Mate selection: The process of developing relationships toward commitment

Milton E. Thomas

The University of Montana

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MATE SELECTION: THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS TOWARD COMMITMENT

By

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B.A., St. Cloud State University, 1980

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
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Chairman, Board of Examiners
Dean, Graduate School

Date 8-11-82
This study examined perceptions of individuals involved in mate selection, their personal filtering constructs, and how these filters evolve. The subject population consisted of 22 partners in 11 relationships defined as pinned, promised, or pre-engaged. Data were collected through structured interviews, with individuals and couples, and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). The interview responses were qualitatively analyzed using the Constant Comparative Method and DAS scores were computed.

Subjects accounted for filters they maintained prior to their relationships, those that operated specifically within the relationships, and the way in which their filters functioned and changed. They demonstrated an awareness of process and couples tended to act out the descriptions provided individually. The subjects' average score on the DAS was higher than the average for satisfied married couples in a previous study. Most of the filters used by the subjects contained flexibility in their scope and application. Personal perceptions and constructs, and patterns of development, were highly idiosyncratic. The relatively high DAS scores were interpreted to reflect the promise of a promised relationship.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my parents whose love and support made this project possible. Thanks also to all my friends whose relationships inspired me. Booky, Bill, and Dean deserve special thanks for helping me make the most of graduate school.

Charlotte Jones was courageous enough to embark on a relationship with me while I was in the middle of this madness. She has been my oasis throughout. The Department of Interpersonal Communication faculty and staff provided an optimum learning environment. Ron Arnett, Bob Kendall, Don Sikkink, and Erika Vora are early mentors who helped shape my philosophy of life; their influence is significant today.

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A special word of appreciation goes to my subjects. They have restored my faith in romance.

I did it!
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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Most individuals in this culture have an option to spend their time with a variety of others, yet virtually all of us at some point forego that option to become intimate with another person and form a commitment. How do we select the person with whom we are willing to make a long-term commitment? No single theory has been proven to predict relational development as it pertains to mate selection, but several social scientists have contributed to our knowledge of the subject.

Theory and research concerning how people get together stems from a number of disciplines. Although the perspectives, goals, and approaches vary, the literature converges in one key area. Theorists argue that relationships most often develop through stages (Knapp, 1978). Even for those fortunate couples who experience mutual love at first sight, their ways of relating and their ability to coexist will move through a stagelike progression.

It is communication variables that distinguish one stage of development from another. As a relationship progresses, the increase in exposure leads to an increase in shared information (Homans, 1961). This information is associated with the status of the relationship in two ways. As Knapp (1978, p. 8) explained it, "human communication
may be affected by the existing relationship, but it will also structure
the nature of any future relationship."

How does communication vary across levels of relationships?
Altman and Taylor (1973) answered this question most succinctly;
however, their orientation toward personality theory misdirects us from
a communication standpoint, thus Knapp's (1978) adaptation of their
analogue may prove more useful. The two major aspects Knapp derived
from Altman and Taylor's theory are depth and breadth. Depth and
breadth of shared information govern the level or definition of any
relationship. Depth concerns the extent to which a given topic is
explored. Breadth refers to the number of topics shared. The depth
and breadth of shared information affect and are affected by the present
status of the relationship. Communication is therefore a key variable
in relational development.

Thus far, most research on relational development has dealt
with descriptive information. Theorists delineate the stages of develop­
ment, assess the interpersonal commodities involved, and prioritize
which general factors predict mate selection.

Some authors have attempted to discover what the stages of
development are. Philips and Metzger (1976) studied many different
aspects of friendship development, supplementing their empirical data
with qualitative examples. Their findings strongly suggest that
relationships develop through stages. Altman and Taylor (1973) also
discovered a phaselike progression in their studies. Davis (1973) and
Knapp (1978) presented comprehensive discussions of relationships,
summarizing the research of others and theoretically extending the notions.

Much of the literature concerns attributions as to why relationships progress. The interpersonal attraction literature, summarized by Berscheid and Walster (1978), suggests that people are drawn to one another and, in conjunction with the intensity of the attraction, we become more and more intimate.

Other theorists discuss expectations about relationships and the impact of our expectations on relational development. These individual conceptualizations can be thought of as filters. Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) first used the term filter in their study on need complementarity. Subsequent studies cast doubt on the validity of their hypotheses, but their by-product finding—"that a series of 'filtering factors' operate in mate selection at different stages of the selection process" (p. 295)—was not challenged. Because the researchers did not seek out filters, their emergence is even more valid.

Duck (1973) referred to personal constructs as the unique mind set each individual possesses during relationship development. He also used filtering as a synonym for the choices we make based on our own constructs. Duck (1973, p. 39) defined filtering as

the selective reduction in information-handling capacity which is a necessary and inevitable concomitant of a system with a finite number of parts. In the terms of the present theory, filtering is the selective reduction of the number of persons still regarded as potential (mates) as a result of a subjective evaluation of the cues which these potential (mates) appear to manifest. (Emphasis mine.)
By looking at the filters operating in relationships, researchers can better understand how relationships develop. Persons who wonder, "What does she see in him?" would do well to consider Bandler and Grinder's notion that our filters are "prescription glasses" prescribing what we are able to and choose to see in others (1975, p. 10). Each individual carries a set of filters for relationship development. Given this idiosyncratic nature of filters, traditional lines of research do not fully conceptualize relational development as it pertains to mate selection. True filters can only be discovered by asking people what their filters are.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Attraction

Literature on relationship progression stems from a variety of sources. Undoubtedly, the most generic concept is interpersonal attraction. Walster and Walster defined interpersonal attraction as "an individual's tendency or predisposition to evaluate another person or symbol of that person in a positive way" (1976, p. 280). This conceptualization and corresponding research concerns relationships in general and deals little with development toward mate selection. The theory implies that degrees of attraction govern development.

Initial Attraction

Extant research indicates that initial attraction is based on intuitively obvious variables. Wilmot (1979) highlighted three of the most influential factors in attraction: (1) propinquity, or physical closeness, (2) similarity in a variety of areas, and (3) communication behavior, one's actions and perceptions of the actions of others.

Many studies conducted prior to 1960 indicate that a person will most likely marry someone who lives close by. In 1961, Kephart summarized the propinquity research by pointing out there is a good chance that one's future mate will live within walking distance. Little research, however, on propinquity has emerged since daters
began driving with greater frequency. Still it is sound logic to assume that increased interaction is a by-product of nearness.

Research on similarity comes mostly from personality and social psychology. Byrne (1971) has studied attitude-specific similarity more than any other single researcher. Berscheid and Walster (1978, p. 88) summarized the work of Byrne and others by saying that

similarity is often a potent transsituational reinforcer.

The answer to the question: "Does attitudinal similarity generate liking?" is a resounding "yes." When we discover that others share our beliefs and attitudes, it is satisfying; we like them.

An unquestioned contributor to the relationship between attraction and attitude similarity is its circularity. Attitude similarity leads to attraction; attraction leads to shared attitudes. Along with this, Byrne and Blaylock (1963) and Levinger and Breedlove (1966) interpreted their findings to indicate that attraction causes us to perceive more attitudinal similarity than actually exists. Because, however, these studies used married couples, it may be commitment rather than attraction that sustains these perceptual distortions. Attraction may have brought the individuals together, but commitment helps maintain the relationship. Rubin (1973, p. 160) defined "commitment . . . as the pledging of oneself to a line of action [such as] the struggle for intimacy with another person."

On the other hand, research on personality similarity has not provided such convincing evidence. Studies dealing with personality similarity (Izard, 1960; Newcomb and Svehla, 1937) found little or no causal relationship between personality and attraction. Because personality theory presumes enduring traits, whereas attitude research only reflects perception during a particular study, the similarity
literature does not necessarily contradict itself. For the most part, "similarity attracts" (Berscheid and Walster, 1978, p. 89).

The third general category Wilmot (1979, p. 75) discussed is communication behavior. The effects of behavior early in the relationship are not clear. One might, however, suspect that judgment is often suspended if there is any magnetic attraction present. For example, it is common for members of a couple to admit, "We hated each other at first." How do these couples join? In Berquist and Shellen's (1981) study of conversational openers, males and females were asked to judge the effectiveness of openers used by others. They noted (p. 8) that men tended to describe qualities of the individual performing the opening (e.g. confident, suave, intelligent, tactless), whereas women focused on the qualities of the opener itself (e.g. positive, light, humorous, rude, cliché). (Emphasis mine.)

Berquist and Shellen (1981, p. 19) followed these findings with other perceptions in the study: "Women were more appropriately perceived in the passive role, relying on nonverbal cues and compliments whereas men were viewed most appropriately in the role of aggressor." To the extent that opening behavior is seen as reflecting an enduring personality trait, taken with judgments of appropriateness, this is one potential area where attraction might begin.

Kephart (1967) found that twice as many men as women in a study of romantic love were very easily attracted to members of the opposite sex. Rubin (1973, p. 205) interpreted this finding as follows: "Since the woman rather than the man typically takes on the social and economic status of her spouse, she has more practical concerns to keep in mind in selecting a mate." The male is most often the initiator; the female is
most often the judge. The female chooses to judge initial behaviors on
their own merit rather than as a reflection of the male's personality.
Consequently, these early behaviors may not significantly affect the
progress of the relationship.

Wilmot's (1979, p. 76) summary of these three factors reveals
their interrelationship:

1. Perception leads to evaluation and evaluation leads to
   perception.

2. Similarity leads to interpersonal attraction; interpersonal
   attraction leads to similarity.

3. Perception of yourself and perception of others are highly
   related and part of a cyclic process.

4. Transacting with another leads to positive sentiment;
   positive sentiment toward another leads to transactions with him.

Further Attraction

Beyond initial factors, the theory suggests that further
attraction results from rewarding and reciprocated behavior.

Reinforcement Theory

The principle of reinforcement (Byrne and Clore, 1970; Lott and
Lott, 1961) stated that our perceptions of interpersonal costs and
rewards govern levels of attraction. Baron and Byrne (1976, p. 204)
listed the basic principles of the Byrne-Clore Reinforcement model, and
the third principle reveals the inevitable success of such a model:

The evaluation of any given stimulus as good or bad, enjoyable or
unenjoyable, depends on whether it arouses positive or negative
feelings. The strength of the aroused affect is reflected in how
positively or negatively we express our evaluations.
Consequently, anything one likes or feels good about is a reward; dislikes, and phenomena which elicit negative feelings, are costs.

More specifically, several generally agreed upon factors in the assessment of costs/rewards have been researched. Berscheid and Walster (1978, p. 40) discussed "the reciprocity-of-liking" as a major factor in relationship development. This principle presupposes that it is rewarding to be liked by another, and that we return like feelings; however, much of the literature on liking features vague operationalizations. Compliments, acceptance (Walster, 1965), and self-esteem (Deutsch and Solomon, 1959) were discussed as dependent variables that can measure liking.

Rubin (1973), on the other hand, suggested that liking has two dimensions--affection and respect--yet research thus far has lent no more credibility to his operationalization. Two problems with research on liking must be treated before substantive research can be performed: (1) liking must be operationally defined and (2) research instruments must measure what they purport to measure (e.g., affection and respect).

Equity Theory

As well as reinforcement theory, the interpersonal attraction literature also subsumes equity theory, another model designed to explain relational development. The equity perspective is a more relational perspective, and it takes reinforcement theory one step further. Equity theory suggests that once an individual within a relationship assesses the distribution of rewards and costs, and discovers inequity, the individual will take measures to restore equity. Berscheid

Equity Theory
and Walster (1978, p. 126) claimed that equity can be restored two ways: (1) actual restitution or (2) psychological justification.

In *Equity: Theory and Research*, Walster, Walster, and Berscheid (1977) comprehensively reviewed equity literature. Unfortunately, little research has been conducted in the last decade and the concepts are researched and discussed in terms of individuals as opposed to intact relationships. The implication is that relational development depends on unilateral decision making. The relationship foci include women's church groups (Berscheid and Walster, 1967), strangers electrically shocking each other (Brock and Buss, 1964), and social work trainees (Walster and Prestholdt, 1966).

Reinforcement theory and equity theory lack external validity when applied to romantic relationships. Liking research contains questionable construct validity because behaviors such as compliments, and concepts such as acceptance and self-esteem, have not been proven to covary with liking. Also, levels of interpersonal attraction have not been identified and no developmental model of attraction has yet surfaced. As Holman and Burr (1980, p. 732) concluded,

> in more complex relationships the exchange processes become more complicated, subtle, long term, unconscious, and frequently irrelevant. . . . Thus, the theory loses much of its utility. Nonrational factors such as love, jealousy, self-esteem, personal needs, values, social norms, commitment, and investments become so important that most of the profit-oriented bargaining and consideration of alternatives gets lost in the shuffle.

**Mate Selection**

Three main thrusts appear in the mate selection literature. According to Murstein (1980), much of the research concerns sociocultural determinants. The term he uses for these determinants is
assortativeness. Just as one rummages through a box of assorted chocolates searching for a favorite, this theory holds that we sort through a field of eligibles searching for Mr. or Ms. Right. In other words, assortativeness acts as a metatheory in that we begin our search with the world before us, narrow the selection with the discovery of certain information, and reduce the number of candidates as we discover more. Assortativeness is mate selection's version of filter theory, except that it is vaguely defined and applied only to early stages of relationship development.

Some of the factors in assortativeness include "age, propinquity, education, socioeconomic status, and intelligence" (Murstein, 1980, p. 777). This list is compressed from earlier versions because factors such as ethnicity (Carter and Glick, 1976), race (Heer, 1974), and religion (Murstein, in print) are decreasing in importance. Physical attractiveness has been shown to be a major factor in assortativeness (Hill, Rubin, and Peplau, 1976; Murstein, 1972; Murstein and Christy, 1976; Shepard and Ellis, 1972). Nonetheless, all this information is discovered relatively early in a development process and further development is left unaccounted for by assortativeness.

Love is mostly researched autonomously from other theories, but Murstein's (1980) decade review of mate selection featured love as a fundamental subset. Many authors have attempted to conceptualize love as multidimensional and then have ventured to delineate the dimensions.

Berscheid and Walster (1978, p. 177) dichotomized love and referred to the "more familiar variety" as "companionate love . . . the affection we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply
intertwined." This perspective coincides with other theories of development and can be interpreted as a stronger magnetism for attraction theorists. Companionate love applies to family relationships, friends, co-workers, and Siamese twins, as well as mates. Because companionate love is conceptualized as a feeling that comes with later stages of relationship development, and because this concept per se has not been operationalized, it is assumed that this review of literature concerning how two individuals form a commitment subsumes companionate love.

The other type of love referred to by Berscheid and Walster (1978) is "passionate love . . . a wildly emotional state" (p. 177), "a state of intense absorption in another" (p. 151). The difficulty of researching passionate love concerns the questionable operational definitions of pertinent concepts. Walster (1971) conceptualized passionate love as physiological arousal within a context where love seems an appropriate label. Research which began with Schachter (1964) and continued with others (Dutton and Aron, 1974) consequently featured threatening, dangerous situations and an opposite sex confederate. The supposition (Kenrick and Cialdini, 1977) is that we misattribute aroused states and label any one of a number of feelings love. As Murstein concluded (1980), this research is based on several cognitive leaps. Questions that need to be answered include the following:

1. Is attraction, liking, or arousal the same as passionate love?

2. Can we assume that arousal is induced without measured manipulation?

3. What is the individual subject's definition of love?
Another love dichotomy was offered by Rubin (1973). His two dimensions are (1) eros (needing, attachment) and (2) agape (giving, caring). After venturing this conceptualization, he attempted to test for these dimensions. In a discussion of his findings, Rubin admitted (p. 25), "The researcher strikes out."

Another theory of love, developed by Lee (1976), is hexadimensional. His theory is interesting, but factor analysis eliminated all but one of his six dimensions (Hatkoff, 1977). Storge, the dimension which did factor out, is roughly equivalent to companionate love; it is accumulated affection. This dimension coincides with developmental theories.

More profound information comes from research where definitions are stressed less, but subjects respond in regard to their concepts of love. For example, Kephart's 1967 study of 1000 college students asked (p. 473), "If a man (woman) had all the other qualities you desired, would you marry this person if you were not in love with him (her)?" Twenty-four percent of the women would not, 72 percent were undecided, and 4 percent said they would marry without love. On the other hand, 65 percent of the men would refuse, 24 percent were uncertain, and 11 percent claimed they would. Many more of the men than women in Kephart's study specified love as a necessary prerequisite to marriage. How is this accounted for? Rubin (1973, p. 205) explained that, "since the woman rather than the man typically takes on the social and economic status of her spouse, she has more practical concerns to keep in mind in selecting a mate."
From a developmental perspective, Fengler (1974, p. 137) supported these conclusions with a subsequent study in which "males generally tend to become more romantic and females less romantic with increased involvement in courtship." Knox and Sporakowski (1968, p. 641) provided a final note to sex differences in development: "Hence for the male, engagement is the bridge from romanticism to realism in attitude toward love."

Beyond sex differences, Kephart (1970) studied another 1079 students to determine the effects of relationship experience on romantic love. He discovered that romantic love does not decrease with experience, that mature individuals continue to pursue romance, and that subjects accounted for lost love not as a result of burst bubbles but as a necessary step in normal personality development.

Love appears to influence our relationship choices. What love is, and to what extent it influences us, is still unknown.

The most progressive theories of mate selection fall within the general category of courtship (dating). These theories follow from early work by Bolton (1961), Kerckhoff and Davis (1962), and Winch (1958). Two unique characteristics of these early models stand out: (1) they suggested that need-complementarity is the most important factor in mate selection and (2) they featured a process orientation and introduced the concept of filtering. The need-complementarity principle proved unreliable (Levinger, Senn, and Jorgenson, 1970). Later, however, the data indicated that need-similarity is important in the selection process; therefore, support for a process model remains intact.
The first of these early process theories was developed by Broderick and Hicks (1970, cited in Broderick, 1971). The data from their study of Pennsylvania newlyweds was factor analyzed to produce three independent dimensions of the courtship process: (1) who did the pursuing, (2) the length and quality (smooth-rocky) of the courtship, and (3) sexual involvement. The result was a model which provided eight unique paths to marriage. The study supported filter theory because so many paths emerged. Broderick (1971, p. 148) concluded that "the study clearly demonstrated the ineffectiveness of over-simple models of mate selection since several alternative models were required to account for the enormous variations observed."

Another model, developed by Lewis (1973), is based on his two-year study of 91 couples. Whereas Broderick and Hicks (1970, cited in Broderick, 1971) could come up with no less than eight paths to marriage, subsequent critics of Lewis's six-step model claimed that his interpretation of the data was overcomplicated. Lewis claimed that the processes of dyadic formation are (1) perceiving similarities, (2) achieving pair rapport, (3) inducing self-disclosure, (4) role-taking, (5) achieving interpersonal role-fit, and (6) achieving dyadic crystallization. Wolfe (1973, p. 2) pointed out that,

after completing all six tasks, not only is the couple ready to get married, but it would seem that they never need return to those tasks again--that they become a permanent characteristic of the relationship.

Rubin and Levinger (1974) also questioned the linearity of the sequence.

The most prolific researcher in mate selection is Murstein. His 1980 (p. 785)
exchange theory, posit[ed] that, in a relatively free choice situation, attraction and interaction depend on the exchange value of the assets and liabilities that each of the parties brings to the situation.

Murstein (1970) labeled his theory Stimulus-Value-Role (SVR) and claimed that the stimulus stage concerns mutual drawing factors (attraction), the value stage entails assessment of value compatibility, and the role stage "comprise[s] the expectations vis-à-vis the self and partner and the perceived fulfillment of these expectations" (pp. 785-786). He added that "some degree of permanence (cohabitation, marriage)" (p. 786) is likely for those who progress through all three stages.

Murstein (1980, p. 786) claimed "some support" for 33 of 39 hypotheses; however, Rubin and Levinger (1974) questioned some aspects of the sequence and the author himself questioned the validity of the value measures. Simple theories such as this three-stage theory seem to suffer reliability problems in general. Murstein (1980, p. 788) noted that

there has been a movement away from monolithic, single-principle approaches, such as those of homogamy and complementary needs, to a belief in multi-determined factors in marital choice. . . . The new theories show an increasing awareness of commitment as depending in part on the interpersonal assets and liabilities of individuals.

The three theories above share two fundamental attributes: (1) they attempt to conceptualize a process model of relationship development and commitment and (2) they attempt to account for the effect each step in the process has on the next. Where they fall short is summarized by Bolton (1961, pp. 235-236):

The outcome of the contacts of . . . two individuals is not mechanically predetermined either by the relation of their personality characteristics or the institutional patterns providing the context for the development of the relation—though these are both
certainly to be taken into account—but that the outcome is an end-product of a sequence of interactions characterized by advances and retreats along the paths of available alternatives, by definitions of the situation which crystallize tentative commitments and bar withdrawals from certain positions, by the sometimes resolution of ambiguity, by reassessments of self and other, and by the tension between open-endedness and closure that characterizes all human relations.

Murstein (1976a, p. 89) added that

there can be no single explanation of marital choice, according to Bolton. There are multiple causes, and the key to understand them is the study of the transactions between them—the processes by which the two individuals are drawn ever closer together. (Emphasis mine.)

Throughout the literature, the common theoretical thread is that relationships develop in stages. The various traditional theories are tied together and expanded upon in the literature, in a body of research and theory classified in libraries under intimacy or interpersonal relations. Intimacy theorists follow no single traditional approach, but several familiar concepts appear.

Relational Development and Intimacy

One of the most influential books to emerge from this group is Davis's Intimate Relations (1973). His theory of stages begins with the probability of strangers becoming acquaintances. Next, the congregation stage deals with the interlocking and routinization that begins to appear in a relationship. Third, communication becomes more idiosyncratic to the individual couple. The information dimension concerns shared, personal information (self-disclosure). Ecological issues are the favors partners do for each other to help them transact with their environment. The deepest dimension identified by Davis is
intersubjectivity in which boundaries between the individuals are blurred and commitment cements their intimacy.

A second theory which has received much attention is Altman and Taylor's social penetration model (1973). Altman and Taylor explicitly identified four main stages of relationship development. The orientation phase is characterized by subtle communication behaviors resulting from sizing the other up and an awareness that the other is sizing, too.

At stage two, participants begin exploratory affective exchange wherein interaction patterns even out and some overt evaluation appears. Altman and Taylor (1973) equated the third stage with close friendships or courtships because affective exchange reflects spontaneity and flexibility of expression. Communication now becomes more unique and increased stability allows for more explicit evaluations, positive or negative.

The fourth and final stage features stable exchange of open, rich, and spontaneous communication. Individuals within the dyad express themselves in various ways and the messages exchanged become highly unique. This stage is achieved in few relationships. The authors warned that this model is not linear and that regression, stagnation, intensity, etc., will appear and disappear.

In 1976, Philips and Metzger's Intimate Communication appeared with a model that, like Altman and Taylor's (1973), is research based. These authors labeled stage one acquaintance. Next comes temporary accommodation, when the couple plans to do something together. The testing stage, according to Philips and Metzger, is to discover what is to be exchanged.
Fourth, one partner will initiate a change in definition through an unprecedented behavior, such as establishing a new currency (e.g., sexual intercourse). This is called preliminary contracting. When both parties are satisfied with the rate and nature of exchange, they reach a temporary plateau where they will be leveling the contract. Although the final stage is accounted for qualitatively, the authors identify intimacy as that point wherein a feeling of security and stability is established.

The most recent comprehensive model of relationship development comes from Knapp (1978) and follows closely the work of Altman and Taylor (1973). The five stages Knapp derived from the original model follow:

1. **Initiating.** Intrapersonal decision making results in an interpersonal transaction.

2. **Experimenting.** Demographic information is shared in pursuit of common ground.

3. **Intensifying.** Disclosures become more personal and the communication process is more efficient.

4. **Integrating.** You and I become we. The couple and the social network unify the individuals.

5. **Bonding.** Stability is facilitated by a formal contract of commitment (e.g., marriage).

Knapp (1978) claimed that eight communication dimensions, which he modified from Altman and Taylor's (1973) model, govern relational growth. These dimensions (p. 14) include:
1. Narrow-Broad.
2. Stylized-Unique.
4. Rigid-Flexible.
5. Awkward-Smooth.
6. Public-Personal.

Communication that is characterized by the adjectives on the right of the hyphens facilitates relational progress.

Knapp (1978), like most of the intimacy authors, qualified his theory by placing the development stages on a staircase, and by comparing the fluctuation of relationships to the way we climb and descend stairways. His theory also takes into account relational disintegration, which added to his conceptualization but moves beyond the scope of this paper.

The advantages to this recent genre of literature are many. The loyalty of these authors and researchers appears to lie with the discovery of how a dyad actually unites rather than with a single traditional theory purported to explain all relationships within all contexts. Furthermore, these models do not claim linearity or a definitive, unvarying sequence. Also, qualitative and anecdotal evidence is combined with empiricism. Different types of relationships are compared to discover commonalities. Finally, and more importantly for a communication researcher, these theorists are communication based and, for the most part, communication specific.

On the other hand, these stage theories of development share a few problems. One, a finite series of stages implies quantifiable data. Little systematic research has been done with any of these models. That research that has been attempted features questionable findings. For
example, Philips and Metzger's (1976) research is friendship specific and based on thorough goal analysis. Goals are obviously important, but Watzlawick and Weakland (1977, p. 20) pointed out that

mate selection must be in large part the matching of certain expected behaviors (and self-definitions) in certain crucial areas. At this point, we must . . . lay to rest questions of "consciousness," "intention," "purposefulness," or any of a variety of terms [e.g., goals] implying that extremely troublesome issue: Is the behavior motivated or not? (And, if so, how?) . . . No theoretical assumptions about the individual have been or need be invoked, only assumptions on the nature of communication qua communication.

Another difficulty associated with the development-through-stages models was also listed as a strength. As Murstein (1980, p. 788) put it, "the new theorists show an increasing awareness of commitment as depending in part on the interpersonal assets and liabilities of individuals." The flexibility and nonlinearity of these theories provides for individuality, but it also provides an argumentatively easy way out of operationalizing and researching them.

Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of the stage theories is their failure to capture the essence of romance, the sensation of falling in love. As Rubin (1973, p. 180) explained it,

the development of intimacy and of commitment are closely linked, spiralling processes. When one person reveals himself to another, it has subtle effects on the way each of them defines the relationship. Bit by bit the partners open themselves to one another, and step by step they construct their mutual bond. The process only rarely moves ahead in great leaps. It is often so gradual, in fact, that it is not noticed. . . . Sometimes the process takes on a momentum of its own, leading to a seemingly inevitable movement toward increasing commitment.

Therefore, although intimacy theorists more closely approximate the nature of relational development, some questions are left unanswered. In Duck's terms (1973, p. 54), theorists have tended to focus on the content (e.g., what occurs, what is decided) rather than structure
Intimacy theorists, along with attraction and mate selection theorists, have focused primarily on what occurs, rather than how it occurs. Nonetheless, this structural orientation may be what is needed to better discover the path to dyadic commitment. Duck (1973, p. 39) provided a good starting point:

For it may be that those things which present a fertile ground for continuing [relationships] are not those which originally precipitate it, although they were present even at the start. They may, in other words, be necessary factors but not sufficient ones, and a theory which replaces 'causal factors' and 'determinants' with a notion of 'selective filters' dependent on subjective explanation and interpretation could show how such is the case.

Interestingly, a mate selection theorist representing a traditionally limited and focused perspective, has recently developed a model that captures the spirit of the filtering approach. Adams (1979) may have offered the most comprehensive yet flexible model of mate selection yet (Fig. 1).

Following Levinger (1965), Adams (1979) referred to barriers to getting in as well as barriers to getting out of a relationship. These barriers are conspicuously similar to the concept of filters presented herein. There are, according to Adams, barriers to beginning a relationship, barriers to continuing it, and barriers to breaking up. There are several perpetrators involved in early attractions, deeper attractions, and alternative attractions.

Adams's (1979, p. 264) objectives in presenting his model revealed strengths and weaknesses: "we have attempted to incorporate both variables and processes in the same theoretical model, realizing that the former are much easier to test than the latter." Adams
Figure 1. The Mate Selection Process

based his model on 19 propositions derived from the literature. His theoretical summarization provides variables which have proven to be factors in mate selection. This aspect makes portions of his model handy for operationalization. His progressive model, however, attempts also to account for process. It is easy to argue that relational development is a process, but process is difficult to research.

No existing theory fully explains the fluid nature of relationship development. The insight we need to adequately account for mate selection will not come from the minds of theorists. Only those persons involved in a particular relationship know what processes are occurring, yet native participants are not always fully aware of these development processes. It is up to the researcher, utilizing the resources of relationship participants, to find out how relationships develop commitment.

How do individual filters combine to mutually influence relationship progression? Some extant research, such as that which concerns romantic history, provides a clue as to how filters may form and evolve.

Romantic history literature often deals with sex roles and sex differences. In Kephart's 1967 study, he asked for retrospectives on prior involvements and found initially that women in his study tended to suppress thoughts of the past. As a result of prior experience, the subjects in Kephart's study highly valued family plan agreement and role compatibility. Another study supported these findings (Wrigley and Stokes, 1977).
On an immediate level, the research by Kiesler and Baral (1970) has considered self-esteem loss as a result of relational termination. It was found that lowered self-esteem results in less discrimination in attraction toward others (the next time around).

On an intense level, Peters (1976) asked remarried divorced persons what their reasons were for remarrying and compared their answers to what the subjects claimed were deciding factors in marriage one. He found that parent image and propinquity were important in both marriages, and that rationalism was stressed more and religious affiliation was less important in the second marriage.

How does one go about gaining relational experience? Eslinger and Clarke (1979, p. 179) looked at the effects of career plans on relationship experience. They found that men with high mobility aspirations have fewer romantic experiences while women with high aspirations report more romantic experiences. This finding may be indicative of a greater succession of involvements for women with higher mobility orientations in the attempt to experience mobility through marriage. . . . a higher proportion of men than women expect to select a mate of higher status than that of their own parents.

In this case, early decisions about one's career govern the extent to which one will experience successive relationships.

For those future intimates who have little cumulative relationship experience, filters are undoubtedly based on different determinants than those with experience. One potential source of information for these novices is the wisdom of those who have been there. Knapp, Stohl, and Reardon (1981) have studied the effects of memorable messages on our communication behavior. They discovered that (1) "these messages were most often received from a person who was older and of higher
status" (p. 33) and (2) "the content of memorable messages is also most often (72 percent) action-oriented--i.e., contains prescriptions of what one should or should not do" (p. 32).

Examples reveal how memorable messages influence individual filtering systems.

If you want a relationship to work (condition), you have to (prescriptive marker) work at it (act).

No matter what the other girls are doing (condition), act like a lady (act) (Knapp, et al., 1981, p. 31).

These master rules passed down from a credible source obviously contribute to a young person's expectations about relationships.

At least two studies have approached discovery of some general filters individuals have regarding relationships. Murstein (1976b) asked 368 college students (172 males, 196 females) which qualities they desired in a spouse. He concluded that most youths are concerned with traditional social issues. The rankings (p. 464) break down as follows:

**Women's Loadings**

1. Popular, social minded.
2. Patriarchal-dominant male stereotype.
3. Even-tempered, well-balanced.
4. Free sexual expression; challenges church values.
5. Physical appearance and status.
7. Admirable and respected.
8. Responsible and controlled.
9. Relegates child care to wife.

**Men's Loadings**

1. Traditional-submissive.
2. Nurturant madonna.
3. Popular and socially minded.
4. Family approved.
5. Efficient, nondefensive and outspoken.
6. Free sexual expression.
7. Physical and social appearance.
8. Egalitarian relationship.

Not only do males desire different qualities in a spouse than females (among Connecticut college students), but the study revealed some preconceptions we have when going into relationships.

Peplau (1981) compared priorities in love between heterosexual and homosexual males and females. Although there were slight differences between heterosexual males and females, the dimensions she explored reflected operating filters. These dimensions included (1) having an egalitarian relationship, (2) having more influence than one's partner in joint decision making, (3) laughing easily with each other, (4) sexual fidelity, (5) each being able to have a career, and (6) enjoying the relationship now without insisting upon a future commitment. The above priorities feature six of the fourteen listed in the study. The usefulness of these rankings is that they get at the struggling, influx nature of a developing relationship. The disadvantage to the study is that the rankings were placed on a nine-point scale that was unlike other instruments used in similar research. This made it difficult to compare the results with findings of other studies. Also, the categories reflected Peplau's (1981) priorities in relationships and the subjects' concern with these a priori categories.

As well as these general filters, and filters that emerge in any given relationship, there is the transaction which occurs between the two. In Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) Comparison Level theory, a specific relationship is measured against perceived alternatives. Berscheid and Walster (1978, p. 24) illustrated that
a college beauty may like a fellow a lot, and delight in his company . . . but not enough. She would never consider marrying him. The battered wife may hate her brutal husband, and be totally miserable . . . but not enough. She fears that she and the children would suffer from loneliness, hunger, and poverty if she left.

Duck (1973, p. 145) also revealed how relational development influences our operating filters:

The question of evaluation is plainly related to that of how filters are "overcome," for in some cases individuals may indeed come to recognize that inferences drawn from cues were erroneous. Individuals may reconstrue the other person in a way which may involve devaluing the status of previous filters.

We have, therefore, general filters, filters for a given relationship, and emerging filters that arise through development.

It is apparent that relational development is, to some extent, idiosyncratic and that sociological theories for established relationships are inadequate representations for development. The most useful tests thus far have utilized the services of those who are within developing relationships to grasp a subjective view for relationship development. In other words, to discover the filters used, we need to ask people about them.

In addition to asking individuals about their relationships, data need to be gathered collectively from couples. As Hof and Miller (1981, p. 60), pointed out, self-report is a useful tool, but "there are serious dangers in relying exclusively on measures that are so easily influenced by response biases, social desirability, and demand characteristics." Individual accounts suffer from the same limitations as the traditional conceptualization of interpersonal communication.

As Bochner (1978, p. 181) explained,
It disregards the delicate fabric of situational constraints and discounts the emergent, coactive nature of patterned interaction so characteristic of enduring relationships. . . . It is not communication which is defined, but rather the cognitions which precede communication.

Bochner's (1978, p. 182) alternative to previous conceptualization is to offer a definition that includes "communication . . . possessing both corporate and individual messages." He also stated that "people respond to the same signals differently in different contexts" (p. 183). Couples therefore will most likely respond differently to questions about their relationships than will individuals. Questioning couples helps to verify data gathered from individuals.

There is a gap between existing literature on relational development toward mate selection and what we know about the subjective stance of involved participants. To fill the gap, and attempt to account for the process of reciprocal influence, several questions need to be addressed. This study sought answers through structured interviews designed around seven questions:

1. What influence does a partner's early image of an ideal mate have on choice?

2. How do people begin the selection process before entering a specific relationship?

3. How do people decide on to whom they will commit themselves (who will become their mates)?

4. How do people deal with differences between anticipated qualities and attributes their mates actually possess?

5. How do people characterize the development of their relationships, from beginning to commitment?
6. How do those who have recently made commitments define their relationships?

7. How does a partner's social network influence the filtering processes?

The couple interviews were used to check for changes in accounts (Scott and Lyman, 1968) between individual responses and couple responses. An answer was sought to the question: in what ways do couples conversationally act out content information they provided individually?
Chapter 3

THE METHOD

Subjects

The subject population was an availability sample of 11 couples. The subjects were solicited from a university population through interpersonal contacts and from announcements in introductory Interpersonal Communication classes (Appendix A). The condition for volunteering was that partners mutually agreed they had made a long-term commitment to their relationship but that they were not married or engaged. In traditional terms, the couples were promised, pinned, or pre-engaged. A couple was eliminated if either partner was an Interpersonal Communication graduate student, or if either had taken COMM 234, Introduction to the Processes of Communication or COMM 470: Relational Development because the data gathered might prove to be self-serving.

Screening took place during the initial meeting. Partners agreed that the above description characterized their relationships. Also at this meeting, couples were informed that the interviews were going to be recorded. The nature of the study was explained and confidentiality was guaranteed. Finally, the interviews were scheduled in the residences of the interviewees.
Materials

A qualitative approach was taken so as to obtain a phenomenological perspective of mate selection. To ensure reliability and validity, data were gathered through triangulation (i.e., a three-way collection strategy). The different kinds of sources for gathering data were (1) structured interviews with individual partners, (2) structured interviews with the individual couples, and (3) Spanier's (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS).

The interviews were organized into sets of three to eight questions with each set pertaining to a specific research question (Appendix B). Interviewing as a technique was selected to gain a clearer understanding of mate selection. McCall and Simmons (1969, p. 5) discussed the usefulness of interviewing:

Although the scientist can . . . acquire directly some sense of the subjective states of the participants, this sense remains his own and cannot merely be assumed to correspond to that of the others. Respondent interviewing is, therefore, necessary for acquiring information about subjective states.

Structure was imposed to maintain focus. Dean and Whyte (1969), in a discussion of threats to interview data, referred to three primary factors that influence responses: (1) the reactive effects of a situation, (2) distortions in testimony, and (3) repertorial inabilities of an interviewee. Structured categories, according to Harper and Askling (1980, p. 80), can be used "as a means of 'guiding' the respondents and insuring systematic discussion of central topics." Also with a structured interview, control is established so that the individual and couple interviews can be compared.
Each couple was asked 12 more general questions, following the format set out by the research questions (Appendix C). This was done for three reasons: (1) as Bogdan and Taylor (1975, p. 118) pointed out, "the multisubject approach allows the researcher to view the relationships between and among people and the differences in their perspectives"; (2) Hocker and Bach (1981) indicated that the way in which couples express themselves is at least as important as what they express, and (3) differences between individual and couple communication may reveal behavioral strategies such as bidding and negotiating that characterize this stage of a relationship. Additionally, interviewing utilizes a verbal channel (as opposed to paper and pencil) that reflects the mode used by the individuals to communicate with one another.

Spanier's (1976) DAS (Appendix D) was the third tool used to collect data. The DAS was selected to provide empirical support for the qualitative data and to assess the level of relationship development. The DAS, a 32-item measure, reflects pragmatic, behavioral compatibility within the dyad. Items in the DAS concern shared tasks, leisure, values, conflict, displays of affection, and degree of commitment. These issues, according to developmental theory, should be of primary importance to those in the process of forming a commitment.

The DAS is based primarily on the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (1959). Within the 32 items, the factors of dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affectional expression are assessed, with a possible total score of 151. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha yielded a .96 rating for internal reliability. Content validity
was accounted for by three judges in terms of the scale's relevancy for contemporary relationships, consistency with existing definitions of adjustment, and the wording and word choice used. Construct validity was established through a correlation with the Locke-Wallace instrument. The correlation was .86 among married couples. The DAS has been proven to be a powerful test of dyadic adjustment and relationship satisfaction. It was useful in determining satisfaction and integration levels of couples in this stage of development.

Procedures

Once a couple agreed to participate, interviewing schedules were set up so that (1) partners were interviewed separately on the same day and (2) an interview with the couple together followed a few days to one week later. All interviews took place in the residences of the interviewees. A pilot study was conducted with members of two couples prior to data collection to ensure that the interviews would last no longer than one and one-half hours. This also was done to enhance consistency and reduce fatigue; too, the pilot was used to see if wording revisions in the research questions might be necessary. The pilot interviews flowed smoothly, so the pilot data were incorporated into the study. No changes were made.

At the beginning of each session, any questions that an interviewee had were answered and, again, anonymity was promised. Before an interview, each subject filled out the DAS. The completed DAS was immediately folded and sealed in an envelope by the respondent; the forms were scored only after the interview data were analyzed.
During the interview, the format in Appendix B was followed except when probing for explication or elaboration. Once each interview was completed, the subject was thanked and reminded to attend the couple interview. Afterward, field notes were recorded on a legal pad page summarizing a broad checklist of conditions: nonverbal cues, time, temperature, room where interview took place, moods (interviewer and interviewees), and emerging impressions.

The tapes were not transcribed verbatim, but pertinent descriptive information and quotations were recorded on coded four-by-six index cards (Appendix E). Coded information included (1) whether it was an individual or couple interview, (2) the sex of the interviewee, and (3) the number of the interview question to which a statement was a response.

The interviews with couples were less structured. This allowed for collaboration and negotiation on responses. Once an interview was completed, the couple was thanked for participating and promised a one-page summary of results, sent when the study was completed. As before, summary notes were written after each couple interview.

Analysis of Results

Computation of scores on the DAS involved simple addition. The total scores were compared first with married couples in Spanier's 1976 study ($\bar{x} = 114.8$) to see if integration and adjustment had occurred. The DAS scores also were examined to see if they covaried with responses or categories which emerged from the interviews. For example, one
couple, whose members were expressing dissonance, produced relatively low scores (96, 104), on the DAS.

The interview responses were qualitatively analyzed with the constant comparative method (McCall and Simmons, 1969), an inductive method of theory development. Glaser (1969, p. 219) stated that

> the constant comparative method is concerned with many hypotheses synthesized at different levels of generality. . . . In contrast to analytic induction, the constant comparative method is concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting (not provisionally testing) many properties and hypotheses about a general phenomenon.

Constant comparison therefore functions well to analyze subjective information concerning relational development toward mate selection. Glaser added that, because constant comparison involves no proof, it is not necessary to consider all available data or to generate categories beforehand. This method lends itself well to process information.

Four steps were followed in the constant comparison made in this study. Step one involved coding each significant response into as many categories of analysis as possible. When categorizing a response, it was compared with other responses in the same category. After a category had acquired three or four responses, a memo on ideas was written. Step two changed the emphasis from comparison of responses with each other to comparison of a particular response with the property of the category it was in. This was done so as to obtain integration.

Glaser (1969) labeled the third step delimiting the theory. This delimiting involved a search for emerging higher level concepts and "underlying uniformities in the original set of categories or their properties" (p. 222). The goal in this stage was to obtain parsimony
of variables and scope in applicability. It is at this stage also that categories became theoretically saturated.

The final step in the constant comparison was writing the theory. Major themes were derived from the memos that were written during coding. Illustrations, examples, and anecdotes came from responses to support the themes.

The procedure was as follows. Cards representing individual and couple interviews were combined. The researcher ran a constant comparison on the first four couples for emerging general themes. A random, equally-sized sample from each of the categories was selected and the overall sample was shuffled together. The pile was handed to a female graduate student in Interpersonal Communication who was told to place the cards into broad categories based on the seven general research questions. She was told that the categories should be defensible, make sense, and that others should be able to understand them. The two categorization schemes were compared.

After the interview data were in for all 11 couples, the process was repeated. A different female graduate student provided an intuitive, deductive cross-check on the categories.

The results are reported in narrative form. The discussion centers around the research questions, their utility, and their relationship to categories which emerged. Because the interview responses were elicited from sets of questions based on the research questions, the connection with the response categories is obvious.

The data also are discussed in terms of individual couples, to reveal the extent to which they acted out their individual perceptions when
responding as a unit. Also, the DAS scores are integrated into the discussion by checking the scores against expressions of satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Finally, implications of the findings of this study to developmental theory, to mate selection, and to further research, are included.
Although no demographic information was sought, some useful information emerged during the course of the study. The subjects ranged in age from 18 to 34. At least one member of each couple attended the university where the study occurred. The three who were not enrolled were graduated. Three couples were involved in long distance relationships (at least 180 miles) and seven couples were parting for the summer.

At the time of the interviews, the couples had been in their present stages an average of 7.2 months. These stages varied in length from two weeks to two years. One couple had been romantically involved for eight years.

Information regarding the seven basic research questions (Appendix B) was garnered from the individual and couple interviews. Subjects' accounts of the development and status of their relationships were highly idiosyncratic. The interviews elicited 904 response cards. Based on the research questions, the researcher sorted responses from the first four couples into seven major categories, each with two or three categories within, resulting in 17 total categories.
Samples from each category were combined, shuffled, and given to a female graduate student to sort into seven categories based on the research questions. Reliability was assessed by dividing the number of agreements in each category by the total number of cards in the category and averaging the total. The percentage of agreement was 42.26. After all 11 couples were interviewed, a category was added for a total of 18. The process was repeated; intercoder agreement for these categories was 64.44 percent and 80.47 percent for the seven major categories. Specific results are in Appendix F.

A different female graduate student was then given a list of the research questions and presented with the sorted stacks of cards. She was asked to derive titles for the categories based on their content. Her titles were combined with the researcher's to avoid theory-biased labels for the categories (Appendix G).

**Question 1**

What influence does a partner's early image of an ideal mate have on choice?

**Category 1.** The first category that emerged from the responses was *Preconceived Ideals*. Three subcategories surfaced: (1) specific, physical features, (2) less specific, trait expectations, and (3) a mesh of values and behaviors--relational fit. Among the physical attributes desired, vague idealizations were offered such as "tall, dark, and handsome" or "cute, good-looking not manly good-looking," as well as specific responses, "I envisioned Cheryl Tiegs." Some respondents
offered physical descriptions first, then added personal essence. "I imagined someone real tall, kind of quiet, like a cowboy. Lean and mean, strong and silent."

When others described their ideals, they referred to personality traits, feelings, or analogies. "I wanted someone patient, compassionate, and understanding. A good father." "I wanted someone like my mother, who was always there and really cared." Because the conceptualizations were somewhat nebulous, a few statements like "I had no preconceived notions" were included in this category.

The third subcategory dealt with both members of the couple.

I wanted someone who I could talk to, who could see what I'm saying, who could understand me. Someone who needed me, yet who was strong. Someone who shares intellectual things and interests with me. Someone who can be close right away.

I envisioned someone who liked to do the things I like to—someone like me.

Category 2. The second category dealt with How the Ideal Image Evolved. Some responses were simplistic. "I ruled out the necessity of having a blond." "I started to look at personality, but I still didn't want anyone fat."

Some were more complex. "That ideal image evolved. I saw glimpses of what I wanted in other relationships. Some things I wanted came out through talking with [my present partner]." Some said their images remained the same, deviated slightly, or were more emphasized.

Category 3. Category 3 contained responses that weighed the Impact of Ideal Images on the Choice to form their present commitments.
Two subcategories emerged: (1) the image was sought and successfully obtained or (2) there was a discrepancy or confusion and an explanation provided. Responses ranged in terms of generality. "My present partner fits the bill. She's a nice person, and I'm physically attracted to her." "He's what I hoped for. We did fun things together. We shared interests. He took care of me. He's a gentleman."

The other responses acknowledged discrepancies or denied relevance.

My early image didn't affect my choice with him.

I got rid of the image before I met him.

When I first met her, she didn't seem to be anything like I expected. Now, she's more like everything.

She's not that close physically. Personalitywise, she's close.

I guess to make him my perfect guy, I'd give him a little broader shoulders, blond hair, make him a little bit more dominant, . . . but that's about it.

Question 2

How do people begin the selection process before entering a specific relationship?

Category 4. The responses that emerged in the category concerned Prerequisites—what an individual was looking for or expected ahead of time. Three subgroups stood out: (1) values or personality traits, (2) specific physical attributes, and (3) a sharing bond or experience.

In response to the interview question which asked what quality or requirement was most important, many answered with one word: "Honesty," "Kindness," "Faithfulness." Some referred to specific values.
"I required that she be Christian." Some responses were vague. "I
wanted her to have a good personality."

The physical criteria covered an equally wide range. "I wanted
someone who no one could consider ugly in any way." "I first looked at
their bodies." When asked what other qualities were important, the
responses were, "I required that they look good from the neck up, too"
and "Sex appeal was the most important quality I looked for."

Others were not so blatant. "They have to have a strong,
silent look. Someone who you'd say, 'Hmmm, how come I haven't noticed
him before?'" Still others took a more tentative approach. "I
required someone who is attractive to me."

The third subgroup dealt with relational expectations.

He has to be affectionate and treat you good—no hitting or
forgetting birthdays. And he has to help around the house.

It was important that he be open with his own feelings and
accepting of mine. He has to be willing to listen, even when it's
hard.

The most important quality I looked for is that he be my best
friend. I needed someone who could accept me, whether or not he
agreed.

"They have to be fun to be around. We have to enjoy doing
things together, as well as individually.

This group included open responses also. "I never had a laundry list of
requirements. I go by feelings."

Category 5. This category dealt with factors that shaped a
respondent's expectations about relationships, How Selection Criteria
Were Derived. Within this category, four primary influences were
identified by different respondents:
(1) observations, (2) memorable messages stored from childhood, (3) values, or ego-based desires, and (4) romantic, dating history.

The subjects observed relationships in a variety of contexts.

I was influenced by what I'd seen in other relationships, by how little people seem to communicate after they're married. By on-again, off-again relationships. By their inability to talk about things.

My family was most important. I watched their problems and I didn't want that.

My most important influence is a couple I observed down the street from my parents' house. They have the ideal relationship—ideal kids, ideal house, ideal everything. I'm impressed by the fact that they're still so much in love.

The memorable messages, or archaic information stored from childhood, originated with parents. "My dad said, 'Watch your girlfriend's mom. She'll turn out the same.'" "My mother said, 'Be honest. Stay a virgin; don't let them try anything.' Of course, they usually forgot about me." Some messages were not direct quotes. "The most important influence was the way my mom talked about how she and dad met. He was the only person she could talk to. I want a similar relationship."

The third set of influences on expectations were claimed to have originated from within, or to reside internally now.

My influences were family-instilled values.

My family influenced me. I'm used to a big, close family. I'm not good at being alone.

The most important influence before this was just a desire to have fun.

What I want most influences my choices.
The final set of factors affecting choices prior to entering a specific relationship concerned personal dating history.

Early on, there was a lot of peer pressure to date a knockout. But later on, I went out with someone who looked good, but didn't treat me well. That relationship made me say, "I don't have to put up with this."

The most important influence was an experience with someone who wouldn't let me dream . . . [who] couldn't understand."

Many of the responses in this category were less specific. "My most important influence is past dating experience." "My primary influence was a lack of success in prior relationships. I saw myself as undesirable." It appears as though filters operate even before a relationship is begun.

**Question 3**

How do people decide on who to commit themselves to (who will become their mates)?

**Category 6. Reasons for Committing: Decisions, Discussions, Actions, and Emotions.** Responses in this category featured diverse rationales for getting into commitments. Intrapersonal decisions and interpersonal discussions were involved. Some of the subjects were guided by feelings, others by behaviors.

Responses in the first subgroup contained adjectives of emotions. "I feel very comfortable with her, and comfortable that she feels the same way." "I decided to make a commitment with him because I was in love with him." Feelings came out in noun and verb form, too. "The happiness I feel when I'm with him is so exciting." "I decided to commit because . . . he cares for me." Feeling also
was used to describe desires for the future "because of the feeling I got that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her."

The other subgroup dealt primarily with behavioral compatibility. I decided to commit because "of all the things we had in common," "we got along so well," "she's fun to be around," "we keep the lines of communication open."

Category 7. This category included responses describing how the commitment was formed, by individuals and the couple. Three subgroups developed: (2) implicit commitment, (2) mutual, explicit decisions, and (3) unilateral, intrapersonal decisions.

The first subgroup of responses reflected an almost passive role. A few respondents used a snowball metaphor.

It wasn't a highly organized process. More of a building up, snowballing effect turning into a good thing.

We fell into it.

It just sorta happened.

I can't pin down how I knew. Over time. It never got dull or boring; it kept moving forward.

The process? I just basically fell in love.

It was the will of God.

Some expressed concerns were shared subtly and some not-so-subtly.

We mostly shared our individual feelings with each other.

He told me he didn't want me to go out with any other guys, so I told him I didn't want him to go out with any other girls.
Many decisions involved planning, or a future orientation.

When deciding, we asked if everyone would accept this. Would our parents accept this? Could we support ourselves financially? The emotional part was there.

We talked about what we both wanted and what we thought it would take to last. And it has. A year and three months now.

Still others thought things through for themselves. "I'm an accountant. I went through a cost/benefit analysis. I decided it would cost too much emotionally to give her up." Additional support for reinforcement theory was present. "I weighed the pros and cons."

Some thought processes were aided by external forces.

I kept thinking how much it would hurt him if I decided I wasn't in love with him and had to tell him that, and so I prayed to God to help me make up my mind about how I felt.

I thought about the song, "It's Hard to Belong to Someone Else When the Right One Comes Along." I thought if there was anyone I could love more than him. I decided there wasn't and, if there was, it didn't matter because I knew I could be happy enough with him.

Some of the responses in this category were more blunt.

I agreed to move in with him because I realized it was temporary.

I asked myself if I wanted to do this, to shelve some of my individual plans.

She: The choice was easy. It felt right. I had decided if he wanted to, I would. But it took him a long time to come around.

He: I kept changing my mind for a while about whether to form a commitment.

Question 4

How do people deal with differences between anticipated qualities and attributes their mates actually possess?

Category 8. The responses to this question actually answered a more general question about problems within and around a relationship.
Category 8 dealt with *Coping Strategies for Problems*. There were two subgroups.

Subgroup one concerned possible coping strategies wherein specific issues were identified and sometimes resolved, individually. Many of the responses stated that a partner was not as confident, neat, ambitious, outgoing, independent, or dependent as the other expected. Other problems were barriers that one partner wanted to overcome within the relationship. "I had to learn to trust him." Still others were working on issues that originated elsewhere but influenced the relationship. "I had to overcome the desire to date others" occurred a few times. Also, "I had to overcome the societal stigma about the age differential." Some responses acknowledged a difference or surprise along with a reframing or justification/explanation. "At first his unpredictability threw me, but I like it. He's a cutup, less serious than previous guys I dated. His differences were welcome."

The other subcategory contained active strategies and joint discussion of problem areas. "I learned to tell her what's on my mind, to go ahead and say something instead of letting it build up. I stopped wearing T-shirts all the time. I still don't have any money, blond hair, or brown eyes."

Some strategies were complementary. "We did a lot of talking. I told him what I didn't like and he told me he'd try to fix it." "I quit nagging her to talk and she started talking." Other responses were more general. "We overcame barriers by talking about them." "I learned to be blunt; otherwise, messages don't get picked up."
**Category 9.** Responses in this category included cues used by partners to decide *when to give up*. Many of the responses referred to personal feelings as the means used to decide whether or not to continue. "I'd know I'd made the wrong choice if I lost trust," ". . . if it got to the point where I was miserable," ". . . if resentment built up," ". . . if I started not to care."

Others appeared to rely on judgments of their partners' actions.

The only thing that would make me think I'd made the wrong choice is if she went through a total change of character, as I know her.

The only thing that would make me think I'd made the wrong choice is if he started being unfaithful.

I'd know I'd made the wrong choice if he . . . started lying constantly. There's good lying, to protect me, and bad lying, to protect himself.

A few respondents referred to transactional changes as indicators. "It would be wrong if we came across something that we can't sit down and work through," ". . . if we quit talking or quit sharing interests.

**Question 5**

How do people characterize the development of their relationships, from beginning to commitment?

**Category 10.** This category contained descriptive information about the mutual activities that initially brought the partners together, *initial impressions* or feelings, and their bearing on progress. The first subcategory was mostly event oriented.

Her roommate introduced us.

We were in marching band together.

She was a student in my class.
We were in line to get our I.D. pictures taken.

I went to work one day and my boss said, "This is ___________." I said, "So it is!"

I tried to get her attention in class and called her the wrong name.

Subcategory two reflected initial feelings and subsequent actions.

I felt high when I met her. . . . Like an addict, I had to have more.

It started on a good note. We got along well, talked well. She said, "I like your pants—nice butt," so it was apparently mutual.

Other positive feelings included liking, admiration, attraction, and charm.

Some of the relationships started on a different note. "I was scared to death of him at first. He was older." She: "I thought he thought he was a cool jock." He: "She hated me at first. So I kept bothering her. Worked pretty good, I guess."

Category 11. This category featured accounts of How the Relationship Moved Beyond the Casual initial phase and how the respondents knew. Within this category, one subcategory dealt with implicit, unshared awareness of progression.

I knew it was going somewhere when he called me 34 times in one month last summer.

I knew because I was really happy and we were spending more and more time together.

I knew . . . because it survived past the ooshy-gooshy stage. We went through a lot of rough times and survived.

I knew . . . when we started talking about our desires for the future. Mutual goals.
Responses in the other subcategory reflected more explicit awareness and assessments as to the synchronization of individual decisions to commit.

I knew it was going somewhere when he gave me a promise ring.

We knew at about the same time because we agreed to spend more time together.

Our individual decisions were within about two months. I initiated, we talked about it, and it was about two months before she accepted it or liked the idea.

Category 12. Responses in this category featured characterizations of Relationship Development, how the process moved from I to we. The first subcategory described significant activities or stages.

Some accounts were specific.

In the beginning, I thought it was a nice spring fling. I had some hope but no idea we'd maintain so much summer contact. I wasn't head-over-heels. After we visited each other's homes, I knew I couldn't go away [on a planned trip] for six months. It grew into a big thing. I wanted commitment; he was willing to give it to me. It's grown into a great relationship, the best I've ever had.

Some accounts were relatively general.

Ups and downs all the way.

It's been hills, valleys, and plateaus.

It developed quickly and steadily.

It developed slowly and steadily.

It developed slowly and painstakingly, with trials and errors.

Still others featured a chronological breakdown (usually by school year), or a description based on changes in relationship definition.

It went from a friendship, to a close friendship, to a romantic relationship. Now it's a stabilized romantic relationship.
Stage one was a student/teacher relationship that was close for an acquaintance. Stage two was a friendship—and I use that word selectively. Stage three was best friend turning into stage four—a lover.

A different subcategory referred specifically to communication behavior during development, whether the response concerned content or fluency.

During the first stage, we couldn't talk as easy as we do now, and we probably talked about different things. We talk easily now, and as we got to know each other we could talk two or three hours without hesitating.

At first I just didn't talk. He started giving me shit. I started opening up with him and we discovered the things we had in common.

Two of the content responses revealed a relatively high awareness of interaction processes.

During the first stage, the talk was basic baloney—classes and stuff. During the boyfriend/girlfriend stage, it was how much we missed each other and we plans. During the low point, it was back to "I did this; school's been tough." As best friends, it's the whole thing combined.

At first we just got to know each other. Shared philosophies. That first couple of months, she'd just come over after work and we didn't talk much. Just about fun things. Then we started talking about commitments in general. The extremes—marriage and freedom. More recently, in the last four months, it's been heavy conflict. We talk about differences in opinions, needs, values. Stuff that built up over last year.

Question 6

How do those who have recently made a commitment define their relationships?

Category 13. This category featured Relational Definitions used by the respondents when describing their relationships. The first subcategory characterized the state of love. Responses dealt
with the impact of love on the relationships and how love within compared to outside loves.

My expectations of love played into it. As our relationship got closer to that, that's what made me do the things I did. . . . Once we started talking about it, we got closer.

Love is nice, and a real important feeling. But when I don't feel it, I know it will return. It's not the basis of our commitment.

Love is important. I would not have made a commitment or asked him for one if I wasn't sure that we shared that feeling. It's essential for commitment.

We grew into love; we didn't fall in love. What we have now is an expression of love. Mutual love has to be there before I'll marry somebody.

In contrasting the love between partners with the love felt for others, the respondents made qualitative judgments or intensity comparisons.

Sometimes I love him the way I love my parents. Other times I love him as a mate—with the physical relationship. A lot of times I love him as a friend, as a companion.

It's different than my love for my parents. It's deeper because it's one-on-one. I love my parents as two people. With [my partner] we're friends, too. We were friends first, then became lovers.

It's not the same as others. It's more than wanting him to get what he wants. I have a personal interest in helping him get it.

My love for her is stronger. I'd do the most for her. She's the most important.

The second subcategory featured characterizations or characteristics of the relationships, especially uniquenesses and positive attributes.

[The relationship is] like honey. Real smooth, real sweet.

The relationship is like a three-ring circus. Sometimes it's real serious, like the tightrope when everyone's watching. A lot of times it's really crazy, like when all the clowns run around. Other
times it's really sad, like at the end when it's all over and you wonder, "What's going to happen next?" And there's always something going on; it's just like the three rings. I run around like a crazy fool and he's like the ringmaster, making sure I don't trip and break my toe. [She had recently broken her toe.] It's fun; it's really fun. It's not serious. We're serious, but our relationship is not serious.

It's unique because it's lasted this long.

It's funny how we get along so well. Sometimes we say the same things at the same time.

Category 14. Responses in this category provided a Label of Relationship Progress used to define the relationships.

We are very seriously committed. We go looking at wedding rings. Sometimes I want to rush out and get married right now. Other times I tell myself no; it isn't time yet.

We're promised. We plan to be married within two years.

Pinned means we both made a commitment to each other. It's a symbol of our love. I don't like going steady, but I guess that's what it symbolized. But it's more than that, too.

It's a very healthy friendship. She's one of the best friends I ever had.

Other responses focused less on a label and more on a processual, tentative description.

It's still in the building process--never at a standstill. Development is always going forward.

Coming out of a few weeks of pretty rough times, it's climbing up. It's bullish.

It's serious, but if either one of us wanted to get out, we could.

Category 15. In contrast to the previous two categories, this one identified Trouble Spots or differentiating issues in the relationships. Some of the concerns were signified as originating outside the dyadic relationship.
It's troubling that we can't be together more. Her parents' reaction is troubling.

It's troubling that we're going to be so far apart this summer.

It's troubling that we have to wait so long to get married.

Other concerns originated within the dyadic relationships.

It's troubling that we have conflicting interests and opinions. It stems from the same thing that's exciting [about this relationship]--value differences.

She doesn't always want to participate in activities with me.

We differ in what we want to do with our lives.

Sometimes she expects me to be someone I'm not.

Money nearly emerged as a trouble spot of its own. Money problems entered as an inside and an outside concern.

It's troubling that we don't have any money.

Finances are troubling; I get worried about the future.

It's disturbing that our financial values are so different. We had a couple of nasty discussions with almost no common ground about how much money we want and how we want to spend it.

Question 7

How does a partner's social network influence the filtering process?

Category 16. Responses in this category implied that others do not influence the couple: It's Just the Two of Us.

My mom always goes overboard. . . . It doesn't influence me much; I'm used to it.

They don't really influence my choices. It helps, but I'm going to do what I'm going to do.

No one influences me. All my decisions are a function of the relationship.
No one's cheering us on or [is] against it. If someone pushed, I'd fight it.

Category 17. This category contained responses that indicated *Partners will Persist, With or Without Support*. Every subject in the study who acknowledged others' influence framed the influence as positive. If a couple met resistance, it only strengthened their relationship.

The first subcategory suggested that the couple was proceeding with validation from others.

My friends cheer us on. It reinforces the choices I've already made.

My parents have supported us. My mother writes letters addressed to both of us.

My family invites [my partner] along on family outings without asking me to ask him.

Other respondents recognized resistance from others and framed it as a positive influence.

Her parents make us stronger by making us think.

Our interactions with members of the opposite sex makes me realize there's competition, something to lose.

Others cause us to discover differences in our perceptions. They force us to discuss things. They put us in situations where we discover things we took for granted before.

Category 18. Responses in this category identified *Defending Statements that Bond the Dyad*. The first subcategory contained responses to the question, "What makes you sure s/he's the one?"

We like so many of the same things.

He's everything I ever wanted.

I know because we love each other so much.
I just know. There's no pat formula. I asked my dad, "How'd you know Mom was the one?" He said, "I guess you just know." I found that to be true.

I know it's right because we've survived a lot of tests. The test of time—it's lasted over a year. The test of separation—we were apart last summer.

The final subcategory contained responses to objections from others. One group offered rationalizations.

I told my mom he treats me well. I tell [my parents] they don't know, and I ask them to be open.

They don't understand; they haven't heard us talk.

Some say he's not for me because of his family's reputation. I say he's not like the rest of them.

The rest of the replies to objections were defiant.

Blow it out your ear.

I'd tell them to get bent.

She's not going out with you; she's going out with me.

I'd tell them they're crazy.

Couple Interviews

The couple interviews were used to answer, "To what extent do couples act out information provided individually?" Communication behavior, referred to explicitly in the individual interviews, surfaced in the couple interviews. One female expressed a desire for her partner to be more dominant. In the couple interview she answered nearly all the questions, to which he added, "Yeah." Sometimes she ordered him to respond after she did. When he listed a number of qualities or behaviors he thought he lacked in her eyes, she added more.
Both members of a different couple claimed that the female member didn't talk enough. The male answered most of the questions first. Sometimes he was the only respondent; often her response was an agreement to his response. They also referred to his sense of humor as a significant contributor to the relationship. He joked with her frequently throughout the interview. In answer to the question, "How did the two of you overcome initial barriers," he replied, "With a lot of baby oil."

Another couple revealed a behavioral contradiction to a verbal conviction. Both individuals commented as to the ineffectiveness and undesirability of quid pro quo bargaining in relationships. While talking about it, and throughout the interview, each partner offered a response and then checked to make sure the other had equal say.

More subtle patterns also were revealed. Several of the individuals involved in relationships where there was said to be little negotiation, planning, or talking about processes, were surprised by information that emerged in the couple interview. These same respondents took more time reaching consensus on responses to questions such as, "How closely times were your individual decisions made?"

Male: Not too closely timed, I don't think.

Female: When did you decide?

Male: November. You?

Female: I didn't really want to date anyone else from the start, but I don't know if that means commitment. If our timing was different, it was only a couple of weeks. It was never exact because I can't remember a time when we actually did say we were committed.
Individuals from another couple commented about the role complementarity in their relationship. Several of their responses to the couple interview questions were offered by one partner, unanswered by the other, as if that partner's job was to answer that particular question. Also, the female answered one question, "I tried to move the relationship toward the direction I wanted it." The male responded, "I said whatever happens, happens." The relationship was apparently built around complementarity.

One couple was struggling with the issue of exclusivity: should they or should they not be going out with others? The male wanted it exclusive; the female did not. When talking about social network influences, he talked about how family and friends bond them. She talked about how others make them cognizant of their opposing perspectives, referring to a discussion they had about her date with another. During the couple interview, he addressed her with his responses and she addressed the interviewer. The relationship was living the core content issue.

To some extent, the couple interviews elicited the information sought. A few of the couples managed to act out processes described by individual members. At least one couple behaviorally belied verbal claims. The limited amount of contact provided limited data, but it appears that dimensions such as conversational dominance, complementarity, and affectional expression might be some processes that couples can identify. Other processes such as negotiation may be more difficult for the involved individuals to see.
The DAS proved to be a valuable tool on a macro level and a micro level. On a macro level, it served as a validity check. The couples should have reached a degree of dyadic adjustment to the point of pinning, promise, or pre-engagement, yet they were not formally bound to the relationships. It stands to reason that the individuals would have been highly satisfied. The DAS measures adjustment and satisfaction; the mean score for the couples in this study was 120.82 compared to 114.8 for satisfied married couples in Spanier's (1976) study. Individual scores are in Appendix H.

On a micro level, the DAS provided a reliability check on individual's references to the four dimensions measured: consensus, satisfaction, cohesion, and affection. One couple who expressed problems in a number of areas had the lowest combined score of the group (male = 104, female = 96), a full 20 points below the group mean.

Another couple expressed concern over differences in opinions and changes in orientation. The male scored 100, the female 127. The difference between the two scores nearly doubled the next highest gap between any two partners. In this case, consensus difficulties were assessed by the instrument, as well as by the partners' perceptions.

The average DAS score for females was 123.27. The males averaged 118.36. Five of the 11 males scored higher than their partners, however, even though the other males averaged significantly lower scores. The average difference is misleading. Overall, subjects' scores on the DAS
supported the prediction that these promised partners exhibit high levels of satisfaction and commitment.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

This study examined the personal perspectives of individuals who were in the process of mate selection, the filters they used when making significant choices, and how dyadic involvement affects individual filtering constructs. Twenty-two subjects from 11 couples were studied using structured interviews, individual and couple, and a relationship satisfaction survey. The couples were pinned, promised, or pre-engaged; all of the subjects hoped for a future with their partners.

Most of the individuals in the study began with some image of an ideal mate. The images varied in terms of generality and focus. Highly specific and/or detailed ideals evolved most with experience.

Most of those who attained their ideals did so because of the built-in subjectivity or flexibility of their images. A person who envisioned an understanding mate could define a number of different behaviors as understanding or choose to see only those behaviors identified as understanding. In any case, early ideals did not appear to be a rigid filter for the subjects in this study.

Mate selection filters did appear to emerge in individuals before the specific relationships studied here were begun. These filters emerged in individualized packages. A person who sought trustworthiness before entering a present relationship also gauged the success of the
relationship by the trust level, and claimed that a lack of trust would be the only cause for termination. On the other hand, a filter package might contain an assortment of desired or required qualities. The subjects in this study could not only identify their preconceived filters, but most could trace where the filters originated.

A variety of paths were followed to arrive at commitment. Filters for commitment were highly personal, judging the other's behavior or assessing one's own feelings, or they were contingent upon interaction within the dyad. Some of the responses suggested a structured intrapersonal or interpersonal decision-making process. For others, commitment just happened. Commitment, for the most part, was defined 22 ways.

Various coping strategies for problem areas were used to keep the relationship intact. Mutual investment therefore appears to have influenced individual filtering. Bottom-line filters were often nebulous. It was up to the individual to decide when faith, trust, or interest had been lost or abused. These ill-defined concepts gave the relationships the benefit of the doubt.

The couples in the study illustrated the complexity of relational development. No two couples met under the same circumstances. The rate and manner of development varied. Even within a couple, what was reported as a slow development for one partner was likely to be labeled quick by the other.

The indicators used by the subjects to ascertain when and how a relationship was progressing possessed a fluidlike quality. An individual could tell, for example, that the relationship had advanced
because the partners were spending more time together. The consequence of subjectivity, however, is that some questions are left unanswered. They were spending more time together than when? How much time is more? Subjects could articulate their filters and criteria, yet the inherent flexibility of their constructs allows for a virtually unexplainable spiralling process.

When attempting to account for the entire development of their relationships, the subjects used one of two basic strategies: (1) an attempt was made to break the development into stages or (2) characterizations such as a snowball rolling down a hill were used. Even when stages were described, approximate time references were made or ambiguous relationship definitions were used. The process of development appears to be elusive.

Considering that a homogenous sample of couples was sought, relational definitions offered by the subjects were highly individual. Few traditional terms or definitions from the literature were echoed. Instead, awareness of process continued to surface as respondents provided past-present-future characterizations. They usually referred to a point they had come to, or a point they were at, that was leading to some end goal.

Subjects were able to identify positives and negatives associated with their relationships. Emphasis was placed on the positive and categories containing positive, optimistic responses were comparatively larger, yet few references to direct cost/reward assessments were made. It makes sense that promised relationships are promising to those within.
Social networks were not identified as a significant influence on filters. Two significant conclusions, however, may be drawn from the data. One is that every subject in the study managed to frame the network as a positive or neutral influence. Other people frequently emerged as obvious supports. Those who did not appear to obviously support a couple only reinforced the partners' commitment.

Another conclusion is that networks appear to operate tacitly as a major filter between the present stage of involvement and the next step: formal engagement or marriage. Whether the barrier was stated as time, finances, or education, there appeared to be an underlying concern relating to significant others' graces. Partners who define themselves as pre-engaged claim they would be married if it weren't for X, but they do not discuss formal engagement—as if it would be risky to unveil a full-sized diamond.

The couple interviews functioned well to (1) contribute information to the data gathered individually and (2) behaviorally manifest phenomena which were alluded to verbally. Not all couples revealed significant patterns, but couples identified and displayed interaction that served to set them apart from others. Considering the limited amount of contact provided during the couple interviews, rich results were gathered from the data.

The high average score on the DAS can be interpreted several ways. These couples may have had to achieve a large degree of adjustment to have made it to their present stages. Add to that the optimism associated with a promised relationship. Also, subjects' scoring on
DAS frequently involved speculations and hypothetical situations concerning shared finances and households.

**Implications**

Qualified implications of this study to extant literature can be drawn. To the extent that subjects were guided by their feelings, attraction theory was generally supported. Rather than identify specific foci of evaluation, several individuals reported that choices were based on favorable predispositions.

The initial factors in attraction delineated by Wilmot (1979) were, for the most part, supported. Propinquity was important for all the couples at some point in the development of their relationships. All but one couple maintained contact through work or through the shared space of a high school or college campus. Summers apart, however, were perceived as positive contributors to relationship growth. One woman especially, said that she didn't think the relationship would still be intact if it weren't for the emotional correspondence carried on during the first summer apart.

A more pertinent concept seems to be closeness induced by the couple. Several of the subjects became aware that their relationships were progressing when they noticed an increase in time spent together. Furthermore, four of the couples were cohabiting or had cohabited at the time of the study. Many of the individuals said that the thought of spending the coming summer apart was troubling.

On the other hand, five of the couples were parting for the summer. Two males were pursuing careers that would take them away from
their partners. Neither of these relationships carried an explicit promise of a future together. Instead, individuals expressed tentative hope. During the study, the partners in three couples were at least 180 miles apart. In spite of these situations, all the couples expected separation to be a temporary state. Propinquity was important to these developing relationships.

Similarity was unanimously identified as an important contributor to the relationship. Shared interests and activities were referred to most, but similarity in backgrounds, values, thought patterns, and sense of humor were also mentioned. Similarity was expressed as important to entering and maintaining these relationships; a few subjects claimed that a decrease in attitude similarity would indicate it was time to get out.

Communication behavior was frequently identified as an important filter. Several subjects focused on interaction patterns rather than, or in addition to, emotions or personality traits. Communication was a filter for initiating, maintaining, and terminating relationships. During initial attraction, evaluations of communication behavior had one of two consequences: the subject was pleased and pursued the relationship or initial interaction left the subject displeased or neutral. In the latter case, imposed propinquity such as the confines of a classroom or a shared social circle bought the judged person time to change the judge's mind.

According to the literature, further attraction is based on reinforcement principles or perceived equity. The subjects in this study continued to focus on initial attraction factors: positive feelings, similarities, and shared activities. Two respondents explicitly
referred to "a cost/benefit analysis" and "pros and cons"; but, for the most part, subjects looked at positives and negatives one at a time.

Equity theory received little support. When subjects talked about initial overtures or later changes in relationship definition, several indicated the other's willingness as one of the reasons for their willingness. This is actually reciprocity, however; contributions from self and partner were usually discussed separately.

Sociocultural determinants were discussed by Murstein (1980) as the first factors in mate selection. Age, intelligence, religion, and other areas received isolated incidents of attention. Far and away, the subjects in this study were most cognizant of physical attraction. Not only was attraction to the other important, but two of the males expressed limited confidence in their own attractiveness as a reason for staying in the relationship.

All of the subjects suggested that, for them, a love dichotomy exists. The love they felt for their mates was somehow different than their love for others. For some, their love for their partners was stronger. For others, there was a qualitative distinction. Still others exemplified differences between activities shared with one's partner and those shared with others. No clear support rests with any single love theory, but the theorists' shared orientation toward a love dichotomy stands strong.

The subjects in this study appear to base their choices on operating filters, as suggested by theorists such as Bolton (1961), Duck (1973), Kerckhoff and Davis (1962), and Winch (1958). Only Duck, however, suggested that these filters reside in personal constructs, as
was found to be the case in this study. The 22 filtering systems used
to build the 11 relationships in this study contradict theories sug-
gesting that general mate selection filters exist.

None of the definitive theories of mate selection received solid support. One theme, however, from several of the theories emerged as significant for these individuals. The concept of role compatibility, as outlined in Murstein's (1970) SVR theory, was referred to by virtually all the subjects as a necessary function of commitment.

More recent theories of mate selection shared two notions: (1) mate selection is a process and (2) each step in the process has a significant effect on the next. Although these theories provide limited application to conceptualizations offered by the subjects in this study, the shared notions above were significant.

Many of the subjects described the process as elusive, like Rubin's (1973) characterization of an intimacy/commitment spiral. Expressions such as "a snowballing effect" and "fell in love" were used frequently. Also, the subjects offered definitions that explained how they had come to a given point, or what the point they were at implied for the future. To the extent that mate selection theorists can capture the dynamics of process, they will be able to conceptualize commitment formation similarly to those involved in it.

Relational development and intimacy theorists were supported by this study. Subjects' characterizations of the development of their relationships most closely approximated Altman and Taylor's (1973) and Knapp's (1978) theories. When subjects talked about getting to know or getting used to each other, they were referring to Altman and
Taylor's *orientation* phase. When they talked about starting to tell each other how they felt, they were engaging in *exploratory affective exchange*. When they referred to how comfortable they felt or the other's unpredictability, they were describing the spontaneity and flexibility associated with the *affective exchange* stage.

Some support was suggested for Knapp's (1978) stage theory by subjects who focused on communication. They described *initiating circumstances*. They talked about *experimenting* with demographic information. Most of these subjects could identify when and how *intensifying* began to occur. Their *integrating* was apparent when they spoke for each other, referring to the couple as *we*. References to formal *bonding* were frequently used to suggest how serious they were about their commitments.

Neither of these theories matches exactly the subjects' descriptions, nor were the other theories positively excluded. Some of the subjects, however, chose to describe development in communication terms and, of these subjects, a few expressed themselves in a way most similar to Altman and Taylor (1973) and Knapp (1978).

An attempt was made to apply Adam's (1979) model of mate selection to the subjects in this study. It appears that his model contains enough scope and flexibility to fit all these relationships. On the other hand, his model does not account for negative first impressions, overcoming barriers through mutual influence, or specific criteria used by individuals.

Stage theory has its place. Subjects tended to characterize their relationships in stage terms and they identified qualitative and
quantitative shifts in communication behavior. Large samples need to be experimentally studied to determine which theories best conceptualize relational development.

Some of the specific conceptual areas featured in the literature were identified by the subjects in this study as contributing to their filtering constructs. Knapp, Stohl, and Reardon's (1981) notion of memorable messages was an influence on several subjects' filters. One subject astutely noted the function of idioms (Hopper, Knapp, Scott, 1981) in his relationship. "Our terms of endearment are words like asshole, shit-ass, and shit-for-brains. [The use of these idioms] brings us together, separates us from others."

Murstein's (1976b) study of desired qualities featured nine rankings for the men and women in his study. Of the nine general qualities prized by women in his study, only the items ranked two (dominant male stereotype), five (physical appearance), and six (loving and tolerant) were alluded to by subjects in this study. Of the nine men's loadings, items five (outspoken), seven (physical and social appearance), and nine (passionate and man-oriented) were mentioned. These findings could be explained by demographic differences between the Connecticut students in Murstein's (1976b) study and the subjects in this study, or by differences in data gathering methods.

Several of the priorities discussed in Peplau's (1981) study were referred to by subjects in this study: talking about feelings, sharing activities, fidelity, living together, laughing easily, supportive friends, political attitudes, individual careers, working together on tasks, and nonexclusivity. Members of either sex were
likely to bring up any of these topics. Sex differences in Peplau's study appear to be inconsequential for subjects in this study.

The crux of Thibault and Kelley's (1959) Comparison Level theory emerged as a concern. Thoughts of dating others, or of waiting until one is older to settle down, were squelched by perceived advantages of remaining in the present relationship in its present form. One woman acknowledged that she might be happier in a different relationship but not enough so to warrant terminating her present relationship.

Concerning social networks, an interesting finding emerged from this study. All influences were perceived to have a positive or neutral effect on the relationship. The Romeo and Juliet Effect described by Rubin (1973) applies convincingly. In the face of adversity from significant others, all subjects reported that it helped by making them think or that it made them stronger, more determined.

Future researchers would do well to begin with qualitatively induced theory. Further, more manageable qualitative theory building could be pursued with any one of the research questions to see if subcategories and groups in this study emerge as categories of their own. Any one of the 18 categories or 37 subcategories in this study would transform readily into research questions to be empirically tested.

For example, the subcategory which dealt with the state of love in the relationships, suggested that romantic love is different than that felt for others. It furthermore was suggested that the love for a mate is stronger in intensity or qualitatively distinct from other love. Samples of pre-engaged, engaged, or married individuals could be tested. Is the love felt for one's mate different than the love for
others? Is the love felt for one's mate more intense, a different kind of love, or both? How are these differences acted out? The same could be done with information from the other categories. Examples such as this demonstrate the efficacy of research that begins with qualitative theory building.

Conclusion

As well as considering areas of promise, future researchers would do well to consider limitations of this study. The methodology used here leaves some questions unanswered. Qualitative approaches are seldom useful to test theory and it is difficult to assess the extent to which these findings are generalizable.

The structured interviewing, in particular, contains potential for distortion. With the structured approach, respondents were guided in the direction desired by the researcher, yet the purpose was to get subjective information from the respondent's perspective. Also, the demand characteristics associated with interviewing tend to elicit socially desirable responses. This was compounded in the present study by the subject matter; many of these subjects were well rehearsed in providing good reasons for forming a commitment.

The utility of the couple interviewing was limited. The problem of social desirability was most troublesome here. Each respondent wanted to say the right thing to the interviewer and the other partner. A frequent initial response to questions was, "You first."

Another problem with the couple interviews was that the brief contact with the subjects only suggested areas of promise for further
research. No definitive statements about the couples' behavior can be made. The information that was elicited was interesting and could be pursued, but findings in the present study were tentative.

In fact, all the information gathered from these subjects must be interpreted with caution. Not only was the sample size small, but also the data were gathered through each instrument only once. Whether or not the subjects would respond the same way again is unknown.

This sample is somewhat unique in that these subjects are simultaneously homogenous and heterogenous. They are homogenous to the extent that they all classified themselves as pinned, promised, or pre-engaged, which might account for the general optimism and positive bias. They are heterogenous to some degree in areas such as background, age, mobility aspiration, and cognitive style. This could explain some of the diversity in their accounts of relational development.

Another limitation is that retrospective reports of how the commitments were formed and how the relationships developed allow distortion to enter in. Subjects might have found themselves in a serious relationship and then decided to explain what happened. Subjects might not have been able to recall what was going through their minds at the specific moment in question. Few expressed ignorance concerning the process of how they got involved.

In spite of these limitations, several major findings emerged from this study. These participants in mate selection appear to carry with them personal filtering constructs. These constructs feature flexibility in interpretation and application, and they allow the partner to use selective perception in order to comply with the filters professed.
These constructs are idiosyncratic in nature. They were formed by significant influences and experiences, and they are maintained or modified according to certain areas of concentration in the present relationship. Mutual influence apparently allows these constructs to be shaped somewhat, and allows the partners to share filters.

Each of the couples saw their relationship as somehow distinct from others; each dyad was special in its own way. To some extent, this can be explained by the methods used to collect data. More likely, this distinction is socially ascribed. We are trained to look for that one and only. Virtually every partner has been or will be called upon to answer the question, "How do you know this person's the one?"

As mentioned before, all the subjects viewed their love for their partners as different from their love for others, either in degrees of intensity or in type. This difference felt was frequently an additional indicator that this person was the one.

Finally, all influences from social networks were considered positive or neutral. Opposers served to bond the dyads; supporters were encouraging. This finding coincided with the general optimism of the responses. There was a tendency to focus on the positive.

In conclusion, it is obvious from this study that all-encompassing theories, particularly those designed for existing relationships, fail to capture the essence of developing relationships. Even with the small sample used, operating personal filter constructs and patterns of development in this study were highly diverse. When confronted with choices like those involved in mate selection, individuals act on their
own perceptions. Discovery of these perspectives enhances our knowledge of relationship development toward mate selection.
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Berquist, C., & Shellen, W. N. Conversational openers between opposite sex dyads in initial interaction. Paper presented at the Western Speech Communication Association Convention, San Jose, California, 1981.


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APPENDIX A
ANNOUNCEMENT FOR INSTRUCTORS

Milt Thomas, a graduate student in Interpersonal Communication, is looking for volunteers to be in a communication study. His thesis concerns how people choose their mates—someone they are willing to make a long-term commitment with. He needs people who classify themselves as pinned, promised, or pre-engaged—people who have made their choice as to who they want for a mate but have not cemented the relationship formally with engagement or marriage. Both members of the couple must participate; each individual will meet with Milt for a one-hour interview and then meet with him as a couple for an hour. He will ask you to fill out a brief survey, and he will ask questions about how the relationship developed. He promises confidentiality and a report of the results to each of the participants once the study is completed.

If you are interested in helping, please leave your name, phone number, and address with me and Milt will contact you, or you can contact him personally in LA 339, extension 6604.
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

I. What influence did the partner's early image of an ideal mate have on choice?

1. When you were younger, how did you envision your ideal mate?

2. How did this image change with time?

3. How did this affect your choice to commit to your present partner?

II. How do people begin the selection process before entering a specific relationship?

1. Before this relationship, what was the single most important quality you looked for in a mate?

2. What other qualities were important to you?

3. Before entering this relationship, what qualities did you require before you would even consider someone as a potential mate?

4. What influences shaped your expectations/requirements for a mate prior to this relationship?

5. Prior to this relationship, what was the single most important influence on your list of expectations for a mate?

III. How do people decide on to whom they will commit themselves (who will become their mates)?

1. What was it about your partner that made you decide to commit?

2. How closely does your partner match who you thought you would choose?

3. What does s/he lack?

4. What was the single most important deciding factor in your choice?

5. How did you become aware that this relationship was going somewhere?
6. Do you think s/he knew at about the same time you did? What makes you reply this way?

7. What kind of process did you go through when deciding whether to make a commitment with this person?

8. What kind of process did the two of you share?

IV. How do people deal with differences between anticipated qualities and attributes their mates actually possess?

1. In what ways does your partner differ from what you expected?

2. How did you explain these differences?

3. What kinds of things do you feel you had to overcome before you could commit yourself to your partner?

4. What things did you tell each other at first about what you wanted in a relationship that later become untrue or irrelevant?

5. How have the two of you handled this change?

6. What would make you know for sure that you had made the wrong choice of partner?

V. How do subjects characterize the development of their relationships, from beginning to commitment?

1. What were the circumstances leading up to your initial meeting?

2. How did you feel about your partner at first?

3. How did these feelings affect future progress?

4. Characterize for me the progression of your relationship from beginning to present.

5. How did you define or label this relationship at various stages?

6. Describe the choice process you used when deciding to commit. Was it a choice? Who made it? Did you make the choice again and again, or was it more like a one-time experience?

7. How did love play in the development of your relationship? What kind of love do you feel for your partner (is it like the way you feel about others you love)?
VI. How do those who have recently made a commitment define their relationships?

1. Where does your relationship stand now?

2. Describe it for me.

3. What changes are going on right now in this relationship about what you want? What your partner wants?

4. What's exciting about this relationship?

5. What's troubling about this relationship?

6. What's funny (odd, unique, different) about this relationship?

VII. How does a partner's social network influence the filtering processes?

1. How have others (besides the two of you) affected the development of this relationship?

2. What have you said (would you say) to friends who ask, "What makes you sure s/he's the one?" If family members ask?

3. Is anyone you love upset with this relationship? What bearing does this have on the relationship?

4. If they say (said), "This person is not for you," what are their reasons? How do you respond?

5. Is anyone cheering you on? What influence does s/he have on your choices?
COUPLE INTERVIEW

1. How did individual expectations going into this relationship affect its progress?

2. How did the two of you overcome initial barriers?

3. What unique traits of this relationship were responsible for its growth?

4. To what extent was your choice to form a commitment a joint decision?

5. How closely timed were your individual decisions made?

6. How did you negotiate the details of forming a commitment?

7. To what extent were the two of you aware of shortcomings (deficiencies) you possessed in the eyes of your partner?

8. How did you work to overcome these?

9. What do the two of you do to maintain the relationship as it now stands?

10. Define your relationship together.

11. How did your relationship develop, from your initial meeting until now?

12. Who besides the two of you influences your relationship, and how do they influence it?
APPENDIX D
DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Always Agree</th>
<th>Almost Agree</th>
<th>Occasionally Disagree</th>
<th>Frequently Disagree</th>
<th>Almost Disagree</th>
<th>Always Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Handling family finances</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Matters of recreation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Religious matters</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Demonstrations of affection</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Friends</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sex relations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Philosophy of life</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Alms, goals, and things believed important</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Amount of time spent together</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Making major decisions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Household tasks</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Leisure time interests and activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Career decisions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>All the time</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>More often than not</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Do you confide in your mate?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Do you ever regret that you married? (or lived together)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. How often do you and your mate &quot;get on each other's nerves?&quot;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23. Do you kiss your mate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Every Day</th>
<th>Almost Every Day</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All of them</td>
<td>Most of them</td>
<td>Some of them</td>
<td>Very few</td>
<td>None of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kisses</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Mostly</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All of them</td>
<td>Most of them</td>
<td>Some of them</td>
<td>Very few</td>
<td>None of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Less than once a month</th>
<th>Once or twice a month</th>
<th>Once or twice a week</th>
<th>Once a day</th>
<th>More often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ideas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. Laugh together

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Less than once a month</th>
<th>Once or twice a month</th>
<th>Once or twice a week</th>
<th>Once a day</th>
<th>More often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. Calmly discuss something

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Less than once a month</th>
<th>Once or twice a month</th>
<th>Once or twice a week</th>
<th>Once a day</th>
<th>More often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28. Work together on a project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Less than once a month</th>
<th>Once or twice a month</th>
<th>Once or twice a week</th>
<th>Once a day</th>
<th>More often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (Check yes or no)

29. 0 1 Being too tired for sex.

30. 0 1 Not showing love.

31. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Unhappy</th>
<th>Fairly Unhappy</th>
<th>A Little Unhappy</th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Very Happy</th>
<th>Extremely Happy</th>
<th>Perfect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

5 I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.

4 I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.

3 I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.

2 It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.

1 It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.

0 My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

Source:

#15  THE PROCESS?  I JUST BASICALLY FELL IN LOVE.
APPENDIX F
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Major category</th>
<th>Total averages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After four couples (136 cards)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreements</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cards</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% agreement</td>
<td>45.83</td>
<td>18.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After all couples (90 cards)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreements</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cards</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% agreement</td>
<td>86.66</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Totals (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After all couples (90 cards)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreements*</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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*Five cards per category.*
CATEGORY TITLES

Category 1
Researcher: Ideal image.
Assistant: Preconceived ideals.
Title used: Preconceived Ideals.

Category 2
Researcher: Changes in image over time.
Assistant: Emotional maturing; coming to terms with a workable reality.
Title used: How the Ideal Image Evolved.

Category 3
Researcher: Impact of ideals on choice.
Assistant: How successful were they in meeting their ideals?
Title used: Impact of Ideal Images on Choice.

Category 4
Researcher: Prior expectations.
Assistant: Prerequisites, ahead of time.
Title used: Prerequisites.

Category 5
Researcher: Influences on criteria.
Assistant: Impetus for decision making prior to relationship.
Title used: How Selection Criteria were Derived.

Category 6
Researcher: Reasons for committing--feelings, compatibilities.
Assistant: Personal decisions and discussions--emotional, behavioral.
Title used: Reasons for Committing: Decisions, Discussions, Actions, and Emotions.
Category 7

Researcher: How we formed a commitment.
Assistant: Joint decisions and situational occurrences.
Title used: How the Commitment was Formed.

Category 8

Researcher: Coping strategies for differences, problems, shortcomings.
Assistant: Issues of problem ownership.
Title used: Coping Strategies for Problems.

Category 9

Researcher: Insurmountable odds.
Assistant: Inflexibility or freeze point.
Title used: When to Give Up.

Category 10

Researcher: Circumstances, feelings during initial contact.
Assistant: Initial attraction based on mutual activities.
Title used: Initial Impressions.

Category 11

Researcher: When they knew.
Assistant: When it moved beyond the initial, casual stage.
Title used: How the Relationship Moved Beyond the Casual.

Category 12

Researcher: Characterizations of development.
Assistant: Identification of the on-going process of moving from I to we.
Title used: Relationship Development.

Category 13

Researcher: Description, definitions.
Assistant: Description of how they perceive their relationship.
Title used: Relational Definitions.
Category 14
Researcher: Label or statement of progress.
Assistant: I to we change in orientation.
Title used: Label of Relationship Progress.

Category 15
Researcher: Trouble spots.
Assistant: Acknowledging, verbalizing differentiating issues.
Title used: Trouble spots.

Category 16
Researcher: Just the two of us influence it.
Assistant: Pretty much unaffected by others.
Title used: It's Just the Two of Us.

Category 17
Researcher: Influences--how we make them all into positives.
Assistant: We will persist, with or without support.
Title used: Partners Will Persist, With or Without Support.

Category 18
Researcher: Possible arguments against and refutations.
Assistant: Defenses that bond us.
Title used: Defending Statements that Bond the Dyad.
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<th>Male</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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Note: total mean = 120.82