

Beliefs and Values: Thinking about Intimate Relationships

Dr. Jody Davis, Fall 2011
Ch 9

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Q19, I Believe for a Relationship to Work, Partners Must be "Soul Mates."

- **Implicit theories:** Beliefs about whether things in life are stable vs. malleable (e.g., intelligence, weight).
 - Implications of stable view?
- **Destiny theory:** Potential partners meant for each other or not
 - "A successful relationship is mostly a matter of finding a compatible partner right from the start"
- **Growth theory:** Successful relationships cultivated over time
 - "It takes a lot of time and effort to cultivate a good relationship"

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- Those with destiny beliefs...
 - More likely to break up when faced with conflict
 - Less likely to be friends with ex-partner
- Growth beliefs...
 - More likely to try to resolve conflicts
 - More com
 - Less likely to have one-night stands

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- Satisfaction predicts rel longevity more for strong destiny theorists
- Destiny beliefs lead to:
 - Relationship-enhancing cognitions if Ps believe they are with the "right person" – so, stay together
 - Relationship-detracting cognitions if Ps believe they are with the "wrong person" – so, break-up
- Growth theorists less influenced

The graph shows that for high destiny theorists, higher initial satisfaction leads to significantly longer relationship longevity. For low destiny theorists, the relationship between initial satisfaction and longevity is much weaker.

Initial Satisfaction	High Destiny (Days)	Low Destiny (Days)
Low	~115	~85
High	~145	~125

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Q7, Does Love Last Forever?

- **Passionate love:** "State of intense longing for union with another" (Hatfield, 1988)
 - Infatuation
 - Intense preoccupation
 - Strong sexual longing
- **Companionate love:** "The affection we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply intertwined" (Hatfield, 1988)
 - Authentic bond
 - Sense of mutual commitment
 - Trust, caring, respect

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- Passionate love declines over time
 - fantasy, novelty, and arousal decline
- Companionate love more stable over time
- Companionate love in first two years of marriage negatively correlated with divorce (Huston)

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Communal vs. Exchange Relationships

(Clark & Mills, 1979, 1993)

- **Communal Relationships**
 - Benefits are given to the other when other has a need, or to show concern
 - Do not expect repayment
- **Exchange Relationships**
 - People provide benefits to others because
 - Previously received benefits from them
 - Expect benefits in return

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Group Activity

- Identify someone with whom you have a communal relationship. What makes the relationship “communal”?
- Identify someone with whom you have an exchange relationship. What makes the relationship “exchange”?

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- Is it uncomfortable when someone close to you takes an exchange approach?
 - Why would someone in a close rel adopt an exchange approach?
- What if you're in a communal relationship, but you're under-benefited?

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Locus of Control

- **Internal locus of control:** believe events are under one's control
- **External locus of control:** believe events are due to chance, other people, or something else other than themselves

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- Internal relationship LOC associated with perceived social support, willingness to seek help

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- Attachment - La Guardia et al. (2000), read in Bradbury & Karney, p. 71

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Standards

- Minimum required for satisfaction (CL)



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- Standards that often lead to problems in distressed couples (Baucom et al., 1996):

- Independence/boundaries
- Control vs. coordination
- Egalitarian or not
- Frequency of expressions of caring
- Degree of sacrifices

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Ideals

- What a person wishes for
- Ideals may be more universal than standards

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Beliefs and Values Affect How We Evaluate Our Relationships

- Fletcher & Kininmonth (1992) "sex satisfaction" study
 - Ps who believe good sex important vs. those who do not
 - If believe it's important, then it affects rel sat
- Think of other examples...

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Beliefs and Values Affect How We Interpret Relationship Events

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Q17, I Have High Expectations for my Relationship. Is that Bad?


- Social support for high expectations
- **Perceptual confirmation:** Those with higher expectations more likely to put positive spin on partner behavior

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- **Behavioral confirmation:** Those with higher expectations more likely to act positively
 - Increased motivation
 - Less likely to avoid a topic of conflict

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- **The Michelangelo phenomenon**
 - The partner's behavior causes one to grow toward one's ideal self
 - The sculpting metaphor
 - Close partners can "sculpt" one another, modifying one another's selves (for good or ill)




Michelangelo: "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free"

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- **Affirmation:** Partner behavior toward the self that is congruent with the self's ideal
- Longitudinal evidence
 - Partner affirmation predicts growth toward the self's ideal over time

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"Couldn't you at least try and read my mind?"

- **Big disclaimer!!** Positive expectations only good for relationships if they're reasonably likely to come true.

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- Newlywed study – Measured relationship expectations and communication skills after marriage (McNulty & Karney, 2004)
 - Assessed sat over 4 yrs
 - Least drop in sat
 - High expectations + good communication
 - Low expectations + poor communication (!)
- The benefits of low expectations

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Unrealistic Expectations (Edelson & Epstein, 1982)

The Relationship Belief Inventory measures five beliefs thought to be unrealistic and consequently dysfunctional for intimate relationships.

Instructions: The statements below describe ways in which a person might feel about a relationship with another person. Please mark the space next to each statement to indicate how strongly you believe that it is true or false for you.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Very False	False	Probably False	Probably True	True	Very True
Sub-scale I: Disagreement is destructive						
<i>I take it as a personal insult when my partner disagrees with an important idea of mine.</i>						
<i>I cannot tolerate it when my partner argues with me.</i>						
Sub-scale II: Mind-reading is expected						
<i>People who love each other know exactly what each other's thoughts are without a word ever being said.</i>						
<i>A partner should know what you are thinking or feeling without you having to tell.</i>						
Sub-scale III: Partners cannot change						
<i>Damage done early in a relationship probably cannot be reversed.</i>						
<i>A partner who hurts you badly once probably will hurt you again.</i>						
Sub-scale IV: Sexual perfectionism						
<i>If I cannot perform well sexually whenever my partner is in the mood, I would consider that I have a problem.</i>						
<i>A good sexual partner can get aroused for sex whenever necessary.</i>						
Sub-scale V: The sexes are different						
<i>Men and women probably will never understand the opposite sex very well.</i>						
<i>One of the major causes of marital problems is that men and women have different emotional needs.</i>						

- Bellavia & Murray (2003) “perceptual confirmation” study – read in Bradbury & Karney, p 380-381

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Beliefs and Values Affect How We Behave in Our Relationships

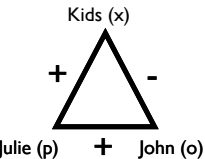
- Those who value communal rel's pay more attention to others' needs

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- Similarity
 - Is similarity simply a result of selecting similar others for close partners?

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Balance Theory



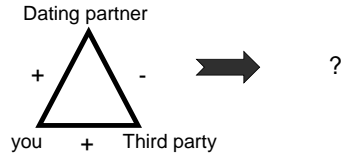
- If *p* likes *o*, *p* is comfortable when *p* and *o* agree about *x*.
- If *p* dislikes *o*, *p* is comfortable when *p* and *o* disagree about *x*.

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- Greater Tension:
 - Close rel
 - You or partner feels strongly
 - Relevant to rel
- Imbalance-induced Tension can be Reduced by:
 - Altering attraction
 - Avoiding an issue
 - Reducing importance of issue
 - Changing an attitude

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Group Activity: Third-party Forgiveness



?

Implications of Balance Theory

- It's more comfortable to agree than disagree with a close partner
- My enemy's enemy is my friend
- My friend's friend is my friend

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- Davis & Rusbult (2001)
 - Dating partners discussed issues about which they disagreed
 - IVs: Dyadic Adjustment, Centrality to self, Centrality to partner
 - **Attitude alignment:** amt Ps changed their attitudes to be more similar to partner

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Attitude Alignment

Greater alignment when issues were central (vs. peripheral) to the partner

Where do you see the greatest attitude alignment?

High Dyadic Adjustment

Category	Central to Self	Peripheral to Self
Peripheral to Partner	~2.5	~2.5
Central to Partner	4.0	5.2

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Attitude Alignment

- No effect for centrality of issue to partner
- Less overall alignment (vs. high dyadic adjustment)

Low Dyadic Adjustment

Category	Central to Self	Peripheral to Self
Peripheral to Partner	2.0	3.0
Central to Partner	3.0	3.0

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- Media Influences – read in Bradbury & Karney, p. 396-398

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