

1998

# Intercultural Romantic Couples' Interactive Construction of Relational Culture

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Intercultural Romantic Couples'

Interactive Construction of Relational Culture  
(TITLE)

BY

Amie D. Kincaid

1975-

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

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Running head: INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

Intercultural Romantic Couples'  
Interactive Construction of Relational Culture

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## Abstract

This study explores intercultural romantic couples and their interactive construction of relational culture. Qualitative methods of inquiry appeared most useful for identifying the processes involved in the social construction of intimates' shared reality and, so, both Conversation Analysis and Joint Interviews were utilized. Five romantic couples whose partners were socialized within different cultural communities participated in the study. Findings of this study suggest that intercultural romantic couples import cultural resources from their individual cultures into their joint relational culture. These cultural resources included foods, traditions, language, and values. Findings of this study also suggest that two types of communicative episodes, intimate play and the negotiation of misunderstandings, were particularly important in the couples' construction of a shared relational culture.

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## CHAPTER I

## Introduction/Rationale

Introduction

The study of romantic relationship development has been an important domain of inquiry in communication scholarship for more than two decades (Altman & Taylor, 1973). One finding that researchers generally agree upon concerns partners' development of shared, implicit, often relationship-specific ways of "making sense" of one another and negotiating their own particular relational world (see, for example, Wilmot & Sillars, 1989; Duck & Pitman, 1994). Thus, inherently ambiguous messages are constructed and interpreted by close partners in terms of shared relational rules and their understandings of one another and, therefore, their ongoing everyday interaction provides for the social construction of their relational bond.

Wood (1995) coined the term "relational culture" to describe the shared reality that romantic partners and close friends construct together. More specifically, "relational culture is processes, structures, and practices that create, express, and sustain personal relationships and the identities of these partners" (p. 150). The processes, structures, and practices are particular activities and routines that partners perform which organize their interaction and coordinate the values and identities that each relational partner maintains in the relationship. Just as with any culture, relational culture consists not only of tangible objects or events, but also interpretations and the significance attributed to these phenomena. These interpretations help guide the intimates' views of themselves, one another, and their view of the relationship. It is important to note that "the essence of

relational culture is neither the activities in which partners engage nor legal, economic, and social definitions of relationships. Instead, it is the meanings partners assign to activities, interactions, and symbols that make up their relationship" (p. 151). In short, "relational culture is intimates' meanings for each other and their joint life" (p. 151). Relational culture is a term that is very eloquent. It not only illuminates the processes involved in creating shared meaning and guiding behavior for intimacy, but it suggests that partners spend the remaining existence of their relationship "expressing, clarifying, refining, affirming, and transforming the original meanings" (p. 151). Research findings support the idea that couples develop shared, implicit "rules" for communication behavior as the relationship develops, but little is known about the methods or ways in which they do this. Hence, since it appears that couples do develop a relationship-specific "culture," it is important to figure out how they do this. The pragmatic interactive processes by which relational culture is constructed are important to the understanding of the way romantic partners communicate and the way relationships work.

Researchers suggest that the majority of our interpersonal relationships are with people who are similar to ourselves (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992, p. 302). As Gudykunst (1993) demonstrates, most interpersonal research is limited to studying how European Americans communicate in the United States. However, interest has increased concerning how communication varies across cultures (p. 6) and the opportunity to interact with an individual from another culture is increasing. Moreover, it would appear that studying intimate intercultural dyads would make the construction of relational culture more visible. All intimates construct a relational culture, however, since

intercultural intimates differ in their individual cultural backgrounds, those differences would appear prominent in their creation of a shared reality.

Samovar and Porter (1994) provide a general framework for exploring intercultural communication. They are concerned not just with how individuals interculturally communicate within mass media and organizational contexts, but also in interpersonal contexts. The issue of face-to-face intercultural communication is addressed. Specifically, they look at difficulties of communication in the international arena and the domestic arena. "The difficulty of being thrust into a global village is that we do not yet know how to act like villagers; there are too many of us who do not want to live with 'them'" (p. 6). Samovar and Porter conclude that the world is becoming increasingly smaller without much preparation or education regarding how to act while engaged in intercultural interaction. Because of the increased contact with multiple cultures and co-cultures it is "imperative for people in the United States and other nations to make an effort to understand and get along with individuals who may possess vastly different characteristics and ways of doing things" (p. 3).

Kim (1991) agrees with Samovar and Porter by saying "in today's world of unprecedented movement and contact across the boundaries of human communities, intercultural encounters come in many forms and circumstances. Individuals with differing cultural backgrounds come together in varying degrees of formality, involvement, and intimacy" (p. 259). Barnlund (1994) contends that "time and space have long cushioned intercultural encounters, confining them to tourist encounters" (p. 27). However, times have changed and, as Barnlund (1994) argues, we can now "expect to spend most of our

lives in the company of neighbors who speak in a different tongue, seek different values, move at a different pace, and interact according to a different script" (p. 26). Therefore, there is an unmistakable need to continue the process of understanding intercultural communication. Increased understanding can not only improve cross-cultural communication, but it can also help individuals comprehend why this understanding is so important. This will then allow for an understanding of how differences are actually negotiated and constructed into a shared "reality."

Gudykunst's (1993) Communication in Japan and the United States focuses upon the similarities and differences that Japanese and Americans encounter during different communicative events. For instance, Gudykunst and Nishida (1993) explore the similarities and differences in interpersonal and intergroup communication in Japan and the United States with regard to initial interactions, relational development, communicator style, and so on. This is important work since understanding different cultures and their communicative practices is the first step toward bridging cross-cultural barriers.

According to Gudykunst (1993), similarities and differences can be explored through uncertainty reduction and social penetration processes. Gudykunst and Lu (1988) show how these are related across relationships in Japan and the United States. Social penetration theory involves four stages of relationship development: orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange. "Developmental theories such as social penetration theory suggest that as interpersonal relationships become more intimate, there should be fewer cultural differences in the nature of communication that takes place" (Gudykunst, 1993, p. 156). Gudykunst and Lu (1988)

also argue that research on uncertainty reduction processes tends to coincide with conclusions from social penetration studies, in that as partners move through the four stages their communication becomes more implicit, stable, or taken-for-granted. Although Gudykunst and others have found that as an interpersonal relationship progresses there should be fewer cultural differences, partners' actual negotiation of an intercultural interpersonal shared "reality" needs further exploration.

Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey (1996) point out that "communication and culture reciprocally influence each other. The culture in which individuals are socialized influences the way they communicate, and the way that individuals communicate can change the culture they share over time" (p. 3). Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, and Nishida (1996) are viewing communication across cultures. They specifically explore communication in cultures that are immensely different than the United States (p.4). Again, this is a very worthwhile collaboration to capture how people in different cultures communicate within their own culture. Research like this can be of great use in understanding cultures that are very different from the United States.

However, what happens when individuals from these very different cultures come together in a romantic setting? Knowing specifics about different cultures definitely helps clear up misunderstandings about other cultures, but we still lack knowledge and understanding about the ways in which intercultural partners negotiate values, practices and routines as they develop intimate bonds.

Minimal research has been done on face-to-face interactions regarding very intimate encounters with individuals from different cultures. Samovar and Porter (1994),

along with several others, have recognized the importance of communication between cultures and American co-cultures (African-, Hispanic-, Asian-, Native Americans) while engaged in face-to-face interaction. However, the specific study of romantic partners' development of a relational culture when those partners have been socialized within or identify with different cultural communities has not yet been explored. Exploration of this subject will greatly benefit the study of both interpersonal and intercultural communication since cultural differences would appear to make the negotiation of a shared reality more visible. Hence, this study is designed to explore how romantic partners from different cultures develop an intelligible relational culture. The findings of this study offer insight into both the construction of romantic relational cultures and the negotiation of cultural differences when communicative partners know each other well and interact intimately. It, therefore, expands the notion of "relational culture" and makes possible the exploration of what is most commonly viewed as a "traditional" romantic relationship.

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

Chapter One demonstrates that an in-depth exploration of intercultural romantic relationships is necessary because little research has been conducted concerning the ongoing pragmatic processes by which romantic partners who are from different cultural communities construct and maintain their relational culture. This study focuses on these processes. This chapter is, therefore, devoted to a review of relevant literature. The chapter begins with a review of romantic relational culture which is followed by a discussion of studies of intercultural communication.

#### Romantic Relational Culture

The notion of relational culture is not a new concept. For years scholars have realized that something is created in the process of intimate interaction. As defined earlier, relational culture is the "intimates' meanings for each other and their joint life" (Wood, 1995, p. 151). As Wood argues "we compose initial meanings for intimacy and then spend the duration of relationships expressing, clarifying, refining, affirming, and transforming the original meanings" (p. 151). Wood identifies five different properties of relational culture. Each of these properties aid in the understanding of what a relational culture is and how it works.

The first property of relational culture is that it has unique content. For every intimate relationship in which an individual engages, he or she experiences events that create a culture unique to that specific relationship. "Even if we do the 'same' things with different people, the meanings we assign vary, and as they do, they particularize the

respective relational culture" (Wood, 1995, p. 151). A second property of relational culture is systematic character. This means that a relational culture functions as a system, making behavior by partners interdependent. A relational culture is not all of a sudden there one day. Relational culture is a process that develops and changes over time. "People do not stay the same, nor do their needs, goals, contexts, and values" (p. 153). Another property involved in understanding relational culture concerns its dialectical character. Relational partners create a culture that "takes on a life of its own and influences the activities and identities of those who created it" (p. 153). This makes the culture dialectic in form; partners continually check one another's identities to make sure the culture that has been created keeps progressing and functioning as it "should." The last property comprised in the notion of relational culture concerns its state or quality. For instance, is the relational culture healthy or unhealthy? Just because partners create their own relational culture does not necessarily make it a good or healthy one. Relationships can sometimes be emotionally or physically damaging. Furthermore, what appears to be a healthy relational culture to some relational partners may not be for other relational partners (p. 154). Regardless, it is important to understand that relational culture is something that is created by the partners involved in a relationship and much of that creation occurs with little awareness of the ongoing everyday processes of their ordinary interaction.

Streek's (1994) discussion of the notion of culture references a modern anthropologist, E. B. Tylor, who defines culture as a "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired



by man as a member of society" (p. 286). Collier (1994) describes it as a "historically transmitted system of symbols, meanings, and norms" (p. 36). She also places emphasis on culture being systematic, meaning "it comprises many complex components that are interdependent and related; they form a type of permeable boundary" (p. 37). These broad definitions of culture fit well with Wood's (1995) notion and help elaborate that notion as do Samovar and Porter's (1994) six characteristics of culture. These characteristics are specifically important to intercultural communication. Samovar and Porter state: "(1) culture is learned; (2) culture is transmissible; (3) culture is dynamic; (4) culture is selective; (5) the facets of culture are interrelated; and (6) culture is ethnocentric" (p. 12). Briefly: (1) individuals learn patterns of behaviors and ways of thinking as they are socialized into a culture; (2) symbols are the core of culture and the portability of symbols allows for them to be transmitted; (3) cultures seldom remain constant, they are ongoing; (4) culture defines the boundaries of behavior providing a limited choice of what is acceptable; (5) all things in a culture are related to one another; and (6) individuals have a tendency to put their own culture in a central position of worthiness and priority (p. 12-13). These six characteristics support the notion that culture is socially constructed as people who share particular life circumstances interact together.

Some aspects of culture are more obvious than others: foods, religious affiliations, traditions, and of course, language. These elements of culture are often easily identified as belonging to a particular cultural community because they often differ from culture to culture. For example: "stir-fry" is usually associated with Asian cultures while "pasta" is linked to Italians; celebrating "Thanksgiving" is a North American tradition not widely

observed elsewhere; and, the Quaker faith is central to this group's cultural identity and differentiates them from other groups. Moreover, the use of words or phrases which belong to the language or slang of a particular group identifies the speaker with that cultural community. For example, using the term "fiesta" rather than "party" or "tea," can mark the speaker's cultural identity since language is a cultural resource acquired as one is socialized within and by a cultural community. Consequently, it is to be expected that these highly visible components of culture will be imported into a couple's shared reality as they develop their own specific relational culture.

Wood (1995) states that "much of what happens in an early interaction occurs within individuals, rather than between them" (p. 186). One decides internally if an individual is someone who can be enjoyed as a friend, an acquaintance, or a romantic partner. To do this, one uses different schemata or trajectories (Honeycutt, 1993; Wood, 1995). If an individual fits the schema for a potential romantic partner, then a romantic relationship may form and, when it does, couples often go through a time period where their "talk and reflections immerse them in each other and the relationship" (Wood, 1995, p. 212). It is not unusual for couples to reduce involvement with other people and focus on each other and their relationship. "Talk meanders from one topic to the next in an easy, stream-of-conscious style that bespeaks partners' increasing comfortableness with each other" (p. 212). Partners increasingly gain personal knowledge about one another (Miller & Steinberg, 1975) and develop personalized communication or a "private code" (Baxter, 1992). This "private code" can take the form of nicknames, invented language, or particular vocabulary (Wood, 1995, p. 214) and these relationship-specific linguistic forms

are an important part of couples' relational culture.

Another important component of a couples' relational culture concerns the amount and quality of social support partners provide one another. Suhr (1994) points out that "traditional marriage vows remind couples that they will encounter adversity and stress during the course of their lives together" (p. 113). Even though unmarried romantic partners have not yet exchanged such vows, they still encounter adversity and stress during the course of their relationship. Suhr (1994) has compiled five major categories of social support: "informational, tangible, emotional, esteem, and social network support" (p. 116). Intimate relational partners often offer one another support in all of these areas. Informational support includes advice, factual input, and feedback on actions. Tangible support refers to offers to provide needed goods and/or services. Emotional support and network support involve expressions of caring and a sense of belonging. Esteem support encompasses all of these because romantic partners are often seen doing all types of support to support their own and their partners' relational identity (Suhr, 1994, p. 116).

Barnes and Duck (1994) define social support as "those behaviors that, whether directly or indirectly, communicate to an individual that she or he is valued and cared for by others" (p. 176). Thus, social support emerges from everyday behaviors and helps to construct a relationship. An everyday behavior that relational partners normally perform is the act of talk. "Routine daily activity is a perpetual process of 'improvisation' that acts out our understanding of our culture and its relational forms" (p. 177). Individuals in a relationship "meet, they talk, they do things together in routine ways and in ordinary circumstances that 'traffic in symbols' that indicate the personal value of partners to each

other and create expectations about others' likely responses to requests or willingness to help if asked" (p. 178). One type of ordinary interaction between romantic relational partners which supports their identities and sustains their intimate relationship is intimate play. Baxter (1992) looks at intimate play as an everyday side of personal relationships and argues that "from a relational cultures perspective, play is a particularly significant resource for constructing the systems of meanings that constitute personal relationships" (p. 337).

Baxter (1992) suggests that play performs a number of functions in relationships and, so, in the culture of which they are a part. Play can serve as an index of intimacy, an enhancement of communication, a successful moderator of conflict or tension, and/or as an instrument to promote relational intimacy rather than merely reflecting it (Baxter, 1992). "Layered on top of play's surface functions of fun and relaxation is a metacommunicative act that accomplishes substantial serious business for the parties" (p. 360). As such, intimate play appears to be an important part of romantic partners' creation of relational culture.

### Social Interaction Between Intercultural Partners

As noted earlier, most of our close relationships are with people who are relatively similar to ourselves (Gudykunst, 1992, p. 302). Gudykunst argues that one reason for this is our initial interaction with people from different cultures, or "strangers," often results in ineffective communication. If an initial interaction with a person is not as satisfying as one would like, one may forgo trying to develop an intimate relationship with him or her. On the other hand, as Chapter One demonstrates, intercultural relationships are on the rise

and, so too, are intimate relationships with "strangers." It is important to realize in developing such a relationship that the more that is known about strangers, the more predictions about behavior can be made (Gudykunst, 1992, p. 302-303) and, so, at least theoretically, the better the odds on a positive outcome. A study by Gudykunst, Gao, Sudweeks, Ting-Toomey, and Nishida (1991) does enhance our understanding of interpersonal intercultural relationships. This study explored themes that emerge in opposite-sex, Japanese-North American relationships. The relationships range from acquaintances to friendships to romantic partners. This self-report study found that in the romantic relationships and friendships, the Japanese respondents thought of their North American partners as "atypical of their culture and as possessing some Japanese characteristics" (p. 239). In addition to this, the friend and romantic relationships had an interest in and some knowledge of each other's culture. Also, in many cases the North Americans were the ones who tended to accommodate their Japanese partner with respect to the display of emotions. For example, if the Japanese did not value touching in their relationship, the North American's did not display this behavior.

This type of research (see also Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, 1996) does inform us about interpersonal intercultural relationships, however, it is limited by their lack of study of the ongoing everyday interaction of romantic partners. We cannot see, with self-report data, the processes by which relational culture is constructed and intercultural differences are negotiated. This requires the study of couples' ordinary, everyday interaction because social interaction is the primary means by which both relationships and culture are constructed and maintained. Moerman's (1993) thirty-year study of the Tai-

Lue of Chienkham, north Thailand, supports this notion. He has explored how this group of people perform practical tasks of "finding or fashioning ethnicity and identity" (p. 86) and he argues that social interaction is the overwhelming form which culture is learned. Duck and Pittman (1994) have also found that social interaction is the primary means of constructing both relationships and culture. "Everyday conversations of real life are places where construction of experience is 'ratified,' and hence that relationships are a routine component of the partners' construction of their worlds" (p. 676). Staske (1996) further contends that "emotional talk between close relational partners plays an important role in the social construction of human emotional experience" (p. 131) and the role those experiences will play in the partners' lives. Hence, the investigation of intercultural intimates' ordinary conversation in natural settings is necessary to a full understanding of "how intercultural conversations are achieved in spite of language and cultural barriers" (Fairly, 1995, p. 21) and to understanding the construction of relational culture.

There are relatively few studies that look specifically at romantic intercultural relationships. Therefore, this study is designed to help better understand the development of intercultural romantic couples construction of their reality.

## CHAPTER III

## Research Questions and Methodology

The preceding two chapters demonstrate that little is known about how romantic partners from different cultural backgrounds develop an intelligible relational culture. Studies of intercultural relationships often deal only with the differences and similarities of varying cultures, few explore face-to-face interactions in natural settings, and many focus only upon the misinterpretations or difficulties arising from cultural differences. The present study, therefore, focused specifically on the pragmatic, interactive processes by which a shared relational culture is constructed in intercultural romantic relationships.

This chapter outlines the research questions and explains the methodology utilized in the study. It begins with the research questions the study is designed to answer, and this is followed by descriptions of data collection procedures and, finally, data analysis.

Research Questions

As Chapter One suggests, little is known about the pragmatic processes by which relational culture is constructed. Culture is about the shared meanings that individuals assign to objects, activities, events, and messages. When partners have been socialized within or identify with different cultural communities, their original meanings for these phenomena spring from their individual cultural background. The development of their shared relational culture will be constructed from these original cultural resources. Hence, the first Research Question this study asked was:

RQ1: What kinds of individual cultural resources do intercultural romantic partners import into their shared relational culture?

The second Research Question this study addressed, concerned the negotiation of relational culture through the everyday interactions of intercultural romantic partners.

RQ2: How do intercultural romantic partners utilize cultural resources to co-construct their own relational culture? Relational cultures are constructed by the means of the ongoing, everyday interactions relational partners conduct, the methods which will provide access to the construction of romantic relational culture are those that capture natural, everyday talk. Berger and Kellner (1975) wrote that "we converse our way through life" (in Duck, 1992, p. 1). Looking at not just what is said, but how it is said makes it possible to see a persons "attitudes, status, and power toward a relational partner" (Duck, 1994, p. 148). This, in turn, can reveal claims that the relational partners make in regard to "disclosure, exchange, intimacy, commitment, or power" (p. 148). Consequently, conversation analysis appears most useful to capture these social construction processes. (see Jacobs, 1990; Pomerantz, 1990). However, since perceptions and beliefs are also important parts of culture (Littlejohn, 1992), joint interviews were also conducted. Denzin (1978) argues that to better understand something, it should be examined from "as many different methodological perspectives as possible" (p. 291). This method is called "triangulation" (p. 291). Triangulation in this study will allow for different kinds of tools to be used to answer the questions to be addressed.

### Data Collection Procedures

Participants. The participants for this study consisted of five intercultural couples who share a romantic relationship. The degree of relational involvement ranged from



seriously dating to married. All of the participants were students or alumni at a mid-sized, Midwest university. Responses to a short survey which partners completed individually (see Appendix A) provide individual and relational background information. It is important to note that the information provided below was taken directly from their surveys and, so, represents their views and descriptions of themselves and their relationships.

Figure #1 describes Couple A's relationship. These partners characterize their relationship as a "boyfriend/girlfriend" relationship which they describe as a "great relationship."

Figure #1: Couple A

Description	Male	Female
Age	24	23
Birth Place	United States	China
Ethnicity	European-American	Chinese
Religion	Catholic	Baptist
Degree of Involvement with Culture*	6	6
Duration of Relationship	7 months	7 months
Degree of Involvement with Partner*	3	3
Perception of Partner's Involvement*	3	3

Note. \*Scale could vary from 1 = Very Involved to 7 = Very Uninvolved

Figure #2 describes Couple B's relationship which they characterize as "engaged."

Figure #2: Couple B

Description	Male	Female
-------------	------	--------

Figure #2 continued

Description	Male	Female
Age	20	18
Birth Place	United States	United States
Ethnicity	European American	Polish
Religion	Christian	Catholic
Degree of Involvement with Culture*	4	4
Duration of Relationship	40 months	40 months
Degree of Involvement with Partner*	1	1
Perception of Partner's Involvement*	1	1

Note. \*Scale could vary from 1 = Very Involved to 7 = Very Uninvolved

Figure #3 describes Couple C's relationship which they characterize as "married."

Figure #3: Couple C

Description	Male	Female
Age	29	27
Birth Place	United States	England
Ethnicity	European-American	White (British)
Religion	Roman Catholic	Methodist
Degree of Involvement with Culture*	5	4
Duration of Relationship	12 months	12 months
Degree of Involvement with Partner*	1	1

Perception of Partner's Involvement\* 1 1

Note. \*Scale could vary from 1 = Very Involved to 7 = Very Uninvolved

Figure #4 describes Couple D's relationship which they characterize as "engaged."

Figure #4: Couple D

Description	Male	Female
Age	27	29
Birth Place	United States	United States
Ethnicity	Hispanic	European-American
Religion	Catholic	Catholic
Degree of Involvement with Culture*	3	5
Duration of Relationship	12 months	12 months
Degree of Involvement with Partner*	2/3	1
Perception of Partner's Involvement*	2/3	1

Note. \*Scale could vary from 1 = Very Involved to 7 = Very Uninvolved

Figure #5 describes Couple E's relationship which they characterize as a "boyfriend/girlfriend" relationship with an engagement anticipated in the near future.

Figure #5: Couple E

Description	Male	Female
Age	25	24
Birth Place	United States	United States
Ethnicity	Mexican-American	European-American

Figure #5 continued

Description	Male	Female
Religion	Catholic	Methodist
Degree of Involvement with Culture*	3	4
Duration of Relationship	7 months	7.5 months
Degree of Involvement with Partner*	1	1
Perception of Partner's Involvement*	1	1

Note. \*Scale could vary from 1 = Very Involved to 7 = Very Uninvolved

Procedures. Wood (1995) suggests "as partners spend more and more unstructured time together, they develop their own rhythms and patterns to define themselves as a pair" (p. 216). Thus, each couple was provided enough audio tape to capture up to six hours of normal, everyday interaction. They were advised to tape during shared leisure activities and review of the tapes indicates that these activities included preparing dinner, eating dinner, driving places and various household chores. The tapes indicated that little attention was generally given to the tape recorder.

After all of the taping was completed, each couple was asked to engage in a joint interview (see Appendix B). It was at this time that the survey depicted in Appendix A was also completed. The surveys and interviews were used to solicit background information about the culture each partner identified with and how their culture relates to their involvement with one another. The interviews were taped to ensure accuracy in the data and to gain a little more insight into how each couple interacted. Interviews ranged

from forty minutes to seventy-five minutes.

Transcription. The amount of audio taped hours varied from couple to couple: Couple A taped five hours of conversation, Couple B taped six hours of conversation, Couple C taped four hours of conversation, Couple D taped four hours of conversation, and Couple E taped four and a half hours of conversation. The tapes were reviewed multiple times and segments of conversations were identified that related to the research questions. These conversations were then transcribed according to a notation system adapted from Jefferson's (1984) Transcript Notation System (see Appendix C). This notation system was used because of the detail it provides of ordinary talk.

#### Data Analysis

The tapes, transcripts, interviews and surveys were reviewed multiple times. After doing this, relevant conversational segments were identified. Those segments were then analyzed in terms of the use of individual cultural resources and the turn-by-turn construction of the conversation. This process explored how partners constructed messages and how those messages were treated by the other. Finally, interview segments that were relevant to the research questions were also identified. The relationship between these segments and the conversational ones was explored.

## CHAPTER IV

## Findings

The findings of this study suggest that intercultural romantic partners, like intimates who share the same cultural background, do import individual cultural resources into their shared relational culture and that the collaborative negotiation of those resources in everyday interaction is a primary means of constructing that culture. This chapter is devoted to the explication of these findings. It begins by exploring the kinds of cultural resources partners import into their relationship and then examines the two types of communication episodes, intimate play and negotiation of misunderstandings, which appear particularly important to the social construction of romantic relational culture. Conclusions complete this chapter.

**Romantic Partners' Importation of Individual Culture**

The first research question this study addressed concerned romantic partners' importation of cultural resources into their shared relational culture. The findings suggest that partners did identify some phenomena as belonging to one culture or the other and they used some of these resources in their construction of their own culture.

**Food.** Since particular foods or cooking styles are often easily identified with a particular culture, intercultural romantic partners often imported this artifact into their shared relational culture. This is evident in the fast uptake provided by Couples A and D in the following two excerpts from the joint interviews conducted with these couples.

**Interview Excerpt: Couple A - European-American Male & Chinese Female**

2. I: How about your culture in terms of food and food preparation?

3. F: ((laugh)) STIR FRY!
4. M: She cooks better
5. F: You like it?
6. M: Yeah- she fries everything soy sauce
7. F: I don't I steam ↑ fish
8. M: Yes and steam alot
9. F: Not alot jus the fish I never steam pork- I never steam ( )
10. M: No you grill those things

**Interview Excerpt: Couple D - Hispanic Male & European-American Female**

19. I: Describe your culture in terms of fo:ods and fo:od preperation
20. C: =Sunday morning Manutho
21. I: Manudo
22. C: Manutho ((laugh)) we used to get that alot Sunday mornings but then it's really high in fat and cholesterol so that kinda cut out (.) um eating Tamalees at my grandmother's (.) on Christmas Eve well not Christmas Eve Christmas Day and New Year's Eve (.) and those are big things

In these two interview excerpts, the couples had little difficulty responding to the question which suggests that the importation of food is very much a part of cultural resources that help make up their relational culture.

Indeed, as the following conversational segments from Couple A suggest, the preparation and consumption of food that is clearly identified with one partner's culture, is sometimes repeatedly negotiated by intercultural romantic partners.

**Interaction #1: Couple A - European-American Male & Chinese Female *Journey to***

*the Mall*

1. M: So is this our dinner?
2. F: N↑o::
3. M: N↑o::? (.) you don't want piz↑za  
((pause))
4. F: ((chewing)) Not really (.)
5. M: We'll figure something=
6. F: =Wa we'll have pizza tomorrow (.) lunch=  
[ ]
7. M: Okay (.)
8. M: Okay
9. F: I want to have Chinese fo↓od ((pause)) ↑I ↑haven't ↑had ↑any ↑Chinese ↑food  
(.) since ↑three weeks ago (.) since (.) ix
10. M: When's the last time you made yourself dinner?  
((pause))
11. F: That wasn't Chinese food >except for the ↑ri:ce<  
[ ] [ ]
12. M: Chinese food ((laughs))
13. M: Hey hey anything you make yourself for dinner is Chinese=
14. F: =↑No:↓ho
15. M: ((laugh))
16. F: ↑No↓o  
((pause))
17. M: ↑Se:e? ((pause)) well (.) how bout we stop at the-uh-when we're at the mall (.)  
for a (.) in the food court?
18. F: Yeah- >do they have Chinese Chinese food there<



19. M: I do not know  
((pause))
20. F: About the worst to happen is to take a left and to go back to >Terra Howte<
21. M: Huh
22. F: Great ((pause)) why wontchyu ↑tr:y Chinese Fo:od?
23. M: I do eat Chinese food, you know that (.) whadoya mean why won't I try it
24. F: That's not your preference  
((pause))
25. M: Exactly (.) I eat Chinese with you all the time (.) the only time I hadn't didn't have Chinese was (.) the last time we went to >the mall< (.) that was it.  
((pause)) whadoya have to say to that smarty pants

**Interaction #6: Couple A - European-American Male & Chinese Female *Dinner***

1. M: It's wonderful
2. F: >Is it good<
3. M: Uh hum
4. F: Mmm (.) mm mm m ((pause)) this is not Chin:ese ↑food (.) don't accuse me of cookin Chinese food all the time (.) is any element of (.) Chinese
5. M: Yes
6. F: What
7. M: >Nobody< I know
8. F: Huh
9. M: Nobody I know would fry: those steaks (.) and put these seasonings on top of them when they're done
10. F: >Come on< THESE seasoning (.) are not Chinese
11. M: [ ]  
I'm serious!

12. M: Okay whatever but
13. F: Italian (.) may:be
14. M: Uh-uh  
((pause))
15. F: And Chinese don't do that (.) it's my: style
16. M: Uh hm  
((eating))
17. F: What does that say:?  
((pause))
18. M: This is a collector's item ((pause)) this is the last paper issue of Datamation  
((pause)) Marches issue will be all (.) online
19. F: †Hmm ((pause)) no more paper?
20. M: Guess not  
((pause))
21. F: ((laugh)) Collector's item uh
22. M: What's that?
23. F: Collector's item uh (.) books will be collector's items ((paper rustling)) you had  
better save all of the books you have
24. M: Umhmm ((pause))  
((dishes))
25. F: What a †hu:ge piece of (.) napkin
26. M: †Thankyou  
((pause))
27. F: Put this (.)
28. M: Nobody I know (.) nobody else I know cooks these vegetables like this either
29. F: You †boil em right?

30. M: Umhmm (.) Chinese fry um (.) ((laugh)) ya do don'tcha?
31. F: Americans fry them too: ((pause))
32. M: ((laugh))
33. F: How many (.) cooks have you been around?
34. M: I've been around alot of people that cook  
((pause))
35. M: Whado ya think >I grew †up< (.) just goin to restaraunts ((laugh)) aunts,  
uncles, cuzins, relatives, (.) friends (.) friends parents (.) ((laugh)) everybody  
cooks ((eating))

**Interaction #7: Couple A - European-American Male & Chinese Female *Hot Cereal***

1. F: You: (.) got me addicted to (.) the uh cereal (.) hot cereal  
[ ] [ ]
2. M: Hmm mm
3. M: Uhm hm
4. F: Cause the first time I had it (.) I hated it
5. M: Uhm hm
6. F: I couldn't eat (.) I couldn't eat even (.) one package
7. M: Uhm hm
8. F: Second time I hated it, third time >hated it< (.) then some how one day suddenly  
I was like, this stuff taste like food ((laugh)) Now I can't do without it (.) what  
am I gonna do?
9. M: Uhh ((laugh)) I guess you're just gonna half to keep buyin it

These excerpts suggest that food is a cultural artifact which these partners were relativley aware of importing into their relational culture. For Couple A, not only does the female import Chinese food into their relational culture, but, in Interaction #7 the male is also

importing some more traditional American food into her diet. She says to him "You: (.) got me addicted to (.) the uh cereal (.) hot cereal." She then proceeds to say how the first three times she tried it she hated it, then, one day she decided that "this stuff taste like food ((laugh))." These excerpts from Couple A show that a couple's relational culture is composed of their combined resources. As the partners encounter new foods and preparation processes, they negotiate the inclusion of these into their "shared reality." Moreover, for Couple A, that negotiation was a gradual process, occurring over repeated interactions, and, sometimes, multiple attempts to "appreciate" the other's cultural artifacts.

Traditions. According to New Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus (1992), a tradition is a "belief, custom, narrative, etc. transmitted by word of mouth from age to age" (p. 400). Traditions may include things like holidays, parties, and specific ways a particular group repeatedly does things. Like food, traditions are elements of culture that can often be easily identified as belonging to a particular culture and, so, importing traditions into the relational culture is often relatively visible. The following interview segment supports this notion.

**Interview Excerpt: Couple C - European-American Male & British Female**

2. I: Do you feel that there has been some importing of your culture into the relationship? If you do in what ways
3. M: I don't think so
4. F: They only (.) kind of thing I
5. M: [ ] Well jus mainly (.) well Christmas er New Year's was it New Year's or Christmas it was Christmas (.) I never heard of krackers before

or sittin around wearin funny paper hats or anything like that but we did that and I never had experienced that before (.) other than that that's about it

The excerpt above suggests that the importation of individual cultural artifacts into a relational culture is sometimes achieved with little resistance by the partner. The male in Couple C is doing Christmas differently than he did it before. He is "trying on" on the females culture as well as learning about it. There is now a tradition interwoven into their relational culture that includes "krackers" and "funny paper hats." Couple C is constructing their relational culture from individual resources and both partners' treatment of those resources.

Couples D & E also use tradition as a source of importation.

### **Interaction #2: Couple E - Mexican-American Male & European-American Female**

#### *Family*

1. M: †We may of had a Quinseñera it might have been a Qeensinatta ((pause))
2. F: \*Is that like a coming out party?\*
3. M: Um-hmm yeah- oh yeah
4. F: Do boyz †have †anything †like †that
5. M: They have a big party (.)

### **Interview Excerpt: Couple D - Hispanic Male & European-American Female**

16. I: All†right how bout describe your culture in terms of rites of †passage
17. M: For girls- uh (.) what I'm missing today is a Quinseñera and that's comparable to like a sweet sixteen but its a little more. mm uh we put more emphasis on it. Its when a girl turns fifteen she becomes a woman a young lady theres a mass fir her and theres a dance and its like it ah (.) people spend about as much as they would on a wedding fir this thing (.) shes escorted by a young man (.) yeah its a

18. F: [ ]  
It's like coming  
out

M: =coming out party and she wears a gown and ah the young men wear tuxes and it's a whole big ↑ thing

In these two excerpts, both couples are talking about a Mexican tradition (Quinseñera) that is, in a sense, a rite of passage for a fifteen-year-old girl. In Interaction #2, with Couple E, the female asks "do boyz ↑ have ↑ anything ↑ like ↑ that." Note that the answer to this question informs her knowledge of both her partner and his culture. This fits into Wood's (1995) notion of relational culture because the female is working to increase her understanding of her partner. Recall also that this particular couple anticipates becoming engaged soon. Therefore, learning about how this tradition provides the female with information which may be relevant to this couples' future since any children they have may enjoy such celebrations.

In the interview excerpt with Couple D, the Quinseñera was talked about a little more in-depth. The male disclosed at this time that boys often receive an expensive gift to substitute for the party. During the interview it was revealed that the female just recently participated in her first Quinseñera with his family and, so, she now has even more knowledge about her partner and his culture. This adds to the dynamics of the relational culture they are negotiating. The Interview Excerpt with Couple D is also interesting because it suggests that the female has had a little bit of experience with this tradition. This is illustrated when she explains to the interviewer "its like coming out." This female has, therefore, incorporated this cultural artifact into her understandings of her partner.

Consequently, both of these excerpts suggest that relational partners are making an active effort to learn more about their partner's traditions and what these traditions mean to them.

Language. As discussed in Chapter Two, language is a very important aspect of culture because it ties members together and marks membership in a culture.

Consequently, when partners from different cultural communities interact repeatedly, linguistic resources from their individual cultures are imported into their shared relational culture. The following segment of conversation from Couple C provides a good example of this.

**Interaction #3: Couple C - European-American Male & British Female *Father's***

Graduation

2. F: He said mine wasn't even there to (.) protect myself (.) so you guys just make fun of me
3. M: We oughta buy him a graduation card  
((pause))
4. F: We better make sure he passed first (.) he didn't get kicked out. I said make sure you have mom's cell phone number on ya
5. M: [ ]  
I was gonna say watch your mom pull up  
and see him sittin on the curb (.) bloody Yanks!
6. F: [ ]  
((laugh))

Turns 2, 4, 5, and 6 suggest that this is a joking episode. Both partners recognize this and the male's use of the phrase "bloody yanks!" not only represents his adoption of her language, but also his appropriate use of that. Hence, "bloody yanks!" is now a part of their shared relational culture.

Couple E also demonstrates cultural importation with the use of language.

**Interaction #1: Couple E - Mexican-American Male & European-American Female**

*Mi Familia*

1. F: So what is that movie um †My †Family about (.) is that what you were talkin about when you said me fameelea (.) is that what you were talkin about?
2. M: It's called Me Fameelea †for \*My Family\*
3. F: So how come it's not called My Family?  
((pause))
4. M: Cuz whadoya mean (.) what is what is it about?
5. F: Um-hmm  
((pause))
6. M: It's about a family ((pause)) and um (.) you know (.) >I don't know< how to explain it. its just about a family in their hard times (.) go:od times
7. F: Isn't that ( )
8. M: It's um (.) I donknow. its alot of tradition its like ((pause)) (ve:ry well that) This particular family is they are (.) they are American they are citizens (.) well, they become citizens in then like one of the boys marries one of the (.) one gir- of his sisters brings in a friend from Cuba or wherever she's on a mission and (.) uh brings in a- er- alien and she asks him to marry this girl and it kinda goes into this story from all of that (.) but then (.) bu- I me- I don't wanna give it away but (.) I really (.) its somethin that maybe you should watch it- and then ask me questions about it
9. F: I want you to watch it with me.
10. M: But >I don't wanta< watch it tho
11. F: Wh:y?
12. M: Cuz its like ((tape cuts out))
 

M: Thers's even like there's even like (.) in the show there's even like a guy who went to college and its kinda like a (.) I wouldnt say hes like ME becuz



hes not like me (.) but like he's ashamed to bring his- his American girlfriend her American family to his house then when he do:es finally (.) really bad

[ ]

13. F: Everything goes re::ally

well

14. M: Not bad but jus (.)

[ ]

15. F: Is that why your afraid?

This is an interesting excerpt because it illustrates a number of things. Turns 1-4 represent negotiation over the English and Spanish translations of the title of this movie. The female appears to privilege her own culture's translation over her partner's in turn 3 when she asks why the movie is not called "My Family." Another example of the use of individual cultural resources occurs in turn 8 when the male stresses "American" and clarifies with "they are citizens." His use of these terms, and "alien," clearly comes from his cultural background as a Mexican-American. His partner now has access to this man's meanings for these words. Finally, he actively encourages her learning about him and his culture when he suggests she watch the movie and ask him questions about it. Turns 12-14 accentuate the relevance of this movie to this couples' "shared reality" by likening it to their own experiences.

It is apparent from the segments above that individual cultural resources are sometimes relatively easily imported into a couple's relational culture. From "trying on" the traditions of the other's culture to eating the other's food, to using his/her language it appears that intercultural romantic partners often easily assimilate cultural resources from both partners into their shared relational culture.

However, this is not always the case. The importation of some cultural resources

sometimes meets with resistance by the importer's romantic partner, and in these cases, greater interactional work is necessary as the couple negotiates what they will include in their relational culture. This is often most evident in the area of values and beliefs.

Values & Beliefs. According to Samovar and Porter (1994), values are aspects of our belief/value/attitude system. "Valuative dimensions include qualities such as usefulness, goodness, aesthetics, need satisfaction, and pleasure" (p. 15). Values express themselves in a culture as rules that members of a culture are expected to adhere to. The following segment from Couple C illustrates this.

**Interview Excerpt: Couple C - European-American Male & British Female**

8. F: I think now that he has been with me he spends more time with his family and my family. I don't think that was a big thing on your list um where I find that important.

To help support this assertion, in the interview, the female mentioned how important family was to British culture. For example, she said that when one goes to the grocery store there are whole families in the stores, not just the mom or the dad. She also mentioned that the pubs in England have playgrounds, so the pub can be used as a social and family venue, not just as entertainment for single adults or couples. The Interview Excerpt shown here suggests that she is importing this family value of her culture into their shared relational culture.

Another excerpt from Couple C delves deeper into the couples' values and beliefs.

**Interaction #1: Couple C - European-American Male & British Female *Raised***

Methodist

1. F: So do you think that you'll still wantin to go to church or will you want to go to

a Catholic church

2. M: \*I wanta go to a Catholic church\*
3. F: Are ya even gonna try? (.) the †Methodist
4. M: Yeah it's fine to go visit but I'm not Methadist
5. F: Well I'm not †Catholic  
((pause))
6. F: It's easier for you to raver than †me.
7. M: No it's †not
8. F: I don't believe in the Catholic way
9. M: So:
10. F: So: I was †raised Methadist  
((pause))
11. F: Nanna unfold the arm (.) wash that ( )  
((pause))
12. F: Well if we †go (.) atleast four times to \*my church\* (.) see if you like it (.) I just don't believe in the Hail Marys or the (I doe ya d)  
[ ]
13. M: Ya don't understand=
14. F: =Well maybe not but (.) I don't believe in (.) Gods the one who (.) you should worship not †Mary
15. M: Your not worshipin Mary (.) see that's what I mean you don't understand
16. F: We:ll

It is important to note that Couple C are expecting a baby within the next few months.

Therefore, this interaction may be seen as extra important because of the negotiation about family and religion into a shared relational culture. In this interaction, each person is attempting to import their cultural background into the "ways of doing things" and

"values" that will become their shared culture. Turn 12 shows the female actively trying to negotiate with the male about "trying" her church. His lack of uptake on this suggestion suggests resistance on his part as far as this issue is concerned.

After exploring the above interactions it appears that cultural resources are indeed imported into intercultural romantic couples relational cultures. Some of these resources may be fairly easily imported with little resistance. Other resources encounter more resistance in being imported to the shared relational culture and couples may engage in more interaction to determine which resources will be included in their shared reality.

#### Romantic Partners' Co-Construction of Relational Culture

As described in Chapter One, relational culture "is processes, structures, and practices that create, express, and sustain personal relationships and the identities of partners" (Wood, 1995, p. 150). According to Bell and Healey (1992), "the analysis of intimates' private codes must be a primary concern for interpersonal researchers" (p. 308-309). These private codes develop naturally through shared interactions. Thus, these codes are unique ways each couple has for communicating with one another. Two kinds of interactions appeared in each couple's conversations and also appeared to be important ingredients of their shared relational culture. These were "Playful Episodes" and "Misunderstanding Segments." The remainder of the chapter is, therefore, devoted to the exploration of these segments.

Playful Episodes. One way that children deal with the complexities of conversation is through using talk as play. Garvey (1977, 1990) found that children utilize five types of play with language: Play with noises and sounds; play with the linguistics system;

spontaneous rhyming and word play; play with speech acts and discourse conventions; and play with fantasy and nonsense (Garvey, 1990, p. 67; see also Parker, 1997). Interestingly, Baxter (1992) looked at play in very much the same way, only the talk she analyzed came from conversations between same-sex adult friendships and opposite-sex, adult romantic partners. Baxter contends that play is a particularly significant resource for constructing meaning in personal relationships.

In addition to determining the kinds of cultural resources romantic partners import into their shared world, one of the primary concerns of this study was to explore the ways in which these resources are utilized to construct that shared "reality." After reviewing the data multiple times, it became evident that romantic partners use talk as play to negotiate understanding and a shared reality in many of the same ways that Garvey (1990; and Parker, 1997) found children using it. As Baxter (1992) argues "play is thought to be an index of intimacy, constituting evidence to the parties' closeness, and intimacy" (p. 337).

Play with Noises and Sounds and Play with the Linguistic System. Young children often play with different forms and rules of language. This study suggests that romantic partners also do this. Talk is played with by repeating strings of syllables, words or phrases. Meaning is intentionally distorted through nonsense and jokes (Johnson, Christies, & Yawkey, 1987). One of the couples plays with the song "Mister Sandman" to place emphasis on the male's last name.

### **Interaction #5: Couple E - Mexican-American Male & European-American Female**

#### Dinner

1. F: Mister †Sali-↓ma:ar

2. M: Mister ↑Sand↓man (.) mister ↑Sal↓mar
3. F: ↑Sal↓ma:ar
4. M: Mister ↑Sal↓ma:ar
5. F: Sal i ma:ar
6. M: Mister ↑Sali- ↓ma:ar
7. F: You dont say SALIMAR?
8. M: I say ((deep voice)) Salamar

In turn 7, the female says to the male "You dont say SALIMAR?" which illustrates relatively intimate knowledge of her partner's routine means of identifying himself.

Importantly, he agrees in turn 8 by enacting his typical use of his last name. So, this playful interaction highlights this couple's construction of the male's identity and shared, intimate understandings of that.

Play with Speech Acts and Discourse Conventions. Garvey (1990) states that society depends upon the conversational rule "say what you believe to be true" (p. 72). However, if both partners recognize an episode as a "playful" exchange, then they are free to take license with this general rule.

#### **Interaction #4: Couple E - Mexican-American Male & European-American Female**

##### *Your the Best*

1. M: Hey
2. F: What
3. M: \*You the best\*
4. F: Yo:u the best

5. M: =Yo:u the best
6. F: Yo::u
7. M: Don't try and get into an argument about who's the best cuz I ought ta win this one (.) you the best
8. F: Why?

This obviously playful and intimate episode is constructed through the repetitive use of the same assessment (Levinson, 1983) while "playing" with the alternate meanings of the pronoun "you." Hence, the "fun" part is an "argument" based upon the same utterance. Again, this unique aspect in their talk is helping to co-construct a shared reality.

Couple A uses talk in much the same way in Interaction #4.

**Interaction #4: Couple A - European-American Male & Chinese Female *Journey after the Mall***

1. F: Didju kn:ow that=
2. D: =No  
((pause))
3. F: Really?
4. D: Didn't (.) yeah
5. F: I thought everybody should know
6. D: I didn't  
((pause))
7. F: \*Sor↓ry\*
8. D: Didju know?
9. F: I ↑didn't (.) but I'm not from here so  
[ ]

10. D: ( )
11. D: From where, Champaign?
12. F: America
13. D: Oh America!  
[ ]
14. F: So I don't half to know
15. D: Ooo::h  
[ ]
16. F: But any American should know
17. D: Oh, what is it every American should know?
18. F: Aa:::h I thought you knew what I was talking about (.) it's somethin give me an  
[ ]
19. D: I thou
- F: anser  
[ ]
20. D: Well see see I thought you were talkin about Cham†paign and you know sh  
we're not were talkin about America in gernal it's different
21. F: And why didju jump in and cut me off?
22. D: Cuz I wanted to (.) I wanted to CUTCHU OFF to prove my dominance of the  
conversation
23. F: Your so domineering
24. D: I know  
((pause))
25. F: That's not nice
26. D: I know
27. F: Are you always like †that
28. D: =Oh yeah  
((cough))



29. F: Why do you have to be domineering?

30. D: I don't

31. F: Then why are you

32. D: I'm not

33. F: You just said you were.

Couple A is also playing with speech acts. The male cannot know what the female is referring to with her question in turn 1 because the conversation began with turn 1. The female asks a question which cannot be appropriately answered. However, each of them "play with" the nonsense question (see turns 1 & 8) which serves to organize the playful episode. Couple A also jokes about the male's "domineeringness." Wood (1995) would argue that these types of interactions facilitate partners' development of shared understandings about one another and appropriate relational identities.

These episodes help to constitute couple's relational culture. They are focused specifically on intimacy and identity which Wood (1995) contends is part of the complex whole because they create, express, and sustain both the relationship and the partners' relational identities. So, these interactions are part of the practices used by partners to construct a relational culture.

Understanding and Misunderstanding. In addition to playful episodes, interactions which demonstrate misunderstandings between these intercultural romantic partners appeared particularly important to understanding the processes of constructing relational culture. It seems reasonable to assume that in intercultural romantic relationships, many misunderstandings come from partners' lack of knowledge about one another's culture.

However, messages have no inherent pre-given meaning. Meaning is created in the process of interaction and, thus, so is understanding. An individual is continually trying to make sense of themselves and others through their activities with other people (Wood, 1995, p. 133-134). Therefore, the study of "misunderstanding segments" appeared useful to explain how shared understandings are constructed. The following segment of conversation from Couple A concerns the women's cultural identity.

**Interaction #2 Tape 1, Side A: Couple A: Are you Asian?**

1. D: So are you considered Asian
2. F: ↑I'm Asian
3. D: I was just wonder↑ing I didn't know whatchude be classified as ( )
4. F: Hahaahaahaha
5. D: How the hell do I ↓know
6. F: Of course I'm Asian what would you think, Indian?
7. D: Chin↑ese
8. F: Chi↑nesse (.) Okay Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Malasian, ( ), Thaies all fall into the same category, Asian
9. D: I see (.) and I'm white-
10. F: Your classified by your skin color
11. D: So I'm white though
12. F: I don't know w(h)hy they call us yell(h)ow ((laugh))
13. D: [ ]  
((laugh))

This particular interaction is shaping each of these partners' relational identities. Not only

is the male receiving more information about his partner's ethnicity and culture, he is also reacting to what his relational partner is saying. In turn 12, the female marks her talk with laugh tokens and laughter (Jefferson, 1984) as she claims a lack of understanding about stereotypical conceptions of Asian skin color. These markers provide the male information about how he is to interpret the message. Since that message concerns her identity and her feelings about European-American's stereotypes of Asians, this is particularly important. This couple is negotiating the meaning that "skin color" will have in their relationship.

Couple E also demonstrates the use of meanings and interpretations in interaction #6.

**Interaction #6: Couple E - Mexican-American Male & European-American Female**

*4th of July*

1. F: Do you guys celebrate fourth of July too?
2. M: Yeah-  
((pause))
3. F: It' s America's American's Independence Day?
4. M: We celebrate (.) the seven†teenth of September
5. F: Hey when is Cinco day Miyo?
6. M: I don't know
7. F: When is it celebrated?
8. M: Another holiday (.) I don't know (.) Cinco day Miyo might be a (.) it could be like a Puerto Rican holiday I guess or somethin
9. F: It could be like what?

10. M: Like a Puerto Rican holiday
11. F: Do you guyz celebrate it or no?
12. M: Not re:ally
13. P: But you celebrate September seventeenth?

This interaction takes place on the Fourth of July and it is obvious that the segment begins with an effort by the female to better understand her partner and his culture. When the female asks whether her partner celebrates the Fourth of July, she can assess similarities between them and this can facilitate the shared meanings of this event. In addition, by asking about the holidays he celebrates she gains information about his culture that will be important in the sharing of those events with her partner. Another interesting segment of this interaction, occurs when he states a lack of knowledge about the date of the Mexican celebration of Cinco de Mayo. This is interesting since this phrase translates directly as the fifth of May and both of these speakers speak Spanish. Hence, misunderstanding between intercultural partners is not always a result of language or cultural differences. More importantly, the relational culture a couple creates is their creation and will include their limitations as well as their strengths.

Context is another important aspect to consider when exploring meaning and interpretations (Wood, 1995, p. 134). Particular groups shape relationship perspectives and identities according to their cultural background. Therefore, the context within which interactions occur happen is very important to the understanding and interpretation of activities taking place.

**Interaction #3: Couple A - European-American Male & Chinese Female S.O.L.**

1. F: U:hh we've been reading articles (.) I think you've read those articles too um (.) there's one article about S O L (.) it's a (.)
2. D: Shit outa luck?
3. F: Huh?
4. D: Shit- \*out- of- luck-\* it's uh an all American saying  
[ ]
5. F: It's a Shiddy bizness
6. D: Yes
7. F: ((laugh))
8. D: S O L \*o!kay\*
9. F: It's a it's a- organization in Finland that specializes in (.) cleaning (.) custodian service? services (.) an uh they, they make their employees very hap!py and proud of what they do despite the status of their their- job and (.) they let the employees have control over their bizness? they will break them up into uh ! teams (.) and have them negotiate with clients and jus work for themselves basicly but they would throw out as (.) a team from S O L so they got the companees repu!tation (.) and they work (.) it's like when they when they tell people I I I'm from S O L the peoples (wawuwa) would take a ( ) but they don't really want to work S O L they work for themsleves

It would appear that in this conversation the female was not familiar with the acronym S.O.L., (which, in American slang, stands for shit out of luck). Consequently, she was unable to make the first-hand cultural reference that the male made to the acronym. In turn 5, however, she demonstrates understanding of the word "shit" by picking up on it and constructing a relevant utterance. Thus, this couple is negotiating shared understandings of both the slang "S. O. L." and the organization using that acronym.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study provide insight into the ways in which intercultural

romantic partners import cultural resources into their relationship and negotiate their inclusion in a meaningful relational culture. It was found that the intercultural romantic couples who participated in this study did, indeed, import individual cultural resources into the development of their shared reality. These resources included food, language, traditions, values and beliefs. In addition, this study also provided insight into the interactive processes intercultural romantic partners utilized in negotiating cultural differences and constructing a meaningful, intelligible relational culture.

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## Appendix A

### Survey

1. What is your name?
2. What is your partner's name?
3. What is your age?
4. Gender (circle one)      Male      Female
5. What is your education level?
6. What religion do you identify with?
7. Where were you born?
8. Ethnicity means "the classification of a subgroup of people who have a common heritage with shared customs, characteristics, language, history, and so on" (Grice & Skinner, 1998, p. 89). Knowing this, what ethnicity do you identify with? (European American is the co-culture traditionally referred to as "white")
9. How involved are you with your culture? (Circle the level of your involvement)  

Very Involved							Very Uninvolved
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10. How long have you been living in the United States?
11. How long have you been involved with your romantic partner? (in months)
12. How do you characterize your relationship with your partner? (i.e. are you dating, boyfriend/girlfriend, engaged, etc.)
13. Recently in this relationship, I have been (circle one)  

Very Involved							Very Uninvolved
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
14. Recently in this relationship, my partner has been (circle one)  

Very Involved							Very Uninvolved
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
15. Please provide any other information you consider important about your relationship

with your partner.

## Appendix B

## The Interview Protocol

1. I'd like to first get a sense of the way you see your individual cultural background. So, I'd like each of you to describe your culture. That probably sounds pretty vague so let me describe some primary characteristics of culture. Culture consists of those things that are shared among the members of a community and we most often think of them in terms of shared values, knowledge, ways of doing things, and, of course, language and nonverbal codes. So, for example, if you think about the "youth or teen culture" in America you notice that teen-agers in this country consider some things VERY important (Getting their license, Dating), they wear particular types of clothing, have a shared dialect (Cool, Rad, Gang-Banger, Chill) and so on. I'd like you to take a minute and think about those aspects of your culture that you think are pretty important and then tell me about them.

2. Please describe your culture in terms of the following things:

- a. Important Traditions
- b. Rites of passage
- c. Foods & food preparation
- d. Clothes
- e. Male & Female gender roles
- f. Romance & love
- g. Commitment to a romantic partner
- h. Attraction & sex
- i. The ideal mate
- j. The importance of communication
- k. How one communicates:  
Affection, Strength, Emotion, Respect, Love, Sexual Attraction,  
Commitment

Now these next few questions are more specific to your relationship. If you're uncomfortable answering any question, just tell me and we'll move on to the next one.

3. What meals do you eat together and how is this done? Does one person cook or are cooking duties shared? What is an average meal like? (e.g. do you sit in front of the television, etc.) What is the typical food enjoyed at meals? Have you learned how to fix one another's favorite foods?

4. Do you have any traditions that the two of you acknowledge together?

5. Do you use terms of endearment with one another? If yes, what are some examples?

6. Do you notice any particular phrases that you use in particular situations? (i.e. conflict)
7. How do you communicate involvement or commitment? (e.g. wedding rings)
8. Have you met one another's families? If so, how was this done? Was it important? Did either of you learn more about the other's culture from this?
9. How involved are each of you in the other's larger social network? This would include family, friends, social groups, etc. Do the members of these networks share your partner's culture?
10. Do you feel that there has been some importing of your culture into the relationship? If you do, in what ways?
11. Are you aware of working out ways to mesh your two cultures? For example, I know a couple where she's Japanese American and he's Irish American and they named their first daughter Miava which is a combination of a Japanese name and an Irish one. Is it important for you to do this?
12. Do you talk about your cultural differences? Why or why not? How comfortable do you feel about doing this?
13. How much do each of you feel you know about your partner's culture? Did you know this much before you were involved with him/her about it? Do you feel you have learned much about it because of your involvement with your partner?
14. Is it important to you that your partner learn and understand your culture? Why or why not?
15. Do you think that one of your cultures plays a bigger role in your relationship than the other person's culture? If so, why do you think this is? Do you consider this a problem?
16. Do you feel that the two of you have more in common than in difference or more in differences than similarities? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?
17. How has participating in this study influenced you? Was it fun, not fun, interesting? Did you learn anything more about yourself or your partner from doing this?

## Appendix C

## Transcript Notation System

1. Turns at talk are numbered and identified by reference to the speaker's sexual orientation (F = Female & M = Male).
2. Utterances are transcribed as they are heard rather than the way they would be written, up to the point of unrecognizability or presumed reader confusion. This requires that both letters and punctuation marks be used to mark sounds, rather than syntax.
3. [ - Links simultaneous utterances (overlap) at the start and end of the overlap (except for in laughter when only the start of the overlap is marked).
4. (=) - Marks a) contiguous utterances (where there is no interval between turns) and b) the different parts of one speaker's continuous flow of the speech which has been carried over to the next line following the interruption by the other speaker.
5. ((pause)) - Marks intervals in the talk within or between turns. A very small interval is marked with (.). A hyphen (-) marks a short, abrupt stop at the end of a word.
6. : - Marks sound extension.
7. ? - Indicates a rising inflection.
8. ! - Indicates an animated tone.
9. † † - Marks altered pitch (higher or lower) of the syllable it is located before.
10. Underline - Indicates stress.
11. CAPITALS - Mark the talk as louder than the surrounding talk.
12. \* \* - Asteriks enclose talk which is lower in volume than the surrounding talk.
13. (( )) - Mark various speech sounds where they occur, i.e. ((cough)), ((laugh)), ((groan)), ((snort)), or other details of the conversational scene ((whispered)), ((dishes banging)).
14. > < - Enclose speech that is spoken at a faster rate than the surrounding speech.
15. ( ) - Marks transcriptionist doubt about the utterance and may be empty if the talk

is completely unrecoverable or filled with what is apparently said.

16. . . . - Indicate that part of an utterance or dialogue have been left out



## Appendix D

## Couple A - European-American Male (D) &amp; Chinese Female (S)

**Interview Excerpts: Couple A**

1. S: I guess I'm the most unchinese Chinese? Cu:z the only thing that I like about my culture is Chinese ↑ food ((laugh)) u:h I dont really mix with the Chinese ↑ here but that's because I I feel that when I am oversees I should make for the local community as a matter of fact I only have one Chinese ↑friend in the U S so:  
  
. . .
2. I: How about your culture in terms of food and food preparation
3. S: Haha hahaha STIR FRY
4. D: She cooks better
5. S: You like it?
6. D: Yeah- she fries everything soy sauce
7. S: I ↑dont I steam ↑ fish
8. D: Yes and steam alot
9. S: Not alot jus the fish I never steam pork- I never steam ( )
10. D: No you grill those things

**Interaction #1 Tape 1, Side A: Couple A: Journey to the Mall**

1. D: So is this our dinner?
2. S: N↑o::
3. D: N↑o::? (.) you dont want piz↑za  
((pause))
4. S: ((chewing)) Not really (.)

5. D: We'll figure something=
6. S: =Wa we'll have pizza tomorrow (.) lunch=  
[ ]
7. D: Okay (.)
8. D: Okay
9. S: I want to have Chinese fo↓od ((pause)) ↑I ↑haven't ↑had ↑any ↑Chinese ↑food  
(.) since ↑three weeks ago (.) since (.) ix
10. D: Whens the last time you made yourself dinner?  
((pause))
11. S: That wasnt Chinese food >except for the ↑ri:ce<  
[ ] [ ]
12. D: Chinese food ((laughs))
13. D: Hey hey anything you make yourself for dinner is Chinese=
14. S: =↑No:↓ho
15. D: ((laugh))
16. S: ↑No↓o  
((pause))
17. D: ↑Se:e? ((pause)) well (.) how bout we stop at the-a-when we're at the mall (.) for  
a (.) in the food court?
18. S: Yeah- >do they have Chinese Chinese food there<
19. D: I do not know  
((pause))
20. S: About the worst to happen is to take a left and to go back to >Terra Howte<
21. D: Huh
22. S: Great ((pause)) why wontchu ↑tr:y Chinese Fo:od?
23. D: I do eat Chinese food, you know that (.) whadoya mean why wont I try it

24. S: That's not your preference  
((pause))
25. D: Exactly (.) I eat Chinese with you all the time (.) the only time I hadn't didn't have Chinese was (.) the last time we went to >the mall< (.) that was it.  
((pause)) what do you have to say to that smarty pants

**Interaction #2 Tape 1, Side A: Couple A: Are you Asian?**

1. D: So are you considered Asian
2. S: I'm Asian
3. D: I was just wondering I didn't know what you'd be classified as ( )
4. S: Hahaahaahaha
5. D: How the hell do I know
6. S: Of course I'm Asian what would you think, Indian?
7. D: Chinese
8. S: Chinese (.) Okay Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Malaysian, ( ), Thais all fall into the same category, Asian
9. D: I see (.) and I'm white-
10. S: You're classified by your skin color
11. D: So I'm white though
12. S: I don't know why they call us yellow ((laugh))
13. D: [ ]  
((laugh))

**Interaction #3 Tape 1, Side A: Couple A: S.O.L.**

1. S: Uh-hh we've been reading articles (.) I think you've read those articles too um (.) there's one article about S.O.L. (.) it's a (.)
2. D: Shit outta luck?

3. S: Huh?
4. D: Shit- \*out- of- luck-\* it's uh an all American saying  
[ ]
5. S: Its a Shiddy bizness
6. D: Yes
7. S: ((laugh))
8. D: S O L \*o!kay\*
9. S: Its a its a organiyzation in Finland that specializes in (.) cleaning (.) custodian service? services (.) an uh they, they make their employees very hap!py and proud of what they do despite the status of their their job and (.) they let the employees have control over their bizness? they will break them up into uh !teams (.) and have them negotiate with clients and jus work for themselves basicly but they would throw out as (.) a team from S O L so they got the companees repu!tation (.) and they work (.) its like when they when they tell people I- I- I'm from S O L the peoples wawuwa would take a ( ) but they dont really want to work S O L they work for themsleves

**Interaction #4 Tape 1, Side B: Couple A: Journey after the Mall**

1. S: Didju kn:ow that=
2. D: =No  
((pause))
3. S: Really?
4. D: Didn't (.) yeah
5. S: I thought everybody should know
6. D: I didn't  
((pause))
7. S: \*Sor!ry\*
8. D: Didju know?
9. S: I !didn't (.) but I'm not from here so

10. D: [ ]  
( )
11. D: From where, Champaign?
12. S: America
13. D: Oh America!
14. S: [ ]  
So I dont half to know
15. D: Ooo::h
16. S: [ ]  
But any American should know
17. D: Oh, what is it every American should know?
18. S: Aa::h I thought you knew what I was talking about (.) its somethin give me an
19. D: [ ]  
I thou
- S: anser  
[ ]
20. D: Well see see I thought you were talkin about Cham† paign and you know sh  
we're not were talkin about America in gernal it's different
21. S: And why didju jump in and cut me off?
22. D: Cuz I wanted to (.) I wanted to CUTCHU OFF to prove my dominance of the  
conversation
23. S: Your so domineering
24. D: I know  
((pause))
25. S: Thats not nice
26. D: I know
27. S: Are you always like †that
28. D: =Oh yeah

((cough))

29. S: Why do you have to be domineering?

30. D: I dont

31. S: Then why are you

32. D: I'm not

33. S: You just said you were

**Interaction #5 Tape 1, Side B: Couple A: Lizards**

1. S: When you go to Arizona? will you get to walk around where which part of Arizona are you going to

2. D: Ah Pheonix

3. S: Wo:w (.) the capitol ci|ty (.) do you call that a capitol city?

4. D: [ ]  
And their

5. D: I don't think Pheonix is the capitol, no it's not

6. S: No?

7. D: No  
((pause))

8. D: Aah will I get to walk around?

9. S: Yeah will you get to like go out?

10. D: I do not know I don't know how much time I'm going to have

11. S: [ ]  
Sightsee::ing

12. D: If I do it won't be a whole lot of time (.) there's not a whole lot to see in Califor or in a Arizona anyway

13. S: There is|n't (.) you can bring back some >lizards<

14. D: Oookay! mm yes
15. S: Scorpios ah scorpion? Haha haha what are they called? ((laugh))
16. D: Scorpions
17. S: Oh yes scorpion ((laugh))
18. D: Scorpio
19. S: Scar scorpion bring me a couple of those that would be nice
20. D: Aahkay
21. S: An ah (.) cactus?
22. D: Aaokay
23. S: And ah jus bring some desert sand
24. D: Some desert sand okay
25. S: [ ]  
Yeah

**Interaction #6 Tape 2, Side B: Couple A: Dinner**

1. D: Its wonderful
2. S: >Is it good<
3. D: Uh hum
4. S: Mmm (.) mm mm m ((pause)) this is not Chin:ese ↑ food (.) dont accuse me of cookin Chinese food all the time (.) is any element of (.) Chinese
5. D: Yes
6. S: What
7. D: >Nobody< I know
8. S: Huh

9. D: Nobody I know would fry: those steaks (.) and put these seasonings on top of them when they're done
10. S: >Come on< THESE seasoning (.) are not Chinese
11. D: [ ]  
I'm serious!
12. D: Okay whatever but
13. S: Italian (.) may:be
14. D: Uh-uh  
((pause))
15. S: And Chinese don't do that (.) its my: style
16. D: Uh hm  
((eating))
17. S: What does that say:?  
((pause))
18. D: This is a collector's item ((pause)) this is the last paper issue of Datamation ((pause)) Marches issue will be all (.) online
19. S: †Hmm ((pause)) no more paper?
20. D: Guess not  
((pause))
21. S: ((laugh)) Collector's item uh
22. D: What's that?
23. S: Collector's item uh (.) books will be collector's items ((paper rustling)) you had better save all of the books you have
24. D: Umhmm ((pause))  
((dishes))
25. S: What a †hu:ge piece of (.) napkin
26. D: †Thankyou



((pause))

27. S: Put this (.)
28. D: Nobody I know (.) nobody else I know cooks these vegetables like this either
29. S: You 1 boil em right?
30. D: Umhmm (.) Chinese fry um (.) ((laugh)) ya do don'tcha?
31. S: Americans fry them too: ((pause))
32. D: ((laugh))
33. S: How many (.) cooks have you been around?
34. D: I've been around alot of people that cook  
((pause))
35. D: Whado ya think >I grew 1 up< (.) just goin to restaraunts ((laugh)) aunts, uncles,  
cuzins, relatives, (.) friends (.) friends parents (.) ((laugh)) everybody cooks  
((eating))

**Interaction #7 Tape 2, Side B: Couple A: Hot Cereal**

1. S: You: (.) got me addicted to (.) the a cereal (.) hot cereal  
[ ] [ ]
2. D: Hmm mm
3. D: Uhm hm
4. S: Cause the first time I had it (.) I hated it
5. D: Uhm hm
6. S: I couldn't eat (.) I couldn't eat even (.) one package
7. D: Uhm hm
8. S: Second time I hated it, third time >hated it< (.) then some how one day suddenly  
I was like, this stuff taste like food ((laugh)) Now I can't do without it (.) what  
am I gonna do?

9. D: Uhh ((laugh)) I guess you're just gonna half to keep buyin it

## Appendix E

## Couple B - European-American Male (E) and Polish Female (A)

**Interaction #1 Tape 2, Side A: Couple B: *Playing Games***

((Computer noises in the background))

1. F: Is that how many times have you played already
2. M: I do(h)n't kn(h)ow?  
[ ]
3. F: No DON'T PUT IT ↓THERE (.) PUT IT ↑THERE (.) my ↑soapson  
an its gonna be a good one (.) Im so ecited
4. M: ( )
5. F: Okay I don't wanna (.) screw you up
6. M: Thatsa first
7. F: I- I never d:o I jus (.) try in- okay lift this arm up wheres the remote is it in here  
(.) yeah (.)
8. M: I don't know where it is
9. F: Don't worry jus keep it'll be all ↑fine (.) I got it Im so ecited see look thats how I  
want my hair (.) look really quick (.) like hers I like it=
10. M: Yeah I see it but hers wasn't colored two or three times
11. F: Oh I don't want it colored (.) I jus like the style (.) I llike that (.) yeah no yeah
12. M: Leave me (.) a- lone-  
[ ]
13. F: No uh that was a booboo
14. M: I gotta clear this out so I can get this (.) cause I wanna work from the left side
15. F: ↑Oo:h I se:e
16. M: I like working from the left

17. F: =I gotta whole um (.) I gotta a whole um (.) almost my whole box packed for my parents to take home(.) with clean clothes (.) so it doesn't have to be washed

## Appendix F

Couple C - European-American Male (M) &amp; British Female (A)

Interview Excerpts: Couple C

1. A: I was raised that um little girls wore dresses and um little boys wore pants and I: don't even think until I moved to America I even had a pair of pants or if I did they were just because it was to go outside an play in we never ever went anywhere a liddle girl never went anywhere in pants an so: when I moved to America I can re we would go to birthday parties and mom would make me wear she'd but me like a party ↑ dress an I'd have to wear my hair all fixed up and I'd cry an say ↑ I ↑ didn't ↑ want ↑ ta ↑ go ((laugh)) because everyone else was jus wearin shorts an regular clothes an I wasn't allowed to wear stuff like that and I can remember wearin pants the first time I can remember wearin pants was um (.) an they were dress pants to school I was in third grade an I forgot school pictures were gonna be that ↑ day an my dad was so upset that I was in the school picture with pants on and I was right in the front row an I can remember even thinkin takin that picture I'm gonna be in trouble fir not wearin a dress cuz I my dad was in the hospital at the time so he didn't know what I was wearin to school but I jus wanted to be like other ↑ kids ((laugh)) an my dad jus didn't understand that ↑ dresses just weren't worn to school in America  
 . . .
2. I: Do you feel that there has been some importing of your culture into the relationship? If you do in what ↑ ways
3. M: I dont think so
4. A: They only (.) kind of thing I  
 [ ]
5. M: Well jus mainly (.) well Christmas er New Year's was it New ↑ Year's or Christmas it was Christmas (.) I never heard of krackers before or sittin around wearin funny paper hats or anything like that but we did that and I never had experienced that before (.) other than that that's about it
6. A: I forgot what I was gonna say  
 [ ]
7. M: Well their accent her parents accent I guess is (.) different to me
8. A: I think now that he's been with me he spends more time with his family and my

family I don't think that was a big thing on your list um where I find that important

**Interaction #1 Tape 1, Side A: Couple C: Raised Methodist**

1. A: So do you think that you'll still wantin to go to church or will you want to go to a Cathlic church
2. M: \*I wanta go to a Cathlic church\*
3. A: Are ya even gonna try? (.) the †Methodist
4. M: Yeah it's fine to go visit but I'm not Methadist
5. A: Well I'm not †Cathlic  
((pause))
6. A: It's easier for you to ravert than †me
7. M: No it's †not
8. A: I don't believe in the Cathlic way
9. M: So:
10. A: So: I was †raised Methadist  
((pause))
11. A: Nanna unfold the arm (.) wash that ( )  
((pause))
12. A: Well if we †go (.) atleast four times to \*my church\* (.) see if you like it (.) I just don't believe in the Hail Mary's or the I doe ya d
13. M: [ ]  
Ya don't understand=
14. A: =Well maybe not but (.) I don't believe in (.) God's the one who (.) you should worship not †Mary
15. M: Your not worshipin Mary (.) see that's what I mean you don't understand
16. A: We:ll

**Interaction #2 Tape 1, Side A: Couple C: Stayin' Home**

1. A: So if you get this job I can definitely go down to part \*time for the baby\*
2. M: If I if I do get it and if I am makin enough money
3. A: ( )
4. M: Atleast thirly-six thousand (.) that's about ten thousand more or six thousand more then I'm makin
5. A: Then that would make what be what I would that would equal what I'm makin=
6. M: =That's without commission (.)
7. A: Well I could quite †completely
8. M: Yo:u'd be better off where you are now
9. A: Yeah but I could do Mary Kay and I wouldn't be spendin a hundred bucks a week for a babysitter
10. M: ( )
11. A: Ya know (.) plus I wouldn't half to eat out evry day ((pause)) and maybe ((pause)) if you could sell your †car (.) even if we don't make what you owe on it (.) we'd only have one car payment?
12. M: Why would we want one car-
13. A: On †my car (.) for even you for six or seven months would not hurt you
14. M: YES it would!  
((pause))
15. A: \*Yeah but\* think of all the money you'd save
16. M: Well think of my discomfort when I'm drivin a thousand miles a week
17. A: Yeah but you get gas milige and turn in the gas milige and you can make money on it=
18. M: =I couldn't WALK but HEY BY GOLLY I GOT GOOD gas milige

19. A: [            ]  
           car? Well you gotta company
20. M: Yeah a ↑va↓an
21. A: Well then ↑really we would we could sell both the cars and (.) get one
22. M: [            ]  
           (            )
23. A: Plus the company vehicle?
24. M: ↑No: it's not a company vehicle it's a FRIGGIN (.) van it's a (.) cargo van
25. A: Well you said a ↑van there's a difference between a \*cargo van and a van\* (.)  
           ↑right
26. M: Ye:ah  
           ((pause))
27. A: If we sell my car that would mean we're gonna have two car payments again (.)  
           instead of one
28. M: How would sellin your car give us two car ↓payments
29. A: Because ↑I don't have a car payment now
30. M: (            )
31. A: No: if I sold my car and got a new car (.) then that would mean (.) we'd have  
           two car payments if we sold your car (.) we'd only have one because the one that  
           would take over yours would be the only car payment (.) ya see what I'm  
           saying?

**Interaction #3 Tape 2, Side A: Couple C: Graduation**

1. A: My mom was givin my dad a lecture sayin (.) you better not be sayin no my God  
           when your on the road you can't do that (.) tellin them people that teaching that  
           driver's safety course the way that you do it eh you jus sit there and be quiet (.)  
           he said I can't be quiet for four hours ((laugh)) (.) I guess Bob and Linda were  
           makin fa fun of him last night (.) sayin if they make him write a essay on like  
           why he's not gonna drive wreckless again he'll be saying writing a word you  
           know how do you spell so in so because he can't spell real good



((pause))

2. A: He said mine wasn't even there to (.) protect myself (.) so you guys just make fun of † me
3. M: We oughta by him a graduation card  
((pause))
4. A: We better make sure he passed first (.) he didn't get kicked out I said make sure you have mom's cell phone number on ya
5. M: [ ]  
I was gonna say watch your mom pull up and see him sittin on the curb (.) bloody Yanks
6. A: [ ]  
((laugh))

**Interaction #4 Tape 2, Side B: Couple C: A Stroller**

1. A: He's pissed off because mom said she was gonna take him and drop him off and go (.) shoppin
2. M: He was pissed off?
3. A: Um-hm  
((pause))
4. A: He said † anyway † you † can † spend † money (.) she said weel I wanta look at the strollers ((laugh)) see what the different kinds of stro † llers
5. M: I thought that we were gonna get one from England?
6. A: Well I asked mom about (.) the price of um and she said that like they probably are five hundred dollars
7. M: Even over there?
8. A: Yeah (.) cause  
[ ]
9. M: Well why the hell would they send us those big expensive † ones
10. A: Well that's just the normal ones just because (.) what they last through two and three kids you don't ever half to worry about the wheels goin bad and they're sturdy they're made for like England everyone pushes their kids everywhere they

don't drive

[ ]

11. M: I tell you one thing after (.) seein (.) mothers push their kids through the str out there at the fair? we won't be usin an umbrella thing unless it's on concrete, I don't care how heavy the friggin stroller is ((laugh))

**Interaction #5 Tape 3, Side A: Couple C: The Phone**

1. M: I remember one of the first times I talked to ya one the phone you were cleaning that day (.) God we used to talk on the phone ALOT!
2. A: I know  
((pause))
3. A: We:ll at ↑first (.) you were doin fairs in stuff too and if we wanted ta talk we had to talk (.) you'd call me when you were goin from place to place (.) you had to have gone and jus like sat somewhere and talk to me on the phone
4. M: Why?
5. A: Because we used to talk alot during the ↓day too
6. M: I'd always talk to you when I was drivin
7. A: \*Yeah\* (.) well we used to half to ride (.) go home from your house and talk the whole time ↑too ((pause)) you would call me as soon as ↑I got in the car (.) and talk to me all the way ho:me (.) for an hour or two an then you would try in talk me into comin back to your house (.) and I ↑never ↑did  
[ ]
8. M: The thing I wonder is how many people eavesdropped on some of those ((laughing)) conversations
9. A: We didn't really have any=
10. M: =We had a ↑couple
11. A: Sex conversations?
12. M: Yeah-  
((pause))
13. A: We did?
14. M: Yeah

15. A: Why like what I though ((pause)) like ( ) o:h that's true (.) we:ll that was in Springfield ( )
16. M: But I was on a cellular phone so it doesn't madder
17. A: Even from a (land) phone ya think
18. M: O:h I yeah as soon as you come across on this thing I can you can hear both conversations
19. A: Oh well (.) hopefully we made somebody happy

## Appendix G

## Couple D - Hispanic Male (C) &amp; European-American Female (S)

**Interview Excerpts: Couple D**

1. I: Describe your culture in terms of (.) important † traditions
2. S: Yours is gonna be longer (.) go ahead
3. C: Important traditions? um (.) birthdays (.) one of the things we sing about twenty different versions of a birthday happy birthday (.) in English and in Spanish (.) whatever traditions do we have? \*I'm tryin ta think\*
4. S: Family reunions thatchu always go to
5. C: Aa that's jus somethin that we jus startid a couple of years ago it's not that old
6. S: Hmm
7. C: Before that it always used to be that we always got together for birthdays when it was somone's birthday † everyone's there (.) and (.) Christmas um every Christmas about seven o'clock we all show up at my Grandmother's house (.) and she lives in a small three bedroom apartment (.) so you try and fit a hundred and twenty-five people in there and it gets kinda crowded umm (.) and there's no arguing nothin everyone's jus havin a good time (.) \*what are some other traditions?\* Aah back to religion passing again the statue of Mary? like it would go from house to house to house in the community and uh like when my grandmother has it we all show up there and say an hour rosary (.) oh ye:ah I forgot about that one
8. S: ((laugh))
9. C: As I got older you know it was like ah yeah I'm not goin I'm not goin (.) umm what other traditions do we have? that's about it (.) I mean I'm sur there's more I jus can't think of it
10. S: Our family traditions? umm birthdays aren't really a big deal I mean we kinda get together um really the biggest deal is like Christmas cuz the day before Christmas is my ah sisters birthday so we get together the day before Christmas and then we all get together at somebody else's house on Christmas † day and then we all get together the day after Christmas at somebody else's house so and like we always eat the same exact thing an ever since I was little an I think

before that it's like certain kinds of foods like I don't know why but they make oyster stew which I HATE and a ha bu it's jus tradition (.) yeah New Year's

[ ]

11. C:

Really

S: Eve it's like a family tradition and uh not New Year's, Christams Eve and um

[ ]

12. C:

Why on New Year's?

S: let's see the other family tradition is jus like these are silly things but every fall my sisters and my mother and I erh and my neeces the ah eh her kids or grand↑kids we all go shopping together at like Shaker Woods festival I mean isn't that funny he has all these religious traditions and I have shopping traditions you know? ((laugh))

13. C: Well there not all religious (.) I mean like we every fall we used to go apple

[ ]

14. S:

((laugh))

C: picking up in Michigan and every summer right before Labor day we'd go to the Warren Dunes (.) and

[ ]

15. S:

We usually also we used to traditionally like every one or two years we get together in the summer for a one or two week um vacation (.) the whole family we'd all rent a house somewhere like Cap Cod or whatever

. . .

16. I: All↑right how bout describe your culture in terms of rights of ↑passage

17. C: For girls- uh (.) what I'm missing today is a Quinseanera and that's comparable to like a sweet sixteen but it's a little more mm a we put more emphasis on it it's when a girl turns fifteen she becomes a women a young lady there's a mass fir her and there's a dance and it's like it ah (.) people spend about as much as they would on a wedding fir this thing (.) she's escorted by a young man (.) yeah it's a

[ ]

18. S:

It's like coming

out

C: coming out party and she wears a gown and ah the young men wear tuxes and it's a whole big ↑thing

. . .

19. I: Describe your culture in terms of fo:ods and fo:od preparation
20. C: =Sunday morning Manutho
21. I: Manudo
22. C: Manutho ((laugh)) we used to get that alot Sunday mornings but then it's really high in fat and cholesterol so that kinda cut out (.) um eating Tamalees at my grandmother's (.) on Christmas Eve well not Christmas Eve Christmas Day and New Year's Eve (.) and those are big things
- . . .
23. I: Do you think that one of your cultures plays a bigger role in your relationship then the other person's culuture? If so why do you think this and um do you consider this a pro!blem
24. S: Probably like we said (.) the only time we had kinda problem was with the mass sort of problem
25. C: But I think my culture is more involved in our relationship (.) then yours
26. S: >Why do ya think that<
27. C: I doeknow (.) and it's not that it causes a problem (.) it's jus that it's more (.) there BOOM in your face I guess
28. S: I think is your saying it's different though not that it's more there I think we're more Americanized than than we are Mexi Hispanic (.) you know it's not like
29. C: [ ]  
Yeah-
- S: you know we don't speak Spanish in our house or you know we don't you know what I ↑mean
30. C: Yeah- and I think because of that that my hispanic culture plays more of a (.) dominant role (.) don'tcha think?
31. S: Hm-mm
32. C: Do you understand what I am saying at all?
33. S: I I think that you are saying ih a plays a more obvious role but not a dominate

role

34. C: Yi yeah that's what I mean NA na not that one is better than the other that jus

35. S: [ ]  
It's

C: mine is more I guess vocalized you know is one way to put it

36. S: Okay

## Appendix H

Couple E - Mexican-American Male (M) &amp; European-American Female (P)

**Interview Excerpts: Couple E**

1. P: My granma was talkin to my mom both my granmas were and they just keep going on and on and on about how much they love Meliseeo an my granma looks at my mom an she's like he's just an all American boy ((laugh)) an I was like well granma not kwite buh
2. M: The all American Mex the all Mexican American boy so it was kinda funny
3. P: Yeah  
 . . .
4. I: Do you feel that there has been some importing of your culture into the relationship? If you do in what ↑ ways
5. M: Not yet (.) no I don't think so but (.) you know maybe when like we'll say this is down the road aways but when I when we have kids an say our daughter turns fifteen you know are we gonna have a Quinseanera for her (.) stuff like that you know um not yet  
 . . .
6. M: Ya know when my mom told me there was a Quinseanera an they were goin I was really you know really excited cuz I wanted Pam to come I wanted her to you know see that and get a feel for that and you know like and then tho so it's like my mom even told her you know sh she's like how does Pam like it Pam you know she thinks it's pretty nice it's like pretty pretty fancy you know for just a girl turnin fifteen well wait til she wait til she what she thinks about the Mexican wedding I'm like don't tell her that but she ran right over and talked to her

**Interaction #1 Tape 1, Side B: Couple E: *Mi Familia***

1. P: So what is that movie um ↑My ↑Family about (.) is that what you were talkin about when you said me fameelea (.) is that what you were talkin about?
2. M: It's called Me Fameelea ↓for \*My Family\*



3. P: So how come it's not called My Family?  
((pause))
4. M: Cuz whadoya mean (.) what is what is it about?
5. P: Um-hmm  
((pause))
6. M: It's about a family ((pause)) and um (.) you know (.) >I don't know< how to explain it it's just about a family in their hard times (.) go:od times
7. P: Isn't that ( )
8. M: It's um (.) I doeknow it's alot of tradition it's like ((pause)) ve:ry well that this particular family is they are (.) they are American they are citizens (.) well, they become citizens in then like one of the boys marries one of the (.) one gir of his sisters brings in a friend from Cuba or wherever she's on a mission and (.) uh brings in a er alien and she asks him to marry this girl and it kinda goes into this story from all of that (.) but then (.) bu I me I don't wanna give it away but (.) I really (.) it's somethin that maybe you should watch it- and then ask me questions about it
9. P: I want you to watch it with me
10. M: But >I don't wanta< watch it though
11. P: Wh:y?
12. M: Cuz it's like ((tape cuts out))  
  
M: Thers's even like there's even like (.) in the show there's even like a guy who went to college and it's kinda like a (.) I would'nt say he's like ME because he's not like me (.) but like he's ashamed to bring his his American girlfriend her \_ American family to his house then when he do:es finally (.) really bad  
[ ]
13. P: well Everything goes re::ally
14. M: Not bad but jus (.)  
[ ]
15. P: Is that why your afraid?

**Interaction #2 Tape 1, Side B: Couple E: Family**

1. M: ↑ We may of had a Quinseanera it might have been a Qeensinatta ((pause))
2. P: \*Is that like a coming out party?\*
3. M: Um-hmm yeah- oh yeah
4. P: Do boyz ↑ have ↑ anyhting ↑ like ↑ that
5. M: They have a big party (.) ( ) they all get to worrying alot and ( ) and Meeseelle watch them
6. P: Where do they watch it?
7. M: On Nickelodeon? where ↑ else
8. P: I thought \*( )\*
9. M: When the kids come over they get to watch whatever they want ( )
10. P: ((laugh)) You still watch ( ) soap opera
11. M: ( ) does too (.) there's one there was this one real popular one it might have been the most popular one ever an it's called it's called Luz Clarita that's what was called and they would both like right around six o'clock I think it comes on about six o'clock they both start ( ) the little girls sing ↑ Loose ↑ Cla↑ reeta:a↑ a ( ) and Melesia start singin ((clap)) ooh- ↑ Loose ↑ Cla↑ reeta- I'm like shut up [ ]
12. P: ((luaghing throughout))

**Interaction #4 Tape 2, Side B: Couple E: Your the Best**

1. M: Hey
2. P: What
3. M: \*You the best\*
4. P: Yo:u the best
5. M: =Yo:u the best
6. P: Yo::u

7. M: Don't try and get into an argument about who's the best cuz I ought ta win this one (.) you the best
8. P: Why?
9. M: ↑Cuz (.) you make me din↑ner (.) you ↑buy me ↑things (.) yo::u're ↑sweet to ↑me (.) yo::u are since:re (.) you buy me candy (.) you like X Files now (.) and yo::ur beautiful
10. P: ((laugh)) Your reachin-
11. M: No I'm not (.) you love my friends (.) your awesome to everybody you meet
12. P: ( )
13. M: Also your intelligent you have a good head on your shoulders

**Interaction #5 Tape 2, Side B: Couple E: Dinner**

1. P: Mister ↑Sali-↓ma:ar
2. M: Mister ↑Sand↓man (.) mister ↑Sal↓mar
3. P: ↑Sal↓ma:ar
4. M: Mister ↑Sal↓ma:ar
5. P: Sal i ma:ar
6. M: Mister ↑Sali- ↓ma:ar
7. P: You don't say SALIMAR
8. M: I say ((deep voice)) Salamar

**Interaction #6 Tape 4, Side A: Couple E: 4th of July**

1. P: Do you guys celebrate fourth of July too?
2. M: Yeah-  
((pause))
3. P: It' s America's American's Independence Day?

4. M: We celebrate (.) the seven<sup>t</sup>teenth of September
5. P: Hey when is Cinco day Mieyo?
6. M: I don't know
7. P: When is it celebrated?
8. M: Another holiday (.) I don't know (.) Cinco day Mieyo might be a (.) it could be like a Puerto Rican holiday I guess or somethin
9. P: It could be like what?
10. M: Like a Puerto Rican holiday
11. P: Do you guyz celebrate it or no?
12. M: Not re:ally
13. P: But you celebrate September seventeenth?
14. M: >Watch this watch this< ((television)) oo:h!
15. P: What are you watching?