

PSYC 325

Discussion Questions

Week 14 (Wednesday) – Long-Distance Relationships

1. After conducting exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, Merolla (2012) established a 10 factor model of relationship maintenance in LDRs, which included temporal and interactional dimensions. In other words, relationship maintenance behaviors were defined by the time during which they occurred (before, during, and following separations) and by the interaction type (intrapersonal or individual, dyadic, and network). Is this model a robust depiction of relationship maintenance? Are there any maintenance behaviors or strategies that are neglected by this model for LDRs?
2. The results of the Merolla (2012) study emphasize the role of intrapersonal maintenance (or cognitions) as a predictor of satisfaction and intimacy. How can we use these findings to advise individuals entering into LDRs? What are some ways an individual can develop cognitions that will positively impact his/her LDR?
3. While Merolla (2012) predicted positive associations between maintenance activities and intimacy/satisfaction, findings suggested that some forms of relationship maintenance have negative outcomes. Specifically, prospective-dyadic maintenance negatively predicts satisfaction and retrospective-network maintenance negatively predicts intimacy and satisfaction. How can these results be explained using theories and concepts learned throughout the semester (Consider attachment theory and the impact of social networks)?
4. What do you think about the generalizability of the Stafford et al. (2006) results, from college students to other populations of LDRs? How could differences in global relationship expectations, and a larger wealth of past relational experience, affect how individuals respond to the major relational changes during such a transitional period?

As technology is playing a larger role in connecting partners from across great geographic distances, how do you think the transition to geographic proximity would differ between relationships that were “reuniting” and those that were living in proximity for the first time? What unique relationship maintenance strategies would individuals in this type of relationship have to engage in to avoid relationship termination?

While the Merolla et al. (2012) study did not find a significant effect of network maintenance factors on positive or negative relational response, how do you think that network response to proximal transition could affect how individuals experience it?

5. Mietzner and Lin (2005) report that individuals, who gain relationship-building skills from LDRs, such as trust, patience, communication and independence, are more willing to possibly be in a LDR again. To what extent do you think that these “skills” represent and are confounded by attachment styles? That is, are these skills only achievable for individuals with a secure attachment style?
6. Mietzner and Lin (2005) found that participants in the “maybe” group, and not the “yes” group, reported non-physical intimacy as a skill that was gained from their LDR. Why do you think that individuals who would participate in a LDR again did not gain this skill while individuals who might consider a LDR again did gain the non-physical intimacy skill?
7. Stafford et al. (2006) examined what happens when long-distance relationships become proximal and found that about 30% of LDRs terminate soon after becoming geographically close. Do you think that LDR fate may be influenced by the amount of skills (as reported by Mietzner and Lin, 2005) gained during the long-distance portion of the relationship?