Discuss the role of communication in maintaining relationships

Introduction; explain how important communication is for maintaining relationships:

-To maintain a relationship people must communicate. Relationships end when individuals stop communicating

-The quality of a relationship is affected by the quality of the communication

Factors that can affect the quality of communication in a relationship:

1. Attribution. How you explain the behavior of your partner (dispositional or situational) and how it is communicated to him/her

Supporting research

* Bradbury & Fincham (1990): Conducted a meta-analysis of research studies on attributions made by couples on each others behavior. Poor marital quality was related to attributing negative behaviors to dispositional factors.
* Bradbury & Fincham (1993): A 12-month longitudinal study showed that the kind of attributions married couples made predicted marital satisfaction at the end of the study.

1. Self disclosure. How much you open up and share about yourself to your partner.

Supporting research

* Social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973): Relationships are formed by a gradual process of self-disclosure; the sharing of personal facts, inner thoughts and feelings
* Collins & Miller (1994): A meta analysis showed that people who disclose intimate information about themselves are more liked than people who don’t

1. Awareness of that men and women communicate differently

Supporting research

* Tannen (1990): In observational studies, she found gender differences in how men and women have conversations. Men interrupt more, women use more language tags, women prefer emotional support whereas men tend to have a problem solving approach to problems
* Reis (1986): Women self disclose more than men. Women also disclose more to other women than men to other men.

Evaluation

+Awareness of the role of communication in maintaining relationship can be used to improve the quality of relationship, e.g. through marriage counseling

-Research mainly comes from western countries (generalisability factor) – other cultures may communicate differently or some factors may not be as important for a good relationship (such as self disclosure

+Research is qualitative/self report. May increase credibility, but respondents may not be fully honest

**Conclusion**

Communication plays a pivotal role for the maintenance of relationships

Explain the role that culture plays in the formation and maintenance of relationships.

**You may define culture in the introduction:** A shared, learned, symbolic system of values, beliefs and attitudes that shapes and influences perception and behavior

1. Differences and similarities in the formation of relationships

a) The importance of love for establishment of a relationship/marriage varies across cultures and time

Supporting research

* **Levine et al. (1995):** For individualistic cultures love is essential for the establishment of marriage. This is in contrast to collectivist cultures.
* **Simmons et al. (1986):** Romantic love is valued more in the US and Germany than in Japan.
* **Kephart (1967) & Simpson et al. (1984):** American college students asked were asked if they would marry without being in love if their partner had all the other desirable qualities. In 1967 65 % of the men said no and 24 % of the women. In 1984 85 % of both men and women said no.

b) Men and women across cultures look for similar things when looking for a romantic partner

Supporting research

* **Buss (1994):** Buss investigated 10,000 respondents from 37 cultures. He found many cultural differences in qualities important during mate selection. In all cultures, women preferred older men and men preferred younger women. In all cultures except one, women ranked financial prospects as more important when choosing a partner than men.

2) Differences and similarities in the maintenance of relationships

a) The importance of love for the maintenance of a relationship/marriage varies across cultures

Supporting research

* **Levine et al. (1995):** For individualistic cultures, the disappearance of love is sufficient reason to end a marriage. This is in contrast to collectivist cultures.

b) There are some rules for maintaining relationships that seem to be universal, yet there are some differences as well.

Supporting research

* **Argyle (1985):**

*Similarities:* Reciprocation, to respect each others privacy, to give emotional support, address by first name, look the other person in the eye during conversation

*Differences:* Privacy, level of intimacy

### Analyse why relationships may change or end

### Rule violations: If the partner/friend violates a rule, there may be a break up

### Supporting research

### Argyle & Henderson (1984): 160 participants aged 17-34 were asked on the dissolution of friendships. The most critical rule violations were jealousy, lack of tolerance for a third party relationship, disclosing confidences, publicly criticizing the person and not volunteering when helping*.* Women identified emotional support, younger participants public criticism, over 20s lack of respect or request for personal advice

### There are too many differences between the partners/friends

### Supporting research

### Caspi & Herbener (1990): A longitudinal study of 135 married couples found that similarity between was related to marital satisfaction

### Hill, Rubin, & Peplau (1976): A two year study of dating relationships among college students. Found differences such as age, education, intelligence, unequal involvement in the relationship, and physical attractiveness. The desire to break up was seldom mutual.

### There is reduced proximity/change in lifestyles

### Supporting research

### Shaver et al. (1985): Moving away from each other is often a major reason for the dissolution of relationships

### Hays & Oxley (1986): Found that the most adaptive social networks for first-year university students involved new friends who were also university students rather than old school or neighborhood friends.

### There is much negative emotion in the relationship

### Supporting research

### Gottman (1988) has developed a model to predict which newlywed couples will remain married and which will divorce four to six years later. He claims that his model has 90% accuracy. He also claims 81% percent accuracy for another model about which marriages survived after seven to nine years. His prediction method relies on Paul Ekman's method of analyzing human emotion and microexpressions. Gottman believes that the four emotional reactions that are most destructive for relationships are defensiveness, negative body language, criticism and contempt. He considers contempt to be the best predictor for marital failure.

### Rogge, 2010: 222 volunteers in romantic relationship conducted a computer tasks where they were to associate their partner’s first name with positive or negative words. Volunteers who found it easy to associate their partner with bad words and difficult to associate her with good things were more likely to separate over the next year.