

Respect and Love in Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

Respect is conceptualized as one of the fundamental bases of most relationships, particularly close relationships. Respect in close, romantic relationships has been studied only recently (Frei & Shaver, 2002; Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006), and the current paper describes a study designed to build on notions of respect as deeply important in relationships. Some 314 college students participated in the study. Participants read a scenario about a dating couple, John and Linda, who were ostensibly in a psychology experiment during which they rated their respect for each other. John (or Linda) had rated self as having either "extremely high respect" or "moderately low respect" for the partner. Participants were asked to imagine that they were John (or Linda) and then rate the hypothetical partner on love attitudes, relationships satisfaction, commitment, and self-disclosure. Participants also gave their own personal ratings of John (or Linda) on several trait adjectives. The design was a 2 (gender of participant) x 2 (John/Linda) x 2 (high/low respect) factorial experiment. The main effect for respect was significant for 15 of 18 total variables, with an extremely high versus moderately low respected partner garnering more favorable ratings in nearly every case. Respect thus appears to be an important part of the intrinsic meaning of a close, romantic relationship.

Palabras clave: Secuencias, Respect, Love, Relationship satisfaction, Commitment, Self-disclosure.

Respeto y Amor en las Relaciones Románticas

Resumen

El respeto es conceptualizado como una de las bases fundamentales de la mayoría de las relaciones, particularmente a las relaciones cercanas. El respeto en las relaciones cercanas o románticas ha sido estudiado solo recientemente (Frei & Shaver, 2002; Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006), y el presente artículo describe un estudio diseñado para construir la noción de respeto en su esencia más profunda en las relaciones. Participaron 314 estudiantes universitarios quienes leían un escenario sobre una relación, John y Linda, quienes aparentemente estaban en un experimento de psicología durante el cual ellos reportaron el respeto que sentían el uno por el otro. John (o Linda) se habían evaluado a sí mismos como poseedores de un "respeto extremadamente alto" o "respeto moderadamente bajo" hacia la pareja. Se pidió a los participantes que imaginaran que ellos eran John (o Linda) y luego calificaran a una pareja hipotética al respecto de actitudes amorosas, satisfacción con la relación, compromiso y auto-divulgación. Los participantes también dieron sus propios puntajes para John (o Linda) en varios adjetivos de rasgo. El diseño factorial fue de 2 (sexo del participante) x 2 (John/Linda) x 2 (respeto alto/bajo). El efecto principal para respeto fue significativo para 15 de las 18 variables, con un respeto extremadamente alto vs. moderadamente bajo hacia la pareja recogiendo puntajes más favorables en casi todos los casos. Respeto parece –entonces- ser una parte importante del significado intrínseco de las relaciones cercanas o románticas.

Key Words: Respeto, Amor, Satisfacción con la relación, Compromiso, Auto-divulgación.

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The Nature of Respect in Close Relationships

What is respect? The definition depends on the setting and type of relationship, which is why dictionaries typically offer several alternate definitions of respect. The definitions most applicable to close, romantic relationships appear to reflect regard, admiration, and appreciation of the worthiness of another person. In writing about intimate relationships, a psychotherapist (Alper, 2005) targeted respect as a core condition of intimacy. “*Respect ... basically means regarding ... someone as worthy of investing one’s time and energy*” (p. 7, emphasis in original). Respect is an important aspect of human relating, both in intimate, personal relationships and in more formal role relationships, where respect is part of interpersonal civility. In fact it is implicitly tied to nearly all relationships (e.g., partner, family, friends).

Philosophical Considerations of Respect

Simon (2007) provided a valuable distinction between two kinds of respect, vertical respect and horizontal respect. Horizontal respect means equality or mutuality within a group of people, whereas vertical respect means difference on some defined status dimension. For most of recorded history, humans were organized vertically, with masses of people at the bottom and a small group of ruling elite at the top. This approach to social life was so pervasive that even organized religions formed in this way.

Against this historical backdrop, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) brought about a veritable revolution in thinking about morality and ethics, as he did in other knowledge domains as well. In brief, Kant developed several versions of what is called the Categorical Imperative of moral behavior. Perhaps the most popular version is found in Kant (1785/1998) as follows: “*So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, and never merely as a means*” ([italics in original], p. 38). Kant believed that only persons are ends-in-themselves, and they are so because persons are rational beings, capable of setting their own ends and therefore capable of engaging in moral behavior. Kant’s notion of an end-in-itself is something that is of supreme worth; its worth is absolute and does not have “degrees” of worthiness. This supreme worth is called “dignity,” and only persons have it. The only proper behavior toward persons who have inherent dignity is respect. Thus only persons deserve respect, and all persons deserve respect equally, a strong implication of Kant’s theory of morality.

Although one area of philosophical research has attempted to classify various types of respect, there is a growing consensus that the various classifications can be reduced to two basic kinds of respect specified by Darwall (1977): *Recognition* respect and *appraisal* respect. Recognition respect, as applied to people, is the basic respect owed to all persons simply because of the fact that they are human beings. It is thus unconditional. Appraisal respect is paid to some

trait, attribute, role, or behavior that a person possesses or displays, and is thus conditional. Recognition respect is very consistent with Kant's notions of persons as "ends-in-themselves, whereas appraisal respect is more akin to persons as "means."

It seems apparent that respect is fundamental to human relating and that horizontal respect, linked with the view of persons as ends-in-themselves and consistent with recognition respect as described by Darwall (1977), is a major component of the mutuality inherent in truly intimate relationships. As noted earlier, respect is tied to nearly all relationships, and it may function as a ground for positive relationships in general. As a basic ground, it is easy to assume respect's presence, and thus ignore it as a topic for serious research. If respect grounds relationships, perhaps respect also grounds personal identity in modern life.

This thesis is explored by philosopher Charles Taylor (1989). Elaboration of the modern concept of respect in relation to the concept of self is complex. Taylor's thesis is that humans have slowly developed a basic "respect for the life, integrity, and well-being, even flourishing, of others" (p. 4). There is a tendency toward universalization of respect to all other humans, a tendency that implies a set of natural rights. "To talk of universal, natural, or human rights is to connect respect for human life and integrity with the notion of autonomy" (p. 12). Thus, growth in the importance of respect implies that persons are also autonomous agents. Taylor viewed two other features as flowing from the notion of an autonomous agent: avoidance of suffering, and a sense of dignity as an inherent property of the agent (consistent with Kant). Taylor also stressed the relational nature of the modern conception of self.

These specific changes in human moral conceptions of personhood required a movement from idealization of the elites to idealization of ordinary people, in Taylor's (1989) phrasing "the affirmation of ordinary life" (p. 13), in other words, the evolution of respect from vertical to horizontal (Simon, 2007). The importance of everyday life is firmly linked to societal growth of respect of persons for each other. "The sense of the importance of the everyday in human life, along with its corollary about the importance of suffering, colours our whole understanding of what it is truly to respect human life and integrity" (Taylor, p. 14).

In an essay celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, Steve Duck (2008) commented perceptively on the need to focus on everyday human relating. "Everyday life is actually a rather mysterious thing and not at all explained by the insistence that we study the spectacular, the unrepresentative or the unusual ..." (Duck, p. 194). Clearly Duck understands Taylor's point that an axial shift to ordinary everydayness had to occur before the complex of ideas of self, human rights, autonomy, and respect could emerge as components of a new moral compass for humanity. Linked to philosophical conceptions of respect are psychological conceptions.

Psychological Considerations of Respect

Social and behavioral scientists have commented on respect from several vantage points, though respect in romantic relationships has not necessarily been a primary focus. For example, Gaines (1994, 1996) studied the giving and denying of respect in cross-gender friendships, finding that respect was “expected” in both friendships and partnered relationships. The denial of respect was a surprisingly important negative behavior in friendships, and reciprocity of respect was very important in partnered relationships. In research examining factors in marital quality, Feeney, Noller, and Ward (1997) found five important dimensions of quality, one of which was respect. Scholars who work with couples clinically have also highlighted respect’s significance. For example, Gottman (1994) commented that the majority of married couples want “just two things from their marriage – love and respect” (p. 18).

Anthropologist Jennifer Hirsch (2003) lived with and studied Mexican couples who resided in Mexico, the United States, and/or who traveled back and forth between the two countries (i.e., “transnational” couples). Respect (*respeto*) has long been a component of Mexican marriages, but it is a type of formal role respect for one’s partner as “wife” or “husband” rather than a respect for the qualities of the person who occupies the role. It is more complex than mere formality, however, as Peck and Diaz-Guerrero (1967) discovered when assessing respect in Mexican, United States, and Border residents. “The American pattern was a relatively detached, self-assured equalitarianism. The Mexican pattern was one of close-knit, highly emotionalized, reciprocal dependence and dutifulness, within a firmly authoritarian framework” (p. 281). For Border residents, there was some “assimilative semi-acculturation of Mexican-Americans ... to the ‘American’ pattern. But there was also ... certain acculturations of border Anglo-Americans to Mexican values” (pp. 281-282). Thus *respeto* has been far from a unidimensional construct. More recently, trust (*confianza*) has joined *respeto* in Mexican marriages. According to Hirsch, *respeto* intertwined with *confianza* could only occur alongside greater gender equality. “Respect ... comes into play among equals: to demand respect is to assert equality” (p. 106). This emphasis on equality is consistent with Peck and Diaz-Guerrero (1967) and echoes philosophers’ discussions of human dignity and equality, as well as Simon’s (2007) distinction between vertical and horizontal respect.

Most recently, Frei and Shaver (2002) employed several studies and methodologies to study respect, developing a 45-item measure entitled the “Respect for Partner Scale.” This measure appears to focus largely on a partner’s respectworthiness (somewhat similar to appraisal respect (Darwall, 1977)). Interestingly, Frei and Shaver found considerable agreement across several ethnic groups on the central features of respect. Elements of the “universality” of respect were also found by Hendrick, Hendrick, and Logue (2010) in their overview of respect in families.

Hendrick and Hendrick (2006) focused on how one displays respect for one's partner, disregarding the partner's worthiness of respect. They operationalized respect as having two overarching conceptual components: caring/supportiveness and equality/mutuality. Within these components were embedded Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2000) six themes of respect: Attention, Curiosity, Dialogue, Empowerment, Healing, and Self-respect. Across three studies, they developed a six-item scale assessing a person's respect for a romantic partner. They found that respect was correlated positively with a variety of positive relationship constructs (e.g., passionate and altruistic love, commitment) and concluded that respect is a powerful – if relatively unexplored – relational variable. Extending this nascent research area of respect in romantic relationships was the goal of the current study.

The Current Research

If respect is an important factor in human relating, it is puzzling why it has been relatively neglected in relationship research. Perhaps its very importance, its necessary existence in relationships that are to succeed, is the reason it has been mentioned widely yet left relatively unexplored. Respect may just be assumed to be important in relationships and has therefore seemed unnecessary to study. In fact, research on *disrespect* has been more common, perhaps because disrespect ruptures the social order and catches people's attention.

We assume in broad outline that Taylor's (1989) analysis of the modern self as an object of intrinsic respect is correct. As such, the self has a web-like structure of natural rights: dignity, autonomy, and freedom from suffering. The right to receive respect becomes an implicit natural right of each self, and two selves in interaction are expected to treat each other respectfully.

This line of argument construes respect as part of the deep background of human relationships. As such, it is implicit, part of the everyday, taken-for-granted facets of ongoing human relations. How might this implicit nature of respect be demonstrated?

One way to demonstrate an implicit social phenomenon is to break the rules as to how the relevant social interaction is supposed to be conducted. For example, two people in a romantic relationship would be expected to express respect for each other. What happens if that expectation is violated?

More specifically, if respect is intrinsic to a romantic relationship, what would happen if dating partners contemplating a future together were interviewed separately, and one of the two people claimed to have "moderately low respect" for the partner rather than "high respect?" This response of low respect breaks the symmetry of the expected "high respect" from both partners. Planning a future with someone that you have low respect for is jarring, because it appears to violate part of the meaning of having a close relationship partner (someone you *should* respect). How would we evaluate such a person, one who perhaps plans to marry the partner, but has moderately low respect for the partner? Further, how would

such a person be expected to evaluate her or his partner? We hypothesized that such a person would evaluate the partner less positively on relational constructs as compared to a person who has high respect for the partner. The person showing a discordance between planning a future with and respecting the partner would also be expected to garner less positive or even negative trait attributions from an external observer.

A relevant question centers on the relational constructs and trait attributions that would likely be related to respect in romantic relationships. Based on previous research (Frei & Shaver, 2002; Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006), love styles, relationship satisfaction, commitment, and self-disclosure have all been found to correlated positively with respect. Thus, it was expected that these variables would be influenced by the level of respect that one romantic partner expressed for the other romantic partner.

In addition to the relationship variables, we expected that people would view someone who was planning a future with a partner for whom they expressed high respect would be viewed more positively on personality and behavioral trait ratings than someone who was planning a future with a partner for whom they had low respect. We thus employed both relational constructs and trait ratings to test the following hypotheses in an experiment that varied gender of participants (male/female), gender of a pseudo-stimulus person (female/male), and degree of respect the stimulus person claimed to hold for their partner (high/low). Because we had not found gender differences for respect in our previous work, nor had gender emerged as a powerful influence in other research on respect, hypotheses were proposed only for the respect factor. They were as follows (see Measures section for details regarding measures as well as sample items):

H1 Participants taking the role of a stimulus person rating the partner and who has “very high respect” for the partner will be significantly more endorsing of passionate love, friendship love, altruistic love, relationship satisfaction, commitment, and self-disclosure than a stimulus person who expresses “moderately low respect” for the partner.

H2 Conversely, participants in the condition of “very high respect” for the partner will be significantly less endorsing of game-playing love than will participants in the condition of “moderately low respect” for the partner.

H3 Stimulus persons showing high respect for the partner will be rated by participants significantly more favorably on positive traits and significantly less negatively on negative traits than stimulus persons showing low respect for the partner.

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 130 men and 184 women enrolled in introductory psychology at a large Southwestern university in the United States. Some 65% of the sample was aged 19 or less. European Americans comprised a majority of the

sample (65%), with 11% Mexican American/Hispanic, 7% African American, 2% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 15% self-identifying as Other.

Procedures

Design. The experiment was a 2 (participant gender) x 2 (stimulus person gender: John/Linda) x 2 (level of respect: extremely high or moderately low) factorial design. As noted, it was predicted that John's (or Linda's) partner would generally be rated more negatively when John (or Linda) claimed "moderately low respect" for the partner, as compared to the condition of "extremely high respect" for the partner. We used "moderately low respect" instead of "extremely low respect" because we assumed that the latter condition simply would not be credible.

On a random basis, participants were given one of four versions of a questionnaire within the constraint of equal allocations of the four versions. The cover page (Page 1) was entitled "The role of respect in close relationships" and gave the same general procedural instruction to everyone. Page 2 was entitled "Couple Attitudes" and had four variations: The basic first paragraph introduced John and Linda, who were juniors in college and had been "dating seriously for about a year." They had met each other's parents and had talked about "a long-term future." John and Linda were in a psychology experiment together and completed a questionnaire that included an item that asked "How much do you respect your romantic partner?" Five response alternatives were given, ranging from extremely high respect to extremely low respect." Two manipulations were introduced at this point. The focus was on either John or Linda, and the script stated that John (or Linda) chose either "extremely high respect" or "moderately low respect" in reference to their romantic partner. In this way, the four versions of the questionnaire formed a 2 (stimulus person – John or Linda) x 2 (respect rating – high or low respect) portion of the total design. Thus, either John or Linda rated themselves as having extremely high or moderately low respect for the partner. Two types of ratings were requested of the research participants. For the first several relational measures, they were asked to "Pretend that you are John (or Linda). Then rate the following questions in terms of how you, John (or Linda) would answer the question, based on your relationship with Linda (or John)."

The second type of measure was a short list of trait ratings. Here, the participants were to take their own personal perspective and rate their stimulus person John (or Linda) on the traits provided.

Measures

The measures the participants completed from the stimulus person's point of view included the following scales and alphas (pooled over all participants). The *Love Attitudes Scale: Short Form* (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Dicke, 1998) is a 24-item scale with six four-item subscales. It is based on the longer Love Attitudes Scale

(Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). The Love Attitudes Scale was developed to measure the six major love styles proposed by Lee (1973). These include the following: Eros (alpha=.79) is a passionate, intense form of love that includes physical attraction yet seeks fidelity and open communication. "I feel that my partner and I were meant for each other" is a sample item. Ludus (alpha = .80) is a type of love style that experiences love as a game in which partners avoid serious commitment and just have a good time together. "I believe that what my partner doesn't know about me won't hurt him/her" is a sample item. Storge (alpha = .86) is love that grows slowly over time and is based on friendship and shared values. "Our friendship merged gradually into love over time" is a sample item. Pragma (alpha = .72) is a practical form of love that looks for a partner who meets predetermined criteria of appropriateness. "An important factor in choosing my partner was whether he/she would be a good parent" is a sample item. Mania (alpha = .66) is a love style characterized by both possessiveness and dependence, and it may often be accompanied by somatic symptoms. "When my partner doesn't pay attention to me, I feel sick all over" is a sample item. Agape (alpha = .90) is altruistic love that cares more for the partner than for the self. "I cannot be happy unless I place my partner's happiness before my own" is a sample item.

The *Relationship Assessment Scale* (Hendrick, 1988) is a seven-item measure of relationship satisfaction, with two items reverse-scored (alpha = .89). It was designed as a generic measure of relationship satisfaction so that it could be used with all types of romantic couples, not just married ones. Sample items are "How well does your partner meet your needs?" and "How many problems are there in your relationship?" (reverse-scored).

Four commitment items were drawn from Lund's (1985) much longer commitment scale and have been used by the first and second authors in a number of studies. Although commitment tends to be strongly correlated with satisfaction, the two constructs define somewhat different domains (alpha = .85). Sample items include "How likely is it that your current relationship will be permanent?" and "How committed are you to this relationship?"

The *Self-Disclosure Index* (Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1983) is a ten-item scale measuring self-disclosure relevant to ten different topics (alpha = .91). The scale can vary the target person of the disclosure and so can be used to assess disclosure to a friend, sibling, parent, romantic partner, and the like. Sample topics of disclosure include "My worst fears" and "What is important to me in life."

At the top of each page of these measures, a prompt in large bold letters stated "Answer as John (Linda) would answer." All measures and items were scored on a 1-5 likert basis, so that the higher the score, the greater the endorsement of the scale/item. A last page of ratings asked participants to give their own personal judgment of the stimulus person, John or Linda. Participants were asked to rate John (Linda) on a five-point scale, ranging from Very low to Very high, on the trait adjectives of intelligent, friendly, gullible, warm, kind, sexual, and successful. These traits were selected to draw a variety of possible reactions. Another question asked for a rating on a five-point scale of how much the stimulus person loved the partner, and another question (also on a five-point scale) asked

for an estimate of how often the couple had sex. A final page asked research participants for basic demographic information.

Since the instructions asked the participants to role-take the viewpoint of either John or Linda, it was reasonable that they retained that role set when making their ratings (reinforced by prompts at the top of each page). At the same time, we wanted to see if participants' *personal* judgments might be different from their *role* judgments. Ideally, we might have manipulated this variable, but the number of participants required would have been unwieldy. Thus, we settled for a few trait ratings of the stimulus persons from the participants' own perspective.

Results

Assuming our reasoning about the implicit nature of respect as a ground for close relationships was correct, we predicted strong effects from varying the level of respect for partner, both for participants' role-taking ratings of the partner and for participants' own personal trait ratings of John (or Linda). The two types of ratings could have diverged widely, but we did not expect that outcome.

To assess this basic issue, a 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance was conducted to examine the three main effects and four interactions (seven effects in all) between participant gender, stimulus person gender, and level of respect for each of 18 relationship variables and personality traits. The analysis of most interest was the main effect of level of respect. But first we should note that for the other 108 effects for the 18 measures, only eight effects were significant: five main effects for gender of participants, two main effects for stimulus person, and one three-way interaction. We consider these eight effects briefly later.

The main effect of level of respect was the most interesting. This main effect was significant for 15 of the 18 total variables. The means and F-ratios are shown in tables 1 and 2. Only the trait word "gullible," the love style of Pragma, and how often the couple had sex failed to achieve significance for the manipulation of level of respect.

Table 1 indicates that for the love attitude scales (LAS) there was greater endorsement of passionate, friendship, possessive, and altruistic love in the high respect condition than in the low respect condition, and there were comparable findings for relationship satisfaction (RAS), commitment, and self-disclosure as well. These findings all supported Hypothesis 1. The game-playing love style of Ludus showed reverse findings, supporting Hypothesis 2. The mean was 3.07 in the moderately low respect condition, but only 2.10 in the extremely high respect condition. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was also supported.

The trait ratings shown in table 2 showed the expected results, with one exception. Means for four of the seven personality traits (intelligent, friendly, warm, kind) were above 4.0 in the "extremely high respect" condition, and "successful," at 3.96 approached 4.0. "Gullible" may have been poorly chosen by us. It is also possible that many participants were not clear on the meaning of this trait.

Table 1
Means and F-Ratios for Respect Conditions for Participants' Role-Taking Perspective of John or Linda in Rating Partner on Relational Measures

Measure	Moderately Low Respect	Extremely High Respect	F-ratio
LAS			
Eros	3.71	4.46	100.97**
Ludus	3.07	2.10	83.27**
Storge	3.14	3.67	22.75**
Pragma	3.13	3.28	2.43
Mania	2.86	3.09	6.22*
Agape	2.84	3.82	93.46**
RAS	3.29	4.32	200.96**
Commitment	3.38	4.35	120.65**
Disclosure	3.67	4.18	32.34**

Note: LAS = Love Attitudes Scale; RAS = Relationship Assessment Scale; Disclosure = Self-Disclosure Inventory. Means could range from 1.00 to 5.00, and the higher the mean, the more of the variable attributed to John or Linda.
 ** $p < .01$. * $p < .02$.

“Sexual” showed results counter to our expectation. Participants rated John or Linda higher on “sexual” in the “moderately low respect” condition ($M = 3.95$) than in the “extremely high respect” condition ($M = 3.58$). Without having any other context than the word “sexual,” participants apparently assumed a negative connotation for that trait.

The results for “How much does John (Linda) actually love Linda (John)” were interesting. Participants role-taking either John or Linda attributed much more love for the partner in “extremely high respect” (4.59) than in “moderately low respect” ($M = 2.81$). This result suggests that degree of love and respect were linked closely for participants in making their attributions.

Hypothesis 3 was largely supported. With the exceptions of “gullible” and “sexual,” mean ratings on the other traits met expectations.

Table 2
Means and F-Ratios for Respect Conditions for Participants' Trait Ratings of Stimulus persons

Trait	Moderately Low Respect	Extremely High Respect	F-Ratio
Intelligent	3.52	4.02	34.64*
Friendly	3.54	4.36	75.23*
Gullible	2.86	3.05	2.43
Warm	2.96	4.08	113.23*
Kind	3.06	4.27	136.98*
Sexual	3.95	3.58	13.23*
Success	3.56	3.96	18.54*
Love	2.81	4.59	258.40*
Have sex	2.29	2.42	1.15

Note: Means could range from 1.00 to 5.00, and the higher the mean, the more of the trait attributed to John or Linda.

* $p < .01$.

Additional effects. In addition to the main effect of level of respect for "sexual" (discussed above), the main effects of stimulus person and participant gender were also significant for "sexual." John ($M = 3.89$) was rated as more "sexual" than Linda ($M = 3.64$), $F(1,307) = 4.95$, $p < .05$. Also, the males' mean rating of "sexual" ($M = 3.91$) was significantly higher than the females' mean rating ($M = 3.62$), $F(1, 307) = 8.47$, $p < .05$. Thus, all three pairs of means appear to be in line with stereotypical attitudes about male sexuality as compared to female sexuality.

For the other four significant main effects of participants' gender, female means were higher than male means for Pragma and Commitment, but the reverse was true for Mania and Agape. No clear interpretation of these differences is apparent, and they may be chance effects.

As noted, there was no main effect of respect for "gullible." However, Linda was rated as more "gullible" than John $F(1, 307) = 5.23$, $p < .05$. Women may be stereotyped as more "gullible" than men, or this may also be a chance finding.

The only significant interaction was a triple interaction for "kind," and it was marginally significant, $F(1, 307) = 4.58, p < .05$. We believe this interaction is best attributed to chance.

Discussion

A scan of tables 1 and 2 suggests that the participants did not distinguish between rating from a personal point of view, versus taking the role of John or Linda. The power of the manipulation of respect simply overrode any niceties of possible viewpoints.

Although the findings largely supported the hypotheses as expected, they were in some ways even more powerful than we had supposed. Of course there was no "neutral" control group to be compared to the high respect and low respect groups. However, it is very likely that a "neutral" respect rating would still have a negative connotation and thus be a negative manipulation. The means for extremely high respect were comparable to means for other data collections for the relational variables. The data for the moderately low respect condition suggest that participants formed a highly negative impression of a stimulus person who (a) sees the partner every day, (b) expresses love for the partner, and (c) is planning a long-term future with the partner, but has only "moderately low respect" for the partner. The juxtaposition does not make sense for common sense psychology. These ratings support our reasoning that a rating of moderately low respect is a violation of what it means to love one's partner in a close romantic relationship. Love implies respect in a loving relationship.

This research presents evidence that respect may be foundational in the sense that respect is implicitly assumed to be a facet of close relationships, and perhaps all relationships that have a positive tone. If respect is part of the "deep background" of most relationships, that fact would explain why it has been understudied. Respect in relationships is so omnipresent that no one thought to study it, at least before Frei and Shaver (2002).

Implicit in the design of the study was the idea that people expect respect to be equal, mutual, and reciprocal between romantic partners. Such reciprocity and mutuality was at least implied by several philosophers and was proposed by Hendrick and Hendrick (2006) as one of the two underlying substrates of Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2000) six dimensions of respect. The current study did not address the question of mutuality, other than just assuming it, so future research should address directly the matter of mutuality.

Respect is used in many relational senses. We have examined only one kind of relationship, a romantic one that has expectations of caring/supportiveness and equality/mutuality. But respect is also used for other, more formal role relations, such as respecting one's boss, teacher, mentor, etc. Does the superior equally respect the inferior in such examples? We do not know, but we think it is an important research question. Stated more formally, how does respect operate in relationships that are asymmetrical in terms of formality, status, and power? We believe that respect in such relationships deserves careful study. After all, half of

our life is spent within the loving mutuality of a partner and home, and the other half is spent within various organizations with complex networks of mutuality and asymmetry. We would expect the rules for giving and receiving respect to be equally complex within such organizations.

It is entirely possible to have read the paper carefully to this point and ask “so what?” We would posit that the basic question that was answered was what happens when a deeply held assumption is violated, in this case our conjecture that respect plays a foundational role in the meaning of romantic love. No law required that the results turn out the way they did it could have been otherwise. But it was not. Our participants had implicit but deep expectations of how persons in close – in this case romantic – relationships should relate to each other, and when those expectations were violated, participants responded accordingly (see Garfinkel, 1967, for an ethnomethodological analog to our study).

Of course we do not presume that findings such as these would be invariant across cultures, although respect as a fundamental value seems to be relatively invariant (Hendrick et al., 2010). For societies that have arranged marriages and/or very formal marital roles, the link between respect and love may be weak initially. Most likely, such marital relations begin with mutual respect for the roles involved (i.e., wife and husband), and feelings of love develop over time. So, in this sense respect comes first, followed by love. In contrast, western norms prescribe “falling in love” as a basis for marriage. Implicit in the love contract is the norm that respect for the partner develops as love develops. The two are intertwined. When respect fails to develop or is too low, the relationship is devalued by onlookers. However, we note that today’s linkage of love with respect is an historical contingency and has been otherwise in past eras.

In conclusion, if Taylor (1989) is correct that respect functions both as an ordinary variable and as a meta-variable, and that we are constantly in situations where respect is given and received, then respect must be studied carefully and broadly. Giving and receiving of respect is often unconscious, operating implicitly as deep background, or, said differently, operating as a meta-variable. We believe that a broad approach to the study of respect will be of benefit both to the study of close relationships, and to the sociological study of the structure of institutions.

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