

2.1 Culture

The role of Social Sciences nowadays is to be an important part of the understanding of the world and the human nature. During decades and throughout the world, different scientists have been working on the development of concepts that allow us to collect acute information and classify them according to their interest and their field of work. One of these concepts that acknowledge our understanding of the world is the concept of culture.

In Anthropology, for instance, Tylor (1881) made it clear that culture... "is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". This conception of culture served anthropologists well for some 50 years. With the increasing maturity of anthropological science, further reflections upon the nature of their subject matter and concepts led to a multiplication and diversification of definitions of culture. In *Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions* (1952), U.S. anthropologists A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn cited 164 definitions of culture, ranging from "learned behaviour" to "ideas in the mind", "a logical construct", "a statistical fiction", "a psychic defense mechanism" and so on. The definition -or the conception- of culture that is preferred by Kroeber and Kluckhohn and also by many other great anthropologists is that culture is an abstraction or, more specifically, "an abstraction from behaviour."

These conceptions have defects or shortcomings. The existence of behavioral traditions -that is, patterns of behaviour transmitted by social rather than biologic hereditary means- has definitely been established for nonhuman animals. "Ideas in the mind" become significant in society only by being expressed in language, acts, and objects. "A logical construct" or "a statistical fiction" is not specific enough to be useful. The conception of culture as an abstraction led, first, to a questioning of the reality of culture (abstractions were regarded as imperceptible) and, second, to a denial of its existence; thus, the subject matter of nonbiological anthropology, "culture," was defined out of existence, and without real, objective things and events in the external world there can be no science.

Kroeber and Kluckhohn were led to their conclusion that culture is an abstraction by reasoning that if culture is behaviour it, ipso facto, becomes the subject matter of psychology; therefore, they conclude that culture "is an abstraction from concrete behaviour but is not itself behaviour." But what, one might ask, is an abstraction of a marriage ceremony or a pottery bowl, to use Kroeber's and Kluckhohn's examples? This question poses difficulties that were not adequately met by these authors. A solution was perhaps provided by Leslie A. White in the essay "The concept of culture" (1959). The issue is not really whether culture is real or an abstraction, he reasoned; the issue is the context of the scientific interpretation. Hence, we interpret culture depending on our interests, our own cultural backgrounds, and our subject of study.

In such cases, what is needed is a term that defines culture precisely in its particular manifestations for the purpose of scientific study, and for this the term sociocultural system has been proposed. It is defined as the culture possessed by a distinguishable and autonomous group (society) of human beings, such as a tribe or a modern nation.

Cultural elements may pass freely from one system to another (cultural diffusion), but the boundary provided by the distinction between one system and another (Japanese, Latin American, European) makes it possible to study the system at any given time or over a period of time.

Every human society, therefore, has its own sociocultural system: a particular and unique expression of human culture as a whole. Every sociocultural system possesses the components of human culture as a whole -namely, technological, sociological, and ideological elements. But sociocultural systems vary widely in their structure and organization. These variations are attributable to differences among physical habitats and the resources that they offer or withhold for human use; to the range of possibilities inherent in various areas of activity, such as language or the manufacture and use of tools, and to the degree of development. Thus, each culture should be understood and appreciated in terms of itself.

Therefore, for the purpose of our study we understand culture as "a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. Culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from one's social environment, not from one's genes. Culture should be distinguished from human nature on one side, and from an individual's personality on the other" (Hofstede, 1991 p.5).

Indeed, every human being, to be considered as pertaining to a specific culture, has to live through a process of socialization which means "The acquisition of the values and practices belonging to a culture, by participating in that culture" (Hofstede, op.cit). The values are considered as "Broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affair over others" (Hofstede,op.cit p.8), and the norms "are the standards for values that exist within a group or category of people. In the case of the desirable, the norm is absolute, pertaining to what is ethically right. In the case of the desired, the norm is statistical: it indicates the choices actually made by the majority. "The desirable relates more to ideology, the desired to practical matters" (Hofstede, op.cit p.9-10). Additionally, in every culture we can recognize a series of symbols: "words, pictures, gestures, or objects which carry a particular meaning only recognized as such by those who share a culture" (Hofstede, op.cit). Thus, cultures provide people with a set of symbols that function as lenses through which they can understand their environment. These lenses are important because they provide people with similar understandings of the world and because they provide people with a way to interpret ambiguous information. Consequently, culture affects cognitions, emotions, and motivations.

In the core of these concepts, researchers have identified two types of cultures named as Individualist and Collectivist. To be consequent with the present research, these are the concepts used in this paper. They made reference to a shared prospect in values, norms and symbols among a wider range of people and beyond boundaries of space and time. Moreover, when we name the cultures as Individualist or Collectivist, we appoint several traits within the frame of social relations: family, friends, workmates, and so forth. We have distinguished the classification of the culture in terms of social relations with other conceptions that refer more specifically to a technological and economical development, political order, time boundaries, etc. (See Table 1.1).

Individualist and Collectivist are opposites; together, they form one of the dimensions of national cultures. Individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family only.

Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama (1992) argued that culture has an impact on people's self-construals. "In most western, independent cultures, there is a belief in the inherent separateness of people. These cultures value individuality, uniqueness, and independence. Most non-western, interdependent cultures, on the other hand, insist on the fundamental connectedness of human beings. The self is defined in relation to ancestors, family, friends, and workmates. These cultures emphasize conformity, harmonious interdependence, and attending to and fitting in with others" (Hatfield and Rapson, 1996 p.11-2).

"Independents focus most on their own thoughts and feelings. Interdependents, who are primarily concerned with maintaining a connection with others, are constantly aware of other's needs, desires and goals" (Hatfield and Rapson, op.cit p.12).

"Triandis and coworkers (1990) asserted that individualists are good at meeting strangers, forming new groups, and getting along with a wide range of people. They are less good at managing long-term relationships. Collectivists, on the other hand, make a sharp distinction between in-group and out-group members. With family and friends, they are warm and cooperative. With out-group members, they are formal and non-cooperative" (Hatfield and Rapson, op.cit p.13).

Individualist in one hand and Collectivist on the other hand have their conceptions not only about relations, but also about love. I will discuss these differences in detail in the next chapter, but before I would like to establish some distinctions.

1- The major cultural groups (Individualist and Collectivist) are more similar in their views of love and sex that stereotypes suggest. Differences exist, but we must be careful not to overdo them for the sake of simplicity, drama or ideology.

Japanese psychologist Susumu Yamaguchi (1994) suggested that self-interest may underlie both individualist and collectivist sentiments. People probably learn to focus on their own needs or to sacrifice themselves for others, depending on the costs and benefits of various courses of action in a given "individualist" or "collectivist" society. Perhaps the two are not so very different after all.

2- Cultural influences can last a lifetime, but sometimes people assimilate rapidly to new circumstances, especially if a new culture proves more rewarding than the old.

3- Individual personality differences may be more powerful than cultural differences in shaping behavior. Nonetheless the influence that varying cultures do have on love, sex, and intimacy is as real and fascinating as the more unifying effects of biology and the infinitely differentiated outcomes of personality.

4- One must not be ideological, but ruthlessly truthful about the advantages/disadvantages of various cultures (Hatfield and Rapson, op.cit p.18-9)

Up to here, we have a broad picture regarded Individualist and Collectivist cultures. Despite all the literature and researches that describe their distinctive traits, in order to obtain an accurate understanding not only in terms of description but in terms of functioning also, cross-cultural researches can contribute on that. First, because they provide some sense of the social structures and processes that are found throughout the course of human relations. Our capital interest is concerning Love and Marital Relations. Second, they furnish some sense of how variable social arrangements can be when the purpose is linked with the constitution and maintenance of the family.

Table 1.1

<i>Collectivist.</i>	<i>Individualist.</i>
. People are born into extended families or other in-groups, which continue to protect them in exchange for loyalty.	. Everyone grows up to look after him/herself and his/her immediate (nuclear) family only.
. Identity is based in the social network to which one belongs.	. Identity is based in the individual.
. Harmony should always be maintained and direct confrontation avoided.	. Speaking one's mind is a characteristic of an honest person.
. Children learn to think in terms of "we".	. Children learn to think in terms of "I".
. High-context communication.	. Low context communication.
. Trespassing leads to shame and loss of face for self and group.	. Trespassing leads to guilt and loss of self-respect.
. Purpose of education is learning how to do.	. Purpose of education is learning how to learn.
. Diplomas provide entry to higher status group.	. Diplomas increase economical worth and/or self-respect.
. Relationships employer-employee is perceived in moral terms, like a family link.	. Relationships employer-employee is a contract supposed to be based on mutual advantages.
. Hiring and promotion decisions take employees in-group into account.	. Hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on skills and rules only.
. Management is management of groups.	. Management is management of individuals.
. Relationships prevail over task.	. Task prevails over relationship.

(Hofstede, 1991 p.67)

2.2 Love

2.2.1 What is love?

*Love is possible only if two persons communicate with each other
from the center of their existence...
Only in this "central experience" is human reality, only here is aliveness,
only here is the basis of love.
Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving.*

Love is a feeling shared by all the human kind. In many ancient cultures, creation myths assumed that from the beginning lovers were one. In the fifth century BC, in his Symposium, the great Greek philosopher Plato recounted the following tale: Once upon a time there were three kinds of people: men-men, women-women, and the androgynous -a union of the two. These early beings consisted essentially of two people, folded together in a spherical ball. They could walk upright or roll about, turning on their four hands and four feet like tumblers.

Eventually, these arrogant beings managed to enrage the gods. To punish them, Zeus cut them in half. From then on, each desolate half was left to wander the earth, searching for its other half. If men and women ever did meet their "better half", they were determined not to be separated ever again. They join to one another. They do not want to do anything apart. They were willing to die rather than risk separation.

Wherever any human being will be, there we will find feelings and expressions of love. But now, the next question that everyone may wonder is "What is love?" Is it a fervent passion? Is it madness? Is it the security and companion of the shared life with someone? Through the History several learned persons have been trying to answer these questions. They have attempted to explain also why you fall in love and why sometimes love vanishes. Thus, I will discuss some of these findings that enlighten the mysteries and secrets of love.

Love is a basic emotion. It comes in a variety of forms. Most scientists distinguish between two kinds of love -passionate love and companionate love. Most of us understand the difference between being "in love" with someone and "loving" them.

"Being in love" (which embodies sexual feelings) and "loving" someone (which is not necessarily associated with sexual desire). Although sexuality may not be a central feature of love, it is most definitely a central feature of the state of being in love.

Moreover, a central feature in the descriptions about love is the description of the passion.

Passionate love is marked by an urgency, which sets it apart from the routines of every day life with which, indeed, it tends to come into conflict. The emotional involvement with the other is pervasive -so strong that it may lead the individual, or both individuals, to ignore their ordinary obligations. "Passionate love has a quality of enchantment which can be religious in its fervor. Everything in the world seems suddenly fresh, yet perhaps at the same time fails to capture the individual's interest, which is so strongly bound up with the love object. On the level of the personal relations, passionate love is specifically disruptive in a similar sense to charisma; it uproots the individual from the mundane and generates a preparedness to consider

radical options as well as sacrifices. For this reason, seen from the point of view of social order and duty, it is dangerous. It is hardly surprising that passionate love has nowhere been recognized as either a necessary or sufficient basis for marriage, and in most cultures has been seen a refractory to it" (Giddens, 1992 p.38)

Passionate love is a more or less universal phenomenon. Nonetheless, Giddens makes a distinction between passionate love and romantic love. The former is more spontaneous whereas the latter is much more culturally specific.

"Together with other social changes, the spread of notions of romantic love was deeply involved with momentous transitions affecting marriage as well as other contexts of personal life. Romantic love presumes some degree of self-interrogation. How do I feel about the other? How does the other feel about me? Are our feelings "profound" enough to support a long-term involvement? Unlike amour passion, which uproots erratically, romantic love detaches individuals from wider social circumstances in a different way. It provides for a long-term life trajectory, oriented to an anticipated yet malleable future; and it creates a "shared history" that helps to separate out the marital relationship from other aspects of family organization and gives it a special primacy. From its earliest origins, romantic love raises the question of intimacy. It is incompatible with lust, and with earthy sexuality, not so much because the loved one is idealized -although this is part of the story- but because it presumes a psychic communication, a meeting of souls which is reparative in character" (Giddens, op.cit p.44).

What is clear for the moment is that sexual love, in contrast to some other forms of love, is personal and selective. It is also exclusive. Not only does the lover seek contact, including physical contact, with the beloved, and craves for reciprocity. For the lover and the beloved their relationship is not one relationship among others. It is thought of as having and being given a special, and even unique position in their lives. It becomes their center, the single center of two lives.

An exclusive love, then, is not one that will not tolerate the beloved's independence, her having a life of her own. What it will not tolerate is her sharing with someone else or others what belongs to the intercourse of love. For where it is thus shared, that intercourse cannot longer be what it is, what it is meant to be. It is the mutual unwillingness of the parties to share it with anyone else that preserves the intimacy of their relationship. "This intimacy comes from the fact that the lover and the beloved give themselves to each other without reservation. Each is willing to entrust to the other what is innermost to his or her soul. This trust belongs to or is part of the love each feels for the other. It is the inability to trust that turns sexual love into a jealous and possessive passion" (Dilman, 1998 p.53).

Another conception about love, or more properly, how we know that we are in love, is gave us by Francesco Alberoni (1986). The more of the follow signs you feel, the more in love you are likely to be. Some of the main signs include the feeling that you have met the person who is truly right for you; the feeling that, at some level, you have been reborn; the feeling that material possessions just no longer matter as much to you; the feeling of wanting to share all with your beloved; and the feeling that you would like to fuse your spirit with that of the loved one. Of course, these feelings can be viewed only subjectively. They are strongly bounded to the aware -that the person

who experiences these feelings- has about them, although not necessarily indicate an indefinite future of the relationship.

Arising explanations about what love is are described by the father of the psychoanalysis; Sigmund Freud (1973). In his theory about the internal functioning of the psychic he considered sexuality as at once pleasure-seeking and also directed to an object. When it is directed to a person, we have here the makings of sexual love. He further believes that all love is essentially sexual in its character. In other words, for instance, such things those are as far apart as friendship and the love of God are seen as forms of sexual love. It is the "libido", the energy of human sexuality, which infuses sexual love. It has two "currents", namely sensuality and affection. Normally in sexual love these are fused together; the character which each has in separation from the other is transformed and together they constitute a whole. That is how in sexual love, sex and love are at once with one another. But when sexual love contains nothing but tenderness this is a consequence of the repression of the libido's sensual current. Freud considers such love as lame in that it cannot achieve its aim, namely physical union. The libido however, can take different aims; it enters into our other loves and interests, moving us to pursue their aims. Freud calls this "sublimation".

This is the gist of Freud's conception of all love as essentially sexual in character. In other words Freud regards carnal love as primary and spiritual love as sublimated form of it. In the conception about love I argue that sex, which indisputably plays an important role in all animal life, assumes a new dimension in human life for which there is no logical space in animal life. In human life, love contains the elements which, when blended together with other characteristics inherent to the human being such as intimacy, communication and commitment, are a creative force in life.

It is apparent to us that trying to separate love from sexuality is like trying to separate fraternal twins: they are certainly not identical, but, nevertheless, they are strongly bonded. Love and sexuality are strongly linked to each other and to both the physical and spiritual aspects of the human condition.

A different conception about love is offered by Erich Fromm (1979). For Fromm love is sought in order to obtain the solution it offers to the existential problem which human separateness poses for all human beings. It is one solution for this problem among several others and the most satisfactory of them. But this is true only in the case of mature love. For with such love "the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two" (Fromm, 1979 p.24). Maturity, however, is something that takes inner work and mature love, therefore, is something that individuals learn. The learning involves coming to self-knowledge -learning to accept disappointment, criticism, contradiction, frustration, loyalty, gratitude, generosity, patience, the tolerance of faults and imperfections in the loved one, learning to consider and care for others, and learning to give up fantasy-thinking and to respect reality. This is the process of growing up, and that means of growing out of a childish mentality, a dependent affectivity, and a self-centered orientation to others. Hence, love requires maturity.

Along the explanations of the different components of love it seems likely indispensable to mention some characteristics such as: Passion as an urgency that claims to be satisfied immediately by physical contact with the beloved one;

exclusiveness during the time of the relation; a strong feeling of wishing to be with each other, and maturity regarded personal issues.

Probably, one of the conceptions more complete about love, is given by R.Sternberg (1998). In his analysis of this phenomenon he emphasizes three major components of love: Passion, Intimacy, and Decision/Commitment. This conception has served as a starting point in several researches about love and couple relationship. Because of its importance I want to analyze this theory in detail.

2.2.2 Triangular Model of Love

In Sternberg's conception of love this is viewed as a triangle.

(Figure)

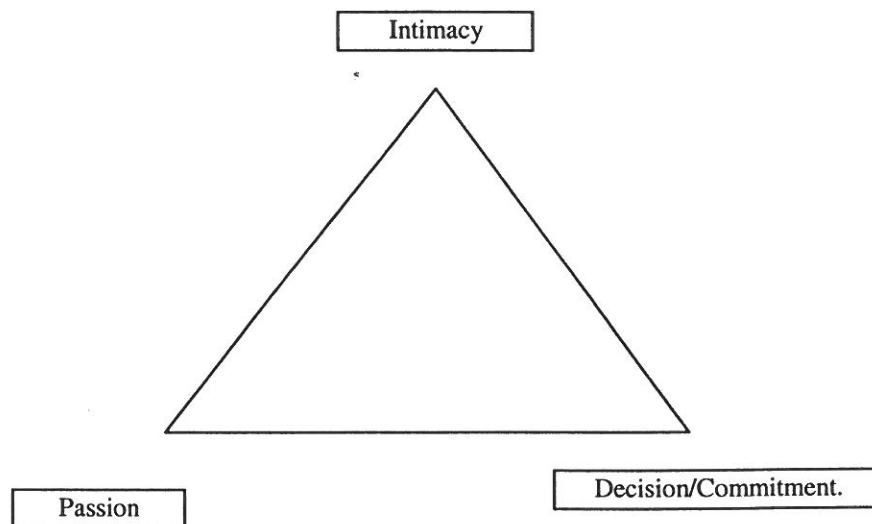


Figure.1

According to Sternberg (1998) these three components are general across time and place. The three components are not equally weighted in all cultures, as we will see, but each component receives at least some weight in virtually any time or place. The Triangle Theory of Love accounts for feelings and behavior.

The element of Passion involves a "state of intense longing for union with the other". Passion is largely the expression of desires and needs -such as for self-esteem, nurturance, affiliation, dominance, submission, and sexual fulfillment. The strengths of these various needs vary across persons, situations, and kinds of loving relationship (Sternberg, 1998 p.9).

Probably the strongest learning mechanism for the buildup of passionate response is the mechanism of intermittent reinforcement, the periodic, sometimes random rewarding of a particular response to a stimulus. If you try to accomplish something,

and sometimes are rewarded for your efforts and sometimes not, you are being intermittently reinforced.

The other component of Love is Decision/Commitment. This component of love consists of two aspects -one short term and one long-term. The short-term aspect is the decision to love a certain other, whereas the long-term one is the commitment to maintain that love. These two aspects of the decision/commitment component of love do not necessarily occur together. The decision to love does not necessarily imply a commitment to that love. Oddly enough, the reverse is also possible, where there is a commitment to a relationship in which you did not make a decision, as in arranged marriages. Some people are committed to loving another without ever having admitted their love. Most often, however, a decision precedes the commitment. Indeed, the institution of marriage represents a legalization of the commitment to a decision to love another throughout life.

While the decision/commitment component of love may lack the "heat" or "charge" of intimacy and passion, loving relationships almost inevitable have their ups and downs, and during the downs, "the decision/commitment component is what keeps a relationship together. This component can be essential for getting through hard times and for returning to better ones. In ignoring it or separating it from love, you may be missing exactly that component of a loving relationship that enables you to get through the hard times, as well as the easy ones. Sometimes, you may have to trust your commitment to carry you through to the better times you hope ahead" (Sternberg, op.cit p.12).

The third component that Sternberg includes in his theory about love is Intimacy. In the context of the triangular theory, intimacy refers to those feelings in a relationship that promote closeness, bondedness, and connectedness. Because Intimacy plays a central role in the present study I will discuss this concept in detail in a further chapter.

The three components of love have different properties. For example, intimacy and commitment seem to be relatively stable in close relationships, whereas passion tends to be relatively unstable and can fluctuate unpredictably. "You have some degree of conscious control over your feelings of intimacy (if you are aware of them), a high degree of control over the commitment of the decision/commitment component that you invest in the relationship (again if we assume awareness), but little control over the amount of passionate arousal you experience as a result of being with or even looking at another person. You are usually aware and conscious of passion, but you are less likely to fully aware of intimacy and commitment. Sometimes you experience warm feelings of intimacy without being aware of them or able to label them. Similarly, you are often not certain of how committed you are to a relationship until people or events intervene to challenge that commitment" (Sternberg, op.cit p.14). (See Table 2.1)

Table 2.1

Properties	Intimacy	Passion	Decision/Commitment
Stability	Moderately high	Low	Moderately high
Conscious controllability	Moderate	Low	High
Experiential salience	Variable	High	Variable
Typical importance in short-term relationships	Moderate	High	Low
Typical importance in long-term relationships	High	Moderate	High
Commonality across loving relationships.	High	Low	Moderate
Psychophysiological involvement	Moderate	High	Low
Susceptibility to conscious awareness	Moderately low	High	Moderately high

Thus, in analyzing love; Passion, Decision/Commitment, and Intimacy are linked in a close connection. If one of these components prevails over the others, the consequence is interpreted as the experiencing of different kinds of love. Nonetheless, in a course of stable relations, it is natural that one of these components prevails over the others. At this regard the variable of time exerts the major influence on this balance.

Let us now analyze the influence of the culture in the different points of view about love.

2.2.3 Culture and Love

*"Love" is a passion to the Melanesian as to the European,
and torments mind and body to a grater or lesser extent;
it leads to many an impasse, scandal, or tragedy;
more rarely, it illuminates life and makes the heart expand and overflow with joy.
Bronislaw Malinowski.*

Love is seen in many cultures as the ultimate human experience; it may be therefore be associated with a higher being.

Typically, cultures recognize more than one kind of experience of love. Cultures may differ, however, in how they view these experiences and which experiences they consider ideal or even acceptable. For example, cultures may differ in their understanding of how and when passionate feelings are experienced or with whom one will become impassioned. Cultures may also disagree about how respectable certain kinds of feelings are for people to have towards each other.

In a very repressive culture, passionate sexual feelings may be acknowledge, but be viewed as a necessary evil. In a permissive culture, passionate sexual feelings may be valued and encouraged. There is no absolute right or wrong with respect to them.

In modern times, cultures have diverse and divergent conceptions of love. In some modern cultures, love is viewed as an experience that can overcome any difficulties in a relationship, whereas in other cultures it is viewed as an experience that needs to be kept under careful control.

One of the reasons why love differs among different cultures is because the experience of love is partially dependent on external factors, which are defined by the culture.

One external factor is simply the presence of a person regarded as socially desirable and as suitable recipient of sexual feelings. When people are highly aroused and also in the presence of attractive confederates, they report experiencing romantic attraction and romantic love. The same arousal in the presence of someone not viewed as socially desirable leads to reports of various kinds of feelings, but not, typically, romantic ones.

Romantic involvement and love are strongly associated with support from one's social network of parents and extended family members. The more social support people experience for their romantic relationship, the greater people's satisfaction will tend to be with that relationship. Familial support becomes increasingly important as a couple becomes more committed to the relationship. This support may explain why people generally marry individuals of similar socioeconomic status and ethnicity. In sum, some kinds of feelings and relationships are encouraged, and others discouraged, by one's social network. Although one can try to operate outside this social as well as cultural network, people have found through the ages that this is easier said than done.

It is difficult to operate outside the network in which one loves because love itself is a socially constructed idea. Although there is no definition that adequately captures

what is viewed as defining love throughout the ages or across cultures, four aspects seem important to it across time and place.

(1) the beloved; (2) the feelings that are believed to accompany love; (3) the thoughts that are believed to accompany love, and (4) the actions, or relations between the lover and the beloved. (Sternberg, op.cit p.66).

The first aspect of love is the beloved. The objects of love change with time period and culture. For example, in some time periods Christians believed that one should love God above anyone or anything else. Other loves were allowed, but many people believed (and some still believe) that the most suitable object of love is God.

In modern times, the most suitable beloved is generally believed to be an adult member of the opposite sex or of the same sex. Today, many people believe that love of God and of another individual are complementary.

The second aspect of love is the feelings that are believed to accompany love. Modern views of love include a passionate sexual component and emphasize feelings of sexual arousal.

The third aspect of love pertains to the thoughts that are believed to accompany love. These thoughts are usually about the beloved. Throughout the ages, people have attempted to characterize these thoughts. Often these thoughts concern the welfare of one's partner or the desirable attributes that one's partner possesses. Another common thought is the anticipation of being with one's partner.

The fourth aspect of love addresses the actions, or relations between a lover and the beloved. Love has even been conceptualized in terms of a set of acts, such as supporting or protecting another person and showing one's commitment to him or her. Actions may or may not correspond to feelings. When they do not, the actions can be quite discrepant from the feelings generating them. This discrepancy may be due to different backgrounds or upbringings, through which individuals come to understand behaviour to mean certain things. This situation is most evident in couples who come from different cultural or religious backgrounds, where notions of what is involved in a close relationship may differ.

"When people come from different cultures, an action viewed by one individual as loving may be seen by the other as cold or meaningless. Consider, for example, physical affection. For some people, signs of physical affection -holding, touching, caressing, stroking- are crucial ingredients of romantic love; for others, they are not. The importance of overt physical affection also may differ cross cultures" (Sternberg, op.cit p.34).

How different cultures perceive Love has been target of researches. People surveyed in France reported that love is an irrational experience that takes control of a person and cannot be viewed objectively, whereas people in the Unites States reported that love is an experience that is important, but not necessarily uncontrollable or the only basis for a romantic relationship (Simmons, Kolke & Shimizu; 1986).

Phillip Shaver, Shelley Wu, and Judith Schwartz (1991) interviewed young people in North America, Italy, and China about their emotional experiences. In all cultures, men and women identified the same emotions as basic, prototypic emotions. These were joy/happiness, love/attraction, fear, anger/hate, and sadness/depression. They also agreed completely as to whether the various emotions should be labeled as positive experiences (such as joy) or negative ones (such as fear, anger, or sadness). They agreed completely, that is, except about one emotion -love. North American and Italian subjects tended to equate love with happiness; both passionate and companionate love were assumed to be intensely positive experiences. Chinese students, however, had a darker view of love. In Chinese there are "few happy-love" ideographs (printed words) love is associated with sadness. Chinese men and women associated passionate love with such ideographs as infatuation, unrequited love, nostalgia, and sorrow -love (Hatfield and Rapson, 1996 p.67-8).

There is also some evidence that in different cultures people view sexuality in very different ways. Swedish men and women, for example, tend to equate love and sex to a greater extent than do most Americans (Foa et al, 1987 in Hatfield and Rapson, op.cit p.113)

Despite these evidences, other researchers suggest that most people are romantically attracted to those who are reasonably similar to themselves in background, personality, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors (Hatfield and Rapson, op.cit). Donn Byrne and his colleagues (1971) proposed that people find it rewarding when others share their views and challenging when they do not. They found that, as predicted, college students worldwide were most attracted to those whose attitudes were carbon copies of their own.

Whatever the reason -attraction, repulsion, or dire necessity- there is considerable evidence that people end up with lovers and romantic partners who are strikingly similar to themselves. "People are most likely to marry those who are similar to themselves in age, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, religion, physical attractiveness, intelligence and education, social attitudes, level of education, family size, personality, and personal habits" (Hatfield and Rapson, op.cit p.35).

Moreover, other researches have found that people feel attracted for persons considered "exotic". (Månsson, 1993 p.98). Someone that is completely different from the own cultural background.

Beyond the appreciated characteristics of the beloved and the differences in culture, researches have shown that in the Modern times Love is an essential prerequisite in any relationship. David Buss (1989) asked over 10.000 men and women, from thirty-seven countries, located on six continents and five islands, to indicate what characteristics they valued in potential mates. Buss found that, in general, men and women throughout the world desired much the same things. Of at most importance was love!.

Hence, despite some cultural differences, Love seems to be a general feeling and the conception of love is nowadays considered as the base of any stable relation. This study is an example of it.

2.3 The Couple Relationship.

Love as a feeling is experienced in the frame of any relationship. In order to understand love it is also important to know what implies a relationship, because love is expressed, among other issues, through the couple relationship.

Whereas the expressions of love within the relations have changed along the times and places, the development of the human relations has been shifting in several aspects. If we take into account that the couple relationship is one of the routes throughout love can cross then, the changes in one of them influences the other.

In this chapter couple relationship and marriage will be used as interchangeable concepts.

A review of the history about marriage and the family show us that they have been in violent flux throughout different epochs. Their rules have been changing constantly to fit each culture and class, each era and economy. Marriage is anything but "traditional".

Marriage transformed dramatically in the nineteenth century. With capitalism, marriage stopped being the main way for the rich to exchange their life's property, as well as for the rest of us the seek for our life's main co-worker. "That change -the death of "traditional" marriage, which had dropped ill in the mid-eighteenth century and breathed its last by the 1920s -was so dramatic that it set of changes in every other philosophy of marriage: what makes sex sacred or even acceptable; what children need to grow up well; how far in or out of their kinship circle (whether defined by tribe, religion, race, ethnicity, or class) people are expected or allowed to marry; what marry rules are required to keep social order; and how important it is to consult your own heart" (Graff, 1999 p.XIII)

Besides the attempts that explain marriage and couple relationship through the history and its consequent shifts, other disciplines such as psychology have been trying to conceptualize what relationship means beyond the boundaries of cultures and time.

Hence, it has proposed that relationship is "a series of interactions between two individuals known to each other... where the interaction is affected by past interactions or is likely to influence future ones (Hinde, 1981 p.2).

The crucial aspect that is implicit in this definition is the notion that individuals generate relational expectations based upon their cognitive appraisals of their interactions with others. Thus, the term "relationship" implies an expectational association between two or more interactions.

Therefore, when two people get together, they immediately exchange clues as to how they are defining the nature of the relationship; this set of behavioral tactics is modified by the other person by the manner in which he responds.

In the marital relationship, at least, two individuals are facing the challenge of collaboration on a wide variety of tasks over an indefinite, but presumably long, period of time.

Whereas some researchers have considered the term relationship as a system where each part exists only in terms of its relation with the other (Watzlawick, Weakland, Fish, 1977; Satir, 1967; Minuchin, 1974) an alternative perspective is a consideration of relationship where the individuals are the center instead of the system (Roger, 1973; Fromm, 1979; Freud, 1973).

In this way, the couple relationship is the subjective space where two individuals come close. In the space created by them, they run their personal characteristics in order to create and adjust the process as a result of their interactions. By the personality of the involved persons a relation obtains its particular meaning and underlines its distinctiveness from other relations (González, 1995).

An additional concept suggest that couple relationship constitutes a special and peculiar relation between two individuals according to their personal characteristics. The relation is characterized by its selectivity, reciprocity, and deep feelings. It is the most intimate personal relation and at the same time the most difficult one in its seek for satisfaction. The individuals interact by their sexual and corporal attractiveness, communicative skills, moral values, cultural backgrounds, and personalities as a whole. They are interested in those traits and they render their selves to each other. Although the relation is a social construction its expression is individual and unique (Fernández, 1995).

However, according to the purpose of the present study we will refer to the concept of couple relationship as a system and as expressions of the individual traits. The former is related with the character of the interactions that each individual expresses in a particular manner; and the latter is referred to the expression of the individual traits in the relationship. In the understanding of the couple, sometimes the focus is set on the interactions itself, in other times on how the individuals express themselves and the meaning of his/her relation with the other.

Thus, in the next part we will discuss the concepts of Communication and Intimacy. The rules applied to the systems are applied to the communicational process. Furthermore, the personality of the individuals is expressed throughout the Intimacy in the couple.

2.4 Communication

In everyday usage the word "communication" refers to a concrete interaction between people, an interaction that is immediately available to the senses, talking, gesturing, signaling, writing, and moving closer to or farther away from someone. In everyday usage, communication is understood as the transmission of things by a sender who knows and knowingly sends ideas, thoughts, opinions, feelings, impressions and facts. The Palo Alto group (Bateson, Beavin, Haley, Jackson, Satir, Watzlawick, Weakland, etc) who developed the initial theoretical framework for family systems based their understanding of communication and family system upon concrete verbal and nonverbal communications that an observer could hear and see.

To these authors the scope of "communication" is by no means limited to verbal productions. "Communications are exchanged through many channels and combinations of these channels, and certainly also through the context in which an interaction takes place. Indeed, it can be summarily stated that all behavior, not only the use of words, is communication (which is not the same as saying that behavior is only communication) and since there is no such things as non-behavior, it is impossible not to communicate" (Watzlawick & Weakland 1977 p.58).

By communication is meant behavior in the widest sense: words and their non-verbal accompaniments, posture, facial expressions, even silence. All convey messages to another person, and all are subsumed in the term "communication" (op.cit p.7).

Every message (communication bit) has both a content (report) and a relation (command) aspect; the former conveys information about facts, opinions, feelings, experiences, etc., and the latter defines the nature of the relationship between the communicants (op.cit p.8).

In every communication, then, the participants offer to each other definitions of their relationship, or, more forcefully stated, each seeks to determine the nature of the relationship. Each, in turn, responds with his definition of the relationship which may affirm, deny, or modify every piece of information.

If we now narrow our focus even more, from human communication in general to ongoing (perdurable) relationships only, we see that "what is relatively simple and unimportant between strangers is both vital and complex in an ongoing relationship" (op.cit p.9). An ongoing relationship may be said to exist when, for some reason, the relationship is "important" to both parties and, assumed to be of long term duration.

2.4.1 Communication: The medium. Why the interviews were conducted with both members of the couple?

In characterizing intimacy as a sense of knowing the innermost, subjective aspects of another and being known in a like manner, we implicitly take a system theory approach to communication. From a system theory perspective, interactants are concurrently senders and receivers simultaneously engaged in complex behaviors at a number of levels within a social context (Satir, 1967) As Jackson and Weakland (1961) state:

In actual human communication a single and simple message never occurs, but that communication always and necessarily involves a multiplicity of messages, on different

levels, at once. These may be conveyed via various channels such as words, tone, and facial expression, or by the variety of meanings and references of any verbal message in relation to its possible contexts (p.32).

For the subjective, innermost aspects of self to be communicated, we imply that "interactants can encode and decode both the literal, denotative aspects of a message (what is said) and the simultaneous subjective, connotative meanings (the why) of the message" (Bateson, 1972). It is this latter aspect that is of central importance in our model of intimacy, and it is synonymous to the systems theorists' notion of metacommunication.

Metacommunication is a comment on the literal content of a message as well as on the relationship between the interactants. As Satir (op.cit p.76) remarks, "metacommunication is a message about a message". These metamessages accompany every literal, denotative message, and are typically conveyed unconsciously through nonverbal channels (e.g., tone of voice, tempo, and facial expressions). When the literal messages and metamessages are consistent, metacommunication is fairly clear and unambiguous. However, not infrequently the literal messages and metamessages may be at variance, qualifying and/or denying each other, giving rise to possible misunderstandings and conflicts. In such instances, it is not uncommon for receivers to give more saliency to the nonverbal metacommunication and to the context than to the literal content. More than one adult have been reprimanded not for what they had said, but for how, when, or where they had said it.

It becomes evident within a system theory perspective that as long as metacommunications remain at an unconscious or inferred level between interactants, the development of a sense of truly knowing and being known on a subjective level is tenuous at best. "If the receiver only attends to the denotative aspects of the sender's statements, he or she is likely to miss the "command aspect" of the metacommunication, which in its highest level of abstraction is a request for validation" (Satir, op.cit p.79). Thus, in responding to the sender's message, the receiver (now the sender) may communicate that "I understand what you said (literal message), but do not know what you mean (metacommunication)." In such cases, the interactants are communicating information on a denotative level, but "missing the point," thereby maintaining subjective distance and nonintimacy. Conversely, if the interactants respond on only the metalevel, disregarding the literal aspects of what is said, they enter the realm of mind-reading without reality-based referents. Only when the interactants can transcend the ordinary communication process and bring their metamessages to a literal level the innermost, subjective aspects of self can become truly known. Perlmutter and Hatfield (1980) describe this process as intentional metacommunication, and consider it the "sine qua non of intimate relations" (p.19). Therefore, we believe that communication is the basic medium through which intimacy is developed, but that the disclosure of personal information is only a necessary, but not sufficient condition.

The communicational process can be characterized on a dimension of openness to closedness. "Relatively open communication involves a great deal of freedom to communicate thoughts, feelings, opinions, fantasies, and so on between the members of the couple. Openness also involves the freedom to communicate congruently, completely, and honestly. Relatively closed communication involves blocking, walling off, distorting, or denying thoughts, feelings, opinions, fantasies, and truths. The closing may involve choices about what to communicate and what not to communicate, as well as "silencing strategies" (Rosenblatt, 1994 p.159).

To develop a sense that we are known and know another, we must communicate and acknowledge the subjective meanings of our messages. Thus, intimacy can be described as “a process in which a dyad -via ideation, sensation, affect, and behavior- attempts to move toward more complete communication, on all levels of the communication transaction” (Perlmutter & Hatfield, op.cit p.18).

2.4.2 Communication and Culture

Each culture attempts to create a uniform system for its members in which people can interpret their experiences and convey them to one another. Given the notion that culture and communication are interlocking systems, all human social interaction is culturally bound, the cultural background thus affecting an individual’s communicative actions and reactions.

In an individualist culture people feel a need to communicate verbally when they meet. Silence is considered abnormal. Social conversations can be depressingly banal, but they are compulsory. In a collectivist culture the fact of being together is emotionally sufficient; there is no compulsion to talk unless there is information to be transferred.

“Lots of things which in collectivist cultures are self-evident must be said explicitly in individualist cultures” (Hofstede, 1991 p.60).

In some African and Asian cultures, oral communication is less valued. For example, “the Paliyans of India, the Apaches of Southwestern United States, and the Quaker religious group avoid talking in some context” (Scollon & Scollon, 1983 in Sallinen 1986, p.18) and “Chinese, Japanese, and Hopi children are considered as relatively silent” (Saville-Troike 1982 in Sallinen, op.cit p.18). According to Klopff and Cambra (1979, in Sallinen, op.cit p.19) Japanese are people who de-emphasize oral skills. Many Japanese view constant verbal communication as unnecessary, and talkative people are considered as being insincere. Traditionally, “in the Nordic and German cultures, silence is positively valued” (Stedje, 1983 in Sallinen, op.cit p.19). “Scandinavian cultures are said to be less verbal than English-speaking ones” (Haines 1984; Marsh 1984 in Sallinen op.cit p.19) and “when compared to the Mediterranean nationalities such as Italians, the North-European cultures, such as the Finns and Swedish, appear as silent” (Stedje 1983 in Sallinen op.cit p.19).

Furthermore, communication in trade language limits communication to those issues for which these simplified languages have words. To establish a more fundamental intercultural understanding, the foreign partner must acquire the host culture language. “Having to express oneself in another language means learning to adopt someone else’s reference frame. It is doubtful whether one can be bicultural without also being bilingual. Although the words of a language are “symbols” (Hofstede, op.cit p.212).

Additionally, learning intercultural communication passes through three phases.

Awareness: ...is the start of everything. The recognition that I carry a particular mental software because of the way I was brought up, and that others brought up in a different environment carry a different mental software for equally good reasons. Without awareness, one may travel around the world feeling superior and remaining deaf and blind to all clues about the relativity of one’s own mental programming.

Knowledge: If we have to interact with particular other cultures, we have to learn about these cultures. We should learn about their symbols, their heroes, and their rituals; while we may never share their values, we may at least obtain an intellectual grasp of when and how their values differ from ours.

Skills: ...are based upon awareness and knowledge, plus practice. We have to recognize and apply the symbols of the other culture, recognize their heroes, practice their rituals, and experience the satisfaction of getting along in the new environment, being able to resolve first the simpler, and later on some of the more complicated, problems of life among the others (Hofstede, op.cit p.230-1).

In the frame of the present study it is essential to know how the members of the couple interchange their innermost feelings and thoughts. Another important aspect are the clues that they give one to each other in order to interpret their symbols. Due to the difference in their tongue languages, the process by which they comprehend and accept the symbols of their partner has an important implication in increasing their intimacy. Thus, Communication and Intimacy are tightly connected. Throughout the study of these processes we can achieve a better understanding of the couple as a system as well as the personality of the individuals involved in the relationship.

2.5 Intimacy

The notion that intimate interactions involve sharing something personal may be closest to the core meaning of intimacy. This meaning emerges most clearly from intimacy's etymological origins. The word is derived from the Latin word *intimus*, meaning "inner" or "innermost". Variations on the Latin word have survived in several languages, and all refer to the "most deeply internal or inmost" qualities of a person. For example, the French *intime* signifies "secret, deep, fervent, ardent." The Italian *intimo* conveys "internal, close in friendship." In Spanish *intimo* means "private, close, innermost." To be intimate means to be close to another.

The several concepts of intimacy recognize two components: (1) intimate interactions, which are dyadic communicative exchanges, and (2) intimate relationships, in which people have a history and anticipate a future of intimate contact over time. Intimate interactions themselves have two components: (1) intimate behavior, in which people share that which is private and personal; and (2) intimate experiences, which are individual experiences of intimacy, closeness, bonding, and so forth (Prager, 1995 p.3).

The authors that distinguish intimacy as intimate interactions derive their conceptions from humanistic theory. These conceptions have two important strengths: They recognize self-disclosure as a central and salient component of intimate interactions, and they are concerned with the important contribution that self-disclosing interactions can make to developmental adaptation and self-actualization.

The difficulty with interactional conceptions has been that intimacy can become overidentified with a few behaviors. Intimacy should not, for example, be equated with self-disclosure. People can use disclosure to confront and criticize, which tends to create distance rather than intimacy.

In truth none of the conceptions focuses solely on intimate experience to the exclusion of behavior. The differences among these conceptions lie in the degree to which some aspects of experience are emphasized over others (Hatfield, 1988). Conceptions of intimate interaction that most influenced the definition in this paper are those that place relatively equal emphasis on behavior, affect, and cognition in intimate interactions

The authors that distinguish intimacy as intimate relationships are divided into three types. The first type -relational conceptions- is comprehensive, multidimensional categorizations of the type of intimate contact partners (usually couples) can have. From a research's point of view, their greatest strength may be their potential to generate hypothesis about how different aspects of intimate relationships influence another.

The second type of conceptions emphasizes the affective aspects of intimate relationships. Affective conceptions drawn from emotion theories, for example, underscored the emotional impact that partners can have on one another as a result of their interdependence. Other conceptions, such as Sternberg's (1988) were more concerned with the positive feelings that partners have for one another, such as love,

affection, warmth, and so on. Still others placed emotional intensity at the center of intimate experience.

Finally, conceptions of intimate relationships sometimes emphasize intimate behavior within relationships. Operant and social exchange theories have inspired work on the rewards and cost of partners' relationship behaviors, particularly their communication. "Researchers with an interest in intimate partners' behavior have gone beyond operant theory's traditional concern with the positive versus punishing consequences of behavior to define intimacy explicitly" (Prager, op.cit p.63).

Conceptions emphasizing individual differences have been concerned with the capacities, motivations, and needs that partners bring to their interaction with others. Psychodynamic theorists have argued that people have different capacities to form, enjoy, and maintain intimate relationships as a result of their own individual history. Motivational theorists are more concerned with stable dispositions of individuals that predispose them to respond to intimacy-relevant cues in particular ways.

Individual approaches have been criticized, however, for neglecting the important information that can be gained from observing relationships versus individuals. Research has suggested that it may be necessary to assess both partners in order to understand their relationship (Minuchin, 1974).

In order to achieve a better understanding of each type of conception, let us analyze each of them.

2.5.1 Intimacy as intimate interactions

Self-disclosure has been used to refer to the process by which one person lets herself or himself be known by another person. According to Derlega and Grzelak (1979 p.152) self-disclosure includes any information exchange that refers to the self, including personal states, dispositions, events in the past, and plans for the future. It can be objectively defined as any verbal message that formally begins with the word "I" (for instance, "I think," "I feel") or any other verbal message about the self.

Self-disclosure involves decisions about whether to reveal one's thoughts, feelings, or past experiences to another person, at what level of intimacy to reveal personal information, and the appropriate time, place, and target person for disclosure.

For most people, one of the nicest things about companionate love is the realization that we know almost all there is to know about another human and that the other human knows all there is to know about us.

As relationships develop interpersonal exchange gradually progresses from superficial, non-intimate areas to more intimate levels. Then individuals generally disclose more information about themselves and at a more personal level.

Self-disclosure may act as a vehicle for developing close relationships one person's disclosure tends to elicit the self-disclosure of the other reciprocally. Self-disclosure

may also contribute to relationship maintenance. "One partner may listen to and help meet the other partner's emotional needs, and this process provides positive outcomes in the relationship" (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979 p.154).

The focus here is on the goals that people can accomplish through their self-disclosing behavior. According to this functional orientation, self-disclosure helps individuals to gain knowledge about themselves and about other persons. It enables the partners in a relationship to coordinate necessary actions and to reduce ambiguity about one another's intentions and the meaning of their behavior.

Self-disclosure leading to share knowledge between equals is likely to be a reciprocal process; thus it makes possible the development of joint views, joint goals, and joint decisions. Given that, the partners will gradually develop "we-feeling" (Levinger & Snoek, 1972 p.8-9).

As friendship grows into love, and is reciprocated, there is an increasing, mutual, opening of areas of privacy: "The lovers come to know, to understand, and to accept more and more about each other; as they do so they validate one another's concept of self, even if only in a folie a deux" (Kelvin, 1977 p.372).

In a rare study that attempted to examine the nature of intimacy without a priori notions, Waring and his associates (Waring, Tillman, Frelick, Russell, & Weisz, 1980) conducted unstructured interviews among the general population, asking subjects "What does intimacy mean to you?" (p.472). A descriptive content analysis yielded five general concepts. Respondents indicated that intimacy involved sharing their private thoughts, beliefs, and fantasies, as well as their interests, goals, and backgrounds. Sexuality, while often a part of intimacy, was not a primary determinant, nor was the expression of anger or resentment. Finally, the subjects reported that their early experiences and observations of intimate relationships and the growth of their own personal identities were important determinants of intimacy.

In reviewing the results of the Waring et al. (1980) study, several important points can be deduced about the cognitive appraisal of intimacy: "(1) intimacy is based upon the exchange of private, subjective experiences, and therefore involves the "innermost" aspects of oneself, (2) intimacy is viewed as "transactional" in that importance is given to the process of "sharing" as well as to what is shared, (3) intimacy is valued as positive relational process that entails both mutuality and self-differentiation, and (4) our prior experiences influence our current perceptions of intimacy" (Chelune, Robison & Kommor, 1984 p.14) If we expand upon these points, intimacy can be seen as qualitative feature of a relationship that involves the mutual exchange of the meanings of our experiences in such a way as to result in our further understanding of both our partners and ourselves. Stated another way, an intimate relationship is a relational process in which we come to know the innermost, subjective aspects of another, and are known in a like manner.

Several earlier investigators attempted to describe the qualities of intimate relationships in terms of specific behavior patterns (Hinde, 1976; Levinger & Snoek, 1972). According to these authors, an intimate relationship is one evidencing all or some of the following characteristics:

- 1- frequent interaction,
- 2- face-to-face interaction,
- 3- diverse interactions across several behavioral and situational domains,
- 4- substantial influence on each other's lives,
- 5- repeated attempts to restore proximity during absence,
- 6- alleviation of anxiety upon return of the partner,
- 7- unique communication systems,
- 8- synchronized goals and behavior,
- 9- mutual self-disclosure, and
- 10- seeing separate interests as being inextricably tied to the well being of the relationship.

Walster, Walster, and Berscheid (1978) described more general qualities that they felt increased as intimacy increased in a relationship:

- 1- intensity of liking or loving,
 - 2- depth and breadth of information exchanged, so that intimates know much more about one another's idiosyncrasies, personal histories, and vulnerabilities,
- 3- actual and expected length of relationship,
 - 4- value of resources exchanged, with partners increasingly willing to invest more of their resources, but also able to punish more keenly, particularly through termination of the relationship,
- 5- interchangeability of resources, and
 - 6- "we-ness," the tendency for partners to define themselves as one unit in interaction with the external social world.

Both of these conceptualizations seem to be generally appropriate to the understanding of intimate relationships. However, they rely heavily on descriptions of specific behavior patterns.

2.5.2 Intimacy as Intimate Relationships

A review of the literature on love suggests that the basic categories of love are (1) love as emotion and (2) love as a type of relationship (Sternberg, 1988).

When we talk about love as an emotion and when we talk about intimacy as the affective aspect of people's experiences in intimate interactions, intimacy and love can be synonymous. The literature suggests that the emotion of love is likely a common form of intimate experience. Intimacy can refer to intimate experiences, an important component of which is positive feelings and emotions about one's relationship partner (e.g., affection).

Sternberg and his colleagues (Sternberg, 1988; Sternberg & Grajek, 1984) equate the emotional aspects of love with intimacy. In Sternberg's triangular model of love, intimacy is the "liking component and includes affective concepts like happiness, warmth, affection, tenderness, closeness, and attachment. Intimacy includes at least ten elements.

- 1- Desiring to promote the welfare of the loved one.

- 2- Experiencing happiness with the loved one.
- 3- Holding the loved one in high regard.
- 4- Being able to count on the loved one in times of need.
- 5- Having mutual understanding with the loved one.
- 6- Sharing oneself and one's possessions with the loved one.
- 7- Receiving emotional support from the loved one.
- 8- Giving emotional support to the loved one.
- 9- Communicating intimately with the loved one.
- 10- Valuing the loved one.

These are only some of the possible feelings one can experience through the intimacy of love; moreover, it is not necessary to experience all of these feelings in order to experience intimacy. On the contrary, "our research indicates that you experience intimacy when you experience a sufficient number of these feelings, whatever the exact number may be. You do not usually experience the feelings independently, but often as one overall feeling" (Sternberg, 1998 p.8)

Intimacy, then, is a foundation of love, but a foundation that develops slowly, through fits and starts, and is difficult to achieve. Moreover, once it starts to be attained, it may, paradoxically, start to go away because of the threat it poses. It poses a threat in terms not only of the dangers of self-disclosure but also of the danger of losing one's autonomy. "Few people want to be "consumed" by a relationship, yet people may start to feel as if they are being consumed when they get too close to another human being. The result is a balancing between intimacy and autonomy, which goes on throughout the lives of most couples, a balancing act in which a completely stable equilibrium is often never achieved. But this in itself is not necessarily bad: the swinging back and forth of the intimacy pendulum provides some of the excitement that keeps many relationships alive" (Sternberg, op.cit p.9)

Another model about Intimacy is offered by Chelune, Robison & Kommor (1984). For them the qualities of an intimate relationship are based upon the subjective, cognitive appraisals of each participant. The following six qualities are relational in nature and characterize the meaning of an intimate relationship at a level beyond its basic components:

- 1- knowledge of the innermost being of one another,
- 2- mutuality,
- 3- interdependence,
- 4- trust,
- 5- commitment, and
- 6- caring.

All these qualities seem to be necessary for the development and existence of intimate relationships. They are also interdependent qualities, different from one another and yet overlapping. They emerge from the relational process and describe the interaction of two individuals within a situational context (or many contexts). Another important consideration in this model of intimate relationships is the influence of time.

One of the most outstanding features of any relationship is its dynamic nature. It is continually growing, changing, developing, recalibrating as it passes through time. Although many times when we discuss relationships or when investigators study

various aspects of relationships we appear to believe that their qualities are static, there is always an underlying assumption that we know that relationships are more of a process than an entity.

A general conception about Intimacy is offered as a result of several researches. The author argued that "Intimacy is a process in which we attempt to get close to another; to explore similarities (and differences) in the ways we both think, feel, and behave (Hatfield in Derlega, 1984 p.208).

Furthermore, the quality of intimacy heavily influences partners' satisfaction. Intimacy, in particular, predicted satisfaction best in terms of happiness, closeness, rewardingness, and goodness of the relationship.

As we stated before, conceptions of Intimacy that most influenced the definitions in this paper are those that place relatively equal emphasis on behavior, affect and, cognition in intimate interactions.

2.5.3 Intimacy and Culture

Cultural values with respect to intimacy likely affect the importance individual dyad members place on intimacy in their own relationships. Broude (1987) provided evidence that values and expectations for intimacy in certain types of relationships vary dramatically from one culture to another. Among Trobriand Islanders, for example, married couples are expected to spend most of their working and leisure hours together enjoying intimacy and companionship. In contrast, the Rajputs of India view marriage as existing primarily for sex and procreation, with intimacy needs met in relationships with family members and same-sex friends.

What do most young couples mean by "intimacy"? Vicky Helgeson, Phillip Shaver and Margaret Dyer (1987) asked college men and women in North America to tell them about times when they felt most intimate with, or most distant from, someone they cared about. For most people, intimate relations were associated with feelings of affection and warmth, happiness and contentment, talking about personal things, and sharing pleasurable activities. What sort of things put an impenetrable wall between couples? Distant relationships were associated with anger, resentment, and sadness as well as criticism, insensitivity, and inattention.

Men and women seemed to mean something slightly different by "intimacy". "Women tended to focus primarily on love, affection, and the expression of warm feelings when reliving their most intimate moments. They rarely mentioned sex. For men, a key feature of intimacy was sex and physical closeness. The threads of intimacy -love and affection, trust, emotional expressiveness, communication, and sex- are so entwined that it is impossible separate them" (Hatfield and Rapson, 1996 p.161-2)

Additionally, they sometimes differ in how comfortable they feel about confiding in those they love. Traditionally, men were most at ease chatting about such things as politics, work, sports, money, sex, or their day-to-day activities. They tended to be less

relaxed discussing more intimate matters. Women were more comfortable talking about such personal concerns.

Zick Rubin and his colleagues (1980) (Hatfield and Rapson, op.cit p.162) asked dating couples what sort of things they talked about with their steady dates. Men found it easy to talk about politics, women found natural to talk about people. Men found natural to talk about their strengths, women about their own fears and weakness. The more traditional the couples, the more stereotyped were their patterns of communication. Less traditional women and men found to be fairly relaxed about discussing all sort of personal matters -politics, friends, strengths and weaknesses.

Researchers found that after marriage, the gap between men's and women's interests in intimacy sometimes widens. Ted Houston, for example, interviewed 130 married couples at the University of Texas. "For the wives, intimacy meant talking things over. The husbands, by large, were more interested in action. They thought that if they did things (took out the garbage, for instance) and if they engaged in some joint activities that should be enough. Houston found that during courtship men were willing to spend a great deal of time in intimate conversation. But after marriage, as time went on, they reduced the time for close marital conversation while devoting increasingly greater time to work or hanging around with their own friends" (Hatfield and Rapson, op.cit p.164).

Lars Tornstam (1992) interviewed a sample of 2,795 Swedish men and women who varied in age from 15 to 80. He asked them how much intimacy they expected in their love relationships. "Women, being socialized with a romantic view on relationships, start out with high expectations for intimacy, but are taught by real-life experiences to reduce these expectations during the life course" (Hatfield and Rapson, op.cit p.164).

Indeed, intimacy is a pre-requisite for any close relation and in particular for couple relations. The presented researches are evidence about that. The criteria of the persons who live in a close and intimate relation are valuable in this regard. Their experiences are transformed in concepts and help us in the comprehension of what intimacy means. However, a fuller understanding of the impact of cultural values on how much people seek out and value relational intimacy awaits further research.