

Class Notes: Close Relationships

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The following are some of the key points from lectures. Class attendance is still necessary for details and elaboration.

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Introduction to Relationships

How an Intimate Relationship Differs from a Casual Relationship

knowledge – self disclosure

caring – love and attachment

interdependence – one's behavior affects one's partner

mutuality – us not you and me

trust – expectations of fairness

commitment – in it for the long run

Four Dimensions of Relationships (Wish)

list of dimensions -- the Wish list

cooperative versus competitive (positive-negative/friendly-unfriendly)

equal versus unequal status

socio-emotional versus task

intense versus superficial

people differ on the relative importance of these dimensions

women weight "intense-superficial" more than males

liberals weight "equal vs. unequal status" more than conservative

conflict in relationships often centers on disagreement about the type of relationship

- meta-communication: the deeper meaning of a communication (what the communication says about the relationship?)
- "Can I help you?" might mean "I have more knowledge than you and you are dependent on me."

Exchange Theory Concepts (Thibaut & Kelley)

interaction matrix

elements

two persons (I and II)

two alternatives (A and B) for each persons; four joint possible events

for each event each person obtains a numerical outcome -- a reward

the patterning of rewards define a "game"

		Person II	
		TV	Movie
Person I	TV	8/5	0/0
	Movie	0/0	5/8

So if they both watch TV, then person I gets 8 units of the outcome and person II gets 5.

Prisoner's Dilemma Game

called a mixed-motive game because what is good for the pair is bad for the individual

		Person II	
		C	D
Person I	C	5/5	-4/8
	D	8/-4	-1/-1

where "C" means cooperate and "D" means defect. Note that C is best for the pair – a joint benefit of 10 – but D is always better for the individual, you get 8 versus 5 if partner cooperates and -1 versus -4 if the partner defects.

The Commons Dilemma is the generalization of prisoner's dilemma with more than two persons: About 50% of people defect (take the option that is best for the individual and bad for the group) when this game is played.

zero-sum game: the sum of the two persons' rewards for all events is zero

		Person II	
		A	B
	A	5/-5	-4/4
Person I			
	B	8/-8	-1/1

Accuracy, Friendship, and Attraction

Factors that Determine Attraction

- propinquity (opportunity to interact)
- frequency of interaction
 - due to positive outcomes
- similarity
 - not so much personality similarity
 - similarity of interests
 - demographic differences
- perception of being liked
- physical attractive
 - in part biological
 - in part cultural

Friendship

- Rules of Friendship
- Argyle & Henderson (page 226 in the book)
- Examples
 - Volunteer help in time of need
 - Keep confidences
- Capitalization
 - Having a friend to talk to during the good times for congratulations and celebration.

Friendship with Ex-romantic Partners

- Quite common
- Are they really friends?
 - Research implies they may not be!
 - Less endorsement of the rules of friendship

Accuracy

Reasons why people should be more accurate in perceiving close others:

- more information
- better motivation
 - access to "backstage"
 - self-disclosure
- more motivated to know

Reasons why people should be less accurate in perceiving close others:

- motivated processing
 - see partner as good (idealization)
 - see partner as like one's self
 - avoid threatening cognitions
- less scrutiny once one "knows" one's partner
 - over-confidence
 - failure to update (falsely assuming that people do not change)

Net effect

- for non-threatening, non-relational, non-evaluative aspects: people in close relationships are more accurate than those who are not
- for threatening, relational, evaluative aspects: people in close relationships are less accurate than those who are not

Inaccuracy is not always bad for a relationship:

Poor outcomes happen when negative thoughts and feelings are communicated to the partner.

Inaccurate in one sense but not another; seeing the partner as very attractive may be "inaccurate" in that others do not see the partner that way but the person does indeed see the partner that way.

See partners not as they are but how they might be may be beneficial because it may motivate partners to change (avoid the danger of trying to change the partner into somebody that he or she can never be).

Satisfaction and Commitment

Major Changes in Marital Satisfaction

- temporal trends: tends to decline over time
- declines with the birth of children
- increases when children leave the household
- declines during periods of stress (e.g., birth of child)

Explanations why satisfaction declines in marriages

- decline in idealization
- decline in passion
- people get married at the point of greatest satisfaction: regression toward the mean
- partner no longer self-presents a positive image
- partner becomes less attractive (e.g., gets older)
- changes in interest and activities

Social Exchange Model

outcomes = rewards minus costs

satisfaction = outcomes minus comparison level

comparison level (CL): expected outcomes based on the past or the outcomes that are perceived to be received by others

commitment = satisfaction plus investment minus alternatives

Love and Attachment

Rubin -- the first social psychologist to distinguish between liking and loving

Lee's colors of love

- eros -- seeks sexual pleasure
- ludus -- seeks variety
- storge -- seek commitment
- mania -- possessive love characterized by jealousy
- agape -- altruistic love
- pragma -- partner must need minimum, practical specifications

Sternberg's triangular theory of love

components

- passion
- intimacy
- commitment

all possible combinations of the above (8 combinations of love)

critical in this system is a balance between the three components

Hazan & Shaver attachment styles

types

secure -- seek out intimacy and is comfortable with it, but not desperately seeking it out

avoidant -- does not want intimacy

anxious-ambivalent -- actively seeks out intimacy but fears the loss of intimacy and partner rejection

based on experiences as infant in interactions with primary care-takers (developmental studies of the "strange situation")

Bartholomew attachment styles

dimensions

feelings about self (positive versus negative)

feeling about others (positive versus negative)

types

secure -- positive about self and others

preoccupied -- negative about self and positive about others

dismissing -- positive about self and negative about others

fearful -- negative about self and others

correspondence to Hazan and Shaver

secure becomes secure

avoidant becomes dismissing and fearful

anxious becomes preoccupied

Alternative dimensional view (Fraley and Shaver)

new dimensions

self: anxious-not anxious

others: approach-avoidance

attachment not a type but rather a dimensional space

Research by Dutton has shown that abused women are more likely to be preoccupied (53%) with only 4% secure. However, those who are fearful (35%) may have been under-sampled.

Find your attachment style: <http://www.web-research-design.net/cgi-bin/crq/crq.pl>

Can My Attachment Style Change?

Evidence that attachment style changes with different partners: partner-specific attachment

Evidence that a "good relationship" can decrease attachment anxiety.

Therapy appears also to help.

Success of Attachment Theory

tied to other areas of psychology (developmental and personality)

easy to administer and can measure just one person

usually results in differences

Intimacy

Definition of Intimacy

subjective or experiential -- how the person feels

behavioral -- what the person does

self-disclosure the usual behavioral measure of intimacy

difficulties with self-disclosure as the operational definition of intimacy

self disclosure to strangers

lower rates of self-disclosure in long-term relationships

disclosure as a need -- Pennebaker research that people who discuss past traumas later have better health

Reis & Shaver definition of intimacy

understood: my partner sees me as I see myself

validated: my partner values what I am

cared for: my partner likes me

Three types of gender effects on intimacy

females are more intimate than males

people are more intimate when interacting with a female

opposite-gender interactions are most intimate for most people

the combination of these three effects predicts especially low intimacy for male-male dyads

Why do males avoid intimacy?

- intimacy viewed as inconsistent with identity
 - need to show that one is in control -- Tannen's sociolinguistic work
 - homophobia
- men want to avoid conflict and intense negative emotions

Evidence is more consistent with the "wanting to avoid conflict and intense negative emotions" explanation.

Do men need women more than women need men?

women can meet intimacy needs from close friends

men cannot meet intimacy needs from close friends

research evidence

men much more at risk of death after death of a spouse

men much more likely to remarry than are women

Conflict and Negativity

Evidence for negativity in close relationships

Ryder & Olson: much more negative talk in married couples than strangers

Herzberger: most of peer violence occurs between siblings

Murder: only recently there were more murders by strangers than by acquaintances Females more likely to kill or be killed by their lovers

Kidnapping and sexual molestation mostly done by parents

Explanations

opportunity

norms of politeness

we learn we can be mean to those we love and not be

subject to severe sanctions

behavior will not lead to relationship dissolution; partner committed to relationship

the decline of idealization

seeing the other as part of self (Aron & Aron)

Tactics that lead to relationship dissolution and member dissatisfaction

violence

verbal abuse

avoidance/withdrawal (time-outs may be needed)

negative escalation or spiral (Gottman)

negative partner attributions (blaming partner)

Advice from the experts

Stay on topic

Cool off time if necessary

But resolve the issue

Avoid making global statements

Duck stages of relationship dissolution

intra-psychic: feeling dissatisfied

dyadic: sharing dissatisfaction with partner

social: sharing dissatisfaction with others

grave dressing: developing a face-saving account

Social Networks

Features of networks

nodes (usually persons; the "nouns")

links or ties (the "verbs")

directional -- need not be reciprocated (liking)

nondirectional -- must be reciprocated (sits next to)

Types of Ties

affective (who likes whom)

social role (boss of whom)

behavioral (asks for help; seeks emotional support; spends time with)

Milgram's Small World Hypothesis

- Any two people are linked by no more than 6 or 7 ties.
 - minimum number of ties between two people is called the "geodesic"
 - basically the same as "degrees of separation"
- Evidence seems to support his theory.
- How does this happen?
 - The number of ties increases exponentially as the number of people increase
 - e.g.: It takes on only 23 people for there to be a 50/50 chance that two or more share the same birthday.
 - "small world" will hold when ties are random
 - but it will not hold if ties are totally transitive: if A is tied to B, and B is tied to C, then A is tied to C
 - still holds if ties are just a little bit random
 - Importance of "weak ties."
 1. more peripheral members of the network may be more important than more central members
 2. Granovetter job hunting example

Why study networks?

social change happens through networks (diffusion of innovation)

social support occurs through networks

way of understanding organizational conflict (formation of factions)

Levels of Network Effects

network: density -- the number of ties in the network divided by the possible number of ties

subgroup formation: groups within the network (factions)

dyad: reciprocity -- If A is tied to B, is B tied to A?

triads: transitivity -- If A is tied to B and C, are B and C tied together?

person: centrality

the number of ties (for directional ties, the number of ties to the person)

the number of ties of persons to whom the node has ties to (Whom do you know?)

the average shortest geodesic (the least number of ties it takes to traverse from one node to another) to everyone in the network

The research evidence is that most networks do have some nodes that are extremely central; that is more central than would be expected. This has several important implications:

spread of innovation and disease

security in the worldwide web

effects of strokes

Social Support

The Buffering Hypothesis

social support is hypothesized to reduce the harmful effects of stress on mental and physical health; social support acts as a buffer

Definition of Stress

subjective state associated with physiological changes

stressors (things that cause stress)

big things -- life events (both positive and negative)

little things -- daily hassles

Functions or Types of Social Support

assistance or replacement (giving something tangible: money or time)

audience: listening (remember Pennebaker's research)

influence agent: getting the person to change behavior in adaptive ways

passive influence: person changes because they think this is what the other wants

active influence: the other directly asks the person to change

distraction: not thinking about stressor (not very effective if that is all that is done)

community: telling the person "You are not unique" or "I know what you are going through"; helps if the person giving the support has or is experiencing the stressor.

Hidden Support

Definition: One person helps another but the recipient is unaware of being helped.

Evidence: Can be more effective than visible support.

Advantages

recipient does not feel dependent

recipient does feel pressure to reciprocate which may be difficult

Issues in Caregiving

Definition of caregiving: intense and chronic social support given by one person to another (e.g., spouse has a serious disease)

effects

extremely stressful to the caregiver but caregiver may deny the experience of stress

often results in a change in the relationship (on the Wish dimensions) that can be difficult for both parties to cope with