

## Relationship of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson in Mark Gatiss's *Sherlock* Television Series

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### ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to reveal the interdependency between Sherlock Holmes and John Watson in Sherlock television series. Their interdependency can be in a form of social needs or emotional needs. To fulfill their needs, both of them need an attachment toward each other. Thus, their attachment develops into an interdependency relationship. In fulfilling their needs, both of them doing the exchange process between cost and reward form their relationship. Also, there are some reasons which made both of them develop a very close relationship. In conclusion, Sherlock and John have their own outcomes or rewards which can be achieved only in their relationship. Also, Sherlock and John, in order to fulfill their emotional or social needs they have to bear the consequence.

**Key words:** Interdependency, social needs, emotional needs.

The genre of crime fiction becomes the genre of several television series. The genre of Crime Fiction is defined as “The genre of fiction that deals with crimes, their detection, criminals, and their motives” (“Crime Fiction”). One of the examples of crime fiction television series is *Sherlock*. *Sherlock* television series is based on the classic detective novel written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The difference between *Sherlock* and the other television series which is based on the classic detective novel is the setting which they used inside the television series. For example, *Poirot* television series, even though it is produced and aired in 1989-2005, but the stories still take place in 1930s. However, for the newest television series of *Sherlock Holmes*, the stories inside the scripts are different from the original stories inside the novel. The script writer of *Sherlock*, Mark Gatiss, changed the settings of time of the original *Sherlock Holmes* stories. The original stories take place in the Victorian Era, whereas the new version takes place in 21<sup>st</sup> century. That is why, this television series is interesting to be analyzed.

Sherlock Holmes and John Watson are the two main characters inside *Sherlock* television series. Sherlock Holmes is pictured as a person who has great intelligence skill to solve a puzzled crime. Before he met John, he is known as the independent person who always works by himself. However, when John comes to his life, Sherlock changes his attitude in interacting with other people. Sherlock always asks John's opinion which he never does to other people. Also, he changes his behavior from the one who depicted as anti-social become a sociable person by gladly welcoming John. Another character is John Watson. At first John is depicted as the retired army doctor who loses his confident because of the accident and injury that he got. He also has a pessimistic point of view toward his new life as a civilian. He lives without any companion and he thinks that there is no one who wants to share a flat with him. After he met Sherlock and welcomed by him as the flat friend of Sherlock, John's behavior changes. He becomes a person who has a confident life, even more; he starts to enjoy his life as a civilian.

Seen from Sherlock's and John's relationship, especially the relation between both of them, I think that Sherlock and John have a huge dependency on each other. That is why I am interested in finding how and why Sherlock and John who do not have things in common can develop a very close relationship. In order to find the way as well as the reasons of Sherlock and John in developing their relationship, I use the theory of Interdependency by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley.

Interdependence theory is introduced by John Thibaut and Harrold Kelley (Reis& Arriaga, 2013, p.2). Interdependence theory assumed that each person has different instrumental and social-

emotional needs. Moreover, the needs of each person are inherently interpersonal and can be accomplished or achieved only in the context of dyads or groups (Rusbult, 2003). In finding the way of Sherlock and John in developing their relationship, I use cost and reward concept in Interdependence theory. Thibaut and Kelley explained that Interdependence theory sees people behavior towards others is driven by the want to maximize the odds of having fulfilling experience (rewards) and minimize the odds of having harmful experience (costs)(as cited in Ritzer, 1983 p. 403).

Furthermore, this theory also explains about the standard of the evaluation in relationship. The standards are divided into two, Comparison Level (CL) and Comparison Level of Alternative (CLalt). The two standards are for evaluating the given outcome that a person gets from a relationship. Comparison Level (CL) is dealing with relative satisfaction of the people inside a relationship while Comparison Level of Alternatives (CLalt) is dealing with the stability of a relationship. (Griffin, n.d., p. 198-201). There is also Six Relational Typologies which shows the types of relationship which exist in an interdependency theory. The Six Relational Typologies does not arrange in an order or level, therefore it is not necessary for the people to follow all the states step by step. There are some kinds or types of a relationship which shows whether a certain relationship is satisfying or not satisfying, stable or unstable, and dependent or nondependent. I will use Comparison Level, Comparison of Alternative, and Six Relational Typologies for analyzing the reason of Sherlock and John in developing their relationship.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHERLOCK AND JOHN**

The adventure of Sherlock Holmes and his partner, John Watson in solving the puzzled cases such as murderer, kidnap, and some political cases become the focus of *Sherlock* television series, whereas their adventure put them into a close friendship.

### **Sherlock and John's Strategy in Developing Their Relationship**

The ways that used by Sherlock and John in order to develop their relationships can be depicted as the exchange process to minimize the cost and maximize the reward of their relationship. Their behavior is portrayed as the result in exchanging process in order to minimize the cost and maximize the reward on their relationship. From their relationship, the cost and reward of it can be categorized into two aspects, emotional and social.

### **The Ways of Sherlock and John in Minimizing the Cost**

Sherlock's cost for his relationship with John is losing his partner, John Watson, for a while. In minimizing his cost, Sherlock does several attempts. One of the attempts is searching for another partner. He chooses Molly, one of the forensic team from the hospital where Sherlock work on a victim's body.

**MOLLY** : You sure about this?

**SHERLOCK** : Absolutely.

**MOLLY** : Should I be making notes?

**SHERLOCK** : If it makes you feel better.

**MOLLY** : That's what John says he does. So if I'm being John...

**SHERLOCK** : You're not being John, you're being yourself. (*Sherlock*, season 3, 2014)

The last sentence shows Sherlock's effort to let himself detach from John. Sherlock changed his behavior from the one who need the existence of John become the one who pretends not to need John. His attempt to minimize his cost fails. Sherlock cannot find the other reward's sources from the people surround him because he can only find his reward in John.

Another attempt which has been done by Sherlock to minimize his cost is by letting John lives his personal life. In order to keep his relationship as a friend with John, Sherlock has to let John living his new life. Thus, this condition gives Sherlock more cost which affects his behavior toward himself and he must find a way to get his reward back. Moreover, Sherlock tries to

minimize his cost and get his reward back by changing his behavior toward John. Sherlock prefers to welcome John rather than to have conversations with his parents.

**SHERLOCK** : John?  
**JOHN** : Sorry, you're busy.  
**SHERLOCK** : No, no, no, they were just leaving.  
**SHERLOCK'S MOM** : No, oh, were we?  
**SHERLOCK** : Yes.  
**JOHN** : No, no, if you've got a case...  
**SHERLOCK** : No, not a case. Yeah, go.

(*Sherlock*, season 3, 2014)

"No, no, no, they were just leaving" shows the effort made by Sherlock to keep John stayed with him and had a conversation with him. It also shows how important John comparing to his parents. It means that the existence of John is one of his needs in getting the reward from his relationship with John.

John also does some attempts to minimize his cost from his relationship with Sherlock. John's cost is suffers from a great depression of losing Sherlock as a person who John cares the most. Before John meets Sherlock, he is depicted as a person who always comes to the psychiatry to help him cure his old trauma as the retired soldier. After he meets Sherlock, he is never going back to his psychiatry. However, after Sherlock 'dies' he starts his old behavior again, which is going back to his psychiatry. It shows how cost in a relationship can be a tool to change or influence one's behavior in order to minimize the cost that a person got. Also, it shows how Sherlock's existence can replace the position of psychiatry and help John to overcome his psychology problems. It means that Sherlock can be a source of John's reward in his life.

In addition John is trying to minimize his cost by comforting himself that Sherlock is not dead. It shows how John has to put a great effort to make himself believes that Sherlock is already dead. The fact that Sherlock is dead gives him a new situation in his life. The new situation that John got leads him to change his behavior toward others. Another way which is done by John to minimize his feeling of losing someone he cares is by making changes on his life. The first change in his life is by avoiding in interacting with the people who remind him to Sherlock.

**MRS. HUDSON** : Just one phone call would have done.  
**JOHN** : I know.  
**MRS. HUDSON** : After all we went through!  
**JOHN** : Yes. I am sorry.  
**MRS. HUDSON** : Look, I understand how difficult it was for you  
after... after...

**JOHN** : I just let it slide, Mrs. Hudson, I let it all slide. And it  
just got harder and harder to pick up the phone, somehow. Do  
you know what I mean?

(*Sherlock*, season 3, 2014)

"I just let it slide, Mrs. Hudson. I let it all slide..." shows how John changes his first behavior after he loses Sherlock. He is trying to comfort himself that he is fine without Sherlock. Also, John does another attempt to minimize his cost by starting a romantic relationship with his girlfriend, Mary.

### **The Ways of Sherlock and John in Maximizing the Reward**

The reward that Sherlock gets from his relationship with John is on the social aspect. Sherlock turns into 'social being' in a way of having a close friend and being known by the people when he lived with John. However, after he met John, his life little bit changes because of the reward that John gives to him in his relationship. Sherlock got his reward by having a friend who cares about his life. John is giving Sherlock a reward by doing blog uploads which tells about Sherlock's adventures.

**JOHN** : I reset the counter last night. This blog had nearly  
2,000 hits in the last eight hours. This is your living,  
Sherlock, not 240 different types of tobacco ash.  
**SHERLOCK** : 243

(*Sherlock*, season 1, 2010)

“People want to know you’re human.” shows how John puts an effort toward Sherlock’s life for making him acceptable on the society by introducing him through his blog. “...This is your living Sherlock, not 240 different types of tobacco ash.” shows that Sherlock knows a lot of tobacco types rather than to be a human being which should be socialize with others.

Another reward that Sherlock gets from John is a bunch of compliments which are said by John for Sherlock’s genius brain. The compliments from John can be seen as a mean for Sherlock in getting his reward. . It is because there is no one in his life who ever give compliments on his genius brain. By getting compliments Sherlock gets recognition from John for his existence.

**JOHN** : Fantastic.  
**SHERLOCK** : Do you know you do that out loud?  
**JOHN** : Sorry, I’ll shut up.  
**SHERLOCK** : No, it’s... fine.

(*Sherlock*, season 1, 2010)

Sherlock’s acceptance on John compliment shows how he wants more compliments from John in order to fulfill his emotional needs. This reward can be categorized as the emotional reward. It means John existence can be the way of Sherlock for achieving his emotional needs which he never got from people around him. Thus, Sherlock gets a very important reward which awarded him emotional needs.

Besides the compliment from John, Sherlock also gets social reward from John in a way of socializing to the others. John tries to help Sherlock gets out from his old habit which is not socializing with other people.

**MAN** : A small token of our gratitude.  
**SHERLOCK** : Diamond cufflinks... All my cuffs have buttons.  
**JOHN** : He means thank you.  
**SHERLOCK** : Do I?  
**JOHN** : Just say it.  
**SHERLOCK** : Thank you.

(*Sherlock*, season 2, 2012)

John’s dialogue “He means thank you” shows how John had to prevent others from thinking about Sherlock’s attitude which shows that he really did not care to whatever the other do. And also the sentence “Just say it” shows John had to teach Sherlock to be a person who live in a society and how to interact with the other people surround him.

Another reward is Sherlock is being known by the other people outside. Sherlock changes his behavior from the one who does not pay much attention on his popularity to the one who does. It shows how Sherlock has to change his behavior in order to maximize his reward. It means the exchange process between reward and cost that Sherlock does already give him the maximum reward in his life.

John’s reward in his relationship with Sherlock is on the social aspect or social needs. At first, he does not get along with his new status as civilian. He is uncomfortable and unconfident with his new status. It is shown in season one episode one.

**JOHN** : Are you still at Bart’s then?  
**STAMFORD** : Teaching now, yeah, bright young things like we used to be. God, I hate them. What about you, just staying in town till you get yourself sorted?  
**JOHN** : I can’t afford London on an Army pension.  
**STAMFORD** : And you couldn’t bear to be anywhere else. That’s not the John Watson I know.  
**JOHN** : I’m not the John Watson.

(*Sherlock*, season 1, 2010)

The last sentence shows how John endures himself from being the new John Watson who is not living as an army. It shows John lost his identity because of his new status as the common people. Therefore, he has to search for a relationship which can give him a reward which made him feels his previous condition. By having a relationship with Sherlock, John gets the reward which he needs. Sherlock gives the reward by giving John an adventure that he can get outside the battlefield. He starts to live as a normal person in a way of communicating with others and doing

daily activities. The exchange process of John's behavior which shows how different he is after and before meet Sherlock, shows that certain reward and certain cost can be one aspect which changes a person behavior.

### **Reason beyond Sherlock and John in Developing Their Relationship**

People behavior and motivation in Interdependence theory are considering the outcome or the reward that the person gets from a relationship. The outcome that Sherlock and John want to achieve influences the reward and cost exchange of their relationship in the previous analysis in 2.1. Hence, the outcome of Sherlock and John is considered as one of the reason on the development of their relationship.

Sherlock's outcome in his relationship with John is Sherlock wants to be considered as social being by people around him as well as having a partner who can give him emotional support. In order to achieve his outcome/ reward Sherlock tried to change his behavior from the one who does not a friend to the one who does. It is shown in season one episode two of *Sherlock* television series.

**SHERLOCK** : This is my friend, John Watson.

**SEBASTIAN** : Friend?

**JOHN** : Colleague.

**SEBASTIAN** : Right.

(*Sherlock*, season 1, 2010)

Sherlock's statement about John as his friend shows that he made a statement that he is also a social being who has a friend, not only a robot which can only solve a case. It means Sherlock really wants to experience a social life by making a relationship to someone that he assumes as a friend. He had never been trying to think and to assume any one he met before John as his friend. It shows Sherlock starts motivating himself to make a friend with John because only with John he can accomplish his emotional and social needs.

Moreover, Sherlock starts to deal with the social life such as having a friend which he did not do before. Sherlock also starts to challenge his brother, Mycroft. He asks his brother whether he has ever tried to make any friend with others or not. It shows the processes of exchanging reward and cost that Sherlock did with John have affected the way of Sherlock thinks about human life. It means that the outcome that Sherlock want to gain is unconsciously already accomplished by him.

However, after the exchange process of reward and cost which portrays as the cause of changing behavior of Sherlock, at last he got something greater than he is expecting. The existence of John as a best friend in Sherlock's life is one of the example of the reward that he got. Moreover, by staying together with John, Sherlock has an experience of being a normal human being who has a close friend and John even considering Sherlock as his best friend, not only a friend. It is shown in the last season episode one when John asked Sherlock to be his best man on his wedding. Sherlock did not have any ideas that John will ask him to be his best man. At first, Sherlock was suggesting the other names to John for being John best man. However, John wants someone special in his life to accompany him in his wedding; they are Mary Mosrtan and Sherlock. Sherlock has never expected if John will consider him as his best friend. Thus, Sherlock needs John's clarification to say about his status as John's best friend. Therefore, Sherlock prefers to say that he is the best friend of John rather than he is the best man of John.

John also has an outcome or reward that only can be achieved in his relationship with Sherlock. John's outcome is a new form of adventure in his new status in a society. His first attempt to gain his personal need is shown in the first season, episode one of *Sherlock* BBC series. John just arrived to his new flat and Sherlock invited him to join him to the crime scene. John as the new retired soldier from British army has to face the fact that in his new status as a civilian, he could not experience his ordinary life as a soldier which always surrounded by lot of injuries and tough life. His new status as civilian seen as the end of his soldier's life which causes him to have a psychological problem. Therefore, Sherlock's offer to be his partner in solving crime can be the way for John to have a new form of challenging situation which is more or less the same as his past life as a soldier.

In addition, the outcome that Sherlock and John got is equal to the reward minus the cost from their relationship. Both Sherlock and John have their own reward and cost which has been discussed on 2.1. Later this outcome can be used for a tool to find the state of Sherlock and John relationship based on the six typologies of relationship in Interdependence theory. Their outcome should be compared to their Comparison Level or minimal outcome that they have expected from their present relationship. Also, their outcome and Comparison Level should be compared with their Comparison Level of Alternatives in order to know whether both of them are interdependent or not.

The Comparison Level of a person deals a lot with the past relationship of a person itself. A person will compare his past relationship to the present relationship by deciding what kind of reward that should get from it. In Sherlock cases, his previous relationship is with his brother, Mycroft, which was not going really well because they always argue and compete each other. This condition makes Sherlock search for other relationships which will give different outcome from his past relationship. Thus, if Sherlock compares his past relationship to his present relationship with John, then he gets a greater outcome from John rather than from Mycroft. It means Sherlock needs a person who does care about him as well as shows his/her admiration of his intelligence which he never got from his brother. In John case, John compares his present relationship with his condition as a soldier who is being involved in a battleship where he cannot get it back because he got injured and retired from the army.

The Comparison Level or minimal outcome of Sherlock is being considered as a human being by the society around him whereas the outcome that he got from John is being considered as John's best friend and getting the emotional support from John. John's Comparison Level is got a new form of adventure whereas the outcome he also got the cure of his trauma. Thus, it means that Sherlock's and John's outcome is greater than the Comparison Level or the minimal outcome that they have expected before. Thus, based on the six typologies of relationship in Interdependence relationship adapted from Roloff when the outcomes of a relationship is much better than the outcome which an actor thought ( $\text{Outcome} > \text{CL}$ ) then it can be considered as satisfying relationship. The more satisfying a relationship is, the more dependable the two actors inside the relationship are. Thus, Sherlock and John's relationship can be considered as an interdependence relationship.

In addition, there is another standard in Interdependence theory for evaluating the given outcome from a relationship, it is known as Comparison Level of Alternatives. Comparison Level of Alternatives (CLalt) is dealing with the greater alternatives outcome which an actor of a relationship can get from other relationships (Griffin, n.d., p. 198-201). For Sherlock the other relationship which can be found outside his relationship with John are his relationship with Molly and his relationship with his brother, Mycroft. However, those two relationships do not give Sherlock a greater outcome than the outcome which he got from John. John has new relationship with his wife, Mary Morstan. However, John could not let himself detach from the outcome which Sherlock gave, which is the new form of adventure. His relationship with Mary does not give him an outcome which Sherlock gives to him. He needs the existence of Sherlock to fulfill his needs to be involved in an adventure. Thus, based on the six typologies of relationship when a Comparison Level of a relationship falls above the Comparison Level of Alternatives ( $\text{CL} > \text{CLalt}$ ) then that certain relationship can be considered as a stable relationship. Also, Sherlock and John will not leave their relationship. Thus, their state of relationship can be represented by  $\text{Outcome} > \text{Comparison Level} > \text{Comparison Level of Alternatives}$ , which shows the type of satisfying, stable and dependable relationship.

## CONCLUSION

Sherlock and John are exchanging the reward and the cost that they get or feel from their relationship in a way to develop their relationship. Sherlock's reward are having new image in a society and having a very close friend which is John. The cost that Sherlock get is losing John as his partner for a while because of Sherlock's fake death. In order to maximize his reward he tries to find another partner and he needs to change his behaviour toward John. For John, I find that his reward is being able to adapt with his new status as civilian as well as having an adventure just like a soldier in his past. John's cost is losing Sherlock because Sherlock was faking his death to protect

him. I find that, John's attempts in maximizing his reward are by having new relationship with Mary and forgetting all the things which can remind him of Sherlock.

Moreover, there are several factors that become the reason beyond Sherlock and John in developing their relationship. The first factor is both Sherlock and John want to achieve their outcomes or rewards which only can be achieved from their relationship. Sherlock's outcome is being considered as a social being by the society, thus, his act for achieving his outcome deals with the social term, such as making friend and being considered as someone's friend. John's outcome is having a new form of adventure in his new life as a civil.

The second factor is they could not find another possible relationship which provides the same outcome. Thus, this condition is fit with the standards that exist in Interdependence theory which are Comparison level and Comparison level for alternative. Sherlock is comparing his present relationship with John to his past relationship with his brother, Mycroft, which is not going really well. With John, Sherlock got his emotional needs. John is comparing his relationship with Sherlock to his past involvement in British army. With Sherlock, he got the new form of adventure without necessarily being an army. He has a new status as civilian, but he can still have his adventure which fulfils his emotional needs for healing his feeling of missing the battlefield. It means the outcome that they get is greater than the minimal outcome (Comparison Level) that they want (Outcome > Comparison Level).

Another factor is Comparison Level of alternatives. Sherlock's other possible relationships are with Molly and Mycroft, but those does not give a greater outcome for him. John another possible relationship is with his wife, Marry, but it also does not give a greater outcome for John itself. John is being surrounded with his memory to Sherlock. Thus, the condition that is being experienced by Sherlock and John can be represented by Comparison Level > Comparison Level of Alternative concept, which means the minimum outcome from their past relationship, could not be achieved in other relationships which exist outside. Hence, their relationship can be considered as a 'stable' relationship based on Interdependence theory.

Sherlock's and John's relationship is considered as interdependence relationship. In their relationship, both of them are fulfilling their personal emotional and social needs. In fulfilling their needs, they create a huge dependency toward each other. Also, in order to be involved in a relationship and in order to fulfil their personal needs (reward), they have to bear the consequence (cost). And, a person in a relationship has the will to maximize his/her reward and minimize his/her cost for fulfilling their emotional or social needs.

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