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| **Theories of Romantic Relationships: Duck’s Phase Model AO1** |
| **Intra-psychic Phase***Threshold: ‘I can’t stand this anymore’, indicating a determination that something has to change.*The focus of the phase is on cognitive processes occurring within the individual. The dissatisfied partner broods on the reasons for his or her dissatisfaction, centring mostly on their partner’s shortcomings. The partner mulls their thoughts over privately, and may share them with a trusted friend. They weigh up the pros and cons of the relationship and evaluate these against the alternatives (including being alone). They begin to make plans for the future. |
| **Dyadic Phase***Threshold: they eventually come to the conclusion, ‘I would be justified in withdrawing’.*The focus here is on interpersonal processes between the two partners. There comes a point when they cannot avoid talking about their relationship any longer. There is a series of confrontations over a period of time, in which the relationship is discussed and dissatisfactions are aired. These are characterised by anxiety, hostility, probably complaints about lack of equity, resentment over imbalanced roles and a rethinking of the commitment the partners kept together. There are two possible outcomes – a determination to continue breaking up the relationship, or a renewed desire to repair it. But if the rescue attempts fail, another threshold is reached. |
| **Social Phase***Threshold: The dissatisfied partner concludes, ‘I mean it’.*The focus is now on the wider network involving the couple’s social networks. The break-up is made public. Partners will seek out and try to forge pacts. Mutual friends find they are expected to choose a side. Factions are formed. Gossip is traded and encouraged. Some friends will provide reinforcement and reassurance (‘I always said you were way too good for him’). Others will be judgemental and place the blame on one partner or the other. Some may hasten the end of the relationship by providing previously secret information (‘I didn’t want to mention this but…’). Others may pitch in and try to help repair the relationship (perhaps by acting as a go-between). This is usually the point of no return – the break up takes on momentum driven by social forces. |
| **Grave-dressing Phase***Threshold: ‘It’s now inevitable’.*This is the aftermath. Once the relationship is dead, we bury it, and ‘spin’ a favourable story about the break-up for the public. This allows the partners to save face and maintain a positive reputation (usually at the expense of the other partner, painting them in a bad light). Gossip plays a crucial role, each partner must try to retain some social credit (La Gaipa, 1982) by blaming circumstances, your partner, or other people, or everything and everyone but themselves.This stage also means you create a story that you can live with yourself. This helps to tidy up the memories of the relationship. You may re-write the history. The traits you found endearing or exciting in your partner at the start are now reinterpreted in a more negative fashion (e.g. ‘a wild unpredictable nature’ is now ‘an irresponsible failure to settle down’). On the other hand it may be simpler for ex-partners to agree to a mutual end and admit they weren’t compatible from the start.The dissatisfied partner concludes, ‘time to get a new life’. |
| **Theories of Romantic Relationships: Duck’s Phase Model AO3** |
| **An Incomplete Model**P: One issue with the original phase model from Duck as theory of romantic relationships is that it is oversimplified.E: For example, Rollie and Duck (2006) stated that the process of the breakdown of a relationship does not simply stop after the grave-dressing phase. There is a further step by which we move on to a new relationship, learning from the previous one, trying not to do the same things again. They named this the ‘resurrection phase’.E: This is an issue because as illustrated by the fifth phase added by Rollie and Duck, relationships do not simply just stop. There is an influence of the previous relationship in our future, which the former model failed to recognise. The original model ignores the dynamic nature of break-ups with the uncertainty. Furthermore, the new model also emphasises the processes within the relationship e.g. the role of gossip in the social phase. Rollie and Duck make it clear that progression from one stage to the next is neither inevitable nor linear.L: As a result, the overall explanatory power of Duck’s phase model is reduced as a theory of romantic relationships. | **Methodological Issues**P: One issue with Duck’s model is that there are methodological issues within the research.E: For example, participants generally give their experiences of the breakdown process sometime after the relationship has ended. Therefore the phase model and the research it is based on is retrospective.E: This is an issue because giving feedback *AFTER* an event (such as after the relationship and after the break-up) means what they recall may not be accurate or reliable. Some facts (as outlined by Duck’s model) may be distorted and changed, or forgotten altogether as part of the break-up process. However, very early on in the break-down is hard to study, and very rarely studied by psychologists, because their involvement may make things worse. So Duck’s model is based on research that ignores the early part of the break-up process so it is an incomplete description of how the relationship ends.L: As a result, the validity and reliability of Duck’s phase model as a theory of romantic relationships is reduced. | **Useful real-life app**P: One strength of Duck’s phase model as a theory of romantic relationships is that it has good real-life application for real relationships.E: For example, the model not only helps us to identify and understand the stages of relationship breakdown but also suggests various ways of reversing it. It recognises that different repair strategies are more effective at particular points in the breakdown than at others. E: This is a strength because Duck recommends that people in the intra-psychic phase could be encouraged to focus their brooding on the positive aspects of their partner. Any attempt to improve the communication and perhaps improve wider social skills could also be beneficial in encouraging stability in the relationship. These insights could be used for things like relationship counselling.L: As such, the explanatory power of Duck’s phase model as a theory of romantic relationships is increased. | **Cultural Bias**P: One weakness of Duck’s phase model as a theory of romantic relationships is that it is culturally biased.E: for example, the model and most of the research underlying it are based on the experience of relationships in Western cultures (especially the USA).E: This is an issue because according to Moghaddam et al. (1993), relationships in individualist cultures are generally voluntary and frequently come to an end (e.g. divorce). Relationships in collectivist cultures are more likely to be obligatory, less easy to end, involve the wider family, and in some cases are even arranged with little involvement of the partners. It is therefore highly unlikely that the process of relationship breakdown is identical across different cultures.L: As a result, Duck’s phase model lacks validity as a theory of romantic relationships. |