


Romantic Love in the United States: Applying Cultural Models Theory and Methods

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Abstract

We seek to advance cultural models theory by contributing to issues related to theory, methods, and testing the external validity of a cultural model. We propose that cultural models are learned as if they were truly properties of collectivities but have no primary existence except in individual representations of them. The shared aspect of cultural models also implies collective awareness of the if-then entailments of cultural models. We use inductive ethnographic methods of freelist (n = 80) and pile sorting (n = 39) to derive a cultural model of romantic love in the United States. From these tasks, we developed a cultural model of successful romantic love consisting of normative scenarios. For successful romantic love relations, a person would feel excited about meeting their beloved; make passionate and intimate love as opposed to only physical love; feel comfortable with the beloved, behaving in a companionable, friendly way with one's partner; listen to the other's concerns, offering to help out in various ways if necessary; and, all the while, keeping a mental ledger of the degree to which altruism and passion are mutual. Our model is supported through an examination of two extended case studies. Further research is required, of course, but we believe we have a rather novel and dynamic cultural model that is falsifiable and predictive of successful love relationships. The model is unique in that it combines passion with comfort and friendship as properties of romantic love.

Keywords

cognitivism, approaches, psychology, social sciences, humanistic psychotherapy, psychotherapy, clinical psychology, cognitive psychology, experimental psychology, emotion, evolutionary psychology, social psychology, research methods, cultural anthropology, anthropology, social anthropology, anthropology, philosophy, humanities

The goals of this article are to lay out a theory of cultural models and use methods specific to this theory to describe and analyze a cultural model of romantic love in America. The first half of the article focuses on a theory of “cultural models” and the methods used to elicit data for constructing such a model of romantic love. The second half uses two extended cases to illustrate how this model works in everyday life and how predictive it is of participants' assessments of their romantic love relationship as well as to shed light on the decisions they make and actions they take. Taken as a whole, both sections provide a road map for conducting cultural models research. There are other road maps, but we show how theory and methods can be linked to culture and psychology in an explicit way for investigating cultural models and how humans use them for purposive behaviors. We are aware of the fact that there are likely to be ethnic, gender, age, and class differences as well as cross-cultural differences that are missed in this research; however, our aim is to highlight what we suspect may be prototypical features of American conceptualizations of romantic love.

We need to add that this study is an attempt to capture the core generic features of a cultural model of romantic love. We think we have done this; however, there may well be variants or alternative models of love relationships that also exist. We doubt that there is a one-size-fits-all cultural model of romantic love that fits all people equally well. To assert that we describe a cultural model of romantic love does not mean (a) that there are not other competing models, (b) nor that people who share this model share it in the same way. As the “love styles” literature that we will discuss shows, many people prefer other styles of love besides romantic; thus, companionate sorts of love or some mix of various styles are also found

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in the United States and elsewhere. Nevertheless, we think we are on safe ground in presuming that romantic love is the most prototypical and privileged style of love when speaking of courtship. Just as people who identify themselves as Christians will vary in faith and practice, so people will vary in their belief in romantic love and practices associated with it. Cultural models are generic mental models that are cultural because we assume others share them as well.

A major contribution of our work is the use of two extended case studies to pilot test how our cultural model works in practice, thus conceptually moving ethnographic “thick description” from its traditional exploratory or descriptive function (see Babbie, 2010; Gatewood, 2012) to an explanatory function. Our article extends the science in social science to ethnography rather than limiting it to statistics because a primary goal of social science should be to explain human behavior in situ. The case studies were chosen prior to the analysis, and—while not random—they were not chosen with any particular bias.

Literature Review—Romantic Love

As would be expected, the psychological literature on romantic love has been focused on survey-based data that explore styles of love and more recently expanded to include various stories of love (Sternberg, 2006, 2008). Using factor analysis, Sternberg developed a triadic theory in which love is comprised of intimacy, passion, and commitment. John Alan Lee developed a “color theory of love” in which varieties (or hues) of love are comprised of a set of primary styles that mix together to form a potentially infinite number of “love styles” (Lee’s phrase). However, there were six main love styles—agape, mania, ludus, storge, eros, and pragma. These styles have generated much survey-based research, particularly by the foremost adopters of his theory, Clyde Hendrick and Susan Hendrick (1986, 1988, 2002, 2006).

Style theories of love are functional, social-psychological theories by which individuals and couples can be classified into some set of love styles by virtue of how much they possess of each salient attribute of that love style. It is unfortunate, however, that style theories tend to identify individuals with singular, all or nothing styles, while recognizing that individuals, in fact, have admixtures of those styles present in their love “profile” and that these proportions may change in terms of context or partner. The Hendricks and Hendrick (2006) wrote,

The “amount” of each love style that an individual manifests can literally be plotted on a graph. The shape of the profile, its change over time, and its relationship to other variables become potential empirical questions to be answered by research guided by hypotheses. To date, our research has not dealt with profiles per se, but with each of the six dimensions individually. (p. 151)

We admire the work of the Hendricks and suggest that cultural models theory helps advance the bounded delineations of love types inherent in a “styles”-based theory of love.

The evolutionary psychological paradigm on romantic love has become quite popular thanks to David Buss and Helen Fisher, whose works have been on nonfiction best-seller lists. Recently, this approach has come under some criticism (see Hrdy, 2011; Ryan & Jethá, 2010) primarily because of its questionable assumptions and its selective, often misguided, use of ethnographic material to reflect back on the sexual mores of Paleolithic foragers. Evolutionary psychologists have developed a field for the study of romantic love that can be divided into three components. The first is that of evolutionarily adapted mental modules that dispose predictable sorts of mate selection, satisfaction, and retention strategies (e.g., Buss, 2003, 2006; Kendrick, 2006a, 2006b). The second, highlighted by the work of Helen Fisher and her colleagues, is how these universal expressions of sex, attachment, and intimacy are promoted by the human neural and hormonal systems. As a result, Fisher asserts that love (as the overarching term for the articulation of sex, attachment, and intimacy) is a “drive,” like hunger and thirst, and not an emotion (H. Fisher, 1992, 1995, 2004, 2006; H. E. Fisher, Aron, Mashek, Li, & Brown, 2002). The third research area derived from the biobehavioral approach is in cross-cultural research as reflected in the works of Jankowiak and Fischer (1992); Jankowiak and Paladino (2008); Jankowiak (1995, 2008); Buss (2003); Schmitt (2005, 2006); Hewlett and Hewlett (2008); de Munck and Korotayev (1999, 2007); and de Munck et al. (de Munck, Korotayev, & Khaltourina, 2009; de Munck, Korotayev, Khaltourina, & de Munck, 2010). These researchers want to demonstrate that romantic love is a cultural universal or examine various corollaries that follow as a result. Much of this work relies on primary ethnographic and survey data while others on cross-cultural databases such as the Human Relations Area Files (eHRAF). While our research concerns one culture only, we note that single cultural studies with an eye toward universal features of love are not at all uncommon. Since the late 1990s, there has been a veritable cottage industry of studies on romantic love in cultural anthropology. Most of this has been spurred by gender studies, interest in globalization, and as an extension of more traditional anthropological interests in marriage practices and norms. Research on romantic love in cultural anthropology has been mostly ethnographic and qualitative rather than theory and survey driven. In this cultural and nonevolutionary frame, some representative cultural anthropologists’ writing on romantic love, sex, and marriage are Laura Ahearn (2001), Jennifer Hirsch (2000, 2003), Naomi Quinn (1987, 1992, 1996, 2005), L. A. Rebhurn (1994, 1999), and Dorothy Holland 1987 (with Skinner) and 1990 (with Eisenhart). What makes these researchers representative of writings on these subjects in cultural anthropology are (a) their focus on ethnography written from a reflexive point of view (i.e., the author is a subject in the ethnography); (b) obtaining data via interviews and conversations or directed dialogues with their informants; (c) favoring a grounded theoretical approach that derives cultural constructs, motivations, ideologies, and practices from discourse or textual analysis; (d) the

multisited or multimode nature of their work; (e) an attention to applied considerations particularly in terms of HIV/AIDS and social justice; (f) the concern with constructions of gender and modernity as shaping conceptions of intimacy, sex, and the self vis-à-vis one's spouse or partner; and (g) changing patterns of love, sex, and marriage as a result of modernization, migration, and globalization. These works are situated in a contemporary context that is attentive to agency, contingency, macrostructural forces, and emotion as culturally constructed (Lutz, 1988).

Barry Hewlett and Bonnie Hewlett (2008) and William Jankowiak (2008) were among the few researchers in cultural anthropology who bridged what seems to be a theoretical and methodological divide between psychologists and cultural anthropologists in the study of romantic love. Their work combines a comparative theoretical approach with both ethnographic and survey methods to evaluate their hypotheses or research questions. It is within the spirit of these researchers' approach to the study of romantic love that our project is situated. That is our goal is to propose a theoretical and methodological approach that can be adapted to ethnographic (local, contextualized) and ethnological (cross-cultural, universalist) research goals. Jankowiak, Shen, Yao, Wang, and Volsche (2015) have very recently conducted research among urban youths in China directly using questionnaire criteria designed to test de Munck et al.'s (2009) proposed universal criteria of romantic love. Their factor analysis of the questionnaire results substantiated four of the five criteria that are found in the model tested here—that is, altruism, intrusive thinking, emotional fulfillment, and psychological betterment. The fifth sexual attraction or passion was not tested but found to be present among urban youth (Jankowiak et al., 2015). We, therefore, assume that these criteria will also be found (among others) as constituting a cultural model of romantic love in America.

Literature Review—Cultural Models Theory

The concept of cultural models was first introduced in Holland and Quinn's (1987) introduction to an edited volume titled *Cultural Models in Language and Thought*. They wrote,

Cultural models are presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of others, alternative models) by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in it. (Holland & Quinn, 1987, p. 4, emphasis in original)

In the same volume, Roy D'Andrade elaborated by emphasizing that "A cultural model is a cognitive schema that is intersubjectively shared by a social group" (Holland & Quinn, 1987, p. 112). The intersubjectively shared and "taken for granted" aspects of cultural models are central to

understanding their function. We assume, as an "objective fact," that the relevant others of our social group also have and use the same cultural models. As a consequence, we can anticipate their behaviors and presume they are able to adequately "read" our behaviors. The "taken for granted" notion also presumes that the cultural model operates out of our awareness, effortlessly and in a "chunked" manner. For instance, when recounting a baseball game and one states that "Jeter hit a home run," we do not need to unpack all that is left unsaid (i.e., the ball, bat, stadium, "Jeter," or the flight of the ball, etc.).

D'Andrade and Strauss (1992) advanced the idea of cultural models as models that "instigate" or motivate behaviors. Thus, romantic love can motivate lower level behaviors such as calling someone up, going on dates, declaring sexual exclusivity and commitment, and so on. Strauss (1992) used the idea of personal semantic models to show how cultural models are personalized and have variable motivational force depending on the life histories of individuals. Her main case study was of a man who saw his role as "breadwinner" as a basic role requirement of fathers and husbands, but who more strongly identified with his own role as a marathon runner. The cultural model theorists mentioned above show that cultural models are not independent of each other but form a network of models with varying degrees of motivational and personal salience depending on individual life history and personality.

Our theoretical orientation and goals are quite similar to that pioneered by Quinn in her research on marriage, Strauss on her research of the working class, and Holland and Skinner (1987) and Eisenhart (1990). These researchers use the concept of cultural model (or schema) to describe emotions, thoughts, and actions as they occur in everyday life. The difference is that these authors predominantly rely on interview material; we, in contrast, seek to first develop our cultural model of romantic love from a variety of systematic methods pioneered by Romney and his colleagues. Two of the main methods described by Weller and Romney (1988) are freelisting and pile sorting. These methods tend not to be adopted by the above researchers. We have synthesized these two approaches by adopting the freelist and pile sorting methods to develop our cultural model of romantic love and interview data to show how they may work to guide and interpret behaviors in everyday love relationships.

Dealing With Contingency in Cultural Model Theory

A cultural model that people use must include some range of responses to contingencies so that people will be able to anticipate and maneuver (i.e., survive) in other than the usual contexts. Without such contingencies, the model will have no resilience or situated potential. The cultural model has to contain shared, systematic information on what is expected when the default model cannot be followed.

In our discussion below, progressing to and including the case materials, we tackle the issue of cultural models and contingency by moving from thin (abstracted) to thick (contextualized) data. The thin data are used to develop a cultural model of romantic love while the thick data are used to determine whether informants use our model, how they instantiate it in their reasoning and behaviors, and to discover how they improvise when the cultural model is not realized or cannot be fully applied.

Examining Freelist Data

In deciding on our sample, we wanted only people who were presently or recently engaged in a romantic love relationship. For the case studies, we only recruited informants who were presently in a romantic love relationship (and not of the “affair” variety). In total, 40 Americans from a small rural town in upstate New York, and 40 from New York City were asked to respond to the freelist question, “What do you associate with romantic love?” The respondents were between 20 and 50 years of age; 44 were females and 36 were males. Our sample was obtained “on the fly” by recruiting individuals at various public settings—laundromats, parks, on campus, bus stations, and the like. All informants were offered US\$10 for their labor. The first author with two research assistants went over the freelist data and coded them as single terms or phrases when possible. The majority had to agree (two of three) for the coding of extended texts, and texts that appeared as synonyms (joy/joyful). There were no obvious differences in the responses of respondents of different ages, gender, or between rural and urban New Yorkers; consequently, freelists were combined.

The freelist terms used for analysis below include only terms mentioned four or more times. This rather arbitrary cutoff point is, according to Borgatti and Halgin (2011), adequate for analyzing a list of terms that has some reach across our sample and, thus, can be considered “to some extent” a cultural domain (see Figure 1).

After finishing the freelists, we discussed the responses with most informants to aid our understanding of what they meant by the terms. We are confident in our interpretations; however, we expect to conduct further studies of the key freelist terms to enhance the validity of our interpretations. The subsequent pile sort indicates the main semantic dimensions that underlie their relationship vis-à-vis each other.

The terms fit quite well with the emphasis of different researchers on romantic love. For instance, “being together” and “connection” fit with criteria of romantic love proposed by most sociologists or psychologists, particularly those who emphasize a “Platonic model of romantic love” that Kövecses (1987, p. 18) has identified as the “dominant metaphor” of romantic love in the United States (see also Lindholm, 1998a, 1998b; Singer, 1987, 1994; Soble, 1990; Tennov, 1979). “Sex” and “passion” fit with most of the definitions of romantic love that acknowledge the erotic/passionate aspect of romantic love (Sternberg, 1988, 1996, 2006, in his triangular theory of love posits passion as one vertex; Berscheid &

	ITEM	FREQUENCY	RESP PCT	AVG RANK
1	BEING_TOGETHER	48	60	4.133
2	HAPPY	46	58	2.333
3	MUTUAL	29	36	4.875
4	FRIENDSHIP	27	34	2.600
5	SEX	23	29	3.143
6	GIFTS	18	19	3.500
7	CARE	16	18	3.375
8	EXCITED	15	15	5.333
9	PASSION	12	13	2.714
10	CONNECTION	10	10	3.333
11	INTIMACY	10	10	3.000
12	DO_ANYTHING	10	10	2.750
13	TRUST	8	9	2.000
14	COMMITMENT	8	9	1.200
15	CONTENT	5	6	4.000
16	EQUALITY	5	6	4.000
17	COMFORTABLE	5	6	5.500
18	HONEST	5	6	3.000
19	BUTTERFLIES	5	6	4.000
20	SACRIFICE	4	5	3.000

Figure 1. Freelist terms for “what do you associate with romantic love?” sorted by frequency.

Meyers, 1996; Berscheid & Regan, 2005, posit that love is a synthesis of companionate and passionate feelings). “Mutual” and “equality” fit with Lindholm’s (1998a, 1998b) discussion on the importance of equal status as a precipitating condition and attribute of romantic love, as well as de Munck and Korotayev’s (1999) and de Munck et al.’s (2010) findings that romantic love, as a criterion for marriage, is causally related to an increase in female status and intimacy. While Sternberg views intimacy as a second vertex, he does not reflect on an assessment of mutuality as a necessary condition for intimacy. Yet, it seems to us unlikely that romantic love could flourish as a cultural norm or even as a possibility, unless a cultural space can be created for the couple to meet as equals (for supporting evidence, see Du, 2002, 2008; Hewlett & Hewlett, 2008; Lindholm, 1998a; Röttger-Rössler, 2008).

Terms such as “honest,” “trust,” “do anything,” and “sacrifice” reflect that the beloved is thought to possess personal virtues that make him or her unique and worth loving. This fits well with the Platonic conception of romantic love as well as Swidler’s (2002, p. 111) analysis of “true love” in the United States. It furthermore supports the main premise of love proposed by Hegi and Bergner (2010) that “Investment in the well-being of the other [IWB] . . . was the characteristic most strongly and consistently endorsed as essential to the four kinds of love under investigation” (p. 633).

Finally, we found that romantic love is associated with the terms “friendship,” “comfortable,” and “content.” These are three attributes Jankowiak (2008) would identify with “comfort love” and Swidler would identify with her informants’ conceptualizations of love after marriage (i.e., “real love”). This

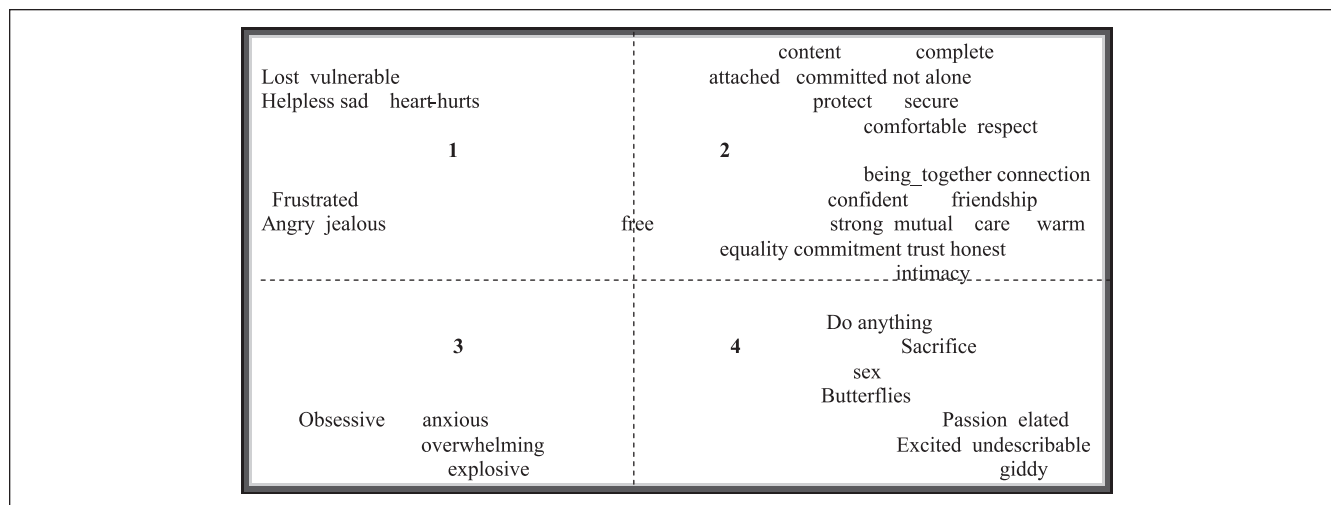


Figure 2. MDS of terms associated with romantic love (using pile sort data) by U.S. informants.

Note. MDS = multidimensional scale.

suggests that key features of what would more colloquially be referred to as companionate love are also a subset of romantic love, at least in the American cultural model. Berscheid and Walster (1978), Hatfield (1988), and the Hendricks and Hendrick (2003) have viewed companionate and romantic love to be in an “either/or” relationship (Hendricks & Hendrick, 2006, p. 163). Recently, Hendricks and Hendrick (2006) noted that “it is quite common for young lovers to claim that their partner is their best friend” (p. 163). However, despite the belated recognition of “friendship” as an aspect of romantic love, there is no attempt to incorporate it into their love style models of romantic love. Fehr (1988), using a freelist task, is the only researcher, to our knowledge, who found friendship to be a significant feature of romantic love in her Canadian sample; thus, her work supports our findings.

The implications of our model are that our model of romantic love seems to include aspects of different love styles such as agape, companionate love, and storge. It suggests that delimiting love into styles does not quite capture the full range of emotions and relational qualities that are associated with a romantic relationship. We suggest that love styles may better refer to tendencies that are foregrounded and backgrounded or more prominent in a relationship. Indeed, this is implied in much of the styles literature, especially by Lee (1976), but it is not applied in the research on love styles. We do think that as an individual’s love relationships may vary over time, certain features of the relationship wax or wane.

Pile Sorts: The Structure of Romantic Love

To further explore the structural relationship between the aspects elicited through the freelist, we took the top 44 terms (all mentioned 2 or more times) to conduct a pile sort task in which terms are sorted in “piles” based on their perceived similarity to one another. Recruiting methods

were the same as before; our sample consisted of 20 informants from the rural area and 19 from New York City (we lost one pile sort form). Informants were asked to sort the cards into two piles and to continue dividing into two piles until they could no longer divide or were left with only two index cards per pile. The goal of this exercise was to reveal the semantic structure of the relationships among the terms. An “aggregate proximity matrix” (aka approx)—the proportion of times terms were sorted with each other—was produced from the pile sort data. The higher the percent of times terms were sorted together, they are judged as being similar in meaning by the sample. A multidimensional scale (MDS) is produced directly from the approx and provides a visually readable (i.e., interpretable) representation of the approx matrix (see Figure 2). Terms located closer to each other were sorted together more frequently than those far away; thus, they can be interpreted as more similar to each other in meaning than terms that are farther away. As it is a two dimensional MDS, the terms are organized according to two dimensions of relations that can be read along the up-down, “vertical” dimension and the left-to-right, “horizontal” dimension. The dimensions refer to underlying semantic continua along which the terms are located.

Multidimensional scales are intended to be interpreted in terms of underlying continua. The horizontal dimension seems to be graded along an evaluative, “good-bad” continuum with “bad” terms along the left side (from the reader’s view) and good terms to the right. “Free” is the only “middle” term, indicating that some informants evaluated it as “bad” and some as “good,” which seems reasonable given that some informants might perceive “freedom” as a threat to a love relationship, while others might interpret “freedom” as an outcome of love. For instance, Swidler’s (2002) informants noted that in “true love,” one is free to express one’s “true self.”

The vertical dimension appears to be an energy dimension moving from low energy terms on the top to high energy terms on the bottom. Thus, *lost*, *vulnerable*, *helpless* are similar to *content*, *secure*, *not alone* in that they are not high energy feelings or qualities. *Frustrated*, *angry*, and *jealous* are similar to *strong*, *care*, *warm*, *equality* in that they are typically (though not always) mid-level energy conditions that do not seem quite as “energetic,” for instance, as the terms below them. At the bottom of the MDS, the terms *obsessive*, *anxious*, *explosive*, located on the negative side, are similar to *butterflies*, *passion*, *excited*, *giddy* in that they refer to high energy conditions or states.

Based on the above analyses of the freelist and pile sort data, we constructed a general cultural model of successful or positive romantic love. The proposed cultural model consists of a “thin” set of unmarked normative scenarios that exemplify the values, feelings, states, and attendant generic preferred actions that either reflect or cause those feelings, values, and states as presented in the MDS. Thus, for successful (i.e., “good” or “happy”) romantic love relations, a person would feel excited about meeting their beloved and making passionate intimate love, as opposed to only physical love; and at the same time feel comfortable, behave in a companionable, friendly way with one’s partner, listen to the other’s concerns about her or his job, offer to help out in various ways—while keeping a mental ledger of the degree to which altruism and passion are mutual. This cultural model of romantic love should be predictive of states, values, and feelings that are associated with romantic love in the love stories or experiences of people who hold and value this model of romantic love. Note that this model differs from the universal feature model of love used for cross-cultural analysis in that it relies on an episodic memory to create a script. We must emphasize that we are proposing a cultural model of romantic love. We do not claim that everyone values or holds this model but we do assert that it seems to be a prevalent and prototypical model of romantic love that accords both with our interview data and with the social-psychological literature on romantic love. Indeed, we think most people know this model implicitly if not explicitly, but many people may opt for a companionate or other type of model of love relationship depending, among other things, on their personalities. Further investigation with larger samples will explicate the extent to which we can more confidently generalize our findings to a larger population. We do not think the aspects of the cultural model described above are offered directly by informants. Instead, they are embedded in the individually constructed versions of culturally shared stories—stories that are the unmarked prototypic exemplars that get extended to and then realized in individual particulars. For example, we expect that if one is in a love relationship, she or he will tell stories that reflect the honesty and commitment of the beloved, or perhaps how commitment had been an obstacle for a while but overcome over time. If there are concerns about trust, these are likely to be mentioned in

stories that explain or describe why there is a lack of trust and that will also reflect a measure of dissatisfaction with the relationship. We would expect that a happy story of love will most likely include one or more of the positive aspects of love that we have found in the data from which we have inferred our proposed cultural model.

The characteristics used by informants to describe the model are capable of modification as a result of the dynamic feedback loops between sets of concepts that describe or characterize aspects of a given cultural model and individual realizations of the model in specific concrete situations. In the ideal scenario, these coexist without stress or disjunction—that is, the relationship is assessed as mutual, committed, and intimate, there is passion, and there is friendship. But in people’s specific instantiations of these, they often have to deal with and assess the implications of apparently (and stressfully) disjunctive or inconsistent attributes; this assessment can move them to variant cultural models or can lead them to reconceptualize the seeming inconsistencies as something consistent. Inconsistencies come up quite a bit in the two case studies we present, and we see how the informants deal with such inconsistencies either by modifying their romantic love model (“maybe I’m incapable of passion”) or causing some kind of ambiguity-based conflict (“is it love or is it lust?”). In fact, it is quite possible that, similar to Hutchins’s (1995) description of navigation or Gatewood and Lowe’s (2006) account of credit unions, no one ever uses or “sees” the whole cultural model at once, but only those aspects that fit a particular situation or upon which someone is reflecting.

We hypothesize that the more a member of a love dyad assesses the dyad to fit the above model, the more satisfied she or he is with the relationship. The less the relationship fits the above model, the less satisfied the member who makes that assessment and the more they will try to alter the relationship to fit the above model, or remain dissatisfied, or terminate the dyad. We also hypothesize that many scenarios, as presented by informants, will illustrate attributes from the cultural model we have developed. We assume that scenarios illustrating aspects of our cultural model will be presented as salient or go unmentioned as default scenarios that “go without saying” whereas those scenarios that contrast with any aspect of our cultural model will be marked and deliberated on by the informant as somehow deviant from their understanding and expectations of a successful romantic love relationship.

A Pilot Test of Our Cultural Model Through Two Case Studies

The two informants used for pilot testing our cultural model are Rose, a 20-year-old student, and Darryl, a 42-year-old electrician, construction worker, and general handyman (these are pseudonyms). We chose these two for two reasons: First, we have four full interviews over a span of a year for

both, which have been fully coded. Second, within the context of an article, we aim to provide thick descriptive data from the interviews to show how either the given informant uses the proposed cultural model or how we can use it to explain her or his behavior. We did not select them a priori because they fit our cultural model; indeed, we would be hard-pressed to find two people who fit it in some perfect way. People do not fit the model as much as our model can be used to explain and predict what people think, feel, and do. Our claim is that our informants are using as their reference standard a cultural model similar to the one we have put forth. The fullness of treatment is required to assess the relationship of their actions and views of their actions to our posited cultural model. To add other people or to compile across informants would be impossible, within an article format, without losing the way a model is used during the development of a relationship over time and across different situations and conditions.

The interviews were examined by reading through the transcriptions and then coding and querying them for passages that reflect our proposed cultural model as well as whatever other features appeared salient to our informants but were not captured by our cultural model. Interviews commonly took 1 hr, often more. The first three interviews with each informant took place over a 2-month period and the fourth interview was approximately 9 months after the third interview. Both Darryl and Rose had been in serious relationships; Darryl had married when he was 31 years old and separated from his wife when he was 33 (officially divorcing her when he was 40). He had a son, 9 years old, at the time I was interviewing him. Darryl had custody of his son—as his wife had substance-abuse problems and was in and out of mental health centers. He worked as a landscaper and electrician. Darryl is of European descent, intelligent, affable, did not have a BA but was taking courses occasionally with the intention of becoming a schoolteacher. He had served in the military and was interested in the Lakota Indians and archeology as a hobby. He was not particularly political and referred to himself as an “Independent.”

Rose was a 21-year-old student at a New England University (not the one where the first author teaches). She had a 24-hr-a-week job and a 3.80 grade point average (GPA). Her parents were from Italy and apparently had an arranged marriage. She had a steady relationship with a non-Italian White male that lasted from high school till the end of her senior year in college. We know nothing about her political inclination but guess that her background is middle-of-the-road to Democrat.

We will provide excerpts from the interviews beginning with Rose. The interviews serve as a source of instances and attributes for exploring the usefulness of our cultural model of romantic love—and we are using the interviews as a means to flesh out (i.e., provide scenarios) and focus in on the cultural model suggested by the freelist and MDS data. A brief assessment of the interview excerpts as they

either fit or contravene our proposed cultural model follows each excerpt.

Case Study 1: Rose

Rose's first interview data. Rose met her boyfriend, Josh, in the 11th grade, she says, “All my friends had boyfriends and I was just sick of it; I mean I was a fat lonely person just by myself.” She and Josh became a couple quickly.

Rose continues,

After 1 month together he [i.e., Josh] said he was in love with me and I thought that was just too soon, that there was no way. And I told him, there was just no way he could know enough of me to say “I love you” . . . We stayed together every day. . . . I was looking for love at that moment, you know, to satisfy my needs for that time period. Because after school I wanted to be with someone, I didn't want to just sit at home and watch TV. . . . I wanted to be with someone. I wasn't looking for three years down the road, two years down the road; I was just looking for right now. Who am I going to bring to my prom? You know it would be great to bring someone there whom I loved to bring to the prom with me and that's what my train of thinking was of a relationship . . .

Assessment of proposed cultural model. Here we see that peer pressure and the social milieu of high school is a primary motivation for Rose to search for what she calls a love relationship. This interview reflects something that was not picked up in the freelist or pile sort data and that is the importance of one's relevant peer group and what they are doing to “pre-accelerate” (Manning, 2009) the process of falling in love. Of course, this should not be surprising to us, as romantic love is by its very nature construed as a social relationship. We have here what is sometimes spoken of as “social pressure” and affiliative goals, with the understanding that such pressure and striving to “fit in” can be either explicit or implicit. It should be noted that although social pressure and the desire to fit in may be motivating factors in themselves, they are not attributes or part of the default romantic love model, but they can be part of alternative (marked) and negatively valued alternative cultural model story lines. Here, also, Rose is able to look at her behavior both from “inside” (how she felt and thought) and “outside” (how others expected her to be) perspectives and see how these converged to influence her own motives and behavior. Cultural models often include multiple roles (any of whose fillers may be applying the model) entailing the possibility of seeing the modeled situation from the perspective of any of those roles. Thus, cultural models, importantly, provide a framework for people to consider and take account of the likely perception of their behavior by others or the effects of their behavior on others.

In other ways, she presents scenarios and thought-feeling complexes that fit with our cultural model: the two of them being together every day and not wanting to be alone. She

also indicated that her romantic model of romantic love also contained a timeline based on the development of the relationship akin to Quinn's (1992) metaphorical model of romantic love as a "journey" and "project."

Second interview data. This was a key interview session, and we will provide two passages. In the interest of space and what will be patently clear to the reader, we will keep the analysis quite brief. The point is not to analyze as much as it is for readers themselves to recognize how key aspects of our proposed cultural model are expressed by and, thus, have predictive ability and provide insight into Rose's discourse.

Excerpt 2.1

VdM: Let's talk about your general philosophy of love and how it fits in with your life . . . how important love is to you.

Rose: Sure yeah. Let's see. Ummm . . . let me think for a second . . . well to be in love what I would want is . . . I want someone who is my friend who I can talk to who cares about what my opinions are ummm. Someone who does treat you differently than other people so you can tell that you are special to him and that when you are together you feel secure you feel that the love is present there. Uhm . . . and it was a friendship too and uhm and to be in love allows you to have fun with that person no matter what you do it could be the stupidest thing and it is just fun with that person because you get along so well . . . and I don't know . . . you can share the most intimate like deepest thoughts you have or anything embarrassing you know any bad thing, you can share it with that person . . . you have to feel comfortable with that person you have to be able to trust them uhm you never have to fear that when you tell them something it won't go in one ear and out the other that they'll remember what you say you know . . . uhm . . . they really have to care about you . . . this is all going both ways too uhm and.

Excerpt 2.2. We had been discussing Rose's life at school and she describes a temporary boyfriend, named George.

VdM: How did you meet George? [She begins by discussing Josh.]

R: We were just so emotionally attached . . . [in high school] . . . and . . . during my first year . . . [in college] . . . I thought he would cheat on me. I kept saying to guys that I wouldn't break up with anyone because of Josh and then I became interested in George and I just knew that he was so much better for me . . . [than Josh]. I told him about Josh but I didn't tell Josh about George. I thought it would naturally happen that I would

get attracted to someone else. So I told Josh that I wanted to see other people because we hadn't been with other people. If he wasn't so honest and so good to me [pause] I know that he would never cheat on me . . . [referring to Josh]. He just knows that we're going to get married . . . I am afraid that if I do break up with him I'm not going to find someone as good as him. . . .

VdM: And Josh, how does he fit or not fit hmmm?

R: With Josh I'm attracted to him but for some reason I can't get into the physical part of it and I think that totally is what's wrong with our relationship right now. I am not sexually attracted to Josh but am to George . . . that's putting it into a slot 'cause I feel bad 'cause I want to be that way but I can't and he needs that and I need that in a relationship and it's okay for me right now that it's not too physical 'cause that's not really what I want and uhm I don't know. But for him . . . that's part of a relationship that's what makes a relationship different from a friendship. And I think it has to be there for you to distinguish a relationship from a friendship to keep it going . . .

VdM: Is that the primary difference?

R: That's not the complete difference but you can . . . like I have a friend right now and we have love for each other just because we have known each other a really long time and we're really good friends but it doesn't necessarily lead to a relationship . . . maybe we could have passionate sex but yeah I guess there has to be something else there I don't know if I can say what it is but there has to be something else . . .

She had sexual relations with George but not intercourse. Finally, she broke up the relationship with George because she told Josh who became very upset and she says,

he loves me so much and I loved him but I was hurting him . . . [it] made me sad. . . . I just said I was sorry . . . we didn't really talk much afterwards and then I left. I told him I never would do it again, . . . that I was sorry that I loved him so much and I probably knew that I was going to do it again.

Assessment of proposed cultural model. In Excerpt 2.1, Rose is referring to attributes associated with friendship, intimacy, in short, aspects one finds in the "good," low-mid-level energy area of the MDS. She also introduces a linked cultural model of the "true" self (vs. false or staged self) that allows her to be stupid and vulnerable and, hence, intimate. The "if-then" relationship between a true self and true love was also emphasized by Swidler's (2002) informants. However, in Swidler's case, it was associated with love after marriage when an enduring relationship had been established. In this case, true love is, according to Swidler, contrasted

with romantic love. We did not find such a contrast probably because both Rose and Darryl were single rather than married and were involved in the courtship rather than the settled down phase of a relationship.

Intimacy, altruism, and mutuality—concepts we have identified with our cultural model of romantic love—were also expressed in Excerpt 2.1. In addition, and something not presented in our model of romantic love but certainly not opposed to it, is the notion of being made to feel special. The idea of feeling special and “unique” is reflected in the complex of terms in the freelist and MDS, and is perhaps a higher order term for some complex of terms such as “commitment, complete, intimacy, friendship,” and so on. We also conjecture that feeling unique is not mentioned as an aspect of romantic love because it is not a property per se of the model but a consequence of the model and related as the idea of a “true self” to a cultural model of the self and, as a result, suggests further avenues for research.

Excerpt 2.2 complements the first in that Rose expresses what results when the salient aspects of the “good, high energy” dimension of romantic love are absent. This, clearly, is the problem in her relationship with her long-term boyfriend, Josh. Again, we see how a concept of self is seamlessly intertwined with the cultural model of romantic love, as she first considers herself at fault and is motivated to have a relationship with George to test, in essence, if her “self” is lacking the ability for good, high energy states and feelings or if it is a problem of the romantic relationship itself. Our cultural model of romantic love does not predict that she would seek another relationship, but it is a feasible prediction from our model given the absence of high energy good feelings in her relationship with Josh. To rationalize the absence of good, high energy feelings, she introduces a new cultural model—that of marriage—and evaluates Josh in light of both the romantic and marriage cultural models. Finding him to be a strong fit with her marriage cultural model, she decides to reconsider her developing sexual relationship with George, whom she links with romantic love. Apparently, at that time, the cultural model for marriage having a stronger motivating force than the one for romantic love, she decides to break off her relationship with George and profess fidelity to Josh. Given our theory of cultural models, we expect such additional inputs as we do not believe that cultural models are cognitively engaged in pure isolation from others and that a major research thrust in the future will have to focus on these connections, as Strauss (1992) and Strauss and Quinn (1997) also both emphasized when introducing connectionist theory to describe cultural models.

Third interview data (a discussion on unprotected sex)

- VdM: With Josh, did you always use a condom?
 R: In the beginning we did a lot.
 VdM: Condoms?

- R: Yeah and just recently we tend not to.
 VdM: How did that happen?
 R: I don't know, I thought, you know it would make it more exciting, I could finally feel like I was being swept off my feet.
 VdM: Was it a big decision?
 R: I don't know I just thought about it and decided to do it.
 VdM: Was he surprised?
 R: I don't know.
 VdM: Did it make a difference in your relations?
 R: Well I'm just a bad person to talk to about this 'cause we're not that sexually active that much anymore . . . we've had unprotected sex like 4 times . . . the last 4 times . . . and it wasn't pleasurable . . . I could totally say stop and he would have, but I don't. I wanted it to be pleasing for me . . . and him.
 VdM: Have you thought of why it's not pleasing to you?
 R: Yeah I'm like that 1% [laughs] . . . the 1% that just can't enjoy sex.

Assessment of proposed cultural model. This excerpt shows how cultural models must be flexible enough to deal with contingencies.

Obviously, life is not perfect and is, as noted before, a contingent enterprise. No cultural model ever totally or perfectly specifies anyone's complete behavior in any situation. In part, this is because specific contingencies can move our application of one or another piece of a cultural model from its default to some marked variant. But, more basically, we must remember that a cultural model itself only actually specifies what is needed for its functioning. Only when the cultural model is *instantiated* in some situation—that is, when the specifics of that situation are interpreted in terms of, and fitted to, the cultural model's parameters—does its application acquire the added behavioral content of that situation. And then this behavioral content only acquires behavioral implementation when the cultural model is *realized* as the model on which each players' actions or acted-on interpretations are based.

Consequently, there is never a perfect fit between cultural model and behavior. Cultural models that “work” must be abstract enough to deal with contingencies, yet concrete enough to direct behavior in patterned and predictable ways that conform to the model. By practicing unsafe sex, Rose is attempting to fulfill the “high energy” aspect of romantic love with Josh. She is not directly seeing her behavior in terms of a whole cultural model of romantic love, but she is specifying a part of her “model” that is not being satisfied. She further brings into her “dynamic awareness” another cultural model—marriage. She finds George to be a better fit for the cultural model of marriage that she employs and, thus, modifies or alters her cultural model of romantic love by

blaming herself, rather than Josh, for her inability to find passion (or good, high energy feelings) in her relationship with Josh. This compromise allows for the possibility of marrying Josh while not fulfilling her “holistic” cultural model of romantic love. “Holistic” is in quotes, because she is unable to mentally see the whole model but her actions indicate that high energy, good feelings are important to her, so we can reasonably conclude that the cultural model of romantic love we have posited is one that Rose employs.

Fourth interview data (9 months after the third interview)

- VdM: The world is dying to know about you and Josh.
 R: Josh and I are over; I haven't talked to him in 2 months. During the summer I was in X (*note: X, Y, and Z are names of universities*) and he was in Y; we didn't speak to each other too much and we were just growing farther and farther apart. Senior year came and he was in Z. We started talking . . . once a week . . . there was nothing there and we decided that we couldn't commit, and we just would try to date other people, but of course he said that he didn't, I said I wasn't but I was and then I went to Cancun in March. When I came back I told him I had kissed someone in Cancun, he got really mad at me. We had talked about trying to work things out after graduation, because we would have more time to commit to each other, to see if that's what we really wanted. He got really angry with me and I said I told you that I can't commit to you right now, I don't think it's fair that you did. He kept saying that I was the one for him but I said “you can't form an opinion unless you have something to compare it to,” because he hasn't had any other girlfriends. He told me that he had cheated on me and had relationships with other people . . . the whole time when he was acting like a perfect person . . . like he had never done anything wrong . . . was always faithful and never cheated on me. Meanwhile, I was always the bad one trying to tell him the truth and finally he just breaks it to me all at once. I wasn't mad at him for cheating on me because I would be hypocritical if I did, cause I was doing the same thing but I was trying to be honest about it and so it was awful. That ended things right there.
 VdM: It was awful?
 R: He was the one person I thought I could trust.
 VdM: What do you mean the one person?
 R: He was the one person that stuck by me, I am not saying that I was a great person to him but he always stuck by me. I just thought it was unconditional and I could trust him with anything and he would never hurt me intentionally, and he did

. . . not intentionally; but I thought for sure that he would feel bad enough that if he did do that he would tell me right away. I just had it all wrong. He thought that he could get away with it.

VdM: And you found out over the phone?

R: Yes.

Later during this interview, Rose said,

I was planning on breaking up with Josh and I almost instigated it telling him that I kissed someone in Cancun. I am always trying to instigate a fight so he would break up with me because I didn't have the courage to break up with him. I was giving him enough reasons to be like “forget it Rose.” He never would do that.

Assessment of proposed cultural model. The first author never interviewed Josh (nor George) so we cannot make suppositions concerning the motivations for their actions or their feelings. Rose had built up a strong model, supported by scenarios of trust and Josh's commitment and faithfulness to her. She had been the “bad one” and Josh the “good one” and this had played a significant role in her decision to break up with George and stay with Josh and also her decision to experiment with unprotected sex as a way of increasing passion and excitement. In an earlier interview, she had discussed with her mom how her relationship with Josh lacked passion and she was interested in meeting other males. Rose said, “My mom knows how I feel and she thinks I should meet other people but she thinks I should marry him [i.e., Josh].” After the break up with Josh, she had considered telling her parents but decided against it for now because “My mom loves Josh, she thinks he is perfect.” This and earlier discussions on peer pressure suggest that part of the “directive force” of a cultural model is peer and family pressure. This is hardly surprising. However, in this case, it reinforced Rose's own assessments of Josh as having all sorts of personal virtues that she might not “find again.” Despite this “rose-colored” view of Josh, she was, at least by what she said, not as angry or upset as one might expect when she found out he had lied and cheated on her all along. Instead, she expressed relief that the relationship ended. We suggest that had her relationship met the complete model of a successful romantic love relationship (including, in this case, high energy aspects of passion and excitement in life), she would probably have been devastated by Josh's confession—and it is not likely that she would have kissed someone when on holiday in Cancun (or if she had, she would not have told him). Our proposed, developing cultural model of romantic love serves us well in providing a framework and story line by which to understand and predict Rose's motives, feelings, and actions.

Case Study 2: Darryl

At the time of the first interview, Darryl was 42; he had been divorced for 2 years and had had full custody of his

9-year-old son, Rich, since he was 2 years old. According to Darryl, his ex-wife has substance-abuse problems and was, consequently, in and out of both jail and mental institutions. He made his living as an electrician, construction worker, and general handyman in a rural area of New England. He was devoted to his son and made a reasonable but certainly not extravagant income. During the four interviews, we focused on both his ex-wife and his current “girlfriend” Hannah. For purposes of space, we will only focus on material related to his present relationship. He, apparently, rarely saw or heard from his ex-wife.

First interview on Darryl’s philosophy of romantic love. Darryl began by noting that when he was younger, he would pursue any woman he had a “romantic interest in.”

D: Today I see lots of issues like caring, honesty, trust and understanding as attributes that I would look for and that’s not to say that I couldn’t meet someone and fall in love . . . that’s not what I am saying but I think it’s difficult to find out if someone has all those characteristics before you necessarily fall in love with them . . . I mean I’m involved with a lady now . . . I love a lot of things about her, she’s very understanding, she’s very sharing, there’s a lot of compromise and everything. There’s a lot of things I love about her but I don’t think I am in love with her. It’s kind of hard to explain I guess. I love a lot of things about her as a human being, there are a lot of things I love about her . . . but I just don’t feel this strong pull inwardly. I mean I can just tell inwardly that it’s probably not what she wants it to be . . . so I kind of . . . I told her that that I love her in a lot of ways but I don’t love her in the ways that she expects me to . . . I am not in love with her. Basically she has all these attributes but there’s this additional thing this feeling that I have inside that I think has to be there which is not there.

VdM: What is that feeling, is it something that one can describe?

D: I’m not sure . . . if it’s biological or just me over the years . . . that my ideas have changed, and I am not exactly sure how to describe it. I thought a lot . . . of the way people change. I know I change when I get into a relationship especially when I have abstained from a relationship for a long time . . . which I have done . . . and suddenly I feel more energetic, more alive . . . but there’s something more, some substance more I think it’s both physical and mental—I think there’s something that goes on mentally that makes you feel high but also physically you just feel more empowered I guess. It makes you feel stronger as an individual.

Assessment of proposed model. Darryl begins with terms that imply “mutuality” and the negotiation of power and care within a relationship: “understanding,” “sharing,” “compromise.” He observes that his cultural model has changed over time, earlier it was more of a “ludus” type model where love and sex were inosculated with one another. He distinguishes between a companionate and passionate model and, like for Rose, something is missing; but unlike for Rose, it is more ineffable and is not necessarily “passion.” As he attempts to describe it, it begins to sound more like a sports energy drink; it makes one high, gives one energy both physically and mentally. Thus, this seems to refer to a general good feeling, high energy state that is triggered by “being together” with the other qualities—mutuality and caring, honesty—that make for a successful relationship but are subsequent to and not an inherent aspect of romantic love. Yet, without these qualities, romantic love is transitory, as reflected in his discussion of his wife with whom he was in love but could not live with. His romantic love model focuses on the high energy features and a sense of personal transformation (i.e., romantic love “makes you stronger as an individual”) that occurs when one is with the beloved. In these statements, Darryl appears to be using a Platonic model, of the kind reflected in the work of Irving Singer (1994), Alan Soble (1990), Charles Lindholm (1998a, 1998b), and Zoltán Kövecses (1987). For Darryl, romantic love is a transcendental state that you achieve. Two individuals are less than the whole, by “achieving” requited, mutual love, the two become a whole—the love couple. Furthermore, when you achieve this state, you are granted increased energy and confidence. This conception of romantic love as a transcendental state is, it seems, virtually identical to Rose’s conception, whose focus is on fixing what is lacking—that is, passion. However, unlike Rose, Darryl assesses and views his conception (or cultural model) of romantic love in terms of its impact on what is for him his more important role as father. Thus, when he talks about how his ideas of romantic love have changed, he does not directly note that these changes are not just a function of age, but what came with his aging—a son. Like Rose, he also feels that individuals can intentionally engineer their courtship relationship to fix what is lacking.

Excerpt 1.2

VdM: Can being in love be cultivated?

D: Yeah I think it can. Like this relationship I am in now . . . it doesn’t necessarily mean I couldn’t fall in love with her tomorrow . . . but I feel there is something missing in me . . . I think you can definitely grow into it . . . especially if you have a lot of good feelings . . . like I said I have a lot of good feelings towards this lady.

He had been dating Hannah, whom he referred to through all of the first interview and most of the subsequent ones as

“lady,” for approximately 2 months at the time of the first interview. He explains,

She was very disturbed when I said I didn’t [love her] . . . she said she just figured that I did. And I said “well you know . . . we never discussed it” . . . well I have a son, so that kind of comes into play too.

She said,

“how are you going to explain to your son if he asks you questions about why I am sleeping over and why all of a sudden is there a woman sleeping in your bed with you?” . . . He’s never known any woman that’s slept in my bed . . . I mean he knows his mother but she left when he was 2.

Assessment of proposed cultural model. Just as Rose did, Darryl first blames himself for not being “in love” with Hannah: “Something is missing in me.” Furthermore, like Josh, Hannah is described as having lots of good attributes that frequently are identified with love but they do not catalyze Darryl to fall in love with Hannah (as not Rose with Josh). Hannah professes to be “in love” with Darryl, but while apparently motivated to reciprocate, he is unable to do so, because, in part, of the lack of attributes identified with the “good” feelings, high energy zone. His role as a father has an impact on his cultural model; at least, Hannah (as he tells it) seems to think so. She seems to create a cultural scenario where if there is a child in the house and a woman sleeps with a man regularly, the group is a family and by implication the father qua husband loves his wife (as she does him). However, by promoting this cultural model of family, she seems to have overstepped her bounds and used the wrong strategy, for to put herself in that position she, by implication, must also be “like a mother” to Darryl’s son. However, her actions do seem to lead to Darryl modifying his initial causal model of romantic love relationships. Whereas he had indicated that “falling in love” precedes finding out about the quality of the relationship and virtues of the beloved, he now clearly argues that one can “grow” into love when the other person exhibits all those good traits (mainly low energy, positive values, characteristics, and behaviors). It further seems that this switch was spurred by recognizing that Hannah’s scenario is also one that his son employs since “he’s never known any woman that’s slept in my bed . . .”

With confidence, we can see that both Darryl and Rose consider romantic love not just a feeling but something that can be intentionally cultivated and modified. For Rose, the cultivation refers primarily to the psychological domain of her own desire to feel passion and be engaged in a love relationship that kindles passion. For Darryl, the cultural model of romantic love needs to be modified so it articulates with his role as father and that he has control of the relationship. Thus, Hannah’s demands, her agency if you will, is a threat to his autonomy in the relationship because his relationship with his son has priority. For him, the quality that is lacking

is in a rough way a positive articulation of both relationships in which the cultural model of the love relationship as posed by Hannah complements rather than threatens the cultural models that form his relationship with his son, including, as Hannah alludes to, the dual role of lover and (step)mother to his son.

Interview 2 (2 weeks later; the woman had been over both weekends). Hannah was 38 years old, divorced, and without children. Hannah’s father had given her a TV and she had asked Darryl if he wanted one and he went to pick it up when she was not at home. That night, she phoned him. Darryl tells the story.

D: She said, “I just wanted to call up and report a hit and run and the theft of a television,” and she laughed and I laughed too; and we talked.

VdM: Did it scare you?

D: [Slight hesitation] . . . No because I knew she was kidding. . . . So we got to talking and she said, “well did you talk to your son?” and I said, “I didn’t tell him that we fell in love.” And she said, “well you should explain to him that you just don’t sleep with someone that there should be love there before you do that.” And I said, “well I think you should definitely have strong feelings.” And I was . . . once again she was throwing “love” out very swiftly and easily and so in trying to discuss it I told her that I liked her a lot and . . . and I liked everything about her and I think that was the offensive thing . . . that I wouldn’t change that word “like” or “care” to “love” and she became very upset and [when] we ended the conversation that night she wouldn’t talk or respond to any questions or anything I said; so I said, “well why don’t I call you tomorrow night?” So the next day, that night I went home and I called her and I had thought about it a lot during the day . . . and I told her that I realize that I was just afraid of the word love . . . and that my definition was not the same as your definition . . . and before that I said, “and I realize that I was wrong I can’t say I love you, I can say ‘I love your eyes,’ ‘I love your face’ and ‘I love your mind’ and ‘I love your humor’ and I can say all those things but it’s still not evoking the feeling that I think love is. And ‘I am sorry that you are hurt but it was never my intention to hurt you.’” Then I reminded her of the conversation we had when we first got together and I was lying on one side of the bed and she was lying on the other and you know “you said you were lonesome” and we went through the conversation again and she said, “well maybe it’s both our

fears it's my fear of being rejected, ["she didn't say rejection but something like that," Darryl's aside] . . . and your fear of trusting someone." And then she said, "you can trust me." And . . . and . . . so I explained to her, "I don't feel that I'm in love with you, that's not saying that I couldn't grow to love you or fall in love with you tomorrow but I am not making that commitment right now." And she and I . . . she still seemed to be upset and she called me the next day and she indicated that she was okay with it now, that it didn't bother her and this weekend she came over.

VdM: Did you have a good time?

D: Yeah, I mean it seemed like . . . that it was a little easier . . . that we both knew where we stood. She indicated . . . she did say something this weekend that she still wasn't sure about my not being able to say that I was in love with her but that she was willing to take the fact that I love all these things about her in the meantime and hope that it grew into something . . .

VdM: Does she love you?

D: Yes. Well and I mean it's hard and I told her maybe you should sleep in your bed, the other bed, and I'll sleep in here, because, I told her, I don't want . . . if this doesn't work out . . . I don't want you to feel that you are just a sexual outlet for me . . . so I mean that way, this way, maybe we should pull apart that much at least . . . if you are concerned about it, then let's abstain from the sexual part of this until I . . . you know . . . until we see what happens . . . I mean if I . . . if I'm not going to fall in love with you and if that's going to upset you then maybe you don't want to have a sexual relationship with me.

VdM: What did she say.

D: I'll think about it . . . I'll have to think about it . . . this was during the day and by night she said that she wanted to sleep in the same bed as me and so . . . we had sex all night . . . [laughs] every opportunity we had.

Assessment of proposed model. Her gift of a television is reminiscent of the high frequency "gift" received in the freelist. Also H. Fisher (1992), discussing the importance and universality of gift giving as part of the courtship process, wryly noted that even male flies give small pieces of carcasses to female flies as a prelude to mating. Gifts of course as Marcel Mauss pointed out are rarely if ever "free" and usually entail reciprocity; thus, the giver implicitly ensnares the giftee in a web of obligations. F. G. Bailey (1971) also noted that the German etymology of gift (*gift*) refers to either "gift" or "poison" and suggested that this double meaning (*à la* Mauss) inheres to gift giving. Hence, Hannah's remark of a "Hit

and run . . . theft," although overtly intended to be humorous, covertly suggested that she and Darryl were connected through a series of obligations and counter-obligations that suggest in its pure sense "family" and in its poisoned sense "obligatory service."

Furthermore, unlike Josh, and perhaps biased by the lens of Darryl's narrative, Hannah seems to be the pursuer in this relationship with Darryl retreating, hesitating, and demarcating his son and himself as the family group, independent of Hannah. These separate cultural models (of family life and obligations) serve as directive forces that impact Darryl's cultural model of love. Both, Darryl and Hannah seem to agree that, at their age and in Darryl's situation of an "incomplete prototypical family," romantic love when mutual entails both marriage or cohabitation at the very least, and Hannah's adopting, to some extent, the role of "mother" to Darryl's son. If we ignore these complicating features, we ignore the "morass of contextuality" within which cultural models are applied, necessarily adapting to a mental environment that involves other cultural models distributed with more or less coherence, centrality or salience, and directive, motivational force.

Darryl discusses how after the gift, Hannah begins to "throw" the word "love" around very "swiftly and easily." In his narrative of his discussion with her, he attempts to distinguish between like and love, noting that he loves many things about her but is not "in love." He, like Rose, and as before, blames himself, explaining to Hannah on the phone that he was "just afraid of the word love." Hannah brings up their mutual fears, she of "being alone" and "rejection," he of "trusting," as, in a way, cultural models that inhibit the expression or fulfillment of the cultural model of romantic love and family, as she sees it. Both Darryl and Hannah see love and family (by this meaning living together and being a family or like a family) as joined or inosculated cultural models with the one (love) inevitably leading to the other. He makes clear that his feelings for her are distinct from another cultural model that is proximate to romantic love, that of sex and particularly of males as using women as "sexual outlets." His feelings are more than that. He unambiguously means by this he has strong affectionate feelings for Hannah, which can be ambiguously interpreted as moving toward romantic love (which Darryl has said can "grow") or just settling into a state of "companionate" love or "like." Some of the attributes of companionate love and liking overlap with our proposed cultural model of romantic love but do not comprise it. Perhaps Hannah initiates sex that evening (this is more conjectural) because it is a try for the passion that is important for love—her desire for Darryl to want and need her in his life in the way that he asserts to be lacking. However, here there is another ambiguity at play, as Hannah has made it clear that sex implies love, particularly when there is a child in the house, while Darryl has made it clear that sex is sex and can exist as its own cultural model independent from the cultural model of romantic love. Hence, there is room for ambiguity and contestation between the users

of similar cultural models within our theory of cultural models.

Interview 3. About 2 months after the second interview, Darryl had been seeing Hannah for some time and decided that he would tell his son about his “strong feelings” for her.

D: Well my son was kind of disturbed; on the weekends he sleeps in my bed as a . . . what he calls “a special treat.” We started this when he was very young. . . . However, he’s 9 now and he should be moving into his own bed anyway and of course this brings up feelings of jealousy and daddy loves her more than he loves me. And I explain to him that I love him just as much as I ever did.

VdM: Did he want to sleep with you.

D: Oh he definitely wanted to sleep with me but I said that well Hannah’s going to be sleeping in there. And he said, “I don’t care I’m sleeping in the middle” and every opportunity he got whenever we could get close to each other he would get right between us . . . so he was feeling threatened. And I indicated to her that, that you know . . . that she needed to also understand his needs and that he was feeling threatened and that she needed to make him feel comfortable by giving him a hug.

VdM: Oh she wasn’t doing that?

D: No, no, in fact there was one occasion where . . . she’s always been pleasant to him . . . but there was this one occasion where she was standing in front of me and he came into the room and he immediately got between us and he put his arms around me and he was hugging me and she put her arms like over his shoulder and reached another hand under his shirt and pinched his chest and immediately tears came to his eyes and he went “ohh” and leaned over . . . and I was just hugging I didn’t know what the problem was. He slipped out between the two of us and he was kind of crying . . . so I asked him what the problem was and she walked into the other room, into the kitchen, and I asked him well what’s the problem, and so then he said, “she pinched me really hard and it hurt.” . . . When I confronted her, “oh did I hurt him I didn’t mean to, I didn’t realize that it had hurt him I just gave him a little friendly pinch.” I don’t know I was thinking well do I say . . . you know . . . reasonable doubt . . . maybe she didn’t really think she was hurting or maybe it was intentional on her part maybe she was feeling threatened that . . . and that didn’t do anything for my feeling any closer . . . this past weekend she was very friendly to him and he was very friendly to her. . . . he’s never . . . I don’t

think it’s been an issue . . . a lot of times the women that I have met and gone home with are from school that are younger and as soon as they see him and what a responsibility he is they usually run the other way . . .

Assessment of proposed cultural model. In a situation in which alternative cultural models can be applied (instantiated), members of the culture choose which to foreground—even if there may exist cultural defaults concerning how to rank and prioritize them. Darryl’s role as father trumps his role as lover to Hannah. Hannah’s attempt to become a full member of the family meets with active resistance from Rich (the son) as well as passive resistance from Darryl. This is clear when Rich tearfully tells his father how Hannah pinched him under his shirt and that it “hurt” him. Darryl, after discussing the incident with Hannah, took a neutral position, stating “reasonable doubt.” Thereafter, after perhaps boundaries had been established, Rich and Hannah were friendlier with each other. He added that other (younger) women who had come over and met Rich decided they were not interested in developing a relationship with Darryl. Thus, Darryl’s rather passive behavior, conciliatory, and affectionate responses to Hannah suggest that he also recognizes that while he may not be “in love” with her, she might represent the best possibility for a woman to become part of his family as she has all sorts of personal virtues. It seems then that he is, given his situation as an older, relatively poor male with a son, also calculating the probability of achieving the prototypical family image—that is, with Hannah as wife and mother—and that this model becomes as salient in its “motivational” force as the romantic love model. Roy D’Andrade (1992) stated that the “marriage model” is nested in the romantic love model because a person will say “I married *because* I am in love with X,” but to say “I am in love with X because I married X” does not (in our culture) make sense. Thus, for D’Andrade, “love” is the master motive and “marriage” the basic-level motive. But that is taking these two as logical and isolated concepts not as contextualized “thought-feeling” complexes as Claudia Strauss (1992) described cultural models.

In the fourth interview, 9 months later, Darryl said that he and Hannah were making arrangements for her to move in officially, as she was staying at his house frequently. He was still not “in love” with her but had decided that he loved her, and his son had grown to love her, too. Thus, apparently, over time, the conflicts between Hannah and Rich were resolved and, as he repeated, they “were no longer an issue.”

Conclusion

The two case studies we have presented show that the proposed cultural model of romantic love provides insight and has some predictive strength. We have proposed that the key attribute field categorizations for a U.S. cultural model of romantic love are: high and low energy associated with good

feelings (e.g., excited, passion, comfortable, content), a mental ledger indexing mutuality (in commitment, altruism, trust), and personal virtues (e.g., honest, intelligent, humor). We do not offer a cultural model comprised of three or so styles or traits as do most love researchers, but view our proposed cultural model as a flexible, generic set of normative scenarios that people see as exemplifying romantic love and triggered at specific times or in given situations. Such categorizations are informants' culturally standard attribution of attributes to the cultural model's story—attributes that can be used by informants to index the cultural model, especially where the cultural model is used as a reference standard. For instance, if one's lover is suddenly leaving for a long trip, one may for reassurance index mutual ideas and feelings of commitment and trust, and also various personal virtues such as honesty. A cultural model must be "thin" enough to encompass many different situations, phases of a relationship, and feelings; yet it must not be so thin that it is too abstract and general for specific uses. Our cultural model approach meets this "just right" criteria. Further work will allow for a greater fleshing out of the types of unmarked normative stories indexed by our cultural model.

We think that the freelist and pile sort material and the sample used (plus its fit with many other studies cited) provide strong evidence that the proposed cultural model of romantic love is one held by some (even if it is not yet clear how many) North Americans. Much more work will need to be done to determine the reach and use of this cultural model.

This is a test run of our theory. There are some issues we need to address in the future. First, we need to repeat the basic methodology with different samples to evaluate the validity, reliability, and reach of our proposed cultural model and also to discover if there are other prototypical models. For reliability testing, we would need to gather samples in other areas of North America and see if through the same procedures of freelisting and pile sorting, we would come up with substantially the same cultural model. For testing the external validity of our proposed model, we have predicted that those who meet the criteria for a satisfying love relationship according to our model would also report being satisfied with their love relationship. Those, like Rose, who feel some area of the cultural model for a good love relationship is lacking—such as passion or mutuality—would mention this dissatisfaction in interviews or surveys and probably attempt to resolve this dissatisfaction.

We need to develop the field/dimension concept (i.e., good-bad/low-high energy) a bit more to recognize how it relates to the actual cultural model scenario, how the fields "fit" together, and whether they vary in salience across individuals, contexts, gender, personality types, the life cycle, and so on. Third, we perhaps need to be more attentive to the distinction between the continuum of dimensions and the respective parts (or fields and attributes) and the holistic conception of romantic love expressed particularly by Darryl. We need to further explore the relations among these parts and conceptions—and to

consider how elements, which in the basic story form are part of a seamless assemblage, can emerge as distinct entities in tasks such as freelists of relevant attributes or in situations where one is clearly "missing in action." Fourth, we need to consider both logically derived and actual variant models of the prototypical model we have proposed and the conditions and processes through which such variants are developed. Fifth, we need to elicit a wide variety of scenarios to develop unmarked scenarios that are associated with the fields and attributes we have proposed. Sixth, we also need to consider the flexibility of cultural models as they compete with contrasting models of either the same situation (e.g., other models of romantic love) or different situations (e.g., romantic love vs. parenting), and to discover a means to determine which models are likely to contrast with which other models and under what conditions.

On the positive side of the ledger, we do believe that the work we have done provides a kind of recipe for constructing and analyzing cultural models. Undoubtedly, there are many other ways to do this; however, we consider the theoretical and methodological guidelines proposed serve as a "good recipe" that we hope others will decide to employ in their own research.

Authors' Note

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