Dating Behavior of Latter-Day Saint Male Returned Missionaries: A Process of Managing Desires

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DATING BEHAVIOR OF LATTER-DAY SAINT MALE RETURNED MISSIONARIES: A PROCESS OF MANAGING DESIRES

by

Nancy C. McLaughlin

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Department of Marriage, Family, and Human Development
Brigham Young University
August 2000
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

DATING BEHAVIOR OF LATTER-DAY SAINT MALE RETURNED MISSIONARIES: A PROCESS OF MANAGING DESIRES

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Department of Marriage, Family, and Human Development

Master of Science

Each year thousands of Latter-day Saint males return to their homes after serving a two year religious mission. According to Latter-day Saint doctrine and cultural beliefs, these young men are expected to resume a normal life including dating and involvement in romantic relationships. Research and Latter-day Saint doctrine related to the dating behavior of returned missionaries (RMs) is reviewed. Most previous research has emphasized the quantitative analysis of single aspects of RMs dating behavior such as dating frequency and social status. In an attempt to add to this field of research, this qualitative analysis explored the attitudes and experiences of a group of recently returned male missionaries as they described their own process of returning to dating and seeking romantic relationships.

The returned missionaries in the sample reported having four main desires or objectives related to their courtship. These were the desire to: 1) feel personally prepared for marriage, 2) avoid rejection and disappointing relationships, 3) be involved in romantic relationships/marriage, and 4) obey gospel doctrine regarding the appropriate timing of marriage. Because these desires were sometimes in opposition with each other,
participants were compelled to continually prioritize their desires according to which they felt were the most important at the time. Participants incorporated various dating strategies in an effort to find a dating style which would allow them to manage their desires in a way that those desires which were most important to them were fulfilled most and those which were least important were fulfilled less.

Conditions including family of origin, past dating experience, missions, interpretation of LDS marriage doctrine were found to influence the development of desires of participants. Similarly, the context of the RMs current feelings, beliefs, and attitudes regarding dating and marriage impacted what desires they had, which desires they prioritized the most, and finally which dating approach they used to manage their desires.

Based on the current analysis, a model illustrating the process RMs experience as they become involved in dating is proposed and discussed. This model depicts the relationships between the conditions which influence the RMs courtship desires, the dating behavior they use to manage their desires, and the outcomes of their behavior.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

John, my best friend and husband, you have been a source of support and encouragement from the beginning to end of this project. Thank you for understanding how important this is to me. I love you. Gabriel and Austin, my two babies, you have been a continual reminder of what is most important to me. You have attended graduate classes, spent hours in my lap beside a computer, and waited for mommy to stop studying so we could play.

Dr. Holman, thank you for believing in me and helping me to complete this project despite all the obstacles. You have been so kind to accommodate any need I’ve had, including allowing me to use your own office and computer. Your kindness and patience as a professor and chairman have not gone unnoticed. Dr. Olson, thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend graduate school. I will forever be grateful to you for what I have learned. Dr. McCoy, thank you for your optimism, suggestions, and advice.

Because of the patience and support of each of you, I have completed this study.
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Introduction

The purpose of this research is to broaden our understanding of the experience of Latter-day Saint male returned missionaries as they establish and maintain non-marital relationships, and as they move toward long-term committed marital relationships. Several recent studies examined the initiation of heterosexual relationships among Latter-day Saint (LDS) young adults (Ostler, 1995), the female experience in dating relationships among LDS women (Pugmire, 1997), and the process of moving from a premarital relationship into a marital relationship, especially as it relates to family-of-origin issues (Doxey, 1994). This study will add to our understanding of courtship and spouse selection processes by investigating in depth one particular group; the recently returned male missionary. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to describe the attitudes toward marriage held by this unique group of young men, and the strategies they employed to establish and maintain heterosexual dating relationships.

Literature Review

In order to analyze the dating behavior of returned missionaries (RMs), four different areas of literature were examined: Latter-day Saint beliefs regarding marriage, LDS youth courtship compared to American youth courtship, Brigham Young University courtship, and LDS returned missionaries. Latter day Saint beliefs regarding marriage were reviewed for an understanding of LDS doctrine regarding the marriage commitment. Studies which compared LDS youth to American youth provided the researcher an understanding of how the dating of LDS returned missionaries may differ from other young American males. A review of previous courtship studies which focused on BYU students provided a frame of reference for comparing the current results against. General research conducted with returned missionaries previous to this study provided the
researcher a general knowledge of this LDS subgroup and their characteristics. The following paragraphs contain an outline of each of these areas of literature beginning with Latter-day Saint beliefs.

Latter-day Saint Beliefs

Because marriage plays an important role in the lives of Latter-day Saints, specific guidelines are given as to whom, where, and when LDS members are to marry. Latter-day Saints believe that if they live rightly during this life, they will be able to continue their marital and familial relations after this life. It is also believed that one must be married in order to attain the highest degree of glory after this life (LDS Doctrine and Covenant, 131:1-4). Because of these beliefs, great emphasis is placed on teaching LDS youth to choose partners who will be both willing and able to commit to an eternal marriage in an LDS temple. As stated by the current president of the LDS church:

There is no substitute for marrying in the temple. It is the only place under the heavens where marriage can be solemnized for eternity. Don’t cheat yourself. Don’t cheat your companion. Don’t shortchange your lives. Marry the right person in the right place at the right time (Hinckley, 1999, p. 2).

The “right time” was discussed by President Hinckley’s predecessor, Ezra Taft Benson:

God has a timetable, or sequence or season, for every good thing. A mission, when the time arrives takes priority over marriage and education. When one is mature enough and has found the right companion, then marriage should not be delayed for education. While all three—mission, marriage, and education—are essential, there’s a proper time for each (Benson, 1988, p. 6)

A male missionary for the LDS church gives two years of service, at his own expense, in one of over 300 countries around the world. While in the mission field, missionaries are prohibited from dating. Upon returning from a mission, they are
expected to be in the process of finding a marriage partner. In regards to this responsibility, Joseph F. Smith (sixth President of the LDS church) stated: "I desire to emphasize this. I want the young men of Zion to realize that this institution of marriage is not a man-made institution. It is of God. It is honorable, and no man who is of marriageable age is living his religion who remains single (Smith, 1977, p. 272)."

Thus, according to existing Latter-day Saint teachings, returned missionaries are expected to be in the process of finding a marriage partner who is willing and able to commit to an eternal marriage in an LDS temple.

LDS vs. American Courtship

Relatively few studies have compared the dating of Latter-day Saint youth to their same-age American peers. Two studies which have explored this topic are relevant to the current study.

Markstrom-Adams (1991) conducted a study with Mormon and non-Mormon youth in order to assess their attitudes about dating, courtship, and marriage. Her study was designed to compare in-group versus out-group relationships by religious minority and majority adolescents. This study dealt with the question of religion as a filter in the mate selection process. The findings indicate Mormons place a greater emphasis on dating other Mormons than their non-Mormon peers place on dating those of their same religion.

In another study, Holman (1996) studied 56 Mormon couples over a nine-year period in order to answer two major questions about LDS courtship: 1) "how do members of a minority religious group, a group with strongly held teachings about marriage, family life, and sexuality, move through the mate selection process?", and 2) "where do these active Mormon young adults adapt to normative American mate selection processes, and where and how do they add uniquely Mormon notions to the
process? (Holman, 1996, p. 125).” The results of the study indicate Mormon youth go through a developmental courting process similar to other American youth. There is an acquaintance period, increased interaction and dependency, and finally a commitment to marriage. However, Holman suggests Mormons tend to view this process differently than those outside their faith. Because of their religion’s emphasis on commitment, these youth see themselves in the process of making a commitment rather than simply assessing compatibility.

Brigham Young University Courtship

Several dating studies were conducted with BYU students in the 1960s. Most of these studies used quantitative methods to explore possible relationships between single factors such as dating frequency and academic achievement. More recently, Ostler (1995) examined the processes by which BYU students initiate romantic relationships, and Pugmire (1997) analyzed BYU co-eds’ experience of courtship.

A number of studies focused solely on the dating behavior of BYU women. Hart (1960) observed the relationship of selected factors to the dating attitudes and patterns of BYU coeds. He found neither place of residence nor year in college were significantly related to the dating frequency of BYU coeds. However, social affiliation (active membership in any BYU social organization that served purposes similar to those of fraternities and sororities at other colleges) was associated with more dates. Another study conducted with BYU coeds was completed by Capener (1967). He also examined dating frequency and living location of coeds on the BYU campus. Contrary to Hart’s conclusions, Capener found the closer coeds lived to boys and ate at the cafeteria with boys, the more likely they were to date more frequently than their counterparts.

BYU male and female students were examined in 1963 to determine the relationship of students’ self-concept to academic achievement, dating practices,
extracurricular activities and church activity (King, 1963). In regards to dating practices, King found no significant relationship between the number of dates and self-concept scores. However, the dating status (i.e. not dating at all, random dating) of students was related to their self-concept scores. In particular students who reported no dating displayed low self-concept scores.

Another study dealing with the dating status of BYU students was designed to determine the degree of relationship between the dating frequency of university students and 1) susceptibility to social influence from peers, 2) family relationship satisfaction, and 3) emotional adjustment (Blattner, 1968, p. 1). Blattner claimed one’s susceptibility to social pressure does have some impact on dating frequency. Blattner also found evidence subjects who scored high on the emotional adjustment scale tended to date less in comparison to other students. However, the relationship between family relationships and dating frequency proved to be nonsignificant.

Campbell (1968) analyzed dating and courtship patterns among students at eight major universities in the United States including BYU. All of the BYU students in the study were members of the LDS church. Some of his findings contribute to the assumption Mormon college age youth are unique in their dating patterns compared to other non-religious and religious students. Findings which relate to the dating behavior of LDS and BYU students include: 1) Protestants and LDS reported the highest dating frequency, 2) Jewish and LDS students reported dating slightly earlier than Catholic and Protestant students, 3) LDS students dated the greatest number of people more than once, 4) LDS students showed the strongest tendency to delay steady dating until age 18 or later, and finally 5) 86.4% of the LDS students reported it was very important that their mate be of the same religion (Campbell, 1968, p. 58-77). More recently Ostler (1995) found evidence indicating BYU students still seek LDS courting partners. For many of
the participants in his study the choice to attend BYU was partly due to the fact that the predominantly LDS school would provide a greater opportunity to marry within their religion.

Ostler (1995) and Pugmire (1997) conducted more recent dating studies at BYU, which are more applicable to the students currently attending Brigham Young University. Ostler (1995) analyzed the data set to be used in the current study. His analysis was focused on finding how individuals in a conservative religious context initiate heterosexual relationships. Ostler examined the interviews of male and female freshmen and recently returned missionaries at Brigham Young University. He found a pattern in the methods that participants used to seek, send, and receive interest cues in the initiation process of relationships. Ostler used this pattern to provide a theoretical model illustrating all of the possible scenarios that could take place to terminate or continue a relationship. He determined the initiation of heterosexual relationships only takes place when both individuals in the relationship are sending and receiving interest cues. In these cases, the interest cues sent include cues that are “attraction strategies” (p. 81). Ostler explains in these situations the individual is not only trying to communicate an interest in the other, but is also attempting to influence the other to be attracted to him or her. Ostler also found “personal interaction, social and attitudinal similarity, and the social and physical environment, play a role in the development of a relationship” (p. 75).

In a study of BYU women, Pugmire (1997) assessed the way LDS women experience the dating process (Pugmire, 1997). Pugmire found females desired mutual influence (the belief that both partners in the relationship have the ability to influence one another and the relationship). The participants believed mutual influence would contribute to their relationship by enabling both members to participate in the relationship. The type of relationship women were involved in impacted their desire for
mutual influence. For example, mutual influence was not sought in physically based relationships. However, religiously active LDS females, who were not in physically based relationships, did seek relationships of mutual influence.

The two studies described above provide results which can be related to the dating behavior of the male returned missionaries in this sample. According to these studies, the participants are likely to initiate relationships if both they and their partner are sending and receiving attraction/interest cues. Further, if they become involved in non-physically based relationships, their female partners will be seeking a mutually influenced development of the relationship.

Returned Missionary Research

Research related to returned missionaries was examined to determine how the role of being a returned missionary might affect the dating behavior of participants. Due to the lack of current research on the BYU male returned missionaries’ dating experience, a study conducted with returned missionaries at the University of Lethbridge was examined. Two BYU studies which cover non-relational aspects of returned missionaries’ lives were also reviewed to contribute to an understanding of returned missionaries in general.

The research conducted with returned missionaries at Lethbridge University explored the missionary experience to determine how missions prepare LDS youth to take on adult roles such as marriage (Parry, 1989). The results of the study described the missionary experience as “a socialization process having the form of a rite of passage” (p. 182). The participants reported the mission experience served as a preparation for a marriage relationship. Parry explained the missionary companionships forced them to shape and reshape their own personalities, as well as to deal with the personalities of successive missionary companions. This experience in interpersonal communication and
problem solving prepared the missionaries for dating and marriage relationships upon their return.

Another study conducted at BYU assessed the grade point averages of returned missionaries (Gilbert, 1967). Gilbert compared the academic standing of returned missionaries who had been on academic probation, academic suspension, and good standing at BYU previous to their missions. Each of the three academic groups assessed showed a significant increase in grade point average in the first school semester after their return ($p < .01$). Thus, regardless of the academic standing the participants had before their missions, their mean GPAs were higher after their missions.

According to these studies, the missionary experience helps LDS males to prepare for marriage upon their return home especially by enabling them to practice interpersonal and communication skills and increase motivation to attain higher grades than previous to their missions.

**Purpose of Study**

Upon returning from their missions, LDS men are expected to seek and find a marriage partner. The manner in which LDS returned missionaries initiate and develop the courtship process has been relatively unexamined. Although some studies have been conducted to examine the way in which American LDS youth date and create relationships, the knowledge we have of this subgroup is also relatively undeveloped. The current research suggests LDS youth see dating as a process leading to an important marriage commitment, and they prefer to date other LDS members. Studies conducted with BYU students have shown place of residence and membership in BYU related social organizations are associated with the dating frequency of BYU coeds. BYU male and female students' susceptibility to social pressure has also been correlated with their dating frequency. Their dating status (i.e. not dating) has also been related to their self-
concept scores. In one study, those who were not dating at all were more likely to have low self-concept. However, another study showed those who scored high on an emotional adjustment scale generally dated less compared to other students. Thus, a low self-concept is related to less dating, but a high self-concept doesn’t predict a high dating frequency. In general, BYU students were shown to have a higher dating frequency, and also to be more likely to date a greater number of people more than once in comparison with students from other colleges.

Finally, past research has shown BYU students are likely to initiate relationships only if both they and their partner are sending and receiving attraction/interest cues. And BYU coeds prefer to have an equal amount of influence from themselves and their partners in regards to their relationships when they are involved in non-physically based relationships.

In sum, most research related to BYU male returned missionary dating has focused on single factors related to their dating behavior, rather than examining the processes which they go through to initiate and develop romantic relationships. Previous studies have explored relationships between static factors such as the dating frequency, dating status, place of residence, and social affiliation of RMs. Two studies which have addressed the process of RM dating behavior have emphasized the female RMs experience (Ostler, 1995; Pugmire, 1997). The current study is an effort to research the courtship process of male RMs. Because religion has been shown to influence courtship patterns (Holman, 1996), it is likely the dating of this population is unique. A qualitative analysis of LDS returned missionary courtship behaviors will contribute to general courtship literature by illustrating how this particular population approaches dating and courtship after serving an LDS mission.
Most research conducted in this field has employed quantitative methods. A “human” process, such as the development of romantic relationships, contains a depth and complexity of meaning. This qualitative study is an attempt to capture some of that meaning by examining the personal interpretation subjects assign to their own experiences.

This study will identify and describe how a sample of returned missionaries at Brigham Young University practiced dating after returning from their missions. In-depth interviews with LDS male returned missionaries will be examined to understand the meanings they give their courtship experience in a conservative religious subculture. Specifically, their attitudes regarding courtship and marriage, and the strategies they employed to establish and maintain heterosexual dating relationships will be analyzed.

Research Method and Data Collection

Site and sample

This study is part of a longitudinal research project which was started in 1993 by Holman. The data set was obtained from a sample of male and female freshman and returned missionaries at Brigham Young University. This study will focus solely on the group of male returned missionaries in the sample. This group was made up of 15 white, recently returned male LDS missionaries. Average age of participants ranged from 21 to 23 years old. All of the participants were attending BYU at the time the original sample was interviewed.

Data collection procedures

The number of interviews with each participant varied from one to four, providing a total of 43 interviews. Most participants were interviewed on three separate occasions. Interviewers followed a general interview guide for each of the three interviews (see appendix). Fourth interviews were conducted the next semester with a select group of
participants in order to verify the developing conceptual framework of analysis. Interviews were conducted by student research assistants under Holman’s supervision. The student assistants were trained to interview participants in an open in-depth format. This training was part of a qualitative course taught at the university.

Initially, the sample was obtained from the university student body by computer, but other subjects were added as referrals from the original sample or as randomly selected students from general education courses taught by Dr. Thomas Holman or Craig Ostler. Recently returned missionaries were chosen in an attempt to limit the sample to those students who weren’t already in serious relationships but were in the process of initiating contact and beginning romantic relationships. Participants were selected randomly and were sent an official letter inviting their participation in the study along with two tickets to the university movie theater. Interviewers contacted possible participants by telephone and scheduled first interviews. Names and places were changed during the transcription of the data. Identification numbers were assigned to each participant as well as each interviewer and interview. Direct quotes which are included in the results section are followed by an identification number which indicates the participant, the interviewer, and the interview. For example, the number (1500117) would indicate participant #150, their first interview or interview #01, and interviewer #17.

**Research design**

One of the best known qualitative methods for identifying process is the grounded theory method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The grounded theory approach entails a method of inductively deriving theory from the analysis of qualitative data. Before collecting and analyzing data, grounded theorists review the relevant technical and non-technical literature in their field of study. This review of the literature is
essential because it allows the researcher to recognize previously discovered theoretical constructs as they are collecting and analyzing the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Throughout the qualitative analysis the researcher continually compares their own developing theoretical model against the existing literature.

Although the phases occur simultaneously, researchers usually go through three general phases during grounded theory analysis. These are: the open coding process, axial coding, and selective sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Many researchers alternate between data collection and data analysis, however, the majority of the analysis usually occurs after the data collection is complete (Bogden & Biklen, 1982). This is the case in my research, as the interviews were completed in 1995.

Following the coding phases outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) I will begin my analysis with an exploration of the general context of the data. In this “open coding” stage Glaser (1978) suggests a line by line analysis in which incidents, ideas, and events are coded or assigned labels at every sentence in the interviews being analyzed. Open coding, however, is not only a process of labeling phenomenon. The properties or characteristics of each identified concept are compared to the other concepts in order to uncover relationships and patterns between ideas in the data. This allows the researcher to categorize similar concepts together under more abstract headings or categories. The categories or themes recognized in the data are the basic units for the development of a theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In the second phase, categories are related to their subcategories by means of statements that define the relationships between them and the phenomenon. For example, a possible hypothesis in my study would be that returned missionaries feel pressure to marry (category) because of the advice of church leaders (subcategory). Once the researcher has developed propositions, he or she returns to the interviews and checks to
see if the proposition can be verified in all cases. If the propositions do not hold up under all cases the researcher examines the deviating cases to determine the factors that make it different and to uncover the reasoning behind the discrepancy. Peer reviews can also be incorporated at this point to verify whether the propositions are supportable. This process of verification produces both conceptual density (illustration of the many variations and similarities between concepts) and theory which is “grounded” in the data. Finally, there is a “continued search for the properties and dimensions of categories and subcategories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 107). The categories are once again compared and contrasted with their subcategories in order to view variations, patterns, and perhaps even phenomenon by analyzing differing patterns (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

At this point in the research the investigator identifies the “core” or general process that is being viewed in the interviews. This process is an answer to the question “so what is happening in these interviews?”, or “what is the story that is being told over and over again in each interview?” Strauss and Corbin term this phase selective sampling because it involves selecting a core category, systematically relating it to other categories, verifying these relationships, and filling in categories in need of further refinement and development. In this phase I will identify an overall process in the dating behavior of returned missionaries. Once I have identified the general process the participants are engaging in to establish and maintain relationships I will rearrange the categories and subcategories to fit the identified pattern or model. The tentative theoretical model must be verified against the data and existing literature (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In my case this means the process of relationship establishment described in my model must be congruent with the participants’ interviews as well as the existing literature on returned missionary courtship. If the model can’t be supported, the
framework will be discarded or altered and the analysis continued. This process of conceptually densifying data produces a “grounded theory”.

Results

The object of analysis was to identify and describe how a particular sample of returned missionaries at Brigham Young University dated after returning from their missions. The overall process of their dating according to their perspective was observed. In order to enable the reader to better understand the results, a definition of terms and brief analytic summary of the results are outlined below.

Introduction

Terms

(definitions from Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96-97)

**Phenomenon:** The central idea, event, happening, incident about which a set of actions or interactions are directed at managing, handling, or to which the set of actions is related.

**Core Category:** The central phenomenon around which all the other categories are integrated.

**Context:** Strauss and Corbin (1990) define context as, “the specific set of properties that pertain to a phenomenon; that is, the locations of events or incidents pertaining to a phenomenon along a dimensional range. Context represents the particular set of conditions within which the action/interactional strategies are taken” (p.96). In this study we limit the context to the individual’s attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about dating, courtship, and marriage. Because ideas and beliefs are more psychological and intrapersonal in nature than “contextual”, they will be referred to as the participants’

**Intrapersonal Conditions**
Antecedent Conditions: Events, incidents, happenings that lead to the occurrence or development of a phenomenon.

Intervening Conditions: The structural conditions bearing on action/interactional strategies that pertain to a phenomenon. They facilitate or constrain the strategies taken within a specific context.

Action/Interaction Strategies: Actions devised to manage, handle, carry out, respond to a phenomenon under a specific set of perceived conditions.

Consequences: Outcomes or results of action and interaction.

Analytic summary

In accordance with the grounded theory method, a "core process" was identified throughout the interviews. This process involved defining a central phenomenon, core category, antecedent conditions, intervening conditions, intrapersonal conditions, action/interaction strategies, and the consequences of those strategies.

The participants expressed a desire to: 1) feel personally prepared for marriage, 2) avoid rejection and disappointing relationships, 3) be involved in romantic relationships/marriage, and 4) obey gospel doctrine regarding the appropriate timing of marriage. These four desires were identified as the phenomenon. The oppositional nature of desires created a need for prioritization and management. The management of desires emerged as the core category around which the dating behavior of participants was centered.

The development of the desires held by RMs as well as the dating behavior they used to manage these desires were influenced by preexisting or antecedent conditions. In this study, the antecedent conditions identified were family of origin, mission experiences, previous dating, and interpretation of Latter-day Saint doctrine regarding
appropriate marriage timing. These factors impacted which desires the participants gave the most priority to.

A broad environmental context including: the American, LDS, and BYU American cultures which participants were living in, also influenced their dating. Although the American and LDS culture may have acted as antecedent or preexisting influences on the RMs’ dating, they have been placed under a current contextual heading in this model. These cultures were similar to what Strauss and Corbin (1990) term **intervening conditions**. They made up the structural conditions which facilitated or constrained the dating strategies participants used to manage their desires (p. 96). The participants’ **intrapersonal conditions** included their beliefs and feelings about courtship, prioritization of desires, and their confidence regarding their ability to initiate and maintain successful romantic relationships (relational confidence). Thus, the participants current feelings about courtship interacted with their environment and past experiences to influence what desires they had and how they managed them.

The dating behaviors the participants employed were the **action/interaction strategies** used to manage their desires. Participants used various styles of dating depending on which desires they gave the highest priority to. Ultimately, they sought a dating style which would allow them to fulfill each desire as much as possible, giving those desires they put the highest priority to, the most attention. When their desires were balanced and met, they were satisfied with their choice of dating style. The optimal **outcome** of a style was a feeling of comfort with one’s ability to manage desires. If desires weren’t met/balanced participants weren’t satisfied, and in this situation they changed their dating style.

Figure 1.0 illustrates the grounded theory terms defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990), and the relevant themes from this analysis which fell under each term.
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Desire phenomenon

Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to the “central idea or event about which a set of actions/interactions [in the data] is directed at managing” as the phenomenon (p. 96).

The phenomenon around which the dating activity of the participants in this study revolved included a set of desires held by the participants. Four desires emerged repetitively in the subjects’ interviews. They were desires to: 1) feel personally prepared for marriage, 2) avoid rejection and disappointing relationships, 3) be involved in romantic relationships/marriage, and 4) obey gospel doctrine regarding the appropriate timing of marriage.

1) Personal preparedness

Participants expressed the desire to prepare themselves for marriage and the responsibilities of providing for a family. They wanted to complete an education and prepare for a lifetime career. Some expressed a need to have time for self-maturation and
spiritual development before seeking marriage. In general, all the participants had some
desire to be personally prepared for marriage. However, they differed in whether or not
they felt it was appropriate to delay courtship in order to become more prepared before
seeking marriage. One RM explained his desire to become more financially and
emotionally prepared before seeking marriage:

You're involved with the gospel and you know that [marriage] is the right thing to
do, but first of all I'm not financially ready, and second of all I'm not emotionally
ready for that. So I was kind of scared thinking, you go to BYU and then you fall
in love and then, like that you're married. I just kept saying I'm not going to get
married, I'm not going to get married (1590110).

Those RMs who felt it was okay to delay courtship for personal preparedness
reasons often struggled with a feeling that maybe they should be actively seeking a wife
at the time to be in accordance with gospel teachings.

I don't know. I guess just looking at myself. I just feel like it's not the right time to
be getting married or to make commitments. There have been times where I thought
it'd be a cool idea. And I kind of get the feeling that that is the next step after the
mission. I don't know. There have been times where I've kind of felt like getting
married would be proper at this moment. And then other times no. So, just
basically wrestling with myself (1540119).

Those who were more open to the idea of marriage in the near future, and who
felt personal preparedness was not a reason to delay marriage seemed more comfortable
about their decision. They felt they were obeying church counsel to be in the process of
actively seeking a mate.
2) Rejection avoidance

Subjects sought positive dating experiences while avoiding rejection and failure. Past experience and relational confidence influenced whether RMs allowed a fear of rejection to influence their willingness to take risks in dating relations. For example, one RM explained he was not dating very much because of his insecurity with girls. “I think, it has a lot to do with getting involved in a relationship and then worrying about that rejection. I think my biggest problem is insecurity with girls” (1630317). Another participant, who had been involved in a very minimal amount of dating before and after his mission similarly said,

It's always difficult to do, to get up your confidence to ask somebody else.
Sometimes you're nervous. [What is] hard about dating is if you ask someone out, and they say yes, and then they say no afterwards. That's kind of tough. It leaves you wondering what's going on. The hardest thing for me is probably just going and asking somebody (1510114).

All participants wanted to avoid rejection and broken relationships. There were various levels of fear regarding the possibility of experiencing rejection or the dissolution of a relationship.

3) Desire for marriage

Participants were interested in dating and initiating romantic relationships. Similarly, they all wanted to marry at some point in time. However, they were seeking varying levels of commitment in their current relationships. For instance, some participants were only interested in non-committal short-term romances for the time being. One RM explained his ideal relationship:
I think it'd be cool just to have a girlfriend who you could just be good friends with, just have somebody there, like kind of a comfort blanket. Somebody you can be close to, but I guess you're not really seriously dating, but you kind of are. I think that'd be...that'd be my ultimate type of dating situation (1530114).

All had the desire to marry at some time. Some were seeking it the near future. For example when asked, “Is dating different after a mission?” One RM responded, “It gets more serious. You look at it, the mission matured me to look. It has prepared me more and I think I'm ready to settle down with somebody (1560118).” Others were solely seeking noncommittal romances for the time.

4) Obedience to gospel

Participants wanted to obey church counsel regarding the commandment to be married as well as advice from church leaders regarding the proper timing of marriage. When they came home from their missions they felt it was expected of them.

Yea, thou shalt get married. You need to go out and find. That is the big change I can see before a mission and after a mission. Before the mission the church says go out with a bunch of different people and look and explore what's out there. I find myself coming back from the mission saying, "O.K., I know what I'm looking for (1560118).

They described marriage as the next step in their lives along with finding a way to provide for a family. Their beliefs regarding the meaning of church counsel regarding whether RMs should be seeking marriage in the immediate or distant future differed according to their interpretation of doctrine. Most felt if they were actively dating and doing their part to find an eternal companion then marriage would come naturally. A minority felt courtship could be delayed for a time or, on the other hand, that it should be
sought in the immediate future. Participants often used the advice of church leaders to justify their approach.

**Antecedent conditions**

A number of preexisting conditions impacted the development of the RMs desires upon returning from their missions. Strauss and Corbin (1990) term these conditions antecedent conditions, and define them as “events and incidents that lead to the occurrence or development of a phenomenon” (p. 96). Although there are numerous factors which may have influenced the desires of RMs, the conditions which were seen repetitively in this analysis were: family of origin, previous dating experience, mission experiences, and interpretation of church doctrine regarding marriage.

The antecedent conditions directly influenced the desires (phenomenon) of participants. These conditions also indirectly impacted the desires of RMs by influencing the marriage attitudes/feelings and relational confidence of participants.

**Family**

Several familial factors affected the dating attitudes and behaviors of participants. When asked how their families influenced their dating, a wide variety of themes were mentioned. The participants most often referred to the influence of their parents on their paradigm or thinking about dating which in turn influenced their actual dating behavior. In particular, the RMs most often described a transfer of values from their parents regarding the importance of dating family- and religiously-oriented women and the need to complete an education before marriage. Less commonly mentioned were the influence of brothers/sisters and the observation of their parents' marriages. In particular, the absence of brother/sister dating role models affected a small number of participants’ relational confidence (confidence in their ability to initiate and maintain relationships).
And finally, the observation of participants’ parents’ relationships affected the attitudes of some RM s about dating and marriage.

**Parental Influence**

Participants commonly reported a transfer of parental values regarding marriage through parent-child conversations as well as the direct observation of their parents’ relationships. For instance, one RM explained his parents hadn’t outwardly emphasized the importance of marrying in an LDS temple, or talked to him specifically about what to look for in a wife, but he acknowledged they did somehow influence his beliefs about these issues.

I could see those things and see how my parents had instilled in me some beliefs, you know. And that I hadn't even realized how they'd done it or what they'd done. And those things are the attitudes and perspectives about what kind of person you [will] marry (1500217).

Without recalling a specific incidence in which he talked to his parents, he explained he knew his parents expected him to find a church member who would be willing to marry in the LDS temple.

Many of the subjects held the belief they needed to find an LDS woman who was family oriented and an active LDS member. Although this belief was most likely influenced by other factors, in many cases participants reported their parents had played a major role in the development of the belief.

Parents were not opposed to the marriage of their sons in general. However, a number of fathers encouraged their sons to wait till their education was complete, while mothers were generally more likely to encourage and accept their son’s pursuit of marriage.
In cases where the parents (and other relatives) of the participant were non-LDS, some participants disregarded their advice to delay marriage in order to complete an education and start a career because they felt their relatives did not understand the church and the need to seek marriage. On the other hand, those who had LDS fathers who gave them advice to delay courtship (for financial as well as emotional, maturity development reasons) seemed more likely to take the advice. One exception included an RM whose grandparents were financially supporting him through college. Contrary to their wishes for him to finish school before seeking marriage, he became involved in a romance which was leading toward engagement.

Thus, in cases where participants reported being influenced by their parents, fathers were more likely to contribute to the participants’ desire to be personally (especially financially) ready for marriage and to delay courtship for this reason. Mothers were more likely to facilitate the desire for marriage and a family.

The marital status and quality of their parents’ marriages impacted the participants’ feelings/attitudes regarding dating and marriage. One of the most frequently mentioned familial factors were the errors these subjects felt their parents had made in their marriage.

The majority of the participants’ parents were married and/or sealed in the temple. Those participants whose parents had been divorced tended to be more cautious in their dating. They were particularly conscientious about finding the right person to marry. When asked if his parents divorce had affected his dating one subject answered:

Definitely. It's made me very cautious. At times, if I'm having a bad day or I'm feeling like something's not working out with a girl, that kind of acts as a catalyst, like, "O.K. I don't believe in love." And to prove it, look at my parents’ marriage. It just doesn't work out. And so I'm just not going to try anymore, and when I'm
having a good day, it still makes me cautious. Like, "O.K. I want to be sure this is real, because I don't want the same thing to happen to my wife and I, as happened to my parents (1640111).

Participants were most conscientious about factors which they thought had caused problems in their parents’ relationship. When asked what he had learned from his father in terms of relationships and dating, one participant said: “mostly I've learned, as far as relationships and how I live my life, I've learned how I don't want to be” (1640311). One RM who was very conscientious of the communication aspect in his dating relationships said it was because his parents had not communicated well with each other. He explained one of the major reasons he felt good about a girl he was dating at the time, was due to their ability to communicate openly about many different topics.

I guess another thing, she's really open. She's willing to talk to me about a lot of things...I think it's definitely helped each one of us. Because, you know, communication, I've mentioned that before in the past. I said that was really big for me...there were some things my parents wouldn't talk about, and that bothered me about my parents in the past (1600410).

**Brother/sister influence**

In general, the brothers and sisters of participants did not have huge impact on their dating. A small minority of RMs reported feeling less confident in their dating abilities because they did not have an older brother or sister who dated. They felt the absence of a brother or sister role model made it more difficult for them to learn effective initiation and maintenance of dates and relationships. One of these participants explained, I didn't have any role models...and so I was really the first one in my family that was dating. I never saw them being interested in a girl. And same with my sisters. They
just never...they just didn't do it. And so I really had no idea what I was doing, so that was harder (1640211).

Another subject who felt similarly was the oldest child in his family. The RMs who reported feeling less relationally confident because of the absence of role models were the oldest or only child in their families.

Thus, a few subjects were less confident in their relationships because they had never had a family member to model. These RMs seemed to feel like they had to learn about relationships on their own and sometimes dating was frustrating because of this. Except for this minority, most RMs didn’t report an influence from brothers and sisters on their dating behavior.

Summary (family influence)

In sum, the participants’ current desires (phenomenon) and marriage attitudes/beliefs were influenced by antecedent familial factors. Parents seemed to have more impact on their dating than any other family members. Parents encouraged their sons to choose dating partners and wives who were active in the LDS religion and who wanted to raise a family, thus, influencing who they wanted to marry. In cases where parents influenced the participants’ desire to marry sooner or later, fathers were likely to encourage the completion of an education before marriage, while mothers were more likely to support marriage in the near future. This influenced when they wanted to marry. Through the observation of their parents’ marriages, participants shaped their attitudes about what type of relationship they were seeking and what type of relationships they wanted to avoid. In general, the brothers and sisters of participants didn’t impact their dating attitudes or behavior. A couple of exceptions included RMs who felt the absence of a brother/sister role model caused them to be less confident in their abilities to develop relationships.
Previous Dating

The dating of participants previous to their missions was examined in terms of frequency and seriousness of dating and relationships. An assessment of whether or not participants had been involved in a serious relationship(s) previous to their mission was primarily based on their interpretation of their experience. For instance, if they said they had been involved in a relationship for two years but did not consider it a serious relationship, it was not considered serious. The participants seemed to account for several factors when assessing the seriousness of their relationships including: the length of a relationship, whether or not the RM initiated the relationship himself or was pushed into it by peers, how much physical intimacy was involved, and emotional closeness.

The goal of analysis was to find if and how the participants’ previous dating experiences had influenced their current dating. The most common pattern found was between the current relational confidence of RMs and their past dating. The seriousness of pre-mission dating did not appear to make a difference in the relational confidence of the RMs. However, the frequency of dates, and especially short-term romantic relationship experiences, did seem to affect their current relational confidence. In particular, the more positive dating and relationship experiences they had previous to their missions, the more confidence they had in their abilities to initiate and maintain current dating relationships. One RM who was very confident in his current dating abilities explained how his relational confidence had increased previous to his mission. “I guess probably the more girls that were willing to go out with me, the more self-confidence I got. And so, I guess that's pretty much it. Just more self-confidence. The more that the better looking girls would go out with me, the more self confident I got” (1520212).
Dating and relationship experiences after their missions, but previous to the study, also impacted RMs' desires (phenomenon) and beliefs about courtship. Thus, the current and past dating of subjects continually created a dynamic and constantly changing level of relational confidence.

Mission

Marriage beliefs and attitudes

The majority of the participants did not report a major change in their marriage goals before and after their missions. However, there were some for whom a mission solidified their marriage goals and in one case changed them. For example, one subject explained,

It's not just dead time. Before my mission I had never even considered marriage or whom I would marry or where I would get married. But on my mission that really came to solidify. You know, I knew that I would get married in the temple... I knew I would marry a member of the church. As I learned more about the gospel, I learned about the roles men and women play (1500217).

Specifically, these participants reported thinking about: the characteristics they wanted to seek in a marriage partner, how they wanted to go about initiating and maintaining dating relationships, and how they felt about marriage and raising a family in general. For some, this thinking took place as they observed couples they worked with, for others it was through experiences with their companions. One RM explained his change in attitude about raising a family:

The mission matured me to look. I didn't want kids; I didn't want to get married. I didn't want anything before my mission. Then I worked with the mission president for a long time and he had his family down there. And just being close proximity with them seeing the two of them interacting and the kids and participating changed my mind a lot. I saw the joy they can bring(1560118).
For some RMs the mission helped them to identify what qualities they wanted in a spouse. For instance, several of the RMs reported putting more emphasis on finding dating partners who were spiritual than they had previous to their missions. One RM explained how he was impressed with a certain girl’s “spirituality” after he returned from his mission.

Being on a mission you kind of observe different things, and so I've found that seeing a girl that I like, she's mature. She has fun, but she has - her testimony isn't wobbly. She's firm in the gospel and she reads in the Book of Mormon and prays in personal presence (1630117).

Relational Confidence

In addition to changing the way participants felt and thought about courtship, a number of subjects learned relationship skills during their missions which affected their dating behavior. Specifically, the relational confidence of subjects was increased due to mission experiences. For instance, one RM felt the commitment pattern helped him with initiating dates and getting to know his dating partners.

I think the thing the commitment pattern [has] done for me, well in dating, is just given me the confidence. I think it's more for confidence wise where you can feel comfortable about asking a girl, "so where are you from," or "how many kids do you have in your family," or "what do you like to do?" Just different things like that, where you have the confidence to ask her out. You don't have to say, "Will you go out with me on such and such a day at this time?" But it's more like you have the confidence within yourself to ask the girl to do that, because you've already asked the question so many times about getting a baptism commitment… And so it's more relaxed (1630117).
Similar to the RM above, other participants reported gaining skills which increased their relational confidence.

Post-mission adjustment

One RM felt he was not prepared to be involved in a seriously committed relationship because he needed to increase his level of spirituality first. It also bothered him to return to a life which was not planned out for him in detail.

I think a lot about my mission and coming home. Because after I got home from my mission it was a really hard time. It was a really difficult experience coming home, readjusting and still retaining that spirituality but, you know, suddenly focusing a lot more on myself. And if I could have been the same person that I think that I was on my mission, then I would be ready for anything now, it'd be great...When you're on your mission... everything that you have put there, all the rules and what you're supposed to do, you know that you're supposed to do it. You know that's what the Lord wants you to do, and all you have to do is just put your effort into that, and just let it work...But then you come home and all of a sudden you're reaching out all your energies not to other people, but more really into yourself. Suddenly you have to get into school and you have to decide what you're going to do with your life and all of those kind of things (1500317).

In this study, the RM above was an exception. Most participants did not report having a lot of problems adjusting to a loss of spirit, or the demand to return to school and their regular lives. Rather, they felt the most significant adjustment had to do with the difference in what type of dating behavior was encouraged and expected (by church, parents, LDS peers, and LDS culture) after their missions in comparison to before. Most of the participants came from a background of noncommittal pre-mission dating followed by two years of no dating. Then they came home to a situation in which they were not
only allowed to date, but expected to date and to date as a means of finding a wife. This was not reported as a problem for most, just a change. At times, the participants viewed this change in expectations as frightening and at other times as a good thing.

Well, I guess before my mission I knew I wasn't going to get married. And so [dating] was just kind of to go have fun and get to know people. But there was never that idea "I could make a commitment here." Right now there is. And I think the girls might look for it, and then sometimes I'm thinking it, you know, and then I think..."I'm not ready." So there is a difference. There is that air of "there can be a commitment made now"...I guess in a sense it's kind of scary. In another sense it's kind of cool. It [would] be sweet to have a family. Love somebody. I mean, the spiritual aspect of it. It's eternity. There's a lot of responsibilities, I'm sure. You know, I don't fully understand all that. So...a lot of times I think about that, and it works. I don't know if I'm ready for that. And I really don't understand like how to find the right person (1540119).

It was hard to tell exactly how participants felt about this change, because it seemed to be something that was taken for granted, a way of life. Although some were overly anxious at first, after a short time most RMs didn't have too much trouble easing into dating. Those RMs who had very little pre-mission relationship experience or had been awkward with initiating and maintaining dating relations were most likely to still feel unsure about their dating after returning from their missions.

Summary (mission influence)

Some RMs explained their mission experience enabled them to realize the importance of initiating and maintaining quality marriage and familial relationships. The mission experiences of several participants allowed them to restructure their criteria of what they sought in dating and marriage partners. They tended to emphasize their desire to find
spiritual dating partners who felt God and family were most important. Several participants mentioned learning social skills such as how to initiate conversations, obtain information from women about themselves through conversation, and how to overcome rejection. These skills increased their relational confidence in dating after their missions. Finally, participants reported experiencing a major paradigm shift in what they felt was expected of them previous to their missions as compared to after. While pre-mission dating was noncommittal and limited, post mission dating was expected and necessary in order to fulfill the command to find a wife. Overall, their mission experiences helped to facilitate their desires to be seeking marriage and relationships and to obey church counsel by seeking marriage.

Marriage Doctrine Interpretation

The counsel from church leaders, parents, and various sources from the LDS culture in general were identified as an antecedent condition which influenced both the current attitudes and feelings about marriage, as well as the RMs’ desires (phenomenon).

Partly as a result of this influence, participants felt marriage was expected after they had returned from their missions. One RM explained,

R: Before a mission you’re not involved in courting. While after a mission that is what is expected and that is what happens.

I: You said that is what is expected. Who is the expecter?

R: I guess our Heavenly Father expects us to get married, but before a mission we don't need to worry about the other things cause that is still kind of in a stack of thing[s] to worry about. When the mission [is] out of the way, you know that expectation is there. Before hand [marriage] is not an immediate expectation, but afterwards you don't have something that needs to be taken care of before you get married, so I guess that way it's rather immediate (1580115).
While the RMs all seemed to feel marriage was expected, there were a number of different opinions regarding when they felt they were expected to be seeking marriage at the current time. As mentioned earlier, the RMs would state their interpretation of church doctrine regarding the timing of marriage and often back up their interpretation with church authority. For instance, one RM said, "I was also told by my bishop and my mission president, you know, "don't rush into anything." So I guess I'm just taking their advice. I'm just not really trying to, you know, get married yet (1540119)." While another RM said, "I think it's important to find an eternal mate. And, you know, the General Authorities saying, you know, "get married before you get too old." And they're encouraging it very strongly and they try to provide situations where people can interact (1530114)."

Another returned missionary felt there was a need to find a medium between looking for marriage immediately and putting it off for too long. However, he believed male RMs should be married within two years after returning home.

I know the prophets have said as soon as you're back from your mission you should start seriously trying to get married. I don't want to be like a nut case about it, like, "I've got to get married." I want to take it easy. I don't want to like put off marriage. I guess the right time is when it feels right, when you are ready, meaning you have to make your efforts. You can't just sit there and do nothing. But I think you should stay in the median. You shouldn't go nuts about it, and you shouldn't not do it. When the time's right you'll feel it and know it. I think it's basically within a couple of years after you get back from your mission, if you're a guy (1510105).

Summary (marriage doctrine interpretation)
Many of the participants indicated feeling some sort of pressure to be seeking marriage in the near future. However, when directly asked, most didn’t explicitly acknowledge feeling marriage pressure from the church, the LDS culture, or their parents. Interviews were often contradictory and confusing because it seemed the participants felt a pressure to marry, but for some reason did not want to admit feeling pressured. Similar to the RM quoted in the paragraph above, many participants were struggling to find a median between the pressure they felt and their own desire not to be a “nut case about it” (1510105).

**Summary (antecedent conditions)**

The RMs had preexisting or antecedent factors including: family influence, previous dating, mission experiences, and church doctrine, which impacted the development of the desires (phenomenon) and marriage attitudes/beliefs held by participants. Parents transferred beliefs about who and where to marry. The observance of their parents’ relationships influenced what type of relationships the RMs were seeking. For a few participants, the absence of brother/sister role models led to an increase in relational confidence. Past dating experience and current dating experiences combined to influence the RMs current relational confidence. Mainly, the more positive experiences they had, the higher their relational confidence. Mission experiences facilitated the RMs’ desires to seek marriage and romantic relationships in accordance with church counsel. This was done through observation of members, mission presidents, learning relational skills, and interaction with companions. One’s interpretation of church doctrine was an antecedent condition which impacted their dating. The participants all felt marriage was expected of them by the LDS culture and religion. However, some felt they were supposed to be looking immediately, while others felt justified in delaying courtship for a time.
Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions are factors which make up the more broad "structural context" pertaining to a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These conditions act to either facilitate or constrain the action/interactional strategies taken within a specific context. In this study three main cultures made up the intervening conditions within which the RMs developed desires: American society, Latter-day Saint culture and beliefs, and the atmosphere and reputation of Brigham Young University. For the most part, the dating of these returned missionaries generally resembled dating of other young American males. For instance, their relationships involved periods of acquaintance, increased interaction and dependency, and commitment or dissolution (Levinger, 1983). Similar to their American counterparts of the same age, these RMs were seeking dating partners who were similar to themselves, who were physically attractive, and around whom they felt comfortable. There were, however, some important differences in the way they experienced their relationships. Based on the analysis of interviews, the differences between the participants and other young American males seemed mainly due to the influence of the LDS and BYU cultures within which the participants lived.

Latter-day saint culture

LDS beliefs and attitudes about marriage and dating are taught and modeled directly and indirectly by various sources including church leaders, parents, and peers. Some of the participants' beliefs and attitudes which distinguished them from other college-age American males were: 1) the participants wanted their dating to eventually lead to marriage, 2) they believed seeking marriage was a commandment rather than an option, 3) they added a new dimension to the general courtship process (Levinger, 1983). More than just assessing compatibility, they sought spiritual traits, spiritual bonding, and spiritual confirmation. 4) Many of the RMs felt it was not only important to find an LDS
partner, but they needed to find someone who held the same interpretations of LDS doctrines, and who lived according to their beliefs. And, 5) they were seeking eternal marriages and thus looked at the courtship process as a course which would lead to a serious and sacred commitment with the potential of lasting beyond the present life.

Because of the differences described above, some of the participants felt LDS marriages were more stable and committed in comparison to non-LDS marriages. One participant explained,

I think that dating and relationships [are] viewed similarly. The dating is good. You go date and you have fun. People all over the world do the exact same thing. But I think they look at it differently because they're members of the church, and you can't help but do that. They look at it as, when you get married, the goal is to be married in the temple, to do it for eternity. So I think those are differences there... I think being a member of the church and looking at it from that perspective, I think gives people, not necessarily more experience, but more something to draw from when they're in a relationship. I feel like it's the commitment or the real feeling... commitment to each other or to the relationship. When people get married, I think they are committed definitely. I think being a member of the church, you know that you're going to be married for eternity.

(1500117)

Brigham Young University

In general, participants reported BYU facilitated their dating and progression toward marriage. Participants mentioned several specific BYU related factors which influenced their dating: the pressure to marry at BYU, the access to numerous dating partners with similar beliefs, and the great number of dating opportunities available at
church activities and socials. The participants especially felt attending BYU facilitated their dating because of the great number of members which were available for dating. “I would say it helps. Just everyone you are around is a member of the church and so there is a much greater concentration of people actually living the gospel. A lot more people that are, that you could potentially marry to form an eternal family. So I guess it is easier to find someone (1580115).”

Due to some of the factors listed above, several participants had very high expectations about the opportunities that would be available to them when they came to BYU. For example, one RM commented, “I heard everything about it. Everyone [says] there's a lot of opportunities to date and meet a lot of nice young women. So I came in thinking that I'd meet a lot of nice young women and have an opportunity to go out and date several girls. That's what I thought. That's about all I heard (1570113).”

Along with high expectations, some participants reported feeling pressure to marry from other students at BYU. For example, when asked, “Do you feel pressure to date or marry here at BYU?” one participant replied, “From friends and stuff, and not just here, but on the mission they always joke with you, and say, "Oh you're gonna get married!" And... you have friends that always joke you. I guess the environment [encourages] the idea of marriage (1650109).”

Another RM reported:

Yeah, there's a lot of pressure to get married but it is not seen pressure. There's nothing direct, it's all subconscious and I think it's mostly the students...I don't know how it started, but now the students themselves keep it alive, you know people get married and then you go, ‘Oh man, they only were two weeks together’, and then you go, ‘Well now I feel like I have to do that’ (1560218).
Some participants felt pressure from themselves to be actively seeking marriage (sooner or later). When asked “Do you feel pressured to date and marry here at BYU?” These RMs responded, “Just from myself not from outside people” (1560118), and, “I haven't felt the pressure because I have nobody to pressure me to do it, other than myself, I suppose” (1530114).

While most returned missionaries did not report being personally affected by the pressure, it did seem to influence some. Perhaps due to their high expectations about BYU and the pressure they felt to be seeking marriage, some RMs were disappointed because they weren’t dating as much as they thought they would.

Summary (BYU influence)

In sum, both LDS and BYU cultures encouraged and facilitated courtship. Because of the influence of Latter-day Saint beliefs, the subjects viewed the courtship process as a necessary and important commitment making process which would lead to an eternal marriage. Although not all subjects dated as much as they expected to at BYU, most felt the atmosphere facilitated their dating and progression toward marriage.

Intrapersonal Conditions

The participant’s feelings about courtship and marriage as well as their feelings about their ability to initiate and maintain successful romantic relationships (relational confidence) influenced the way they prioritized their desires and thus their behavior.

Relational Confidence

The relational confidence of participants refers to their overall security or insecurity about their ability to initiate and maintain dating relationships. The subject’s interpretation of their dating experiences seemed to be associated with the pattern of dating they went through. For example, whether or not they interpreted a failure to maintain a relationship as a reflection of a personal problem or deficit was associated with the style of
behavior they chose to use. The overall insecurity or security the subjects felt about dating and themselves was revealed in the way they thought about and participated in dating.

The participants varied in this factor. Some felt very confident in their abilities. These RMs tended to have had more experience with dating and relationships. At the other end was one so insecure he rarely dated. In general, however, most felt semi-confident they could initiate relationships and have positive dating experiences. This factor was very dynamic and changed according to their ongoing exposure to dating experiences.

Marriage attitudes and beliefs

Participants held dating paradigms containing individual beliefs and feelings regarding marriage and courtship. They held beliefs about who, when, and where to marry. In general they wanted to marry an LDS member who was active in the church, and whom they could marry in an LDS temple.

In the church we have the goal to go to the celestial kingdom. So the outline has been given us on how to get there. And one of those is eternal marriage. Temple marriage. If that was one of your higher values and what you look for, then you're going to look for someone that you can take to the temple. And that you can have an eternal family (1540119).

They differed in when they wanted to marry according to their interpretation of church counsel and when they felt it was right for them.

Some RMs came home excited and anxious to be married, while others were scared of any type of commitment. Participants also had different expectations regarding the responsibilities of marriage and whether they felt personally prepared to fulfill the role of a husband. Many of the subjects were anxious about being the financial provider
for a family. While others felt the Lord would take care of things and there was no need to worry.

I feel a strong responsibility to take care of ourselves financially. But I feel really good about it. I've prayed about it, and I believe if you know that it's right from the spirit that the Lord won't let you flounder. He'll help you and support you. In that sense I'm not worried about financial [responsibility] because I know my Father in Heaven will take care of me as long as I pay my tithing and do everything when I can (1570213).

Summary (intrapersonal conditions)

The way the participant's felt about their ability to initiate and maintain successful dating relationships influenced their dating behavior. In addition, the way the participants felt about marriage in general, such as whether they were open to and wanting to pursue courtship, and whether they felt personally prepared for marriage determined their approach to dating. In sum, a dynamic interaction between the participants' confidence in their relationship skills and their current beliefs and feelings regarding courtship provided a context within which RMs chose to incorporate various dating behaviors.

Action/Interactions Strategies and their Consequences

So far we have examined the antecedent conditions (family experiences, past dating experiences, missions, marriage doctrine interpretation), intervening factors (cultural environment), and courtship beliefs (current courtship attitudes and beliefs) which influence the participants' desires to: 1) be involved in relationships and seek marriage, 2) be personally prepared for a marriage relationship, 3) obey church counsel regarding marriage, and 4) avoid rejection and disappointment. The following section
will describe the action/interaction strategies the participants used to manage their current desires.

Four general patterns of dating were identified among participants including: romance dating (style one), minimal dating (style two), friendship dating (style three), and commitment avoidant dating (style four). Each style was defined by a general description of the participants’ characteristics, dating behaviors, desire management, and the consequences of their behaviors while using a particular style. In general, those participants using a style one approach were actively seeking serious relationships with the potential of marriage. Style two participants expressed the desire to limit or slow down the frequency of their dating. Style three daters were seeking friendships in hopes one of their friendships would eventually evolve into a more romantic relationship. Finally, those who used style four were dating for fun, while avoiding relationships with the potential of leading to a marriage commitment.

Subjects were grouped into styles according to a number of different properties including: 1) their feelings about dating/seeking marriage, 2) level of anxiety to marry, 3) level of anxiety regarding marriage responsibilities, 4) relational confidence, 5) response to rejection/disappointment, 6) dating frequency and type, and 7) relationship frequency and types.

While some RMs reported using a number of different styles of dating, others continued to use one style. The involvement in one style of dating did not predict or necessitate involvement in another style.

Each style will be defined and illustrated with case examples. First, the characteristics of those participants who used the style will be described. Next, the actual dating and relationship behavior of the participants in the style will be outlined. Third, a
summary of the desires which were managed best by each style will be explained.

Finally, the consequences of using each style are discussed.

**Style one (Romance Dating)**

**Characteristics**

A majority of the participants who experienced style one did so soon or immediately after returning from their missions. Nine participants (64%) were involved in style one dating behavior at some time during their post-mission dating. A majority (67%) of the RMs who experienced this style had a relationship or dating experience(s) which caused them to reevaluate their dating attitudes and behavior. As a result they changed their dating style. Thus, most of the participants spoke of this style in retrospect as a past experience, which happened soon after they returned from their missions. Three out of the nine (33%) RMs were still using a style one approach when the interviewing process ended and showed no signs of discontinuing it in the near future.

While using a style one approach many of the participants initially felt excitement and sometimes anxiety about dating again. “I had just gotten off my mission, and that was, I was just kind of all fired up. ‘Cause it's like, "All right, I can date now," and all this stuff”(1640211). Another participant explained, “I didn't really know what I was doing when I first came home. You know, your feelings are kind of warped still, and, like I said, I just wanted to jump right into it (seeking marriage) (1550209).”

Along with this feeling of excitement, many style one participants reported wanting to initiate a serious romantic relationship with the potential of leading to marriage immediately. “When I got home from my mission,...the only thing you think about is the church and the gospel and the gospel is eternal life and eternal life is eternal marriage. And so that's what I was thinking, you know. Go home and get married. I just wanted to get married, or so I thought (1640211).”
Thus, at this time they were excited about dating and were seeking marriage or at least an exclusive romantic relationship in the immediate future. In retrospect, some of the RMs who had felt this way while in style one, described it as a false sense of preparedness for marriage.

Even though they came home feeling ready for marriage, these RMs reported little or no feelings of pressure from outside sources such as parents or the church to marry soon. For example, one RM said, “My parents don't want me to get married until I'm kind of older...like twenty-one or twenty-three or out of college or whatever. My grandparents really don't want me to, until I'm way older (1520212).”

One factor which distinguished the participants in this style from others was their tendency to gloss over the responsibilities that come with a marriage relationship. Unlike RMs in other styles who emphasized their concern about being prepared financially, physically, and emotionally for marriage, participants using a style one approach focused on finding a marriage partner instead of focusing on the need to prepare themselves financially, spiritually, etc. for marriage. Several of the subjects held high expectations for their ability to find a spouse immediately upon returning from their mission. They seemed to feel dating would somehow be easier, and that they would experience immediate success in their relationships if they tried hard enough. A couple of participants expected to be led by the spirit to a marriage partner in a manner similar to how they had been led to investigators in the mission field. Both were disappointed when this did not occur. “Looking back I almost feel like maybe I jumped into that a little fast and was a little presumptuous. Maybe in feeling that I would just know instinctively who was the right one. And that may have been just a little idealistic” (1500217)

Another RM explained:
The only time I have really been around a lot of LDS people at one time was when I was on my mission. So I expected that when you came to BYU everyone was, like, kind of spiritually, you know, progressing, and they all read the Book of Mormon, and that it was a lot easier to meet your wife or whoever. Because you have the spirit with you so strong that it would just tell you right away who your wife was supposed to be or who your husband was supposed to be. I honestly felt this way, that the spirit would just tell you, and you would just know what to do concerning all those things because that's the way it had been on my mission. I realized once I got here that it is a lot different (1520112).

Many of those RMs who experienced style one had previously or currently felt insecure about initiating dates or relationships. Several possible reasons for this general lack of relational confidence were identified. One of the most salient commonalities among these participants was the lack of relationship experience. However, their lack of dating and romantic relationship experience was not due solely to feelings of insecurity and/or a lack of relationship skills. A minimal amount of eligible LDS dating partners as well as the absence of a brother or sister dating role model were also reported as reasons. It is also likely there are a large number of RM’s who do not have an extensive dating history simply because they planned on serving a mission. Many of the RMs in this sample (regardless of the styles they went through), reported not becoming serious previous to their missions because they thought it would be hard to keep a relationship intact during their mission or because they felt pre-mission dating was more for fun than serious commitment.

In sum, the RMs in the sample who used a style one approach to dating seemed more likely to be shy or insecure about dating, were more likely to have unrealistic
expectations about their ability to initiate and maintain romantic relationships immediately upon returning from their missions, and tended to gloss over the responsibilities of marriage. It seemed the RMs who had these factors in combination with limited dating and relationship experience were more likely compared to other subjects, to fall into style one dating upon returning home from their missions.

**Dating Behavior**

While some participants who used style one were involved in short-term monogamous relationships, others dated lots of different people but did not report initiating a steady relationship with any one partner. Style one participants tended to date frequently. Group and single dating were both common. Dates were formal and informal.

Because most of these subjects felt ready for marriage, they were seeking romantic relationships in which they would be exclusively committed to one person. The relationships of participants in this style were characterized by a fast-paced style in which the couple discussed commitment (physical intimacy, emotional intimacy, and/or exclusive dating) early in the relationship. In general, they were more likely to want to become physically intimate sooner than those participants who used a style three (friendship) approach in relationships. One RM who reported coming home seeking marriage in the immediate future, explained his experience.

> When I came home, I admit...I kind of started thinking, "who do I know? Who do I like?" And I thought of ------. So I just started asking her out. And she's a lot of fun. Our friendship started up again, like it was. But I think I wanted something too fast, which is interesting, because when something happens fast, it scares me. And then all of a sudden we were just kind of happening. I'm like, "hey, wait a minute (1640211)."
After initiating this relationship he felt the relationship was moving toward commitment--before they had “developed any deep feelings for each other” (1640211). This scared him and the relationship was dissolved. Another RM who felt he and his partner’s personalities clicked on their first date, reported having similar feelings. In this case, he felt the physical part of the relationship had progressed too rapidly because he kissed her on the first date. Again, it seemed because the relationship started out fast it was dissolved.

Boom. It happened quick. And I didn’t like it at all. I didn’t even know her last name. It was awful...it was one of those three week wonder things. I really like her and stuff, but from both sides it’s kind of awkward, and so I kind of laid off. I saw her today and it was like ‘Hi’, and, ‘Bye’. So, I was embarrassed. I learned a lot from that situation (1630418).

Similar to the experiences described above, most of the relationships initiated during style one were short term, and all but one of the relationships initiated were dissolved by the participant, their partner, or both. Although each RM had a specific situation, what they had most in common while using this style was the desire to actively pursue romantic relationships which had the potential of leading to marriage. In contrast to the attitudes of RMs using other styles, many of these RMs were seeking marriage or serious relationships in the near future.

Desire Management

Frequent dating of a large number of people enabled these participants to fulfill the desire to obey church counsel to be actively seeking a marriage partner. Simultaneously, their fast-paced and frequent dating behavior increased their chances of experiencing rejection and disappointment. Thus, the desire to avoid disappointment and rejection was not fulfilled by using this style. For the majority, this style did not fulfill
the desire to become involved in a serious relationship or marriage because most of their relationships were too quick and did not progress past a short romance. A minority of RM s who continued using this style eventually became involved in serious relationships which were leading toward engagement. In sum, RM s who discontinued using style one, usually stopped because they had an increased desire to avoid rejection/disappointment and/or to be more personally prepared before seeking marriage. Those who stayed tended to have more desire to seek romance/marriage.

The main difference between the RM s who continued using style one and those who stopped using this approach was in their response to disappointing experiences. Feelings of frustration, fear, or disappointment caused most to want to slow or reduce their dating in order to fulfill a personal need, take a break from the pressures of dating, and minimize the likelihood of experiencing another disappointing experience. On the other hand, those who continued to use this style even after experiencing temporary disappointments were less likely to think they needed to change something about themselves or to have more time before marriage. Thus, they may have slightly altered their dating style as the result of a disappointing experiencing, but they didn’t change dating styles.

Consequences

For most of these participants, style one dating experiences such as the dissolution of a fast-paced relationship or the failure to initiate a romantic relationship with someone caused them to reflect on their dating paradigm and to change their dating style as a result. For instance, one RM explained how his relationship during style one had taught him about dating, relationships and himself.

I think it definitely had an influence, because it kind of made me step back. It certainly taught me a little bit about myself, about what I wanted when I would date
people...and what I was looking for, what I was ready to do and what I was not. How much I was willing to make a commitment or how much I was not. And I think I learned a lot more about, probably about two things. Probably in relationship in dealing, maybe, with girls and the way they think. And then also about myself. Just how ready am I to have a girlfriend [or] to get into a serious relationship where you can get married to someone (1500317).

Those who felt a negative dating experience was due to something they had done wrong in their relationship or dating, or as the result of personal unpreparedness for marriage and commitment, were likely to discontinue using style one dating. A number of these RMs felt more strongly about incorporating dating behaviors which would allow them to avoid rejection and relationship failures. Thus, the priority they placed on the desire to become involved in relationships/marriage was decreased while the priority placed on the desire to avoid disappointment was increased.

RM$s who discontinued using this style became more cautious about dating and were much less likely to move quickly toward a committed relationship. While none of these RMs continued seeking a wife with the intensity of style one, they did continue to look at marriage as a future goal.

There were a minority of RMs who didn’t experience a major paradigm shift as a result of their experiences in style one, and were still in style one at the end of the interviewing process. In contrast to those RMs who discontinued using style one, these RMs had more pre-mission experience with romantic relationships in terms of seriousness and frequency. When faced with disappointment or rejection they did not interpret their experience as a sign of a need for personal change or growth.

For instance, one RM was involved in a fast-paced relationship very similar to many other style one participants except that it progressed to a possible engagement. When
the relationship ended, he interpreted the dissolution of the relationship as her fault and a reflection of her immaturity. "Basically we got down to the point where I just figured that she doesn't know what she wants." (1560218). This RM continued using a style one dating approach by dating frequently and seeking a romantic relationship. The RMs who continued using style one were more likely to move at a quicker pace toward engagement and marriage than those who discontinued using style one dating.

**Summary (Style One)**

Several similarities were identified among those participants who exhibited style one dating behaviors and attitudes. In general, the RMs felt excited about dating while they were using style one. They also felt ready for marriage or at least a serious romantic relationship with the potential of marriage. These RMs reported little or no feelings of pressure from outside sources such as parents or the church to marry. One factor which distinguished the participants in this style, was their tendency to gloss over the responsibilities which come with a marriage relationship. Unlike RMs in other styles, they focused on finding a marriage partner instead of focusing on the need to prepare themselves financially, spiritually, etc. for marriage. Several of the subjects held high expectations for their ability to find a spouse immediately upon returning from their mission. Most of those RMs who experienced style one reported having previously or currently felt insecure about initiating dates or relationships.

Many of the RMs who exhibited style one characteristics became involved in short-term, fast-paced romantic relationships or dated a large number of people frequently. Thus, based on the results of this analysis, those RMs who exhibit style one characteristics are more likely to date lots of different partners or become involved in fast-paced romantic relationship(s). Style one participants tended to place the most priority on their desires to be involved in romantic relationships/marriage and to obey
church doctrine to be actively seeking marriage. Style one behaviors enabled RMs to fulfill the desire to obey church counsel to be actively seeking a marriage partner. Because their relationships tended to be fast-paced and often disappointing, the desire to avoid disappointment/rejection was not fulfilled by using this style. For the majority this style did not fulfill the desire to become involved in a serious relationship or marriage. However, the small number of participants who continued using a style one approach, even after experiencing dating/relationship disappointments, were able to fulfill the desire to be involved in serious relationships. These RMs did not leave style one to become more personally prepared for marriage/commitment, and became involved in relationships which were progressing toward engagement.

In sum, there were several main factors which distinguished style one daters from the other dating styles: 1) unlike style two, these RMs were seeking romantic relationships, they were excited about dating, and they felt ready to marry, 2) unlike those using style three, they wanted to be involved in a romantic relationship immediately rather than simply seeking non-committal friendships with the potential of romance, and 3) unlike those in style four, they were not actively avoiding serious committed relationships with the potential of marriage.

Style Two (Minimal Dating)

Characteristics

Six participants (43%) reported going through or wanting to go through a period of time in which they slowed the frequency of their dating from what it had been previously, dated very little, or didn’t date at all. Most (75%) of the RMs who experienced style two entered it after and as a result of their experiences in style one. All except one of the RMs who used dating style two had also experienced style one at some point during the interviewing process. For those who entered style two after style one,
taking a break from dating may have been a reaction to the experience(s) they had while using style one.

Although they planned to be married eventually, most the RMs in this style wanted to decrease their dating because they wanted to take a break from dating and seeking a wife. For some participants, this approach was a short-lived desire to take a break, while others actually decreased their dating. Both groups were included in this category because they expressed a desire to minimize their dating.

In general, style two participants were dissatisfied with dating, afraid to initiate dates, or simply did not feel like seeking dating and relationships which could lead to marriage. The subjects who used a style two approach reported feeling frustrated with dating in general, fear of rejection or disappointment, and personal “unpreparedness” for marriage. Perhaps more than anything else, they seemed tired of looking for romance. One RM explained his reasoning for decreasing his dating, “I'm just tired. I don't like first dates anymore. I'm tired of taking a different girl out every week” (1640311). Similarly, another subject explained, “It's been pretty slow. Usually I would have perspective...even if I was kind of not interested in somebody, or it just didn't work out, some way or the other, so I would have a new person in mind, already. Usually it's that way. But sometimes you get tired of chasing” (1600210).

This style was not as fast-paced or action-oriented as style one. Instead, it seemed more like a break period or transitional phase between dating styles for most who experienced it. One RM described his feelings while using style two, “You know. I'm not too disappointed or anything. Just been sulkier, that's all. Tense. I can't say that there's been anything momentous occurring” (1600210). Although some entered the style because of frustration, there was a more relaxed feeling in comparison to the anxiety of style one, in which they were seeking a wife immediately. While decreasing their dating frequency,
the RMs spoke as if they were taking less responsibility for finding a marriage partner and leaving it up to fate. “I find myself now thinking that when I date and things like that, I want to date and have fun and maybe not be so ready to be so serious. If that happens that's fine, I'm not opposed to that. When it happens, it will happen” (1500217). Although most of these participants would not have minded being involved in a relationship at the time, they had no interest in initiating or seeking relationships or dates themselves. “I just haven't gone out and tried to just ask anybody out, or really anything. I just choose not to right now. I just don't want to right now”(1500317).

The RMs using style two did not report feeling pressure from outside sources to marry. However, a couple of participants felt it would be best if they married within a certain time frame. For example, one participant explained, “I wouldn't mind being married before I left BYU. Because the quantities [are] here and the opportunities are here. And where I go to chiropractic school, I don't know if that's going to be available or not. So I have a little bit of a time-line pressure” (1530114).

The RMs in this style were not actively seeking marriage or dating through their behavior. However, they were open to the idea of relationships simply happening to them without their initiation. This feature distinguished them from participants in style four who were actively avoiding relationships which had the potential of long-term exclusive commitment and/or marriage.

In contrast to the “naive” excitement and feeling of “readiness” in style one, RMs in style two were more likely to point out barriers or issues they felt they needed to overcome before marrying. In particular, financial, emotional, and spiritual preparedness were emphasized by participants. They spoke of these issues as contributing to the decrease in their dating. One RM described this phenomenon as an “anti-pressure” to marry:
When I first got home I think I was excited and ready and, you know, it'd been a long time since I dated. Now I think there's more of an anti-pressure...I have at least six years of school left, and my parents don't help me at school, financially at all. Just financially I have a lot of responsibility before I want to get married (1530114).

For the most part, the returned missionaries who experienced this style were similar to style one participants in relational confidence. Many of them felt somewhat unsure about their dating abilities. Also similar to style one participants, those RMs who had had more positive experiences with pre-mission relationships and dating seemed to have more relational confidence.

**Dating Behavior**

The RMs who were using a style two approach to dating reported going through or wanting to go through a period of time in which they slowed the frequency of their dating from what it had been previously, dated very little, or didn’t date at all. One exception was a subject who hadn’t experienced anything but minimal dating before or after his mission, and thus he wasn’t necessarily taking a break from dating. He was categorized as a style two dater because his dating was minimal, and his insecurity about dating increased his desire to avoid rejection and disappointment.

The RMs who experienced style one and interpreted their experiences in style one as a reflection of personal unpreparedness for marriage or the personal inability to successfully initiate and maintain a romantic relationship were likely to want a “break” from dating.

**Desire Management**

Because dating was minimal, those who used this approach were fulfilling desire to avoid rejection and disappointment as well as the desire to become more personally prepared before marriage. They were not fulfilling the desire to obey perceived church
counsel to be actively seeking a marriage partner, or to be involved in serious relationships/marriage.

Consequences

In general, the RMs who stopped using style two did so because they didn’t feel as strong of a desire to avoid rejection/disappointment or they felt they found another style which would allow them to avoid rejection/disappointment while dating (rather than to stop dating all together). They also discontinued using style two because of the desire to pursue romance/marriage again. Those who continued using style two did so because they wanted to continue avoiding rejection/disappointment by not dating, or wanted to continue becoming more personally prepared for marriage before pursuing dates and relationships.

A majority (67%) of those who used dating style two moved onto another style during the interviewing process. For these RMs the dating lapse they went through was a transitional phase in between styles of dating. During the interviewing process most of the RMs who began using style two eventually moved to a style three approach. After feeling as if they wanted to decrease their dating, those RMs who stopped using style two, eventually eased into a more comfortable and slower paced dating style in comparison to style one.

Those who discontinued using a style two approach did not necessarily begin dating at a much greater frequency when they stopped using style two (dating lapse). However, their attitude toward dating changed to a more optimistic, comfortable attitude. They became willing to initiate dates and relationships again. They began thinking about their dating as a process of seeking friendships rather than seeking romance. These were participants who discontinued using style one as the result of a negative experience and moved into a dating lapse (style two).
Summary (Style Two)

In general, participants who were using a style two approach were dissatisfied with dating, afraid to initiate dates, or simply did not feel like dating or being involved in relationships for a time. The most salient feeling of RMs in this style was the desire to take a break from dating. The RMs in this style were not actively seeking marriage or dating through their behavior. However, they were open to the idea of relationships simply happening to them without their initiation. These characteristics led them to limit their involvement in dating and relationships. The dating these RMs were involved in was likely to be informal group dates which were initiated by someone else. None of the participants were involved in a romantic relationship while using a style two approach. Those participants who exhibited style two characteristics and behavior tended to place the most priority on their desires to avoid rejection and disappointment and to become more personally ready for committed relationships and marriage. After temporarily expressing a desire to limit their dating, a number of these participants started dating again. On the other hand, some participants continued to avoid initiating dates and relationships.

In sum, the factors which distinguished style two daters from the other dating styles were: 1) unlike style one, these RMs were frustrated/tired of dating and did not feel ready for marriage, 2) unlike style three, they did not want to initiate dates or relationships including friendships, and they were not satisfied with their dating, and 3) while those who used style four wanted to avoid serious commitment, they were open to dating. On the other hand, style two daters wanted to take a break from initiating dates and relationships in general. Also in contrast to style four, some style two daters were open to having a dating partner initiate a relationship with them with the potential of marriage.
Style Three (Friendship Dating)

Characteristics

Six participants (43%) demonstrated style three dating behavior. All of the RMs who used this style were still using it at the end of the interviewing process. Two RMs started and finished in this style. The other four came to this style after going through other style/s. Thus, a majority of the subjects who used this style began using it after another style.

The RMs in this style did not mind being involved in romantic relationships, but they did not want to force a relationship to happen. Instead of avoiding dating all together, they dated to enjoy themselves and to make friends with the possibility of leading to romance. One RM who was using this approach explained how he thought courtship would proceed for him,

We[‘ll] [be] really good friends, and there'll be a time where [I’ll] just know. It'll probably just hit me. "Okay, I think she's the one". I think the most important thing [is to let] things kind of come together. You can't force things on the girl, neither can she force things on you. And it's a dual thing. So you can't really make things happen [by yourself](1630418).

His words summarized the desire of style three daters to allow relationships to progress naturally as the result of mutual influence from both partners. Their philosophy was significantly different compared to those using a style one approach in which participants tried to make relationships happen.

In general, these participants viewed dating as a means of making friendships, having fun, getting experience, and building a pool of possible marriage partners. Although they sought dating partners who seemed like they had the potential of romance,
they didn’t try or expect to pursue a serious romantic relationship with all of their partners.

The RMs in style three were more relaxed in their dating style and seemed to enjoy the process more than those in style one and two. One style three participant explained his change in perspective from style one to three:

When you get off your mission, it's like, "I guess the next thing's marriage.” And so you just kind of think, "hmmm, could I marry her? Could I marry her?” But it's really relaxed now. I enjoy dating [and] just [going] out with friends. So I think the most important thing is to have a good friendship before dating seriously and [seeking] marriage (1630418).

Most felt personally competent enough to marry and carry the responsibilities of marriage. Those who didn’t feel ready at the time, felt using a friendship style of dating would help them to become ready for marriage.

Style three daters were more confident about themselves and their dating compared to style one and two. Those RMs who had more positive experiences with pre-mission relationships and dating seemed to have more relational confidence.

RMs who experienced style three immediately after their missions were more likely to be confident in their dating abilities and selves. These RMs were also more likely to have had experience exclusively dating a number of different girls previous to their missions. On the other hand, the RMs who began using style three after style two (dating lapse), were likely to still be somewhat unsure about their dating in comparison to their counterparts.

Dating Behavior

Similar to RMs who used a style two approach, some of the RMs in style three weren’t dating a lot. However, their attitude about dating was different than those who
used style two. They wanted to be involved in dating and were willing to initiate dates and relationships. These participants went on group and single dates as well as formal and informal dates. In comparison to relationships of participants in other styles these participants developed their relationships at a slower pace and focused on building friendships while delaying or avoiding becoming physically intimate. The RMs who were in relationships were comfortable with the possibility that their relationship could either dissolve or progress to marriage.

Desire Management

In general, RMs using this approach seemed comfortable with their dating style and the management of their desires. In fact, these participants seemed more content in their ability to fulfill competing desires than any of the other style participants. This may have been because the style three approach was able to fulfill all four desires simultaneously. Using a style three approach provided a buffer against rejection and/or relationship disappointment. They were avoiding rejection by having a pool of friends as backup, and also by starting with friendship in order to get more of a feel for whether the relationship would turn out good or not, so as to avoid possible rejection. This style also allowed subjects to seek friendships with the hopes of eventually becoming involved in romantic relationships and marriage. Thus, they felt they were obeying church counsel to be actively seeking marriage. And finally, they were also buying time to become more personally prepared for marriage, because they were seeking friendships rather than an immediate romance.

Consequences

Based on the results of this analysis, RMs who used style three immediately after their missions were more likely to be confident in their dating abilities and selves. On the other hand, the RMs who began using style three after another style, were likely to be
somewhat more cautious about dating, and still a little insecure about their dating abilities. Some of these RMs seemed to start style three dating because they wanted to date again (after style two), but they wanted to protect themselves from being hurt. Some tried to keep all their relationships on a friendship level, wouldn’t ask girls out more than once or twice, or kept a number of eligible partners available so they would have someone else to ask out if a relationship was dissolved.

Many of the RMs who began using a style three approach did so after experiencing some type of dating/relationship failure. For example, one style three participant started seeking friendship-based relationships because he had become disappointed with style one dating. He explained his current dating behavior,

I'm looking just for friends. 'Cause, now I don't want to make that big of a conclusion and [think marriage or a serious romance is a possibility] 'Cause it's just...it's too disappointing all the time. And so I just make a lot of friends. I've come to the conclusion that when I get married, it'll just happen. I won't have to worry about it. And I don't have to go on a rampage looking for a wife or anything (1640311).

Rather than thinking that every girl he dated could be his future wife, this RM began focusing on developing friends. Another RM using style three decided to seek friendships before romance after he experienced a fast-paced relationship which ended.

Going out with her for a week or two, I realized I want to develop a relationship. I want to have a relationship and get to know someone and have a friendship there. That's what happened...Cause there wasn't any friendship there. That happened cause there just wasn't anything rooted in the relationship (1630217).

The RMs who used style three seemed to want to use this approach because it was comfortable and safe. Style three most resembled the dating many of the participants
were involved in previous to their missions. Group dating and friendships with the opposite sex were much more common than seeking long-term, seriously committed romantic relationships. Two of the major factors which seemed to cause a number of subjects to begin using a style three approach were: experience with a relationship which was not based on friendship, and/or disappointment in seeking romance.

All the RMs who used a style three approach continued using it once they had begun. Thus, there was no movement from one approach to another. The RMs seemed to continue in the style because they were comfortable and content with the approach’s management and fulfillment of their desires.

**Summary (Style Three)**

The most salient characteristic of RMs who used a style three approach, was their ability to enjoy the process more than those in style one and two. In general, these participants viewed dating as a means of making friendships, having fun, getting experience, and building a pool of possible marriage partners. They were still selective about those whom they dated, and they sought women who seemed like eligible marriage partners. However, they did not try or expect to pursue a serious romantic relationship with all of their partners.

Those who exhibited style three characteristics were likely to develop their relationships at a slower pace and focused on building friendships while delaying or avoiding becoming physically intimate. Most felt personally competent enough to marry and manage the responsibilities of marriage. Those who didn’t feel ready at the time, seemed to feel using a friendship style of dating would help them to become ready for marriage.

Compared to participants using other styles, these RMs seemed to place equal emphasis on each of the four desires. Thus, their dating behavior was not the result of an
effort to fulfill any one desire more than the others. Rather, through their dating behavior they were able to successfully manage all four of their desires simultaneously. The outcome was satisfaction.

In sum, there were several main factors which distinguished style three daters from the other dating styles: 1) unlike style one, they were seeking friendship before serious romantic relationships, 2) unlike those in style two, they were open to dating, they wanted to date, and they were dating, and 3) unlike those in style four, they were not actively avoiding serious committed relationships with the potential of marriage.

Style Four (Commitment Avoidant)

Characteristics

These RMs wanted to delay becoming involved in serious romantic relationships with the potential of marriage. Only a small percentage of the sample (21%) demonstrated style four dating behavior. With the exception of one RM who stopped using this style for a short time, the RMs who used this style of dating continued to use it throughout the interviewing process.

The participants using this approach felt they needed more time to adjust to being home from their missions, to mature, to grow spiritually, become more financially prepared for marriage, and to enjoy dating. One RM explained,

I'll probably go with what my dad says, with making sure that you're stable. Making sure that you have at least, if you aren't through school or something, at least maybe your wife where she's able to help you with maybe working. It's worth it, I think, to wait and be able to have that degree, have a set job where you're able to work and support a family (1650109).

When asked, “what do you think the worst thing about dating here at BYU is?”, another style four participant said: “The worst. (long pause) Probably getting into a
70

situation where ya might have to make a commitment. Cause right now, I'm not ready to get married. That's for sure. I just got home (1540119).”

Finally, a third participant avoided becoming committed to one person because he did not want to risk going through the dissolution of a relationship if it didn’t work out. I think that [the possibility of a negative break up] is one reason I never had like a real long, committal period with a girl. I guess the first one I do have will be my wife or something, cause I can't imagine hating a person after [breaking up] and disliking them just for some stupid reason (1590110).

In sum, there were a number of factors which motivated these RMs to use a style four approach to dating. The most common characteristic of the RMs who were classified as style four style daters was their tendency to avoid dating behavior which they felt could progress to marriage.

Style four participants had a fun, easy-going attitude about dating. However, they were afraid of becoming committed to one person for a long length of time. At times they considered becoming serious or seeking marriage, but in general their dating behavior was commitment avoidant.

They had more pre-mission experience with dating compared to many other participants. In contrast to the RMs in style one and two, the RMs in style four were more worried about having a dating partner who wanted commitment than they were worried about being rejected. They also seemed to have an easier time finding and initiating dates compared to the participants in other styles. In general, they were confident in their ability to initiate and maintain relationships.

The RMs who were using this approach did not seem to be as negatively affected by dating rejections and/or disappointments compared to other style participants. In fact, they were often the instigators of a relationship break up. In most cases, when such
incidences occurred they continued dating and did not change dating styles. One exception was an RM who eventually became tired of noncommittal relationships and briefly moved to a style three approach to dating.

Perhaps due to the ease of their dating, they tended to date lots of different people and to date frequently. Their relationships in this style were short-term and based on physical intimacy, and/or fun. The main feature distinguishing this style from the others was the participant’s desire to avoid serious commitment to one person. Being in this style did not indicate a dating lapse or decreased dating. In fact, these RMs dated as much or more as the RMs in other styles.

**Desire Management**

Because their relationships were relatively non-committal, their dating behavior facilitated the desire to become more personally prepared before seeking marriage as well as the desire to avoid rejection and disappointment. It did not facilitate the desire to obey church counsel to be actively seeking marriage or to be involved in marriage and serious romantic relationships. However, these participants placed a much higher priority on the desire to become personally prepared for marriage than they placed on the desire to be involved in serious relationships and marriage. At times they felt justified in the decision to delay courtship. While at other times they felt maybe they should be more actively seeking marriage. For the time being, they seemed to feel their current desires were being managed well enough that they did not want to change styles.

**Consequences**

Most the RMs who used style four did not switch to another style during the interviewing process. It is likely these RMs would continue to use style four until they felt less of a need or desire to become more personally prepared before seeking commitment and marriage. For instance, one RM did decide he felt he was ready to seek
commitment and discontinue using a noncommittal style four approach. His dating behavior had previously followed a pattern in which he would begin by initiating a romantic, physical relationship at a fast pace. After a few dates the novelty of the person would wear off and he would move on to another person. He explained, “That's why I've never had that many, I mean, a girlfriend for long periods of time. Because it's like a week or a weekend or something like that. It [being involved in relationships based solely on physical intimacy] affects it in a big way because you have no basis and you have nothing to build on” (1590210).

He continued by saying he realized this pattern kept him from developing long-term romances. And so he decided to try to initiate a more long-term romance with exclusive commitment to one person. “I turn over a new leaf like every day.... my feelings are kind of veering away from that now. I think it's becoming more important to me to like the girl. Well, I mean, I also like other girls but just like, to hope that something comes out of it (1590210). Later this RM became involved in a relationship in which he was initially willing to become committed and exclusive. After about a week of dating exclusively, he explained the novelty wore off, and he began using a style four approach again.

These participants tended to continue using a style four approach because it met the desire to be more personally prepared for marriage and commitment, which was their main desire. This approach allowed them to enjoy dating while allowing themselves time to become personally prepared for marriage. However, they did not seem quite as content as style three daters in their ability to manage desires. There was occasional questioning of their approach, specifically wondering if they should not be avoiding commitment and marriage.

**Summary (Style Four)**
Style four participants had a fun, easy-going attitude about dating. They were avoiding relationships with the potential of marriage because they wanted to avoid marriage for the time and/or were afraid of exclusive commitment. Most RMs who used this style of dating felt personally unprepared for serious commitments or marriage either emotionally, financially, or in terms of their age and maturity.

Style four participants seemed to have more experience with short-term romances than their counterparts from other styles. This may have contributed to their confidence in relationships and dating. In contrast to the RMs in style one and two, the RMs in style four weren’t as worried about being rejected. They seemed to have an easier time finding and initiating dates than the participants in other styles. Those who exhibited style four characteristics were more likely to date lots of different people and to date frequently. Their relationships in this style were short-term and based on physical intimacy, and/or fun. These RMs seemed to place the most priority on the desire to be personally prepared for marriage. In consequence of their dating behavior, they enjoyed their dating but at times felt unsure of their decision to delay marriage.

The differences which distinguished style four RMs from other participants were:
1) unlike those in style one, style four RMs were avoiding marriage and did not feel ready for marriage, 2) compared to those in style two, style four daters were willing to date, wanted to initiate dates and romances, and for the most part enjoyed their dating experiences. While on the other hand, style two were frustrated with dating and/or were afraid of rejection and thus desired to take a “break” from initiating dates and relationships all together. Style four participants were actively avoiding serious commitments with the potential of marriage, while style two RMs simply wanted to avoid initiating dates because they were frustrated or tired of rejection/disappointment.
3) unlike those in style three, style four daters did not feel ready for marriage and were avoiding relationships with a marriage potential.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to broaden our understanding of the experience of Latter-day Saint male returned missionaries as they establish and maintain non-marital relationships, and as they move toward long-term committed marital relationships. The returned missionaries in the sample reported having four main desires or objectives related to their courtship. These were the desire to: 1) feel personally prepared for marriage, 2) avoid rejection and disappointing relationships, 3) be involved in romantic relationships/marriage, and 4) obey gospel doctrine regarding the appropriate timing of marriage. All the RMs appeared to have these four desires to various extents. Because these desires were sometimes in opposition with each other, participants were compelled to continually prioritize their desires according to which they felt were the most important at the time. The level of importance placed on each desire varied from high to low. Thus, each RM had a unique “set” of desires. Participants incorporated various dating strategies in an effort to find a dating style which would allow them to manage their desires in a way that those desires which were most important to them were fulfilled most and those which were least important were fulfilled less.

The methods the RMs incorporated to manage their desires emerged as the core category around which all the other categories were “integrated” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Antecedent conditions including: families of origin, past dating experience, missions, and interpretation of marriage doctrine, were found to influence participants’ courtship beliefs, desire prioritization, and relational confidence. Similarly, the LDS, BYU, and American culture impacted the intrapersonal conditions of participants. In turn, the RMs current feelings, beliefs, and attitudes regarding dating
and marriage impacted what desires they had, which desires they prioritized the most, and finally which dating approach they used to manage their desires. As their courtship beliefs and experiences changed, they often altered the importance they placed on a desire(s). Dating styles were altered to accommodate altered desires. When they felt their desires were being fulfilled and managed at an optimal level they were satisfied with their choice of dating approach and did not change approaches. If they felt their desires were not being managed at an optimal level they were dissatisfied and were likely to change dating styles.

The model (figure 1.1) below illustrates the relationships among factors which interacted to produce the process the RMs in this sample incorporated to manage competing desires.

**Desire Management Model (Figure 1.1)**

![Desire Management Model Diagram](image)
Implications

The findings of this study suggest the transition to post-mission dating is characterized by competing desires which necessitate management. Therefore, the transformation to post-mission dating can be perceived as a process by which RMs seek dating behaviors which will enable the management of their desires at an optimal level. The majority of the RMs in this sample eventually found a dating style which allowed them to balance their desires at a level with which they were satisfied. The participants experienced the most difficulty and dissatisfaction with their dating when they had a desire(s) which they felt was not being fulfilled through their dating style.

The desire management process can be used as a conceptual model for understanding returned missionary dating behavior by those who associate with, teach, and counsel Latter-day Saint male returned missionaries. This conceptual framework describes some of the antecedent and current factors which influence LDS returned missionary’s dating behavior and thus satisfaction with their dating. In particular, the results indicated a number of RMs have minimal previous experience with serious long-term romantic commitments, and in some cases minimal dating and relationship experience in general. Although post-mission dating and marriage are encouraged and accepted, this does not mean it becomes easier for RMs to date and initiate relationships after their missions. In fact, it may be harder because of the pressure they feel from themselves and sometimes others to be involved in and seeking seriously committed relationships.

In 1963, King found those BYU students who were not dating tended to have lower self-concepts in general. The participants in this sample who had less positive dating experiences were found to be more insecure about their dating. At times this factor caused them to use a dating style which decreased their chance for being hurt at the expense of using a style which would allow them to fulfill their desire to be involved in positive dating
relationships. In order to better understand particular RMs dating behavior, it is important for practitioners to be aware of the influence of antecedent and intrapersonal factors, such as pre-mission dating history and relational confidence, which work together to influence current dating behavior.

The desire management model outlines four of the most common desires or goals RMs may have as they make the transition to dating. Similar to Holman's (1996) findings with LDS youth, the participant’s in this study thought of their courtship as a process which was leading up to an important marital commitment. Their belief in the importance of seeking marriage and the sacredness of a marital relationship, influenced the way they thought about and practiced dating. The four desires which emerged as the most important dating goals for the participants were likely a result of these beliefs.

For most of the RMs in this sample, the transition to post-mission dating wasn’t especially difficult. A number of participants altered or changed styles in accordance to their changing beliefs and thus desires. Their sometimes good and sometimes bad dating experiences were normal processes observable in most person’s dating. Those RMs who experienced ongoing dissatisfaction with their dating, were often continuing to use a dating style which did not meet one or more of their desires to the extent they wanted. In these cases, it may be helpful for RMs to reprioritize their desires.

The four general patterns or styles of dating described in the model may be used as an interpretive reference illustrating the style of dating behavior which fulfills various desires. In general, the participants did not experience styles one through four in a consecutive manner. For example, some continued using the same style throughout the interviewing process, while others jumped from style one to style three dating. Ostler (1995) found those BYU returned missionaries who were sending and receiving attraction cues simultaneously with their dating partner were more likely to initiate a relationship.
This study found evidence supporting his conclusions. RMs who were in a relationship in which they and their partner were interested in continuing the romance and were sending positive signals simultaneously, were more likely to continue using their current dating style and to initiate and develop a relationship.

It is important to note a number of RMs appeared to experience styles one through three in a sequence. These RMs were likely to have returned home desiring an immediate romance. After experiencing a dating failure or disappointment, they wanted to slow down their search for immediate romance. Eventually they began dating again with a slower, more relaxed approach. In may be helpful for laymen and practitioners to be aware of this pattern. Those who begin using a style three approach without going through styles one and two, may be more likely to be satisfied with the results of their dating behavior.

Limitations and Future Research

One participant was dropped from the analysis because his interview did not contain enough information to be included in the study. This lowered the sample size to 14 participants. Because the sample was kept to a minimum, a detailed analysis of individual returned missionaries was possible. However, in the future it would be beneficial to compare these results with a larger sample. The present qualitative study provided a conceptual framework based on the meaning which male LDS returned missionaries assign to their own dating experiences. In the future, a quantitative study could further the research in this area by comparing this framework to a larger population of returned missionaries.

This study only addressed some of the issues involved in the dating of male returned missionaries. The influences identified in the present study were those which seemed most salient to these particular returned missionaries. These results are likely to be somewhat due to the wording of the questionnaires, which guided the interviewing process. Thus, future research needs to be conducted in order to assess the validity of
these influences as well as to explore the possibility of other influential factors. In particular, the nature of the relationship between the families of returned missionaries and their dating behavior needs to be assessed further. The association between pre-mission and post-mission dating experiences also needs to be examined. Research in this area needs to examine if and how the change in what type of dating is expected previous to, during, and after their missions impacts returned missionaries’ dating behavior.

This analysis revealed four dating styles RMs may use as they first begin post-mission dating. It would be beneficial to observe a sample of RMs over an extended time to identify other styles which may emerge as time passes. For example, one might study the long-term effect of broken engagements on RMs’ dating, the change in dating styles an RM may or may not experience as they become engaged, or even, the difference in dating styles between those RMs who have been back one year and those who have been back for five. Further research in this area would allow us a greater understanding of the dating process returned missionaries’ experience.
References


INTERVIEW GUIDE
RESEARCH QUESTION: How do single, religiously active LDS young adults initiate, build-up/maintain, make a permanent commitment to, or end, heterosexual relationships?

SUB-QUESTION #1: What attitudes and experiences do they bring to any new relationship?

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO ASK

GENERAL AREAS OF INTEREST

INTRODUCTION

Put them at ease with such questions as:

Where are you from? (If you might have common acquaintances, do not mention them since they may clam up if they think their interview could be shared with someone they know, but do show an interest in them and their story)
What is your major?

ATTITUDES

When should you date? What is appropriate behavior on a date? Does that change as you get older or more experienced?
When is physical intimacy appropriate on a date and what is appropriate? What is good/fun about dating? What is difficult and hard about dating? Is it different for men and women?

How should people find a mate? Where? What is the process of mate selection? How old should you be when you start dating for marriage and not just fun? How is it different for men and women?

When should you get married? What is the right age? How can you know who to marry? How long should you know the person? Be engaged? What should you look for in a marriage partner?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL AGGRESSION/SEXUAL AGGRESSION</td>
<td>Under what conditions is it OK to use force—to grab, squeeze, push your partner? To hit, slap, or kick partner? Under what conditions do these things usually happen? How can/should it be handled?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>church's attitude/teachings</td>
<td>Many people report feeling pressured to become more physically intimate than they want to. What kind of pressure do partners exert to get more physical intimacy? Do women press for more? Do men? How? How can a person handle these situations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community context</td>
<td>What do you see the church saying about dating? How and what did you leaning about dating, premarital intimacy, mate selection, and marriage from advisors, bishops, sunday school teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American context in 1980s-1990s</td>
<td>What is OK to do on a date, from the church's view, and what is not? What does the church say is OK on a date as far as physical intimacy goes? How do you feel about the church's teachings as you perceive them? About what/how you were taught by church leaders?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do you think teenage dating is viewed in your community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>HISTORY OF DATING EXPERIENCES</td>
<td>When did you start to get interested in the opposite sex?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What attracted you to boys/girls?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When did you begin to date?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What was your experience with dating like? Explain.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How did you deal with the issues of dating like physical attraction, what to do on dates, where to go, whether to ask/go with someone, being turned down or turning down, building-up, maintaining, breaking up, being breaker or breakee, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Parents' attitudes, behaviors, and dating history</th>
<th>How did family affect who, when, where, why you dated?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents dating history as known. How like or not like them?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Siblings dating history.</th>
<th>How like or not like them?</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive? Not supportive?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did they feel about dating, mate selection, marriage? Same/different from you? How?</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Friends and peers.</th>
<th>What was dating like where you grew up?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tell me about your friends' dating experiences. How similar or different from yours was some of their experiences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What was it like in your junior high? Your high school? Your ward? Your stake? What pressures did you feel about dating?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
other contexts for dating. What do you see the church saying about dating? How and what did you leaning about dating, mate selectin, and marriage from advisors, bishops, sunday school teachers? How do you feel about the church's teachings as you perceive them? About what/how you were taught by church leaders?

community context How do you think teenage dating is viewed in your community?

American context in 1980s-1990s. What is it like to be dating in America in the late 20th century? Constraints? Opportunities?
**SUB-QUESTION #2: How do people become aware of each other?**

**ATTRACTION PHASE**

Have them give a detailed history/description of the attraction phase of each relationship they have been in starting with the **most recent**. Work back to age 16 at least or further.

**Awareness**

What kind of people do they look for or are they attracted to? Who is in their "field of eligible?"—Mormons, non-Mormons; Blacks, Asians, etc; rich, poor; intelligent, average; same social class as them or different; out-going, quiet; good-looking, average; etc.

How did they become aware of the person?

What initially attracted you to him/her? Get detail? Why was that aspect attractive to you?

What else attracted you to him/her?

Has what attracts you changed as you have gotten older? How?

**Initial interaction**

What led to the initial interaction? How did you meet?

What did you do? What did you say? How did you determine if you'd like to get to know the person?

Was the initial interaction positive? negative? Could you have broken off the interaction or were you "forced" to be with them (e.g., had class with them, worked with them, in same FHE group, etc.?)?
FROM ACQUAINTANCE TO BUILD-UP
gradual vs. dramatic
movement

What made you want to see
him/her again?

When did you see him/her next?
What did you do? How did you
feel about him/her?

When did it move from just
getting acquainted to building
a relationship? What was
involved in changing the nature
of the relationship?

Did the relationship build-up
gradually or quickly? Why?

CONTINUED VS. NON-CONTINUED
RELATIONSHIPS

You meet and may be attracted
to lots of people. Tell me
about some people you were
initially attracted to, but it
never went beyond that. How
come nothing came of those
possible relationships?

What was the difference between
people you continued with and
dated for a while and those you
may have been initially
attracted to, but decided not
to try to build a relationship
with?
SUB-QUESTION #3: How do people build-up and maintain a relationship?

BUILD-UP

Have them describe the most recent person they have had a more than casual relationship with (more than 1 or two dates). Have them briefly describe why they went out with him or asked her out. Move quickly into the B phase & the B-->C transition. Do this on backwards through the last several short or long relationships/dating experiences. Back to age 16.

Why did you date the person or continue the relationship beyond initial encounter/date?

What moved it from "1st date/get to know each other" to deciding to let a relationship develop?

FROM BUILD-UP TO RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE

What moved the relationship from not so serious to a serious relationship? Did it occur gradually, all of a sudden?

What about him or her, or about the relationship made you want to become more serious?

Did you feel you were "falling in love?" How did you feel? What made it love?

What changed in your relationship? How did communication grow? How was it different from when you first met?

What about physical intimacy? Was there more touching, kissing, sitting close, etc.? Did this just keep increasing
or did it reach a certain point and not go further, or did it "ebb and flow?"

Did you spend more time together? What sort of things did you do?

What does it mean to be "in love?"

RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE

How did you maintain your relationship?

How did you handle differences? How did you handle conflict? Did you have fights and arguments? How did you handle them?

Did the relationship have its ups and downs? What factors were related to downturns and upturns?
SUB-QUESTION # 4: How do relationships deteriorate and end?

DETERIORATION

Have persons talk about the most recent relationship they were in that ended. Have them briefly describe the relationship up to the beginning of its deterioration. Then start getting more detail.

What happened? When did it seem to start going downhill? Was it one thing or a series of things that contributed? Was it sudden or gradual? Was it off-again/on-again; did you break-up and make-up? If so describe the when, where, how, and how come of this.

ENDING (BREAK-UP)

When exactly did break-up occur? What events surrounded the break?

Who initiated the break?

How did you feel about the break-up? How did you deal with those feelings? What did you do to feel better?

How long did it take for you to get over it?

Who helped/hindered your recovery?