

**IN THE VOICE OF, IN THE IMAGE OF: SOCIALLY SITUATED
PRESENTATIONS OF ATTRACTIVENESS¹**

Dorothy C. Holland

1. Introduction.

Anthropologists know that, although "my boyfriend," "my old man," and "my main man," may refer to the same man, the words evoke different social contexts and practices. Despite this realization, cognitive anthropologists have found it difficult to say how this contextualizing information should be incorporated into cognitive accounts. Despite ever more sophisticated analyses, our descriptions of "typified knowledge" often seem somehow removed from social process, human striving and human struggle. In the analyses, knowledge systems sit like gems of wisdom unhooked from their practice in actual historical and social contexts. It is as though cultural knowledge is always cognitively presented as doxa--as timeless, natural, non-arbitrary, indisputable truth.²

Perhaps for Americans, "attractiveness"--the subject of this paper--is usually thought of as a timeless truth that is forever and always relevant. Perhaps all such complex cultural categories, from attractiveness in the U.S. to the vital "force" of witches in the French Bocage (described by Favret-Saada, 1980), are mentally presented as doxa.³ But perhaps they are not. Perhaps attractiveness is associated with, and evaluated by reference to particular social practices or activities and particular groups. The question is important because the category of attractiveness is a cultural keystone of the gender status quo in the U.S. Its apparent fixity, its seeming permanence or impermanence surely affects the possibility of resistance and opposition to that order.

The American women in the studies described here accorded a woman's attractiveness a significance analogous

to that accorded a man's (family's) honor in Bourdieu's Kabylia (1977). At least this was true for the women when the study was done. At that time they were participating in college peer cultures. In an historical overview of American campus cultures, Horowitz (1987:208), gives a flavor of the importance of women's attractiveness as follows⁴:

As dating entered the college scene, it fundamentally reshaped the college lives of coeds....it established the key way that women gained status. College men vied for positions on the [sports] field or in the newsroom; college women gained their positions indirectly by being asked out by the right man. Their primary contests became those of beauty and popularity, won not because of what they did, but because of how and to whom they appealed.

Campus dating began in the U.S. some sixty years ago and, though the dating patterns have become more informal, the historical situation described by Horowitz roughly matches the situation I found on two university campuses in the late 1970's and early 1980's. "Attractiveness" or "desirability" remains a central cultural interpretation of the force driving women's relationships to men (Holland and Eisenhart 1988) and therefore of moment in the reproduction of the gender status quo.

In this paper I ask: How is attractiveness mentally presented? Is it always cognitively presented as an aspect of the world that transcends social divisions or is it somehow evocative of particular social groups and particular social struggles? Here, I describe several suggestive pieces of two research projects that were left by the wayside, unaccounted for in my previous analyses. These pieces hint that cognitive presentations of attractiveness are "heard" and "seen" internally "in the voice" and "in the image" of socially significant others engaged in action. They suggest ways in which thinking and feeling about attractiveness are confounded with thinking and feeling about socially significant others.

The paper begins with a description of attractiveness informed by recent advances in cognitive anthropology. The previously inexplicable pieces of interviews from my studies

are then described and their implications for cognitive presentations described. Since the ideas of the paper build upon unanticipated findings of studies designed for other purposes, my account is not a systematic presentation of data, but rather a mining of a number of "cases". The research methods are described only in briefest and most relevant detail. As for the samples, suffice it to say that the studies were carried out over a four-year period in the late seventies and early eighties at two universities of the American South. The universities, which are in close proximity to one another, I will call by the pseudonyms, "Bradford" and "SU." Bradford is an historically black university with students from lower-middle and working-class backgrounds; SU, an historically white school with more middle-class students than Bradford.

2. From Prototypes to Cultural Models.

Twenty years ago, a cognitive anthropologist might have studied attractiveness by building a checklist of distinctive features, i.e., those necessary and sufficient features of a person--let us say a woman--that must be present before "attractive" would be a semantically correct appellation for the woman. Perhaps the woman must appear to be within a certain age range; a certain weight range; perhaps her body must have a certain shape; her hair, a certain luster; her skin, a certain color and sensual quality; her face, a certain physiognomy, etc.

Today, we recognize that such a checklist (if one could be developed) is likely to describe solely the properties of the "prototype"--the exemplar or best representative--evoked by the word. We have learned that categories are not likely to be digital as implied by checklist definitions, but more likely to be analog categories, organized such that less than perfect examples "shade away" from the prototype or exemplar.

Prototypes are certainly important. All sorts of cosmetic and clothing industries in the U.S. successfully curry, and exploit by graphic means, Americans' desires to approximate the epitome of the attractive woman or man. Nonetheless prototypes have proved to be insufficient as a cognitive "account" of what people know about categories. Linguists, anthropologists, and psychologists have all found it necessary to hypothesize an additional knowledge form--

the "simplified world," "cultural model," and "mental model," respectively. These worlds and models, roughly speaking, specify the background knowledge that is presumed, at least for the purpose of discourse, in interpretations of a concept like attractiveness.

2.1 Cultural Models.

In anthropology, "cultural models" are shared ideas of how the world, or some portion of it, works. Quinn and I (1987:20) described cultural models as follows:

...Our knowledge is organized in culturally standardized and hence familiar event sequences that tell, for example, how marriage goes...; or how anger is engendered, experienced and expressed...; or under what circumstances a lie has been told...; or what to expect in a relationship between two young adults of opposite gender...; or that wishes give rise to intentions and intentions to actions.... These "stories" include prototypical events, prototypical roles for actors, prototypical entities, and more. They invoke, in effect, whole worlds in which things work, actors perform and events unfold in a simplified and wholly expectable manner.

When talking and acting, people assume that their words and behavior will be interpreted as indexing or pointing to a context of meaning--a world proposed by a cultural model. Violations of this assumption cause confusion and prevarication. For example the linguist Charles Fillmore, a key figure in the development of "frame semantics," asked us to consider the word "bachelor." Why is it confusing to ask if the Pope is a bachelor? After all, a bachelor is an unmarried male and the Pope is an unmarried male.

The problem, says Fillmore, is that 'bachelor' evokes a simplified world "in which prototypical events unfold: men marry at a certain age; marriages last for life; and in such a world, a bachelor is a man who stays unmarried beyond the usual age, thereby becoming eminently marriageable" (Quinn and Holland 1987:23). The Pope, under his vow of celibacy, is simply not a relevant character in the simplified world

of the bachelor. (Fillmore 1975, 1982; see Sweetser 1987 for an extended discussion of the limitations of prototype theory in accounting for the use of 'lie'.)

3. The Simplified World of Intimate Male/Female Relationships.

So, what then is the world in which attraction is a relevant event and attractiveness a relevant quality? In an earlier analysis of the interviews reported below, Debra Skinner and I (Holland and Skinner 1985, 1987) concluded that talk about cross-gender relationships presupposed a simplified world of romance.⁵ In the cultural model that we hypothesized, the relevant entities were intimate relationships and the people--attractive women, boyfriends, lovers, and fiances--whose attraction created these relationships. The typical progress of a cross-gender relationship presupposed by that model can be summarized as follows:

- (1) An attractive man ("guy") and an attractive woman ("girl") are attracted to one another.
- (2) The man learns and appreciates the woman's qualities and uniqueness as a person. Sensitive to her desires he shows his attraction by treating her well. For example, he buys things for her, takes her places she likes, and shows that he appreciates her.
- (3) She in turn shows her admiration of and her caring for him and allows the relationship to become more intimate.

The model also implies the motives for such relationships:

- (4) The relationship provides intimacy.
- (5) It also provides prestige. The relationship demonstrates that the woman is attractive--she has attracted a man--and vice versa.

And, the model provides a way to compensate for unequal attractiveness and thus, a means for calculating relative attractiveness:

- (6) If the woman is more attractive than the man--i.e., the woman is less attracted to the man than he is to her--he can compensate by treating her especially well. The man's treatment of the woman is a sign of (his assessment of) her attractiveness relative to his.
- (7) If the woman's attractiveness is the lesser of the two--i.e., the man is less attracted to her than she to him--she compensates by lowering her expectations for good treatment. The woman's expectations of the man are a sign of (her assessment of) his attractiveness relative to hers.

According to this cultural model, in other words, attraction is the force that produces intimate cross-gender relationships and the ability to attract--attractiveness--an essential and crucial quality of those who would participate in the world of romance. Attractiveness determines how a woman will be treated by men. Attractive woman will receive attention, gifts, and intimacy from men and will have access to whatever social and material amenities the men may wish to share. Unattractive women will either receive bad treatment from attractive men or else have to settle for unattractive, less prestigious men. Attractive men will be admired and chosen as intimate partners by attractive women; unattractive men will have to settle for less attractive women.

Attractiveness, in short, is understood and identified in relation to this simplified world. Attractiveness presumes this complex of knowledge, and so, it becomes clear, cannot be captured by the early 1960's cognitive anthropologist and his or her checklist definition. Neither can attractiveness be captured in a prototype. It can be figured or thought about as it is "essentialized" or "embodied" in an individual such that some women can be said to be more attractive--closer to the ideal or prototype of the attractive woman--than others. But there is more, much more. Attractiveness presupposes a world in which attractiveness attracts others and leads to further interactions and relationships. In the simplified world,

attraction is acted out in a taken-for-granted way and thus provides a basis for a second means of figuring attractiveness. The paper treats both the first means which I call "essentialized attractiveness" and the second which I call "enacted attractiveness." As the general problem dictates, I address the cognitive presentations of these forms of attractiveness evident in the studies at Bradford and SU. As will be shown, these cognitive presentations draw upon the cultural model as it informs social activities in which the knowledge is practiced.

4. Essentialized Attractiveness.

Some of the particulars of "essentialized ideal attractiveness" were implied by the cultural model of romantic relationships; others were not. The model implied that men capable of sensitivity to women would be considered more attractive than men without such ability and that women's capacity for affection was an important aspect of their attractiveness to men, but not which color of hair or skin--if any particular one--would be considered attractive. These latter sort of features seem to be decreed at least in part by public fashion as controlled through advertisements, represented in beauty contests, and the like. Examples of attractive women (the beauty queens, the models in glossy advertisements, "before" and "after" pictures accompanying diet plans, etc.) were constantly presented to the women in the media and pointed out by the men and women in their lives.

The women in our studies--especially the second study--Study B--which included open-ended interviews and participation in the women's peer activities--often talked about being attractive. Their talk presumed a shared notion of ideal attractiveness. A woman at SU, for example, provided a good example in one of the interviews in Study B:

[When I'm with my girlfriends,] we always talk about our boyfriends, or how we wish we had boyfriends, or how fat we are--we all say that...None of us have to lose weight, but we just want to be thinner....I'm gonna lose weight and clear up my face and [grow] my hair out, so I'll be all beautiful this summer...When we did anything with the guys, we always asked them, "What do guys like in girls?"...

4.1 Knowledge in Practice: Essentialized Attractiveness, Critical Talk and Self Improvement Projects.

Although the studies were not intended to uncover the details of ideal attractiveness or to determine in which practices ideal attractiveness was important, there were some interesting hints in the interviews and observations, relating to the latter. The SU woman's description quoted above sums up a frequent activity: criticizing self in relation to ideal attractiveness. The women constantly talked about how they themselves, or others, departed from the ideal and, among themselves--especially at SU, the predominantly white university--discussed ways and means of overcoming or remedying deviations from the ideal.

There were also indications that comparisons to the ideal went on internally, within the individual, and, in one case, a suggestion that the social identities of the critics had been retained. In this case the woman, Sandy, was upset by the critical talk. She had come to SU from another part of the country and, from what she said, found the SU students' ideas of attractiveness, unfamiliar. She commented:

In my hometown, I was pretty much respected in the community and accepted for what I am, or was, in that community. [I was] basically your nonconformist, and I dressed to suit me. But when I came down here I...got the impression that here I was a sloppy little girl and I didn't have any class or I didn't have any style...I have some preppie clothes, and sometimes I wear them but I don't feel that what you wear puts you in a certain circle, and all of a sudden I felt that I was put either to one side or to the other side,...and I didn't have a choice because it was all around me...and I didn't like that...And it really really bothered me.

Sandy went on to say that the same forces made her feel that she was not a "lady" just because she cursed when she got angry. Sandy eventually formed a very close relationship with another woman, ceased to be particularly interested in romantic relationships with males, and more or less withdrew

from the peer society at SU. As she reported her thoughts and feelings, the criticisms were remembered in the voices of her peers. She seemed to (re)experience the comparison of herself to the ideal through the questions and criticisms of her peers. They had become an "internal interlocutor" that invidiously compared her to the ideal and to which she formulated answers and defenses.⁶

5. Enacted Attractiveness.

Notwithstanding the importance of essentialized attractiveness--the energy devoted to being attractive and the bad feelings, such as Sandy's, engendered by criticisms of departures from ideal attractiveness--the second way of figuring attractiveness was also important. Despite the women's apparent concentration on becoming more attractive, by losing weight and so forth, they also expressed great concern in the interviews with enacting their attraction to men in actual relationships.

In the simplified world of romance, as described above, attraction is both a function and a sign of attractiveness and prestige. When a man--especially one who is considered by others to be attractive--is attentive and treats a woman well, he is attesting to her attractiveness. Through his attention, she gains prestige and attractiveness.

Waller (1937:730), writing about attractiveness on college campuses in the 1930's, also noted this self-reinforcing characteristic of attractiveness. He pointed out that women's attractiveness and prestige depended upon having good clothes, a smooth line, ability to dance well, and popularity as a date. As he wrote:

The most important of these factors is the last, for the girl's [sic] prestige depends upon dating more than anything else; here as nowhere else nothing succeeds like success. Therefore the clever coed contrives to give the impression of being much sought after even if she is not.

Some forty years after Waller's research, the ploy of boosting one's attractiveness by being or appearing to be the recipient of positive attention from more than one man

was reported in the present interviews. A woman at SU spoke of "keeping the upper hand" as a means of making sure the man treated her well. As was the case for validating one's honor in Kabylia as described by Bourdieu (1977), the timing of responses to male interest was a delicate matter. The interviewer had just asked the woman to talk more about the idea of keeping the upper hand:

I didn't want him [a man she had just started to go out with] to think that I was really crazy about him and that he could just use me, you know, maybe if he knew I'd want to go out with him and stuff like that. So that's why I just sort of let him, in fact, I was trying to get it with him, you know, get the upper hand with him, but it didn't work. He's the same way...

The interviewer asked how she tried to get the upper hand.

...He'd say something about going out and I'd say, "Well just...we probably will, but it's a little early right now." I'd do stuff like that, and he'd ask me, he asked me if I had...a boyfriend back home and I didn't say anything, and he says, "Well, I figured you did."...

She went on to explain other ways in which she tried to give the man the impression that she had other boyfriends, including such subterfuges as leaving the dorm when she thought he was going to call.

As can be seen the enactment of attraction was not a simple and straightforward process and the women spent time talking and thinking about these relationships and their progress. The women--especially those who were more experienced--talked about, typified, and analyzed (potential) romantic partners and the way they enacted attraction. In the following quote, for example, a woman describes the market-like forces resulting from a "scarcity" of men at Bradford.

At this school, it's about six girls to one guy...so the ugly [guys]...think they look like heaven and

will try to [talk to you] all the time. It's really sick. And then the ones that you think are cute, know they're cute, or they're cute and dumb. You never get a good combination...Some of these guys have the cutest girlfriends, and I don't know how they got them...He must have money. That's the reason why an ugly guy could get a fairly decent looking girl. He has one of two things; a car or he's got money...And most of the guys here that look good, they're real dumb and...as far as holding a conversation, just forget it; I'd rather talk to a wall...but with so many girls to one guy, he gonna get somebody regardless of how he act.

Here, besides talking about the shortage of men and its consequences, the Bradford woman also distinguished among the potential romantic partners available at Bradford and alluded to different types of men and what they do, e.g., "the ugly [guys]...think they look like heaven and will try to [talk to you] all the time." As it turned out, this Bradford woman's focus on styles of enacting romantic attraction was very common at both Bradford and SU. There was a large vocabulary for talking and thinking about these styles. The styles had been reified and associated with a set of stereotypes including such types as "jerks" and "jocks" and "bitches."

Study A--the first study--in fact, began as a more traditional ethnosemantic study. It focused on the hundreds of gender-marked type names such as "turkey," "dyke," "libber," etc., that SU undergraduates knew and used. As the research progressed it became clear that these types were characters from the world of romance. Most were types that, because of the way they enacted attraction, caused the taken-for-granted progress of intimate relationships to go awry. The "jerk" or "nerd" or "creep," for example, was an unattractive type who could not compensate for his unattractiveness by treating a woman especially well. Jerks, nerds, and creeps were simply too insensitive to discern a woman's wishes. They could not even tell when women wished they would go away.

"Jocks," "hunks," and "athletes," on the other hand, had prestige and were attractive, but were considered risky. They tended to be arrogant in their assessment of their own attractiveness and thus were apt to treat a woman badly. The women were on the lookout for these types because they

feared bad treatment and a consequent loss of prestige. One woman, for example, told about an incident--given in detail in Holland and Skinner (1987:94-96)--in which a college athlete, Sam, snubbed her friend Annette. Annette had taken Karen and other girlfriends to a party to meet Sam, but when they got there Sam completely ignored Annette. He did this, according to Karen, because he was "a big jock on campus...he thought...she [Annette] was just an average girl, and he was too good for her...he just wanted the real [pretty] girls around him...to make him look that much more better." Sam's style of enacting attractiveness was costly and painful for Annette.

A third set of types was problematic because of their unusual sexual appetites. Types like playboys, for example, were thought to be unusually focused on sex so that the woman was likely to be forced to make a decision about physical intimacy before she knew enough about the relationship. She could easily end up being treated badly.

This set of stereotyped enactors of attraction--the "jerks," "jocks," "playboys," "gays," "brains," and, to give some of the men's terms for women, "bitches," "broad," "chicks," "easy lays,"--was clearly an important way of understanding attraction and attractiveness. Besides frequently attributing problems in romantic relationships to involvement with one of these types, the women also accounted for decisions they had made by reference to these stereotypes. One woman, for example, talked about deciding to avoid a man whom she often saw in the lounge of her co-ed dorm. She did not know him personally, but he gave cues of being a "jock" and so she judged him likely to treat her badly.

In a cartoon published in the summer of 1987, Jules Feiffer graphically portrayed the idea of projected fantasies and, wonderfully for my purposes, drew upon the set of stereotyped enactors of attraction. He depicted himself as a scruffy looking man writing a letter to Fawn Hall, Oliver North's secretary who was interrogated in the "Iran-Contra Hearings":

- Panel 1: Dear Fawn: You have replaced Diane Sawyer as the media blonde in my life.
 Panel 2: The kind of blonde who would never go out with me in high school...who hung out with jocks like Ollie North -

Panel 3: Who made me wonder why I was on the left when all the women who looked like you were on the right.

Panel 4: Fawn, I lust after you in my video heart...But I'm a realist. I know that if I ever asked you to stay late at the office to shred cartoons -

Panel 5: You'd stare at me coolly and say, "I don't do that anymore."

Panel 6: Or, "I'm washing my hair."

5.1 Cognitive Presentations of Enacted Attractiveness: Epitomizing Scenes.

Besides leading to the hypothesizing of the cultural model of romance, Study A produced some other unanticipated results. As described, Study A began as a study of the meaning of gender-marked names that undergraduates used to talk about one another. The research began with ethnosemantic techniques--elicitation of terms and sorting techniques--designed to discover features and dimensions of meaning. But the respondents often deviated from the answer form anticipated by the techniques. We were given some descriptions that implied more-or-less straightforward features or dimensions of meaning, for example:

- (1) [sissy] a male who is effeminate
- (2) [bastard] a male who is mean
- (3) [stud] a guy who is horny

However, a large set of responses included complex descriptions of how the type looked, how the type talked, and what the type did in romantic situations.

- (4) [boy, dude, dog, wimp, hippie, turkey, punk, nerd, jerk, prick, skinhead] these are losers - all the names that you call really queer dates. They're usually immature or ugly, or think they're cool, but aren't at all. They try to impress girls, but actually make fools of themselves.
- (5) [redneck, dog, turkey, punk, nerd, jerk, skinhead, cowboy, brain] I think of 98-pound weaklings - jerks. They're all ugly little jerks that you'd never want to be seen with, or never want to talk

to. You cannot get rid of them.

- (6) [couchwarmer] a guy who is too cheap to take you out so he takes you to his home all the time.
- (7) [ladies' man] a friendly man who is deceitful. Ladies' man and macho man are variations on the same theme - one tends to have larger biceps.

From the study, we (Holland and Skinner 1987:87) concluded that the respondents were conveying their sense of the social types by outlining a social drama, or sometimes, a scene from the drama. These scenes - which were sometimes described as though they were being visualized - captured the male types' ways of carrying on romantic relationships.

As actors in the simplified world of romance, the respondents were telling us that these types enacted attraction in a style that differed from the way the cultural model proposed a male would act on his attraction to a female. They were telling us the unusual aspects of the type's style by describing the type's peculiar behaviors or by describing the type's intentions, personality traits, or beliefs that would lead to untoward romantic behavior: "He is friendly, but deceitful; he thinks he is cool, but actually makes a fool of himself" (Holland and Skinner 1987:87).

More or less graphic depictions of the type and his actions will hereafter be referred to as "epitomizing scenes." In our interviews these scenes were described with emotion. They seemed to capture some aspect of the type's behavior that was poignant for the women, that elicited disgust, anger or other strong emotion from them.

These epitomizing scenes are a type of knowledge structure that Quinn and I (1987:26), drawing upon Lakoff (1981), describe as an image-schema: "...image-schemas [are] gestalts just as visual images are. However, they are much more schematic than what we ordinarily think of as visual imagery, and they may contain not just visual components but also kinesthetic information of all kinds."

Epitomizing scenes are a type of image-schema, but one perhaps less schematized than the generic definition suggests. That epitomizing scenes are important in presentations of social and cultural situations has been corroborated by others. Needham (1981), for example, has noted scenes which seem to capture complex situations in a

single poignant gestalt. Needham's "affective scenes," "exemplary scenes," and "paradigmatic scenes," although discussed in relation to a different conceptual framework, are suggestively similar to "epitomizing scenes." (See also White, in press.)

Markus and Nurius (1987), in another line of research, have summarized social psychological work on self schemas. That research, largely conducted in the U.S., suggests that we imagine our possible futures, our potential accomplishments, our potential disasters, in fairly concrete detail--somewhat as Feiffer depicts his imagined encounter with Fawn Hall. We then try unsurprisingly to realize valued scenes and avoid the negative ones. It seems reasonable to suggest that these visions of future selves are informed by cultural models and to suppose that, in the case of romantic relationships, ideas for possible futures are developed by projecting oneself into encounters with others--possibly stereotyped enactors.

In addition to the research just summarized, we also have indication that the various stereotyped enactors are similarly visualized. Ashmore and del Boca (1986) have conducted studies on the type names used in the research described here. In some of their studies, they asked respondents to visualize types, such as a "career woman," and describe them. Their data show a great amount of agreement among college age students in the Northeastern U.S. on several features: hair styles, clothing, behavioral mannerisms, speech style, etc.

The salience of visual appearance and ways of talking characterized in the epitomizing scenes also may help to explain the sort of metonyms that allude to the types in everyday discourse. The women did not always invoke a particular stereotyped enactor by the type's label; they simply referred to a feature of the type's visual appearance or a way of talking. A statement like "oh, you're wearing your add-a-beads," was enough to evoke the "sorority girl" and her way of enacting attraction.⁸

Mental presentations that retain manner of speaking and style of dressing are of special analytic importance, of course, because ways of speaking and ways of dressing are often taken as markers of social identification. Bakhtin (Volosinov 1986) and others have argued that inner speech partakes of images or ways of speaking that are associated with particular social groups and individuals. Our internal

dialog, in other words, goes on in voices of others that we may recognize. Here too, as in the other research just cited, there are clues that our mental presentations of the ways of enacting attractiveness are in the voices and images of people that we recognize. Romantic types are not represented in a sort of disembodied propositional form which simply describes what they do in romantic relationships. Rather they assume an image, a form that retains information about who they are or at least the social clique or campus group to which they belong. This topic of the social identification or grounding of cognitive (re)presentations will be taken up again. First I will discuss further aspects of the pragmatics of knowledge about enacted attractiveness.

5.2 Knowledge in Practice: Attractiveness Claims in Social Discourse.

In romantic encounters--as already pointed out--the women tried to improve their own attractiveness by giving a (potential) suitor the idea that they were competing with other men. It is not surprising then that the women also tried to affect their own and others' attractiveness by claiming that the other was a negatively-valued, unattractive stereotyped enactor--a "jerk" perhaps or an "asshole," when women labeled men; a "bitch" or "dumb broad," or "easy" when men labeled women.

A clue to the salience of pragmatics appeared in the first study--Study A. The Study-A interviews, it will be remembered, were of a type used to elicit the meaning of names like "turkey" and "gay." Many of the responses, however, told us not about the semantics, but about the pragmatics, of the terms. Some respondents grouped terms such as "bitch", "shrew", "dog," "dumb blonde," "airhead," etc. together because they could all be used to insult a woman. Other terms (such as "sweetheart") were said to be endearments. In some cases, both the semantic and the pragmatic information was given and in some, only the pragmatic. The pragmatic, for some respondents, for some terms, was more salient than the referential meaning of the terms.

As became clear, the set of names for stereotyped enactors is a complex and rich tool for making claims and counter claims about self and other. Not only are the names

themselves "colorful" so that they convey evaluations of the different ways of enacting attraction, but also the categories are reflexive.

As Boltanski and Thevenot (1983), among others have pointed, out, social classification systems tend to classify the classifier as well as the classified. In the system described here, a woman who refers to a man as an "asshole" is implicitly claiming that he holds no attraction for her at all, and thus that she is more attractive than he is. On the other hand, by classifying a man as a "playboy," the woman both admits to his attractiveness (as testified by his attractiveness to other women) and the possibility that he would at least try to treat her as though she were more attracted to him than he to her. In other words, she admits to the possibility that he is more attractive than she is.

In the case of attractiveness, the classifier not only classifies the target of her classification and herself she also classifies those who are intimately related to the classified. In the unmarked case, the taken-for-granted situation of the cultural model, it is those of similar attractiveness who become intimate. Thus, a woman's boyfriend's attractiveness is a sign of her own attractiveness. If a woman's boyfriend were to be called a "nerd," then her attractiveness also would be impugned. If a man called another man's girlfriend a "dog," he also implied that her suitors were unattractive. The reflexivity of these categories enabled an individual to propose a hierarchical ranking of a number of people, including him or herself, simply by labeling one person.

Aside from their reflexivity, the names of stereotyped enactors also tended to be easily constructed and their meaning easily discerned. Many of the names were constructed from metaphors and assonance-rimes. As a result, the evaluation of the type was apparent from the name. With names such as "rat," for example, or "hunk," "hot dog," or "asshole," drawn from the popular domains of animals, foods, and body parts (see Holland and Skinner 1985), the evaluation of the stereotyped enactor was clear. New names were created fairly often and because of the conventions for naming the types and relating them to the cultural model, the evaluation of the new type and even the probable way in which the type interfered with the course of intimate relationships were evident to those with knowledge of the model and the conventions. Thus, naming was a handy means for trying to discredit others and their styles of enacting

male/female relationships.

The women and men in the present research were very sensitive to the use of names both to discredit and to take a stand in opposition to others. In the words of one person who commented on the names collected in Study-A, for example, "only a wimp would call a fag, a gay." (See Holland and Skinner 1987:109). Another informant, a woman in Study-A, appeared to cobble together on the spot a negative-sounding name--'female chauvinist pig'--to refer to women who have low opinions of men. In some of the first interviews that we did in Study A, female respondents, including this woman, were asked to group types of males according to their similarity in meaning. This woman grouped together a set of terms that included "bastard," "prick," "macho," "hunk", "playboy." When she was later asked how the terms were similar she said, "what a female chauvinist pig would think of males--stereotypical attitudes." She made up a negative sounding label to classify a general orientation to men and, by implication, a group of women that she opposed.

The respondents in the Study-A interviews often explicitly linked these names to the type of person who would use such a name in practice. Upon considering some of the names, especially the more derogatory ones, a number of respondents said that they themselves did not use the word and that they had trouble focusing on the referent of the term as opposed to the type of person who would use such a term. That is, the names were taken by the respondents as indicating stances toward people who were named and use or refusal of the names was treated as a sign of affiliation or distance with those people who would use such a name. In practice, negotiation over the value of social groups differentiated by their stance toward male/female relationships occurred through struggle over the names to be applied to these different groups.

The use of the names to discredit particular individuals and/or their behavior also was frequent. In the activity of discussing others and their behavior the commentators referred to others as examples of stereotyped enactors of attractiveness and sometimes called them such to their face or at least to the faces of their significant others. Returning to the example given above in which Karen told about Sam, the big man on campus, and his treatment of Annette, the ordinary girl, Karen continued her account by describing her own reaction to Sam. She changed her mind

about him: "I didn't think he was attractive anymore." Her inclination was to demean him, to label him as a non-prestigious male, an unattractive type: "...I wanted to tell him...that he was acting like an ass."

Karen did not venture to confront Sam with her claim--after all he was at the party with a woman who clearly thought he was attractive. Apparently she also kept her opinion of Sam from her friends, especially Annette. Even in the interview, Karen was still visibly upset for her friend Annette and she was embarrassed by her own interpretation of Sam and its implications about Annette's relative lack of attractiveness.

In other cases, the discrediting interpretations were publicly presented. Throughout most of the one-and-one-half years of Study B, for example, Linda's dormmates talked about Linda's boyfriend. He often ignored and criticized her, leaving her in tears. The women in the dorm--her friends--didn't think that he was attractive enough that she should tolerate all the bad treatment he was giving her. They told her several times that he was a "jerk." They wanted Linda to repudiate what they considered improper treatment. Linda's counter position--as told to the interviewer--was to defend her own behavior.

Linda's situation and the concern to discredit her boyfriend was a matter of dorm-floor interest and, in some interesting ways, parallels the national concern in the U.S. about Gary and Lee Hart in late 1987. When Gary Hart, who had dropped out of the presidential race because of a "media-expose" of his ill-concealed affair with Donna Rice, re-entered the race, his wife, Lee Hart, appeared by his side. The national news magazines pondered the situation. Newsweek (Alter, et al., 1987), for instance, carried an article which included an inset section with the headline: 'I'D HAVE TOLD HER TO LEAVE THE JERK'. In the body of the inset the writer first summed up the impression that Lee Hart was conveying: "She came off as proudly defiant--a strong woman who chose, despite seemingly compelling reasons to do otherwise, to stand by her errant husband in a very public way." The writer then went on to question whether the "wayward candidate's efforts to redeem himself with the aid of his long-suffering wife" would in fact earn him a second chance. Apparently assuming that women voters in particular would be upset, the writer queried political women from "all across the country." The journalist found a singular lack of enthusiasm for Gary Hart. He quoted Betty

Friedan to the effect that Hart had "already shown his contempt for women, and his re-entry into the race continues to show his contempt for women." A quote from Irene Natividad, chair of the National Women's Political Caucus, made reference to what I would classify as a epitomizing scene. Natividad alluded to a photograph that ran in many newspapers during the expose: "The picture of Donna Rice on Hart's lap is every woman's nightmare,"..."I think women have a long memory when it comes to that."

While the women politicians seemed to agree about how to categorize and evaluate Gary Hart's behavior, they had difficulties with his wife's. What could they say about Lee? She was supporting a man who had treated her badly. In the logic of the cultural model, she was indicating that he was more attractive than she was--otherwise she would not accept such treatment--and, given that the commentators had so negatively labeled him, how were they to label her? The commentators devised possible interpretations to counter a negative opinion of Lee, but said that it was "painful to watch" and, in the end, wished that Lee had refused to support him.

"I give her credit. The reality is that people in a relationship, who love each other, do work things out," said Kathy Aubin, president of the Houston chapter of the National Organization for Women. "But I wouldn't have put up with it, and I think most feminists wouldn't. I'd have told her to leave the jerk" (Alter, et al., 1987:16).

5.3 Attractiveness Claims in Inner Dialog.

Apparently, the process of claiming attractiveness also goes on in similar fashion in inner dialog. The language of stereotyped enactors--and their associated epitomizing scenes--are used internally to make claims and counter claims about self and future selves.

There were instances in the interviews where women reported interpreting themselves according to these stereotypes. A concise example came in an interview in which a woman recounted her early sexual experience.¹⁰ She talked about getting involved in many casual sexual relationships without really knowing what was happening.

She said, "I had sort of formed this concept of myself as...a loose woman." She countered the claim, "and yet I knew I really wasn't. I knew I didn't believe in that." She decided that her behavior was the outcome of a fundamentalist religious upbringing that had failed to prepare her for the situations that she would face.

An internal debate related to the attractiveness of possible future selves was recounted by Susan, one of the twenty-three women who participated in Study B. The debate was long standing and continued over the course of the study. Susan sometimes represented this debate as a conversation and she used an epitomizing scene to think about her own future.

During the one and a half years of the study, Susan was in conflict over the lifestyle that she wanted to pursue. As she proceeded through school, she rejected concerns of social reputation and getting rich. She moved toward a view of herself as a "hippie"--"a peaceful deadhead." She had trouble identifying a goal worth working for in school and her grades began to fall. She had difficulty, however, giving up the image of herself as being good at schoolwork. She said of her sister who also was in college:

...[She's] real smart. Well, she's not real smart, she's as smart as me, but she's more responsible and she studies more....She just got her license to operate the [special equipment]...Mom and Dad, like if she got that, it's like...'Yes, Susan, [and] what are you going to do?' 'Oh, shut up! I don't want to hear about that right now.'

Interestingly, Susan's debate over lifestyle and the ramifications of her choice was couched partly in terms of male/female relationships and it affected her participation in romantic relationships. As referred to above, she was torn between pursuing a social reputation and wealth versus a more relaxed, "hippie" lifestyle. In her internal debate she often focused on her feelings about a group of women in her hometown whom she referred to as "socialites." She portrayed these socialites in an epitomizing scene--hanging around the country club and talking about their rich husbands. Susan found this scene so disgusting that she was critical of a certain attitude her SU schoolmates displayed toward romantic relationships. It will be recalled that

romantic relationships--according to the cultural model--provide prestige. A motive for romantic relationships is the procurement of prestige. Susan objected to such a motive. She brought the interviewer back to the dorm one night to show her women in the lounge with their boyfriends. Susan felt that they were trying to show off their boyfriends and, apparently because it reminded her of the "socialite" scene back home, was put off. She argued that boyfriends should not be for prestige.

6. Discussion: Presentations of attractiveness and social groups.

We have seen various hints that the women internally reproduced attractiveness as it was being practiced on the campuses. Their mental presentations of attractiveness "borrowed" from the activities in which they engaged with their peers such as sessions of self criticism and discussions about boyfriends' and others' behaviors. The women did not think about attractiveness by reasoning logically from propositionally represented content, or even by reasoning via analogy and metaphor (Quinn and Holland 1987:27-30). They thought about attractiveness in relation to themselves and others by forming interpretations and counter-interpretations to which they were drawn or repulsed.

A very important aspect of the women's dialogic (or multilogic) way of thinking was its association with the social groups on campus. In the case of self-criticism relative to an idealized or essentialized attractiveness, the internal interlocutors that pointed out the women's flaws were identifiable as the critics who originally remarked upon those flaws (as in Sandy's case with her SU peers).

In the case of interpreting the behavior of others, labeling as a type, and thereby ranking them by attractiveness, traces of campus groups and cliques also remained. Romantic types were pictured in epitomizing scenes and, in these scenes, retained the items of dress (like add-a-beads) and ways of talking and behaving that identified them with individual persons and groups on campus. Hence, a type's way of enacting attraction was confounded by the women with the behaviors of the social group with which the type was associated. Susan's decision

about a preferred lifestyle seemed to be as much a reaction to the people, whom she knew as "socialites," as to their way of life considered in the abstract. Indeed it would be very hard to separate the two. Similarly, Sandy's thinking about her own attractiveness seemed to be entangled with, and inseparable from her thinking and feelings about her encounters with the flesh-and-blood peers who had criticized her. To the extent that the behavior of these women were influenced by these mental presentations, we can see that their "stands" on attractiveness--Sandy's withdrawal from male/female relationships; Susan's choices to reject a life as the wife of an upper middle class man--were affected by the cultural model of romantic relations, but affected in an indirect manner--through the vehicle of their socially grounded, socially loaded presentations of attractiveness. The cultural model, the simplified world of generic men and women and their generic romantic relationships, informed the women's mental presentations and the acts and choices that ensued, but so did the women's association of campus groups and individuals with the particular styles of enacting heterosexual attraction. The implication, in other words, is that their cognitive presentations of attractiveness confounded propositional content with social context; their thoughts and feelings about attractiveness were not neatly separated from their thoughts and feelings about affiliation with, and opposition to, the social cliques on campus.

7. Conclusions.

What can be said in summary about cognitive presentations of the culturally complex category of attractiveness?

I have suggested that attractiveness--as it is expressed among young adult women in the Southern U.S.--is bounded by or framed by the cultural model of intimate cross-gender relationships. The cultural model posits a simplified world of romantic relationships and, in that world, attraction is a driving force and attractiveness, a key quality. In talking and, apparently, in thinking about attractiveness, the women presumed this world.

The taken-for-granted world of romance is a world that is mentally presented as though it were unhinged from immediate social and historical circumstances. Contentious sexual politics and movements like the women's movement have

no place in this abstracted world. The "truths" of the world--that attractive women receive attention and good treatment from men; unattractive women, bad treatment--are timeless and not a matter for debate or opposition. However, we cannot conclude that the cultural category of attractiveness is always presented with this ahistorical, asocial aura of naturalness and inevitability.

Although the women in the studies reported here did, no doubt, at times dwell upon the simplified world of romantic relationships, the cultural model seemed more often to constitute background knowledge rather than the focus of their attention. We know that people sometimes think and talk about romance or marriage as a focus in and of itself. Quinn (1987), for example, presents an interview in which an informant was clearly thinking about marriage as a system. The informant worked through the implications of the cultural model of marriage to conclude that, given the way people enter into marriage, it is amazing that any marriages succeed. In the present studies, however, the women--from what I could tell--usually did not focus on the world of romance, *per se*. They did not sit in their dorm rooms or apartment buildings and work out the logical implications of the model, as a theoretician might sit at a desk and work out the implications of a theory of the human immune system. They did not even work out the strategic implications of the model for how many boyfriends they should have, etc. They did not "plan" to maximize the prestige and intimacy that they as women could gain within the parameters set by the model.

Instead, the women focused on the activities in which they put their knowledge of attractiveness into practice. They used their knowledge of ideal attractiveness to measure with others both their shortcomings and their efforts to become more attractive. They used their knowledge of stereotyped enactors to interpret and make claims about and, sometimes, to discredit the attractiveness of potential suitors, ex-boyfriends, friends and acquaintances. They used their knowledge to affiliate or to distance themselves from particular individuals or groups and from particular stances toward male/female relationships prevalent on their campuses. The debates and images which they reported of their mental presentations of attractiveness resembled these common interpersonal activities.

Unlike an abstracted world of romance, these activity-based presentations of attractiveness seemed cognitively to

preserve their linkages to, and confusions with, people and groups in the women's campus environment. Cognitive presentations of attractiveness retained the voices and images of people and groups that the women knew. The everyday politics of attractiveness and the, albeit low-key, campus struggles over ways of enacting attractiveness were reflected in the cognitive presentations of the category. The cultural model, in short, was presumed by these cognitive presentations, but the presentations of ideal and enacted attractiveness were not cognitively presented in the timeless mode of a simplified world. Instead, these women's thinking both about ways of being attractive and about stances toward male/female relationships was meshed with their thoughts and feelings about the particular people and groups in their social world.

Perhaps there are cultural categories that are always mentally presented without any trace of particular human voices and images. Perhaps there are cultural categories conceived solely as a timeless, self-contained system like Boolean algebra or Morse code. Attractiveness is not such a category, at least not in all its manifestations. Attractiveness is presented as it is practiced in social activities and these presentations take forms--epitomized scenes and debates--that retain voices and images drawn from the women's social and historical context.

NOTES.

¹ Originally presented at the conference, "The Representation of Complex Cultural Categories: The Contribution of Cognitive Anthropology," King's College Research Centre, Cambridge, England. March 22-23, 1988.

² See Bourdieu's (1977:164-171) discussion of "doxa."

³ I use "presentation" instead of "representation" in order to avoid evoking an empiricist's world of reality which is more-or-less accurately and more-or-less precisely "represented." "Presentation" is used to suggest a construction--an account that is put together.

⁴ Since one of the studies--Study B--reported here was restricted to women, the paper emphasizes women and their perspective. Further, these notions of intimate cross-gender relationships, especially regarding the romantic types described in a later section, vary regionally in the U.S. For these reasons, "American cultural model of romantic relationships," should be read as "cultural model of romantic relationships found among young adult women in the southeastern area of the U.S."

⁵ The model is applied to close male/female friendships as well as romantic relationships. For the sake of brevity of phrase, however, I usually refer to the "cultural model of romantic relationships" or the "cultural model of romance."

⁶ In his analysis of rebellious working-class boys in school, Willis (1981) surmised that the lads had internalized the position of the school adults and thus the larger society, as an "internal interlocutor" who questioned and criticized their behavior. That Sandy's interlocutors on the subject of attractiveness spoke in the voice of her peers rather than school adults or some other authority, is not surprising. Our research (Holland and Eisenhart 1988; in press; Eisenhart and Holland 1983) suggests that peers play a crucial role in the reproduction of traditional gender relations.

⁷ Holland (n.d.) relates expertise and experience to the kind of understanding that the women had of romantic relationships. Inexperienced women are less knowledgeable about different styles of enacting romantic relationships.

In case the women's views of romance reported here seem to be missing the irrational element we tend culturally to associate with love, the reader should consult Hochschild's (1983:255) research. She found that men had more romantic notions of love than women and attributes this difference to their different stakes in marriage: "...young men hold hegemony over the courtship process while at the same time women, for economic reasons, need marriage more."

⁸ At the time of the study, sorority women often wore a kind of gold necklace to which one could add gold beads.

⁹ Obviously, these names also posit the existence of such a group or category of people and, concomitantly, the existence of other groups or categories. They may, in fact, contribute to the coalescence of a group.

¹⁰ That study was conducted by Quinn.

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