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Pathways to Marriage...Or Not: A Study on the Emotions of Dating in LDS Young Adults

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Materials and Methods:

- Sample: 12 females, 12 males attending BYU
- Method used: Grounded theory
- Participants took READY/RELATE
- Participants were interviewed twice
- Data analyzed using Nvivo

Results:

After reviewing and analyzing the interviews, we started noticing a pattern of emotions that our participants and, we suspect, other young adults, go through. This cycle has four emotional stages. Stage 1 is the stage when a person is actively dating or in a relationship. Stage 2 is the break up or this stage can also happen when the person of interest starts dating someone else. Stage 3 is the discouragement that occurs after the break up and before someone gets the motivation to date again. Stage 4 occurs when a person is hopeful and starts dating again. This cycle is continuous. We have found that an individual can go through the cycle quickly or slowly. They can also be in one stage much longer than any of the other stages. Each of the stages are discussed in-depth below. We hope to use this cycle to help us better understand how young adult’s emotions influence their progression towards marriage.

Cycle of Dating Emotions

Definition of Stages:

**Stage 1—Genuine**: People in this stage of the cycle are content with life. They are real, enthusiastic, genuine, and passionate. This is the stage where a person is actively dating. They could be in a relationship or not. This is the stage where relationships begin, and are maintained.

**Stage 2—Confused**: Stage 1 turns into Stage 2 when a person starts getting confused and they start doubting their ability to date, the sincerity of partners love. They start getting frustrated and uneasy with their relationship. This is usually when a break up occurs in a relationship. If a person is not in a relationship, this stage may happen when someone that they like starts dating someone else.

**Stage 3—Discouraged**: Stage 2 turns to Stage 3 after the break up occurs and before they start dating again. This stage can last a long time, but it can also be relatively short. During this stage a person is discouraged, depressed, sad, lonely, and unmotivated to start dating again.

**Stage 4—Inspired**: This stage occurs when a person begins to want to date again. Usually this occurs when a person becomes interested in someone else. Or they somehow realize the importance of dating (through a motivational talk, a helpful roommate, a loving parent, etc.). They are motivated, and they are hopeful that something will work again.

Discussion and Further Research:

We have found that this model can predict the universal emotional stages that everyone experiences while dating. Although we believe that this model is universal, further research could be done to predict individual differences including:

- Personality characteristics
- How progression through cycle changes with time
- Gender differences
- Attachment style as a predictor of movement through stages