Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Social Sciences
ISSN: 2284-5747 | e-ISSN: 2458-1054
Covered in: ERIH+; CEEOL; Index Copernicus; CrossRef; CrossCheck; J-Gate; Google Scholar; Ideas RePeC; Econpapers; Socionet; KVK; WorldCat, EBSCO.

2021, Volume 10, Issue 1, pages: 46-54 | https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenss/10.1/57

Trust and Marital Intimacy

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Abstract: The way in which intimacy is built in a conjugal couple consistently influences the solidarity function of the partners and the mutual feeling of trust. The psycho-relational consequences of some acts of the other partner can affect the quality of the couple's life. Partners do not always understand the consequences of certain facts, their depth and the extent to which their own relationship may be affected. Secrets can dig into the basis of the function of solidarity, they can affect the quality of communication, of the interaction in one's own marital relationship, they can keep conflicting in a manifest or latent state, etc. Censorship of opinions or hiding various reactions leads to the vitiation of one's relationship and the feeling of trust gradually loses its intensity. A successful couple's relationship allows the partners to develop day by day, both together and separately, because the strong bond of trust prevents the two from having doubts about the partner's involvement in the relationship. The study aims to analyze the construction of marital intimacy, as the main source for substantiating and strengthening trust between partners.

Keywords: *intimacy, trust, conjugality, emotional participation, couple.*

How to cite: Apostu, I. (2021). Trust and Marital Intimacy. *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Social Sciences, 10*(1), 46-54. https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenss/10.1/57

1. Intimacy and trust - psychosocial aspects

The feeling of trust does not come naturally and is not a gift we give to a person. A person's trust is a privilege that must be built, strengthened and maintained for a long time by verbal assurances, but especially by specific behaviors of both actors (Spring, 2009).

Trust is an essential aspect of any type of relationship that allows us to be sure that certain actions will be completed by the person to whom we have entrusted them. The feeling of trust also has subjective nuances, each having its own definition of what trust means. We are confident when we reveal a secret to a friend, and we believe that they will not judge us harshly and will not reveal it to a third party (Shechtman, 2007).

In fact, the anger and disappointment expressed when a person betrays is primarily due to the way we relate to the feeling of trust. In general, I trust translates into trusting that you will not do something that will make me suffer. Thus, we start from the premise that the plans of others correspond to our own, and when this belief proves to be false, the feeling felt is that of betrayal (Shechtman, 2007, p. 78).

The feeling of trust given to a person implies a certain vulnerability to be disappointed, but disappointment and vulnerability do not always have negative consequences. For a person with a certain level of psychological strength, being vulnerable becomes a way to see disappointment as a chance for development, becoming a man who sees failure as a lesson, an opportunity to learn. In other words, the feeling of trust can be restored, starting from the reconstruction of the self-image and from the capacity to face the problem generated by the betrayal of the other (Shechtman, 2007, p. 79).

In terms of a couple's relationship, trust in the partner is much more important because, once lost, it is difficult to rebuild. The manifestation of trust in the partner is not universal, this being customized for each couple. Thus, what is trustworthy in one couple may be irrelevant to another. However, for a couple's relationship to work, it is important that both partners share the same view on this feeling (Cole, 2005).

2. Building trust - psychological and social resources

Although each person has their own vision of what it means and how to express trust, it is necessary that when two people form a couple, they reach a common denominator. This mutual acceptance of trust gives partners a chance to get to know each other and determine the boundaries of personal privacy. In itself, conjugality presupposes a permanent journey in

intimacy, with partners gradually validating the other's emotions, feelings, desires, needs and life values.

In the relationship, both partners must offer their chance to gain the other's trust. Because there is no pre-established and generally valid pattern of gaining and maintaining trust, each must guide the other by giving them a roadmap that will allow them to enter his / her life and feel that the relationship is based on a sense of confidence (Spring, 2009).

Although it is fundamental in almost all social interactions, individuals do not have a clear definition of what it means to feel confident, but are guided by certain key indicators, which play the role of proof of trust: trust (promises), predictability, honesty, loyalty and delimitation of borders (Cole, 2005).

In addition to the key indicators outlined above, that guide each person on the path to trust, it is just as important for partners to build a sense of security. So, in a couple, partners can show this by expressing a desire not to hurt each other in any way. Even if their own actions can sometimes cause dissatisfaction and distrust of the loved one, they are often done involuntarily, and the end point is not the desire to affect the relationship with the partner (Acriş, 2003).

Promises play a decisive role in gaining or losing trust. However, breaking promises, both in the form of formal ones (related to the culture of the individual) and informal promises (doing something for the other, taking on a task, etc.) does not always have major consequences for the feeling of trust. This is because predictability is closely linked to the previous actions of the partner. The feeling of trust is not the construction of a moment but is the effect of several actions that validate the seriousness and the degree of participation of the other. For this reason, small escapes from a whole set of facts can build a momentary frustration, but not a collapse of confidence in the other.

Honesty towards your partner is essential and is manifested by the way we nurture the trust that our partner places in us. Loyalty to another person is a key component of trust and is manifested by the support of our partner when we experience our most difficult times. Delimiting boundaries in a relationship involves setting mutually agreed limits that partners should not exceed during the relationship. Depending on the relationship, the boundaries may be larger or smaller, according to the attitudes and beliefs of the partners (Cole, 2005, p. 32).

Confidence is also maintained by types of behaviors that may seem insignificant at first glance and can be easily forgotten by partners. If at the beginning of the relationship, the partners are prone to make more

compliments and pay more attention to the partner, over time, these types of feedback become less pronounced and, apparently, the connection between the two does not seem so strong. However, a love affair always needs small and big fuses to maintain the feeling of trust largely gained at the beginning of the relationship (Spring, 2009).

Gradually, the conjugal partners are validated less by compliments and beautiful declarations and more by the effect of their actions. Words have a greater consistency in the first phase of the relationship, especially in the early stages of fusion. Each partner tends to charge their own ideals into the other's words and gestures. Over time, words no longer have enough strength to build trust, they also need the action component to validate them.

The development of confidence, Cole points out, can occur as a result of going through certain stages. The first step is the question-and-answer game. Start by getting to know the person beforehand, just by making simple assumptions. These assumptions are verified as soon as you know the person, through a game of questions and answers between the discussion partners in order to find out useful information about each other (Cole, 2005, p. 68).

The next stage is called **climbing to the craziest heights of desire**, longing and romance and is characterized by building an idealized image of the partner. At the same time, the ability to trust each other and loyalty in the relationship are tested. The third stage is the descent caused by the maturation of the relationship. It is a period in which the aspects necessary for a relationship are discussed: how to continue the relationship, financial arrangements, sexual desires and feelings, but also whether you want to continue the relationship. It is a defining stage for the decision of the course on which the couple's relationship is heading.

The last stage involves **getting to know each other** because the partners have had time to get in touch with different elements of the other partner's character and personality. If after all that has happened in the relationship, the partners have decided to stay together, it means that a strong bond of trust has been created (Cole, 2005, p. 69).

Therefore, it can be said that trust is the basic ingredient of solidarity. A relationship of solidarity cannot be built on suspicion, on undeclared dissatisfaction, or distrust. All these negative aspects that build distrust lead to consistent dysfunctions in terms of the formation and development of conjugal solidarity.

In a couple, in addition to gaining and maintaining a sense of trust, it is equally important to show intimacy between the two partners of the couple.

3. Construction of intimacy - psychosocial effects

Intimacy can be seen as an indicator that measures the degree of romantic fusion between two marital partners. In order for the partners to develop an intimate relationship, they need certain situations that facilitate and develop access to privacy. Although common in public discourse, the couple's intimacy is not similar to "we are intimate." It is built over time and is subject to a wide range of mutual confirmations and validations from the partners.

In this sense, the first situation consists in the desire to contribute to the well-being of the loved one and involves the care shown for the well-being of the partner, hoping that in the future they will be rewarded with the same behavior. The experience of happiness with your partner involves the creation of a storehouse of experiences full of pleasant and memorable moments spent as a couple. The manifestation of esteem for the loved one is another way to access intimacy and appears as a laudatory thought regarding the loved one, highlighting their qualities, but also being aware of the less positive aspects of the partner. The security of relying on the support of your loved one in difficult times and the help of finding a solution is another way to reach privacy (Sternberg, 2010, p. 20).

Another approach that facilitates access to privacy in a relationship is the acceptance and sharing of things that have the title of common property, such as time spent with the partner, joint actions or certain goods or even supporting the other one for personal fulfillment. Receiving emotional support is important, because it is necessary for the partner to feel that in difficult times they find a real support and a source of revitalization in the loved one. Giving emotional support is closely related to the previous situation because in addition to receiving emotional support, it is important that we also be able to offer support and empathy to the loved one (Sternberg, 2010, pp. 21-22).

A functional marital relationship presupposes a permanent feedback, a permanent participation and deepening. An intimate relationship is achieved through the involvement of both partners, so that they are able to give up emotional armor, really listen to each other and give up their own individuality to form a whole. To become a whole, Smalley believes, the two partners must go through five stages of intimacy, each leading to a deeper, more lasting, and more satisfying level of relationship (Smalley, 2010, p. 22).

A first step is to speak in clichés and involves an exchange of meaningless remarks, which cannot be used to find out certain particular aspects of the interlocutor. The next step involves sharing concrete facts, namely discussions about topics that ensure safety and do not involve

discrepancies in thinking and perception: weather, work, friends. These previous two steps are described by Smalley as superficial and risk-free. The next three steps involve deepening and moving from superficiality to team building. Thus, sharing opinions is an essential step in the journey to intimacy. It ensures the leveling of differences of opinion between partners, the construction of a common value system, as a set of resources that become the foundation of that conjugality. The fourth stage, that of sharing feelings, appears as one of maturity, one in which feelings are based and on an identity of common values. Thus, in the last stage described by Smalley, the sharing of needs is the highest level of intimacy, that in which each partner is aware of the needs of the other and feels to meet them. It is the stage of the 3 accomplishments: the fulfillment of the self, the fulfillment of the other and, at the same time, the common fulfillment (Smalley, 2010, pp. 23-26).

Over time, various explanations and theorizations of the concept of "privacy" have emerged. Before we can write a definition of intimacy in a couple, it is necessary to state the multiple meanings it can have; meanings that complement each other.

Intimacy, seen as a person's ability to enter into intimate relationships, is obviously different from that of another person due to the fact that individuals differ from each other both physically and mentally. The meaning attributed to intimacy is that a relationship is based on the bodily interaction of the partners combined with the knowledge, acceptance, appreciation and support between them in order to create that strong connection so necessary to a relationship (Leleu, 2003).

Intimacy is seen as a feature of relationships. From the perspective of a relationship, intimacy offers the partners the satisfaction of their basic needs (security, affiliation and solidarity) according to Maslow's pyramid, while creating a transparent barrier between the two partners, which allows for the couple's responsibilities: listening, mutual trust, sincere communication (Mitrofan & Ciuperca, 1998; Stancu, 2011).

As a process between two people, intimacy is based on the possibility between two people to get closer and share their thoughts, feelings, values, personal beliefs without fear of later evaluations, ridicule or criticism (Stancu, 2011).

Taking into account all the above and bringing them all together, it can be said that intimacy is "an emotional binder (consisting of emotions of knowledge, acceptance, appreciation, understanding and support) formed between two people in a process of mutual self-disclosure"(Stancu, 2011).

In couple relationships, intimacy occupies a priority place, given the fact that a relationship that is not based on an intimate relationship

established between the two partners acquires the meanings of a minimal, non-fusional relationship. Thus a full relationship develops what is called erotic intimacy seen as a privileged relationship that denotes the close and deep nature of the unique bond that is created between two human beings, on two equally important levels that complement each other - bodily and sentimentally, with one final and grand goal, that of establishing a close connection between the two partners (Leleu, 2003).

Over time, various theories have emerged that directly or indirectly influence the need for privacy and trust of individuals. For a clearer picture, we will set out some of them, as they were synthesized by Robert Sternberg.

Complementarity theory suggests that individuals prefer partners who complement them in certain ways. This theory emphasizes that individuals tend to choose partners who complement their skills and expectations and fewer partners that are like them. In this sense, according to some specialists, the different side of the other further stimulates the interaction between individuals and, at the same time, the nature of codependence.

Although complementarity often works, there are situations where it is a minus. When the partner achieves performance in a field of specialization or the profession of the other, then the attraction for the partner decreases because there is a tendency to compete or threaten the socio-professional position of the other (Sternberg, 2010).

Also, according to the stimulus-value-role theory, the partners trigger the first forms of attraction starting from general elements such as the level of physical appearance, cultural elements, material status, etc. Thus, the stimulus is the trigger of a relationship. It manages the initial merge between the two potential partners, but it is not enough to substantiate the relationship. For this reason, the stage of value consensus mattered a lot in the construction of intimacy and, at the same time, in the validation of the conjugal relationship. Excessive value discrepancies will make the relationship undesirable while value consensus or minimum value issues will create the premise of a relationship. Conjugal relations, therefore, begin on the basis of a trigger related to stimuli, each partner loading into the other all his conjugal ideals. The second stage, that of role validation, measures the degree to which each partner can find himself in that relationship. However, the consensus of values does not always imply the guarantee of conjugal functionality, the adhesion to a set of values does not mean at the same time the assumption of the afferent roles. There is sometimes a difference between the role you want and the role you play. For this reason, the

assumption and compatibility of the role becomes a last criterion that validates a conjugal relationship or not.

The theory of reciprocity was developed by Alvin Gouldner and shows that people tend to get involved and maintain relationships with others based on the benefits they have gained from their investments. That being said, in terms of privacy, the two partners become intimate as the investments (confessions, affection, care, attention) made by each correspond to the benefits received by each; the benefits can be: listening, understanding, providing a sense of security. But a relationship based entirely on the rule of reciprocity, with the principle of investing and then collecting dividends, is the type of relationship that no longer has trust and sincerity as a starting point (Gouldner, 1960, cit. in Chelcea, 2010).

As the above theories show, all marital relationships start from a set of common values. In different ways, the homogamous conception is present in all theories, but the points that each of the theoretical conceptions of attraction and intimacy emphasizes is different. Each partner seeks in the other the set of values to which they adhere, the sum of personal "ideals" on the basis of which they build the image of their own happiness. Thus, some make an emotional image of the conjugal fusion, others analyze their potential partner through an initial economic or social status approach, etc.

4. Conclusions

Contemporary mentalities place the conjugal relations between solidarity and relational individualism. Although it seems reprehensible, at least in the view of the followers of traditionalism, relational individualism accepts the personal fulfillment of the couple, the common fulfillment being an extension of the two individual fulfillments. Individuals should not feel in a married couple as being in the service of each other, they should also take care of their own happiness. According to systemic theory, unhappiness in a subsystem affects the happiness of the whole system. From this point of view, the way of constructing intimacy is extremely important for the vitality of the conjugal couple. It stimulates participation, self-disclosure, sincerity and trust.

For certain types of conjugal cultures, the predefining of solidarity as a basic principle in conjugality is related to an external principle to which couples adhere, according to the culture of the reference community. Relational individualism does not exclude solidarity, however, it is no longer seen as a surrender, based on a general cultural principle, but as a construction started by themselves, from their own intimacy and state of comfort in the conjugal couple. It should be noted that a certain category of partners

consider intimacy as a fact of conjugality, begining with the first phases of romantic fusion, and this opinion seems to invite partners to feed on this state. However, the euphoria triggered by the stimuli that generate the phenomenon of falling in love only highlights the intimate quality of the two and not the state of intimacy. Intimidation and trust are states that are constantly being built and validated, especially by facts that show participation, emotional involvement, fidelity, all with a direct effect on trust. Conversely, feeding the partners with the initial bliss generated by the attraction will make the relationship last only as long as the feeling of love lasts.

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