One of my favorite things that we learned about in class this year was Knapp’s model of relational development, also known as the staircase model. The reason that I like it so much is that I believe it does a really good job of explaining relationship development in an easy to understand way. The one major problem that I have with this model though, is that it does not work for long distance relationships. It does not work because long distance relationships develop differently than normal relationships do. I am going to change Knapp’s model to work for long distance relationships. It will still have all of the same steps but they might be out of order and it will not be a perfect staircase like Knapp’s model.

There is one major problem with what I am trying to do here and that is, that relationships can become long distance at different stages in the relationship development. In this case I am going to assume that long distance relationships for where the two people meet each other and get to spend anywhere from a day to two weeks together before they become long distance and the two people know that this is going to happen.

Now these relationships usually start off and escalate quickly because the two people know that they do not have that much time together but they like each other. The initiating stage is the same in both types of relationships but it is when you get to the experimenting stage you will realize that the relationship will eventually become long distance. Like every stage both people have to decide if they want to continue the relationship or not. This is the step where a lot of long distance relationships end, but if you decide to keep the relationship going then the next step comes very quickly (Dixson, n.d.).

The next stage is intensifying and this is where both people start saying things like, I love you, and showing how much they care about the other person (Honors, n.d.). This is where the first big difference between Knapp’s model and mine occurs. This step in long distance
relationships happens and sooner and lasts longer. Now because this is now a long distance relationship during this step these messages can happen over different mediums such as talking or text messaging via cell phone, e-mails, instant messaging or any other form of communication (Dixson, n.d.).

Being in a long distance relationship also causes the bonding step to precede the integrating stage (Honors, n.d.). The reason for this is that being apart makes you feel like you have show that you are highly committed to the relationship since you do not to get to spend as much time together(Jorgensen, 2008). This is also why you skip the integrating step until the relationship is no longer a long distance one and the two people are now seen as a couple in other people’s eyes.

On the other side of the staircase, ending a long distance relationship usually happens faster than a normal relationship. The reason this happens is because there are less consequences to ending a long distance relationship because you are already distant from your partner. In Knapp’s model there are steps to ending the relationship; differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating, avoiding, and finally terminating (Honors, n.d.). I could not find any information to back up this point but I believe that in a long distance relationship it is easier to slide right down to terminating if you realize your relationship is in one of the declining stages.

I think this model is important because it can give people who have never been in a long distant relationship a glimpse into how they can develop and decline and it will be easier to compare and contrast long distant relationships with normal relationships. It may seem that this model might not be very important, but I think it is necessary and gives a visual model of ideas and studies that we learn about from case studies. It is not that different from Knapp’s model but I feel it is different enough to be needed.
