The personal construction of love.

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THE PERSONAL CONSTRUCTION
OF LOVE

by
J. Gordon Reid
B.A. Carleton University, 1976
M.A. Carleton University, 1978

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the
Department of Psychology in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada
1987
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ABSTRACT

The first purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which the Personal Ideal could serve as a basis for understanding people's interpretations of their love experiences. The results indicated that subjects considered their most intense experience of love to be even significantly higher in conformance with their personal ideal than with the romantic ideal, and that their ratings of this experience as "True Love" were highly correlated with their personal ideal but not the romantic ideal.

The second purpose was to empirically demonstrate the process by which people's love cognitions develop. Results indicated that subjects' interpretation of their most intense experience of love relative to the romantic ideal and the personal ideal could be significantly influenced by varying the order of different sets of instructions. These results were interpreted using the assimilation/accommodation model of Piaget.

Finally, a factor analysis utilizing a number of measures obtained within this research revealed three distinct factors relative to peoples' interpretations of their love experiences. It was concluded that further research was required before the significance of these factors could be adequately assessed.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

There are two major purposes of this study. The first purpose is to demonstrate the salience of a cognitive representation, referred to as the **Personal Ideal**, relative to people's interpretations of their love experiences. It will be argued that the personal ideal is a more useful concept than the romantic ideal for understanding how people interpret their love experiences. The second goal is to explore the influence of the measurement process itself on people's interpretations of their love experiences. It will be argued that subjects' reconstructions of their love experiences are significantly influenced by certain frameworks established by the very questions designed to assess these interpretations.

The first part of the introduction discusses the cognitive concept of the "personal ideal" as a dynamic interpretive lens through which one understands and make sense of his or her love experiences. This will be followed by an exploration of current definitions of love. Two theoretical views of romantic love, the psychoanalytic and the social-psychological, will then be outlined and the relationship between this form of love and the romantic ideal will be discussed. Various definitional problems associated with both romantic love and the romantic ideal will also be noted. Specific consideration will then be given to the
definition of the romantic ideal as a cultural norm (Averill & Boothroyd, 1977; Averill, 1985), along with a critical examination of the study used to support this position.

During the examination of the study by Averill and Boothroyd (1977), the influence of the measurement process itself in terms of its effect on people's reports concerning the nature and intensity of their love experiences will be considered. It will be argued that certain experimental conditions introduce cognitive sets which influence subjects' reconstructions of their love experiences within the experimental paradigm. Since this type of information is utilized by researchers to examine people's cognitions of their love experiences, failure to appreciate this experimental influence may lead to certain unwarranted conclusions. The present study then, was designed to allow an examination of both the salience of the personal ideal, and the influence of particular experimental conditions on subjects' love ideals.

Love: A Cognitive View

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of research attempts to examine love over the last ten to fifteen years. In spite of the many concepts which have developed from these investigations, the significance of people's cognitions in the interpretation of their love experiences has received minimal attention. This is not to say that the cognitive component of love has been overlooked. For example, as noted by Laswell and
Laswell (1976), "One can think about love, know when it is happening, and distinguish its meaning from other information; that is its cognitive aspect" (p.214). The variety of attempts to utilize people's cognitions concerning their love experiences is also exemplified in the development of scales such as the "Attitudes Towards Love" scale developed by Knox & Sporakowski (1968) and Rubin's (1970) "Liking and Loving" scale. The aspect of people's love cognitions which has received minimal attention therefore, is not the content or form of these cognitions. Rather, it is the consideration of the manner in which our cognitions are derived, and the way in which they are used as an interpretive lens for our love experiences, which deserves more exploration.

The development of cognitive structures. The social psychological study of cognitive processes in general, and their role as an interpretive lens for many of our experiences in particular, is not new. Markus and Zajonc (1985) state that "the social psychology of the seventies and of the eighties takes it for granted that internal representations mediate between the stimulus and the behavioral consequences and that these representations dominate the entire process" (p.138).

These cognitive structures have been variously referred to as schemas (e.g. Neisser, 1972), inferential sets (e.g. Jones and Thibault, 1958), prototypes (e.g. Cantor and Mischel, 1979), themes (e.g. Lingle and Ostrom, 1981), frames (e.g. Minsky,
1975), attitudes (e.g. Tesser and Cowan, 1977) and hypotheses (e.g. Bruner, 1951). Generally, these structures have been described by Marcus and Zajonc (1985) as;

Organizations of conceptually related representations of objects, situations, events, and of sequences of events and actions... Cognitive structures derive from past experiences with many instances of the complex concepts they represent... These structures help the perceiver achieve some coherence in the environment and in the most general sense provide for the construction of social reality. (p.143)

As suggested in this quote, cognitive structures develop "from past experience". The development of these structures has been described by Jean Piaget (1970) within the framework of an assimilation-accommodation model. Piaget describes how the cognitive system interacts with its environment and by means of many such interactions undergoes developmental change. According to this model people play an active role in their cognitive interchanges with the environment.

Each cognitive encounter always has two aspects: assimilation and accommodation. As summarized by Flavell (1977):

Assimilation essentially means interpreting or construing external data in terms of the individual's existing cognitive system. What is encountered is cognitively transformed to fit what the individual knows and how he thinks. Accommodation means taking account of the structure of the external data. (p.13)

According to Piaget's model therefore, the cognitive system simultaneously adapts reality to its own structure (assimilation) and adapts itself to the structure of the environment.
(accommodation). It is in the process of repeatedly attempting to accommodate and assimilate novel environmental elements that the system itself gradually changes its internal structure; cognitive development takes place.

It is likely that people's interpretations of love are also subject to the same processes of assimilation and accommodation. That is, people interpret their experience of love within the parameters of an existing cognitive structure, and that structure is simultaneously modified in some way by their experience. It is this continuing interplay between cognitions and experience, this dynamic relational quality which exists between our love experiences and our interpretation of those events, which serves as the theoretical foundation for the "personal construction of love" and its associated cognitive structure, the "personal ideal".

The personal construction of love. The notion of a personal construction of love has been implied in previous frameworks used to investigate love. For example, researchers such as Walster and Berscheid (1971) used Schacter's two-factor theory of emotion to suggest that two components are necessary for a passionate experience: the arousal and the appropriate cognitions. From this position, love does not exist unless the lover defines it as such. As stated by Walster and Walster (1978), "When we're physically aroused and when we label that unsettling feeling
"love" - whether it's painful or enjoyable - then we're in love. It's that simple" (p.12).

According to Walster and Walster (1978) our ideas concerning love come from our culture, our family, and our personal experiences of love. Thus, much of the research in this area has tended to concentrate on examining the variations in the content of love ideals due to such cultural and personal factors. The present research however, considers our love ideal as an active interpretive process. The personal construction of love supposes that the love ideal serves as the basis by which people assimilate their love experiences; however it also assumes that this representation is continually subject to the processes of accommodation in the dynamic relationship between a person and his or her world. In this sense love ideals are both "creative" and "created" within the continuing interplay between the sociocultural world and the self.

In adopting this framework of the personal construction of love, two central issues emerge. The first issue argues that at any given point in this continually evolving constructive process, the personal ideal serves as the most salient factor in people's interpretations of their love experiences. The second issue is concerned with the implications of considering individuals' love cognitions as a dynamic interpretive process. To the extent that these ideals function as an interpretive device and are modified with changing experiences, it is critical
that attention be paid to the influence of certain stimuli that researchers provide to their subjects in attempting to measure these ideals. Thus the measurement device itself may significantly influence the way in which subjects conceptualize and report their love cognitions.

Before providing some empirical support for these two issues, there are several important concepts which need to be clarified. The first concept concerns the definition of love. Much of the research examining the phenomenon of love has concentrated on what has typically been referred to as "romantic love". Because of the complexity of this concept, two perspectives, the psychodynamic and the social-psychological, have been selected to highlight its key components. While these models provide a useful framework for delineating the generally accepted components of romantic love, there are certain definitional difficulties associated with this concept. These problems will be explored in this section.

The second concept which requires clarification is that of the romantic ideal. Like romantic love, the related concept of the romantic ideal is also subject to definitional difficulties. In discussing these the significance of this ideal in present day love experiences will be considered. Several of the key arguments supporting the notion of the personal ideal will also be developed.
Finally, the notion of the romantic ideal as a cultural paradigm (Averill and Boothroyd, 1977; Averill, 1985) will be explored. As will be argued, people may well be aware of this cultural romantic ideal and can, if requested, rate their experiences relative to this ideal. Yet to consider people's interpretation of love relative to cultural norms is to disregard the relational quality between people and their world. In an attempt to illuminate the importance of this perspective, it will be argued at this point that it is more meaningful to consider that people interpret their love experiences within the evolving framework of their personal ideal.

Definitions of Love.

In this section problems concerning the definition of love will be highlighted, followed by a brief description of two major forms of love, romantic and companionate. The concept of romantic love will then be examined in more detail through a comparison of two theoretical models, the psychoanalytic and the social-psychological. Definitional problems associated with this concept relative to modern day relationships will then be discussed.

People do not easily agree on the definition of "True Love". One of the reasons is because it is a value-laden concept. As noted by Goode (1959):

Verbal definitions of this emotional relationship are notoriously open to attack...Agreement is
made difficult by value judgements; one critic would exclude anything but "true" love, another casts out "infatuation", another objects to "puppy love", while others would separate sex and desire from love because sex presumably is degrading. (p.40)

However, one consistent theme which does emerge is that there are immature and "false" forms of love, on the one hand, and mature and "real" forms of love, on the other. Abraham Maslow (1962), for example, speaks of D-love (Attachment) and B-love (Caring). Within this framework Maslow sees "attachments" as fulfilling needs for acceptance and approval and refers to these as "deficiency needs". This he considers to be an immature aspect of love and one that continues to operate as long as the needs are unsatisfied. Once satisfied however, this form of love is replaced by B-love ("B" for being) which is described as less dependent, less needful, more autonomous and more giving. Similarly, Kernberg (1977) distinguishes between stable, mature love, which is the result of positive maturational processes, and transitory adolescent love, which stems more from primitive idealization.

This mature versus immature dimension is reflected in the separation of love into two categories. The first, with its high intensity and emotionality has been called "romantic love", (Driscoll, Davis & Lipetz, 1972; Rubin 1970, 1973), or "passionate love" (Hatfield & Walster, 1981; Safilios-Rothschild, 1977). Romantic love is characterized by intense absorption in another (Walster and Walster, 1978), a strong desire to confide
in and be confided in by one's lover, high physiological arousal, and large amounts of mutual gazing that are not present in nonromantic relationships (Livingston, 1980). A good description of the physical symptoms associated with the experience of romantic love has been provided by Pope (1980). These symptoms include reactions such as "erectios for the male and wetness for the female, a lump in the throat, sweaty palms, weak knees, cold feet, a pounding heart, butterflies in the stomach, and dizziness" (pg.4). He suggests that romantic love can begin as a "crush" or "puppy love" in young children and that there seems to be no point at which one is too old to fall in love. More specifically, he describes romantic love in these terms:

A preoccupation with another person. A deeply felt desire to be with the loved one. A feeling of incompleteness without him or her. Thinking of the loved one often, whether together or apart. Separation frequently provokes feelings of genuine despair or else tantalizing anticipation of reuniting. Reunion is seen as bringing feelings of euphoric ecstasy or peace and fulfillment. (p.4)

The second, more mature form of love has been called "conjugal love" (Driscoll et. al., 1972), "affectionate love" (Safilios-Rothschild, 1977), and "companionate love" (Hatfield and Walster, 1981). Generally it is seen as a less emotional experience than romantic love and includes feelings of friendship, understanding, deep attachment, and a concern for the welfare of the other. Hatfield and Walster (1981) describe
companionate love as "the affection we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply entwined" (p.9).

Most of the research in the area of love has been primarily oriented towards defining and delineating romantic love, a concept explored further in the next section.

**Romantic Love**

This section provides a closer examination of the concept of romantic love by presenting this concept within the parameters of two theoretical models. The first model reflects a psychoanalytic orientation, with resulting emphasis placed on the "self" and the resolution of various psychodynamic conflicts. The second model, developed by Rubin (1970; 1973) reflects a social psychological orientation and emphasizes the importance of one's "attitudes", and the ways in which one thinks, feels and acts towards love.

The psychoanalytic model. Within this framework several factors have been isolated which serve as the foundation for the concept of romantic love. The first of these factors is the preoccupation which one individual has for another. This factor has been noted by Cikszentmihalyi (1980) in his definition of romantic love which is said to occur "when a person cannot control his or her attention being invested in another person, yet enjoys the experience" (p.314).

Not only is a lover preoccupied with the object of his or her attention, there also appears to be a large degree of uncontrollability over one's behavior and emotionality. This
manifestation of a highly charged and essentially uncontrollable affective experience is a second major aspect considered to be representative of romantic love. Sometimes characterized as an intense longing or passion for the other person, it is often heightened when the lovers are separated. This "feeling of incompleteness" may lead to fits of jealousy and intense loneliness and desperation. Because of the intensity of these feelings, the slightest taste of indifference or negligence from the loved one can induce strong feelings of anger and unhappiness. Theoretical discussions of this aspect have seen it as revealing an internal need state that is frustrated in its effort to gain satisfaction. For example, Friedlander & Morrison (1980) describe it as follows:

The implicated need states tend to be variations on the theme of narcissistic injury or threat to self-esteem and include the wish to rediscover the total love of infancy, to master the trauma of losing the original love object, to achieve perfection, to relieve anxiety, or to make sense of otherwise confusing and affective arousal. (p.29)

Thus, the existence of both a need state and its frustration seem central to the notion of romantic love according to these theorists and define a third major aspect of this experience.

A fourth factor of romantic love seen from the psychoanalytic perspective is that of idealization, wherein the love object is invested with qualities and characteristics that make him or her highly desirable to the individual. Friedlander
and Morrison (1980) see this as arising from a recognition of one's own imperfection and incompleteness, a perspective similar to that described as an "awareness of separateness" by Fromm (1954). From this position, the search for love is the attempt to overcome our experiences or awareness of loneliness and isolation. Any successful "possession" of the loved object would thereby result in a restoration of one's sense of completeness, wholeness, and perfection. This notion of idealization has also been seen as an important source of potential conflict in love relationships since the loved one inevitably fails to live up to these demands (Kemper & Bologh, 1980).

Fantasy is the fifth aspect of romantic love. In this context, fantasy refers to the belief that possession of the love object will actually lead to satisfaction of the numerous frustrated need states and ultimately provide a blissful and conflict-free state of existence. To the extent that this belief is mistaken it is not difficult to understand why eventual possession of the loved one might soon give rise to feelings of bitterness and resentment.

The social-psychological model, Zick Rubin (1970, 1973), a social psychologist and an important contributor to research in the area of love, defines romantic love as "an attitude held by a person toward a particular other person involving predispositions to think, feel, and behave in certain ways toward that other person" (p.265). Generally, Rubin's (1973) definition...
incorporates three components of love. The first is attachment which he describes as:

...powerful desires to be in the other's presence, to make physical contact, to be approved of, to be cared for. In its most extreme the love need appears as a passionate desire to possess and be fulfilled by another person. (p.213)

A second component for Rubin is caring, which he suggests can best be described as the desire to give to another. In presenting this conception of love Rubin cites the following description provided by Harry Stack Sullivan (1953): "When the satisfaction or the security of another person becomes as significant to one as one's own satisfaction or security, the state of love exists" (Rubin 1973, p.213).

Rubin points out that both needing and caring are essentially "individual conceptions...referring to inclinations within one person's mind or heart" (p.214). His third component, intimacy, refers instead to the link or bond between two people, a component which he says may be manifest most clearly by "close and confidential communication between two people, through non-verbal as well as verbal channels" (p.214).

Definitional problems of romantic love. Both of these models suggest that romantic love is a multi-dimensional concept. This is true in terms of the various components with which it has been identified (physiological, cognitive, and emotional) and in
terms of the various theoretical perspectives of the writers and theorists who have attempted to describe it.

Not surprisingly, the variety of attempts to delineate the complexities of romantic love have met with much criticism. As discussed by Geller and Howenstine (1980), social scientists have been vulnerable to collapsing the distinction between social facts and fiction of romantic love. For example, Ellis (1972), in outlining the "facts of love", evaluates the romantic lover as unrealistic, tending to overevaluate the beloved, verbal, esthetic, monogamous, perfectionistic, passionately intense, and often antiseXual (p.72). According to Geller and Howenstine (1980) however, this type of description owes more to the love literature of the Middle Ages than to empirically replicable observations in our present society. A similar point suggesting the "fictional" quality of descriptions of romantic love has been made by Csikszentmihalyi (1980) who says, "Lacking a clear concept of what the object of discussion is, the writers' conclusions often produces sensations akin to what Alice must have felt in Wonderland" (p.312).

Moreover, as Geller and Howenstine (1980) state, "because the concept synthesizes into one commanding image, complex and paradoxical themes, a wide variety of different and sometimes antithetical properties have been attributed to romantic love" (p.62). This type of definitional confusion is reflected in the surprisingly polarized attitudes concerning the significance of
romantic love within relationships. For example, some writers have expressed a great deal of pessimism regarding the possibility of integrating romantic love into an enduring relationship. As expressed by Linton (1936):

All societies recognize that there are occasional violent emotional attachments between persons of the opposite sex, but our present American culture is practically the only one which has attempted to capitalize on these and make them the basis for marriage (p.175).

One of the most vocal spokesmen of this position has been de Rougement (1963) who said, "Romance is...incapable of establishing a durable marriage, and it is not an act of courage but one of absurdity to marry someone forever because of a fever that endures for two months" (p.80).

Nevertheless, while some writers may question the value of romantic love within our modern day society, being romantically in love with one's partner prior to marriage is a commonly accepted tradition and is virtually expected of the couple. Indeed, some writers have taken exception to the contention that romantic love is an unsatisfactory prerequisite to marriage in our culture. Goode (1959) argued that:

...there is widespread comment among marriage analysts, that in a rootless society, with few common bases for companionship, romantic love holds a couple together long enough to allow them to begin marriage. That is, it functions to attract people powerfully together, and to hold them through the difficult first months of the marriage, when their different backgrounds would otherwise make an adjustment troublesome. (p.39)
It may be then, that the inconclusiveness concerning the value of romantic love in present day relationships reflects the controversy concerning the "reality" basis for the definitions of romantic love. As will be discussed in the following section, this controversy may also underlie the inconclusiveness regarding the role of the romantic ideal as a paradigm for people's expectations and interpretations of their love relationships.

The Romantic Ideal.

The following discussion provides a brief introduction to the origins of the romantic ideal and presents some current perspectives on its role within romantic love. Particular difficulties in the study of this phenomenon are revealed in the discussion of relevant research. Finally, the concept of the personal ideal will be compared to that of the cultural romantic ideal as defined by Averill and Boothroyd (1977).

Origins of the romantic ideal The current conception of the romantic ideal has been identified as evolving from the games of "courtly love" played by members of the European nobility in the twelfth century (Rubin, 1973). Its distinguishing features include "beliefs that love is fated and uncontrollable, that it strikes at first sight, transcends all social boundaries, and manifests itself in turbulent mixtures of ecstasy and agony" (Rubin 1973; p.185).

Importantly, while this "romantic ideal" may in previous centuries have played a significant role in love relationships,
most of these relationships were extramarital. According to Safilios-Rothschild (1977):

For many centuries in many societies love and marriage have been almost entirely separate and sometimes diametrically opposed. Until recently and in most cultures, love has been considered entirely separate from marriage and from sex. "Real love" could only be platonic and never consummated and sexuality was not thought of as exclusively confined to marriage. (p.16)

The conclusion reached by the "love courts" (held by the wives of knights in the twelfth century) was that real love could not exist in a legitimate marital relationship because the married man and woman were legally constrained to belong to each other. The romantic ideal, they declared, could not exist except when the man and the woman could freely and voluntarily commit themselves to each other (Stora-Sandor, 1973).

According to Rubin (1973), it has not been until fairly recently that the fusion of love and marriage has occurred within our own culture:

Although the incorporation of the romantic ideal into marriage was first advocated in eighteenth-century Europe, it seems to have thrived particularly in America. The breakdown of an inherited aristocracy made the strict parental control of mate selection somewhat less necessary than it had been in Europe, and the pioneering spirit that stressed individuality was extended to mate selection as well... With the rise of industrialization the purely economic importance of marriage became further reduced. A man's farming skills and a woman's domestic aptitude became less essential criteria for the selection of a spouse and the possibility that love might take its course became even greater... All that
remained to complete the transformation, therefore, was to export some of the trappings of the romantic ideal - the heart throbs ... the torment ... the all consuming passion ... the overcoming of obstacles - and to make them a part of the popular mythology of courtship. (p.190)

The use of the word "mythology" in this reference to the romantic ideal deserves some attention. The Art of Courtly Love, written by Andreas Capellanus in the thirteenth century, stands as the first effort to record a "system of courtly love". According to Geller and Howenstine (1980), social scientists have tended to read Capellanus' book as an accurate description of a way of life found in the so-called "Courts of Love". Yet there are some specialists who doubt whether courtly love as an institution ever existed. For example, Donaldson (1965) argues that this book should be read as a "spoof" and that the "rules" of courtly love were instructions for a court game. Additionally, careful reading of this book indicates that Capellanus fundamentally believed romantic love to go against religion and holy law. In the words of Capellanus, "No man through any good deeds can please God so long as he serves in the service of love" (p.315). As Pope (1980) points out, this is an anti-love book written to disparage and ridicule, not to present and understand the concept. To cite this as an authoritative work on the origins of the romantic ideal is "like citing Marx as a source of capitalist idealology" (p.14).

In its very origins then, the concept of the romantic ideal "challenges our notion of reality by threatening the distinction
between fact and fiction" (Geller and Howenstine, 1980, p.64). Thus the very foundation for the romantic ideal appears to rest not on fact, but on fiction. Yet this possibility in no way denies the existence of this ideal. In spite of the questionable basis for its origins, its ideological presence in art and literature can not be denied. As Geller and Howenstine note, throughout history there have been "fictional accounts" of romantic love which have been accepted by their audiences. Nursery school fairy tales for example (i.e., Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty) serve as prime examples of this romantic ideal, as do movies such as "Ryan's Daughter" and "Love Story".

Yet the question of what these themes represent is unresolved. As Pope (1980) asks, "Do these "fictions" present common experiences of the times and culture, new patterns that people may come to embrace (life tending to reflect art), fantasies enjoyed by the audience but never reflected in their lives, or simply the idiosyncratic vision of the individual artist?" (p.24). What can be legitimately questioned therefore, is the extent to which the romantic ideal plays a significant role in current day love relationships. As will be seen in the following section however, this is not an easy question to answer.

Relevant research. The following study by Kemper & Bologh (1980) is an attempt to measure the romantic values of university students. While romantic values may not be identical to the romantic ideal, they are certainly related concepts. More
importantly, this study clearly highlights a major problem associated with research in this area.

For these researchers romantic values were defined as:

...traits, behaviors, and identities that comprise a person's image of the ideal love object. They are qualities one feels the other must have before one can become romantically interested in him or her. (p.33)

They began by asking approximately 50 undergraduate students to describe those qualities, traits and characteristics of a member of the opposite sex that "turned them on". After gathering 40 unduplicated items, 18 more were added as suggested by previous research conducted by Hudson & Henze (1969). Having gathered these "values and ideals", 101 male and 126 female sociology undergraduate students were asked to provide their own assessment of the importance of each of these values in terms of their own ideal mate, "someone they could love". In order to understand underlying patterns of romantic values, the researchers then factor analyzed the responses for males and females, obtaining 19 factors in each analysis.

For males the three most important factors for selection of an ideal female partner, in order of the highest loading items were; a) smart, brainy (22.8%), b) have attractive figure, physique (10.4%) and c) would make a good parent (8.4%). For females the three most important criteria were: a) ambitious, hardworking (26.5%), b) intellectual, a thinker (9.5%) and c) have attractive figure, physique (8.5%).
In comparing the results of their research to a similar study which examined "campus values in mate selection" conducted by Hudson & Henze (1969), Kemper and Bologh discovered some unexpected differences. They say:

We assume that some of the differences in the two sets of findings are the result of historical changes in cultural emphasis - for example, autonomy needs are more important today ... (p. 40)

If, as these authors suggest, the differences in results obtained between their study and that of Hudson & Henze (1969) are indeed attributable to "historical changes in cultural emphasis", then this would suggest a dynamic relationship between the romantic ideal and the culture in which it exists. As culture changes, so does the romantic ideal.

This relational quality between the romantic ideal and culture raises an important question concerning the significance of the romantic ideal within present day society. Indeed Kilpatrick (1974), has suggested that the romantic ideal, due to various transformations in the youth culture, is incompatible with our present society and essentially obsolete. He argues that adolescents have "de-mythologized" the romantic ideal and stripped it of its foundations. According to Kilpatrick, in order for romantic love to survive, the behavior associated with it requires the following conditions; a) a future oriented society, one which is willing to defer satisfactions almost indefinitely, b) a sharp polarity among the sexes, c) an assumption of scarcity...
and d) an individualistic rather than a communal outlook. Kilpatrick argues however, that people are no longer willing to live for the future and prefer instead to live in the present. Additionally, the trend towards convergence of sexual roles, the fact that the adolescent can obtain everything (sexual relations) and everyone (including individuals of all ages, religions, classes, and ethnic groups), and the increasing emphasis on communal rather than dyadic relationships, have all served to diminish the intensity, mystery and excitement of romantic love.

However, Kilpatrick has been taken to task by some writers (Kazak and Repucci, 1980) because his orientation assumes a linear approach to changes in our society. Accordingly, while his arguments may have been descriptive of American life in the 1960's, these arguments are now open to debate since they have failed to anticipate recent trends in today's society. For example, it is not clear that people of today still feel as though there is no shortage of resources, or that we are currently less community minded in our social orientation. Basically these writers argue that "a broader and more cyclical view of romantic love may have decreased during times in which Kilpatrick's (1974) assumptions were met but that it might increase again in prevalence during periods in which societal mores were different" (p. 221).

Yet while Kazak and Repucci (1980) may well be accurate in their refusal to accept a linear approach to societal changes,
there is a deeper issue here which has been raised by Gergen (1973, 1982), and strikes at the very heart of the traditional view of science. In brief, one of the core assumptions of science is that phenomena in nature are enduring. As Gergen (1982) notes, "Although seldom questioned it would appear that the strength of the traditional view of science is fundamentally dependent on the stability of the relationship among events in nature" (p.11). Similarly, with regards to human behavior, such phenomena are also assumed to be subject to transtemporal stability. Yet as discussed by Gergen, "If we scan the most prominent lines of research during the past decade, we soon realize that the observed regularities, and thus the major theoretical principles, are firmly wedded to historical circumstances" (p.315). According to Gergen then, this assumption of transtemporal stability within social psychology is invalid. As a result principles of human behavior cannot be developed over time because the facts on which they are based do not remain stable.

As discussed in the research by Kemper & Bologh (1980), this assumption may be particularly invalid with respect to the concept of romantic values and raises the question of the extent to which the meaning of concepts such as romantic love or the romantic ideal can be meaningfully analyzed when these concepts appear to change over time. In this context it should be noted that if the romantic ideal changes as culture changes, it would seem reasonable to assume that variations in the romantic ideal
would also be associated with variations within any given culture. For example, to what extent would the concept of the romantic ideal within our present culture vary across members of different socio-economic status, or between the sexes, or between the young and old? It would appear that this possibility is reflected in the findings of Kemper & Bologh (1980) who discovered that romantic values appear to be related to sex, age, social class, religion, mother's marital happiness, father's education, personality, individual need factors, and even ordinality of siblings. Yet even considering these factors the amount of explained variance in romantic values did not exceed 16 percent. Moreover, two-thirds of the romantic values did not attain significant R squares. As commented upon by these researchers, "These two facts, taken together, suggest that much of the variance in romantic values may stem from personality and individual need factors, although some variance may also be due to interactions between some of the socio-demographic and family factors" (p. 41). As Kemper and Bologh (1980) finally conclude, "There seems to be a general inability to explain much variance in romantic values" (p. 41).

To the degree that these cultural and individual factors are related to romantic values in some unknown and undoubtedly changing manner, the notion of the romantic ideal itself becomes primarily a generalized concept with no specific applicability to any particular individual. From this perspective the singular
concept of the romantic ideal becomes questionable and suggests that some other concept may need to be introduced if researchers are interested in examining the relationship between how one thinks about love and what one experiences.

In spite of the wide variation in the romantic values of the subjects in the Kemper and Bologh (1980) study when taken as a whole, it is obvious that individuals were capable of responding to the questions posed with regards to their own personal values. While it may not be possible to account for these values on aggregate, it seems reasonable to suggest that these values, through whatever process they are constructed, serve a valuable function for each individual. As suggested in this paper, the personal ideal serves as the interpretive lens through which individuals make sense of their experiences. Thus individuals, depending on the complex interaction of numerous factors such as culture, family, personal characteristics, and life experiences, construct their own personal ideals. While it is legitimate to discuss the the romantic ideal from a cultural perspective, the question remains as to the significance or meaning of this ideal once it has been filtered through the interpretive lens of the personal ideal, a question which will be explored in the following section.

The romantic ideal as a cultural norm. While several arguments have been advanced to question the theoretical utility of the romantic ideal, there is one study of particular interest
which will now be presented because of its novel approach to this issue. This study suggests that the romantic ideal represents a cultural norm on the basis of which people interpret their love experiences. The position of the present paper however, has argued that while it may be possible to conceive of the romantic ideal as a cultural norm, this concept becomes less meaningful once the interpretive frameworks of individuals are taken into consideration. Thus the question which will be directly addressed at this point is; "to what extent do individuals actually utilize the romantic ideal in order to interpret their love experiences"?

The following section is a critical examination of this particular research and serves as a vehicle for addressing this issue.

According to Averill (1985), love can be understood as a complex syndrome consisting of many component processes. He argues that none of these components (e.g. idealization of the loved one, suddenness of onset, physiological arousal, etc.) are necessary or sufficient in and of themselves for the emotional syndrome of love to occur. Rather, it is the way in which one organizes these components into a coherent whole which is most important. This organization is determined to a large extent by "paradigms" or "exemplars" of emotion, of which the romantic ideal is an example. As Averill states:

... the component processes of an emotional syndrome are given coherence and meaning by
culturally provided exemplars. These exemplars embody the norms and rules according to which emotions are constructed... Paradigms of emotion, such as the romantic ideal, provide the individual with a model and a rationale for behavior, and by conforming to the paradigm, the individual serves to confirm the broader cultural network, of which the paradigm is an aspect. (p.107 and 93)

Averill's argument then, is that the experience of romantic love is an interpretation or "reconstruction" of one's behavior in conformance with the appropriate cultural norms, in this case the romantic ideal.

In order to understand how Averill arrived at this interpretation of the romantic ideal, it is useful to examine the actual experiment which he uses to support his arguments. The study in question was conducted by Averill & Boothroyd (1977). The 85 subjects who participated in this research ranged in age from 18 to 54 years and included individuals who were single, married and divorced.

In the initial phase subjects were requested to complete the "Attitudes Towards Love" scale developed by Knox and Sporakowski (1968). This scale is comprised of 29 items, each of which presents a description of a love relationship. Subjects were then asked to decide how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each of these items. Following this, subjects were requested to indicate how many times they had been in love and the intensity of those experiences. They were then given an account of a couple who fell in love at first sight and were married five days later.
This story, according to these researchers, highlighted three main components often associated with romantic love: a) suddenness of onset (love at first sight), b) a commitment to future involvement (such as marriage) and c) turbulent emotional reactions (high intensity). The subjects were then asked to rate on a 10-point scale how closely their most intense experience of romantic love resembled this romantic ideal.

One would anticipate that if Averill was correct in viewing this romantic ideal as a cultural paradigm, many of the subjects' most intense love experiences would conform closely to this ideal. The results indicated that 40 percent of the subjects indeed rated their experience as closely conforming to this romantic ideal (see Figure 1). When these researchers examined the descriptions provided by these subjects however, they discovered that only five to ten percent of those subjects whose ratings suggested they had experienced this romantic ideal had actually done so. This finding was noted by Averill and Boothroyd who stated that "regardless of how many subjects literally fell in love in accordance with this ideal, it is still worthy of note that 40% of them interpreted their most intense experience as so conforming" (p.244). As an additional qualification to this issue, Averill and Boothroyd provided the following explanation:

... the romantic ideal is not so much a description of actual behavior as it is a standard by which people interpret their experience of love. But an ideal type may do
Fig. 1. The number of subjects who indicated that their most intense experience of love either bore no resemblance, or conformed closely, to the romantic ideal. (Reprinted from Averill & Boothroyd, 1977)
more than simply aid in the interpretation of behavior: it can also shape or determine the behavior it reportedly explains... Thus, people may try to emulate the ideal and, even when they fail, may still interpret their behavior as being more in conformance than it actually is (p.245).

Yet while 40 percent interpreted their most intense experience of love as being in high conformance to this romantic ideal, 40 percent of the subjects reported that their most intense love experience was not in conformance with this romantic ideal. This polarization of subjects' rated degree of conformity to this romantic ideal is a curious finding given the extent to which it purportedly serves as a cultural norm. The following explanation for this result was provided by Averill (1985);

If a person's experience matches the paradigm on one or more aspects, there is a tendency to assimilate the remainder of the experience into the paradigm. This is particularly likely if one's attitude towards the paradigm is favorable ...

Similar considerations apply to those subjects who said their experiences did not conform to the paradigm of romantic love. These individuals tended to have an unfavorable attitude towards the romantic ideal, and if their experiences differed from the ideal in one or more respects, they tended to say that it did not conform at all. (p.93)

On the basis of these explanations, it appears as though a) the actual experiences of the majority of subjects did not conform to this romantic ideal, and b) that it was their interpretation of that experience, not the experience itself, which was compared to this romantic ideal. Yet note that Averill and Boothroyd (1977) have now given subjects' "attitudes" towards
romantic love a major role in the explanation of why some subjects considered their most intense love experience to be in conformance to this romantic ideal while others did not. The correlation between this attitude score and subjects' conformity ratings on this romantic ideal was reported as statistically significant ($r=-.31$, $p<.01$). Given the large degree of importance which these researchers attach to one's "attitudes" towards this romantic ideal however, it is noteworthy that the $R^2$ square for this correlation indicates that just slightly more than nine percent of the variance in the conformity scores can be accounted for by this variable. While this finding may be statistically significant, the amount of unexplained variance is so large that one is left wondering if there is not a more parsimonious explanation for these results.

Averill and Boothroyd (1977) view their romantic ideal as a cultural norm, as a standard by which people interpret their love experiences. In defining this romantic ideal as a norm which exists "out there" however, this view completely bypasses the possibility that each individual could be simultaneously aware of this norm and yet have their personally constructed version of a "romantic ideal"; their personal ideal. Yet, as has been argued previously, due to the continually developing quality of this personal construction arising within the relationship between persons and their world, this personal ideal may or may not bear any resemblance to the romantic ideal as constructed by these
researchers. To suggest that individuals interpret their behavior in conformance to the romantic ideal is to assume that there is indeed such a thing. The position taken in this paper however, questions the legitimacy of this concept once it is considered from the perspective of an individual's interpretive framework. Moreover, it is one thing to consider behavior in terms of the degree of conformance to a cultural norm. It is quite another thing to then view that norm itself as an interpretive device which individuals utilize in the interpretation of their own behavior.

The thesis of the present paper then, is that if one wishes to conceptualize the process by which individuals cognitively interpret their experiences of love, some consideration must also be given to the interpretive process of individuals. This is not to completely ignore the cultural level of analysis as a tool for understanding how people make sense of their love experiences. Rather, it is an attempt to shift the primary level of analysis to that of personal norms, through the consideration of personal ideals, rather than that of cultural norms. According to the results of Averill and Boothroyd (1977), people interpret their behavior in conformance with a cultural norm. According to the position of this paper however, this position is too limited and is subject to an entirely different interpretation. The basis for this position is provided in the following section.
Personal ideals versus the romantic ideal

It must always be kept in mind that it is the person who is experiencing and interpreting. Moreover, how and what people actually experience appears to be dependent on various factors. Consider the following comment by Spaulding (1970):

The whole development of the sociology of knowledge suggests that a person, a group, or a category of persons will tend to choose from among the techniques or ideas available those which are perceived to cater to its basic needs... And so it seems likely that persons in different roles might well tend to show differences in romantic tendency. It seems probable that differences in such things as socioeconomic status, age, race, phase of mating process, and sex might be associated with differences in acceptance of the romantic complex. [romantic ideal] (p.88)

By accepting the notion of personal ideals, a qualitative shift in the interpretation of the results of the Averill and Boothroyd experiment becomes possible. From this position those subjects who rated their most intense experience of love as being in high conformance with that romantic ideal may well have had a personal ideal which was similar to the researchers' constructed version of the romantic ideal. This should not be surprising when one considers that psychological constructions of norms are often assembled by an amalgamation of various individuals' personal conceptions. On the other hand, those subjects who rejected this romantic ideal simply rejected that particular version. It was not so much that their most intense experience of love was not in conformance with "the" romantic ideal, but rather that their
personal ideal was not in conformance with the particular ideal constructed by Averill and Boothroyd. Subjects may still have considered their most intense experience of love as being romantic, but it was not romantic relative to the standard presented to them in the form of that romantic ideal.

As a cultural paradigm the romantic ideal is easily recognized by most subjects. Its continual presentation in songs, movies, magazines, stories, etc., makes it an easily recognizable theme. Even though subjects can rate their most intense "love experience" relative to the ideal presented by Averill and Boothroyd (1977) however, the question remains as to what extent this demonstrates that people actually interpret their love experiences on the basis of this paradigm.

The saliency and modifiability of love ideals. In order to examine this question two critical dimensions will be examined which parallel the two major purposes of this paper. The first avenue is to compare the salience of the personal ideal relative to the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd (1977) in an attempt to determine which is more meaningful relative to subjects' interpretation of their love experiences. The second avenue, which is a methodological consideration, is to explore the modifiability of subjects' interpretations of their love experiences. In this regard, variations in subjects' responses to questions concerning their love experiences will be examined in
terms of the possible influence of those same questions on subjects' cognitive sets.

With regards to the latter point, subjects in the Averill and Boothroyd experiment are not only being asked to recall their most intense love experience (an interpretive process in and of itself) but they are also specifically requested to "reconstruct" that experience according to certain parameters established by the presentation of the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd (1977). To the extent that the romantic ideal can be considered as a cognitive representation, the influence of questions concerning that ideal can be seen as stimuli which may influence that cognition in some manner. This possibility has been completely ignored. As noted by Markus and Zajonc (1985) with regards to schemas:

In a determination of the effect of a particular schema on processing, it is important, then, to consider the content of the stimulus material, the way it is likely to be represented, and what schemas it is likely to activate... (p.167)

Is it meaningful then to act "as if" the results which were obtained in the experiment by Averill and Boothroyd (1977) were independent of the means by which they were gathered? In consideration of the quote by Marcus and Zajonc, it may not be. While Averill (1985) notices the possibility of reconstruction relative to his cultural concept of the romantic ideal, the possibility of reconstruction relative to the parameters of the experiment itself is not noted.
In summary, two major issues are being investigated here. First, it has been argued that the failure to appreciate the relational quality of love has been reflected in the conceptual framework of those researchers who have posited the concept of the romantic ideal as a cultural norm. In so doing they have assumed that it is this cultural ideal which serves as the standard and which people utilize in interpreting their love experiences. Conversely, the position take in this paper is that while people may be aware of the concept of the romantic ideal, it is the personal ideal which is more salient and meaningful in the interpretation of their love experiences.

Second, it has been argued that Averill & Boothroyd (1977) may have significantly influenced the cognitive framework of the subjects and failed to appreciate their impact on the results. This could have occurred in the presentation of the story used to demonstrate the romantic ideal, and it could have also occurred simply by requesting the subjects to first think about and then rate their most intense experiences of love relative to the constructed version of the romantic ideal. In so doing, the results of their study which measured the extent to which subjects interpret their experiences of love relative to the romantic ideal may be confounded with the manner in which the results were measured. To the extent that this can be demonstrated then the results of their experiment would become suspect.
Hypotheses and Rationale.

The following section was designed to provide a means of examining these issues. The intentions, in keeping with the salience and modifiability questions raised above are as follows.

Regarding the former issue, the purpose is to demonstrate 1) that the personal ideal is significantly more salient in people's interpretation of their love experiences than is the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd (1977), and 2) that subjects' interpretation of their most intense experience as being "True Love" is significantly related to their personal ideal, not to this romantic ideal.

With regard to the latter issue, the purpose is to demonstrate that the manner in which the questions, constructed to measure the cognitive representations of subjects' ideals, are introduced to those subjects significantly modifies their responses to those questions. The following rationale provide the basis for the formal hypotheses which will be used to examine these two issues.

1) Salience
   (Hypothesis 1)

While subjects may well be cognizant of the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd (1977), it has been argued that it is their personal ideal which is most salient in the interpretations of their love experiences. The fact that people are cognizant of this romantic ideal does suggest however that this representation
bears some relationship to the personal ideal. In other words, for different people the romantic ideal as a cultural norm, in the manner portrayed by Averill and Boothroyd (1977), may, at any given point in time, represent a greater or lesser part of their personal ideal. Yet while this romantic ideal as a cultural norm may play a significant role in the personal construction of one's love ideal, the role of other influences such as personal factors suggests that this romantic ideal is not likely to be the same as the personal ideal. In keeping with this position, it is proposed that people tend to use the personal ideal as the primary interpretive lens through which they make sense of their love experiences. This leads to the following hypotheses:

**HYPOTHESIS 1.** Subjects' ratings of the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to their personal ideal will be significantly higher than their conformity ratings to the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd (1977).

(Hypothesis 2). If one were to accept the assumption made by Averill (1985), "Paradigms of emotion, such as the romantic ideal, provide the individual with with a model and rationale for behavior..." (p.93), then to the extent that one's most intense love experience departs from this ideal, there should be significant differences in the degree to which one interprets that experience as "True Love". As a result, it would be expected that people who consider their most intense experience of love to be in high conformance to the romantic ideal of Averill and
Boothroyd (1977) should highly rate that experience as being "True Love". Conversely, those people who do not consider their most intense experience as being in high conformance to this romantic ideal should be less likely to consider that experience as being "True Love". However, if individuals are primarily interpreting their experience of love on the basis of the degree of conformity to their personal ideal, then there should be a fairly low relationship between subjects' ratings on the "True Love" scale and their ratings on the romantic ideal scale. Thus, the personal ideal rating should serve as a more accurate indicator of subjects' True Love ratings than the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd (1977). This supposition will be supported if the correlation between True Love ratings and personal ideal ratings are significantly higher than the correlation between True Love ratings and the romantic ideal conformity ratings.

**HYPOTHESIS 2.** The degree of conformance to the personal ideal will be a significantly better indicator of subject's True Love ratings than will the degree of conformance to the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd (1977).

2) **Modifiability of the Love Ideal**

(Hypotheses 3). It has been argued that people's interpretation of a love experience relies on their cognitive representation of that experience. In keeping with the basic notion behind the personal construction of love however, the
interpretative framework utilized in this process is not static. Rather, it is subject to constant modification in a dynamic interplay between the individual and his or her world.

According to the argument being presented, it should be possible to experimentally manipulate subjects' cognitions concerning their love experiences. Considering this possibility within the experiment by Averill and Boothroyd (1977), it may be that the "stimulus" of their romantic ideal — the presentation of the short narrative descriptions and the request for subjects to rate the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to that romantic ideal — influenced their reports of that experience. More specifically, it is possible that the context provided by these stimuli may be used by subjects to actively reconstruct their love experiences. Thus the context of the experiment may importantly provide a framework for their interpretation. Moreover, it is possible that once subjects interpret their experience within this framework, any further answers concerning that experience would essentially incorporate that experimentally re-constructed interpretation. If this can be experimentally demonstrated it would not only raise questions concerning the findings of Averill and Boothroyd (1977), it would also lend some support to the notion of a dynamic relational quality between people's cognitive representation of love and their experiences.
Thus, it would be predicted that subject's interpretation of their most intense love experience could be significantly influenced by varying the order of stimulus presentations to the subjects thereby altering their cognitive sets. It would be expected then, that subjects provided with the story of the romantic ideal at the outset of the experiment would tend to utilize that cognitive framework to reconstruct their love experiences, and that this reconstruction would subsequently influence their ratings on other tasks (i.e., the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to their personal ideal). Conversely, those subjects who are first requested to focus on their personal ideal will utilize a different cognitive framework to reconstruct their love experiences and should respond to subsequent tasks in a significantly different manner from the first group (i.e., the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd, 1977). For the same reasons, varying the order of presentation of other stimulus conditions, such as subjects' ratings of their most intense experience of love as "True Love", and presenting descriptions of various styles of loving, should also influence their cognitive sets, and thus alter their subsequent interpretations.

**HYPOTHESIS 3.** There will be significant differences in the degree to which subjects interpret their most intense love experience as being in conformance with their personal ideal, the
Averill and Boothroyd (1977) romantic ideal, "True Love", and the extent to which they rate their personal ideal as conforming to the romantic ideal, as a result of manipulating the order of presentation of various conceptual frameworks.

**Exploratory Analyses: Rationale.** One of the secondary goals of this research is to replicate the original experiment by Averill and Boothroyd (1977). To the extent that this can be successfully accomplished, any differences which are found in the additional experimental conditions of the present research can then be used to question the validity of their results relative to the extent to which people utilize the romantic ideal.

Second, the relationship among the various interpretations provided by subjects (True Love ratings, Intensity ratings, "Attitudes Towards Romantic Love", etc.) and variables such as age, number of times in love, time since the most intense experience of love, need to be clarified. To this end a factor analysis of all the relevant variables will be used in order to help facilitate this process. It is also possible that this analysis will shed further light on the relationship between subjects' interpretations of the personal ideal and the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd (1977).
Subjects

Two hundred subjects were recruited from introductory and second year psychology courses at the University of Windsor and offered course credit for their participation. Subjects were informed that the study was concerned with an investigation of love and intimate relationships and were assured that no embarrassing questions would be asked. The demographic characteristics of the subjects are presented in the results section.

General Design

As can be seen in Figure 2, there were seven basic steps in this experiment. After completing a short personal data form, subjects completed the Knox and Sporakowski (1968) "Attitudes Towards Love" scale. Subjects were then asked a series of questions concerning various aspects of their love experiences. Following this subjects were requested to provide conformity ratings to various scales and to read and rank order a series of descriptions of styles of loving. The scales, which were designed to provide measures of subjects' interpretation concerning their love experiences, and the various descriptions of love, served another important function as well. Since it had been
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP (4)</th>
<th>GROUP 1</th>
<th>GROUP 2</th>
<th>GROUP 3</th>
<th>GROUP 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERSONAL IDEAL Conformity Ratings to PI</td>
<td>PERSONAL IDEAL Conformity Ratings to PI</td>
<td>ROMANTIC IDEAL (Newspaper Account) Conformity Ratings to RI</td>
<td>ROMANTIC IDEAL (Newspaper Account) Conformity Ratings to RI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP (5)</th>
<th>GROUP 1</th>
<th>GROUP 2</th>
<th>GROUP 3</th>
<th>GROUP 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONPPIRI Ratings of Degree to which Personal Ideal conformed to Romantic Ideal</td>
<td>CONPPIRI Ratings of Degree to which Personal Ideal conformed to Romantic Ideal</td>
<td>CONPPIRI Ratings of Degree to which Personal Ideal conformed to Romantic Ideal</td>
<td>CONPPIRI Ratings of Degree to which Personal Ideal conformed to Romantic Ideal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. A schematic representation of the experimental design.

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hypothesized that the presentation of the romantic ideal scale in
the experiment by Averill and Boothroyd (1977) may have served as
a stimulus which significantly influenced subjects' interpretation of their most intense experience of love, then the order in which various stimuli were presented to subject became a critical component of this study. The specific order of presentation of these scales and the styles of loving descriptions were specifically established in advance and these are described as follows.

The first stimulus, or cognitive framework condition, involved a manipulation of the order in which subjects rated the romantic ideal (RI) of Averill and Boothroyd (1977) and their personal ideal (PI). As a means of identification this order variable was referred to as the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK condition. Thus, subjects who were first requested to provide conformity ratings to the romantic ideal scale were identified as being in the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition (Groups 1 and 2). The intent with this condition was to first cognitively anchor the reconstruction of subjects' most intense love experience to the framework of this romantic ideal. This was attempted by requesting that they first read the romantic ideal story as presented in the experiment by Averill and Boothroyd (1977), and then rate the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to this romantic ideal. In contrast, subjects in ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition (Groups
3 & 4) were first requested to rate the extent to which their most intense experience of love conformed to their personal ideal, and at a later point were requested to read the romantic ideal story and provide a conformity rating to the romantic ideal scale.

A second order variable, referred to as the STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK condition, was also incorporated into this design. Each group of subjects, following their initial exposure to either the romantic ideal scale or the personal ideal scale, was then exposed to a set of descriptions of six various styles of loving and also requested to provide ratings of the extent to which they considered their most intense experience of love to have been "True Love". Relative to this measure of True Love it should be noted that people were essentially requested to provide their own intuitive interpretation of this and that no guidelines were provided order to assist them in this task. As described below, this order condition, in which subjects were exposed to the descriptions of the styles of loving and the True Love scale was also manipulated and was incorporated as a means of further altering the subjects' conceptual "love" framework following exposure to either the romantic ideal or personal ideal anchors.

For STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition, subjects were first requested to read and then rank order a set of styles of loving descriptions. Following this, subjects were asked to rate the degree to which they considered their most
intense experience of love to have been "True Love". Thus, subjects in this condition were requested to provide the True Love rating following exposure to the styles of loving descriptions. In this manner it was possible to investigate the influence of the styles of loving framework on these True Love ratings. Conversely, in STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition, subjects were first requested to provide True Love ratings and were then exposed to the styles of loving descriptions. Subjects in this condition therefore provided True Love ratings which were not influenced by the styles of loving framework. As can be seen in Figure 2, half of the subjects in ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition were subsequently exposed to STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition, while the other half were exposed to STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition. Similarly, half of the subjects in ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition were also subsequently exposed to STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition while the other half were exposed to STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition. As a result of this order of presentation, each of the four True Love ratings was effectively preceded by four separate framework conditions.

Following this STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK condition, those subjects in Groups 1 and 2 who had initially rated the degree to which their most intense love experience conformed to the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd (1977)
(ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition), then rated the extent to which this experience conformed to their personal ideal. Similarly, those subjects in Groups 3 and 4 whose initial ratings had been relative to their personal ideal (ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition), completed their rating relative to the romantic ideal.

Utilizing the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions and the STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions in this way, it was possible therefore to examine the influence of the various cognitive frameworks on subjects' "reconstructions" of their love experiences across four separate groups.

As a final examination of the influence of these various conceptual frameworks, and also as a means of gathering other specific information, each subject was requested to rate the extent to which their own personal ideal conformed to the romantic ideal as presented. It was expected that the various conceptual manipulations would significantly impact on this measure.

Materials

These materials consisted of: 1) a data sheet, 2) the "Attitudes towards Love" scale (Knox & Sporakowski, 1968), 3) a set of questions examining various parameters of the subjects' past love experiences, 4) four 10-point rating scales, and 5) a description of six separate styles of loving (see Appendix A).
The data sheet was designed to elicit biographical information and covered the following areas: age, sex, marital status and primary cultural background.

The "Attitudes towards Love" scale designed by Knox & Sporakowski (1968) is a 26 item questionnaire in which each item is scored on a scale ranging from strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5). It consists of items such as: "When you are in love you are usually in a daze", "Regardless of other factors if you truly love another person, that is enough to marry that person". Those with a low score on this scale were seen as endorsing the cultural stereotype of romantic love while those with high scores were seen as having attitudes which endorsed "conjugal" or companionate love. (Note: The test-retest reliability on this scale was reported as 78.4%).

The set of questions examining specific aspects of each subject's love experiences was as follows; 1) the number of times in love, 2) if they were currently in a love relationship and if so for how long, 3) if they were not currently in a love relationship and if not then how long it had been since they were, 4) the intensity of their most intense love experience, and 5) the amount of time which had elapsed since that experience.

Subjects' indicated their frequency of love experiences in terms of the following categories: zero, once, twice, three times, four times, five times or more. These responses were
scored in accord with their nominal value (i.e., 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5).

For those subjects who considered themselves to be currently in a love relationship the length of time associated with that relationship was rated as being less than either 1 month, 6 months, or 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 years, whichever was most accurate. These ratings were scored from "1" to "7" where "1" represented less than 1 month while "7" represented less than 5 years. An identical time estimate and scoring system was utilized for those subjects who considered that they were not currently involved in a love relationship.

In order to rate the degree of intensity of their most intense love experience, a 5 point scale was provided where a score of "1" represented slightly intense while a score of "5" represented extremely intense. This was coded in accord with its nominal value.

To assess the length of time which had elapsed since that most intense experience the same rating and scoring was used as for recording the length of time which had elapsed since the start of the love relationship.

The 10-point rating scales allowed subjects to rate 1) the perceived degree of conformity between their most intense love experience and the romantic ideal, 2) the perceived degree of conformity between their most intense love experience and their personal ideal, 3) the extent to which they considered their most
intense experience of love to have been "True Love", and 4) the
degree to which they considered their personal ideal to be in
conformance with the romantic ideal as presented. Each of these
scales was clearly marked to indicate that a "1" signified "not
at all in conformance" while a "10" signified "in complete
conformance". Each scale was also appropriately labelled to refer
to the specific task for which it was being used. Scoring of
these scales was done in accordance with their nominal values.

The styles of loving descriptions were modified versions of
descriptions provided by Lee (1973, 1977) and Laswell & Lasswell
(1976). These descriptions were provided to the subjects
primarily to provide a conceptual orientation to various loving
styles. After reading each description subjects were requested to
rank order each of the styles of loving such that a rank of "1"
indicated the style of loving which most closely approximated
their own style while a rank of "6" indicated the style of loving
which least approximated their own style.

Procedure

As an initial orientation to the experiment subjects were
presented with the following statement:

This study has been designed to investigate the
phenomenon of love. While each of us has some
familiarity with love, it is a very personal
experience and there may be certain aspects of a
particular love relationship that you feel
uncomfortable in revealing to anyone else. In
order to help with this, you will not be required
to write your name on any of the pages, nor to
provide your name verbally to the experimenter. Furthermore, as you will soon see, none of the tasks in this study actually require you to reveal any explicit personal information.

Each one of four questionnaires (see Appendix A), representing each of the four subject groups, (groups 1, 2, 3, and 4, as described below) was randomly distributed to the subjects. To accomplish this each set of questionnaires was arranged from 1 to 4, and each subject was alternately given either questionnaire 1, 2, 3, or 4. There were 50 questionnaires for each condition allowing for a total sample of 200 subjects.

Irrespective of group assignment each subject followed the same initial procedure as follows. Subjects first completed the data sheet and were then requested to simply think about their various love experiences. One minute of recall time was offered in order to allow this experience to be reasonably recalled but subjects were allowed more time if it was requested. All subjects then completed the "Attitudes towards Love" scale (Knox & Sporakowski, 1968), and then the questionnaire examining the parameters of their love experiences.

GROUP 1. Subjects in this group were first exposed to ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition. These subjects were first requested to read the following newspaper account of a couple who fell in love:

On Monday, Corporal Floyd Johnson, 23, and the then Ellen Skinner, 19, total strangers, boarded a train at San Fransisco and sat down across the aisle from each other. Johnson didn't cross the
aisle until Wednesday, but his bride said, "I'd already made up my mind to say "yes" if he asked me to marry him." "We did most of the talking with our eyes" Johnson explained. Thursday the couple got off the train in Omaha with plans to be married. Because they would need to have the consent of their parents if they were married in Nebraska, they crossed the river to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where they were married Friday.

This account has been cited in Burgess & Wallin (1953, p.151), Rubin (1973, p.192-193) and Averill & Boothroyd (1977, p.237-238) in order to highlight the romantic ideal. While one might wish to debate the representativeness of this story as "the" romantic ideal, the fact that it has been used previously at least permits comparisons to be drawn across these various studies. As this section of the research design was constructed in order to replicate the experiment of Averill & Boothroyd (1977), subjects were then asked to rank on a 10 point scale how closely their most intense love experience conformed to this romantic ideal.

Following this, STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition was introduced as follows. First, the written descriptions of each of the styles of loving were presented to the subjects. Each subject was requested to read the descriptions carefully and then to rank order them from 1 to 6. Next, using a 10-point scale, subjects were asked to rate the degree to which they considered their most intense love experience to have been "True Love".

Next, in order to complete ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition, subjects were asked to indicate on a 10 point scale how closely their most intense experience of love conformed to their personal ideal.
Finally, subjects were asked to rate on a 10-point scale how closely their personal ideal of romantic love conformed to the romantic ideal as presented in the questionnaire.

**GROUP 2.** Subjects in this group were also asked to first rate the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to this romantic ideal in keeping with ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition. Following this, subjects then rated the degree to which they considered their most intense love experience to have been True Love prior to receiving and rank ordering the styles of loving descriptions (STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND). As with Group 1, subjects then provided ratings of the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to their personal ideal, followed by ratings of the extent to which their personal ideal of romantic love conformed to the romantic ideal as presented.

**GROUP 3.** Subjects in this group were first requested to rate the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to their personal ideal (ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition). They were then provided with the styles of loving descriptions which they rank ordered and were then asked to provide True Love ratings (STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition). These subjects then rated the extent to which their most intense experience of love conformed to the romantic ideal in order to complete ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition, and then the extent to which their personal
ideal of romantic love conformed to the romantic ideal as presented.

GROUP 4. As with subjects in Group 3, subjects in this group were first requested to rate the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to their personal ideal (ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition). They then rated the degree to which they considered their most intense experience of love to have been True Love before receiving the styles of loving descriptions (STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition). Subjects were then requested to rate the extent to which their most intense experience of love conformed to the romantic ideal in order to complete ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition, and then the extent to which their personal ideal of romantic love conformed to the romantic ideal as presented.

Subjects with questions concerning the definition of the romantic ideal were asked that these be held until all of the questionnaires had been completed. This procedure was included in an attempt to avoid biasing the subject's own interpretations of this concept.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Subjects' Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the subjects are presented in Table 1. Of the 200 subjects, 122 were female while 78 were male. The mean age of subjects was 25.37 ranging from 18 to 60 years (S.D.=8.2). Of these subjects 62.5% were under the age of 23. Subjects reported having been in love an average of 2.13 times (S.D. = 1.21), and 127 currently considered themselves to be in a love relationship. Since 15 subjects did not indicate whether or not they were currently in love this means that slightly more than 68 percent of the subjects in this sample were currently in a love relationship of some sort.

Salience of the Romantic Ideal versus the Personal Ideal

This analysis, in keeping with Hypotheses 1 and 2, examined first, the relationship between subjects' conformity ratings on the RI scales to those of the PI scales, and second, the degree of relationship between conformity ratings provided by subjects to the RI and PI scales relative to their ratings on the True Love scale.

PI and RI Scales It was been predicted (Hypothesis 1) that subjects would consider their most intense experience of love to be in significantly higher conformance to their personal ideal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>N=78 (39%)</td>
<td>N=122 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>24.00 (S.D.=5.86)</td>
<td>26.23 (61%) (S.D.=9.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Number of Times In Love</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean KSP scores</td>
<td>83.56</td>
<td>86.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Currently in Love</td>
<td>42 (63.6%)</td>
<td>85 (71.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number not Currently in Love</td>
<td>24 (36.3%)</td>
<td>34 (28.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
than to the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd (1977). An analysis of variance using both scales as a repeated measure (called IDEAL) was used to explore this hypothesis.

Referring to Table 2, a highly significant difference can be seen between subjects' ratings on the PI and RI scales (Ideal): $F(1,196)=45.85$, $p<.01$. Overall, the mean conformity ratings (on a scale of 1 to 10) were 6.31 for the personal ideal scale and 4.63 for the romantic ideal scale. Additionally, as can be seen in Table 3, 67.5 percent of the subjects reported conformity ratings of "6" or more on the personal ideal scale, while, 42.5 percent of the subjects reported conformity ratings of "6" or more on the romantic ideal scale. Thus, subjects interpreted their most intense love experience as being significantly higher in conformance to the personal ideal scale than to the romantic ideal scale.

Examination of Table 4 also reveals a non-significant correlation between these two scales ($r=.07$, $p<.26$) On the basis of these results it can be concluded that subjects respond in a significantly different manner to the personal ideal scale as compared to the romantic ideal scale. The lack of correlation between these two scale indicates that subjects do make a significant conceptual distinction between these two measurements.

True Love ratings. It had also been predicted (Hypothesis 2) that subjects' ratings on the PI scale would be a significantly
Table 2

Analysis of Variance using Personal Ideal and Romantic Ideal as Repeated Measures (IDEAL) across Cognitive Framework Conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Between Subjects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCF</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLCF</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCF * SLCF</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects within</td>
<td>1447.34</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCF by SLCF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within subjects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal</td>
<td>282.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>282.24</td>
<td>45.85**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal * RCF</td>
<td>37.21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37.21</td>
<td>6.04**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal * SLCF</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal * RCF * SLCF</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal by Subjects within RCF by SLCF</td>
<td>1206.50</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05  
** p<.01

Note. Key to abbreviations: RCF = ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK; SLCF = STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK.
Table 3

Frequency and Percentage Distributions for RI and PI conformity scores across all Groups.

Conformity ratings to the romantic ideal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RI Ratings</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>CUMULATIVE FREQUENCY</th>
<th>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>94.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
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Conformity ratings to the Personal Ideal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PI Ratings</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>CUMULATIVE FREQUENCY</th>
<th>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>41.5</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>19.5</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>83.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>92.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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TABLE 4

Correlations Among Variables Across All Groups

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>TL</th>
<th>RI</th>
<th>COMPPIRI</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>KSP</th>
<th>NTIL</th>
<th>INT</th>
<th>TINT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMPPIRI</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.32**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.10</td>
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<td>AGE</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT</td>
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<tr>
<td>TINT</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</table>

* p<.01
** p<.001

Note. Key to abbreviations: KSP = scores on Knox and Sporakowski "Attitudes Towards Love Scale", NTIL = number of times in love, INT=degree of intensity of love relationship, TINT = time since most intense experience. N=200
better predictor of scores on the True Love scale than their scores on the RI scale. Examination of Table 4 shows that a significant relationship does exist between PI and TL ($r = .55$, $p < .01$) but not between RI and TL ($r = .07$, $p < .31$). In so far as subjects' interpretations of their most intense experience of love as being a "True Love" experience is concerned, it appears that this interpretation is associated with the degree to which subjects consider that experience to conform with their personal ideal, not in terms of its relationship to the romantic ideal.

The relationship between subjects' assessment of the degree of "intensity" of their most intense love experience, and their conformity ratings on the personal ideal and romantic ideal scales was also examined. As demonstrated in Table 4, a highly significant correlation was found to exist between "intensity" ratings and conformity scores to the personal ideal scale ($r = .38$, $p < .01$). However, no significant relationship was found between intensity ratings and ratings on the romantic ideal scale ($r = .09$, $p < .19$). The rated degree of intensity of that experience and "True Love" scores were also found to be highly correlated ($r = .57$, $p < .01$). Thus, subjects' interpretations of their most intense experience of love in terms of the degree to which it could considered "True Love" and "intense", were highly related to subjects' conformity ratings with their personal ideal, and unrelated to their conformity ratings with the romantic ideal.
Impact of Cognitive Frameworks

The first analysis for this issue was an examination of the degree to which subjects' conformity ratings on the romantic ideal scale (RI), personal ideal scale (PI), True Love scale (TL), and the Comparison Between Personal and Romantic Ideal scale (COMPPIRI), were subject to conceptual alteration. It was hypothesized that altering the order of presentation of these various scales, as well as the descriptions of the styles of loving, would significantly impact on the cognitive reconstruction of subjects' love experiences. The order of presentation of these cognitive framework conditions have been described in detail in the methodology section.

PI and RI Scales. It had been hypothesized (Hypothesis 3) that significant differences would exist in subjects' conformity ratings on the RI and PI scales as a result of manipulating the conceptual frameworks as described for the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions and STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions. The mean conformity ratings for the romantic ideal and personal ideal scales relative to each of these cognitive framework conditions are presented in Table 5.

Results of a two-way Analysis of Variance (Table 6) revealed a significant main effect of the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions on PI ratings $F(1,196)=3.98$, $p<.05$, but no main effect for the STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions or the interaction effect. In order to more clearly
TABLE 5

Means and Adjusted Means for PI, RI, TL, and COMPPIRI relative to COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>RI</th>
<th>TL</th>
<th>COMPPIRI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RCF FIRST</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>5.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCF SECOND</td>
<td>6.66</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>4.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Adjusted Means)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>5.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>RI</th>
<th>TL</th>
<th>COMPPIRI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLCF FIRST</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLCF SECOND</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Adjusted Means)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note - Adjusted means were calculated as the Least Square Means following the analyses of covariance which were conducted on each of these variables.

RCF = ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK CONDITION
SLCF = STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK
## TABLE 6

**Analysis of Variance and Covariance for PI across Cognitive Framework conditions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3.98*</td>
<td>RCF</td>
<td>36.90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLCF</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>SLCF</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCF*SLSF</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>RCF*SLSF</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>4.49</td>
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<td>0.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>SEX</td>
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<td>1.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGE*SEX</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>AGE*SEX</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>7.12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTIL</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NTIL</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>170.80</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33.47**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TINT</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>TINT</td>
<td>25.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.95*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERROR</td>
<td>1205.24</td>
<td>196</td>
<td></td>
<td>ERROR</td>
<td>964.47</td>
<td>189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05
** p<.01

Note. Key to abbreviations: RCF = ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK; SLCF = STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK; KSP = scores on Knox and Sporakowski "Attitudes Towards Love" scale, NTIL = number of times in love, INT = degree of intensity of love relationship, TINT = time since most intense experience.
ascertain the effect of the cognitive framework conditions on subjects conformity ratings, sources of variance due to variables such as age, sex, intensity ratings etc., were removed using an Analysis of Covariance (also Table 6). In this analysis PI served as the dependent measure, the cognitive framework conditions served as the independent variables, and Age, Sex, the interaction of Age by Sex, number of times in love (NTIL), scores on the Knox and Sporakowski scale (KSP), time since the most intense experience of love (TINT), and degree of intensity of the love experience (INT) served as the covariates. This revealed an even stronger main effect for the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions; $F(1,189) = 7.23, p<.01$. As can also be seen in Table 6, neither the STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions, nor its interaction with the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions was found to be significant with this analysis. The mean differences in PI ratings across the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions can be seen more clearly in Figure 3.

As these results indicate, subjects' conformity ratings of the extent to which their most intense experience of love conformed to their personal ideal could be significantly modified by the introduction of the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions, but they were not significantly influenced by the STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions or the interaction of the two.
Figure 3. Mean ratings for RI and PI scores relative to order of presentation

Note. In condition ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition (RCF First) subjects were requested to first rate the extent to which their most intense experience of love conformed to the Romantic Ideal and then provide a conformity rating to the Personal Ideal. In ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition (RCF second), the order of scale presentation was reversed.
A two-way ANOVA for the RI scale (see Table 7) revealed no significant differences for the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions, the STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions, or the interaction effect. For the same reasons as with the PI analysis, an ANCOVA using RI as the dependent measure, the cognitive framework conditions as the independent variables, and the same covariates as mentioned previously was conducted (also Table 7). This analysis revealed a significant main effect for the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions; F(1, 189) = 3.98, p < .05, (see Figure 3). Neither the STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions nor its interaction with the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions were found to be significant using this analysis.

On the basis of these results it can be seen that subjects' conformity ratings of the extent to which their most intense experience of love conformed to the romantic ideal could also be modified by the introduction of the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions but was not significantly influenced by the STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions or the interaction of the two.

In order to examine the influence of the cognitive framework conditions on the within-subject ratings of the RI and PI scales, an analysis of variance using both scales as repeated measures (IDEAL) and the cognitive framework conditions as the independent variables was conducted (refer to Table 2). This
### TABLE 7

Analysis of Variance and Covariance for RI across Cognitive Framework conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>RCF</td>
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<td>1.83</td>
<td>RCF</td>
<td>25.69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.98*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLCF</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>SLCF</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>RCF*SLCF</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>RCF*SLCF</td>
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<td>AGE</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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<td>AGE*SEX</td>
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<td>KSP</td>
<td>98.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.20**</td>
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<td>38.56</td>
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<td>TINT</td>
<td>66.60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>196</td>
<td></td>
<td>ERROR</td>
<td>1219.29</td>
<td>189</td>
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</table>

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Note. Key to abbreviations: RCF = ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK; SLCF = STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK; KSP = scores on Knox and Sporakowski "Attitudes Towards Love" scale; NTIL = number of times in love, INT = degree of intensity of love relationship; TINT = time since most intense experience.
revealed a significant within subject effect for the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions, $F(1,196)=6.04, p<.01$, but no significant main effect for STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions or the interaction. These results strongly suggest that not only is there a significant difference in the manner in which subjects' provide conformity ratings to their personal ideal and the romantic ideal, but that the size of this difference is significantly influenced by the order in which the various conceptual frameworks are presented to the subjects. The distribution of conformity ratings to the PI and RI scale across the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions are presented in Table 8.

**COMPPIRI and True Love Scales.** No significant differences due to the presentation of either the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions, the STYLES OF LOVING COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions or their interaction were found on the ANOVA or ANCOVA for the COMPPIRI or True Love ratings. This may suggest that these measures, as compared to the conformity ratings on the PI and RI scales, are less subject to modification by the introduction of the cognitive frameworks. Other possible explanations for this finding are offered in the discussion section.

**Exploratory Analyses.**

In the Averill & Boothroyd (1977) study, the distribution of subjects' conformity ratings to the Romantic Ideal assumed an
Table 8

Frequency and Percentage Distributions for RI and PI conformity score across ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions.

**Conformity Ratings to the Romantic Ideal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RI Rating</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>RCF FIRST</td>
<td>RCF SECOND</td>
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<tr>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conformity Ratings to the Personal Ideal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PI Rating</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Key to abbreviations: RCF = Romantic Cognitive Framework
inverted U-shaped curve. Testing for the significance of quadratic and higher order trends in this curve, these researchers found only the quadratic component to be significant. The first analysis therefore was conducted in order to assess the degree to which that distribution was replicated in the present research. Of most interest in this analysis was the degree of correspondence between that distribution and the distribution of conformity scores obtained in the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition since this was the condition designed to replicate the experiment by Averill and Boothroyd (1977).

Next, since measures such as conformity ratings on the personal ideal scale and the romantic ideal may reflect various aspects of a subject's interpretive framework, a factor analysis utilizing the available measures was conducted. In this manner it was hoped that a larger, more comprehensive structure might emerge which would shed more light on the process by which subjects' were interpreting their love experiences.

Distribution of romantic ideal scores. To begin this exploration an analysis of the number of subjects who ranked their most intense experience of love ranging from "not at all in conformance" to "in complete conformance" on a scale of 1 to 10 was conducted. A regression analysis testing for linear, quadratic, cubic and quartic trends found both the linear component to be significant [F(1,5)=6.08, p<.06], as well as the
cubic component \( [F(1,5) = 6.68, \ p < .05] \). This result however reflected the distribution of scores across all group irrespective of the influence of the conceptual frameworks. An analyses of the RI scores obtained in the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition measure revealed a significant cubic component \( [F(1,5) = 12.64, \ p < .02] \). In contrast, analysis of the distribution of subjects' conformity ratings to RI in ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition revealed only a significant linear component \( [F(1,5) = 8.12, \ p < .04] \).

On the basis of these results it could be concluded that the distribution of scores obtained in the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition did not replicate the experimental findings of Averill and Boothroyd (1977). Examination of Figure 4 however, does reveal a clear U-shaped distribution, especially if the scores for points "9" and "10" are ignored. Examination of the distribution of conformity scores for the ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition (also Figure 4) does not reveal a similar result however, and this raises questions regarding the interpretation of the findings of Averill and Boothroyd (1977). This issue is considered at greater length in the discussion section.

**Factor Analysis**  A Factor analysis utilizing age, sex, intensity, time since most intense experience (TINT), number of times in love (NTIL), scores on the Knox and Sporakowski scale, and conformity ratings on the RI, PI, TL and COMPPIRI scales was
Figure 4. The number of subjects who indicated that their most intense experience of love was not at all in conformance, was somewhat in conformance, was moderately in conformance, or was in complete conformance, to the romantic ideal for ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK conditions.
conducted. Three factors emerged and were orthogonally rotated utilizing a Varimax rotation with a mineigen value of 1.25 (see Table 9).

The first factor loading named "Personal Factor" consisted of conformity ratings on the personal ideal scale (.77), conformity ratings on the True Love scale (.86), and INT, the rated degree of intensity of subjects' most intense love experience (.77). The second factor loading was named "Romantic Factor" and was comprised of subjects' conformity ratings to the romantic ideal (.75), COMMPIRI, the degree to which one's personal ideal conformed to the romantic ideal (.78), and subjects' attitudes towards romantic love as measured by the Knox scale (.65). The third factor named "Time", loaded on AGE (.73), NTIL, the number of times in which subjects had been in love (.57), and TINT, the amount of time which had elapsed since subjects' most intense experience of love (.73). As can be seen, these factors are highly distinctive with particular items loading highly on their respective factor while contributing negligibly to the remaining ones. The interpretation of each of these factors is provided more detail in the discussion section.
TABLE 9

Factor Analysis scores for age, sex, intensity, time since most intense experience (TINT), number of times in love (NTIL), scores on the Knox and Sporakowski scale, and conformity ratings on the RI, PI, TL and COMPPIRI scales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
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</thead>
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<td>.036</td>
<td>-.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
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<td>.138</td>
<td>-.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>.275</td>
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<td>RI</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>.747</td>
<td>.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPPRI</td>
<td>.207</td>
<td>.784</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKSP</td>
<td>-.102</td>
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</tr>
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<td>AGE</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>-.279</td>
<td>.732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTIL</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TINT</td>
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<td>.187</td>
<td>.737</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
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<td>-.261</td>
<td>.011</td>
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</table>

VARIANCE EXPLAINED BY EACH FACTOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.137</td>
<td>1.806</td>
<td>1.596</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. Key to abbreviations: KSP = scores on Knox and Sporakowski "Attitudes Towards Love Scale", NTIL = number of times in love, INT = degree of intensity of love relationship, TINT = time since most intense experience.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

It has been proposed that peoples' interpretations of their love experiences relies on a personally constructed love ideal which continually evolves in the ongoing relationship between a person and his or her social world. Some researchers have suggested that this love ideal is provided by the culture and have cited the romantic ideal as an "emotional norm" which people use in order to make sense of their love experiences. It was argued however, that this position implies a static relationship between individuals and their social world, and thus misses the essential relational quality of love. In order to provide a meaningful framework within which this quality of love can be discussed, an examination of people's interpretation of love experiences has been shifted from a cultural to a personal construction. From this perspective it has been argued that the personal ideal, a process which theoretically embodies the transactive quality between persons and their world, is a more useful heuristic than the concept of the romantic ideal for illuminating this process.

In keeping with this purpose, the first goal was to establish that the personal ideal is indeed highly salient in terms of how people interpret their love experiences, and
significantly more salient than the romantic ideal in this regard. The results of this study indicate that while people can interpret their love experiences relative to the romantic ideal, the personal ideal is significantly more prominent in the interpretation of these experiences.

The second goal of the study was to provide empirical support for the process associated with the development of the personal ideal. More specifically, the intent was to provide an experimental analogue of the concepts of assimilation and accommodation as previously discussed in terms of the personal construction of love. To this end the modifiability of subjects' cognitions concerning their love experiences was examined. It was hypothesized that if subjects' cognitions concerning their love experiences are continuously changing with new experiences, then the introduction of different sets of instructions should significantly influence those cognitions. Moreover, it was also hypothesized that the manner in which subjects interpreted their experiences was dependent on their existing cognitive structure. These possibilities were tested by varying the order in which a description of the romantic ideal, the personal ideal, and various styles of loving were presented to subjects prior to assessing the interpretation of their love experiences. Using this procedure four different order conditions were constructed. Results indicated that subjects' reconstructions of their love experiences relative to their personal ideal and the romantic
ideal, were significantly influenced by this procedure. As will be discussed, the concepts of assimilation and accommodation can be used to interpret these results. The following sections provide a more comprehensive discussion of each of these results and conclusions.

The Salience of the Personal Ideal.

The results of this study indicated that the personal ideal is highly salient in people's interpretation of their most intense love experiences. As will be seen, support for this conclusion is provided in several related sets of findings. This section discusses several findings which support the salience of the personal ideal over the romantic ideal as a means by which subjects judge "True Love" and the intensity of their love experience.

First, when subjects are simply requested to rate the degree to which their most intense experiences of love conformed to their personal ideal and the romantic ideal of Averill and Boothroyd (1977), they rate this experience as being significantly higher in conformance with their personal ideal than with the romantic ideal (F=45.85, p<.01). This initial finding indicates that people are indeed able to rate their love experiences relative to a personal standard, and that this standard is significantly more salient for them in this respect than is the concept of the romantic ideal presented to them.
Second, no correlation was found between subjects' ratings of the extent to which they considered their most intense experience of love to be in conformance with the romantic ideal scale as compared to their ratings on the personal ideal scale ($r = .07$). Thus, subjects not only appeared to rely on their personal ideal to a significantly greater extent than the romantic ideal in interpreting their most intense love experience, but the degree to which they interpreted that experience as conforming to their personal ideal was unrelated to their interpretation of that experience relative to the romantic ideal.

Third, a highly significant correlation was found between subjects' interpretation of the degree to which they considered their most intense experiences as being "True Love", and their interpretation of the extent to which those experiences conformed to their personal ideal ($r = .55$). However, no significant correlation was found between subjects' "True Love" scores and conformity ratings on the romantic ideal scale ($r = .07$). These results indicate that subjects' interpretations of their most intense love experiences as "True Love" are generally made irrespective of the degree to which they consider those love experiences to conform to the romantic ideal. Conversely, their interpretation of those experiences as "True Love" is highly correlated with the degree to which they consider those experiences as conforming to their personal ideal.
Finally, subjects' ratings of the degree of intensity of their most intense love experiences were also found to be highly correlated with the personal ideal scale \( (r = .38) \), but not with the romantic ideal scale \( (r = .09) \). Given that these intensity ratings were also highly correlated with the "True Love" ratings \( (r = .57) \) this tends to reconfirm the greater salience of the personal ideal relative to the romantic ideal in terms of how subjects interpret their most intense love experiences.

Each of these findings support the conclusion that the personal ideal is significantly more salient than the romantic ideal in terms of subjects' interpretation of their most intense love experiences. However, this does not necessarily suggest that the romantic ideal is unimportant in this interpretive process. Overall, 67.5 percent of the subjects rated their most intense experience of love to be either moderately or completely in conformance to their personal ideal (ratings of "6" or higher on the personal ideal scale). Comparatively, 42.5 percent of the subjects provided conformity ratings of "6" or higher on the romantic ideal scale. In spite of the statistically significant difference between conformity ratings on the PI and RI scales, it might still be argued that the romantic ideal is quite salient for many of the subjects even though this rating was not correlated with the personal ideal, True Love ratings or intensity ratings.
Averill and Boothroyd (1977) found that 40 percent of their sample group rated their most intense experience of love as being in high conformance to the romantic ideal. Indeed it is this finding which has been used by Averill and Boothroyd (1977), and Averill (1985), to support their contention that the romantic ideal represents a cultural paradigm. As previously suggested however, this result may have been significantly influenced by the context provided to the subjects. Before examining this possibility more closely, there are several other considerations relative to the concept of the romantic ideal which should be considered.

One argument which can be raised concerning the significance of the romantic ideal as measured in this research concerns the actual question posed to subjects on the romantic ideal scale. Specifically this question, which asks subjects to consider their most intense experience of love, effectively directs subjects to use "intensity" as a means of identifying their own experience. Since they are then asked to relate that aspect of their experience to the romantic ideal, which theoretically includes this aspect of intensity as one of its central components, this may lead to results which would tend to inflate the degree to which subjects utilize the romantic ideal to interpret their love relationships. In other words, if subjects had been asked instead to rate the degree to which their most "satisfying" or "meaningful" love relationship
conformed to the romantic ideal, different results might have been obtained. In fact, even with this possible bias, more than half of the subjects (57.5%) considered their most intense experience of love to be only "somewhat in conformance" to the romantic ideal (ratings of 3, 4, or 5) or "not at all in conformance" (ratings of 1 or 2).

More cogent arguments questioning the impact of the romantic ideal relative to people's interpretations of their love experiences can found in the research literature. The following section presents several research studies which are related to this issue. These studies tend to indicate that the romantic ideal may serve little or no purpose relative to subjects' interpretations of their actual love experiences.

The romantic ideal in psychological research. Several writers have considered the romantic ideal as having a deleterious effect on modern day romances. De Rougement (1949) for example, has argued that the incorporation of the romantic ideal has resulted in people ignoring the practical considerations that have historically helped to insure successful marriages:

To him all considerations of social level or education, of suitability of temperament, background, age, material resources, outlooks on the future, family, career, religious preferences, theories of upbringing, and intellectual and spiritual communion have become secondary; the prime mover is romance. (p. 65)
In the romantic story presented by Averill and Boothroyd (1977), several components were suggested as forming the romantic ideal: idealization of the loved one, suddenness of onset (love at first sight), and high physiological arousal. Additionally, the romantic ideal also embodies the belief that there is only "one right person" and that love will conquer all barriers. If people's love experiences actually conformed to this description then de Rougement's pessimistic attitude may well be grounded. Several psychological and sociological studies however, suggest that people's experiences of love rarely meet the form represented by this ideal, and that they are unlikely to interpret their love experiences on this basis.

First, in terms of physiological arousal, Burgess and Wallin (1953) interviewed 226 engaged couples, most of whom were college students, and found that only eight percent of the women and five percent of the men recalled feeling a "strong physical attraction" for their partner within one or two days of their first meeting. Presumably even fewer of the respondents characterized this experience as "love at first sight". As was suggested nearly twenty years later by Murstein (1974), "It is noteworthy that despite the lack of confirming evidence, the treatment of love in recent fictions perpetuates the myth of love at first sight" (p. 383).

The second contraindication to the romantic ideal from the empirical research addresses the idea that people generally
believe that there is one ideal love somewhere in the world; the romantic conviction that for each individual there is a "right one" waiting to be found. James Bossard (1931), after having examined 5,000 marriage licenses of residents living in Philadelphia, found that at the time of their application, one out of four couples lived within two city blocks of each other and one-third lived within five blocks. In general, the proportion of marriages "decreased steadily and markedly as the distance between contracting parties increased" (p. 222), a generalization which has come to be known as Bossard's Law (Rubin, 1973). This finding, similar that of "residential propinquity" as commonly used by researchers studying interpersonal attraction, suggests that a high percentage of people who fall in love are likely to have already known each other for an extended period of time. Other recent research studies (Katz and Hill, 1958; Ramsoy, 1966) have confirmed this finding. According to by Rubin (1973), "The likelihood that a person will fall in love with and marry "the girl next door" flies in the face of the romantic notion that one's perfect mate may be waiting for one across a crowded room in some far corner of the globe" (p.194). Or, as Hunt (1959) facetiously remarks, "Somewhere in the world she is waiting for you, and it is a fifty-fifty chance that you can walk that far in less than half an hour" (p.364).
Third, and perhaps most importantly, according to de Rougement's criticism of the romantic ideal, those who fall in love tend to ignore factors such as the suitability of the mate's social and economic background. Yet scores of studies show that to an overwhelming extent people select mates who are very narrowly limited to those of similar ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds (Rubin 1973). Additionally, if the love relationship is to continue it appears as though the extent to which the couple share similar attitudes and values becomes an extremely important factor. For example, Kerchoff and Davis (1962) found that couples who agreed highly in their rankings of what was important in marriage (i.e. financial security, moral and religious unity) were significantly more likely to progress towards a permanent relationship than were those who were in less agreement.

In sum, these findings suggest that people who are contemplating permanent relationships clearly do not seem to adhere to the tenets of the romantic ideal. Rather, as stated by Rubin (1973):

Mates are in most cases found close to home and and selected from a field of eligibles who typically share one's race, religion, social status, and important values and attitudes. When marriages cross class lines, they often illustrate processes of social exchange that are more reminiscent of the hardheaded calculation of arranged marriages than of the unpredictable vicissitudes of courtly love. (p.203)
This reference to the principles of social exchange strongly suggests that marriages in North America are rarely based on the blind type of unreasoning stereotypically portrayed as the romantic ideal. Instead, lovers appear to make a clear distinction between the "myth" of the ideal and the realities of living, a perception described by Hunt (1959) in the following manner:

Americans are firmly of two minds about it all, simultaneously hardheaded and idealistic, uncouth and tender, libidinous and puritanical; they believe implicitly in every tenet of romantic love, and yet know perfectly well that things don't really work that way. (p.363)

It is not unreasonable therefore to question the extent to which people whose own experiences generally contradict the romantic ideal, are likely to interpret their behavior on the basis of that ideal. In fact, the experimental results presented in this study indicate that while subjects can rate their experiences relative to the romantic ideal, it is their personal ideal which is more salient. Additionally, subject's interpretations of the degree to which their most intense love experiences conformed to their personal ideal were unrelated to the degree to which they interpreted those experiences as conforming to the romantic ideal. More importantly, when these subjects were requested to indicate the extent to which they considered their most intense experiences as being "True Love", these ratings were found to be unrelated to the degree to which
they considered those experiences to conform to the romantic ideal. Thus subjects in this experiment generally did not interpret their experiences as "True Love" on the basis of the degree to which that experience either conformed or did not conform to the romantic ideal. Conversely, their assessments of those experiences as "True Love" do appear to be highly related to their personal ideal.

Moreover, the very concept of the romantic ideal is still in question. As Hunt (1959) stresses, the romantic ideal has "changed its character very considerably over a period of nine centuries, but its earnest opponents are still slaying medieval dragons. The uneasy and imperfect blend of illusion and reality, idealism and hardheadedness, which we have described under the name of the "new romanticism" cannot properly be considered identical in spirit with abject troubadour woman-worship" (p.369). One might wonder at the extent to which the romantic ideal as presented by Averill and Boothroyd (1977) even approximates a modern day representation of the romantic ideal.

The personal construction of love emphasizes continual change within a love relationship. In the following section, this process relative to people's cognitions concerning their love ideals will be considered more closely by examining the impact of the experimental context on subjects' interpretations of their love ideals. These results will then be interpreted within the assimilation-accommodation framework in order to
demonstrate how these findings can be used to reflect the process of the personal ideal. The exploratory factor analysis will then be considered so as to highlight various aspects of the interpretive processes accompanying subjects' ratings of the various scales in this study.

The Modifiability of Love Ideals

The influence of stimulus conditions on the romantic ideal. It has been argued that Averill and Boothroyd (1977), while acknowledging the reconstructive process associated with one's interpretations relative to cultural norms, failed to consider the possible influence of their version of the romantic ideal on subjects' reconstructions of their love experiences. More specifically, it is possible that providing subjects with certain stimuli (such as the story depicting the romantic ideal and the romantic ideal scale) may have significantly altered and/or constrained subjects interpretation of their most intense love experience. As a result, questions were raised concerning their experimental findings. One of the goals of the present research was to replicate and extend Averill and Boothroyd's (1977) findings in order to critically examine the influence of stimulus conditions on subjects' ratings of the romantic ideal.

As reported in the results section, an exploratory analysis of the linear, quadratic, cubic and quartic components of the romantic ideal curve as discovered in the replicated condition (those subjects who were initially requested to provide
conformity ratings to the romantic ideal; ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK FIRST condition) found a significant cubic trend in this curve. However, Averill and Boothroyd (1977) reported a significant quadratic component in their curve. One explanation for this discrepancy is that it may be due to a difference in the instructions given to subjects in the Averill and Boothroyd (1977) study as compared to subjects in the present research. In both studies subjects were requested to rate their most intense experience of love relative to the romantic ideal. However, while the Averill and Boothroyd (1977) study provided anchors of "No Resemblance" at one end of the scale and "Close Resemblance" at the other, the present research utilized four anchor points: "Not at all in Conformance", "Somewhat in Conformance", "Moderately in Conformance" and "In Complete Conformance".

Yet close inspection of the curve as presented in Figure 4 depicting the distribution of scores for subjects in the replicated condition does reveal a fairly distinct U-shaped curve similar to Averill and Boothroyd's (1977) if only the responses of subjects who provide conformity ratings from "1" to "8" are included. Thus, if one was to consider the "Moderately in Conformance" anchor as used in the present experiment to be similar to Averill and Boothroyd's (1977) "Close Resemblance" anchor, then the two sets of findings do indeed seem to overlap.

However, the distribution of these conformity ratings for those subjects who were previously exposed to the personal ideal
scale, True Love scale, and the descriptions of styles of loving (see Figure 4; ROMANTIC COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK SECOND condition), does not reveal an inverted U-shaped curve, but rather a linear trend. Yet the only difference between these two conditions was whether or not subjects' ratings of the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to the romantic ideal was made prior to or following exposure to the personal ideal scale. This difference in subjects' responses can also be seen by examining the results presented in Table 8. As can be seen, 51% of those subjects who were initially exposed to the romantic ideal, provided conformity ratings of "6" or higher with regards to that scale. However, only 34% of those subjects who provided conformity ratings to the romantic ideal scale after exposure to the personal ideal scale (RCF SECOND condition) provided such high ratings. Relative to the Averill and Boothroyd (1977) study this suggests that the degree to which subjects interpret their love experiences relative to the romantic ideal depends significantly on the context presented to them.

On the one hand this finding serves as a cautionary note concerning research in this area. On the other hand, however, this result can be meaningfully interpreted within the framework of the accommodation and assimilation model of the personal construction of love.

Cognitive Frameworks: Assimilation and Accommodation. Significant differences were found to exist in subjects'
conformity ratings to the romantic ideal scale depending on whether that scale was introduced before or after the personal ideal scale (F=3.98, p<.05). These results have also been expressed in terms of mean differences (Table 5), and in terms of the percentages of subjects who provided the various conformity ratings to this scale (Table 8). As discussed in the preceding section, 51% of the subjects in RCF FIRST condition provided conformity ratings of "6" or higher on the romantic ideal scale, while 34% of the subjects in RCF SECOND condition provided such ratings. Importantly, significant differences were also found in subjects' conformity ratings to the personal ideal scale depending on whether those ratings preceded or followed exposure to the romantic ideal scale (F=7.23, p<.01). As also expressed in terms of percentages, 76% of those subjects who initially rated the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to their personal ideal (RCF SECOND condition) provided conformity ratings of "6" or higher to the personal ideal. Comparatively, 59% of those subjects who provided conformity ratings on the personal ideal scale following exposure to the romantic ideal (RCF FIRST condition) provided similar ratings.

In addition to these findings, when subjects' ratings on the romantic ideal scale and personal ideal scale were analyzed as repeated measures (see Table 2) a significant difference was found in their ratings of these two scales within each order
condition (F=6.04, p<.01). Thus not only were significant differences found in subjects' ratings of the romantic ideal scale and the personal ideal scale depending on the order in which these scales were presented, but the amount of variation in subjects' responses to these two scales also differed significantly depending on the order in which they were presented to subjects.

One means of explaining these results is through the use of the assimilation/accommodation model described previously. Accordingly, it has been suggested that people's love ideals, which serve as the interpretive lens for their experiences, are subject to constant modification in the interplay between individuals and their social world. With new experiences the cognitive structures supporting these love ideals are modified in the process of accommodation. Yet the significance, or meaning of that experience is also importantly dependent on the existing cognitive structure of the individual. It is within this process of assimilation and accommodation therefore, that people's interpretation of their love experiences are developed.

In terms of accommodation, the introduction of each of the stimulus conditions in this research can be conceptualized as the "external data" which subjects were required to take into account in the interpretation of their experiences. For example, one group of subjects was first presented with the story of the romantic ideal and then asked to rate their most intense love
experience on the romantic ideal scale. The other group of subjects however, was first presented with the personal ideal scale. Thus, these two groups of subjects can be understood to have differentially accommodated the interpretation of their love experiences relative to these two scales. In other words, these two groups of subjects have qualitatively different reconstructions of their most intense love experiences at that particular point in time.

By comparing the romantic ideal ratings of the group of subjects who initially accommodated their experiences to the romantic ideal, with the romantic ideal ratings made by the group of subjects who initially accommodated their experiences to the personal ideal, then the process of assimilation can be used to explain why significant differences were found between these two groups on this measure. To the extent that subjects in both groups are understood as having initially accommodated the interpretation of their most intense love experience to different ideals, then the group of subjects who provided ratings to the romantic ideal following exposure to the personal ideal can be seen as having a different cognitive framework prior to their rating of the romantic ideal than did the first group. Thus, the significant difference between these two groups of subjects' conformity ratings to the romantic ideal scale can be understood as indicating that "how" subjects interpreted "that" experience is not only dependent on the romantic ideal
story and the romantic ideal scale, but is also dependent on the existing cognitive structure at the time of interpretation. Thus in order to appreciate subjects' interpretations of the extent to which their most intense experience of love conformed to the romantic ideal both aspects of the interpretive process, assimilation and accommodation, must be considered.

This process can also be used to explain the significant differences in subjects' interpretations of the extent to which their most intense experience of love conformed to their personal ideal depending on whether or not they were initially exposed to the romantic ideal scale. However, the conformity ratings of those subjects who initially interpreted their most intense experiences of love relative to the personal ideal scale and then the romantic ideal scale, differed significantly from the conformity ratings of those subjects who provided these ratings in the reverse order. As was shown in Figure 3, subjects' mean ratings between conformity scores on these two scales were significantly further apart when the personal ideal was presented first than when the romantic ideal was presented first. When the personal ideal is presented first, 76% of the subjects considered that experience as being at least moderately in conformance to their personal ideal while only 34% of those same subjects considered that experience to be moderately in conformance to the romantic ideal. Comparatively, when the romantic ideal was presented first, 51% considered that
experience as being moderately in conformance to the romantic ideal while 59% of those same subjects considered that experience to be at least in moderate conformance to their personal ideal. This finding indicates that when subjects are initially requested to interpret their love experience relative to the personal ideal, this reconstruction impacts to a significantly greater extent on subjects' subsequent ratings relative to the romantic ideal than does the romantic ideal in terms of its subsequent impact on the personal ideal. Thus the personal ideal again appears to be significantly more salient than the romantic ideal in terms of subjects' interpretation of their most intense love experience.

Relative to the framework of assimilation and accommodation, the cognitive framework conditions were actually more complex than the previous description would indicate. Subjects not only provided conformity ratings to the personal ideal scale and romantic ideal scale, but were also required to engage in other tasks which were specifically designed to alter their conceptual frameworks. For example, having initially provided conformity ratings to the romantic ideal scale, subjects in this condition were subsequently requested to read a description of six styles of loving, provide True Love ratings and then conformity ratings to the personal ideal, and to finally rate the degree to which they considered their personal ideal to conform to the romantic ideal. For reasons discussed in
the following section, these additional conditions did not appear to either impact on subsequent ratings, or be influenced by previous ratings.

**True Love and COMPPIRI ratings.** Contrary to expectations, subjects' ratings of the extent to which they considered their most intense experience of love to have been "True Love" was not significantly affected by the cognitive framework conditions. This may suggest that this type of judgement is qualitatively different from that required for judgements relative to one's ideals. As a result, the cognitive schema supporting people's interpretation of "True Love" rating may be essentially uninfluenced by the cognitive shifts associated with subjects' interpretation of the extent to which their love experiences conformed to their personal ideal, or to the romantic ideal. This finding may therefore indicate that subjects' assessments of "True Love" is represented by a cognitive schema which may be correlated with their personal ideal, but which consists of a variety of other elements that were uninfluenced by the experimental conditions. Research comparing this concept of "True Love" with that of love ideals may shed further insight into this issue.

Subjects' ratings of the extent to which they considered their personal ideal to conform to the romantic ideal (COMPPIRI) were also not affected by the cognitive framework conditions. It is possible that the location of this scale within the
experimental design may account for the lack of differences found between the groups. Since all subjects were requested to provide ratings to the COMPPIRI scale after they had been exposed to both cognitive framework conditions, the differential impact of these conditions at this point may have been minimized. This possibility could be easily tested in further research by manipulating the position of this scale within the experimental design.

In summary, the use of the assimilation-accommodation model as described has been provided as a conceptual framework in order to interpret the results of this experiment. From this perspective, subjects' cognitions concerning their love experiences can be simultaneously understood as being highly responsive to the influence of external stimuli, and as important determinants of how those stimuli are interpreted. This provides indirect support therefore, for the utility of the personal construction of love as a useful heuristic for "making sense" of the process by which people interpret their love experiences.

Love ideals and the process of change. This process model provides an explanation as to why people's interpretations of their love experience changes over time. Additionally, this issue of change also offers another perspective on the relational quality of love which has been discussed previously. The perspective being referred to at this point is concerned
with the concept of love as arising between two people. Rather than considering love solely from the perspective of one person therefore, it can also be meaningfully understood as developing in the relationship itself. Lee (1973) provides a useful observation in this regard:

A lover may begin a relationship with actions and ideas about loving which are identified as primarily typical of a certain kind of love, for example, storge. But in response to a partner whose way of thinking and acting in love are predominantly ludic, he may be drawn into altering his approach to love so that he becomes more typical of storgic ludus than of "pure" storge. In time, with a number of experiences, he may become a typical ludic lover. Then for the first time, a encounter with a typically erotic lover may open a whole new concept of loving to him. (p.23)

What this issue reflects is not only that an individual's style of loving may change over time, but importantly, that how a person loves at any given point in time, is fundamentally dependent on the other's style of loving. From this position, it could also be assumed that the other's style of loving would likewise be modified in interaction with the first individual, which would in turn impact on the other's style and vice versa, in a constantly evolving process. As this example serves to demonstrate, while it may be possible to consider love in terms of one person's style of loving, this expression can also be understood as being determined in the reciprocal interplay between lovers.
From this position, there is a significant difference between viewing the interpretation of love in relation to one's experiences, to another's style of loving, or to a cultural norm, "as if" these experiences, the other's style of loving, or the cultural norm existed independent of those doing the interpretation. It is only in terms of the dynamic relational process that some flexibility is provided in terms of accounting for why the ideals, the people who supposedly posses those ideal, and the culture which supposedly provides those ideals, change. It is this lack of process, of the "emergent quality of love" as described by Csikzentmihalyi (1980), which is not captured in the concept of the romantic ideal as a cultural paradigm.

As argued in this paper, the theoretical notion that culture serves as a source of emotional norms is acceptable providing that the implicit assumptions of this particular framework is clearly recognized. The relationship between cultural norms and one's experiences of love has in fact been articulated by Berscheid and Walster (1974); "By the time one reaches adolescence, he has learned cultural norms concerning categories of stimuli (situations) that produce specific emotions. He has been painstakingly taught what the emotions "feel" like" (p.373). These writers however, also point out that there are a number of personal factors which also contribute to
this labelling process and which must be considered in any attempt to understand how one interprets their love experience.

There have been a variety of researchers who have in fact considered the impact of personal factors on one's interpretations of love. For example, this approach has been undertaken in research examining factors such as locus of control (Dion & Dion, 1973; Lester, Edge, Kawich and Lee, 1983), self-esteem (Dion & Dion, 1975), and measures of androgyny and self-disclosure (Lester, Brazill, Ellis & Guerin, 1984) relative to people's interpretations of love. Additionally, differences between male and female interpretations of love have received a great deal of attention as exemplified in the studies by Coombs and Kenkle (1966), Kephart (1967), Kanin, Davidson & Scheck (1970), Dion & Dion (1973), Rubin (1973), and Hill, Rubin & Peplau (1976).

However, while some researchers have stressed the impact of cultural norms and others have stressed the impact of personal variables on one's interpretations of love, the significance of the reciprocal impact of these two concepts relative to the concept of love has essentially been neglected in the psychological research in this area. Before expanding on this relational issue in terms of the personal construction of love, one further source of information concerning subjects' interpretive processes still needs to be examined.
Underlying Dimensions of the Interpretations of Love.

The interpretive process by which people make sense of their love experiences is unquestionably a complicated process. In an attempt to simplify the relationships among the numerous variables in this study, a factor analysis was conducted. This analysis revealed three separate factors referred to as the Personal Factor, the Romantic Factor, and Time. The significance of each of these factors relative to subjects' interpretations of their love experiences is discussed in the following section.

The Personal Factor The items which loaded significantly on this factor consisted of the "True Love" ratings (.86), Intensity ratings (.77), and the personal ideal ratings (.77). This pattern of item loadings indicates that when subjects are requested to rate the degree to which their most intense experience of love conforms to their personal ideal, they generally tend to utilize similar parameters as those used in the interpretation of the "intensity" of that experience, or the degree to which they consider it to have been a "True Love" experience. Thus, if subjects do not interpret that experience as being intense, or as a "True Love" experience, they are unlikely to consider it as being close to their personal ideal. This relationship however, does not indicate a causal connection between these items. It would be equally meaningful to say that when subjects interpret a love experience as intense, and as
being close to their personal ideal, they are also likely to consider it as being "True Love".

On the basis of these results then, it is concluded that subjects' perception of their most intense experience as True Love, and the perceived degree of intensity of that experience are each reflective in some way of the degree to which subjects consider that experience as conforming to their personal ideal.

Romantic Factor. The Romantic Factor is comprised of three items: scores on the Knox and Sporakowski (1968) "Attitudes towards love" scale (.65), conformity ratings of the extent to which subjects' most intense experience of love conformed to the romantic ideal (.74), and COMPPIRI ratings; the extent to which subjects considered their personal ideal to be in conformance to the romantic ideal (.78).

Considering the high item loading of scores on the Knox and Sporakowski (1966) "Attitudes Towards Love" scale on the Romantic Factor, this seems to indicate that when subjects' are requested to interpret the degree to which their most intense experience of love conformed to the romantic ideal, their interpretation is indeed reflective of their attitudes towards romantic love. Apparently however, irrespective of one's attitudes towards romantic love this is not an important element in terms of the degree to subjects interpret their most intense experience of love as conforming to their personal ideal, the
extent to which it could be considered as "True Love", or the degree of intensity of that experience.

The high item loading for COMPPRII ratings on this factor initially suggests that those subjects who interpreted their most intense experience of love as being in high conformance to the romantic ideal, also considered their personal ideal to be in high conformance to the romantic ideal. On the basis of this finding however, it would be expected that a high correlation would exist between subjects' ratings on the personal ideal scale and those of the romantic ideal scale. Yet as discussed previously, no significant correlation was found between these two ratings. What this seems to indicate is that the basis on which subjects interpreted the relationship between these two ideals as measured on the COMPPRII scale was qualitatively different from their interpretation of the degree to they interpreted their experiences as having conformed to each of these two ideals.

**Time** The third factor, consisting of subjects' age, number of times in love, and time since most intense experience, was called "Time". The relationship among these items suggests first, that as one grows older the cumulative number of times that one will experience a love relationship will increase. This finding is not at all surprising since the number of opportunities to meet new people and the amount of time
available to establish a love relationship also increases with age.

Secondly, this factor suggests that younger people are more likely to interpret their most intense experience of love as having occurred within a shorter amount of time than are older people. Thus, while increasing age allows for a greater number of opportunities for love experiences, it is likely that there will be an increasingly longer amount of times between experiences which are interpreted as being highly intense. Essentially this factor suggests that people are more likely to have a number of intense love relationships when they are young, and much fewer though longer relationships as they grow older. However, this also suggests that the experience of romantic love does not disappear with increasing age. As discussed by Hunt (1959):

Everyone knows that adolescents are romantic, but even for the long-married couple, love not only involves comradeship and mutual interests, but tenderness, moments of intensity, waves of compassion, joyous sexual play, and spells of candlelight and soft music. That the middle-aged do all this is the best kept secret of our era; neither movie makers, fiction writers, nor advertising men can bring themselves to admit that any but the young can feel and act so. (p.370)

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Given the limits with which generalizations can be made to the population at large on the basis of data gathered from a university population of psychology students, the relationship
between the personal ideal and people's interpretation of their love relationship needs to be assessed relative to a more diverse population sample. Also, this study, similar to that of Averill and Boothroyd (1977), examined the various responses of individuals irrespective of their age groups. The youngest subject in the present research was eighteen, and only fifteen of the two hundred subjects were over the age of forty. Gathering information on subjects in specific age groups may provide some useful information on people's interpretations of their love experiences in terms of both their personal and romantic ideal.

Relative to the cognitive frameworks, the order of presentation of the romantic ideal versus the personal ideal and the descriptions of the styles of loving versus the True Love ratings were the major stimulus conditions considered in this experiment. It is possible, given the apparent modifiability of subjects' responses on these measures, that other variables may have also influenced subjects' cognitive representations. For example, the "Attitudes Towards Love" scale (Knox and Sporakowski, 1968) was designed to measure the degree to which people's attitudes towards love fall towards the romantic or the companionate side. It may be that this measurement device also impacts significantly on subjects' interpretations of their love experience. Manipulation of the order of presentation of this measure should be attempted in order to examine this possibility, since researchers which use this or similar
measurement devices may not recognize its potential influence on subjects' responses to subsequent experimental measures.

In terms of the particular measuring instruments in this research, several points should be noted. First, future research should consider the use of parallel scales in order to investigate how confident people are in their ratings of these scales. For example, it is possible that people who provided low conformity ratings to any of these scales may have been unsure of the extent to which their most intense experience of love conformed to these measures. In addition, these parallel measures could also be used to obtain reliability estimates of the scales used in the present research. Second, while Averill and Boothroyd (1977) conceived of the romantic ideal as consisting of several component parts, it is not at all clear how well the story provided by these researchers reflected these different aspects. The use of different scenarios which subjects could rate in terms of these components might help to clarify the validity of the position taken by these researchers. Third, in spite of discussions concerning the romantic ideal, no study to date has attempted to determine what people consider the romantic ideal to be, or on what basis they might make such an assessment. Perhaps a content analysis of people's description of this ideal might therefore be appropriate before further discussions concerning it's value in current day society are attempted. To this end, investigations examining idiosyncratic
variations in peoples conceptions of both the romantic ideal and their personal ideal might provide some illuminating information on this topic.

**Summary and Implications**

The theoretical model referred to as the personal construction of love has been presented as a means of describing the dynamic relational quality of love. In order to demonstrate this quality, the primary emphasis in this paper was placed on the relationship between one's experiences and interpretations of love. Using the concepts of assimilation and accommodation it was argued that a person not only interprets his or her love experiences within the parameters of an existing cognitive structure, but that this structure is also modified by that experience. It is in this interplay therefore, between one's experiences and cognitions that the personal ideal was said to develop. In this respect it was argued that people's personal ideals were highly salient in terms of how they interpreted their love experiences. The initial set of results indicated that the majority of subjects did indeed interpret their most intense experience of love as being in high conformance to their personal ideal, and that this ideal was significantly more salient than the romantic ideal in this respect. In addition, a significant correlation was found between subjects' interpretation of the degree to which they considered their most intense love experience as being "True Love", the degree to
which they considered that experience to have been "intense", and the degree to which that experience conformed to their personal ideal. No significant correlation was found between "True Love" ratings and "intensity" ratings relative to the romantic ideal.

In addition to establishing the salience of the personal ideal, this ideal, in conjunction with the romantic ideal, was also used to empirically demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between people's ideals and their experiences. To accomplish this the presentation of these ideals as well as descriptions of styles of loving were arranged in four different order conditions. The results of this analysis indicated that the manner in which subjects interpreted the extent to which their most intense experiences of love conformed to these love ideals depended significantly on the order in which these ideals were presented to them. It was also argued that subjects' cognitions concerning their love experiences were not only influenced by the "external data" which had been presented to them, but that their interpretations of this "external data" was also influenced by their cognitions. Since the cognitive framework of the personal ideal appeared to exert a greater effect on subjects cognitions than the romantic ideal, this was interpreted as further support for the salience of the personal ideal.
A factor analysis was also conducted in order to simplify the relationship among the variables in this study. This analysis yielded three separate factors which were called the Personal Factor, the Romantic Factor, and Time. The item loadings for the Personal Factor indicated that subjects' interpretations of "True Love", "Intensity" and their personal ideal were all made on the basis of a common judgement. As indicated in earlier findings however, it would seem that while subjects' interpretation of their experience as "True Love" and the interpretation of this experience relative to their personal ideal may share a common basis, these cognitions may also differ in certain, though as of yet, undetermined ways.

Relative to the Romantic Factor, it was concluded that subjects' interpretations of their most intense love experiences relative to the romantic ideal were indeed associated with their "attitudes" towards romantic love. However, these interpretations were not associated with subjects' assessment of the extent to which their most intense love experiences conformed to their personal ideal, the degree to which they could be considered "True Love", or the "intensity" of that experience.

Finally, in terms of the Time Factor, it was concluded that the experience of romantic love is not restricted to the young. Romantic love has often been associated with immaturity, narcissism, falseness, and as reflective of a frustrated need
state. This Time Factor suggests however, that the ability to experience romantic love may also require a great deal of maturity, sensitivity, and caring from the partners; a condition which would seem to require a considerable amount of time and experience in order to develop.

The "Personal" Construction of Love

In his presidential address, Harlow (1958) declared that, "So far as love is concerned, psychologists have failed in their mission. The little we know about love does not transcend simple observation, and the little we write about it has been written better by poets and novelists (p. 673). According to Hunt (1959) however, "Poets have written more about love than almost anyone else and are somehow thought to be experts on it, but they continually contradict each other in hopelessly irreconcilable terms" (p. 1). He further suggests that while poets are "a notoriously flighty lot", even philosophers have come no closer to agreeing with each other on the ultimate truth of love. Perhaps then it is not so surprising that the leading researchers of present day continue with this pessimistic note concerning our understanding of love. Almost twenty years after the previous comments, Berscheid and Walster (1974), offered the following statement; "Can scientists do better than those who have provided only fragmentary and contradictory information about the nature of love? Perhaps. But most would agree this is
a promise for the future, rather than a feat of the past" (p.365).

The literature on love is replete with explanations as to why this topic is so exceptionally difficult to understand and to research. While numerous issues concerning this point have been raised throughout this paper, there is one common theme which been repeatedly stressed. Specifically, this theme emphasizes that love is a process, and that it therefore arises and should be considered, within the context of relationships. It is in keeping with this notion that the love ideal as emphasized in this paper has been considered as a dynamic, interpretive process, one which is subject to continual transformation in the interplay between individuals and their world.

One approach to discussing the relational quality of love is to provide a distinction between the term "personal" as used in the personal construction of love model, with the term "individual". The notion of the individual has been described by Sullivan (1984) as being that of an "absolute", divorced from any form of group membership beyond itself. He refers to this particular emphasis as "egocentric", where the frame of reference is shifted from a "you-and-I" to an "I". The personal world in contrast is "embedded in larger structural totalities that are impersonal in nature but nonetheless affect the viability of the personal world" (p. 53). This is a conception
of the person that makes it distinct from the concept of the individual. A person, and a personal world, exists as a relational totality, an I-thou.

Thus the concept of personal as used in this paper represents the notion that people exist, and can only exist, in a world of relationships. It is this relational quality to which the personal construction of love refers, since people love, and can only love within a world of relationships. The notion of a relational quality between persons and their world can also be described in a slightly less abstract manner. For example, as described in the following statement by Sullivan (1984):

The world itself and people within it are relational. By this we mean that to know or identify persons, things, or events, we have to identify or contrast them with other persons, things, or events. In order to come to know and understand something, we usually attempt to identify and contrast it with something that we already find familiar. (p.2)

This process of coming to know the unfamiliar by reference to the familiar is compatible with the notion of assimilation as previously introduced. Accordingly, our personal construction of love can be understood as being "created" within this relational context. It is to this half of the process that much of the research in the area of love has adressed. Yet the concept of the personal construction of love further recognizes the "creative" aspect inherent in this relational model through the amalgamation of both metaphors of assimilation and accommodation.
Love, as viewed within the personal construction of love, has also been described as a process which arise in a relationship between lovers, and cannot be properly attributed to either of the individuals. A similar point has been made by Martin Buber (1958) in his discussion of an "I-Thou" relationship:

Love does not cling to an I, as if the You were merely its "content" or object. It is between I and You. Whoever does not know this ... does not know love, even if he should ascribe to it the feelings that he lives through, experiences, enjoys, and expresses. (p. 66)

Thus the notion of the relational quality of love can theoretically be considered from many different levels of analysis. This research has investigated the concept of love from the perspective of the relationship between one's cognitions and experiences. It has also been briefly discussed in terms of the relationship between lovers.

Without this relational concept, the subject of love can easily become rather dry and meaningless, which relative to the reported experiences of people who consider themselves to be in love would seem to be a rather odd state of affairs. It may be that love will always remain an elusive topic of investigation just as it appears to have done since the time of Aristotle. However, whatever this "thing" called love might be, it does appear to have changed dramatically over the centuries, at least in terms of our conceptual understanding. As argued in this paper, love also differs considerably depending on who is experiencing it, and with whom one is experiencing it with. In conclusion therefore, love can be considered as being importantly linked to almost any aspect of the person or social world which one decides to select. It may be precisely because
of this indeterminate number of relationships that the topic of love poses such a challenge for investigators. Interestingly, with the increasingly rapid advances occurring in our society it may be that our understandings of love will never be able to keep pace with such change. Fortunately for those who are in love, one does not need to understand or explain in order to experience. Yet for those who fail to appreciate the relational quality of love, it may always come too late.
APPENDIX A

LOVE QUESTIONNAIRE
Love Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions.

1) Age: ___
2) Male: ___ Female: ___
3) Marital Status: Single ___ Married ___ Divorced ___ Separated ___
   Common Law ___ Widowed ___
4) What is your primary Ethnic/Cultural background (i.e. Polish,
   Italian, American, Chinese, Spanish)
   Please specify: ________
Please read each statement carefully and circle the number which you believe most adequately represents your opinion.

1. Strongly Agree (definitely yes)
2. Mildly Agree (I believe so)
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree.
4. Mildly Disagree (probably not)
5. Strongly Disagree (definitely not)

1. When you are really in love, you just aren't interested in anyone else.
2. Love doesn't make sense. It just is.
3. When you fall head-over-heels-in-love, it's sure to be the real thing.
4. Love isn't anything you can really study; it is too highly emotional to be subject to scientific observation.
5. To be in love with someone without marriage is a tragedy.
6. When love hits you know it.
7. Common interests are really unimportant; as long as each of you is truly in love you will adjust.
8. It doesn't matter if you marry after you have known your partner for only a short time as long as you know you are in love.
9. As long as two people love each other, the religious differences they have really do not matter.
10. You can love someone even though you do not like any of that person's friends.
11. When you are in love you are usually in a daze.
12. Love at first sight is often the deepest and most enduring type of love.
13. Usually there are only one or two people in the world whom you could really love and could be really happy with.
14. Regardless of other factors, if you truly love another person, that is enough to marry that person.

15. It is necessary to be in love with the one you marry to be happy.

16. When you are separated from the love partner, the rest of the world seems dull and unsatisfying.

17. Parents should not advise their children whom to date; they have forgotten what it is like to be in love.

18. Love is regarded as a primary motive for marriage, which is good.

19. When you love a person, you think of marrying that person.

20. Somewhere there is an ideal mate for most people. The problem is just finding that one.

21. Jealously usually varies directly with love; that is, the more in love you are, the greater the tendency for you to become jealous.

22. Love is best described as an exciting thing rather than a calm thing.

23. There are probably only a few people that any one person can fall in love with.

24. When you are in love, your judgement is usually not too clear.

25. Love often comes but once in a lifetime.

26. You can't make yourself love someone; it just comes or it doesn't.

27. Differences in social class and religion are of small importance in selecting a mate.

28. Day dreaming usually comes along with being in love.

29. When you are in love, you don't have to ask yourself a bunch of questions about love; you will just know that you are in love.
Before continuing, it is important that you take one or two minutes to recall those experiences in which you consider yourself to have been in love. You will not be asked for any personal details of these experiences so try to allow all of your thoughts and feelings to flow freely. When you are ready please answer the following questions.

1) How many times have you been in love.
   (Please circle) 0 1 2 3 - 4 5 (or more).

2) If you currently consider yourself to be in love, how long would you estimate it has been since the start of this relationship. Please check the most appropriate answer.
   1) Less than 1 month __ 4) 1-2 years __ 7) 4-5 years __
   2) 1-6 months __ 5) 2-3 years __
   3) 6-12 months __ 6) 3-4 years __

3) If you do not currently consider yourself to be in love, how long would you estimate it has been since you have been in a love relationship. Please check the most appropriate answer.
   1) Less than 1 month __ 4) 1-2 years __ 7) 4-5 years __
   2) 1-6 months __ 5) 2-3 years __
   3) 6-12 months __ 6) 3-4 years __

4) How would you rate your most intense experience of love?
   (Please circle)
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Slightly (Moderately (Extremely Intense) Intense) Intense)

5) How much time would you estimate has elapsed since your most intense experience of love. Please check the most appropriate answer.
   1) Less than 1 month __ 4) 1-2 years __ 7) 4-5 years __
   2) 1-6 months __ 5) 2-3 years __
   3) 6-12 months __ 6) 3-4 years __
Please read the following description

On Monday, Corporal Floyd Johnson, 23, and the then Ellen Skinner, 19, total strangers, boarded a train at San Francisco and sat down across the aisle from each other. Johnson didn't cross the aisle until Wednesday, but his bride said, "I'd already made up my mind to say 'yes' if he asked me to marry him." "We did most of the talking with our eyes," Johnson explained. Thursday the couple got off the train in Omaha with plans to be married. Because they would need to have the consent of their parents if they were married in Nebraska, they crossed the river to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where they were married Friday.

This true life account has been selected in order to represent a "romantic ideal". In literature, the relationship which existed between Romeo and Juliet could also serve as an example of a romantic ideal. Keeping your most intense love experience in mind, and using the following scale, please rate the degree to which you consider your most intense experience of love conformed to this romantic ideal. On this scale a rating of (1) signifies that your most intense experience of love was not at all in conformance with this romantic ideal while a score of (10) signifies that your most intense experience of love was in complete conformance with this romantic ideal.

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According to research conducted by several prominent psychologists, each individual has their own particular style of loving. In fact, these psychologists have distinguished six styles of loving. There is no good or bad style. None of these styles are more or less mature than any other and none are more or less real than any other. Each is a valid way of loving another person. Several key characteristics are associated with each style of loving and these will now be described to you. Please read these carefully because when you are finished you will be asked to rank them in terms of how closely you think your own style of loving compares to each of these descriptions.

STYLE A.- People who score high on this style of loving believe that love at first sight is possible; if not mandatory. Type A lovers remember exactly the day they met, the time they first kissed, the day, hour, and place of their first sex; and they expect their partners to remember and celebrate the anniversaries of such occasions. This type of lover is certain he or she is in love because the partner has exactly the skin, fragrance, hair, voice, body build, and eye colour he or she likes.

The type A lover wants to know everything about the beloved from the first moment of their meeting, all of his or her joys and sorrows, who else he or she has loved in the past, how much and in what ways. At the same time this type of lover wants to reveal everything to the loved one - what he or she dreamed last night, what happened on the bus that day.

If type A lovers do not get jealous it is because they are rarely apart. There is thorough commitment. A type A lover can go quite comfortably without falling in love, sometimes for a long time, but when cupid strikes it is hard, fast, and total. Breakups are explosive and painful.

STYLE B- This lover plays love affairs as he or she plays games or puzzles - to win. They hate dependency, either in himself/herself, or in others. They shy away from commitment of any sort and do not like to be taken for granted. A type B lover enjoys strategies and may even have two, three or even four lovers at any one time. They may even create a fictional lover in order to discourage a real lover's hopes for a permanent relationship. He or she avoids long range plans and is careful not to date the same person often enough to create the illusion of a stable relationship.

A type B lover would prefer to find a new sexual partner rather than work out sexual problems with an old one. A type B lovers usually enjoys love affairs and hence rarely regrets them unless the threat of dependency or commitment becomes too great. Physical appearance of the sexual partner is less important than other qualities such as self-sufficiency, and lack of demanding behavior. He or she is never possessive or jealous. A type B lover never reveals all of him or herself nor demands such revelations by partners.
STYLE C- The person with this style of loving tends to be realistically aware of their own worth and may even maximize his or her own assets before commencing the search for a partner. For example, a male type C lover may decide not to become involved with any females until he has 10,000 dollars in the bank or has a secure job.

These lovers are extremely rational. The idea of love at first sight makes no sense to them. They reason that too many questions about the future remain unanswered until two people have done considerable self-revelation. Although they tend to be sensible, type C lovers are far from calculating sexually. Finding the right partner allows such a person to relax, enjoy the relationship and care deeply.

Those who understand love this way believe that the core of every love relationship is the practical capability of the partners to satisfy each other's goals, values and wishes. A type C lover finds much contentment in helping the loved one to fulfill his or her potential; for example such a lover might make sure that the beloved finishes school, asks for deserved promotions, and so on.

STYLE D- True type D lovers are likely to be emotional and intense in everything they do; loving is no exception. This type of lover may be unable to eat, sleep, or even think logically around the loved one. They have peaks of excitement but also depths of misery, with very few periods without a high or a low. He or she cannot tolerate loss of contact with their loved one even for short periods of time. A type D lover is typically crushed by either real or fancied rejection. They have a tendency to review their past love affairs in some detail and speculate on what it was that led to their termination.

These type of lovers see passion as a natural part of being in love and may interpret an absence of emotional highs and lows as signifying that one is not in love. Type D lovers believe that no one should have to share a partner with anyone else. They usually stress the importance of sexual exclusivity in the relationship, and the thought of a partner even entertaining the notion that another might be attractive may be quite unsettling to them. These type of lovers do not tolerate separation well.

STYLE E- This type of lover is forgiving. They believe that true love is shown by caring more for one's partner's welfare than for one's own. Love is not martyrdom but, rather, an unconditional caring, nurturing, giving, forgiving, and understanding of one's partner. For example, a type E lover would be more likely to help his or her lover to get medical attention for a venereal disease contracted from someone else than to be angry or punitive towards the beloved for having a sexual relation with another.

A type E lover places such a priority on the happiness of his or her beloved that they would give up the loved one if that would seem to give him or her a greater chance for happiness elsewhere.
A type E lover exhibits an extremely high degree of patience with the behaviors of his or her lover. The ideal type E lover would wait indefinitely for their beloved to be released from prison or a mental hospital and would tolerate the behaviors of an alcoholic or drug-addicted spouse. A type E lover is always supportive of his or her partner.

TYPE F. These individuals believe that love means slowly growing to care for another person. Building a marriage on a close association over a long period of time is usually important to a type F lover. Sexual intimacy usually comes relatively late in the relationship, is accepted comfortably and is satisfying. He or she does not fantasize finding some other - perhaps unknown but ideal - lover in the future and abandoning the loved one.

A type F lover is not a person bored by routine house activity, but is more likely to find it comfortable and relaxing. These type of lovers enjoy the security of being able to predict each others responses to their behaviors. If these lovers were to break up they would probably remain close and caring friends.

They believe that persons in love ought to respect each others personal's dignity and do not see differences of opinion or arguments as threatening to the relationship. They are likely to believe that when their love has matured it will be permanent.

Please rank order all of these styles of loving from 1 to 6. A rank of 1 should be assigned to that style of loving which most closely approximates your own style of loving, a rank of 2 to the next closest description and so on until all six styles have been ranked. In this manner a rank of 6 will be assigned to that style of loving which you consider to be least like your own style of loving. It is important that each style of loving be given a different rank even if you feel that two styles of loving are fairly close to each other.

RANK (1 = most similar)
(6 = least similar)

STYLE A  
Style B  
Style C  
Style D  
Style E  
Style F  

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Keeping your most intense love experience in mind, and using the following scale, please rate the degree to which you consider your most intense love experience to have been "true love". On this scale a rating of (1) signifies that you consider that your most intense love experience was not at all "true love" while a score of (10) signifies that your most intense love relationship was absolutely true love.

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1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
In this section we are interested in the degree to which you consider that your most intense experience of love conformed to your personal conception of an ideal love experience. Please think carefully about this for a moment. Then, using the following scale, rate the degree to which you consider your most intense experience of love conformed to your personal conception of an ideal love experience. On this scale a rating of (1) signifies that your most intense love experience was not at all in conformance with your personal ideal, while a score of (10) signifies that your most intense love relationship was in complete conformance with your personal ideal.

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As a final question, please rate the degree to which you consider your personal ideal of romantic love to be in conformance with the romantic ideal as depicted in this questionnaire. On this scale a rating of (1) signifies that you consider that your personal ideal of romantic love is not at all in conformance with the romantic ideal as depicted, while a rating of (10) signifies that you consider your personal ideal to be in complete conformance with the romantic ideal as depicted.

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REFERENCES


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