

Relationship development in courtship mate selection

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Relationships in varying degrees and forms, whether interpersonal or not, is a complex area that many researchers had been in pursuit to discern its intricacies for many years now. Relationships are very difficult to understand, primarily because every individual is unique and are constantly developing the human concepts and changing the assumptions of how and what they are in a society.(Rothwell, 2004)

In this paper, we were to analyze concepts in family communication as a topic for future research and critical literature review. In this context, I chose a topic under family communication which evaluates relationship development with regards to courtship patterns and behavior and the mate selection processes. These factors are geared towards evaluating literature and researchers that studies this particular context in family communication.

In line with this objective, interpersonal relationship and the discussion on the subject is very crucial in determining the basis of a logical evaluation of the topic. Interpersonal communication, with regards to the discussions in class, is a type of communication process that enables people to form unique and continuing interactions in order to build sustaining relationships.

(Borchers, 1999) Examples of which are friends, family, lovers, and the likes. Interpersonal communication affects all of us and is a crucial part in the way we live in the society.(Rothwell, 2004) Everyday, we engage in interpersonal communication with different people. Situation and circumstance may differ, but there remains the fact that interpersonal communication is an essential part of our lives. Interpersonal communication is the core of meaningful relationships.

Before any formal analysis drawn into understanding the nature of relationship development, under the area specifically including courtship patterns and behavior and the theories underlying the concept of mate selection, discussion regarding the how relationships are formed and the processes including it is an important step in reaching the paper's goal. In line with this, there must be a discussion regarding the essential theories surrounding relationships.

In understanding relationships and how they develop, we must understand that there have been many attempts to explain the complexity surrounding relationships. In the paper, the objective is to evaluate the studies done in the courtship process and the theories of mate selection to be able to relate the said topics on how relationships develop. In this context, we need to define relationship as a concept in human life and activities.

One of the popular models designed to understand relationships is Mark Knapp's Relational Model. Knapp's model is efficient in describing different kinds of relationship, whether it may be romantic, in couples, friends, business partners and others. Knapp's Relational Escalation Model is composed of three main stages: construction, maintenance and deterioration stage. The construction stage describes initial formation of the relationship as well as the progression and gradual escalation of intimacy.

First impressions, in which we are all familiar with, are considered as the essential step in instigating the first stage of relationship development. In this step, physical appearance plays a huge role. Brief introductions about

each individual are made; personal information in which only information deemed as necessary to form a background is shared. At this point, individual also decide on whether to pursue forming relationships with the other. The partners now go in a process of experimentation, wherein they engage in small talks and continue to share information about themselves. The conversation will only include topics of which are very broad for both individual to understand and feel comfortable talking about.

The relationship further escalates through the stage known as intensifying or strengthening. At this point, the relationship becomes more intimate with inclusion of feelings, affection and an increased interaction between the two individual. Both individual will in the sense, "tests", the other to assert whether the other would want to pursue a deeper level of relationship. (Rothwell, 2004)

The second stage concerns the maintenance category in which Knapp emphasize is a stage that has passed the formation stage and not yet have deteriorated. The relationship at this stage continues to build a strong foundation and establish a more formal relationship. This stage also signifies the beginning of regarding the individuals seen as a social unit, for example, best friends. Included in this stage is the concept of integration, in which partners have a more intimate relationship besides friendship.

The next step is then the bonding process that determines the individual's commitment with each other, shown through their actions, habits and others. They also consider declaration of their relationship as an evidence of

devotedness with one another. The differentiation period now occurs at which the partners experience defining their differences and would attribute themselves in an individualistic context. In a stage included in the category, the limiting stage governs the period at which the couple now experience a great deal of conflict, and the relationship attempts to avoid tension and discussion of the conflict. Communication in this stage is often disregarded and even if it exists, is not as intimate in content like before. In some versions of Knapp's model, the maintenance category is eliminated; rather, stages from initiation to bonding are included in the escalation stages.

(Rothwell, 2004)

The next category in Knapp's model is the deterioration category which describes a stage that asserts the end of the relationship. With the lack of communication and issues unresolved, the couple is now faced with the avoidance stage in which conversation becomes sparse and both physical and emotional distance is evident. After which, the couple will experience a formal retreat and defeat in resolving the issues, and will move on the termination stage which signifies the end of the relationship. (Rothwell, 2004)

Another model worthy to be discussed at this point is Duck's Relationship Filtering Model. Duck's model is a set of filters that determines the level to which people make their choice to pursue a determined level of relationship with others. The first filter, sociological or incidental cues assumes the role of the constraints placed with meeting people on basis such as their school, workplace and hometown. Simply stated, the sociological cues indicate the

importance sociological locations in governing our choice of forming relationships.

The pre-interaction cues are cues which determine the synthesis of information about the other interaction with people and its influence on our choice of whom to form relationships with. Interactions cues is the next filter and determines the judgments we make on other people and our consideration of other factors for us to consider forming relationships with them. The last filter is the cognitive cues that describe the individual's consideration of how similar the other person is with us that in turn will strengthen our decision to form a formal relationship with him/her. (Duck, 1982)

Courtship/ Mate Selection After our discussion of relationship, and how the models mentioned describes how it is formed and develop, the paper will then evaluate the literature reviews concerning relationship development in context of courtship/mate selection. It is the objective of the paper to define the key terms courtship and mate selection first before analyzing its influence in relationship development. Also, as part of its critical literature review, will discern the studies governing how the key concept of courtship/mate selection affects relationship development.

Courtship is defined as a process by which humans select and even attract a mate in the hope of forming a more well-defined and committed relationship. This often attributes to the relationship that is serious and committed enough that would often result to marriage. Cate and Lloyd (1992) explored

this topic in their book entitled Courtship. In their analysis, they evaluated the difference between relationship development and deterioration, and the aspect of courtship development and deterioration to provide contrasting conclusions in the two areas.(Cate & Lloyd, 1992)

In their book, they describe the factors that affects later course of marriage, to which many studies followed after which. The book contains a look on how the process of courtship developed over the span of 40 years in America and examined the factors that discriminate between stable and unstable premarital relationships. The book also laid a foundation for recent works as it explain the future of courtship as an institution that future research should aim to discern. In the book, the authors mention that the process of courtship had evolved through time. (Cate & Lloyd, 1992)

In one of the recent attempts to analyze contemporary courtship process, Cere (2001) mentions that courtships provides a path towards marriage. Courtship as a process helps individuals to develop their relationship with complex transitions from the basic physical attraction up to lasting marriage through affection and need fulfillment.(Cere, 2001) The process itself can also be said as an attribute to the moral and educational factors of marriage. But as the article suggests, contemporary American courtship had tremendously developed into a term which is regarded as outdated and fad. A study also made by Bailey and Rothman, as cited by Cere (2001) shows the decaying courtship process traditions in the 20th century in America.

In addition, Leon Kass, also cited by Cere (2001), concluded that the disregard of the idea of courtship, with influence from the trends in law, economics, and technology had taken its toll in disintegration of the concept of marriage. According to Anthony Giddens which Cere (2001) cited, contemporary society has now adopted a new grammar of intimacy, and society now reflects a culture that celebrates pure relationships rather than marriage. A pure relationship according to Giddens is a form of relationship that reflects no intrinsic emotional, psychological, or sexual satisfaction to the individual.

Marriage as a result, is placed under a situation wherein the lone-term sexually intimate relationships are set with similar stages in Knapp's Relational Model; initiation, maintenance and dissolution.(Niehuis, Huston, & Rosenband, 2006) Thus, the disregard for what was perceived to be the pathway to marriage, courtship. Giddens had made valuable conclusions with his observation and research that greatly defines and characterizes the courtship process in the modern world.

Review of Literature There has been many published works and researches done in understanding relationship development with regards to courtship/mate selection. The first one the paper will discuss is written by (Houts & Robins, 2000). The article entitled " The social ecology of marriage and other intimate relationships" provides an interdisciplinary framework for studying relationships. There are three levels to which the article analyzed the subject. The first one is the society, in which relationships are characterized with the economic and ecological forces that governs the

function and nature of an individual in a relationship. The second one is the individual spouse and their psychosocial and physical attributes which forms their beliefs and attitudes towards their partners. The third one mentioned in the article is the marriage relationship, and whether behavior entails the character of the degree of the relationship formed. (Rosenfeld, 2005)

The article efficiently described the relationship between the individuals, as a couple, and their marriage. It had determined the factors such as analytic and operational conditions, the dyadic conditions, to which relationships can be evaluated. As the author concluded, it suggests that social scientist should understand the complexities of the 2 levels of analysis which are congruent with each other, while considering the environment of the relationship which affects their marital relationship in general. (Houts & Robins, 2000)

In another light, psychological factors have also been evaluated in pursuit to understand relationship development. One study of Houts and Robins (1996) identified the links between social homogamy, similar leisure interest and role performance preferences, and the dynamics of premarital relationships. It entails findings that similar interest and individual role performances results to more compatibility experienced during the marriage.

Further more, the study suggests that randomly paired individuals are more likely to find their compatible mates rather than asserting or controlling of the individual's preference. Houts and Robins (1996) also defined the concept of assortative mating which assumes its role in the basis of leisure

interests and role preferences.(Houts & Robins, 1996) In the study, the social characteristics of assortative mating were also discerned.(Houts & Robins, 1996) But as the findings suggest, either age, religion or sex is not definite basis on a couples' leisure interest or role preference. The importance of this study contributes to our understanding that researches with regards to relationship development should include empirical linkages between the combined social and psychological attributes of the couple and their relations with their courtship experiences.