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Intimacy as a Double-Edged Phenomenon? An Empirical Test of Giddens*

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Abstract

In a series of books published since 1990, Anthony Giddens has explored the impact of globalization on the personal relationships and inner lives of those living in the advanced capitalist societies of the West. Of particular interest to him have been intimate, sexual relationships, which he views as tending, under the weight of globalization, away from a "traditional" model and toward a "posttraditional" form in which the relationship is seen as a means to self-development and is expected to be dissolved when it no longer serves this purpose. These posttraditional or "pure love" relationships, Giddens argues, hold great promise for human freedom and happiness, but are so unpredictable that they also threaten to overwhelm people with anxiety and lead them to engage in compensatory addictive behaviors. This article empirically examines Giddens's claims. Data come from a nationally representative survey of Americans in midlife. Results show that people in pure love relationships reap the rewards to which Giddens points, but experience few of the negative side effects. The theoretical implications of the findings are considered.

Among the world-historical changes considered by the founders of sociology to have given birth to the modern social order, few occasioned as much anxiety as did detraditionalization — the receding, in Western Europe, of customs and beliefs that had, given the relative stability of feudalism, anchored people's lives in predictable, transgenerational practices. Although Emile Durkheim and Max Weber recognized the benefits modernity might bring, both worried that as

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traditionalism faded, individuals would lose their sense of social rootedness and would no longer have their spiritual, creative, and communal needs met.

The most prominent heir to this "genuine ambivalence" (Sica 1988:165) about modernity and detraditionalization is Anthony Giddens. Moving away from an earlier focus on action theory (see Bryant & Jary 1991; Cohen 1987, 1989; Craib 1992; Giddens 1979, 1984, 1987; Sewell 1992; Tucker 1998), Giddens has, over the course of the 1990s, pursued an ambitious theoretical project: tracing the effects, on people's inner lives, of the major transformations of the contemporary era (Giddens 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1998, 2000). Paying special attention to new forms of global interdependency, Giddens theorizes that the expert systems that serve as globalization's infrastructure operate on the basis of decontextualized knowledge, the cultural authority of which calls into question the local knowledge on which tradition depends. In Giddens's view, globalization thus furthers the Enlightenment project of loosening the grip of tradition, enhancing people's capacity to live their lives autonomously.

But Giddens sees detraditionalization as a "double-edged phenomenon" (1990:7). Drawing on various strands of psychoanalytic thought, he argues that "ontological security" — a "sense of continuity and order in [the] events" (Giddens 1991:243) that make up one's life — is a basic psychological need. Yet Giddens maintains that life in posttraditional societies is filled with ontological insecurity, for in such societies "an indefinite range of potential courses of action . . . is . . . open to individuals" (28-9), which destabilizes long-term life narratives. In such a context, anxiety abounds, as do new psychopathologies of addiction that arise as defense mechanisms against anxiety when tradition can no longer serve this purpose.

Giddens's views on modernity have received substantial attention from theorists (e.g., Bryant & Jary 2001; Held & Thompson 1989; Jamieson 1998; Kaspersen 2000; Mestrovic 1998; O'Brien, Penna & Hay 1999). But no one has empirically tested his claims about the relationship between detraditionalization, autonomization, and psychological insecurity.

This article is a preliminary effort to fill this lacuna. We focus specifically on Giddens's discussion of detraditionalization in the realm of intimate relationships. We begin by explaining how, according to Giddens, globalization has fundamentally altered the nature of all personal relationships. We then synopsize Giddens's account of recent changes in intimate relationships in particular, showing why he views the shift away from traditional relationship forms as both advantageous and risky. We go on to derive, from this discussion, five hypotheses about the psychological consequences of posttraditional intimate attachments. We test these hypotheses using data from a nationally representative study of U.S. adults age 25-74. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings.

Globalization and Personal Relationships

Giddens's account of detraditionalization is inextricably bound up with his analysis of globalization. Central to the debate among theorists of globalization is a concern that the complex of processes commonly labeled "globalization" represents nothing new (see Albrow 1997; Guillen 2001; Held et al. 1999; Robertson 1992; Sklair 1991; Waters 1995). In this debate, Giddens sides with those who view today's globalized world as a radically new social configuration, even though he sees it as one arising out of the process of modernization. It is in the context of this "discontinuist" (Giddens 1990:5) vision of contemporary society that his views about personal relationships can best be understood.

For Giddens (1984), a key dimension along which social systems vary is in the degree to which they are organized around interactions between agents who are distant from one another temporally and spatially. Premodern societies, he argues, were primarily composed of interactions within local, place-based kinship and friendship networks and communities. In modern societies, however, "the level of time-space distanciation is much greater" (14). As the modern nation-state grew in tandem with industrialism and capitalism, it developed "*surveillance* capacities" and a monopoly on legitimate violence that gave it "coordinated control over delimited territorial arenas" (57, emphasis in original), making interactions with physically absent others a routine feature of social life for its citizenry. At the same time, with the onset of modernity, people's lives become tied to the world capitalist economy, the international division of labor, and the world military order (Giddens 1990:71). These global interconnections, Giddens argues, have attained record levels of density in recent years with the development of new communications and transportation technologies, which have facilitated the expansion of international trade and the growth of world financial markets and have also accelerated the pace of cultural diffusion, thrusting us into a period of "radicalized" modernity (Giddens 1994, 2000). As a result, we now live in a world in which "distant events . . . affect us more directly and immediately than ever before" (Giddens 1998:31).

Concomitant with the increasing time-space distanciation of modern social life is the "disembedding" (Giddens 1990:21) of individuals from local, place-based orientations. Disembedding, in Giddens's theoretical vocabulary, refers to the process whereby people develop the psychological resources to gear their interactions toward physically absent others. The most important such resource is trust. Giddens suggests that modern social intercourse would be imperiled were individuals unwilling to trust the legions of physically absent others on whom they are dependent (1994:89-90). According to Giddens, modernity's answer to this trust-inculcation problem is the authority of expert systems. Individuals put their trust in such systems — for example, the medical system, the financial system, or the aviation system — because they are state regulated, because they legitimate

themselves by reference to an ideology of bureaucratic rationality, and because they claim to operate in accordance with the findings of technical science. And it is precisely trust in expert systems that is the condition for disembedding: "An expert system disembeds… by providing 'guarantees' of expectations across distanciated time-space. This . . . is achieved via the impersonal nature of tests applied to evaluate technical knowledge and by public critique… used to control its form" (Giddens 1990:28).

But as expert systems "stretch" (28) time and space, they also change the nature of personal relationships: relationships between friends, lovers, family members, etc. First, expert systems, functioning alongside the on-going division of labor, eliminate some of the exigencies upon which such relationships once rested. In such a context, personal trust, which is no longer anchored in necessity, "becomes a project… to be 'worked at' by the parties involved… [T]rust [in modern societies] has to be won, and the means of doing this is demonstrable warmth and openness" (121). The second way expert systems affect personal relationships is by making them objects of analysis. Because the personal relationship has today been drawn into the domain of psychological or pop-psychological expertise, it has become radically detraditionalized: informed less than it was in premodern societies by sacred folk beliefs about the rules of combination, behavior, temporality, and duration that such relationships should ideally follow. In science, and in the expert systems that legitimate themselves by reference to it, "critique of even the most basic assumptions of a perspective is not only in bounds, but called for" (Giddens 1994:86). But the intrinsic revisability of expert knowledge is antithetical to traditional wisdom, which is characterized by unquestionability and which is, accordingly, looked down upon by "experts" in the modern sense of the term. In addition, whereas the knowledge that informs expert systems is based on "impersonal principles" (85), traditional belief is fundamentally local and has sacred status only because the principles it expresses are tied to the collective identities of particular social groups. In a culture that privileges expert knowledge, traditional views about personal relationships begin to appear antiquated.

Intimacy and the Rise of the Pure Relationship

Giddens believes that globalization and the rise of expert systems have wrought changes in every type of personal relationship. Of particular interest to him, however, are intimate, sexual relationships. In *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992), he characterizes the shift such relationships have undergone as a shift from the ideal of "romantic" love to that of "pure" or "confluent" love.[1]

Romantic love, Giddens argues, does not predate modernity. Although discourses of love could be found in premodern societies, Giddens maintains that when premodern peoples thought of love, their referent was not to romance, but to passion: to an all-encompassing sexual attraction for another that was "disruptive" insofar as it "uproot[ed] the individual from the mundane," "generating a break with routine and duty" (Giddens 1992:38, 40). Love was thought to be disruptive in part because it was seen as connected to the supernatural; it was an emotion that overcame people when the forces of an unpredictable "cosmic order" (41) intervened in their lives. Because love was viewed in this light, it was regarded as "dangerous . . . from the point of view of social order and duty" and for this reason was "nowhere . . . recognized as either a necessary or sufficient basis for marriage" (38).

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, passionate love did not disappear, but there arose alongside it a new conceptualization: love as romance. On this understanding, love is still connected to "cosmic fate" (41), but is now viewed as a phenomenon whereby individuals who strive to embody the idealized qualities of their genders find another who, "by being who he or she is, answers a lack which the individual does not even necessarily recognise" (45). In this way, "the flawed individual is made whole" (45). Central to this view of love, according to Giddens, is that it provides a narrative within which an individual can make sense of the unfolding of his or her life. In nineteenth-century romance novels, the lives — especially of women — were portrayed as "quest[s] . . . in which self-identity awaits its validation from the discovery of the other" (45). Insofar as individuals saw their lives as quests of this kind, they could project themselves forward in time, anticipating, if they had not already found their one true love, the moment when this would happen, and envisioning what their lives would be like from that point onward: a life-long marriage coupled with parenthood. In Giddens's view, romantic love was connected to rationalization because an intimate relationship, viewed through the lens of romantic love, was "a potential avenue for controlling the future, as well as a form of psychological security (in principle) for those whose lives were touched by it" (41).

To say that romantic love was intertwined with rationalization, however, is not to claim that those who embraced this cultural complex managed to throw off all the shackles of "mysticism and dogma" (40) against which the Enlightenment had been directed. For the notion of romantic love, especially the assumption that it entailed a life-long (heterosexual) marriage, was folded into common sense, religious tradition, and jurisprudence, so that individuals who wished to deviate from the life-course trajectory implied by the romantic love narrative found themselves up against powerful constraints.

In the second half of the twentieth-century, however, the romantic love ideal began to be pushed aside by a genuinely detraditionalized cultural framework: intimacy as what Giddens calls "pure" or "confluent" love. He

defines a "pure" relationship as one in which "a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only insofar as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it" (58). Whereas romantic love relationships revolved around idealized visions of manly strength and womanly virtue, the pure relationship is an effort to achieve, through constant communication, an intimate knowledge of the other's unique and authentic self. Whereas romantic love entailed a lifelong commitment, a defining feature of pure love is that intimacy is sought as a means to self-development, so that a condition for entry into such relationships is the implicit agreement that if the values, interests, and identities of the partners begin to diverge in noncomplementary ways, the relationship loses its reason for being and becomes subject to dissolution. An individual who is committed to a pure love relationship — even through marriage — is therefore committed only contingently.

But pure love differs from romantic love in other ways as well. Whereas romantic love relationships centered around the material comforts of hearth and home, the "core" of pure love relationships, according to Giddens (1991), is "reflexive questioning" of the status of the relationship "in which the question, 'Is everything all right?' figures as a leading motif" (91). Whereas under the romantic love ideal, "the element of sublime love tends to predominate" (1992:40), "confluent love for the first time introduces the *ars erotica* into the core of the conjugal relationship" (62). Finally, whereas romantic love relationships were normatively heterosexual, "confluent love, while not necessarily androgynous . . . presumes a model of the pure relationship in which . . . a person's sexuality is [but] one factor that has to be negotiated as part of a relationship" (63).

In Giddens's account, the rise of the pure love relationship is related, in complex ways, to globalization and the growth of expert systems. First, insofar as the decontextualized knowledge on which expert systems rest undermines the authority of tradition — while globalization, simultaneously, brings people into contact with a wide variety of cultural practices — lifestyle choices, i.e., the choices individuals make between competing practices of everyday living, become the "very core of self-identity" (1991:81). Individuals, faced in these circumstances with the cultural mandate to achieve self-understanding by weaving together coherent narratives of self-development from the threads of their past, present, and anticipated future lifestyle choices — what Giddens calls the "reflexive project of the self" (9) — gravitate toward relationships that center on authenticity and self-disclosure, on the pursuit of similar lifestyles, and that are sufficiently contingent that they do not threaten to block unanticipated lines of personal development.

Second, as individuals pursue self-actualization, they become increasingly reliant on expert systems of therapy or on therapeutic discourse more generally. These systems ask the individual to continually "conduct a self-interrogation in

terms of what is happening" in the relationship so that the status of the relationship and its dynamics can be assessed (76). Such pressures push in the direction of relationships in which emotional communication and reflexive questioning play central roles. Moreover, since therapeutic expert systems recognize adherence to tradition to be a valid lifestyle choice only insofar as that adherence is consistent with the entirety of the individual's psychological needs — in other words, since expert systems refuse to bow to traditional authority as such — reliance on therapy or the discourse surrounding it leads people away from relationships in which they are constrained by tradition, i.e., away from the romantic love ideal and toward the pure love relationship.

Third, as individuals put their trust in expert systems, becoming less oriented than their counterparts were in the past toward local kinship groups and communities, these groups lose their capacity to ground intimate relationships: to provide the framework of moral obligation and trust that intimate partners need to assure themselves they will not be taken advantage of by the other. In such a context, trust comes to depend on "the opening out of the individual to the other, because knowledge that the other is committed, and harbours no basic antagonisms towards oneself, is the only framework for trust when external supports are largely absent" (96). Such an opening out is a defining characteristic of pure love.

Of course, Giddens does not believe that globalization and the growth of expert systems are the only social changes to have abetted the rise of the pure love relationship. Also of crucial importance, in his eyes, are, on the one hand, fertility decline, and, on the other hand, the growing acceptance of contraceptive technologies. These interrelated developments made possible "a progressive differentiation of sex from the exigencies of reproduction" and ushered in an era of "plastic sexuality" in which, especially for women, "sexuality became malleable . . . and a potential 'property' of the individual" (1992:27). Plastic sexuality, in turn, militated in favor of the pure relationship. Women were freed from much of the fear previously associated with sex, fear "of repetitive pregnancies, and therefore of death, given the substantial proportion of women who perished in childbirth" (27) and could now make sexual fulfillment a life-goal and a condition for remaining in relationships. The severing of sexuality from reproduction — reproduction being a focal point of concern in most societies — also made it so that "heterosexuality is no longer a standard by which everything else is judged" (1992:34). The logic of plastic sexuality thus gave cultural support to "interest groups and movements . . . claiming social acceptance and legal legitimacy for homosexuality" (33), paving the way for the emergence of a view of intimacy that, in principle, does not rely on assumptions about "natural" gender complementarities. The feminist movement, too, Giddens argues, played an important role in the appearance of the pure love relationship. Feminist campaigns against domestic violence

and in favor of equality in housework, child-care arrangements, and emotional caretaking made traditional, romantic love relationships seem retrograde. These campaigns were carried out in conjunction with the mass entry of women into the paid labor force, a development which greatly enhanced women's authority in relationships with men by undermining the homemaker/breadwinner dichotomy.

As a consequence of these changes, the pure love relationship is now, according to Giddens, the dominant cultural form in the posttraditional advanced capitalist societies of the West. To be sure, Giddens does not suggest that all contemporary relationships achieve the ideals of pure love. "The degree to which intimate spheres are transformed in this way," he insists, "plainly varies according to context and differential socioeconomic position, in common with most of the traits of modernity" (Giddens 1991:98). Nevertheless, he claims that "reasonably durable sexual ties, marriages and friendship relations all tend to approximate today to the pure relationship" (87).

The Pure Relationship as a "Double-Edged" Phenomenon

On the whole, Giddens sees the transition to the pure love relationship as cause for celebration. The major advantage of such relationships, he argues, is that they are more egalitarian than their romantic love counterparts. Because romantic love rested on essentialist assumptions about natural gender differences, "for women dreams of romantic love" — dreams enshrined as obligations in some family, community, religious, and legal contexts — "all too often led to grim domestic subjection" (Giddens 1992:62). Subscription to the romantic love ideal also hindered women's ability to break up with abusive and emotionally unavailable men and to find sexual fulfillment.

The pure relationship, in contrast, allows for escape. But in Giddens's eyes, the pure relationship is superior even if the individuals involved have no wish to escape, because it takes seriously the values of autonomy and equality. Describing the pure relationship, he notes:

> A good relationship is a relationship of equals, where each party has equal rights and obligations. In such a relationship, each person has respect, and wants the best for the other. The pure relationship is based upon communication, so that understanding the other person's point of view is essential. Talk, or dialogue, is the basis of making the relationship work. Relationships function best if people don't hide too much from each other — there has to be mutual trust . . . Finally, a good relationship is one free from arbitrary power, coercion or violence. (Giddens 2000:80)

Precisely because pure relationships have these characteristics, they are, Giddens believes, fundamentally democratic, so that a shift to a society of "pure lovers"

would represent nothing less than the democratization of family life (see Giddens 1992:184-204).

But Giddens does not see pure relationships as good simply because they enhance people's autonomy, equality, and happiness. He also suggests that there is a connection between the diffusion of pure love relationships and the solidification of democratic ideals in the polity. As individuals experience the joys of egalitarian social arrangements in their most intimate relationships, they may carry with them, when they participate in the public sphere, a sense of the importance of these very values. For this reason, he suggests, "the transformation of intimacy might be a subversive influence upon modern institutions as a whole," and that "the advancement of self-autonomy in the context of pure relationships is rich with implications for democratic practice in the larger community" (3, 195).

Yet, like modernity itself, the pure love relationship — which has enormous potential to render the world a better place — also raises new risks. The biggest risk, Giddens believes, is widespread psychological insecurity. Drawing on the work of psychoanalytic theorists such as Erik Erikson, D.W. Winnicott, and Harry Stack Sullivan, Giddens takes the position that the human psyche is a fragile entity. This is so because the conditions of existence raise psychologically disturbing questions about the nature of being, the finitude of life, intersubjectivity, and self-identity (1991:55). These questions confront us, at an emotional level, as infants, and would throw us into an abyss of anxiety and neurosis were it not for the fact that infants receive, in the normal course of their development, an "emotional inoculation" against such concerns that takes the form of the "basic trust . . . which the child . . . vests in its caretakers" (39, 38-9). As maturation progresses, however, the basic trust acquired during childhood must be supplemented by cultural resources that help the agent deal with or repress existential concerns. To the extent that these resources achieve this aim, they produce in the agent a sense of "ontological security" (36).

Traditional societies, Giddens believes, provide agents with a great deal of ontological security. Not only do such societies operate on the basis of unquestionable religious cosmologies; in addition, "tradition orders time in a manner which restricts the openness of counterfactual futures" (48). Individuals living within the confines of tradition choose their life-course paths from a limited set of models; models which, because they are traditional, give the individual not only a clear sense of what his or her future will entail but also a socially approved framework for understanding the connection between past, present, and future. In this way, traditional cultures help stave off anxieties born of the recognition that self-narratives are inherently contingent and problematic to weave together.

People living in posttraditional societies, in contrast, have a more difficult time obtaining adequate levels of ontological security. The plurality of religious cosmologies in posttraditional orders injects an element of skepticism into the

faith even of true believers, reducing the security such cosmologies would otherwise provide. More important, the fact that people in posttraditional societies must forge unique life-course paths — envisioning futures for themselves based on the lifestyle choices they make in the present — and that they must do so in a context where nearly every commitment is contingent means that individuals are increasingly aware of the consequentiality of their own actions and of the intrinsic limitations on their abilities to predict what those consequences will be. Globalization makes such prediction even more problematic because it exposes the individual to "high consequence risks" stemming from the normal accident-prone nature of global systems (Giddens 1991:136).

According to Giddens, individuals in pure love relationships are especially lacking in ontological security. Such relationships, however emotionally rewarding they may be, are, by their nature, contingent. Pure lovers must therefore constantly entertain the possibility, if only at an unconscious level, that their most precious psychosexual ties will, at some unknown point in the future, be dissolved; a dissolution which would force them to engage in the painful re-narration of their self-identities and also to establish new sets of quotidian habits and routines capable of serving as the "core of (accomplished) normalcy with which individuals and groups surround themselves" (1991:127).

This ever-present threat of relationship dissolution, Giddens suggests, produces in pure lovers a diffuse anxiety, for which the most common defense mechanism is addiction. "Addiction," he proposes, "has to be understood in terms of a society in which tradition has more thoroughly been swept away than ever before and in which the reflexive project of the self correspondingly assumes an especial importance. Where large areas of a person's life are no longer set by preexisting patterns and habits, the individual is continually obliged to negotiate life-style options" (1992:74). The anxiety associated with such a continual negotiation may lead individuals to engage in a variety of compulsive and destructive behaviors — alcoholism, drug addiction, anorexic self-starvation, sex addiction, even obsessive concern with work — for two reasons. First, the repetitive nature of such addictions may provide a sense of "security in a world of plural, but ambiguous options" (1991:107) by carving out for the individual small domains of daily life that are completely predictable. Second, addictions may represent "a defensive reaction, and an escape, a recognition of lack of autonomy that casts a shadow over the competence of the self" and which therefore lessens the individual's unconscious sense of responsibility for, and hence anxiety about, future outcomes (1992:76).

Testing Giddens's Theory

Although Giddens is often criticized for his lack of empirical engagement (e.g., Sica 1986), it is clear that at the core of this particular theory of his stands a set of empirical claims about the psychological consequences of being in a pure love relationship. Given that this is so, we find it symptomatic of the unhealthy schism between the social theory and quantitative research genres that there have been few efforts to determine whether the associations Giddens proposes actually obtain.

In saying this, we do not mean to claim that Giddens's concept of pure love has never before met with empirical scrutiny. In a 1999 article in the British journal *Sociology*, Lynn Jamieson (1999) reviewed a number of recent studies of intimate relationships with the goal of examining "the nature of intimacy . . . and considering how well proximities to and divergences from 'pure relationships' sit with [Giddens's] . . . understanding of social change" (482). Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research, Jamieson found evidence to suggest that "most individuals now approach couple relationships with expectations which include mutual emotional support and treating each other like equals" (1999:491). But this, she argued, tells us next to nothing about whether those relationships are in fact egalitarian. What research reveals on this score is that it is common to find couples who "collaboratively generate a sense of caring, intimate, equal relationships" (484) but do so in part to mask glaring gender inequalities in such areas as sexual satisfaction, housework and child-care arrangements, and control over money. Jamieson uses this finding to mount a full-scale assault on Giddens's theory, which, in her view, not only misrepresents the nature of contemporary intimacy, but was "prefigured" by decades by a number of other similar theories. She claims it is "strangely cut off from . . . the wealth of relevant feminist research," built around a "rather unpacked psychological theory," and interlaced with assumptions deriving from a patriarchal and individualizing "therapeutic discourse" (480, 482, 481).

We think Jamieson's article raises important issues. But however much an empirically based critique of the notion of pure love relationships contributes to an understanding of contemporary intimacy, it is quite different from the effort to systematically test the core associational propositions of Giddens's theory on their own terms.[2] Nor does the fact that egalitarian ideals often mask inegalitarian behavior make it any less interesting to examine how reported variation in assent to those ideals and in actual egalitarian practice correlates with various psychological outcomes.

The core propositions of Giddens's theory that we wish to test can be restated as a series of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals in pure love relationships experience a heightened sense of autonomy.

Hypothesis 2: Those in pure love relationships are happier with their partnerships.

Hypothesis 3: People in pure love relationships are more likely to support egalitarian political arrangements.

Hypothesis 4: Individuals in pure love relationships suffer from anxiety.

Hypothesis 5: People in pure love relationships fall into harmful addictions.

To test these hypotheses, we analyze data from the National Survey of Midlife Development in the U.S. (MIDUS).

Data and Measures

In 1995, the MacArthur Research Network on Successful Midlife Development administered a telephone survey and sent a self-administered questionnaire to a random sample of English-speaking U.S. adults age 25-74. These instruments contained various measures of health and well-being and included a component on intimate relationships. The main sample, which we use in our analysis, is comprised of 3,032 cases. Skip patterns in the questionnaire force us to restrict the sample to the 74.2% of respondents who report being partnered; that is, either married or living with someone in a marriage-like relationship. We further restrict the sample to the 98.2% of partnered respondents who identify as heterosexual. This is a problematic restriction, both on political grounds and because, as Jamieson points out, Giddens (1999) believes "same-sex couples" to be "in the vanguard of developing 'pure relationships'" (487). Nevertheless, the restriction is necessary for our analysis because, as we discuss below, we use questions about gender equity in the division of household labor as indicators of relationship traditionalism, and such questions in all likelihood have very different meanings in gay and lesbian households.

After these restrictions were imposed, and cases with missing data points on the dependent variables excluded from the analysis (mean replacement was used for missing data on the independent variables), we were left with an effective sample size that ranged, across multivariate models, from 1,970 to 2,205.

We use three variables to construct our measure of pure love. The first is an intimacy variable that measures: (1) the degree to which respondents think that their partners understand the way they feel; (2) the degree to which they can open up and talk with their partners about their worries; and (3) the frequency with which respondents talk with their partners about important issues. A relationship centered around emotional communication and discussion is a pure love relationship as Giddens understands it, so respondents who score high on our intimacy variable should be in relationships that have at least some of the characteristics of pure love. The second variable we use is

an attitudinal measure of relationship traditionalism, based on four questions that ask respondents whether women can have full and happy lives without marrying or having children, and about the importance of gender equity in the division of household labor. Whatever their other characteristics, pure love relationships are defined negatively against a traditional view of relationships in which marriage and childbearing are seen as essential components of female identity and in which women are viewed as having special responsibilities in the private sphere. We supplement these attitudinal measures with a measure of behavioral nontraditionalism: a rough index of reported gender equity in the division of household labor in the respondents' relationships.

In using traditionalism measures as indicators of pure love, we part company with Jamieson's interpretation of Giddens because she thinks that in Giddens's theory such relationships are defined only by the characteristics of "mutual self-disclosure and appreciation of each other's unique qualities," with relationship equality the postulated effect (1999:477). In our view, textual evidence from Giddens does not support this interpretation. In the introduction to *The Transformation of Intimacy*, Giddens (1992) defines the pure relationship as one of "sexual and emotional equality" (2). Later in the book, he asserts that the "opening out to the other" which occurs in a pure relationship "presumes a balance of power" and "depends both upon the increasing autonomy of women and upon plastic sexuality" (1992:94). More generally, we see the pure relationship as Giddens's attempt to characterize the ideal toward which contemporary couplings are tending away from the view that relationships involve a "naturally given" set of "rights and obligations" (96). We therefore think it reasonable to use attitudinal and behavioral relationship traditionalism measures to help distinguish those who seem enveloped in this cultural complex from those who do not.

The intimacy and attitudinal relationship traditionalism measures were constructed using a principal components analysis. The proportion of variance accounted for in the indicators is 73.4% and 55.5%, respectively. The corresponding alpha values are .75 and .63. (The questions that form the basis for these and all the other variables we use are listed in the appendix.)

Because a pure love relationship, as we see Giddens defining it, is both intimate and nontraditional, we next construct a set of categorical variables around the intersection of the intimacy and traditionalism measures. We classify respondents as being in pure love relationships if they score in the upper quartile of the intimacy measure, in the lower quartile of the attitudinal traditionalism measure, and in the upper quartile of the housework equity measure. We classify respondents as being in romantic love relationships if they score in the upper quartile of the intimacy measure, in the upper quartile of the attitudinal traditionalism measure, and in the lower quartile of the housework equity measure. All other respondents we classify as being in hybrid-

type relationships. These categorical variables serve as the independent variables in our analysis.

We return to principal components analysis to construct four of our six dependent variables: autonomy, relationship satisfaction, political egalitarianism, and anxiety. The proportion of variance accounted for in these indicators was 67.6% (autonomy), 86.2% (relationship satisfaction), 81.3% (political egalitarianism), and 93.9% (anxiety), with corresponding alpha values of .75, .82, .77, and .91. The questions we use to measure autonomy ask respondents how much control they feel they have over their lives. Relationship satisfaction is based on questions that ask respondents to rate their relationships. Political egalitarianism measures the hypothetical willingness of respondents to pay more in taxes and in healthcare costs to help those worse off than themselves. The anxiety factor derives from questions that ask respondents about the duration and severity of their bouts of worry in the last 12 months.

The two other dependent variables — measures of whether the respondent has alcohol or drug problems (our operationalization of addiction) — are sums of responses to a series of five yes/no questions in which respondents report whether or not they have had, in the last 12 months, particularly dangerous episodes involving drug or alcohol use.

Analysis: Descriptive Statistics

Our modeling procedure follows the order of the hypotheses specified above. We begin by examining the descriptive statistics, and then present a series of multivariate models to test hypotheses 1-5.

We begin our analysis with an examination of Table 1, which shows the distribution of relationship types across a number of sociodemographic categories. Pure love relationships, as we are operationalizing them, comprise 3.3% of the cases in the sample, romantic love relationships 15.5%, and hybrid-type relationships 81.3%. But a word of caution is in order when interpreting these statistics. Because our classification of respondents depends in which quartile they fall on three different measures, there are mathematical constraints on the proportion who could be classified as being in any of these three relationship types. This classification strategy, which focuses on the extremes of the distribution, is useful for locating those respondents *fully* immersed in the pure love or romantic love cultural complexes and in teasing out the psychological consequences of such an immersion, but is less useful for measuring the actual distribution of views about love and intimacy across the social landscape. These are relative, rather than absolute, measures of interpersonal relations. For the latter, further research, with better tailored measures, would be required.

These limitations aside, Table 1 suggests that no single sociodemographic group has a monopoly on pure love relationships. There are, to be sure, some

TABLE 1: Percentage Distribution of Relationship Types by Selected Sociodemographic Variables

	Pure Love	Romantic Love	Hybrid
Sex			
Women	3.1	15.8	81.1
Men	3.6	16.1	80.3
Age			
Age less than 35	2.5	17.0	80.5
Age 36-50	3.9	16.6	79.5
Age 51-65	3.3	14.4	82.2
Age 66-80	2.6	13.5	83.9
Race/ethnicity			
Non-Hispanic whites	3.1	16.9	80.0
Non-Hispanic blacks	3.8	6.3	89.9
Non-Hispanic other race	5.4	10.7	83.9
Hispanic	4.1	22.4	73.5
Education			
High school dropout	4.7	16.6	78.7
High school graduate	2.8	16.3	80.9
Some college or four-year degree	2.6	14.3	83.0
Advanced degree	4.0	16.8	79.1
Socioeconomic status			
Low social economic index	2.3	14.9	82.9
Medium social economic index	3.4	14.1	82.5
High social economic index	4.0	17.3	78.7
Total	3.3	15.5	81.3

small differences in the distribution of such relationships by gender, age, ethnicity, education, and socioeconomic status. A higher proportion of men than women are classified as being in pure love relationships, probably because men report higher levels of intimacy. With respect to age, those in pure love relationships are slightly more common among those age 36-50 than any other group. A lower proportion of non-Hispanic whites are in pure love relationships than Hispanics or non-Hispanic blacks. And although respondents at either the bottom or top of the educational ladder are more likely to be pure lovers than those at the middle, in general the proportion of pure lovers increases with socioeconomic status. All in all, however, what is notable about these differences is how small they are. None is greater than a few percentage points. In fact, in an unreported regression, the only statistically significant

TABLE 2: Unstandardized OLS Coefficients from the Regression of Dependent Variables on Pure Love and Hybrid Relationship Variables

	Model 1 Autonomy	Model 2 Relationship Satisfaction	Model 3 Political Egalitarianism	Model 4 Anxiety	Model 5 Alcohol Problems	Model 6 Drug Problems
Male	.109**	.206***	–.157***	–.158***	.135***	.065**
	(.045)	(.045)	(.041)	(.045)	(.027)	(.018)
Age	–.008***	.010***	.013***	–.014***	–.006***	–.004***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.001)	(.001)
Race/ethnicity						
Black	.038	–.222***	.338***	–.168**	–.028	–.015
	(.079)	(.071)	(.077)	(.078)	(.047)	(.031)
Hispanic	.212	.032	.332*	.136	–.080	.101
	(.151)	(.135)	(.148)	(.149)	(.090)	(.060)
Other race (nonwhite)	–.320**	–.203	.019	–.144	.012	.007
	(.118)	(.107)	(.116)	(.114)	(.070)	(.047)
Education						
High school graduate	.318***	.075	.155	–.268***	–.024	–.014
	(.156)	(.067)	(.073)	(.073)	(.044)	(.029)
Some college or four-year degree	.366***	.004	.229**	–.248***	–.034	.015
	(.079)	(.070)	(.077)	(.076)	(.046)	(.031)
Adv. degree	.331**	.004	.353***	–.351***	.014	–.017
	(.107)	(.070)	(.106)	(.106)	(.064)	(.043)
Socioeconomic index	.007***	–.002	.000	.001	.000	–.001
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.001)	(.001)
Labor force participation						
Not in labor force	–.121	.077	–.040	–.048	–.044	.092***
	(.065)	(.059)	(.064)	(.064)	(.039)	(.026)
Retired	.040	.014	–.003	.017	.048	–.054
	(.088)	(.079)	(.086)	(.086)	(.052)	(.035)
Unemployed	–.322**	–.197	.188	.240*	–.108	.015
	(.124)	(.106)	(.117)	(.116)	(.070)	(.047)

sociodemographic predictor of being in a pure love relationship was the respondent's score on the Duncan (1961) Socioeconomic Index (SEI), and its effects were weak.

What are the psychological consequences of being in a pure love relationship? We turn next to an examination of our multivariate models, where we control for the effect of sociodemographic, labor force participation, and family composition variables. Readers should be forewarned: the proportion of

TABLE 2: Unstandardized OLS Coefficients from the Regression of Dependent Variables on Pure Love and Hybrid Relationship Variables (Cont'd)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	Autonomy	Relationship Satisfaction	Political Egalitarianism	Anxiety	Alcohol Problems	Drug Problems
Religious affiliation						
Agnostic	.021	–.018	–.025	–.098	.193***	.027
	(.078)	(.071)	(.078)	(.051)	(.048)	(.032)
Catholic	.197***	.011	.038	–.006	.070*	–.030
	(.051)	(.046)	(.051)	(.051)	(.031)	(.021)
Family composition						
Married	.176*	.351***	–.090	–.215**	–.165***	–.134***
	(.084)	(.080)	(.083)	(.082)	(.050)	(.034)
Number of kids	–.002	–.022	.038**	.023	–.008	.004
	(.014)	(.012)	(.013)	(.013)	(.008)	(.005)
Relationship type						
Pure love	.316**	.384***	.336**	–.021	–.070	–.025
	(.058)	(.118)	(.129)	(.128)	(.079)	(.053)
Hybrid	–.044	–.458***	.058*	.042	.031	.038
	(.053)	(.048)	(.052)	(.052)	(.031)	(.021)
Constant	–.382	–.377	–.865	1.057	.573	.357
R^2	.068	.118	.063	.066	.063	.043
Valid cases	1,970	2,101	2,205	2,039	2,103	2,141

variation explained in these models is small. But are there statistically significant associations in the direction Giddens theorizes?

Hypothesis 1: Individuals in pure love relationships experience heightened feelings of autonomy

As model 1 in Table 2 indicates, being in a pure love relationship relative to being in a romantic love relationship (the excluded variable in the model) is positively associated with our measure of autonomy. Being educated, being from a higher socioeconomic position, being male, being younger, being Catholic, being employed, and being married are also positively associated with autonomy. That these variables help predict feelings of autonomy is hardly surprising, given the status-driven, credential-based, youth-oriented, patriarchal nature of contemporary capitalism. But it is somewhat surprising to find that the type of relationship

one is in has an independent association with autonomy, and this finding is consistent with Giddens's theory.

Hypothesis 2: Those in pure love relationships are happier with their partnerships

As model 2 shows, being in a pure love relationship is a predictor of relationship satisfaction. The model also suggests that, everything else being equal, African Americans report less satisfaction with their relationships than non-African Americans. Men are more satisfied than women, the old are more satisfied than the young, and the married more satisfied than the unmarried. In contrast, those in hybrid-type relationships are less satisfied than those in romantic love relationships, probably because intimacy predicts relationship satisfaction, and we have defined hybrid-type relationships as those that are not especially intimate. Pure love is actually a stronger predictor than any of these other factors. Again, Giddens's theory receives support.

Hypothesis 3: People in pure love relationships are more likely to support egalitarian political arrangements

Model 3 indicates that being in a pure love relationship is positively associated with our measure of political egalitarianism, as is being in a hybrid-type relationship. The other positive predictors of political egalitarianism are having a collegiate and post-collegiate education, being black or Hispanic relative to white, being older, and having more children, whereas the negative predictor is being male. The MIDUS questionnaire did not include measures of overall political orientation, so we cannot be sure that the association between pure love — constructed as it is around relationship traditionalism measures — and political egalitarianism does not stem from the fact that both are picking up a latent political attitudes or identification factor. Nevertheless, the association is present in the data, and is consistent with Giddens's theory.

Hypothesis 4: People in pure love relationships suffer from anxiety

Contrary to Giddens's argument, there is no significant association, in model 4, between being in a pure love (or hybrid-type) relationship and anxiety. The model does reveal that the educated are less anxious than the uneducated; that blacks report less anxiety than whites; that women report more anxiety than men; that the young are more anxious than the old; that the unemployed are more anxious than the employed; and that people who are married are less anxious than those who are cohabitating. But no support for hypothesis 4 can be found.

Hypothesis 5: People in pure love relationships fall into harmful addictions

Given that those in pure love relationships are no more anxious than those in romantic love relationships, it would be strange to find that pure love was positively associated with addictive behavior. In this regard, models 5 and 6 yield no surprises. Those in pure love or hybrid-type relationships are no more likely than those in romantic love relationships to have alcohol or drug problems. Alcohol problems are negatively associated with being older and being married, and are positively associated with being male, being agnostic, and being Catholic. Drug problems are negatively correlated with being older and being married, and positively correlated with being male or not in the labor force. But the data provide no support for the claim that those in pure love relationships are more likely to develop addictions, at least of the kind we measure here.

Discussion

Though this article might be seen by some as part of a research tradition in which the more counterintuitive claims of psychoanalytic theory are empirically debunked (Sewell 1952), we are under no illusion that the entirety of Giddens's theory stands or falls on the basis of this simple analysis. First, it is Giddens's ambition not only to advance an argument about the psychological effects of pure love relationships, but also to account for the historical emergence of this cultural complex. Our study sheds no light on questions of historical etiology.

Second, Giddens might have posed the problem differently from us. We believe we are correct in interpreting Giddens as saying that individuals in pure love relationships are both more autonomous and have less ontological security than those in romantic love relationships. But it is possible to interpret him as making another argument as well: that social systems in which the pure love complex has become central are characterized by lower overall levels of ontological security. Because our data are neither cross-national nor time variant, we cannot speak to this possible system-level dimension of Giddens's theory.

Third, we are sure that both Giddens and Jamieson would agree that our measure of pure love is not subtle enough. We would very much have liked to include in our measures questions about such things as views toward commitment, the role of sexuality in the relationship, whether the respondent thought it was important to be in a relationship with someone who has made similar lifestyle choices, whether the respondent felt obligated to make his or her relationship conform to life-course norms about intimate involvement, how often the respondent talked with his or her partner about the status of the relationship, whether these talks drew from traditional or therapeutic

relationship discourses, and so on. Unfortunately, such questions were not asked on the MIDUS questionnaire (nor were they asked in any other nationally representative survey we were able to find that also included the relevant mental health measures), and we cannot rule out the possibility that we would have obtained different results had our measures of pure love been more accurate.

Problems also beset our dependent variables. For example, diffuse anxiety of the kind Giddens is interested in may not be accessible to what he has elsewhere (1984) termed discursive consciousness. If this is true, self-reported measures of worry would not be of very much use. Also, since addiction, in Giddens's theory, may take any number of forms (including, as described above, anorexia, sex addiction, "workaholism," etc.), our exclusive focus on alcohol and drug use — these being the only good measures of addiction in the MIDUS data — might have kept us from observing all the associations Giddens theorizes.

Finally, some might raise the objection that because we have not incorporated as controls in our models all the predictors found by other researchers to be associated with our dependent variables — for example, all the factors that predict autonomy or political egalitarianism or drug use — we are in no position to assess the net explanatory contribution of pure love, to determine whether selection biases may have influenced our findings, or to draw any inferences about causal direction.

We are sympathetic to these objections and believe they highlight the need for more nuanced empirical tests of Giddens's theory. Such tests stand little chance of being carried out, however, unless a dialogue is initiated between those in the theory community and sociologists of the family, demographers, and sex researchers who routinely administer surveys that ask questions about intimate relationships. We believe the benefits of such a dialogue would extend well beyond the assessment of Giddens's claims, for Giddens is not the only social theorist to have written extensively about intimacy. Important discussions of the topic can also be found in the work of Beck and Beck-Gernshiem (1995), Bellah et al. (1985), Castells (1997), Foucault (1978), Lasch (1977), Luhmann (1986), Seidman (1992), and Swidler (2001). (For an overview of some of this work, see Jamieson 1998.) Survey research that had as one of its goals to determine whether there is empirical support for some of the testable claims these theorists advance with respect to intimacy could prompt substantial theoretical refinement. This is so because the arguments theorists make about intimacy are typically tied to their core assumptions about human action and the nature of modern society — assumptions that might be called into question by null findings. At the same time, studies such as these could help sociologists of the family, demographers, and sex researchers recognize new patterns of variation, particularly in agents' subjective views about relationships, that might be systematically associated with the outcomes of interest to them. Our effort to subject Giddens's theory to empirical scrutiny shows, we think, that blurring

the distinctions between the theory and quantitative research genres does not necessarily lead to incoherence, and may produce interesting — although less than conclusive — results.

More specifically, we believe that despite the problems with our measures identified above, our findings establish a presumption in favor of one of Giddens's major claims, and against another. On the positive side, our results count as evidence for Giddens's assumption that emotionally intimate and nontraditionalistic relationships are powerful forces in people's lives. Sociological theory has often been accused of failing to sufficiently incorporate feminist perspectives into its analyses (e.g., Alway 1995; Sprague 1997), but Giddens, at least, has clearly absorbed the feminist insight that the domestic sphere is a crucial axis around which other forms of social engagement revolve. The finding that one's overall sense of autonomy and political attitudes are connected to involvement in a relationship with pure love characteristics gives specificity to this insight. Moreover, the finding lends credence to Giddens's speculation that it is through the mechanism of intimacy that modernity's potential to remake the social order in a manner compatible with the values of autonomy and equality may, in the final analysis, be realized. It need not be seen as tied to Giddens's apologetics for the cosmopolitan centrism of the Blair and Clinton administrations to agree with him that there are "radicalising" and democratizing "possibilities [in]. . . the transformation of intimacy" inasmuch as "a social world in which emotional fulfillment replaced the maximising of economic growth would be very different from that which we know at present" (1992:3). By providing preliminary evidence that some of the associations Giddens theorizes do pan out, we give support to those who would insist that any program of social and political reform not inadvertently curtail — for example, by enshrining, as some contemporary progressives have done, a nostalgia for masculinist working-class politics — the cultural shift toward the pure love ideal that Giddens describes.

On the other side of the ledger, however, our study failed to turn up any evidence that the transformation of intimacy is in fact a double-edged phenomenon. People in pure love relationships are, so far as our data indicate, happier with their relationships and no worse off on a number of psychological measures than those in more traditional relationships. It is of course true, as Vaughan (1986) has shown, that the dissolution of a relationship that has served as an anchor of self-identity and a vehicle for self-growth can be extremely painful. But there is no evidence that pure lovers are especially affected by the threat of this dissolution. Nor do the other contingencies of a life built around the ideals of pure love — for example, contingencies relating to the ever changing lifestyle preferences of one's partner or to the timing of major life decisions — seem to lead pure lovers to engage in compensatory addictive behaviors. Why this should be the case is not clear, but we suspect that Giddens may be overestimating the psychological importance of habit, routine, and

predictability in people's lives or at least underestimating people's ability to quickly reestablish routine. In offering such a speculation, we by no means intend to suggest that there is anything wrong with practice-oriented theories of action of the kind offered by Giddens (1984), Bourdieu (1990), and Joas (1996), among others — theories that view much of human action as habitual and lacking in conscious motivation. What we mean is that Giddens — along with Sennett (1998), who we see as taking a complementary stance focusing on labor market, as opposed to domestic, instability — may fail to appreciate the degree to which strategies of personal growth may be compatible with psychological flexibility. Whatever one thinks of claims of affinity between contemporary culture and post-Fordist production regimes (e.g., Harvey 1989; Lash & Urry 1987), it is not hard to imagine that people today, having become connoisseurs of experiential variety, might feel stymied by personal relationships they view as standardized and utterly predictable. Insofar as this is so, the very feature of pure love relationships that Giddens sees as a cause of anxiety — their contingent and ever changing nature — would, in the eyes of those culturally predisposed to favor what W.I. Thomas (1925) called the "new experience," actually be a source of enduring satisfaction. Only time and a good deal more theoretical and empirical investigation will tell whether Giddens is searching in vain for intimacy's — and, indeed, modernity's — elusive second edge.

Notes

1. In making this argument, Giddens draws on various historical sources, including Stone (1982) and Cancian (1987). Other relevant studies include Illouz (1997), Lystra (1989), Kern (1992), Rothman (1984), and Seidman (1991) and many other histories of intimacy and the family. Many of the arguments Giddens advances are in agreement with the work of these scholars, but others — especially his claims about the causes of the shift from romantic to pure love — are very much at odds with them. Given our interest in testing Giddens's psychological claims, we make no effort here to identify, in Giddens's historical narrative, the points of convergence or divergence from other sociohistorical scholarship on love and intimacy.

2. One of the few researchers to have attempted something like this is Hall (1996), who, using Canadian data, finds a negative correlation between being in a pure love relationship and marital stability. However, Hall does not examine any of the dependent variables we consider here.

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APPENDIX: Questions Used to Construct Independent and Dependent Variables, MIDUS Survey

Variable	Question
Intimacy	How often do you and your spouse or partner have a really good talk about something important to you? How much does he or she understand the way you feel about things? How much can you open up to him or her if you need to talk about your worries?
Attitudinal relationship traditionalism	Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Women can have full and happy lives without marrying Women can have full and happy lives without having any children Men should share equally with their wives in work around the house Men should share equally with their wives in taking care of young children
Behavioral relationship traditionalism	Running a household involves a lot of chores, and couples vary in who does these things, like cooking, shopping, laundry, yardwork, repairs, and paying bills. Overall, do you do more of such chores, does your partner do more of them, or do you split them equally?
Autonomy	Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Other people determine most of what I can and cannot do What happens in my life is often beyond my control I have little control over the things that happen to me
Relationship satisfaction	How would you rate your marriage or close relationship these days? Would you describe your relationship as . . . ? (excellent, very good, etc.) During the past year, how often have you thought your relationship was in trouble?
Political egalitarianism	How much obligation would you feel: To pay more for health care so that everyone had access to health care? To vote for a law that would help others worse off than you but would increase your taxes?
Anxiety	On days you worry, does the worry usually last…? (all day long, most of the day, etc.) How much does the worry interfere with your life or activities?
Alcohol/drug problems	(Same five questions asked for both) Were you ever under, during the past 12 months, the effects of (alcohol or drugs)… in a situation that increased your chances of getting hurt? Did you ever, during the past 12 months, have any emotional or psychological problems from using (alcohol or drugs)…? Did you ever, during the past 12 months, have such a strong desire . . . to use (alcohol or drugs) that you could not resist it . . . ? Did you have a period of a month or more during the past 12 months when you spent a great deal of time using (alcohol or drugs) or getting over their effects? Did you ever, during the past 12 months, find that you had to use more (alcohol or drugs) than usual to get the same effect or that the same amount had less effect on you than before?