and Aggression

Dr. Jody Davis, Fall 2011
Ch 8

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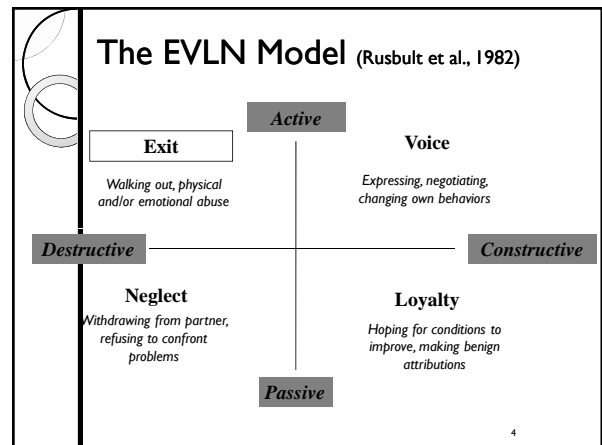
Interdependence Theory (Again)

- **Correspondence of Outcomes:** degree to which events are mutually beneficial or mutually aversive
 - Ex of high correspondence of outcomes: John and partner prefer to see the same movie OR John and partner prefer that John watches the action flick and partner watches the documentary

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- When there is low correspondence of outcomes, there is a **diagnostic situation**, an opportunity to learn about the partner
 - Relationship-specific motives (ex: com)
 - Individual-level disposition

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Accommodation (Yovetich & Rusbult)

- Tendency to react to partner's destructive act by inhibiting destructive impulses and reacting constructively
- When partner behaves badly, given matrix tendency is to...
 - Effective matrix tendency is to...
- Inhibiting negative impulse

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Q28, Is Fighting with My Partner a Bad Sign?

- Conflict
 - Arises from low correspondence of outcomes
 - Inevitable with increasing interdependence
 - Present in both distressed and non-distressed rel's
- When Conflict Happens
 - Weekdays (especially after stressful day)

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Gottman's Structural Model of Marital Interaction (Distressed Couples)

- Less positive behavior, more negative
 - 10x more likely to use neg tone of voice
 - More neg (e.g., contempt), more likely to divorce
 - Positive – see next slide
- Greater reciprocity (positive *and* negative)
- Longer cycles of reciprocal negative

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Johnson et al. (2005)

Negative communication skills hurts sat only when there is also low positive emotion

Negative Skills	Low positive emotion	High positive emotion
Low negative skills	-0.2	-0.25
High negative skills	-0.4	-0.2

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- Direct vs. Indirect Strategies – read in Bradbury & Karney, p. 336

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Making Meaning during Intimate Conflict

- **Reactivity hypothesis:** Unhappy couples tend to be vigilant for negative behaviors and reciprocate
- **Gottman et al.'s (1976) Talk Table**
 - Partner A reports intentions; Partner B reports impact – unhappy partners report neg impact of pos intentions
 -
- Noller (1981): Dissatisfied partners unable to infer meaning of communication from spouse (but can understand meaning of strangers!)

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Demand-Withdraw Pattern

- One person approaches with a problem while the other avoids issue/problem
- Balance of closeness dilemma
 - Failure to agree upon the balance between interdependence and independence
- Which partner wants a change affects which partner plays the demand or withdraw role
 - Possible power differences between men and women

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Will not be on test

Couple Type	Topic	Wife-Demand + Husband-Withdraw	Husband-Demand + Wife-Withdraw
Happy couples	Wife topic	12	10
	Husband topic	10	11
Unhappy couples	Wife topic	17	11
	Husband topic	14	15
Very unhappy couples	Wife topic	19	12
	Husband topic	15	16

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- Attachment Theory and Couple Conflict – read in Bradbury & Karney, p. 340-341
- Q20, What is Cheating, and What are its Consequences? – read in Lewandowski et al. (2011)

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Physical Aggression

- **Intimate Terrorism**
 - Goal of controlling and intimidating partner
 - Most commonly engaged in by males against females
 - Best predicted by personality, background
 - Those who engage in intimate terrorism in one rel likely in other rel's as well

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Q23, Why do some people stay in bad or abusive relationships?

- Rusbult et al. (1998) “abusive rel” study
 - Women in shelters for battered women
 - Those who returned to husbands
 - Lower alternatives (less education, less income, no drivers license)
 - Higher investments (longer rel, children)

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Common Couple Violence

- Characteristics of Common Couple Violence
 - Conflict interaction that gets out of hand and turns physical (pushing, grabbing)
 - Common (18-30 yr olds: 30% mild, 11% severe)
 - Males and females equally likely
 - 80% who are aggressive are likely to be agg 30 mos later too

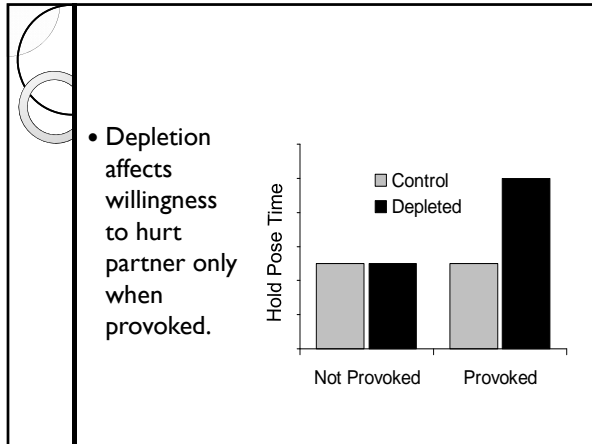
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- Explaining Common Couple Violence
 - **Sociocultural perspective** – read in Bradbury & Karney, p. 354
 - **Interpersonal perspectives** - more extreme lack of communication skills than merely unhappy couples
 - **Intra-individual perspectives** – modeling behavior from family of origin (e.g., level of hostility in family predicts aggression in adult rel)

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- Finkel et al. (In press) “Yoga Study”
 - Draw
 - Watch interview on TV
 - Assigned to depleting (ignore words on screen) or not-depleting task (just watch)
 - Provoked by partner (false feedback about creativity of drawing) or not
 - “Assigned” to director role – choose how long partner will hold painful yoga poses

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- Optional Readings from Lewandowski et al.
 - Q21 Why do people cheat in relationships?
 - Q22 Isn't a little jealousy a good thing?
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