

FROM A 'SCIENCE OF LOVE'
TO 'PUTTING FEET TO
CHRISTIANITY'

CONSTRUCTING INTIMACY IN
SECULAR AND CHRISTIAN VERSIONS
OF RELATIONSHIP MANUALS

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Master's thesis

Comparative Religion

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This Master's thesis compares how the emotional programme of intimacy changes when a secular self-help relationship manual is adapted for Christian couples. The contents and construction of the emotional programmes are compared using qualitative analysis. The topics of the comparative analysis include the covers of the manuals, metaphors, spiritual outlook, explanatory models, modalities of knowing, values, exercises and construction of intimate relationships.

The adaptation has a significant impact on the tone and scope of the emotional programme. Especially the introduction of God as a super-social relationship changes the orientation of the emotional programme towards the mystical. The object of relationship repair changes from improving human intimate relationships by therapeutic interventions to repairing the relationship between man and God, even experiencing and expressing God's emotions. The underlying core of theory and practice, however, does not change much. It is functionally preserved while being wrapped inside Christian rhetoric.

The findings are situated in the context of other self-help relationship manuals, and the tension between the relationship ideals of autonomy versus dependency is discussed. The relevance of these findings to conceptualizations of individualism, commitment and therapeutic culture are considered.

Sue Johnson's relationship manuals are an instance of cultural hybridization that offers a solution to the cultural contradiction between the conflicting demands of individualism and commitment. Critiques of the therapeutic often claim that it is therapeutic language that makes commitment impossible. It is argued that already the fundamental commitment to individualism is enough to make commitment difficult, even without the help of the therapeutic attitude. Johnson does not relinquish the fundamental value of individualism, but offers a solution highlighting the value of commitment both for the secularly inclined as well as for those already committed to a Christian value system.

Keywords: Sue Johnson, intimacy, Christianity, self-help, relationship manual, Emotionally Focused Therapy, content analysis, metaphor, emotional programme, therapeutic culture, dependency, autonomy, individualism, commitment, hybridization.

Contents

1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background and Relevance	1
1.2 Previous Research	6
1.3 Research Questions	11
1.4 Primary Sources	13
1.5 Ethical Considerations and Self-Disclosure	13
2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework	14
2.1 Emotional Programmes and Regimes	14
2.2 Metaphors	15
2.3 Therapeutic Culture	19
3 Methods	22
3.1 The Hourglass Model of Research	22
3.2 Qualitative Content Analysis	23
4 Analysis	28
4.1 Comparison of the Emotional Programmes	28
4.1.1 The Promise: From Lasting Romance to the Love of God	28
4.1.2 Constructing Intimacy Through Metaphors	31
4.1.3 Outlook on Spirituality: From Humanism to Christianity	43
4.1.4 Explanatory Models: Biology as ‘God’ versus God as Biology	46
4.1.5 Modalities of Knowing: Enclosing Learning within ‘Having Always Known’ ..	49
4.1.6 Ethics and Values: From Liberal towards Conservative	57
4.1.7 Transforming Intimacy: Sharing Vulnerability and Narrating the Bond	60
4.1.8 Scope of Intimacy: From the Couple to Including God	67
4.2 Johnson’s Emotional Programmes in Context	73
4.2.1 Effective Dependency and the Relationship Ideal of Autonomy	73
4.2.2 Individualism, Commitment and the Concept of Therapeutic Culture	84
5 Summary and Conclusion	87

Bibliography

Appendices

Appendix I: Sections in *HMT* and *CfC*

Appendix II: List of Figures and Tables

Appendix III: Summary in Finnish

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Relevance

I am interested in the conceptualizations of intimacy in contemporary forms of counselling and spirituality, especially in the context of self-help relationship manuals, but also within the broader framework of therapeutic culture. Sue Johnson's adaptation specifically for Christian couples of her self-help relationship guide *Hold Me Tight* provides promising material for analyzing variations in the construction of intimacy, and for reflecting on the nature of the therapeutic. In this chapter I will make a case for the relevance and significance of studying Johnson's books, discuss previous research (chapter 1.2), present my research questions (chapter 1.3), describe my sources (chapter 1.4), and reflect on matters of ethics and personal bias (chapter 1.5).

Sue Johnson and Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT)

Although my focus is on Johnson's self-help books, I will first situate her in the field of professional family and couple therapy as that will help us understand the roots of her self-help prescriptions. Sue Johnson is a Canadian psychologist and one of the two founders of Emotionally Focused (Couple) Therapy (EFT). Separately and along with another Canadian psychologist Leslie Greenberg she has written several manuals and articles about EFT since the 1980s, such as *Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples* (1988). One of Johnson's claims to fame is the reported success rate of her method. On her web page Johnson states that "Empirical research has supported the effectiveness of EFT, showing that 70–75% of couples move from distress to recovery and about 90% show significant improvements (the best results of any couple therapy) and evidence shows that these positive effects last over time."¹ In a culture that obsesses about the fragility of intimate relationships, laments the high divorce rate, and in general pathologizes more and more forms of psychological suffering, it is a seductive claim that someone has an "explicit map to lasting love."²

In their book *Family Therapy* psychologists Herbert and Irene Goldenberg classify EFT as an experiential model of family therapy in the sense that the role of theory is minimized in contrast to focusing on change as a non-rational therapeutic experience.³ While sharing many features in common with phenomenological therapeutic techniques popular in the

¹ Hold Me Tight Commercial 2018.

² Johnson & Sanderfer 2016:3.

³ Goldenberg & Goldenberg 2013:239. The Goldenbergs may not be the most unbiased source in the sense that they share much of Johnson's professional interests, but here I just want to establish a general view of how EFT is presented in a textbook on family therapy.

1960s, such as Gestalt therapy, psychodrama, Rogerian client-centered therapy and the encounter group movement, EFT is more accommodating of theory, although it continues to emphasize client awareness of inner experiences over intellectual understanding.⁴ According to the summary of the Goldenbergs EFT is an outgrowth of humanistic therapy, integrating key elements from the work of Carl Rogers (creating a safe therapeutic environment, modeling active empathetic understanding), Fritz Perls' Gestalt therapy (directing clients toward greater awareness by engaging in resolution-enhancing affective processes), Virginia Satir's emphasis on congruent communication and closeness in the therapist-client relationship.⁵ According to the Goldenbergs, EFT "is based on considerable research on the role of emotion in therapy, integrates such research with attachment theory, and offers a step-by-step manualized therapeutic plan to help clients access and process their emotional experiences."⁶ In this sense the Goldenbergs consider EFT a well-articulated theory about systemic change processes.⁷ EFT is a short-term approach to couple therapy, usually consisting of 8–10 sessions.⁸

According to Johnson *Hold Me Tight* is "a simple, popular version of EFT, one ordinary folks can read and apply on their own."⁹ Thus, the implication is that lasting love can be achieved by following the advice in a self-help book.

Self-Help Version of EFT for Christian Couples

What makes Johnson's manuals an interesting subject of study is that she has also written an adaptation of *Hold Me Tight* specifically for Christian couples. Johnson tells that the rationale behind this Christian version, entitled *Created for Connection*, was offered by Johnson's EFT colleague Kenneth Sanderfer as follows: "Christians seeking guidance for their love relationships want to know not only that what they are reading is grounded in sound research, but also that this guidance is completely consistent with their faith and the Scriptures that guide them in their pursuit of divine wisdom."¹⁰ This led to a collaborated revision of the original book by Johnson and Sanderfer not only to help specifically Christian couples, but also to apply attachment theory, the theoretical foundation of EFT, to man's relationship with God (*CfC*:4–5).¹¹ In other words, Johnson and Sanderfer's manual also offers ideas and techniques for healing the relationship

⁴ Goldenberg & Goldenberg 2013:239–240.

⁵ Goldenberg & Goldenberg 2013:267–268.

⁶ Goldenberg & Goldenberg 2013:460.

⁷ Goldenberg & Goldenberg 2013:460.

⁸ Goldenberg & Goldenberg 2013:267.

⁹ Johnson 2011:6; cf. Johnson & Sanderfer 2016:3.

¹⁰ Johnson & Sanderfer 2016:3–4.

¹¹ From now on I will refer to Johnson 2011 as "*HMT*" and to Johnson & Sanderfer 2016 as "*CfC*".

between a couple and God. For Johnson any improvement in the quality of the relationship between a couple (individually and together) and God translates into better quality of relationship between the couple, and vice versa. This is an interesting idea that ties into discussions about the possibly increasingly therapeutic nature of religion in contemporary Western societies.

In the context of therapeutic culture Johnson's formulations provide a case that goes against some of the features usually attributed to the therapeutic world view,¹² in that

(1) it claims not to be personality-driven,¹³ and

(2) it claims to de-pathologize dependency and thus goes against one of the usual indications of therapeutic thinking, that is, autonomy.

As a third point (3) it fits both what might be called the broad and narrow definition of therapeutic culture in that Johnson has produced not only an internationally recognized therapeutic method and practice validated by scientific and professional organizations representing psychology, such as the American Psychological Association, but also self-help versions of the same.¹⁴

From the standpoint of religion, Johnson's alliance between therapy and spirituality can be situated in the context of humanistic psychology. Health researchers Michael Hayes and Helen Cowie, for example, have argued that some forms of humanistic psychology, especially in the context of counselling, have "actively taken account of spiritual experience rather than religious experience as a means of promoting healing and emotional well-being in clients."¹⁵ From this perspective Johnson's Christianized version of a self-help relationship manual, itself based on her branch of couple counselling psychology, provides an interesting case in point.

In her therapeutic manual aimed at professional therapists, *The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy*, Johnson writes how EFT is experiential in that it focuses on:

The great capacity that human beings have for growth and the positive adaptiveness of emotional responses and needs. Both Carl Rogers and John Bowlby (1969), the originator of the attachment view of relatedness used in EFT, tended to depathologize clients. Bowlby believed that all ways of responding to the world can be adaptive; it is, as Rogers also

¹² I will discuss the concept of therapeutic culture in chapter 2.3.

¹³ In DVD 2018 Johnson writes: "If you are tired of the pop-psychology and personality driven approaches for relationship advice, watch this video for truly helpful, empirically validated information on love and personal connections that will endure."

¹⁴ See chapters 2.3 and 4.2.2.

¹⁵ Cowie and Hayes 2005:27.

suggested, only when those ways become rigid and cannot evolve in response to new contexts that problems arise.¹⁶

Rogers is in many ways a model for Johnson¹⁷ and EFT seems to assume a similar continuum of personal growth that can encompass also the spiritual. As Cowie and Hayes write:

Rogers (1951), the founder of client-centred therapy, integrated a strong commitment to the Protestant religion with an equally strong commitment to scientific enquiry. McLeod (1993) notes that the influence of Protestant thinking on client-centred therapy is evident in the emphasis on individual personal growth and the concern to be guided by feeling and intuition rather than by doctrine. These two strands in Rogers' life met in his vocation to become a therapist and have evolved in contemporary humanistic practice to challenge the assertion that religious beliefs are necessarily 'contrary to reality' and embody a growing concern to respect the reality that clients bring to the therapy session.¹⁸

The case has often been made that there is a strong emphasis on emotion and experience in the here and now in much of current Western culture.¹⁹ Hence a Christianized form of self-help therapy that specifically focuses on the manipulation of emotional experience seems like a pertinent subject to study. Moreover, in Johnson's adaptation we get to see what the move from a basically secular attitude of 'openness to spirituality' to committed Christianity involves. Even in the comparatively simple setting of Johnson's relationship manuals the transition requires resolving the traditional conflict between scientific and faith-based models of explanation, subscribing to a new set of values and ethics, interpreting prayer in a very specific way, and accounting for the Christian God instead of generic spirituality.

The Strange Situation Experiment and Adult Attachment

So, what is Johnson's form of relationship repair like? The core of Johnson's entire system of interpreting relationship drama, finding and creating authentic emotions as well as the idea of what is healthy, natural and desirable in the context of human relationships has deep roots in the attachment theory of John Bowlby (1907–1990), a British psychiatrist. Johnson summarizes Bowlby's tenets: "His findings confirmed his belief in the reality of emotional starvation and his conviction that loving contact is as important as physical nutrition. He believed that keeping precious others close is a brilliant, built-in survival code" (*CfC*:24).

¹⁶ Johnson 2004:15.

¹⁷ She writes, for example, that "EFT is a reflection of the kind of conversation that the experiential therapist Carl Rogers (1951) and structural systems therapists, such as Minuchin or others (Minuchin & Fisch, 1982; Fisch, Weakland & Segal, 1982), might have had if they had discussed a case of relationship distress over tea." Johnson 2004:14.

¹⁸ Cowie and Hayes 2005:30.

¹⁹ See, for example, Riis & Woodhead 2010.

I will quote in full Johnson's description of Bowlby's Strange Situation experiment as it is in many ways pivotal to understanding Johnson's own theory of adult love and her method of therapeutic interventions.

Bowlby needed to find another way to prove to the world what he knew in his heart. A Canadian researcher, Mary Ainsworth, who became his assistant, showed him how to do that. She devised a very simple experiment to look at the four behaviors that Bowlby and she believed were basic to attachment: that we monitor and maintain emotional and physical closeness with our beloved; that we reach out for this person when we are unsure, upset, or feeling down; that we miss this person when we are apart; and that we count on this person to be there for us when we go out into the world and explore.

The experiment was called the Strange Situation and has generated literally thousands of scientific studies and revolutionized developmental psychology. A researcher invites a mother and child into an unfamiliar room. After a few minutes, the mother leaves the child alone with the researcher, who tries to offer comfort if needed. Three minutes later, the mother comes back. The separation and reunion are repeated once more. The majority of children are upset when their mothers walk out; they rock themselves, cry, throw toys. But some prove more emotionally resilient. They calm themselves quickly and effectively, reconnect easily with their mothers on their return, and rapidly resume playing while checking to make sure that their moms are still around. They seem confident that their mothers will be there if needed. Less resilient youngsters, however, are anxious and aggressive or detached and distant on their mothers' return. The kids who can calm themselves usually have warmer, more responsive mothers, while the moms of the angry kids are unpredictable in their behavior, and the moms of the detached kids are colder and dismissive. In these simple studies of disconnection and reconnection, Bowlby saw love in action and began to code its patterns. (*CfC*:25–26)

We will meet this tripartite model many a time as Johnson relies on it to determine 'healthy' versus 'unhealthy' behavior and emotion. For Johnson, 'emotional resilience' as constructed in the above experiment is what is healthy, and the children who in general are calm and confident in moments of separation and reunion are the ideal. We will see that both the demanding (anxious and aggressive) and the withdrawing (detached and distant) behaviors (and their attendant emotions) are considered unhealthy and in need of clinical intervention.²⁰

Johnson recounts that eventually Bowlby's attachment theory "revolutionized child-rearing methods in North America" and that "today it is widely accepted that children have an absolute requirement for safe, ongoing physical and emotional closeness, and that we ignore this only at great cost" (*CfC*:27). Bowlby's attachment theory has later found many theoretical and clinical applications in conceptualizing also adult relationships.²¹

Johnson's contributions in the professional field are her own studies on applying attachment theory to adult relationships as well as the couple therapy form, EFT. Johnson provides possibly the clearest account of the premises at the core of EFT when she formulates the studies of the social psychologists Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver as

²⁰ See Figure 1 in chapter 4.1.2 for my etic visualization and interpretation of this setting.

²¹ See, for example, Mikulincer & Shaver 2014 for an overview.

seven key principles. Basically, all of these are derived from the Strange Situation experiment, just applied to adult relationship. Two of these principles are different from the parent-child relationship, and Johnson presents them as follows:

- As adults we can hold loved ones in our minds and find comfort, and we do not always need physical closeness. Adult romantic bonds also have a physical — a sexual — element. Sexuality is part of adult bonding.
- The relationship between God and people of faith can be understood as an attachment bond, in which God is a safe haven, a secure base, and the ultimate source of comfort and care. (CfC:30)

Johnson observes that “in the twenty-first century, a love relationship has become the *central* emotional relationship in most people’s lives” (CfC:20; italics in the original). She continues that “inevitably, we now ask our lovers for the emotional connection and sense of belonging that my grandmother could get from a whole village” (CfC:21). This is the social setting Johnson paints in offering EFT as her own formulation of relationship repair based on the principles of adult attachment. Her own quick summary of EFT as a way of seeing and shaping love relationships goes like this:

Forget about learning how to argue better, analyzing your early childhood, making grand romantic gestures, or experimenting with new sexual positions. Instead, recognize and admit that you are emotionally attached to and dependent on your partner in much the same way that a child is on a parent for nurturing, soothing, and protection. Adult attachments may be more reciprocal and less centered on constant physical contact, but the nature of the emotional bond is the same. EFT focuses on creating and strengthening this emotional bond between partners by identifying and transforming the key moments and messages that foster an adult loving relationship: being open, attuned, and responsive to each other. (CfC:8)

In Johnson’s manuals this formulation, “open, attuned, and responsive” corresponds to the attitude of the calm and confident child in the strange situation experiment, and this programmatic ideal of intimacy is at the core of what I will be analyzing in this study.

1.2 Previous Research

I will here briefly discuss key points previous research on self-help and relationship manuals has found and what new light my material and approach can bring to the discussion. As sociologist Micky McGee summarizes in her 2005 book *Self-help, Inc.: Makeover culture in American life*, there is something very prototypically American about self-help, and it has become a huge and growing industry grossing in the billions:

Imagine a self and then invent that self. Picture a life, then create that life. The ideal of self-invention has long infused American culture with a sense of endless possibility. Nowhere is this ideal more evident than in the burgeoning literatures of self-improvement—a sector of the publishing industry that expanded dramatically in the last quarter of the twentieth century, particularly in its final decade. The trade publication *American Bookseller* reports that self-help book sales rose by 96 percent in the five years between 1991 and 1996. By 1998, self-help book sales were said to total some \$581million, where they constituted a powerful force within the publishing industry, shoring up profits in an era of bottom-line publishing faced with otherwise declining sales, unearned author advances, and hard cover return rates soaring to 45 percent nationally. Indeed, the self-improvement industry, inclusive of books, seminars, audio and video products, and personal coaching, is said to constitute a \$2.48-billion-a-year industry. One-third to one-half of Americans have purchased a self-help book in their lifetimes. One New York City bookstore allocates a quarter mile of shelf space to the various

subcategories of self-improvement literature. And perhaps most impressively, between 1972 and 2000, the number of self-help books more than doubled, increasing from 1.1 percent to 2.4 percent of the total number of books in print. Advice books—specifically self-improvement books, not simply the traditional didactic youth literature with life lessons or moral imperatives—are now available for every age group from early readers to the aged. Self-improvement books are available to cover any and all issues, with titles specialized to address every market segment.²²

In her 2005 book *Self-Help Books: Why Americans Keep Reading Them*, folklorist Sandra Dolby analyzes self-help within the framework of “the creative use of cultural resources toward a goal of self-education.”²³ Her basic idea is that self-help books can be grouped into eight themes, each of which contains focal ambiguities of conflicting beliefs in American culture. Dolby suggests that self-help books have a very simple structure of criticizing something in culture and then offering a solution. She maintains that the cultural conflicts will remain despite the efforts of self-help experts, but that self-help literature has the important function of preserving and renewing cultural motives and may also change what individual readers highlight in their lives.²⁴ Dolby discusses the themes she finds as follows:

The eight themes can be presented as single-word concepts: (1) fear; (2) control; (3) competition; (4) judgment; (5) dishonesty; (6) individualism; (7) violence; (8) impatience. It may seem that culture gives us a clear attitude to bring to each of these. In American culture, competition and individualism are good; dishonesty and violence are bad. Generally, we would argue, control and judgment are good; fear and impatience are bad. However, in fact, there is an ambiguity tied to each of these. Fear is bad if it produces cowardice but good if it produces obedience to God or a law of nature. Control is good if it leads to effective work but bad if it stifles innovation. Competition is essential in a capitalist system, but it just might not be so good if it leads to suicide or war. Our system of justice requires that all citizens be prepared to judge their peers; on the other hand, the Bible teaches us to “judge not, that ye be not judged.” Everyone knows that dishonesty is bad—even a very young George Washington could not tell a lie—but then there are times when the truth must not be spoken (Are you hiding Jewish war-victims in your attic?). Individualism is the backbone of American culture, yet Robert Bellah and his colleagues in *Habits of the Heart* point to its many negative effects, including the loss of a sense of community. Violence is awful, of course, but we resort to it time and again, thus reinforcing its real value. And impatience is if nothing else bad practice—“All things come to those who wait”—and yet our culture is strongly geared toward action, speed, and being first in line.²⁵

The roots of therapeutic self-help thinking are usually located in the America of the 1880s. The most useful histories from the view point of my study I’ve found are historian T.J. Jackson Lears’ *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* and historian Eva Moskowitz’s *In Therapy We Trust: America’s Obsession with Self-Fulfillment*.²⁶ I will refer to Moskowitz in chapter 2.3. Psychologist Steven Starker's 1989 book *Oracle At The Supermarket: The American Preoccupation*

²² McGee 2005:11–12; Original reference numbers removed from the quote.

²³ Dolby 2005:17.

²⁴ Dolby 2005:101.

²⁵ Dolby 2005:101–102.

²⁶ Lears 1994; Moskowitz 2001. See also Lears 1983 for a briefer summary.

with *Self-Help Books*, contains a brief history of even earlier advice books from seventeenth century onwards, which can be considered predecessors of self-help in America.²⁷ For the influence of the New Thought Movement, see chapter 2.3.

While self-help has been an established format for long, specifically therapeutic relationship manuals in their current form came into being in the late 1970s.²⁸ According to cultural sociologist Rebecca Hazleden, the focal relationship themes in self-help have shifted through the decades from house hold management in the 1950s, sex and self-actualization in the 1960s, individualistic sexual autonomy for women in the 1970s, to caution about loving too much in the 1980s and 1990s.²⁹

The responses to self-help and its effects range from considering it a horrendous scam, as, for example, investigative journalist Steve Salerno does in his 2006 book *SHAM: How the Self-Help Movement Made America Helpless*, to hopeful statements about its empowering effects, such as those of sociologist Anthony Giddens' in his highly influential 1992 classic *Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Many studies of self-help relationship manuals have been critical, partially because they have taken a feminist perspective on the portrayal of women in the manuals.³⁰

Closest to the setting of my study comes the 2007 dissertation of psychologist Cathryn Hill. In her *Relationship Rhetoric: Representations of Intimacy in Contemporary Self-Help Literature* Hill analyzes the ways in which relationship manuals are rhetorically constructed and what the recurring themes and subjects in such manuals are. Hill studies ten popular relationship manuals in terms of their methods of asserting credibility, such as metaphors and terminological choices. She also interviewed 21 readers of relationship manuals and found that from the rhetorical stand point, readers consider it most important that the author persuades them that they genuinely care about improving relationships. I use Hill's study both as inspiration in terms of her methodology and as comparative material in terms of her findings about the recurring rhetorical devices, themes and settings in relationship manuals.

Other important conceptual and comparative material I use are Rebecca Hazleden's numerous studies on relationship manuals. The most important one from the point of view

²⁷ Starker 1989; See also Woodstock 2007 for an analysis of the positive thinking discourse in self-help best-sellers since the 1880s.

²⁸ Hazleden 2011:272.

²⁹ Hazleden 2011; See also Hochschild 1994, Moskowitz 2001.

³⁰ See Hill 2007 for a review of the various studies.

of my study is her 2004 article *The pathology of love in contemporary relationship manuals*, which I use as comparative material in discussing the conflicting ideals of dependency vs. autonomy in chapter 4.2.1. I also make some references to the sociologist Arlie Hochschild's classic 1994 study *The Commercial Spirit of Intimate Life and the Abduction of Feminism: Signs from Women's Advice Books*. There are many other studies of self-help relationship manuals, but most of them are so focused on specific themes in the manuals (such as representations of gender and sexuality), or on specific manuals, that I have rather focused on the studies where the setting resembles my own.³¹

Both Hill and Hazleden argue that self-help books should be considered a genre of literature in contrast to Scott Cherry, who studied the apparently non-genre nature of self-help as a marketing strategy designed to invite the reader in.³² Hill considers genre a discourse from the point of view of having enough similarities in "form, substance, and purpose."³³ Hazleden similarly argues that self-help books "understand themselves as part of an intertextual genre in which they must position themselves."³⁴ So, self-help relationship manuals are also likely to have their own typical characteristics and features.

Case Johnson

What makes Johnson's manuals interesting in the context of relationship manuals is that they seem to at least on the surface contrast with many of the findings of Hill, Hazleden and Hochschild. In Hill's analysis relationship manuals are fundamentally an instance of the discourse of the good wife. For Hill the function of the relationship manual genre is providing acceptance of the social status quo, offering women consolation and comfort while reinforcing the idea that marriage is a good thing, no matter that it tends to fail.³⁵ In contrast to this *HMT* neither distributes responsibility unequally between men and women nor prescribes different roles or responsibilities to them in the maintenance and shaping of love. While there is more of a gender bias in the case of *CfC*, where we move towards more conservative Christian ground on many levels, both books are about changing what Johnson presents as the quality of the patterns of intimate interaction, and on this level of changing patterns we have the same prescriptions and sanctions for both men and women. What is equally at stake for both sexes is the loss or gain of the highest

³¹ See Hill 2007 for a discussion of the various studies and the discourses in them.

³² Cherry claimed that self-help books characterize themselves as "singular, solitary" texts. Cherry 2008. For a discussion of self-help not so much as a genre of literature, but from an organizational or social movement theoretical framework, see Archibald 2007.

³³ Hill 2007:35.

³⁴ Hazleden 2010:294.

³⁵ Hill 2007.

relationship good: intimacy. So, in this sense it does not seem appropriate to consider Johnson's manuals within the discourse of the good wife. Unless, of course, we want to argue that Johnson is extending the traditional emotional programme of women for men as well, creating a discourse of the good husband.

Hochschild studied best-selling advice books for women published in the United States from the 1970s to 1990s and found what she called "a shift in the cultural premises about human attachment." In other words, Hochschild noticed a cultural cooling in the sense that most books advocated a paradigm of caution with respect to and strategic control over emotional needs.³⁶ Speaking of this 'cool' variant in the advice books Hochschild wrote "[t]he emotion work that matters is control of the feelings of fear, vulnerability and the desire to be comforted. The ideal self doesn't need much, and what it does need it can get for itself."³⁷ Johnson's books, on the other hand, seem to present an exceedingly 'warm' ideal of intimate relationships in terms of prescribing trust (versus caution), and stressing the vital importance of acknowledging and expressing emotional needs (versus controlling them and getting by with little outside care and support). To put it in Hochschild's terms, Johnson recommends couples to invest their emotion work in their intimate relationship to the degree of what she calls 'effective dependency.' It should also be noted that the dependency Johnson prescribes is not the traditional and 'warm' ideal of older advice books where women are guided to submit to patriarchal rule and invest their emotion work in the family and community, as discussed by Hochschild.³⁸

Indeed, in contrast to Johnson's manuals, Hazleden's findings include that most relationship manuals diagnose 'loving too much' or codependency, and the remedy that is offered does not target the relationship, but offers models and practices aimed at making the self more autonomous and independent from the partner.³⁹ This is in stark contrast to the models in Johnson's relationship manuals, where the whole paradigm of codependency is challenged, and dependency is considered not only a biological and spiritual necessity, but also a virtue. Johnson's methods aim at changing interactional relationship patterns into more 'positive' ones, not emancipating women from depending too much on men (a gender-qualified setting she simply does not discuss). Johnson's books do not pathologize love itself as something inherently dangerous (that should be traded for independence from men), as much of Hazleden's material, for example, seems

³⁶ Hochschild 1994:3–4.

³⁷ Hochschild 1994:14.

³⁸ Hochschild 1994:7–8.

³⁹ Hazleden 2003, Hazleden 2010.

to do. In contrast, Johnson pathologizes recursive interactional patterns that do not generate more ‘intimacy,’ which is the teleological goal in Johnson’s paradigm.

What is also interesting about Johnson’s manuals is that we get to see how she adapts a basically secular relationship manual with the kind of humanistic openness to spirituality that characterizes much of relationship manuals in Hill’s material⁴⁰ into a Christian one that subscribes to fairly conservative values and has been purged of all references to any other form of spirituality than Christianity. The combination of therapeutic and Christian themes is neither new nor unpopular, as, for example, this quote from sociologist Paul Lichterman’s 1992 study of self-help psychology books shows:

[...] M. Scott Peck’s (1978) *The Road Less Traveled*, a book combining psychotherapeutic and Christian themes, has been on the *New York Times* list for nearly six years (at the time of writing).⁴¹

It is usually claimed that relationship manuals are more aimed at women than men.⁴² While this claim may be right, there are self-help books specifically for men, also for Christian men. Sociologist Andrew Singleton has, for example, studied self-help literature addressed to Christian men.⁴³ What is interesting considering Johnson and Sanderfer’s Christian version is this Singleton’s observation about the generally evangelical nature of Christian self-help:

Most Christian men’s self-help literature is written by and for evangelical Protestant Christians and originates in the US. All of the literature I discuss in this article emerges from the evangelical tradition and typically reflects evangelical concerns. However, I refer to it as ‘Christian men’s self-help’ rather than ‘evangelical men’s self-help’ because it purports to speak to all Christian men, regardless of denomination, creed or theological standpoint.⁴⁴

While Johnson and Sanderfer do not specify the type of Christianity they espouse, for example psychological anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann’s 2012 book *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* discusses forms of Christianity that have much in common with Johnson and Sanderfer’s book.⁴⁵ I will refer to some of her findings in my analysis.

1.3 Research Questions

Johnson’s relationship manuals claim to contain a program, specifically focusing on the emotions, which will lead to the goal they are offering: lasting love and true intimacy. Based on this, I take off from the abductive premise that in Johnson’s relationship manuals love and intimacy can be usefully examined as an emotional programme

⁴⁰ See Hill 2007.

⁴¹ Lichterman 1992:421.

⁴² See, for example, Hazleden 2011:271 where she refers to Hochschild 1994 and others.

⁴³ Singleton 2004.

⁴⁴ Singleton 2004.

⁴⁵ Luhrmann 2012.

constructed by relationship rhetoric.⁴⁶ My hypothesis is that at the core of Johnson's model of love is the idea that certain emotions and interactional patterns are negative in the sense that they have a damaging effect on what Johnson calls love, while some emotions and patterns are considered to foster love. From this perspective Johnson's books prescribe an emotional programme on achieving intimacy, or as Johnson puts it, shaping and maintaining enduring love.

My other hypothesis is that the introduction of Christianity and God in *Created for Connection* modifies Johnson's model of love so that something about the emotional programme also changes, however subtly that might be. Based on these working assumptions I have come up with the further hypothesis that studying the adaptation from this angle might be a useful way to present the material as well as likely to provide useful insights about the intersection between counselling and spirituality within the context of therapeutic culture. In this sense my research questions have an abductive basis, that is, I already have some ideas of a model that might usefully explain the data. Nevertheless, I will try to answer my research questions by studying my sources systematically, and with as little expectation and prejudice as possible.

I am interested in the difference that introducing Christianity makes to the emotional programme of love. So, my research question is:

How does the emotional programme of intimacy change with the adaptation of Hold Me Tight into Created for Connection?

To help me approach answering this question I have come up with the following research tasks:

- (1) Establish what was changed in adapting *HMT* into *CfC* and determine which of these changes are relevant in terms of my research question.
- (2) Organize the changes into categories or themes that seem to best highlight the differences, and then analyze the changes to the emotional programme of intimacy within these categories.
- (3) Discuss what bearing the findings have with regard to studies and theories about self-help relationship manuals and therapeutic culture?

⁴⁶ In this study I use the words 'love' and 'intimacy' interchangeably unless otherwise defined. This is in line with not only Johnson's practice, but also with the relationship manual genre in general. As Hill notes regarding her material: "The term love, which is generally synonymous with intimacy, shows up in descriptions of women as loving (which tends to mean nurturing and caring)." Hill 2007:164.

1.4 Primary Sources

My primary sources are Sue Johnson's books *Hold Me Tight*⁴⁷ and *Created for Connection*.⁴⁸ *Hold Me Tight* is 310 pages in the paperback edition published by Piatkus in 2011 in Great Britain, which I am referring to in this study. It has the same contents as the original hardcover edition published by Little, Brown and Company in 2008 in the US. The kindle version that I use for searching within the text is also 310 pages (or 4134 locations in kindle terms). *Created for Connection* is 324 pages in the October 2016 revised hardcover edition published by Little, Brown and Company that I am referring to in this study. The kindle version is likewise 324 pages (or 3931 locations in kindle terms).

It is hard to find sales figures for the books, but on Amazon.com *Hold Me Tight* is listed as number one bestseller in the category "Sociology of Marriage and Family". It has 653 customer reviews with an average of 4.6 out of 5 stars.⁴⁹ *Created for Connection* is listed as number 23 in the bestseller rank for "General Gender Studies" (in the social sciences). It has 32 customer reviews with a similar average of 4.6 out of 5 stars.⁵⁰

1.5 Ethical Considerations and Self-Disclosure

Since I'm studying publicly available books and not people, the main concern is the validity and fairness of my presentation and the possible indirect consequences any inaccuracies might cause to the authors, none of which I intend. My own interest in relationship guides stems from a more general theoretical fascination with the therapeutic ethos, metaphor and rhetoric. I stumbled onto Johnson's self-help books in 2015 and was surprised by their single-minded focus on the 'quality of connection' as the be-all and end-all determinant of relationship success. Along with writing this study I have become more aware of the genre-constrained nature of self-help, which explains some, but not all, of my wonder. While Johnson's clinical, professionally-oriented books are not the subject of this study, the ideas in them do naturally have much in common with the simplified self-help versions. I am personally interested in what I can learn about the therapeutic nature of much of globalized Western culture by studying, for example, Johnson's books. I do not have a strong personal bias for or against the type of help Johnson offers. I personally view my study as an instance of cultural history of introspection within the context of self-help relationship manuals.

⁴⁷ Johnson 2011.

⁴⁸ Johnson & Sanderfer 2016.

⁴⁹ Amazon HMT 2018.

⁵⁰ Amazon CfC 2018.

2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Emotional Programmes and Regimes

Here I introduce my theoretical framework, the idea of looking at emotional programmes prescribed by, for example, self-help books, from a sociological distance, and with a cultural filter (chapter 2.1). I also discuss how I approach metaphor in the context of studying Johnson's emotional programmes (chapter 2.2), as well as present a general overview of the concept of therapeutic culture as far as it is relevant for my study (chapter 2.3). In Johnson's books the prescribed kind of love seems to be something quite else than, say, a mystical passion one has no control of, but rather something that can be understood, shaped and kept alive by carefully-designed practices – what I refer to here as an emotional programme.

I decidedly wanted a sociological framework so that I could analyze the emotional programmes on the level of the individual, the couple, as well as groups and societies. Also, since my interest is saying something about therapeutic culture, it seemed using a solely psychological theory would make that difficult.

I use the idea of emotional regimes to situate Johnson's books in the context of self-help literature as emotional programmes. In their 2010 book *A Sociology of Religious Emotion* scholars of religion and sociologists Ole Riis and Linda Woodhead write:

In individualized modern societies unauthorized emotions are less likely to be blamed on outside agencies (demons, ghosts, ancestors, collective sinfulness) than taken as an indication that an 'individual' is confused, weird, sick, unreliable, crazy, or perverted, and in need of professional, including medical, treatment. As well as sanctioning unauthorized emotions, emotional regimes offer rewards for appropriate emotional display. Those who exhibit the correct emotions in the right settings at the right times and in the right ways receive formal and informal approval. There is extensive informal guidance and help for those who wish to develop these skills in modern societies, including self-help literature and different forms of therapy and techniques of 'self-improvement'.⁵¹

Johnson's books are, by her own admission, specifically self-help versions of her more formal therapy textbooks and academic research, and thus seem to fit Riis and Woodhead's idea. I chose Riis and Woodhead's account on the basis that it allows an individual a meaningful place in the greater scheme of things (some autonomy and agency, not total determination by the social structure or cultural ideologies), conceptualizes two-way connections between the macro, meso and micro levels as well as puts a reasonable weight on the cultural level. This should be enough for me to be able to discuss Johnson's ideas also in the broader context of cultural movements and society. As Riis and Woodhead write:

⁵¹ Riis & Woodhead 2010:49.

At the micro-level, even the most ‘private’ emotions occur within the framework of wider emotional regimes, whose impress they bear. To take a much-analyzed example, the intimate emotional expectations and roles associated with romantic love between a man and a woman are shaped by a wider emotional regime that is carried not only by surrounding social relations, but by a plethora of cultural symbols, material objects, and embodied practices.⁵²

In the context of religion, Riis and Woodhead write that “different religious emotional regimes can be distinguished by their varied emotional scales, harmonies and discords.” They continue, “Emotions gain their meaning and particular tone from their place within the broad, symbolically- and textually-inscribed, programme.”⁵³ In Riis and Woodhead’s theory religious (and other) emotional regimes help to order and pattern emotional life at the individual, group and societal level.⁵⁴ An emotional regime implies an understandable logic of emotions as well as some performative means of embodying appropriate emotions, or as Riis and Woodhead put it:

Ordering implies offering a coherent programme for emotional life that clarifies which emotional notes must be sounded and which must not, which emotions should be foregrounded, and which should appear only on the ‘back stage’ or not at all... To love, for example, is not merely to feel something but to relate to others and oneself in new ways. A religion that exhorts love and defines what is meant by love and also guides love toward its proper objects, regulates its expressions, rules out inappropriate loves, and sanctions incompatible emotions. Thus emotional ordering involves emotional clarification and emotional focusing. By means of ritual, symbolism, and living examples, religious emotional regimes embody normative patterns of feeling and relating that shape both personal and collective life.⁵⁵

So, to be clear, in my study Christianity is an example of an emotional regime, while each of Johnson’s manuals contains an emotional programme. The emotional regime of Christianity patterns the emotional life of Christians (or rather there are many Christian emotional regimes corresponding to the varieties of Christianity). Johnson’s Christian relationship manual, on the other hand, includes guidance (a programme) in developing the skills appropriate within the emotional regime of Christianity in the domain of intimate relationships (including the couple’s relationship with God). Riis and Woodhead also present an interesting analysis of how individuals navigate across the multiple emotional regimes of late modern societies and I will get back to some of that as far as it is relevant to my analysis of Johnson’s ideas (chapter 4.2.1).⁵⁶

2.2 Metaphors

My interest in metaphor in this study stems from the observation that Johnson’s use of metaphor is very systematic and purposeful. She uses metaphors in constructing the emotional programme she prescribes, providing metaphoric examples of ‘positive’ and

⁵² Riis & Woodhead 2010:50; reference removed at the end of the quote.

⁵³ Riis & Woodhead 2010:73.

⁵⁴ Riis & Woodhead 2010:77.

⁵⁵ Riis & Woodhead 2010:77–78.

⁵⁶ Riis & Woodhead 2010, see for example pages 210–217.

‘negative’ ways of embodying her programme. In this way Johnson also uses metaphors to persuade the reader with concrete images of what they can expect in terms of following or neglecting her emotional programme of intimacy.

Hill studied metaphors as one component of relationship rhetoric, and in her view “[t]he transformation of pain and uncertainty into concrete terms through the use of commonplace metaphors is an important function of relationship guides.” She elaborates that “although false as literal, logical expressions, metaphors accurately express the speaker’s subjective viewpoint and emotional experience.”⁵⁷ Indeed, as the linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson argue in their classic 1980 book *Metaphors We Live By*, our understanding of emotions is to a large degree metaphorical. Riis and Woodhead, whose theoretical model of emotion I use, also subscribe to this idea (and are discussing Lakoff & Johnson’s contribution in the quote below):

On this account, we understand the world by navigating our way through it in a visceral, embodied fashion, experiencing it not by abstract mental representations but in active, physical engagement with people and objects that either yield to or resist our interventions. This immediate sensory engagement is mediated by ‘image schemata’ that are prelinguistic patternings of embodied motor activities that give a meaningful structure to physical experience, and that are felt rather than consciously reflected upon. These ground the metaphorical expressions that are the basis of language, meaning, and understanding. Rational reflection comes last, not first, in the cognitive process, and is dependent on prior sensory-emotional processing, rather than antagonistic to it (though it can modify and provide feedback on it).⁵⁸

Hill studied metaphors in relationship manuals to understand the authors’ perspectives and the directions in which they are trying to move the reader’s attention. Of particular importance she considered master metaphors which in her view are so “common or taken-for-granted that they are overlooked.” I am using this broad approach to metaphor as not only a very strictly defined linguistic device of “seeing something in terms of something else,” but including the deeper cultural implications.⁵⁹

My approach to conceptualizing and studying metaphors is close to that of scholar of religion Mira Karjalainen in her 2007 dissertation *In the Shadow of Freedom: Life on board the oil tanker*, where she studied how sailors construct ‘freedom’ through the use of metaphors. Karjalainen also takes off from Lakoff and Johnson’s approach and by quoting linguist Dilin Liu she summarizes well the basic idea why metaphors are a telling object of study:

⁵⁷ Hill 2007:109. Hill is here quoting Kopp & Eckstein 2004.

⁵⁸ Riis & Woodhead 2010:26.

⁵⁹ This approach to metaphor comes close to how Hochschild analyzed how in one relationship manual the culturally salient myth of the “cowboy” was applied to the female protagonist in a scene where she dared to challenge monogamy and be independent, and to derive her happiness from there (instead of being the good wife). Hochschild 1994:8–9.

Like language in general, the use of metaphors is simultaneously shaped by and shaping the culture in which the language is spoken. In other words, language speakers' use of metaphors is to a great extent influenced by their cultural experience, and in return, metaphors help shape the speakers' construction of reality – their worldviews. The dominant metaphors that the speakers of a language use can provide an excellent window for us to look at the values and beliefs treasured in their culture and the worldviews they hold.⁶⁰

From this perspective of studying metaphors as cultural models or collective representations should reveal something about how, in my case, 'intimacy' is constructed in Johnson's books. Thus, studying how Johnson uses a web of metaphors (themselves inherently ambiguous) to highlight her resolution to the cultural contradictions inherent in the concept of intimacy should also tell us something about the emotional programme she is building and what it prescribes.

One interesting theoretical discussion about emotion is the discrepancy between essentialist accounts of emotion as a (potentially subconscious) drive, on the one hand, and more interactive accounts of emotion as socially constructed, on the other.⁶¹ Studying metaphors in relationship manuals is one way of seeing how their authors just somehow magically make these conflicting accounts of emotion work with each other through the use of metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson approach this territory when they discuss the concept of love in terms of metaphors:

“Love,” on the objectivist view, has various senses, each of which can be defined in terms of such inherent properties as fondness, affection, sexual desire, etc. Against this view, we would claim that we comprehend love only partly in terms of such inherent properties. For the most part, our comprehension of love is metaphorical, and we understand it primarily in terms of concepts for other kinds of experience: JOURNEYS, MADNESS, WAR, HEALTH, etc. Because defining concepts (JOURNEYS, MADNESS, WAR, HEALTH) emerge from our interactions with one another and with the world, the concept they metaphorically define (e.g., LOVE) will be understood in terms of what we will call *interactional properties*.⁶²

In discussing how metaphors can be imaginative and creative, how they can “give new meaning to our pasts, to our daily activity, and to what we know and believe,” Lakoff and Johnson use the metaphor “love is a collaborative work of art” as an example. They argue that the large and coherent network of entailments such a metaphor creates, if it fits with our experiences of love, makes us experience “a kind of reverberation down through the network of entailments that awakens and connects our memories of our past love experiences and serves as a possible guide for future ones.”⁶³ Lakoff and Johnson make five points in discussing what they mean by such metaphoric reverberations. I will quote three that are most important in terms of my study.

⁶⁰ Liu 2002:119 in Karjalainen 2007:111.

⁶¹ See, for example, Hochschild 2003 for a discussion. She calls these the “organismic” and “interactive” accounts of emotion.

⁶² Lakoff & Johnson 1980:119–120; italics and upper case in the original.

⁶³ Lakoff & Johnson 1980:139–141.

First, the metaphor highlights certain features while suppressing others. For example, the active side of love is brought into the foreground through the notion of WORK both in COLLABORATIVE WORK and in WORK OF ART. This requires the masking of certain aspects of love that are viewed passively. In fact, the emotional aspects of love are almost never viewed as being under the lovers' active control in our conventional conceptual system. Even in the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, the relationship is viewed as a vehicle that is not in the couple's active control, since it can be *off the tracks*, or *on the rocks*, or *not going anywhere*. In the LOVE IS MADNESS metaphor ("I'm crazy about her," "She's driving me wild"), there is the ultimate lack of control. In the LOVE IS HEALTH metaphor, where the relationship is a patient ("It's a healthy relationship," "It's a sick relationship," "Their relationship is reviving"), the passivity of health in this culture is transferred to love. Thus, in focusing on various aspects of activity (e.g., WORK, CREATION, PURSUING GOALS, BUILDING, HELPING, etc.), the metaphor provides an organization of important love experiences that our conventional conceptual system does not make available.

Second, the metaphor does not merely entail other concepts, like WORK or PURSUING SHARED GOALS, but it entails very specific *aspects* of these concepts. It is not just any work, like working on an automobile assembly line, for instance. It is work that requires that special balance of control and letting-go that is appropriate to artistic creation, since the goal that is pursued is not just any kind of goal but a joint aesthetic goal. And though the metaphor may suppress the out-of-control aspects of the LOVE IS MADNESS metaphor, it highlights another aspect, namely, the sense of almost demonic possession that lies behind our culture's connection between artistic genius and madness. [...]

Fourth, metaphors can thus be appropriate because they sanction actions, justify inferences, and help us set goals. For example, certain actions, inferences, and goals are dictated by the LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART metaphor but not by the LOVE IS MADNESS metaphor. If love is madness, I do not concentrate on what I have to do to maintain it. But if it is work, then it requires activity, and if it is a work of art, it requires a very special *kind* of activity, and if it is collaborative, then it is even further restricted and specified.⁶⁴

What is important to realize in classifying metaphors and their entailments is that, as Hill says, "the process of deciding on networks and mappings is not always clear."⁶⁵ In other words, it partly depends on the sensibilities of the one studying them. It is likely that most researchers will find more or less the same metaphors in a given text, but how they interpret and classify the text-immanent networks and entailments behind them is necessarily subjective (and subject to the ambiguity of the metaphors themselves). I have tried to minimize this by comparing my interpretations with Hill when possible.

There's still another use of metaphor that is relevant in studying Johnson's manuals. As Hill notes, "metaphors maintain a respected place in psychotherapy,"⁶⁶ and Johnson does use metaphors and narratives as creative therapeutic devices. Johnson instructs couples to construct personal metaphors and narratives for the relationship in such a way that it aligns with the emotional programmes her manuals envision.

⁶⁴ Lakoff & Johnson 141–142; italics and upper case in the original. Cf. Hill 2007:33.

⁶⁵ Hill 2007:122–123. Here Hill also discusses why she considers some of Lakoff and Johnson's metaphors of love metaphors of relationships in general.

⁶⁶ Hill 2007:109.

In this context it might be argued something akin to Kelly Bulkley's concept of root metaphor is implied. In her 1992 article *Dreams, Spirituality, and Root Metaphors* Bulkley writes:

The adjective "root" in the root metaphor concept emphasizes three things: first, how these particular metaphors reach down into the deepest issues of human existence; second, how these metaphors are uniquely alive, vital, and powerful; and third, how we need many of them to enjoy a balanced, thriving life – just as a tree needs many roots to steady and nourish it.⁶⁷

Bulkley is clearly influenced not only by Lakoff and Johnson, whom she builds on, but also by therapeutic ideologies that see a continuum between spirituality and counselling. She analyzes root metaphors in both religious and non-religious dreams, and presents "some practical guidelines, oriented around the model of playing with dreams" to "help make the spiritual dimension of dreams more accessible to psychotherapists, pastoral counselors, and lay people."⁶⁸

While Johnson does not discuss dreams, the way she emphasizes metaphors created and shared together as parts of a common narrative for the couple, has much in common with Bulkley's idea. I will discuss Johnson's use of root metaphors in chapter 4.1.2.

2.3 Therapeutic Culture

In this chapter I will sketch some views on the once again hotly debated concept of therapeutic culture. One of the most comprehensive and systematic surveys of this concept is sociologist Elaine Swan's 2009 book *Worked Up Selves: Personal Development Workers, Self-Work and Therapeutic Cultures*, but within this study I can only discuss some themes directly relevant for my discussion.

Eva Moskowitz studies the impact of America's investment in "self-esteem, psychological happiness, and emotional growth."⁶⁹ She refers to such cultural emphases as the 'therapeutic gospel' and considers its main tenets to be:

(1) The belief that happiness should be the supreme goal, that every other kind of achievement (such as wealth or high moral character) is valuable only in so far as it contributes to this goal. In other words, success is ultimately measured by a psychological yardstick.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Bulkley 1992:200.

⁶⁸ Bulkley 1992:197.

⁶⁹ Moskowitz 2001:8.

⁷⁰ Moskowitz 2001:2.

(2) The conviction that all problems have psychological causes, even problems that used to be considered economic, political or educational.⁷¹

(3) The psychological causes of our problems can and should be treated.⁷²

Moskowitz's study focuses on America's fascination with quick, psychological fixes, which she describes as follows:

Time and again the history of the nation's obsession with the psyche indicates that Americans have embraced simple, quick, and easy therapeutic solutions to complex and difficult problems. Lacking psychological rigor, the therapeutic gospel proposes that every problem be solved by positive thinking.⁷³

Moskowitz situates the roots of the therapeutic gospel "in the 1850s in Belfast, Maine, with an obscure clockmaker with the curious name Phineas P. Quimby."⁷⁴ Indeed, the roots of therapeutic culture are usually considered to be the same as those of self-help itself, and to start from the 'New Thought' movement as articulated by Quimby. Historian John Haller, for example, argues in his 2012 book *The History of New Thought: From Mind Cure to Positive Thinking and the Prosperity Gospel* that currently New Thought could be called America's "'secondary religion' whose church and unchurched adherents profess teachings built on principles centered around healing, self-discovery, and empowerment."⁷⁵ Haller summarizes the history of what later became of New Thought as a metropolitan movement as follows:

Recoiling from the biblical God who had reputedly sent life's sorrows as tests of human beings' faith, New Thought practiced visualization, affirmation, and prayer as a means for realizing health, harmony, peace, and prosperity. Thought-as-power became the basis of this "Christ Science" or "mindcure" system begun by Quimby and matured through a generation of writers, lecturers, and publishers intent on accentuating life's positive attributes. Teaching the divinity of each individual and the infinite possibilities available through the power of creative thinking, New Thought's churches and affiliated associations organized for the purpose of finding and exploiting the routes to personal happiness. Built on the notion that success was a sign of virtue, they looked to the best ways of holding to a positive attitude and thinking one's way to wealth and happiness. They concluded that since thoughts can materialize, success lay in the ability to attract, persuade, and influence one's fellow human beings. Success was the outcome of the quality of mind, its character, and its temperament. Provided that the individual exercised perseverance, determination, energy, and patience, anything was possible and likely probable.⁷⁶

Moskowitz's work is a well-researched example of a long line of cultural critique aimed at therapeutic culture (and at self-help as one of its core elements). Sociologists Suvi Salmenniemi and Mariya Vorona summarize this critique well in their 2014 article *Reading Self-Help Literature in Russia*, as "epitomizing various ills of 'our times': the

⁷¹ Moskowitz 2001:2.

⁷² Moskowitz 2001:3.

⁷³ Moskowitz 2001:6–7.

⁷⁴ Moskowitz 2001:9.

⁷⁵ Haller 2012:275. For Haller's history of Quimby see Haller 2012:44–64.

⁷⁶ Haller 2012:122.

promotion of an individualist ethos, lack of commitment to social institutions, increasing preoccupation with the self, and the promotion of self-reliance, which leads to a withdrawal from the political domain and deflects a collective protest against structural inequalities.”⁷⁷ Salmenniemi and Vorona mention three classics in this vein: sociologist Philip Rieff’s 1966 book *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud*, historian Christopher Lasch’s 1979 book *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, and sociologist Frank Furedi’s 2004 book *Therapy Culture: Cultivating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age*.⁷⁸ These are probably among the most cited analyzes along with cultural sociologist Eva Illouz’s 2008 study, *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help*. While these studies represent quite diverse arguments, they are usually considered to exemplify the same broad critique that blames (popular) psychology for many of the undesirable consequences of modernity.

In addition to this ‘sign of our times’ style research Salmenniemi and Vorona identify another current of research on self-help. This is the more empirically oriented research that I have reviewed in chapter 1.2. These two streams of research are linked, however, in that many empirical studies of self-help, such as Hazleden’s (whose work I discuss in chapter 4.2.1) draw on the work of philosopher Michel Foucault. Sociologist Nikolas Rose is among the scholars who have developed Foucault’s framework in the context of therapeutic culture. While Illouz and others have criticized the oversimplicity of Foucault’s analysis (lacking context sensitivity and ascribing readers little agency, for example),⁷⁹ Foucault’s idea of an ‘ethical substance’ and Rose’s articulation of ‘governmentality’ continue to find more careful applications (and Illouz, for example, occasionally uses them or something similar herself).⁸⁰ In this stream of research, therapeutic culture is usually discussed as ‘psy’ knowledges or discourses, and the basic idea is that there is an ideological element involved. The way popular psychology encourages us to internalize models of the self and views of the world is considered a means of institutionalized self-government. In this analysis, the fundamental effect of self-help is to make us become citizens who willingly comply with governmental policies.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Salmenniemi & Vorona 2014:45.

⁷⁸ Salmenniemi & Vorona 2014.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Illouz 2008:4.

⁸⁰ Illouz 2008:88–89.

⁸¹ Cf. Salmenniemi & Vorona 2014.

Illouz looks at therapeutic discourse as a flexible and generic (lacking specific content) symbolic narrative structure that can be used to resolve cultural contradictions. She writes, for example, that:

The therapeutic narrative taps into the subject simultaneously as a patient and as a consumer, as someone in need of management and care and as someone who can, if helped, be in control of his or her actions. In that respect, it merges two contradictory constructions of self at work in contemporary culture: the self as a (potential or actual) victim of social circumstances and the self as the sole author and actor of one's life.⁸²

What is particularly interesting in the case of Johnson's manuals is Illouz's remark that the therapeutic narrative shares the Judeo-Christian cultural template:

The narrative uses the basic cultural template of the Judeo-Christian narrative. That template that is both regressive and progressive: regressive because it is about past events that are, so to speak, still present and at work in people's lives, and progressive because the goal of the narrative is to establish prospective redemption, here, emotional health. In that way, the narrative is a very efficient tool to establish coherence and continuity for the self.⁸³

Illouz also stresses that the therapeutic narrative is performative in that it reorganizes experience (for example by 'healing'). This performativity is also intimately linked with a sense of moral worth, since according to Illouz, "it is in the experience of self-change and in the construction of that experience that modern subjects experience themselves as morally and socially most competent."⁸⁴

As we can see the concept of therapeutic culture is a multifaceted one. It is, however, relevant for my study in that in Johnson's books we will meet several features considered vintage examples of the therapeutic ethos, such as the paramount value of emotional health, a performative combination of 'victimization' and empowerment, as well as a general reliance on the positive effects of the talking cure.

3 Methods

3.1 The Hourglass Model of Research

I subscribe to the general idea that in cultural studies we are using theories as heuristic frameworks to help us approach understanding historically and culturally specific, local, 'bounded' systems.⁸⁵ The methodological and theoretical choices that we make in our research design inevitably commit us to certain epistemological and ontological premises. However, the point of this kind of cultural research is neither to hammer such premises into the material nor to reduce our findings into examples of predesigned universal mechanisms. The idea is rather to look at the 'natural attitude' in the data through the lens

⁸² Illouz 2008:183–184.

⁸³ Illouz 2008:184.

⁸⁴ Illouz 2008:184.

⁸⁵ I am following Alasuutari 1996 in this discussion.

of the theoretical models in order to find out new things about it, something that challenges the ‘mundane’ interpretation and provides material for reflection. This view is social constructionist in the sense that we are interested in making sense of how the ‘mundane’ interpretation works in constituting social realities.⁸⁶

The process by which such research takes place has been likened to an hourglass by sociologist Pertti Alasuutari in his 1996 article *Theorizing in Qualitative Research: A Cultural Studies Perspective*. We start from the broad top of the hourglass by entertaining a wide variety of possible theories, concepts and research strategies. We choose and frame a case, and then analyze it in detail as if it existed separately from everything else. This corresponds to the epicenter of the hourglass. At the bottom of the hourglass we again assess and discuss our case within a wider cultural and theoretical framework. At this point it is likely that our preconceived notions have been challenged, and the usefulness of our initial premises can be evaluated against conflicting observations provided by our analysis. This is as it should be and may lead us to develop our framework and thus possibly also take part in theory building. But the important things in an approach like this are (1) being aware of the wide variety of theoretical and methodological approaches possible at the outset, (2) being open to gathering also the observations that do not fit the initial model chosen, (3) and reflecting at the end on what kind of a model might best explain our actual findings.⁸⁷

In this study I chose the initial framework of the theory of emotional regimes, metaphors as cultural models within such regimes and the concept of therapeutic culture as a provisional interpretative context for my findings. This is the theoretical construct I used to look at two self-help relationship manuals.

3.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

While I used both quantitative and qualitative methods in analyzing my data, the main method could be called qualitative content analysis or close reading of culturally constructed meaning in the texts of the manuals. I explored the manuals statistically, but only very lightly in order to establish, for example, how often a word is used in *HMT* versus *CfC*. This gave me a general idea of where I might find useful objects for a closer reading of changes in meaning potentially relevant for my research question. In other words, I approached text as proxy for experience and analyzed it quantitatively through word counts, and qualitatively through more classical content analysis, involving at times

⁸⁶ See Alasuutari 1996.

⁸⁷ Cf. Alasuutari 1996.

thematic analysis, and ultimately focusing on comparing the changes in the two manuals that I was studying.

I used a toolbox comparable to what Tuomi and Saarijärvi describe as content analysis,⁸⁸ to what Alasuutari outlines as the qualitative approach to researching culture in his 1995 book *Researching Culture: Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies*, and to what Clifford Geertz called ethnographic thick description⁸⁹ (although I have just the manuals as proxy for the experience that could be gained through ethnographic fieldwork). What each of these involves, is a creative process that cannot be entirely predesigned, but I will explain the steps my analysis took in detail.

My first research task was to establish what was changed in adapting *HMT* into *CfC*, and to sort the changes into potentially relevant and potentially irrelevant ones with regard to my research question. In practice, I read the two books side by side and systematically recorded all differences on the level of words. Based on this quantitative analysis it seemed warranted to claim that *CfC* is, in fact, an adaptation and not, for example, a completely different book with entirely different material just claiming to be an adaptation. I base this on the findings that:

(1) There are 91 sections in *HMT*. In *CfC* there are two more sections, that is, 93 sections, 85 of which have the same heading and enough similar content to be recognizable as an adaptation of *HMT*.

(2) The 6 sections in *HMT* that are clearly different from *CfC* make up one chapter that has been completely rewritten and has a clearly different subject matter in the books. This is evident in the titles, too. In *HMT* this chapter is called “Healing Traumatic Wounds – The Power of Love” while in *CfC* it is replaced by a new chapter entitled “Our Bond with God.” The new chapter in *CfC* has 8 sections in comparison to the 6 in *HMT*.⁹⁰

To document this and to have a systematic way of referring to the text sections in the books (section codes) I wrote Appendix I: Sections in *HMT* and *CfC*. In accordance with my first research task I broadly divided the changes I found into categories that were not likely to be relevant in answering my research questions and those that might be. The likely irrelevant categories for analyzing changes in emotional programmes included:

⁸⁸ Tuomi & Saarijärvi 2018.

⁸⁹ Geertz 1973:16.

⁹⁰ See Appendix I for details.

(A) Minor typographical and editorial changes (such as dividing a paragraph into two while retaining exactly the same words; adding words that in their context seemed to mainly enhance the flow of the text like “still;” correcting minor spelling errors like changing “face to face” to “face-to-face;” changes in the use capital letters; removal or addition of quotation marks when it did not seem to substantially change the meaning).

(B) New summaries of research findings that were already in the original book and did not change the content of the findings, only presented them in a more accessible format.

(C) Minor rephrases of research findings that did not seem to have a substantial effect on their meaning and application in their context.

(D) Omissions of steps in the exercises that did not seem to make any difference to what was actually suggested since the same was already being implied in the description or in the examples related to the exercise.

The potentially relevant categories in terms of somehow changing the nature of the emotional programme of intimacy included:

(1) Additional content that was clearly designated Christian (such as quotes from the Bible or from writers identified as Christian; new ideas, activities and motivations presented to be relevant to spiritual life such as Bible study group, going to Church, the idea of marriage as a spiritual exercise).

(2) Additional material that had expressly stated implications for being a Christian (such as research findings on how Christians view God or on what types of prayer are healthy; new case study dialogues between expressly Christian couples that discuss the relevance of God and the uses of faith in a relationship).

(3) Changes that were potentially motivated by what kind of Christianity was being portrayed (such as removing all references to homosexuality; rephrasing the material that discusses biology and neurochemistry – for example evolution, genes and specific hormones; changing or removing such expressions as “hell” and “bullshit;” modifying ideas on proper sexuality like removing the idea of sexual role play; new evaluations of cultural phenomena like “Hollywood love story”).

(4) Changes related to how the main author(s) and EFT were portrayed (such as removing or significantly shortening descriptions of the difficulties Johnson faced in developing EFT and the amount of help she received; removal of some descriptions of Johnson’s youth).

(5) *Removal of previous references to other religions and rephrasing of previous religious content* (such as deleting references to Buddhism and Islam; rephrasing descriptions of religious practices).

Here were at least some categories of change that I would need to take into account in my further analysis. While I tried to be as careful and perceptive as possible, any categorization of content like this is also necessarily a product of the “sensitivity of the intellectual receptivity of the individual, the sharpness of his insight, as well as luck,” as Tuomi and Sarajärvi put it in their manual on qualitative research and content analysis.⁹¹ Being systematic and not ignoring any variation without careful consideration were my guidelines.

The second research task involved a closer reading of the categories of change I had found, and then dividing them in a way that would elicit effective comparison. This involved thematic analysis as conceptualized, for example, in Guest et al. 2012 book *Applied Thematic Analysis*.⁹² This is how I proceeded.

I wanted to start my analysis by looking into what clues the covers could provide regarding the intended nature of the emotional programmes, especially in terms of what kind of promises were made and what kind of an audience seemed to be targeted. This became a part of my second research task (see chapter 4.1.1). At a very early stage I observed the key role of metaphor in Johnson’s adaptation, and decided to include it as another category to be examined (see chapter 4.1.2). The changes to the outlook on spirituality adjusted the goals of the emotional programme from those of secular humanism towards those of Christianity and became the subject of chapter 4.1.3.

I noticed the explanatory models in *HMT* and *CfC* were very different. I hypothesized relying on the primacy of biological versus religious explanations would have implications for the emotional programme and discussed this in chapter 4.1.4. Also, I hypothesized that the differences in modalities of knowing would have an impact on the emotional programmes and analyzed this in chapter 4.1.5. In chapter 4.1.6 I discussed the differences in values and how they changed the prescriptions of the emotional programmes. As no emotional programme is complete without practical means of embodying its prescriptions (see chapter 2.1), in chapter 4.1.7 I discussed the changes in the exercises and practices and their implications for the emotional programmes. I

⁹¹ Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018:113. My translation.

⁹² Guest & MacQueen & Namey 2012.

considered it likely that expanding the setting from two partners to including God would expand the scope and nature of the emotional programme of intimacy and discussed this separately in chapter 4.1.8.

Wherever possible in terms of relevance and space I discussed comparative material, studies and theories, that seemed to help bring out and make understandable the differences in the emotional programmes. For example, in chapter 4.1.1 I referred to Hill who also analyzed the covers of relationship manuals. In contrast to her, my interest in this was not the rhetoric itself, but how the changes in it were used to construct two different emotional programmes.

Likewise, in chapter 4.1.2 I used Hill for comparative insight, especially in terms of what she considered the usual master metaphors in relationship manuals and how they were typically used. I will explain in a little more detail how my approach differs from Hill's. Since metaphors as a rhetorical device are the subject of Hill's study she presents and discusses them very systematically. She groups metaphors (and their main phoros – the foci they are applied to – which I mention here in brackets) under three main categories: Elements (journey, weather, water, space), Organic (growth, levels, medical) and Technology (build, war, financial). She also lists the main subjects of each of the metaphor categories, of which she finds six: Difficulties, Change or Efforts, Advice or Skill, Life or Self, Emotions, and Relationship.⁹³ She then moves on to discussing the main subjects and referents of the metaphor topics in more detail.⁹⁴ I make some references to Hill's discussions, but since I am studying how emotional programmes are constructed and modified, I only discuss the metaphors that are crucial in understanding this, and from this vantage point only.

With the third research task I arrived at the bottom of the hourglass and situated my findings within the context of the relationship manual genre (chapter 4.2.1). In practice, I discussed Johnson's concept of 'effective dependency' in relation to the late modern relationship ideal of autonomy (as exemplified in studies on relationship manuals). I chose this theme because it was what seemed to have the highest contrast and interest value with respect to previous studies. I used Hazleden 2004 as the main comparative material, while also making some references to Giddens 1993 and Hochschild 1994.

⁹³ Hill 2007:112.

⁹⁴ Hill 2007:119.

Lastly, I considered Johnson's manuals against some concepts of therapeutic culture in order to highlight what the core cultural contradiction is that Johnson is addressing. For this I used the framework provided by *Habits of the Heart* (chapter 4.2.2).

4 Analysis

4.1 Comparison of the Emotional Programmes

In each of the subchapters I compare (what I consider constituting) the emotional programmes of intimacy in *HMT* and *CfC* by topic. I look at what I consider the key points in terms of content and rhetoric that Johnson changes in order to differentiate between the emotional programmes in *HMT* and *CfC*. I analyze the changes in the way Johnson constructs credibility and what they tell us about the intended audience and the intended nature of the emotional programmes her manuals offer. The focal points and themes of changes in content and rhetoric I found most conducive to studying the nature of the emotional programmes are represented by the subchapter headings. See chapter 3.2 for the reasoning behind these choices.

4.1.1 The Promise: From Lasting Romance to the Love of God

What are self-help relationship manuals as a genre geared towards providing? To take a marketing perspective, sociologist Wendy Simonds has studied the views of editors of self-help books. She found that among the most important elements required by some publishing companies to get a self-help book on the market are titles and book covers that promise happiness.⁹⁵ Hill has studied this aspect of relationship manuals as a means of establishing credibility.⁹⁶ In her study Hill found that

[T]he major methods of presenting credibility on book covers are to include "Ph.D." or "Dr." with the author's name, to refer to the *New York Times* bestseller list, to include titles of previous books, to include a photograph (especially if the author is well-known), to have endorsements from other self-help authors or from critics, to refer to the author's appearances in the media, and to describe the author as both an expert and someone who conducts workshops.⁹⁷

All of these are featured in both of Johnson's manuals, and can give us clues about the target audience. I'm interested especially in getting an idea about the kind of Christians Johnson is targeting, as that should help me better understand the modifications she makes.

The promise of *HMT* is summarized on the back cover: "Through illuminating case studies from her practice, advice and practical exercises, couples will learn how to nurture

⁹⁵ Simonds 1992; see also Hill 2007:25.

⁹⁶ Hill 2007:57–60.

⁹⁷ Hill 2007:60.

their relationships and ensure a lifetime of love.” Then follow quotes from three famous endorsers all of whom are qualified with “Ph.D.” and are themselves also authors of self-help relationship manuals, the names of which are mentioned and that are in line with Johnson’s message.⁹⁸ The core persuasion of the recommendations is that the “most original” and “best couple therapist in the world” is finally sharing her hard-won practical strategies (“Dr. Johnson’s superb science, humor, and clinical wisdom are finally accessible to all of us”). There’s no indication of a religious bias on the covers of *HMT*. It aims at a secular market (while not specifically excluding spiritually inclined audiences).

The emotional regime of the kind of Christianity Johnson and Sanderfer target their manual at seems to be more in need of an emotional programme that stresses a felt-sense of religious emotions, as we begin to see in the title in the back cover of *CfC*: “Resounding praise for *Created for Connection*.” In *CfC* there are five endorsers. There’s something for everyone in the credentials of the endorsers: three pastors, and two doctors, one of them also a hip-hop artist (“Tommy ‘Urban D.’ Kyllonen”) and the author of a Christian self-help book himself, while another is the founder of several Christian community groups that are mentioned by name. What the endorsements stress are the practicality and clear-cut honesty of Johnson’s ideas and methods; the impressiveness of her research background; the faith-based approach that seamlessly integrates the research into the Scriptures. The outspoken and implied result of using Johnson’s methods is a deeper kind of inspirational and transformative healing and sacrality of intimate connection between a couple and with God than regular relationship manuals can offer. Three of the references mention the metaphor of map and a clear path leading to the spiritual home that Christians are presented as longing for and God as having promised for them. The metaphoric implication is that this is the book where, as the endorser with the most clinical credentials, “Dr. Bill Bumberry, senior trainer, Gottman Institute, adjunct instructor in clinical psychology, Saint Louis University,” puts it, “Two powerful traditions, the science of love and Christianity, come together to illuminate the path to deeper love and lasting emotional connection.”

CfC also includes an inside sleeve. The left side begins with a very persuasive quote from the Bible: “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. – 1 John 4:8,” implying that if the Christian reader is not doing well in the field of love, they better

⁹⁸ The authors are John Gottman, Harville Hendrix and William Doherty. Hill 2007 discusses the exact same books by Gottman and Hendrix that are mentioned. Hazleden 2004, 2010 and 2014 discuss the same book by Hendrix.

find some guidance, as otherwise they also lack connection with God. In marked contrast to the marketing strategy of *HMT*, which mostly strikes the “best and most valuable” note, *CfC* asks: “Do you yearn to grow closer to God and to further incorporate Him and His teachings into your marriage? We all want a lifetime of love, support and faith, but sometimes we need a little help.” In both manuals Johnson’s contribution is contrasted with other offerings in the general relationship manual market, but in *CfC* the focus is that “Dr. Johnson and Kenneth Sanderfer, a leading EFT practitioner in the Christian community, share Johnson’s groundbreaking and remarkably successful program, based on her bestseller *Hold Me Tight*, for creating stronger, more secure relationships not only between partners, but between us and God.” The sleeve contains a succinct summary of what Johnson presents the setting of *CfC* to be:

The message of *Created for Connection* is simple: Forget about learning how to argue better, analyzing your early childhood, or making grand romantic gestures. Instead, get to the emotional underpinnings of your relationship by recognizing that you are attached to and dependent on your partner in much the same way that a child is on a parent, and that we are on the Heavenly Father, for nurturing, soothing and protection. The way to enhance or save our relationships with each other and with God is to be open, attuned, and responsive and to establish safe emotional connection. Filled with Bible verses, inspiring real-life stories, and guidance, *Created for Connection* will ensure a lifetime of love.⁹⁹

In summary, Johnson is addressing Christians who are looking for a felt-sense of connection with God while being mindful of a need to comply with Scripture. Marriage is a given value to this group and they are open to healing their relationship with God through scientifically-based counseling techniques. This situates Johnson’s audience broadly in the evangelical Christian range (while not excluding many others).¹⁰⁰

Evangelicals have a long history of involvement in the popular culture industry. The roots of this involvement can be traced to the late 1700s, but as scholar Charles Brown summarizes, “it was not until the 1960s that the large scale, mass-produced, and consumed evangelical material culture that we know today emerged.”¹⁰¹ This is an industry of several billions producing not only books, but also music, movies and material objects ranging from children’s toys to jewelry. The profits on this market are such that some of the companies are listed on NASDAQ and some have also been acquired by non-evangelical companies such as EMI.¹⁰² Based on his own research on the opinions of workers in the evangelical culture industry Brown concludes that “the Calvinist notion of work as an extension of worship and ministry seems alive and well in American

⁹⁹ This is an adaptation of the quick summary quoted at the end of chapter 1.1.

¹⁰⁰ See also chapters 4.1.5 and 4.1.7 for more arguments in favor of the assumed evangelical audience of *CfC*.

¹⁰¹ Brown 2012:115.

¹⁰² Brown 2012:113–114.

evangelicalism today,” albeit that “the Calvinist asceticism that Weber wrote about has been replaced with a Christian ethic of consumerism.”¹⁰³

Now we have an idea of the differences in the promise and prospected audience of the manuals, but what and how does Johnson change inside text to achieve these changes? I will next turn to Johnson’s use of metaphor in constructing her emotional programmes.

4.1.2 Constructing Intimacy Through Metaphors

My aim in this chapter is to analyze Johnson’s metaphors in such a way that the emotional programmes in *HMT* and *CfC* become visible and can be effectively compared. On the level of master metaphors Johnson’s scheme follows what is common to self-help relationship manuals as studied by Hill. As is to be expected in a competitive market, where authors need to make their products as attractive, convincing and unique as possible, Johnson provides twists of her own. What is most interesting, at least from the point of view of my study, however, is how Johnson very creatively and systematically adapts the basically secular emotional programme of *HMT* into the decidedly Christian one in *CfC*. My main focus is on the filters and reinterpretations that Johnson applies to her metaphors and how the reverberations (to use Johnson and Lakoff’s term) of these change the emotional programme. In practice, I analyze how Johnson uses metaphors to construct a sense of orientation for intimacy in *HMT* and how she modifies this in *CfC*. Or to put it differently, I study the coordinate system implicit in her use of metaphor.

Love as a journey forward

In *HMT* we meet the words “journey,” and “path” only a few times, but in these quotations Johnson uses them to metaphorically construct the core setting of her manuals, that of moving towards relationship goals in accordance with her instructions:

With the first study of EFT, I knew I had found a path to lead couples from desperate distress to happier connection. But once I understood that all the issues and drama revolved around attachment bonds, I realized that I also had discovered a broad map for love and could systematically plot out the steps of the journey to a special kind of loving connection. (*HMT*:48)¹⁰⁴

Now let’s replay this little drama and see how they can create a new kind of dance. Here are the steps that can set them on the path to greater harmony. (*HMT*:127)

They can focus on achieving orgasms in one interlude and in the next on gently journeying to the place poet Leonard Cohen calls “a thousand kisses deep.” (*HMT*:200)

Johnson’s claim is that with her advice, with the ‘map’ of love she has figured out, the reader will be able to undertake a journey of a special kind along a carefully designed

¹⁰³ Brown 2012:127. Publishing information about Weber’s book removed from the quote.

¹⁰⁴ All underlinings in this chapter are by me to draw attention to some of the key metaphors and terms being analyzed.

path that will lead to special emotional and sexual destinations. This metaphorical journey has steps, which Johnson has worked out, and the implication is that the reader will somewhat linearly be ‘moving forward’ towards something better than the regular relationship drama or sex.

According to Hill the idea of love as a journey towards something that is always better is so commonplace in the rhetoric of self-help relationship manuals that it can be considered a master metaphor for love in them. It can be easily applied to all the main subjects usually covered in such guides (see chapter 3.2 for a list). The setting relationship manuals use this metaphor to construct is that the author is the expert who has prior knowledge of the terrain. The reader is constructed as the inexperienced or previously mistaken traveler who should accept the challenges of love and take the trouble to continue moving forward until they finally reap the rewards of the completed journey. The metaphor of journey entices the reader to view love as an adventure, and with the added image of the experienced author by their side, it seems that any difficulties on the way can be easily resolved by the unique road map the author has. Responsibility for the success of the journey is in relationship manuals placed on the reader, as it is up to them to follow the prescriptions, and to try again until they make it to the realm of relationship bliss.¹⁰⁵

The aim of the journey and love as growth upward

But what is ‘forward’ in *HMT* and in *CfC*? What is the prize to be won by the journey of love? By examining this we can begin to see the differences in the emotional programmes Johnson constructs.

In *HMT* the drama of love is between the couple, and the rewards to be expected from the journey are intimacy and happiness, at times described in such terms that there is a scent of romance, magic and spirituality in the air, but still not framed in terms of religious emotions or concepts. Mostly Johnson promises to teach skills that strengthen the sense of security and empowerment of both partners of the couple, and especially their confidence in the solidity of their relationship. These quotes summarize well what Johnson presents the prize of following her advice to be:

As I told Bill and Laura in their last session, sexual technique is just the frill, not the real thrill! They had the best sex manual of all, the ability to create closeness, tune in to each other, and move in emotional synchrony. (*HMT*:208)

Marion says that she feels more “confident” as a person since they have been able to turn their relationship around. She now feels “close” to Steve in a way that moves her into “calm happiness.” Steve chooses his words carefully. “When she risks and comes close, I melt,” he says. And I feel high. We have a new level of trust here. Will *melt*, *high*, and *trust* do?” I tell

¹⁰⁵ Hill 2007:111–114.

him that it seems to me that they will do very nicely. I get him to ask Marion, and she replies with a broad, open smile. (*HMT*:230; italics in the original)

Here Johnson describes the goals or rewards of following her advice in terms of metaphoric movement (moving in emotional synchrony, closing emotional distance). The journey ‘forward’ also metaphorically leads towards the other, as well as metaphorically aligns the movement of the two partners. Both of these ‘journeys’ towards greater harmony and connection between the couple are envisioned as being forward in time along a ‘path’ of common effort in accordance with Johnson’s ‘map’ of the emotional terrain of couple interaction. What Johnson is offering in *HMT* aligns well with the relationship manual genre in general, as Hill notes: “Love, connection, romance, joy, and peace are the rewards one can expect to reap when one does marriage properly.”¹⁰⁶

In *CfC* Johnson and Sanderfer apply new qualifying words (or terministic screens as Hill calls them) and narratives to the metaphors of love as a journey. This significantly extends the metaphorical terrain of the emotional programme and changes its overall tone. First of all, the map of relationship drama now applies to the reader’s relationship with God as well, “It [EFT] gave me a new map for guiding me in my relationship with God and others” (*CfC*:14). In *CfC* the journey to relationship bliss turns into a spiritual journey with religious motivations (longing for God), aims (union with God), and emotions (holiness):

All through history, Christians have also spoken of this longing for connection with God in terms of a personal spiritual journey, a seeking for union with God. The Bible promises us, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). This journey can be framed as a search for peace, for wisdom, for release from shame or sin, and as a returning to wholeness. Indeed, the word *holy* originally signified that which must be preserved whole and intact. (*CfC*:251–252; italics in the original)

As in the quotes above and below, in *CfC* the emotional programme is legitimized by references to the Bible, which further defines what is prescribed as the appropriate approach to intimate relationships:

The Bible reminds us that marriage is not just a social arrangement but a spiritual exercise, a journey toward greater communion with God and others. For a Christian couple, shaping a Future Love Story sets them on the path to endless growth. (*CfC*:222)

It’s [marriage] part of my journey toward God, toward being the best Christian I can be. So my husband and I have a commitment to help each other grow. (*CfC*:269)

In other words, in *CfC* the journey becomes strictly a matter of marriage understood as a spiritual exercise sanctioned by God. The journey of the couple becomes ultimately a matter of seeking union with God. The path still leads forward into the future, but is characterized as ‘endless growth,’ which both partners are expected to commit to in order

¹⁰⁶ Hill 2007:164.

to become the best Christians they can. The prescriptions of the emotional programme are further defined by setting up God as the one who determines the direction the couple should help each other grow towards. This also has repercussions on the meso level of the emotional programme in that the couple are now prescribed certain group activities. These are clearly connected with the emotional programme in that the couple's work is conceptualized as altruistically mediating God's love for those in need:

The story that Bobby Joe and Frank tell me reflects their belief that marriage is a spiritual journey. She comments, "Now that we are closer, we are beginning to serve God together in a new way, and we see this growing in the future. We will help each other become more of who God wants us to be. We are planning a mission trip next summer with our church and starting a small group in our home to help other couples grow together. As we learn to come together, we will find new ways to serve the Lord." (CfC:239)

They provide typical ministry aid, such as school supplies, medical and dental services, and gifts and food at Christmas. But what sets them apart is the focus on getting to know the people on an individual basis and coming alongside them on their life journey. [...] There are no hidden agendas here – just a ministry and outpouring of Christ's love. (CfC:284–285)

The rhetoric of closeness as the goal of intimate relationships that we saw in *HMT* remains, but now this state of intimacy to be achieved is framed as serving "God together in a new way," which implies that as the couple come closer to each other they also approach God. The stress on personal emotional responsiveness that Johnson prescribed already in *HMT* gets new application in the Christian emotional programme in terms of getting to know those in need and helping them in a very personal and practical way.

What should be mentioned before we move on is that according to Hill 'growth' is another master metaphor in relationship manuals. Along with journey, the metaphor of growth is so commonplace that it is hard to notice how self-evidently we consider it good in itself. As we have seen in the quotes above, also in Johnson's scheme growth is of exceedingly high value and being on the 'journey' with the proper map naturally leads to 'growth.' In the context of relationship manuals, it is easy to find and cure the obstacles to 'growth,' and such remedies always lead to positive results, just as is the case with the metaphor of journey.¹⁰⁷

Bad dance moves, faulty tuning and other obstacles on the way

So now we are on a journey of growth and have the general directions: but how are we supposed to reach the goal? What kind of involvement and practices do the emotional programmes prescribe? Enter more specific metaphors of movement instructions and metaphors of levels.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Hill 2007:114–115.

What Johnson does with the metaphors of journey and growth is to apply a very specifically constructed filter of ‘connection’ versus ‘disconnection’ over them. This filter can be seen in most of her metaphoric discussions of the journey of ‘love’ or ‘intimacy’, both of which Johnson also associates with ‘connection.’

Johnson takes the tripartite model of attachment styles directly from the strange situation experiment.¹⁰⁸ She systematically uses metaphors of what might be called recursive patterns of couple interaction to construct and illustrate this scheme. This scheme defines in Johnson’s manuals what is deemed as the positive middle ground or ‘balance’ between two negative extremes. It seems to me ‘coherence’ (or order) is the prescribed middle ground criterion here, whereas I would call the two opposing extremes of disconnection ‘chaos’ (incoherent signal) and ‘nothingness’ (no signal). This scheme applies both to the interactional patterns themselves and to the emotions involved. And here we meet the generic criterion Johnson uses to determine what is positive and what is negative: ‘health.’ There is a strong association between the ideas of growth and health in the relationship manual genre (as in globalized Western societies in general), just as the unquestionable value of ‘health’ is another given.¹⁰⁹ We will see that this applies to Johnson’s manuals, too.

First of all, in Johnson’s scheme couples get caught in all kinds of repetitive patterns of interaction that stall them or mislead them from the correct path towards the kind of growth that will lead to relationship bliss. Johnson refers to these patterns metaphorically as circles, cycles, loops, spirals, and dances, but what is common to all of them is that they can take over the relationship.

This spiral has really taken over. One freezes up, feels paralyzed, shuts down into a shell, the other feels shut out and pokes harder and harder to get a response. (*HMT:78*)

They’re caught in a terrible loop, their responses generating more negative responses and emotions in each other. (*HMT:32*)

It is a circle that just spins and spins and it has taken over your relationship. (*HMT:78*)

So this circle, cycle, loop, dance, whatever it is, has us stuck. (*HMT:72*)

What this means in Johnson’s scheme is that such patterns have a negative effect on the axis of connection versus disconnection. In other words, the bad thing about the patterns is that they separate the partners either by pitting them against each other or by making them escape each other, thus not landing on Johnson’s zone of coherent connection. This safe zone of coherent connection is the prescribed ideal in her emotional programme.

¹⁰⁸ See chapter 1.1 for a description of the experiment.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Hill 2007:114–115.

Here we will see in more detail how Johnson metaphorically constructs the obstacles to connection through the metaphor of dance:

We get stuck in three basic patterns—I call them the Demon Dialogues—when we cannot connect safely with our partner. Find the Bad Guy is a dead-end pattern of mutual blame that effectively keeps a couple miles apart, blocking reengagement and the creation of a safe haven. Couples dance at arm's length. That's what Jim and Pam are doing when they fall into blaming each other for their distressed relationship. Many couples lapse into this pattern for short periods, but it is difficult to maintain over time. For most, Find the Bad Guy is the brief prelude to the most common and entrapping dance of distress. Marriage researchers have labeled this next dance Demand-Withdraw or Criticize-Defend. I call it the Protest Polka because I see it as a reaction to or, more accurately, a protest against the loss of the sense of secure attachment that we all need in a relationship. The third dance is Freeze and Flee, or as we sometimes call it in EFT, Withdraw-Withdraw. This usually happens after the Protest Polka has been going on for a while in a relationship, when dancers feel so hopeless that they begin to give up and put their own emotions and needs in the deep freeze, leaving only numbness and distance. Both people step back to escape hurt and despair. In dance terms, suddenly no one is on the floor; both partners are sitting out. This is the most dangerous dance of all. (*HMT*: 66–67)

We see several 'dance moves' or 'positions' here with respect to 'connection' between the couple, all of which Johnson considers undesirable. These moves fail to exemplify and generate what Johnson's system values: safety and hope. The ideal kind of dance Johnson's emotional programme prescribes in contrast to the various 'dances of distress' described above is 'tango:'

Think of it this way: If Conversations 1, 2, and 3 are a little like going for a walk in the park together, then Conversation 4 is like dancing the tango. It's a new level of emotional engagement. All of the previous conversations are preparation for this one, and all the upcoming dialogues hinge upon a couple's ability to create this one. Conversation Hold Me Tight is the ultimate bridge spanning the space between two solitudes. (*HMT*:147–148).

When experts suggest that only fresh relationships flying the flags of conquest and infatuation can offer exciting sex, I think of an older, long-married couple that I know and how they dance the Argentine tango. They are completely present and engaged with each other. Their moves are achingly deliberate, totally playful, and stunningly erotic. They are so attuned and responsive to each other that even though the dance is fluid, improvised in the moment, they never miss a step or a turn. They move as one, with grace and flair. (*HMT*:203)

Tim has become accessible. He can tell his wife about his attachment needs and vulnerabilities. He is emotionally engaged. It is this that matters, not exactly what he says. But Sarah at first does not know how to handle this stranger. Can she trust him? In just a short time, he has changed the music in the relationship from a polka to a tango, a dance of intense connection. (*HMT*:56)

In the first quote we get to see the setting typical of many relationship manuals. The approach is very programmatic and results can be expected only after several phases of journeying and practice. The reward, however, is something quite extraordinary, as Johnson poetically puts it at the end of the first quote.¹¹⁰ As the second and third quote show, when the distance between two solitudes has been bridged, the outcome is a state nothing short of magical in its combination of intense presence and engagement along with flawless execution of every move. So, metaphorically we are engaged in a journey

¹¹⁰ Cf. Hill 2007:185, 193.

forward, in growth upward, and we now have an idea of what the bad and good moves look like. Before we move on, let's try to visualize what Johnson's use of metaphor has so far taught us of her model of intimacy (see Figure 1).¹¹¹

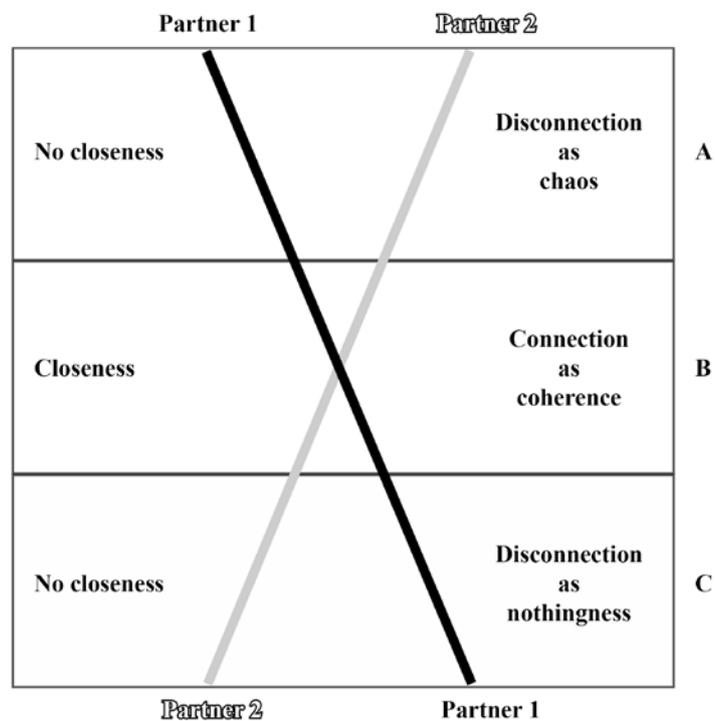


Figure 1. Intimacy as 'closeness' and 'connection' on a tripartite metaphoric map.

In Figure 1 I have represented partner 1 by a black line and partner 2 by a light gray line. Where these lines intersect, zone B in the middle, both partners are closest to each other and have the best quality connection possible. There are two extremes where the lines do not touch and accordingly the couple do not feel closeness towards each other. The couple enters zone A at the top when the emotions and interactional patterns between them are too chaotic, or to put it closer to Johnson's terms, too far in the realm of blame and demand. Zone C at the bottom awaits the couple whose relationship 'dance' gets frozen by withdrawal and evasion. Zones A, B, and C make up what I have called the tripartite model that Johnson has derived from the strange situation experiment (see chapter 1.1). In Johnson's view every relationship good depends on the couple staying on the safe zone B of coherent 'closeness' and 'connection'. This is where Johnson's map points at, where the journey of creating love is, where we grow as a couple. Zone B is also where we can best meet with God, where the quality of our interaction with him has positive repercussions on the quality of our connection with our partner (and vice versa). Both zones A and C are dangerous, the quality of interaction there and the emotions involved

¹¹¹ Johnson doesn't provide any visualizations herself, so this is my etic interpretation.

are ‘negative’ and ‘unhealthy’ and have a correspondingly deleterious impact on the relationship.

If we now go back to the three quotes above we see that they also contain what Hill would classify as metaphors of levels, which according to her “generally refer to emotions (which are often buried deeply).”¹¹² Indeed, in this vein Johnson uses the metaphor of ‘attunement’ to add one more dimension of orientation to the journey. The fantastic state described in the two quotes above is in Johnson emotional programme considered to be the result of moving between emotional surface and depth.

In Johnson’s manuals the ‘closeness’ of connection depends on what ‘level’ of emotions we are attuned to. There are the usual surface emotions¹¹³ that we have (in intimate relationships) when we are taken (or demonically possessed as Johnson’s terminology seems to imply) by the kind of negative interactional patterns exemplified in the quote about the demon dialogues above. Johnson pathologizes these patterns and their attendant emotions as negative and unhealthy. They are all to be avoided as something inherently dangerous to emotional health and a sense of safety.

But as Johnson’s map reveals, there is another level of emotions and that is where attunement comes to the rescue. By tuning in to ‘deeper’ emotions,¹¹⁴ we are connecting with what might be called authentic emotions, although Johnson rarely chooses this term herself (for the few cases, see *HMT*:148, *CfC*:156; *HMT*:166, *CfC*:176).

Johnson’s relationship repair hinges on the idea that we can come to understand and direct our emotional life. This is where proper attunement, as taught by Johnson, is required. To put it in etic terms, attunement is what heals our emotions, our relationship, and in the process also our agency. We connect with something more real, and this makes it possible for us to become better, more intentionally directed human beings, as Johnson underlying model has it. Also, in Hill’s analysis it is typical of the relationship manual genre that the “growth of a relationship involves being familiar with one’s levels, as well as healing from one’s wounds.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, in Johnson’s scheme, with the help of the activities the levels metaphors like attunement describe, the recurring negative patterns and their

¹¹² Hill 2007:114.

¹¹³ Surface emotions (e.g. *HMT*:112, 122) are also called “reactive” (*HMT*:112, 120), and “negative” (*HMT*:32, 83, 230) emotions.

¹¹⁴ Deeper emotions (e.g. *HMT*:43, 129, 144, 152) are also called “more vulnerable” (*HMT*:120), “most vulnerable” (*HMT*:121), “softer” (*HMT*:42, 51, 121, 144), “softest” (*HMT*:121), “more profound” (*HMT*:119), “underlying” (*HMT*:130), “deep” (*HMT*:143, 158), “deepest” (*HMT*:57, 130, 148, 161), “primary” (*HMT*:189), “core” (*HMT*:158), and “innermost” (*HMT*:152, 284) emotions.

¹¹⁵ Hill 2007:115.

attendant negative emotions can be ‘healed’ and directed to positive outcomes. Then, instead of taking control over the relationship, the loops, circles, cycles and dances become healthy and contribute to our growth:

When we slowed down the “spin” of these circular dances, softer emotions, like sadness, fear, embarrassment, and shame, always appeared. Talking about these emotions, maybe for the first time, and seeing how their pattern trapped them both, helped Jamie and Hugh feel safer with each other. Jamie didn’t look so dangerous when she was able to tell Hugh how alone she felt. No one had to be the bad guy here. They began to have new kinds of conversations and their narrow exchange of blame and silent distancing slowed down. Sharing their softer emotions, they started to see each other differently. Jamie admitted, “I never saw the whole picture. I just knew he wasn’t close to me. I saw him as not caring. Now I see how he was ducking my bullets and trying to calm me down. I shoot when I get desperate and can’t get a reaction any other way.” (*HMT*: 42–43).

In a third conversation, Revisiting a Rocky Moment, this couple replay a time when they got stuck in a demand-distance loop, acknowledging the steps each made and the emotions each felt. They now are in control of the momentum created by their dance. (*HMT*:52)

They have started to go beyond just doing the steps in their negative dance and to see the pattern it is creating as it occurs and begins to take over their relationship. They are acknowledging their own steps in this dance. They have begun to see how these steps trigger each other into the primal program of attachment needs and fears. They are starting to grasp the incredible impact they have on each other. They are understanding, voicing, and sharing the hurt of rejection and fears of abandonment that drive the dance. (*HMT*:143; in the original this is formatted as a bullet list).

Moments like these were amazing and dramatic. They changed everything and started a new positive spiral of love and connection. (*HMT*:44)

All the quotes give an idea of how healing emotions and the relationship works in Johnson’s system, but more importantly for us here, they demonstrate that an inner metaphorical movement of ‘attunement’ towards the emotionally healing ‘depths’ is a destination through which Johnson’s map of love directs us. We could visualize this as in Figure 2 below. I have represented surface emotions as horizontal in that they cannot provide for growth which in Figure 2 occurs in both vertical directions. I have emphasized the lack of intimacy in surface emotions (A) by representing them as a shallow, horizontal cone that lacks volume in contrast to the vast depths and heights of authentic emotions shown as the voluminous, open-ended vertical half cylinder spanning from the heights of point B to the depths of point C. This figure is just a generic illustration of the idea that in Johnson’s model the realm of authentic emotions and growth seems to inhabit a more open and unconstrained space than that of the superficial and rigid emotions that trap us when we unhealthily remain attuned to them. When it comes to *CfC*, we could visualize a proper connection with God as occurring within the open space between points B and C. Here our image of God is unconstrained by our ‘negativity’ and can fulfill its function as an empowering attachment figure, both a source of authentic emotion and a model for growth in a ‘positive’ and ‘healthy’ direction. Attunement to God occurs within a vertical continuum of authentic emotion just as a properly attuned connection to one’s partner

does (in the sense that both partners of the couple attune to and meet on the level of their more authentic emotions which have more scope and life to them).

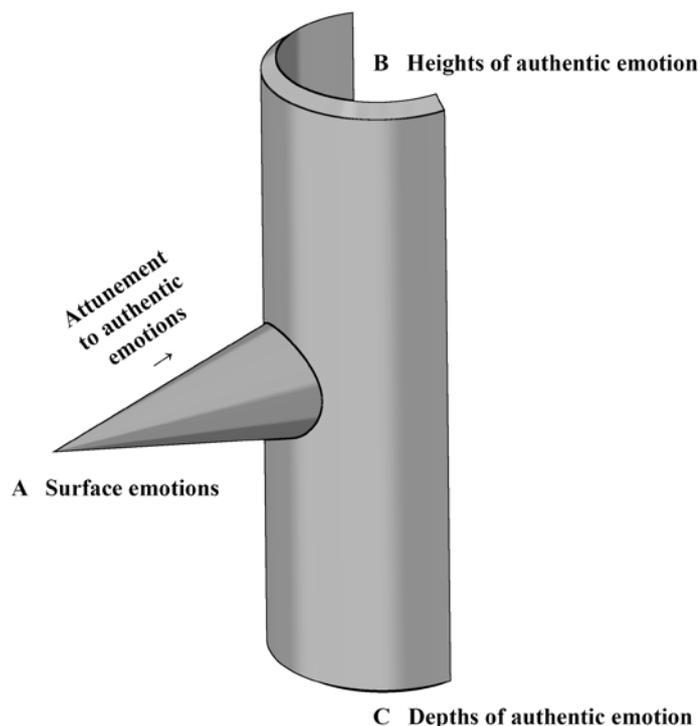


Figure 2. Attunement from surface emotions to authentic emotions.

There are no significant modifications to most of the metaphors of interactional patterns in *CfC*: A loop is still a loop, a circle is a circle,¹¹⁶ a cycle remains a cycle. But thinking of Lakoff and Johnson's idea of the reverberations that occur in the whole network of metaphoric entailments when a metaphor's meaning is qualified in some creative new way,¹¹⁷ I think what Johnson does with the metaphor of dance is a case in point. She keeps almost every other reference to 'dance' as it was in *HMT* but adds a second quote to the epigraph at the beginning of the whole book. In *HMT* and in *CfC* the whole book begins with a quote from a Leonard Cohen song. This quote stays also in *CfC*, but is followed by a quote from the Bible, in effect transforming the whole meaning of the book. The quote by Cohen seems to mirror the core ideas of EFT, and when we see them side by side, the changes in metaphoric entailments to what 'dance' means in *CfC* become apparent.

¹¹⁶ In *CfC* Johnson introduces the idea of a 'sacred circle,' but I think it builds on such a different meaning of 'circle' that I will not discuss it in this context.

¹¹⁷ See chapter 2.2.

<p>Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin Dance me through the panic till I'm gathered safely in Lift me like an olive branch and be my homeward dove Dance me to the end of love – Leonard Cohen (<i>HMT</i>:vii; <i>CfC</i>:vii)</p>	<p>I can see now, GOD, that your decisions are right;... Oh, love me—and right now!—hold me tight! just the way you promised. Now comfort me so I can live, really live; your revelation is the tune I dance to.. – Psalm 119:75–77 (The Message) (<i>CfC</i>:vii)</p>
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Table 1. Comparison of the Epigraphs.

The latter quote seems to mirror the core message of EFT in a Christian context. The first line seems to establish that Johnson now has a spiritual perspective and that she understands she is to serve God, who knows what is right. This implicitly invites the reader to consider the same on his or her part. The second line contains the name of the conversation Johnson considers most important and life-changing in her system, “hold me tight,” not to mention that the in-the-moment quality of love that Johnson teaches seems to be implied. The third line seems to connect with the ideas about Christianity that Johnson discusses in *CfC*, namely God’s covenant with humanity, and the idea of God as a perfect attachment figure. The fourth line seems to be showing the essence of love to be exactly the kind of interaction EFT prescribes for couples, including the idea that this is what is really meaningful in life, crucial for truly thriving. The last line uses arguably the most thoroughgoing metaphors in Johnson’s system, love as music and dance, but now the tuning is on the level of revelation, God’s love. Even Johnson seems to be pleased with the metaphoric reverberations of this Bible quote as she makes it also the beginning quote of the chapter on what she considers her most crucial ‘conversation’ of ‘hold me tight’ (*CfC*:154). With over a hundred references to the word ‘dance’ in both manuals, the tone of the emotional programme changes dramatically by this one qualification to the metaphor of love as a dance of connection. In *CfC* it becomes also a matter of connecting with God, tuning into his revelation, being touched by his divine love. What comes to ‘attunement’ Johnson attaches a whole array of new meanings to it in her Christian scheme:

It is no accident that when Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel showing the moment when God reaches to touch Adam’s outstretched hand and thereby create mankind, the intensity of the gaze between Adam and God is palpable. The artist has captured the moment when God tunes the human nervous system and shapes Adam for connection with Him. (*CfC*:176)

Those who have this sense of security in their most important relationships also report that bonding moments in romantic relationships tune them in to their sense of connection to God. (*CfC*:260)

This is where a positive sense of connection with God fosters more loving bonds with special others, and in turn, these loving bonds help us to tune in to and turn toward the love of God. (*CfC*:267–268)

The sense of connection with a loving God calms us and helps us tune in to our partner's world so that we can respond more compassionately and sensitively to his or her needs. (*CfC*:279)

Johnson begins by establishing that mankind was created by God, who tuned mankind's biology for a very special kind of connection with Him. In terms of the emotional programme, Johnson then asserts that successfully tuning in to one's partner's deeper emotions in a romantic sense has repercussions on how well they can tune in to God. And then she says this works also the other way. So, in the Christian emotional programme the stakes are much higher: every interaction with one's partner and with God has implications for the future quality of connection between them. In the Christian emotional programme the range of expected emotions is also much broader, and the proper interplay of religious and romantic emotion is more exactly defined and prescribed.

Root metaphors

What comes to the idea of root metaphors, Johnson's emotional programmes prescribe the therapeutic use of deliberately constructed metaphors and narratives that communicate to the couple the shared significance of their relationship. This involves metaphoric naming of the couple's relationship past and future:

But a few months later, with their connection much more secure, they were able to create a clear, logical story of how their problems evolved and how they had reclaimed their marriage. They called it, "How N & B Conquered Demons and Distance and Created the Ultimate Cuddle." (*HMT*:226; *CfC*:233)

Todd agrees that this is the outline of the polka for them. They decide to call it the Vortex. For them the name expresses how obsessed Todd gets with his wife's sexual availability and how obsessed she becomes with guarding her space. (*HMT*:90; *CfC*:100).

To add something to what Hill found in her material, it seems to me that Johnson's setting invokes a kind of 'timeless' or constant tension in stressing the recurring nature of interactional patterns. We're always in the beginning, at each moment choosing the positive or negative pattern according to which our love will unfold as a 'journey.' Any lapse in attention at any point may decide the success or failure of our journey, and we must attend to this kind of 'safety' first, or the 'drama' will relentlessly and inevitably destroy our love. In this sense the journey Johnson sets up is more of an internal ascent or inner transformation which will lead to 'growth,' rather than a linear path, although she stresses both aspects.

To use some etic metaphor to summarize, Johnson's map seems to act as a 'tuning fork' that gives a fixed note ('deeper' emotions or God's love) and rhythm (calm, synchronous) that the lovers need to synchronize with in order to really love, to have true intimacy. This fork may give different tones in the different settings of the exercises and conversations

(when to, for example, tune in to one's vulnerability, and when to radiate hope in reinforcing a new direction), but for each prototypical situation, it always gives a fixed direction, as predetermined by Johnson. The outstated expectation is that with practice the lovers will learn to better recognize the correct note, as well as to separate it from clearly inappropriate notes. This is in line with Riis & Whitehead's formulation quoted in chapter 2.1 that an emotional programme "clarifies which emotional notes must be sounded and which must not, which emotions should be foregrounded, and which should appear only on the 'back stage' or not at all."¹¹⁸ The big difference in *CfC* is that there the 'attachment cry' inherent in our biology and neurochemistry is said to have been 'tuned' by God so that we would long for him and be able to find him, and also to be properly attuned to Him and His wishes. The implication is that whatever direction Johnson's tuning fork guides us towards, it is the direction that also God wants us to go on our metaphorical journey.

4.1.3 Outlook on Spirituality: From Humanism to Christianity

In this chapter I look at the differences in outlook on spirituality in *HMT* and *CfC*, and their implications for the emotional programmes. There are only a few references to religions and forms of spirituality in *HMT* such as this, "we can learn sympathy and compassion for others from the Christian Bible, from the Koran, or from the teachings of the Buddha" (*HMT*:272). But none of these references are used to make prescriptions. In the instance above, Johnson goes on to say, "But I think first we have to learn it and feel it in the tender embrace of a parent or a lover" (*HMT*:272). In contrast, in *CfC* all references to other religions have been removed and in the instance under discussion here, Johnson gives instead her understanding of what kind of a place she believes Christ intended His church to be (*CfC*:283). This illustrates the basic difference in the role and nature of what is considered spiritual in *HMT* versus *CfC*. In *HMT* the primary frame of reference is secular humanism of the variety that is open to spiritual and religious experience as healthy and inspirational.¹¹⁹ The basic premise in *CfC*, on the other hand, is that it is directed at Christian couples, and that everything in it is Bible-proof and appropriate for Christian audiences.

Hill notes that in the relationship manual market it is customary that authors backup their expertise by their religious beliefs, and that their religious backgrounds are usually easy to discern. According to Hill some authors take the view that specific religious beliefs are

¹¹⁸ Riis & Woodhead 2010:77–78.

¹¹⁹ See chapter 1.1 and Cowie & Hayes 2005.

not a requirement for a happy marriage, but that sharing a belief system is likely to make the couple happier. Some authors use references to God to legitimize their ideas in the sense of claiming that there is a cosmic order that we shouldn't attempt to change.¹²⁰ Hill observes:

Although most of the authors are openly religious (in the sense of practicing Christianity or Judaism) their use of spirituality is not necessarily tied to religion. The line between Christianity and New-Age spirituality has never been well-defined, but has become increasingly more blurry.¹²¹

Relationship guide rhetoric has it both ways, appealing to readers in a New-Age spiritual vein, but (for most) with the more traditional Jewish or Christian religious perspective as a back-up.¹²²

HMT can be positioned in the more general and blurry territory of spirituality where no alternatives are excluded, while *CfC* clearly sets itself apart from everything else than Christianity. To give another example, in both books Johnson discusses studies which show how “simply pausing and recalling times when someone cared for you instantly reduces your hostility to people who are different from you, if only for a brief period.” In *HMT* Johnson makes her only reference to Buddhism right after this:

This supports the Buddhist meditation method for enhancing compassion by thinking on how one is loved by another. Science journalist Sharon Begley, in her book on neuroscience and Buddhism, quotes the Dalai Lama as saying that Tibetans in danger usually shout “Mother” for comfort. (*HMT*:269)

In *CfC* the replacement goes:

Christians have always known this, though. Father Anthony Storey, a Catholic priest and one of my life mentors whom I spoke about in the introduction, always reminded me that meditating on religious images or sayings was not simply a religious ritual but also a way of connecting with the best part of ourselves—the part that naturally believes in and resonates with the best in others. (*CfC*:279–280)

Here we see several dramatic shifts in Johnson's rhetoric. In *HMT* it is the science that supports religious ideas and it is the Buddhists who exemplify the behaviors (that are first scientifically explained and predicted). In *CfC* the modality of knowing is completely different, it is the Christians who “have always known” how things really are.¹²³ The implication is that scientists, including Johnson when she is presented in her role as a scientist, are finally coming to realize the same eternal truths through their research. The next thing we need to ask is how is God constituted in *CfC* and what is he presented to be bringing to the emotional programme of intimacy?

¹²⁰ Hill 2007:131.

¹²¹ Hill 2007:132.

¹²² Hill 2007:133.

¹²³ See chapter 4.1.5 for a discussion of this modality.

God in CfC

In discussing God in *CfC* Johnson uses the words transcendence (*CfC*:249), omnipresent (*CfC*:254) and infinite (*CfC*:268), but each only once in the whole book. Johnson is not interested in God as an abstraction (*CfC*:251). For Johnson God is the ultimate source of light and love (*CfC*:v), and for Sanderfer God is at the heart of love (*CfC*:14). Johnson's mission is to enhance the quality of human relationships with other human beings and with God. This makes her look at God from a very specific viewpoint, that of God as relationship. Indeed, Sanderfer writes in his introduction that "God's very nature is relational" and that "God has created us as relational beings" (*CfC*:15, see also *CfC*:22). Johnson recalls that her friend and mentor when she was an undergraduate student, Father Storey, had urged her "to remember that Christians have always referred to God as an attachment figure, as the 'Heavenly Father'" (*CfC*:7). Indeed, Johnson writes of God as the ultimate attachment figure (*CfC*:256) and in reviewing research on the subject mentions that according to it "believers describe God and relate to Him as a reliable, responsive parent – a perfect attachment figure who is always there for His children" (*CfC*:32–33). This takes us to perhaps the main role that Johnson ascribes to God in her book. God is the ultimate, unfailing or perfect model of being a good parent to one's child, or of being a good life partner to one's partner – God is "the ultimate giver of secure connection and love" (*CfC*:5), "the ultimate safe haven and refuge" (*CfC*:32), "the ultimate source of safety and comfort" (*CfC*:265).

As the title of Johnson's book goes, human beings were created for connection. Johnson argues that God did not create us for a distant, abstract connection, but for a very personal, intimate and visceral bond. Both Johnson and Sanderfer write almost identically in their introductions that "God is love, and He wants more than anything to have an intimate relationship with us individually and as couples" (*CfC*:9, 14). Johnson writes that "God desires a breath-to-breath and face-to-face relationship with us" (*CfC*:37). Sanderfer describes this as "a special and unique intimate relationship" (*CfC*:16). Johnson writes that human longing "is not for an abstract 'knowledge' of connection; it is for a 'felt sense' of belonging. We feel this connection when we are *moved* by the majesty of the natural world, the spiritual truths found in Scripture, and the music of hymn and chorus" (*CfC*:251; italics in the original). Johnson explains that "Most often this message [that we would be better off if we loved each other more] is given as a set of moral rules and abstract ideas. Trouble is that it doesn't seem to have that much impact unless we are also emotionally touched, that is, unless we personally experience a connection to a loving

God” (*CfC*:283). Johnson and Sanderfer share the belief that it is “God’s intention that we each experience a divine gaze when we look into our partner’s eyes, a gaze that communicates the miracle of being truly known and deeply loved” (*CfC*:9–10). Johnson suggests talking to God, and talking to God in a very specific way, “from a more vulnerable place” (*CfC*:268, cf. *CfC*:264–265), also “offering up” one’s emotional needs to God in prayer (*CfC*:268).

Let us pause to consider the blurry line between Christianity and New Age in Johnson’s case. In their 2005 book *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* sociologist Paul Heelas and Woodhead make a distinction between ‘subjective-life spirituality’ and ‘life-as religion.’ They claim that what is occurring in the West (along with the ‘massive subjective turn’ of modern culture) is subjectivization, and that this involves both “secularization (with regard to life-as forms of religion) and sacralization (with regard to subjective-life forms of spirituality).”¹²⁴ In Johnson’s case, *HMT* can be considered open to (New Age or other forms of) spirituality, while the move in *CfC* is towards what Heelas and Woodhead call ‘life-as religion,’ at least in the sense that some precepts and practices from the Bible are prescribed as absolute (and thus exemplify conformance to a higher authority than the subjective self). This would be a move in the opposite direction than Heelas and Woodhead theorize. However, it should be noted that both *HMT* and *CfC* share much with New Age premises, such as the idea of health as something holistic (at least in the sense of involving also emotions) and the view that psychological or spiritual growth in the sense of personal empowerment is essential.

In *CfC* Johnson’s ‘effective dependency’ on God is not a relationship of one-sided moral authority of God over man, but includes the idea that God wishes man to live according to his attachment needs and fears. I will turn to this merging of biological and biblical rhetoric next.

4.1.4 Explanatory Models: Biology as ‘God’ versus God as Biology

We have seen that the God in *CfC* is presented as someone whom we should be very intimately involved with and who has a very personal interest in our lives. In this chapter I discuss how Johnson and Sanderfer manage to fit in a God like this with the basically scientific models of explanation and argumentation in *HMT*.

In *HMT* Johnson uses biological models and neuroscience to explain why and how we love. In her 2012 book *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* cultural sociologist

¹²⁴ Heelas & Woodhead 2005:5–6,10. Italics in the original.

Eva Illouz takes note of a cultural process of disenchantment with regard to love and considers scientific modes of explanation one of the factors contributing to it:

Throughout the twentieth century, first psychoanalysis and then psychology, and later biology, evolutionary psychology and neuroscience, deployed their scientific infrastructure by subsuming “love” under some of their key scientific concepts, as “the unconscious,” “the sex drive,” “hormones,” “species survival,” or “brain chemistry.” Under the aegis of scientific modes of explanation, these frameworks undermined the view of love as an ineffable, unique, quasi-mystical experience and selfless sentiment.¹²⁵

What is interesting is that in *CfC* Johnson seems to be taking a step back towards making love something mystical and sacred, while at the same time retaining her scientific models. This is achieved by some very interesting rhetoric moves. Indeed, with the introduction of God into the metaphysics of *CfC*, many scientific models of explanation have been rephrased. In *HMT* it is said that we are “programmed by millions of years of evolution” (*HMT*:261) to seek out belonging and intimate connection, while *CfC* substitutes for this “created by God” (*CfC*:272). In *HMT* the “culture of separation” that we are building is at odds with our “biology” (*HMT*:262) while in *CfC* with our “own God-given nature” (*CfC*:272).

From six references to “evolution” in *HMT* (*HMT*:4, 13, 16, 46, 168, 261) we come to none in *CfC*. Johnson, for example, deletes from her explanation of love the term “pinnacle of evolution” (*HMT*:13), but keeps the idea that love is “the most compelling survival mechanism of the human species” (*CfC*:22). Indeed, even with the rephrasing Johnson manages to keep the functional role of her scientific models. To give another example, Johnson doesn’t change a word in her chapter on John Bowlby’s work on a new theory of attachment until we come to this part:

Along with his studies and observations, Bowlby was impressed by Charles Darwin’s ideas of how natural selection favors responses that help survival. Bowlby came to the conclusion that keeping precious others close is a brilliant survival technique wired in by evolution. (*HMT*:16)

In *CfC* Johnson shrinks these two sentences to this: “He [Bowlby] believed that keeping precious others close is a brilliant, built-in survival code” (*CfC*:24). After this the further studies by Bowlby in this chapter are recounted without changing a word.

In *HMT* Johnson calls the code of attachment that we need to accept “primal” (*HMT*:263) while in *CfC* Johnson has the code be “predesigned” (*CfC*:274). In discussing what she calls “primal panic” caused by isolation, Johnson removes a reference to evolution by changing this: “This need for safe emotional connection to a few loved ones is wired in by millions of years of evolution” (*HMT*:46) into this “This need for safe emotional

¹²⁵ Illouz 2012:162–163.

connection to a few loved ones is a wired-in recipe for survival” (*CfC*:57). In the same paragraph she also makes two other edits by omitting “Love is the best survival mechanism there is, and” (*HMT*:46) from the beginning of a sentence that then continues in both books “To feel suddenly emotionally cut off from a partner, disconnected, is terrifying” (*HMT*:46, *CfC*:57). In the same context she also changes the term “survival imperative” (*HMT*:46) to “life-and-death imperative” (*CfC*:57).

There’s only one place in *CfC* where Johnson reveals the motive for removing references to the theory of evolution, and it is also the only place where she mentions Charles Darwin. She changes this “Charles Darwin, who was fascinated by the power of emotion and its role in the struggle for survival...” (*HMT*:108) to this “Differing Christian views on his origins theory aside, look at what Charles Darwin had to say about the power of emotion and its role in the struggle for survival” (*CfC*:117).

So, the struggle for survival is a legitimate idea in Johnson’s Christian setting, but it needs a bit of rephrasing. In discussing how to keep love between partners alive, Johnson writes “It [love] is our survival code and contains an exquisite logic that we are now able to understand” (*HMT*:238). In *CfC* she continues from this by adding: “We have a new lexicon for a truth written into our very DNA as humans made in the image of a loving God” (*CfC*:245).

Johnson keeps to the idea that there exists a “drive to emotionally attach – to find someone to whom we can turn and say ‘Hold me tight,’” but instead of saying that it is wired into our “genes and our bodies” (*HMT*:13), in *CfC* she says “into our mind, soul, and spirit” (*CfC*:22). Her new admonition is that “We will see below how recent research bears out the truth of Scripture and how ‘all truth is God’s truth’” (*CfC*:22). She keeps her idea that we need emotional attachments to be physically and mentally healthy, to survive, but adds a corollary that “by obeying God’s basic command ‘Love one another,’ we actually determine our ability to not only survive but also thrive – to live fully” (*CfC*:22; cf. *HMT*:13).

In a chapter on the neuroscience of harmony, Johnson continues in the same vein by changing, “Oxytocin seems to be nature’s way of promoting attachment” (*HMT*:168) to “Oxytocin seems to be nature’s way of promoting the attachments God created us to feel” (*CfC*:177). Johnson also illustrates some neuroscientific concepts by biblical references. She makes, for example, a minor insert by describing the concept of “primal panic” with a biblical quote: “I think this is what David was experiencing in Psalm 38:10 when he

vividly describes his state of loneliness, saying, ‘My heart beats wildly and my strength fails’ (NLT)” (*CfC*:41).

In summary, Johnson keeps the science that is functionally relevant for EFT by accepting that there are certain things that are “wired-in” in our biology, and that they alert us to matters of life-and-death importance, but she has God be the origin of these “codes” by predesign. God created our biology the way it is so that we could seek after him and know how to live as he really intended.

When speaking of the deeper attachment emotions Johnson subscribes to the notion of emotions as a drive, a compelling biologically determined force, that is the real mover behind the surface emotions (which Johnson sees as misinterpreted or inauthentic emotions). I would argue that this makes adding God as the prime mover behind attachment biology a fairly easy move, since a similar sense of inevitability and authenticity was already present in the models of explanation in *HMT*.

As to the differences in emotional programmes it seems that the kind of Christianity Johnson construct has no problem with science as such as long as it is subsumed under God by making every scientific fact a de facto creation of God. This, however, has implications for the nature of the emotional programme as God brings in a metaphysical depth to *CfC* that the secular, scientific models in *HMT* do not contain (although Johnson’s broad humanistic stance does not rule out spirituality or religion). Consequently, there is a link between our biologically induced feelings, such as love, and God. In some passages in *CfC* it seems that Johnson’s model claims that we can understand things by experiencing God’s feelings in our heart. I will next turn to this matter of epistemology.

4.1.5 Modalities of Knowing: Enclosing Learning within ‘Having Always Known’

What are the epistemological implications of God having created us, as Johnson’s rhetoric in *CfC* would have it? What and how can we know according to the premises of the two emotional programmes? In *HMT* Johnson recounts her endless clinical trials, relentless research efforts, spending countless hours in libraries and in watching videotaped couple interaction. Finally, she presents herself as having figured out a “scientific map of love,” which she is presenting in her manual. She still ends *HMT* with these words:

But we will never completely understand love. The more we discover, the more we will find that we do not know. As the poet E. E. Cummings observed, “Always a more beautiful answer that asks a more beautiful question.” (*HMT*:275)

In other words, in *HMT* knowledge isn't yet complete and whole, there is always something new to study and understand. The method of acquiring knowledge that Johnson presents in *HMT* is scientific research both in the sense of systematic clinical experimentation and in the sense of learning from the solidly-proven research of others. In *CfC* the setting is quite different.

As we saw in analyzing the book covers, *CfC* is pitched to provide faith-based teachings with scriptural support. This is something that Johnson does attend to. She uses Bible quotations in *CfC* in a variety of ways. There are 30 quotations from the Old Testament, mostly from Genesis (8 quotes) and from Psalms (12 quotes). There are 28 references to the New Testament, mostly from John (6 quotes), Mark (5 quotes), Luke (4 quotes) and 1 John (3 quotes). So, in effect the modality of "having always known" associated with the kind of Christianity Johnson present in *CfC* means that her ideas must be shown to somehow correspond to what is found in the Bible.

CfC also includes 27 new references in the bibliography, including 11 new research articles mostly on the themes of attachment and religion. One new reference is Johnson's own book *Love Sense: The Revolutionary New Science of Romantic Relationships*, which discusses many themes similar to *HMT*.¹²⁶ Johnson also brings in a variety of authors that she qualifies as Christian. I will now look into how Johnson uses the new references and how this affects the emotional programmes. I have broadly divided the new references to external authority that Johnson uses in *CfC* into three types: (1) Scientific research, (2) Christian authors, and (3) Scripture.

Scientific research

The first kind of authority is scientific, and basically the authority derives from the idea that research can prove not only how things work, but also what is psychologically healthy and normal. Scientific authority is normative for Johnson in the sense that since health is an almost absolute value in the framework of therapeutic culture, one should do what science suggests is healthy. There is a sense of moral authority in the use of the psychological-scientific references in that the therapeutic narrative behind Johnson's theory basically says that we are responsible for our own future and have only ourselves to blame for the unnecessary and useless suffering we inflict on ourselves and others if we do not take responsibility on our own past and choices.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Johnson 2013. The attitude to spirituality in it is fairly similar to that in *HMT*.

¹²⁷ See chapter 4.1.7 for Illouz's take on this as a "split model of responsibility."

In *CfC* Johnson uses the studies on attachment and religiosity of psychologists Lee Kirkpatrick and Pehr Granqvist to support her views, as we will see in the quote below. Although Johnson frequently refers to Mario Mikulincer's studies in *HMT*, in *CfC* she brings in also Mikulincer's research on the use of God as an attachment figure. This quote summarizes well how Johnson uses research to support her ideas in *CfC*:

From the very first studies on the nature of attachment bonds, it has been clear that for people of faith, their connection with God is experienced as a potent source of attachment security. He is seen as the ultimate safe haven and refuge. His guidance also offers an anchor and a compass for believers as they face the uncertainties of life. Psychologist Lee Kirkpatrick of the College of William and Mary, in Virginia, consistently finds in his research that believers describe God and relate to Him as a reliable, responsive parent—a perfect attachment figure who is always there for His children. Scripture describes God as a “father to the fatherless” (Ps. 68:5). Mario Mikulincer also finds that, in general, people naturally turn to thoughts of God and His comfort when subjected to subliminal threats—for example, images of failure or of death. This spiritual bond is explored further in Part Three of this book, in the chapter “Our Bond with God.” (*CfC*:32–33)

In this quote Johnson presents scientific studies as something that consistently produce the same results, results that are in accordance with Johnson's theory on what a healthy relationship with God is like. We should note, however, that here Johnson actually takes off from research and adds something that is not found in the Bible. This is the kind of knowledge that research is needed for in Johnson's scheme, but it can only be accepted if its key values and aims are in harmony with the overall message of the Bible (as interpreted by Johnson).

Johnson also uses psychologist Kevin Byrd's research on attachment styles and prayer in a very similar manner. As in the quote above, here also there is first Johnson's own summary of how things are, and then the research findings are brought in to support, elaborate or expand on Johnson's views.

When our most important love relationships, those with parents and life partners, are positive, they open us up to the love of God. When we feel precious, held, and protected by loved ones, it appears to be easier for us to feel comfortable seeking closeness to God, have confidence in His benevolence, and open ourselves up to faith. Our experience of having a secure base with others also translates into the ability to explore religious possibilities. We can deal with doubts and ambiguities and struggle through a personal “quest” during which we can truly explore our inner spiritual life. According to Indiana psychologist Byrd, more secure attachment, with its accompanying emotional balance and positive expectations, often leads to more meditative and conversational forms of prayer, rather than prayer that is focused on petitioning God for help. (*CfC*:260)

It is also very clear what kind of prayer is considered healthy: the same kind of calm and conversational style with the aim of trying to reach for “attachment security” that Johnson advocates between couples in general. In summary, Johnson's rhetoric works to establish a seamless merger between scientific findings and Christian ideas. In this way she legitimizes scientific research and extends what Christians “have always known,” and then persuades the reader that her practical applications of research findings are, in effect,

proving that Christianity is right. The implication of these rhetoric moves is that Johnson can present her methods as a 'Christian' way of healing relationships with partner and God, now only made even more precise and effective by scientific validation. This blending also works to legitimize Christianity as an effective religion, if practiced in accordance with Johnson's programme.

Christian authors

All new references to Christian authors are in the chapter "Our Bond with God." Johnson uses Christian authors, both classical and contemporary, to support her arguments that her programme is in line with Christianity. The views of specifically Christian authors may already hold more weight within the Christian communities Johnson seeks to address, so they may not need to be legitimized in the same way as scientific material. Johnson focuses instead on persuading her readership of her interpretation of the Christian authors. Johnson uses Christian authors to present views similar to her EFT concepts, and also to reinterpret Scripture and Christianity in a way that is understandable within the contemporary context. To give an example, here Johnson stresses the positive, healing nature of a connection with God, using both research findings and a Christian author:

These studies about the power of positive connections resonate with Christian teachings. Christians often report that turning to their bond with a loving God helps them deal with distress. They find comfort in their sense of belonging with and to God. In his book on the spiritual nature of man, Alister Hardy recounts the story of how a woman who was crippled by despair and hospitalized for depression decided to pray. She told Hardy, "Suddenly, a voice said, 'Afraid or sane, you are still one of my sheep.'" This became the pivotal moment of her life and her healing. (CfC:35)

Here Johnson is clearly moving out of the narrowly secular psychological framework into spiritual territory where a personal encounter with God can spark healing. Johnson is also extending the medical paradigm in the sense that healing is not only a matter of dealing with distress and depression, but also a matter of spiritual self-discovery. A similar style of argumentation can be seen in the quote below, seamlessly combining scientific authority and a Christian author, the latter for inspirational interpretations of Scripture quotes:

The core of bonding theory and science is the assertion that we are built for relationship, for connection, and that this is our most basic instinct and compelling need. As the Christian writer Henri Nouwen tells us, "God loved you before you were born, and God will love you after you die. In Scripture, God says, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love.' This is the fundamental truth of your identity. This is who you are, whether you feel it or not. You belong to God from eternity to eternity. Life is just a little opportunity for you during a few years to say, 'I love you too.'" (CfC:249)

The kind of Christianity Johnson is constructing here has significant impact on the emotional programme, since responding to God's love is presented as the main objective

of an individual's life. Johnson tends to describe the relationship between man and God in a way that resembles an ordinary intimate relationship with a human partner. The most human picture of God comes through Max Lucado, another best-selling Christian author:

Contemporary writer Max Lucado describes his personal relationship with God this way: "If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If He had a wallet, your photo would be in it. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning... Face it, friend. He is crazy about you!" (*CfC*:250)

But this is not the only picture in *CfC*, as the style of the Christian authors that Johnson quotes varies considerably. At the mystical end is Henri Nouwen, whose ideas Johnson quotes to give credibility to what she presents as the scientifically sound idea of a built-in longing for connection within all humanity. In this way Johnson is able to give her idea a spiritual interpretation:

I love what Nouwen writes about this topic [built-in longing] in his book *Words of Hope and Healing: 99 Sayings*: "The mystery of God's presence can be touched only by a deep awareness of His absence. It is in the center of our longing for the absent God that we discover His footprints and realize that our desire to love God is born out of the love with which He has touched us." (*CfC*:251)

As we have seen also in discussing metaphors, Johnson develops this into the imperative of seeking union with God (*CfC*:251). The biologically determined drive to attach emotionally in *HMT* changes levels and becomes in *CfC* a spiritual journey for which God has created us, and it is also the Christian authors that Johnson uses to substantiate this change in rhetoric.

Johnson makes reference to a famous evangelical Rick Warren, whom Luhrmann describes as "pastor of Saddleback Church and author of one of the best-selling books in American publishing history"¹²⁸ to demonstrate that Warren and her wife's ideas about marriage in the grips of grief are close to Johnson's own, and that what Johnson is prescribing can also be framed in terms of the Christian concept of grace:

Bestselling author and pastor Rick Warren and his wife, Kay, spoke recently of dealing with grief together after losing their twenty-seven-year-old son to suicide in 2013. "When Matthew was alive, we were worried that should he take his own life, then it would tear our marriage apart," Kay said. "We knew we wouldn't divorce, but we thought it would ruin our relationship. But we made the decision that, though we may grieve differently, we would grieve together and show grace to one another." (*CfC*:254-255)

While there are no details about how the couple actually grieved together, the basic idea of not divorcing and facing difficulty together is what Johnson prescribes. While Johnson uses psychological research to stress the usefulness of God as a reliable attachment figure, she also puts equal emphasis on the suffering that ensues from not being connected to God:

When we cannot connect with those we love and depend on, including God, we suffer. But as psychologists Pehr Granqvist and Lee Kirkpatrick suggest, "God does not die, sail off to

¹²⁸ Luhrmann 2012:311.

fight wars, move away, or file for divorce.” Nevertheless, in the Bible and in classic Christian literature, separateness from God is referred to as “a dark night of the soul.” Even Jesus was not exempt from primal panic and suffering when separated from the one He loved most. He cried out from the cross, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani* (Mark 15:34) – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” This is one of the clearest demonstrations, in fact, of His humanity within His divinity. (*CfC*:257)

The diaries of Mother Teresa, in the period of her life when she felt cut off from God, are full of anguish. She grieved and struggled with this loss of felt connection with Christ. In 1956, she confided to Archbishop Périer, “I am longing – with a painful longing to be all for God – to be holy in such a way that Jesus can live His life to the full in me. The more I want Him, the less I am wanted. I want to love Him as He has not been loved, and yet there is that terrible separation, that terrible emptiness, the feeling of the absence of God... Please, Your Grace, pray for me – that I may draw very close to God.” She also spoke of the “agony of desolation” that comes from her longing to be with “the Absent One” (in *Come Be My Light: The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta*). (*CfC*:257)

Johnson’s examples of the agony of separation from God (as the spiritual counterpart to the biological “primal panic”) could hardly be more gripping: Jesus on the cross and Mother Teresa suffering for almost 50 years of “loss of felt connection” with Christ.

In summary, Christian authors provide important additional sources of legitimation for Johnson’s ideas as they are comparative material possibly more familiar to the Christian audience that Johnson can use to illustrate and further develop her ideas. Johnson is likely using Christian authors to position herself in the same audience territory, too. Johnson’s use of Christian authors also extends the emotional programme into the domain of religious emotions, since many of Johnson’s key concepts get described in terms of the concepts and formulations that Christian authors use, such as grace, holiness and the agony of God’s absence.

Scripture

The references to Scripture are spread all over *CfC*. Johnson uses Bible quotes to connect the tenets of EFT with ideas in the Bible that seem to be similar or analogous. While she does not connect all the ideas of EFT with Christian ones, she focuses on the common key themes of love, suffering, vulnerability, trust, hope, and the practice of compassion. The overall impression this makes is that since the core ideas fit, why shouldn’t also all the details. The epigraph to the whole book is a telling example of how Johnson weaves EFT and Christianity together, which I have already looked into in the context of metaphor (see chapter 4.1.2).

Let’s discuss a few more examples. Johnson uses a matter of fact tone of discovery when she claims that her “system of understanding love relationships based on the best of modern research” is “consonant with the wisdom of this ancient book of faith.” She then adds two Bible references to establish an analogy between her book on EFT and the Bible,

“which is bookended with images of marriage (Gen. 2 and Rev. 22) and emphasizes the centrality of love from beginning to end.” (CfC:4) In a similar manner, as we have seen in discussing metaphors (see chapter 4.1.2), Johnson announces that she now has “a spiritual perspective on this and can see bonding relationships as echoing what the Bible describes as ‘becoming one’ with a loved one” (CfC:6). Again, just adding references to the Bible is enough to prove the point, “(Gen. 2:24; Mark 10:8)” (CfC:6). It seems we are to understand that the way EFT construes ‘becoming one’ (as something akin to a shared synchronistic ‘tango’ where all levels of the relationship resonate in perfect harmony) is an earthly ‘echo’ of an analogous spiritual union.

Sanderfer uses a similar device of just mentioning a Bible reference to prove something that can also be explained from the attachment perspective, “Jesus encouraged us to move out of the house of fear and to make our home in Him (John 15:4)” (CfC:16). The implication here is that as EFT suggests, we should confront our fears in order to build a secure connection. But Sanderfer continues from here by addressing the reader directly and juxtaposing the “house of fear” in the Bible quote with the “house of love with your partner,” and implies that the kind of love EFT offers is what God intended. He writes: “It is my prayer that this book will help usher you into the house of love with your partner, and that you both may experience the true love and intimacy God created us for” (CfC:16).

In summary, integrating the modality of “having always known” with that of scientific inquiry is achieved by showing consonance between scientific ideas, Christian authors and Scripture. But it is difficult to tell which of the modalities or authorities is primary. In some passages it seems there is still another authority that presides when others appear to be in conflict.

For example, in discussing Eddington and Einstein, Johnson presents the idea of the human heart and showcases its ability to directly sense truth, no matter whether it comes through Scripture or science. The human heart may provide the ultimate modality of knowing as it has the ability to sense when something is so beautiful that it can only be the work of God:

There is no conflict between science and faith here. In fact, the workings of the human heart seem to lead in a straight path directly to our understanding of the nature of the one who shaped it. Sir Arthur Eddington, a dedicated Quaker who was also a scientist, at first fiercely opposed Einstein’s scientific theory of relativity, seeing it as sacrilegious. But he was the one who finally proved this theory, showing how the bending of light in the 1919 solar eclipse followed Einstein’s predictions. Listening to the truth in his own heart, Eddington finally concluded that Einstein’s way of making sense of the universe had to be right: his ideas were so beautiful that, in them, “I can hear God thinking.” (CfC:265)

Indeed, as I mentioned in chapter 1.2 the Christianity Johnson constructs in her book comes close to some ideas Tanya Luhrmann has described in her study of Evangelical Christianity. Luhrmann observes that heart comes close to being a sacred word for evangelical Christians, and that it refers to the capacity to spontaneously and automatically connect to God and feel his love.¹²⁹ According to Luhrmann the notions of Henri Nouwen, whom we have seen Johnson quote repeatedly, appeal deeply to contemporary evangelicals:

Nouwen [...] presents the heart as a mystic collapse: “that point of our being where there are no divisions or distinctions and where we are totally one.” People talk about having “a heart for something: the poor, leading worship, helping out in a school. They talk about God “putting [something] on my heart,” by which they mean that they really want to do something, like play the violin. To say that something happens “in your heart” means that the experience is private, personal, deeply felt, and spontaneous. At the same time, it is a claim that you feel this way because God wants you to feel this way, and that these feelings are really God’s.¹³⁰

This kind of spontaneous warmth and kindness effortlessly radiating from the heart does resemble what Johnson describes as the best-case scenario in *HMT*. But with deliberate use of notions like the heart *CfC* extends the emotional programme significantly. The setting in *HMT* has us stuck with trying to manage our relationships with scientifically-proven methods, while *CfC* includes formulations where it seems the couple and God can become linked so that the emotional life spontaneously fulfills God’s commands. With formulations such as this the potential conflict between personal interest and God’s interest is also alleviated. Johnson seems to subtly posit EFT as a means of strengthening this bond with God, and thus as a practical means of being healed by God’s love. In *CfC* feeling religious emotions comes close to being a means of understanding. Conceptualization of agency and intentionality are also transformed by this, as it seems the emotional programme Johnson offers in *CfC* involves indirectly healing God’s emotions, too. Or at least EFT is presented as a means of becoming more able to feel the kind of emotions Johnson prescribes as the proper feelings a Christian should feel.

In the broad formulations of a self-help book it is hard to distinguish what is exactly being claimed, but we should not forget that the tension between doctrinalism and experientialism is an enduring one within the evangelical community as, for example, theologian Christopher Zito’s 2016 book *Doctrine and Experience: Caught in the Crossfire of Evangelical Spiritualities* testifies. He describes the tension thus:

Doctrinalism does not deny the subjective aspect of spirituality, but it does reject experience as functioning positively at the ground level – that is, a personal experience of God is not a

¹²⁹ Luhrmann 2012:107.

¹³⁰ Luhrmann 2012:107.

reliable or perhaps even necessary source for knowing God. [...] Experientialists do not, as a matter of course, deny the importance of doctrine, though they do contend that without genuine experiences of God, the assertions of the Bible by themselves are powerless to bring us into a living relationship with God.¹³¹

CfC treads on these issues lightly and carefully, asserting the importance of both doctrine and subjective experience, but the relationship between scientific, scriptural and experiential modes of knowledge remains ambivalent. This is not surprising as the evangelical relationship with science has been a heavily contested topic for decades.¹³²

4.1.6 Ethics and Values: From Liberal towards Conservative

The emotional programme Johnson presents in *CfC* seems to also require conforming to more conservative values and modes of self-expression than those in *HMT*, at least in some areas of life. The first area where we can see this is in how Johnson discusses sexuality.

In *HMT* Johnson writes that the book “is designed to be used by all couples, young, old, married, engaged, cohabiting, happy, distressed, straight, gay; in short, all partners seeking a lifetime of love” (*HMT*:6), and in *CfC* mentions that she shares with Sanderfer the passion “for helping couples—all couples” (*CfC*:4). Yet in *CfC* the word “gay” is not used even once in contrast to the five instances in *HMT* (*HMT*:6, 44, 115, 187, 266). Likewise, in the case study dialogues between partners that Johnson uses a lot in her book, the two gay couples in *HMT* have become straight. “Vincent and James, a gay couple” in *HMT* (*HMT*:115) are “Vincent and Jane” in *CfC* (*CfC*:125). Except for the names and personal pronouns, the dialogue remains exactly the same.

In section D.1.5.3 discussing the practice of forgiving injuries the Marcy of *HMT* is called Marc in *CfC*. Amy has turned from being Marcy’s lesbian partner into being Marc’s wife. The dialogue is no longer about Marcy being gay, but about Marc having “dropped out of the degree program for engineering to apply to seminary.” The basic structure of the dialogue is still intact, the emotional hurt being discussed remains “feeling devalued” and the reaction continues to be “walling up” (*HMT*:187; *CfC*:196). The idea of same sex intimate partnership or same sex marriage does not come under consideration in *CfC* as Johnson has removed the one instance of gender qualification “In a heterosexual couple” there was in *HMT* (*HMT*:170; *CfC*:179).

In section D.1.1.2.1 Johnson changes her previous expression “an orgasm” (*HMT*:89) into “my own physical pleasure” (*CfC*:100). This is, however, the only instance of the word

¹³¹ Zito 2016:5.

¹³² See for example Rios 2014.

“orgasm” that is rephrased in *CfC*. The other 14 remain (*CfC*:177, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 207, 208, 211, 212 three times; 217, 297).

Johnson’s chapter on sexuality faces a few cuts in *CfC*. Johnson deletes an account of sexual fantasy role play between a couple (*HMT*:201–202). Also mention of “cream” used for sex is deleted (*HMT*:202; cf. *CfC*:210). The idea of reading erotic books in the context of resolving sexual problems is removed (*HMT*:208; cf. *CfC*:215) while in the following chapter on keeping love alive this idea remains (*HMT*:231; *CfC*:238). Describing Ron Jeremy as someone “who might be considered a sexual performer extraordinaire” (*HMT*:195) has been deleted, while using him as an example of a porn star who swaps sexual partners but shuts out emotional connection by adhering to the rule “absolutely no cuddling” has stayed (*CfC*:203).

A further area of conduct that Johnson has curtailed is the use of swear words. After she has introduced her concept of ‘Demon Dialogues’ in section C.1.2.2 Johnson adds in *CfC*: “This negativity can destroy a relationship and erode partners’ trust in connection altogether, leaving them in an emotional hell that echoes the images of pain and despair we see in Christian frescoes and paintings of people being literally assaulted by demons” (*CfC*:42). This is the only instance of the word “hell” in *CfC*, in contrast to the 12 in *HMT* (*HMT*:35, 66, 83, 110, 119 twice, 124, 133, 139, 158, 207, 218). In *HMT* the word is only used figuratively as a swear word as in “I sure as hell don’t feel like no Christmas fairy” (*HMT*:124) or as in “I’d just be miserable as hell with you, if that’s okay” (*HMT*:119). In *CfC* Johnson has either removed “hell” or replaced it by words like “baloney,” “awful” or “earth” (*CfC*:241, 141, 76 respectively). Other expressions of similar type like “smug son of a bitch” (*HMT*:66; *CfC*:76) have also been either removed or replaced by something assumedly more appropriate for a Christian manual. Another example of purging something that might be considered offensive for a strictly-Christian audience is that in the context of analyzing a case study dialogue Johnson has deleted this in *CfC*: “Jim’s experience is defined perfectly by the title of a Notorious Cherry Bombs song, ‘It’s Hard to Kiss the Lips at Night that Chew Your Ass Out All Day Long’” (*HMT*:33).¹³³

In summary, the paradigm of heterosexuality seems to be absolute, although this is not mentioned. All references to homosexuality have simply been removed. This may be a

¹³³ Cf. *CfC*:43. I wonder if the fact that there is cross-dressing and flirtation in the video of this song had anything to do with this decision. The lyrics also mention God and Jesus in this way: “I used to roll her in the clover; But thank God those days are over; It’s hard to kiss the lips at night that chew your ass out all day long; All day long; She goes on and on; If someday they drop the big one; I’d say, ‘Sweet Jesus she’s gonna finally leave me alone’”.

marketing tactic to maximize readership, just as in the case of not qualifying the nature of the Christianity presented in terms of congregation. A homosexual Christian reader would not notice the purging, because sexuality is just sexuality in *CfC*, with no outstated qualification as to the preferred orientation. In *CfC* Johnson also systematically tones down swear words, although the couples in *CfC* still do swear, only by using more carefully picked expressions. There appears to be some cleaning, but not much, related to what is considered appropriate in the bedroom, but this is also nowhere stated, just noticeable in what has been omitted. All of this has an implicit effect on the emotional programme, perhaps most significantly in that *CfC* limits the choice of partner to heterosexual marriage, although this is nowhere explicitly stated (as we have also seen in chapters 4.1.1 and 4.1.2).

Scholar of religion Lynn Neal analyzes in her 2006 book *Romancing God: Evangelical Women and Inspirational Fiction* an example of versioning similar to Johnson's in the context of evangelical fiction. Neal recounts the story of author Francine Rivers, who had published a historical novel in 1991 entitled *Redeeming Love*. In 1997, after her conversion experience, she issued a book with the same name, now no longer a secular one by Bantam Books, but an evangelical adaptation by an evangelical publishing house. The revised version has the same characters, but it has been rewritten with didactic intent to communicate God's love. With the help of Rivers' editor the book has been "redeemed" (as Rivers puts it) for the Christian market, a process involving similar changes to the ones Johnson makes:

"Shit" becomes "dung," and "whores" become "soiled doves." Graphic sexual language is transformed into suggestive metaphor, and the vague voice of God becomes a clear message of salvation through Jesus Christ. In the original, Angel dreams of being cleansed by God and learns to recognize her self-worth, but the redeemed Angel proclaims her belief in Jesus Christ as the son of God at a Sunday morning church service. To Rivers, *Redeeming Love* reflects changes in her spiritual life and her commitment to women's ministry, offering a more explicit message of salvation and of God's love for humanity.¹³⁴

Neal mentions that evangelicals are very zealous in monitoring content to ensure it upholds Christian beliefs. The risk is that by portraying evil one would participate in sin. In Rivers' case her addressing sensitive subjects such as abuse, prostitution and adultery, was accepted because her story highlights the reaches of God's love, but her publisher did write a frontispiece with a warning to exercise caution with younger readers.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Neal 2006:160. References removed in the quote.

¹³⁵ Neal 2006:162–163.

Neal's general argument is that while it is often disparaged by scholars and pastors, evangelical fiction has an important function in articulating faith and helping readers realize and remember a romancing God. She writes:

Gaining this divine intimacy and immanence occurs in part through identification with the heroine, but also through the genre's portrayal of romance. These depictions, in turn, evoke a larger sacred historical narrative that situates my consultants at the center of evangelicalism and God's love. God is the ultimate lover who pursues them and will always be there for them. For these readers, then, Christianity itself becomes a love story as the novels narrate the power of God's love, not the force of his judgment.¹³⁶

In effect, Neal is here analyzing a version of the therapeutic narrative underlying evangelicalism. But as we have seen, making secular narratives into evangelical ones requires some techniques of 'redemption,' and this holds true for Johnson's adaptation, too.

4.1.7 Transforming Intimacy: Sharing Vulnerability and Narrating the Bond

How are Johnson's relationship ideals to be achieved? In this chapter I consider some key elements of the operative side of Johnson's relationship repair as they pertain to embodying the emotional programmes she prescribes. While Johnson's manuals contain numerous case studies that illustrate the realizations and changes she wishes for the couple, she makes it clear real change is not a matter of intellectual insight. Real change has to do with emotions and the case studies provide examples of the kind of emotional changes Johnson considers positive.

There are 12 exercise or "Play and Practice" sections (which I will abbreviate 'P&P' from now on) common to both *HMT* and *CfC*, comprising about 36 pages in each book. Johnson has made very few changes in adapting the exercises for *CfC*. The core is in the new chapter on God where Johnson provides four new pages of exercises specifically for Christian readers (section E.B.1.7.1 in Appendix I).

The first P&P section is a warm-up where the reader is introduced to evaluating their relationship "through the attachment lens" (*HMT*:57). First there is a questionnaire with five questions on each of the three themes of whether one feels one's partner is (a) accessible, (b) responsive, (c) positively emotionally engaged, which in Johnson's system make up the 'attachment lens.' The result of the questionnaire is considered to represent each partner's perception of the security of their common bond on a numerical scale. Each 'true' answer gives one point and if the total score is 7 or more, the bond is considered secure (*HMT*:58). In other words, Johnson is here using commensuration to provide an objective metric for assessing the quality of subjective emotions. This is one typical

¹³⁶ Neal 2006:159.

characteristic of Johnson's system. Before we change emotions, we need to know where we stand on a scale of emotional intensity or quality. To feel more loved, for example, we must first quantify our emotions and establish our current position on a continuum of minimal to maximal sense of being loved.

Another typical setting comes next. Johnson's exercises are built on the assumption that some of them are emotionally difficult for the readers, so they are encouraged to approach them step-by-step. First they need to understand their relationship through the attachment lens. Then they need to identify which parts of the exercises feel particularly difficult. The readers need to start with the parts that feel easiest and use the methods that feel easiest, and then work their way up to the most difficult combination of task and method. Generally, just reflecting on one's own is considered easiest. Next on a presumed scale of difficulty comes writing down one's reflections on the issues that the exercises throw light on. The most challenging task is to share one's authentic feelings with one's partner while at the same time embodying the qualities of emotional accessibility, responsiveness and engagement that Johnson's system prescribes. This final stage of high quality sharing – think of the 'tango' we met in chapter 4.1.2 – is what Johnson considers transformative in the context of each P&P exercise. And it is the elements of this quality that Johnson's exercises are teaching the couple to recognize, align with and create.

Johnson continues with open questions about a previous case study dialogue and about the reader's past personal experiences with love (the model they brought, the strategies they taught, how one coped in needy situations). Here we meet a third key element of Johnson's exercises, the practice of naming concrete and specific things and situations which bring up a lot of emotion (negative or positive from the point of view of having a sense of secure connection). Johnson asks the reader to consider what have been in past relationships the typical patterns of disconnection, typical issues of hurt, typical moments of connection. (*HMT*: 59–61) This is a prep-up for what is to follow in the chapters on the seven transforming conversations, each of which contains one to three P&P sections focusing on the themes of healing negative interactional patterns and emotions, creating loving connection, and ensuring that the relationship narrative of the couple is likely to stay positive in the future.

Most of the P&P sections contain open questions and case study dialogue examples (before or amid the P&P section) to help the couple instantiate the theoretical concepts in their relationship and emotional life. What make Johnson's manuals most conspicuously emotional programmes, however, are the fill-in forms and pre-structured conversations

that she uses abundantly. Both contain heavily predefined options which really drive home what the couple is expected to feel and how they are prescribed to interact. Below are a few examples of how Johnson uses predesigned options:

I tend to _____. I move this way in our dance to try to cope with difficult feelings and find a way to change our dance. Choose an action word, a verb, e.g., complain, nag, zone out, ignore you, run, move away. (*HMT:97*, emphasis in the original)

My understanding of the circular dance that makes it harder and harder for us to safely connect is that when I move in the way I described above, you seem to then ____. Choose an action word, a verb, e.g., shut down, push me to respond. (*HMT:97*, emphasis in the original)

In this incident, the trigger for my raw feelings was _____. On the surface, I probably showed _____. But deep down, I just felt _____ (pick one of the basic negative emotions, sadness, anger, shame, fear). What I longed for was _____. The main message I got about our bond, about me or my love was _____. (*HMT:110*, italics in the original)

Predesigned conversations can contain several parts with fill-in forms like these. If the options are not this clearly articulated, the expectation has always been demonstrated by case studies and analyzes of what it is that is supposed to be happening in them from the point of view of Johnson's emotional programmes. The patterns have been laid out before-hand and the reader is meticulously instructed to enact the conversations in the right way and to try to feel the proper emotions. In fact, there's never any question about what is expected as Johnson at times provides extensive lists that the reader can simply select from to communicate with their partner in the proper emotional vocabulary:

If it is too hard to speak them, you can circle them on this page and show them to your partner. *In this incident, if I listen to my most vulnerable feelings, I felt: lonely, dismissed and unimportant, frustrated and helpless, on guard and uncomfortable, scared, hurt, hopeless, helpless, intimidated, threatened, panicked, rejected, like I don't matter, ignored, inadequate, shut out and alone, confused and lost, embarrassed, ashamed, blank, afraid, shocked, sad, forlorn, disappointed, isolated, let down, numb, humiliated, overwhelmed, small or insignificant, unwanted, vulnerable, worried.* (*HMT:121*, italics in the original)

Here is a list of some of the phrases partners use in this conversation. If it helps you, you can simply check the one that most fits for you and show it to your partner. I need to feel, to sense that:

- I am special to you and that you really value our relationship. I need that reassurance that I am number one with you and that nothing is more important to you than us. (*HMT:168*, followed by nine bulleted options in total, only the first one of which is quoted here)

The contractual nature of Johnson's emotional programme is evident throughout the exercises: both partners benefit from the emotional safety engendered by committing to sharing and responding positively to the other's fears and needs. This is very clear in Johnson's P&P section on sex:

If I were perfect in bed, I could, I would _____, and then you would feel more _____. See if you can share at least four of your responses. Then tell each other one way in which the other is sexually perfect for you in bed and out of bed. (*HMT:210*)

The couple is clearly expected to strive to respond as best they can to each other's wishes and desires, and especially to provide the emotional reassurance that this is working for them both. But it is not just any kind of sex that is considered positive and healthy. Before

this Johnson has clearly pathologized (at the least the long-term use of) what she calls ‘sealed-off’ and ‘solace sex,’ and prescribed ‘synchrony sex’ as the ideal that creates love (instead of just providing temporary relief from distress). In the P&P section Johnson states this repeatedly in this vein, “What are your most important expectations in bed? Think carefully about your answers. Sometimes they are not what we think of first. Partners have told me that their most important expectation after sex was to be held tenderly and caressed gently, but they’d never expressed that desire to their lovers” (*HMT*:209, see also *HMT*:210).

Johnson keeps suggesting throughout her manuals that what people generally feel and want may not be their true feelings and desires, but that through the attachment lens and the accompanying exercises they can connect with and have what they really want. This programmatic attitude extends even to the exercises where the couple are instructed to keep their love alive by creating new, positive narratives about the future of their love story. The examples and predesigned ideas Johnson offers for the couple’s future are straight from her attachment ideals as we have seen in chapter 4.1.2 while discussing Johnson’s use of root metaphors. Real love, Johnson is saying, is attachment security and her exercises can create that. Johnson’s emotional programmes leave little room for variation. Negative and positive patterns of interaction and emotion are very sharply defined. The couple is thoroughly instructed on what is the best way to achieve love (as attachment security), and deviation from this path is labeled dangerous and ultimately leading to divorce, the ultimate disaster. The emotional programme in *HMT* is, indeed, not too far from the basic setting of conservative Christianity, even without the introduction of Christianity.

Sequence of Transforming Intimacy

Johnson’s relationship practices rely heavily on verbalization of emotions, identifying and measuring fears, needs and desires. The transformative crux of these practices is gradually learning to cultivate the proper emotions and then sharing these verbally with one’s partner in the prescribed manner. Considering the totality of all the exercises in the manuals, we can use Figures 1 and 2 to describe the sequence (see chapter 4.1.2). First the couple needs to digest the tripartite scheme of interpretation (Figure 1). ‘Closeness’ must be seen as the goal, and all forms of interaction and emotion not conforming to Johnson’s ideal of calm, coherent connection as unsafe and undesirable. In this stage the couple learn that they are taken by very rigid and damaging patterns and emotions, which I have visualized as being within the narrow and cramped emotional space represented

by point A in Figure 2. Next, the couple need to attune to authentic attachment emotions. The first part of this process is a shared confessional of fears and traumas which we can visualize by moving to point C in Figure 2. Meeting each other with the prescribed quality of acknowledgement and acceptance, the couple's negative interactional patterns and emotions are transformed. The couple can then begin to grow in a positive direction by the power of Johnson's relationship technique. To ensure that this journey of growth (as if towards point B in Figure 2, but definitely away from point A) will continue, the couple are to devise a narrative about how they met their demons and how their relationship thus began to flourish (section D.1.7.5). The couple is also advised to commit to a shared narrative about the future, especially what comes to retaining the quality of their interaction within the parameters of Johnson's recommendations (section D.1.7.6). The couple is also to plan recurring ritual reminders and celebrations of their common bond to periodically reinforce their commitment to the emotional programme (section D.1.7.8).

Indeed, we can see these practices as relationship rituals, a term that even Johnson uses. Johnson occasionally uses technical terms familiar from her professionally oriented books like 'de-escalation,' but mostly resorts to very practical and hands-on metaphoric vocabulary, especially in the context of the exercises. In these sections Johnson is speaking almost as a linguist explaining the magic power that words have on transforming feelings, "three adjectives or images that describe your relationship," "two verbs that capture how each of you moved," "three adjectives, emotions, or images that express your relationship right now" (*HMT*:228). In this she is not too far from New Thought ideas on the curing power of thought, at least in the sense that all social (and personal) factors extraneous to the quality of the relationship are considered of secondary importance and not dealt with in any way. The underlying idea is that it is enough to change the quality of interaction by manipulating thoughts, and that the rest will follow from there. However, Johnson claims that her technique is targeting emotions, and in the confessional part of sharing one's vulnerability, this appears to be a particularly strong requirement without which change is not considered possible.

Critiques of therapeutic culture often polemically refer to such confessional and emotional practices as forms of 'victimization' required by the therapeutic ethos.¹³⁷ This type of argumentation considers such expression of infirmity a self-inflicted or culturally expected attempt to avoid personal responsibility, but at least in Johnson's case this would be missing the point that the goal of this practice is empowerment (and the ability to steer

¹³⁷ See, for example, Furedi 2004:112–113.

one's life more efficiently and responsibly). Illouz, for example, makes the case that "therapeutic culture has marked a major advance in the ethos of self-reliance; although it takes a stance of victimhood and moral disculpation for the past, it enjoins a voluntarist responsibility for the future."¹³⁸ Illouz considers this "split model of responsibility" a "new cultural model of selfhood,"¹³⁹ but another possibility would be to trace (some core elements of) this development to the protestant revolution, as for example Rose does.

Building on sociologists Marcel Mauss and Benjamin Nelson (and ultimately Max Weber), Rose claims that the "protestant revolution begins a new era in the culture of the self and the systems for self-direction, in which the union of conscience, casuistry, and the cure of souls is rejected; in its place, each individual comes to bear the obligation of doing the will of God without the benefit of learned confessors, directors, and advisors."¹⁴⁰ Rose grants that the medieval setting of every Christian being obliged to make annual confession in accordance with the centrally managed "specialized treatises tracing the obligations of conscience in daily life, how individuals were obliged to conduct themselves in every particular eventuality"¹⁴¹ resembles that of the seventeenth century puritans measuring their daily state of sin in a confessional diary against biblical standards. But he considers that, "self-inscription of the diary both calibrated one's lapses and bore witness to the survival of one's faith; the self was to become both sinner and judge."¹⁴²

Let us next consider how the Christian practices differ from those in *HMT*. The new P&P section (E.B.1.7.1 in Appendix I) contains all the key modifications Johnson offers in *CfC* (including anything minor she adds in the earlier P&P sections). Here Johnson begins with the same questionnaire as in the first P&P section of both books, but now applied to one's connection with God. In this context Johnson interprets a sense of accessibility, responsiveness and engagement as an indication of God's presence. It is difficult to find much difference in how Johnson evaluates relationship with partner, on the one hand, and relationship with God on the other. Johnson is looking for a very personal connection with God as some of the questions are about whether the reader feels they "matter to God on a personal level," and whether they sense that God cares about their "joys, hurts, and

¹³⁸ Illouz 2008:186.

¹³⁹ Illouz 2008:186.

¹⁴⁰ Rose 1999:224.

¹⁴¹ Rose 1999:223.

¹⁴² Rose 1999:224. Here I might argue in passing that while it is true Johnson's practices do not explicitly focus on personality (but patterns of interaction and emotions), there is no growth in the sense that Johnson conceptualizes it without a fundamental commitment to the idea of having a self (see chapter 1.1 for Johnson's claim).

fears” (*CfC*:266–267). There is no sense that God could ever choose to deny his attention from anyone. The reader’s task is to evolve a sense that “[e]ven when I make mistakes and fail, I can turn to God to find comfort and acceptance,” and that ultimately, “[i]n prayer, in church services, and in moments of love and service to others, I feel the closeness of God and that He is with me” (*CfC*:267). The ideal relationship with God is similar to that with one’s partner, except that with God there is no need to make any implicit two-way contracts or worry about him fighting or disagreeing over anything. God’s actions never cause us relationship trauma, as he always acts like the ideal partner. In this way the blame on our relationship with God is always on us. God, unlike us, never locks up into negative patterns of interaction. He is always there for us whenever we approach him. If we approach him in the proper way, the blessings of his divine love feed our ordinary relationships. But how do we ourselves learn to trust in this and to lean on him?

There’s actually very little new in the way of practices in *CfC*, or at least everything follows the patterns familiar from *HMT*. Johnson posits the *Song of Solomon* as a paradigm of healthy Christian sexuality and instructs the partners to discuss it. She recommends sharing Scriptures that the partners consider helpful in forgiving each other (*CfC*:269). What best describes the uses of faith in Johnson’s system are again offered as a ready-made list to choose from:

Christian couples can often outline many ways in which their faith helps them to shape and keep loving bonds. Tick off any of the following examples that are true for you.

- Tim says, “I can turn to the Lord for comfort and support when I am angry and upset. This calms me and helps me slow down and take my wife’s feelings into account. I am a better husband when I can turn to Him for support.”
- Anne says, “When I feel mean, like I want to lash out at Sam, my commitment to my faith, my desire to truly follow Christ, turn me around. The image of the Lord and His kindness and caring reminds me that this is how I want to be. So I try a different, kinder way.”
- Steve says, “My colleague tells me that you have to show your partner what they can do and cannot do. Maybe, but I have been taught to show forgiveness: to forgive my partner and to be compassionate. So that is what I try to do. After all, I make mistakes and I feel forgiven by the Lord. I feel loved by God, so it’s easier to pass the love on.” (*CfC*:269; the list contains five examples in total, three of which are quoted here)

What is of note is that in *CfC* the content of the prescriptions remains essentially the same, but now Scripture, faith, Christian upbringing and God can be the motivation and model for relationship practices, not just what attachment theory prescribes, or the science of love has proven effective, as in *HMT*. This is the most apparent difference between the practical sides of the emotional programmes. As prayer is not an integral part of the methodology of the Seven Transforming Conversations, I will discuss it in the next

chapter. Prayer is the link between the couple and God that according to Johnson can take their relationship to a “whole new level of closeness” (*CfC*:270).

4.1.8 Scope of Intimacy: From the Couple to Including God

On one level Johnson’s relationship repair is extending the ideal of therapeutic communication to intimate relationships. The couple is, in effect, subjecting their intimate interaction to a mutual therapeutic alliance. The outstated motivation for this in Johnson’s manuals is receiving and being able to give better quality intimacy in terms of attention, engagement and responsiveness. This is the setting in *HMT*, but what is God’s role in the couple’s intimate life?

In discussing evangelical emotional practices of developing the heart Luhrmann refers to a practice that she calls “God the therapist.” The way she describes it brings to mind Johnson’s idea that couples should offer up their needs to God in prayer (*CfC*:268).

Luhrmann quotes one evangelical woman and then discusses her ideas:

“It’s just like talking to a therapist,” Sarah said, “especially in the beginning, when you’re revealing things that are deep in your heart and deep in your soul, the things that have been pushed down and denied.” And just as you expect your therapist to take the rage and still maintain the relationship, congregants yell at God with a kind of toddler’s rage (as they imagine it), and still God continues to listen patiently, and he understands. He knows why you are so upset, why you needed to kick.¹⁴³

Luhrmann compares God in this setting to a therapist who has perfected the analytic attitude of listening to the client with maximum attention and empathy, with no regard to the therapist’s own needs. As we saw in discussing the roots of Johnson’s form of therapy, the godfather of this idea, Carl Rogers, promoted the ideal of client-centeredness, just as Johnson does in her professional work. Luhrmann concludes that God expresses such an attitude perfectly, “He is unfettered by the normal human selfishness and petty jealousy that make it [expressing the analytic attitude] so difficult for a human being.”¹⁴⁴ Perhaps Johnson’s EFT has a market in addressing this evangelical setting?

At least Johnson gives relatively much space to the idea of healing one’s relationship with God by learning to pray better. In *CfC* Johnson presents the idea that prayer (and talking to God in general) can take different forms, and that one of them is the desirable and healthy way. The model comes again from the tripartite model in the strange situation experiment, and the proper way to pray corresponds roughly to the therapeutic analytic attitude.

¹⁴³ Luhrmann 2012:119.

¹⁴⁴ Luhrmann 2012:119.

It should be noted that already in *HMT* religious activities are mentioned in a positive light, although only in passing and their import is not developed as it is in *CfC*. For example, in the context of helping couples “design their own bonding rituals” Johnson gives this same example in both manuals:

Participating in spiritual or other rituals together, such as formally meeting for special family meals, planting the first spring flowers in a family garden, praying or attending religious events together. (*HMT*:219; *CfC*:227)

But in *CfC* she develops these notions further, and, for example, in discussing ways of protecting ourselves and connecting with others, Johnson adds this:

People of faith will recognize this in their connection with God, the one who is loved most of all. When we are disappointed in life or feel distant from God, we often deal with our emotions in the same ways. In prayer, we can rail against God, begging or even demanding that He respond to us, or we can try to turn away and dismiss our need for His grace. (*CfC*:77–78)

In *CfC* Johnson argues that Christian partners may have an advantage in the most crucial of her transformative conversation, the “hold me tight” conversation. This, she explains, comes from the Christian understanding of and experience with prayer:

There is a sense in which Christian partners may have an advantage in this conversation. Prayer is a place where we learn to open our hearts and risk showing our deepest vulnerabilities to the one we love: God. From our most fragile places, we then turn to God, show Him our hearts and our longings. As He draws near to us, we are comforted by this connection and held in His love. For Christian partners, reaching from a place of doubt and vulnerability is a well-worn and valued path to connection with God. This is the same path that can lead us to secure connection with our life mate. Timothy Keller, in his recent book *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, reminds us that when we pray, at best we seek not only to get more blessings from Him, but also a way to get more of God Himself and to draw closer to Him. Our ability to reach for God in a heartfelt way is a model for how to open up to and reach for our partner. (*CfC*:156–157)

Here we see another example how Johnson uses a famous evangelical Christian author to legitimize her interpretation of prayer and in general to promote the EFT way of working. In *HMT* Johnson stays in the ordinary social realm and prescribes practices to enhance couple interaction and connection, sometimes mentioning religious practices in a positive light. In *CfC* prayer becomes an additional paradigm for couple interaction, both between partners, and with God. In practice Johnson prescribes the same EFT way of attunement in discussing prayer, but the range of religious feelings prayer involves sets the tone of the emotional programme to better correspond with the emotional regime of Christianity (as constructed by Johnson). The scope and depth of intimacy is also significantly enlarged by adding God in the equation. Communing and becoming one with the one who created us for connection is in *CfC* a matter of discovering one’s fundamental identity.

As we have seen in the quotes above, in *CfC* God is construed as the one we love most of all, and as I have argued, as the perfect therapist. Luhrmann analyzes further the therapeutic nature of the evangelical relationship with God by drawing on the work of

psychoanalyst Ana-Maria Rizzuto. According to Luhrmann, Rizzuto rejected the Freudian notion that God is nothing more than an exalted father. Luhrmann summarizes Rizzuto's ideas:

Instead, she argued that a person's internal representation of God is nearly as complex as an internal representation of a parent; that it draws on the important relationships and powerful experiences in the life of the individual; and that, once formed, it has all the psychic potential of a living person, even if it is experienced only in the privacy of the mind.¹⁴⁵

Luhrmann goes on to note that evangelical therapists share Rizzuto's conclusions in that they believe God to function like a social relationship in a congregant's emotional life. Consequently, such therapists think that "any psychodynamic work they do with a Christian is essentially therapeutic work with that person's relationship with and conception of God."¹⁴⁶ Johnson is approaching this territory and offering her relationship repair also as a means of reworking the God-concept. Luhrmann cites one evangelical therapist:

If someone believes in a punishing God, then they are going to be afraid of God, and they are going to be angry at God, and they are going to be running around doing everything they can think of to please him so he won't zap them. When I see them begin to relax and just praise him – that's a radical shift.¹⁴⁷

Johnson takes a similar approach, although the worst-case scenarios in the minds of her patients are not as grim. In Johnson's system there are three basic ways of engaging with others, which she illustrates in the context of prayer by case examples such as these:

Amy's voice is calm as she describes to her pastor her secure connection with God: "I know I can reach for Him and find that still moment of peace. I don't always get what I pray for, but it helps keep me steady. That I can ask and be heard." (*CfC*:258)

"I know I shouldn't feel this way, but these days I almost get angry when I try to pray. I felt so sure when I began coming to church, but now I just want to stand and yell, 'Are you listening to me at all?' I ask, 'Do you care that I hurt? I don't think so. If you did, you would help me now.' But then maybe I don't deserve His comfort. I am just not that important to Him." She cries, "It's not fair. Not when I pray so hard every day, asking Him to help me." Kate is caught in her anxiety and agitation. (*CfC*:258–259)

"The truth is that no one is looking out for you in the end. There is no point in spending your life on your knees praying. It doesn't get you anywhere. I am fine just living from day to day. It's like I say to my wife, 'If something bothers you, the best thing is to just try to forget it.'" Tom is dismissing his need for connection with God. He avoids depending on God. (*CfC*:259)

Johnson also makes it very clear which strategy her emotional programme prescribes and why: "The secure strategy of owning our need and reaching for connection that we see in Amy's response is the most positive and effective way of dealing with our attachment needs. It is the one most likely to gain us the closeness we desire" (*CfC*:259).

¹⁴⁵ Luhrmann 2012:123–124.

¹⁴⁶ Luhrmann 2012:124.

¹⁴⁷ Luhrmann 2012:125.

The aim of evangelical therapists, as Luhrmann discusses it, seems to be removing limitations that the human life imposes on experiencing God as truly loving.¹⁴⁸ This aim broadly corresponds with what Neal considered the function of evangelical fiction in chapter 4.1.6, that of fully experiencing the power of God's love. This also ties in well with the self-help relationship manual genre where social factors are not discussed, and especially well with Johnson's EFT which focuses solely on the quality of connection aspect of relationships. Luhrmann also describes what happens after evangelicals have undergone the emotional work of making God more 'alive' for them:

What congregants meant by this ["alive"] was that they not only identified God's presence reliably, they responded to him emotionally as if he were a real person, unique and specific, with his own particular way of consoling, encouraging, laughing, and grieving.¹⁴⁹

In *CfC* Johnson positions EFT as a means of achieving something like this by simultaneously working on one's relationship with one's partner and with God:

The positive side of this is that studies tell us that if Claire can have new experiences of reaching and receiving loving responsiveness from her partner, or find a safer, more reliable sense of connection with God, she can shift into a more secure style of bonding in both the romantic and faith-based aspects of her life. As she does this, she will begin to see God as a more stable and accepting figure and as a less controlling one. In fact, later in therapy she tells me of a religious retreat she went on and also of a positive experience of closeness with Peter. She notes, "For the first time, I really saw the delight in his eyes. And I got that it was for me! I was delightful to him! Somehow that helped me feel that God had forgiven me for my failings. And if God has forgiven me, loves me even, well, then that changes everything." (*CfC*:263)

The concept of delight and the idea of God's love changing everything in *CfC* tune the Christian emotional programme a few scales in the direction of the mystical. Johnson also gives new meaning to such concepts as the gaze, which (as we have seen in chapters 4.1.2 and 4.1.3), specified as divine gaze, is what the authors hope couples will experience.

In summary, in *HMT* the focus of the emotional programme is on transforming the emotional intimacy between the couple by human means. In *CfC* Johnson shifts attention towards being able to better commune with God. This seems to imply that the aim in *CfC* is to become able to fully connect with and express God's emotions. This, indeed, transforms everything about the emotional programme, which in *CfC* has the additional focus of healing one's God-concept. But even though Johnson commends the ability of the human heart to 'hear God thinking' (see chapter 4.1.5) it remains unclear just how active of a role does God have.

¹⁴⁸ Luhrmann 2012:125.

¹⁴⁹ Luhrmann 2012:125.

Function of God and Christianity

Christianity comes in many varieties and I will consider this from a few perspectives to bring out what the functions of God and Christianity are in the context of Johnson's self-help relationship manuals. The first observation is that a big part of Johnson's emotional programmes is devoted to risk analysis and to practices of reducing risk. The emotional self is considered fragile and its health to hinge on a wholeness that is constantly under threat of the traumatizing effects of substandard connection. Safety in the sense of predictability and intelligibility of emotional experience are what Johnson's practices aim at creating, and we may ask how Christianity and God are construed as being of help in that.

In his 2010 article *Playing against Superior Beings in Religion, Technology and Economy* scholar of religion Matti Kamppinen takes off from the setting provided by game theoretician Steven Brams' 1983 book *Superior Beings*. What is of interest to us here is that Kamppinen compares "superior beings of religions and the risks of modern societies" on the axis that both provide "challenging antagonists for games of life."¹⁵⁰ Kamppinen writes:

On the basis of biblical and theological writing, the Christian god sees, oversees, feels anger and love, expects, forgives, punishes and so on. [...] Christians are encouraged to make decisions about their moral conduct even though their future is foreseen by and causally dependent on the god; and the causally omnipotent and loving god allows bad things to happen although it could have cancelled them.¹⁵¹

In Johnson's case it is striking how only God's positive sides are mentioned and emphasized. The God of Johnson's Bible is as far from a zero-sum game adversary with eschatological threats as possible. Johnson nowhere discusses problems of the unequal distribution of suffering, for example, which are surely not the expected subject of her manuals. But by token of what she omits, the God she constructs is so loving, understanding, and reliable that he appears to be a zero-risk resource for endless empowerment. In fact, Johnson's God is so one-sidedly helpful, nurturing and personally invested in each human's life that he acts more like a guardian angel than, say, the wrathful God of Old Testament. Indeed, the global phenomenon of angel healing is worth mentioning in this context.

In her 2017 article *Healing Enchantment: How Does Angel-Healing Work?* scholar of religion Terhi Utriainen discusses modern angel healing practices in the context of her

¹⁵⁰ Kamppinen 2010:83.

¹⁵¹ Kamppinen 2010:86.

ethnographic fieldwork in Finland.¹⁵² In her material angels appear as completely non-judgmental intimate others providing healing and sustenance.¹⁵³ As Utriainen notes, “In art and popular parlance, angels often work as metaphors of God’s mercy, beauty, inspiration and goodness.”¹⁵⁴ This comes very close to God’s core function in *CfC*: he is always available when the partners need him, he provides grace, he infuses the couple with confidence and hope. He is untiringly trustworthy, present, predictable. Granted, in the context of *CfC* God created us and we can look at the Bible for clues to God’s will, but as noted, Johnson only cites the positive parts. So, what exactly does Johnson’s concept of Christianity involve?

There are many ways of conceptualizing religion, which Woodhead reviews in her 2011 article, *Five Concepts of Religion*. Woodhead broadly divides concepts of religion into religion as (1) culture, (2) identity, (3) relationship, (4) practice, and (5) power. The corollary of Woodhead’s article is that we should always carefully research “what counts as religion in a particular context, and in what ways,” and she offers her concepts as an aid in this process. In this spirit I will briefly summarize how Johnson’s Christianity relates to these concepts. The first concept clearly has implications for Johnson as she considers being a Christian a matter of holding certain beliefs (exemplified by her Bible quote) as well as adhering to the conservative values she prescribes (see chapters 4.1.5 and 4.1.6). Christianity is also a matter of identity to Johnson (see chapter 4.1.3), but not so much in the senses that Woodhead discusses in her article (Johnson does not specify organizational belonging, for example). Another concept that particularly characterizes Johnson’s Christianity is religion as relationship. The social aspect of Christianity is important to Johnson as she prescribes community practices such as missionary work (at least in the form of charity) and Christian home groups. Under this third concept of religion Woodhead also discusses “religion as super-social relations” which describes well the general function God has in *CfC*. The couple is in effect having super-social or meta-social relations with God, a being usually considered outside the range of ordinary social relations.¹⁵⁵ This relationship is the one whose more exact nature we have just explored within the frameworks of game theoretic risk analysis and angel healing provided by Kamppinen and Utriainen. The fourth concept of religion, practice,

¹⁵² While Utriainen’s fieldwork was situated in Finland, the phenomenon of angel healing is a global one, and for example Furedi ridicules it as ‘angel fad’ and considers it an example of religion in decline. Furedi 2004:90. My interest here is simply to use angel healing as a contrastive example of a practice with surprisingly analogous aims and conceptualizations as Johnson’s Christianity.

¹⁵³ Utriainen 2017:268–269.

¹⁵⁴ Utriainen 2017:255.

¹⁵⁵ Woodhead 2011:131.

especially in the form of ritual and embodying God is also a key element in Johnson's Christianity, as we have seen in this and chapter 4.1.7. The fifth concept applies, too, as Christianity is also power for Johnson, especially social capital in the form of emotional empowerment and enhanced intimacy.

4.2 Johnson's Emotional Programmes in Context

4.2.1 Effective Dependency and the Relationship Ideal of Autonomy

In this chapter I compare Johnson's concept of effective dependency against the background of previous research on relationship manuals, especially concerning the relationship ideal of autonomy common to them. This will help further highlight what intimacy is in Johnson's system and how she construes it.

As self-help relationship manuals can be considered one nexus where wider emotional regimes and ideologies meet, the way they deal with the cultural contradiction between autonomy and dependency can tell us something about changes in the cultural climate as well (see chapter 1.2 and Sandra Dolby's views, for example, as well as Riis & Woodhead's views on the role of self-help in chapter 2.1).

As Riis & Woodhead observe, there are several theoretical meta narratives about the characteristic nature of late modernity (within the context of which self-help relationship manuals can be situated). Usually these narratives stress a single emotional characteristic.¹⁵⁶ To give an example, in his 1994 book *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style*, historian Peter Stearns discusses the changing nature of the emotional norms in American society. His conclusion is that

In the culture of the twentieth century undue emotion, whether anger or grief or love, meant vulnerability as well as childishness. By the 1990's, several generations had been schooled in the desirability of keeping most emotions buttoned up and expecting other people to do the same. American cool still prevails.¹⁵⁷

While this is a valid observation based on the premises of Stearns' research, it gives a very one-sided picture of the emotional life in late modernity. Riis & Woodhead, in contrast, take the stance that "[t]o live in late modern societies is to live *across* many different social domains, and to experience resulting emotional cross-pressures."¹⁵⁸

While Stearns would hardly have any objection to this claim, the point is that highlighting just one narrative resembles applying only one metaphor to love. While it may be true that there has been a general shift towards 'cool,' as is the usual observation about relationship manuals, the other, 'old' and 'warm' variants do, still exist. They also take

¹⁵⁶ Riis & Woodhead 2010:210.

¹⁵⁷ Stearns 1994:310.

¹⁵⁸ Riis & Woodhead 2010:210; italics in the original.

new creative stances to old problems. It is also a matter of what we study and highlight. Riis & Woodhead write of ‘hyphenated’ emotional identities, the construction of which seems to be one late modern approach to meeting the tensions and contradictions between various social settings, such as the workplace, leisure activities and family life. In Riis & Woodhead’s scheme the emotional function of self-help and therapy is precisely to provide assistance to individuals who wish to properly adapt to (or defy and change) conflicting emotional regimes.¹⁵⁹

The added reflexivity required by the multiplicity of conflicting roles is what Giddens highlighted as the characteristic feature of modernity.¹⁶⁰ After this brief introduction let us turn to our comparison.

My approach here is close to that of cultural sociologist Rebecca Hazleden in her 2004 article *The pathology of love in contemporary relationship manuals*. In this article Hazleden’s main focus is on examining Giddens’ famous claim that the social and cultural effect of self-help relationship manuals is emancipatory (or democratising with respect to gender roles and promoting a reconciliation of the sexes) and thus in line with Giddens’ concept of pure relationship.¹⁶¹ Hazleden follows in the footsteps of Hochschild’s 1994 study of advice books in the 1970s to 1990s, but Hazleden’s material is from the years 1981–2000. Hazleden studies ten best-selling relationship manuals “for their conceptions of love and their prescriptions and proscriptions for self-formation.”¹⁶²

Hazleden’s method is consonant with my study of the emotional programmes in Johnson’s books, as the formation of the self is a matter closely tied with finding authenticity through emotions, especially in late modern relationship manuals. As another well-known classic study, *Habits of the Heart*, puts it about the therapeutic relationship ideal, much in the same vein as Giddens:

In its pure form, the therapeutic attitude denies all forms of obligation and commitment in relationships, replacing them only with the ideal of full, open, honest communication among self-actualized individuals.¹⁶³

The therapeutic attitude liberates individuals by helping them get in touch with their own wants and interests, freed from the artificial constraints of social roles, the guilt-inducing demands of parents and other authorities, and the false promises of illusory ideals such as love. Equally important, the therapeutic attitude redefines the real self. Money, work, and social status are not central to authentic self, which instead consists of the experience and

¹⁵⁹ Riis & Woodhead 2010:210–211.

¹⁶⁰ Giddens 1993.

¹⁶¹ Hazleden 2004:202.

¹⁶² Hazleden 2004:201.

¹⁶³ Bellah et al. 1986:101.

expression of feelings. For such expressive selves, love means the full exchange of feelings between authentic selves, not enduring commitment resting on binding obligation.¹⁶⁴

Hazleden's findings provide an interesting mirror against which to view Johnson's manuals both with respect to their concept of love and with respect to the construction of autonomy as the relationship ideal of therapeutic culture, which is what I discuss in this chapter. In her analysis of relationship manuals Hazleden finds that romantic love is, first of all, portrayed as a narcotic, as something that produces intoxication, addiction and fusion, all qualities that the authors of the books generally consider dangerous and unhealthy.¹⁶⁵ The starting point here is similar to Johnson in that there is something too chaotic, reactive and afflicting in relationships that needs to be identified and mapped to be made sense of and then rectified. At least on the surface, however, it seems that most things in Hazleden's material are the direct opposite of Johnson's views:

Even when two partners seem to be in loving harmony with each other, they must guard against the pitfalls of love: 'What these people are experiencing is a heightened, almost unbearable need to melt into or "fuse" with the other person as quickly as possible' (Forward, 1987: 24–5). The consequences of this must not be underestimated – fusion is described as 'two gray figures locked in a repetitious, deathly dance' (Dowling, 1981: 145), or 'the slow, dark dance of death' (Beattie, 1992: 31). Such a relationship can involve significant neglect of the self, becoming '*a means of avoiding their own feelings . . .* To be without the relationship – *that is, to be alone with one's self* – can be experienced as worse than being in the greatest pain' (Forward, 1987: 277*). Infantile over-involvement with the other thus provides an unhealthy, extreme break from paying attention to the self, for whilst 'it is common for people to lose their sense of "I" temporarily when they enter the realm of "we"', nonetheless 'in order for the greater "we" to continue growing, each person will need to define the boundaries and continually strengthen their individual "I" ' (Carter-Scott, 2000: 239, 240). It is therefore vital to concentrate on 'maintaining a clear personal identity' (Friedman, 1985: 16).¹⁶⁶

In the quote, dance metaphors are applied to 'loving harmony,' but 'too much' of what Johnson might call closeness or intimacy is seen to have dire consequences, similar consequences that Johnson ascribes to losing connection. Too intimate a relationship is construed as a way of avoiding one's own feelings. By contrast in Johnson's emotional programme everything but increased intimacy seems to be a way of avoiding the proper kind of emotions and connection. In Hazleden's material the kind of loneliness that Johnson calls primal panic is also characterized as a pathology, but prescribed to be overcome by detachment, the direct opposite of Johnson's remedy of attachment.

What is worth looking at more closely in the previous quote is the idea that in order to strengthen the 'we' or the common bond, a clear definition of boundaries and "strengthening the individual 'I'" are required. The value of autonomy may not be so

¹⁶⁴ Bellah et al. 1986:101–102. Illouz 2018 has developed this view to its extreme in that she considers practices of self-forming authenticity almost solely from the point of view of consuming and manufacturing emotions.

¹⁶⁵ Hazleden 2004:204.

¹⁶⁶ Hazleden 2004:205. Italics in the original.

different in Hazleden's material and Johnson's emotional programmes as it first appears. While Johnson stresses the primacy of dependency in intimate relationships, her exercises and the stated results of practicing them do not seem to undermine autonomy in the sense that Hazleden's material claims addiction or dependency to do. In fact, in Johnson's system the idea of caring for others is not construed as involving any kind of neglect of the self, but rather investing in the self's greatest need of reciprocal loving care, something which also helps to clarify and empower one's deeper identity.

Hazleden also analyzes the construction of the symbolic narrative structure underlying her material. Just as we learn of the facts about attachment needs in Johnson's books, Hazleden's relationship manuals present their ways of interpreting relationships as facts, realities that the reader is also invited to discover by learning to notice the symptoms in their situation and behavior.¹⁶⁷ This is typical of self-help books, as Hochschild also notes, that the reader is led to discover herself as a therapeutic subject.¹⁶⁸ The underlying symbolic narrative structure seems to be very similar in Hazleden's material and Johnson's books. There is a disease that is identifiable, progressive without treatment, requires intervention to heal, but can be cured if treated properly. There is a cost to the cure, which in Johnson's books is the courage to face one's fears and share them, although this makes one vulnerable to further disappointment. In Hazleden's material, giving up, for example, 'love addiction' is construed as being potentially as difficult and painful as curing heroin addiction.¹⁶⁹

In contrast to Hazleden's material where love itself is directly pathologized, Johnson's emotional programme looks at love on the level of recursive interactional patterns and divides them into positive and negative – while pathologizing the latter, along with the negative emotions they produce.

In a move that seems to be characteristic of the psy discourses, 'codependency' was originally used to describe specific patterns of behavior of close family members of alcoholics or drug addicts, but then applied to progressively new situations and contexts.¹⁷⁰ The case seems to be similar with Bowlby's attachment theory, which originally pertained to children, but which Johnson is now using to pathologize 'attachment mis-attunements,' first in *HMT* with respect to adult intimate relationships,

¹⁶⁷ Hazleden 2004:206.

¹⁶⁸ Hochschild 1994:4.

¹⁶⁹ Hazleden 2004:207.

¹⁷⁰ Hazleden 2004:207.

and later in *CfC* in connection with one's relationship with God. Hazleden summarizes how codependency is constructed in her material:

So far, we have seen that the texts characterise romantic love as a series of biochemical reactions, and thereby constitute such love as something we experience as embodied creatures, as both the beneficiaries and the victims of our own intoxicating hormones. They thereby render romantic love a *natural* and *universal* phenomenon, and at the same time separate the self from its emotions by interpreting the latter as mere bio-chemical responses of the brain, thus inviting detachment from, and consequent lay-scientific scrutiny of, emotional life. At the same time, psy ontology is *naturalised* and *normalised* by the use of the vocabulary of the discovery of truths. Furthermore, they introduce the notion that the experience of romantic love might somehow be a dangerous or risky one, first drawing an *analogy* between addiction to love and addiction to narcotics, and later finding a *direct correspondence* between love (as an unhealthy involvement with the other) and addiction to a person or a relationship. A new 'disease' of loving too much, or codependency, is thus created, and a claim is made for the importance of psy intervention in the disease, both for its diagnosis and its cure.¹⁷¹

It is interesting to note that the biological models behind Hazleden's material seem to be rather similar to those in Johnson's books, and in both they are used to construct the idea that love is a compelling force. But whereas in Hazleden's material this emotional drive to attach is considered a pathology in itself to be cured by adhering to its opposite, Johnson sees the same phenomenon as an overriding and unavoidable imperative that we are bound to serve, and can only choose to do so either unconsciously (and produce negative interaction) or consciously (and produce positive interaction). In Hazleden's material love is shaped by avoiding too much closeness in order to be autonomous from nature and others, while in Johnson's view love is shaped by intentionally serving nature's or God's designs as they were meant to be served (which just happens to also be the best way to serve one's own 'real' interests).

Independent or Codependent?

While Johnson advocates dependency, she qualifies it by calling it "effective" (*HMT*:19, 283; *CfC*:28, 254, 295), "positive" (*HMT*:61; *CfC*:71), or "constructive" (only in *CfC*:281, 285) dependency. Johnson's outstated mission, as we have seen, is to depathologize dependency in relationships, but what does this really mean in her books and what does she claim is accomplished by it?

In the introduction to *HMT* Johnson laments that in contrast to her research findings, her colleagues argued that "healthy adults are self-sufficient" and that "only dysfunctional people need or depend on others" (*HMT*:4). Johnson polemically continues:

We had names for these people: they were *enmeshed*, *codependent*, *merged*, *fused*. In other words, they were messed up. Spouses depending on each other too much was what wrecked marriages! (*HMT*:4; italics in the original)

¹⁷¹ Hazleden 2004:208; italics in the original.

From this it would seem that Johnson is prescribing codependency. While this part did not make it into the introduction in *CfC*, both books do have another similar section where Johnson explicitly argues against the ideal of autonomy. She writes:

[...] the attachment view of love was, and perhaps still is, radically out of line with our culture's established social and psychological ideas of adulthood: that maturity means being independent and self-sufficient. The notion of the invulnerable warrior who faces life and danger alone is long ingrained in our culture. Consider James Bond, the iconic impervious man, still going strong after four decades. Psychologists use words like *undifferentiated*, *codependent*, *symbiotic*, or even *fused* to describe people who seem unable to be self-sufficient or definitively assert themselves with others. In contrast, Bowlby talked about "effective dependency" and how being able, from "cradle to the grave," to turn to others for emotional support as a sign and source of strength. (*HMT*:19; *CfC*:28; italics in the originals)

But what is interesting is that in addition to these lists of conditions that Johnson seems to want to depathologize, she does not discuss them further by these names. What she does include are glossary definitions of the terms codependent, enmeshed, symbiosis (fused) and undifferentiated. In her definition of codependent Johnson seems to be implying that it is not dependency that should be seen as the problem with codependency:

codependent A term applied to a person who facilitates, albeit often unintentionally, the dysfunctional behavior of a loved one. For example, the partner of an alcoholic who wants the drinking to stop but does not insist that the problem be confronted. The implication is that this partner's dependence on the relationship prevents him or her from confronting the alcoholic. (*CfC*:294; emphasis in the original)

But neither does Johnson seem to say that enabling alcoholism would be a good thing. Johnson's glossary discussion of the term 'enmeshed' also seems to be highlighting the idea that it is a misconception to think that closeness would be a threat to autonomy, and also to imply that it is the dependability of secure connections that ensures healthy functioning:

enmeshed Extreme closeness that impedes separate functioning and autonomy. In the past, lack of separateness, rather than lack of secure, positive connection, was considered the core problem in conflicted families and couple relationships. Health was defined as being able to separate from others, to stay objective and in control of emotions, and to not allow loved ones to strongly influence one's decisions. (*CfC*:295; emphasis in the original)

Johnson is here implying that she is not subscribing to the idea of health presented. Throughout her books she frames her views as advocating close, intimate connections and taking into account the other person's desires and wants. But it would be difficult to find an example where Johnson would consider inability to function separately as a positive thing. Johnson's discussion of 'symbiosis' reveals more clearly where she sees a theoretical rift in conceptualizing mental health, but here her attention is more focused on adult-child relationships, so it is hard to tell how she might consider secure attachment something akin to symbiosis:

symbiosis In psychological theory, a state in which one person is mentally and emotionally fused with another. Originally, for example, it was believed that a baby experienced himself or herself as part of the mother's body. Growing up was thought to be primarily a process of becoming more and more separate and autonomous. Inability to separate could lead to mental

illness. For example, schizophrenia once was seen as the result of being symbiotically fused, usually with one's mother. The idea is part of the “dependency and closeness are dangerous for your mental health” school of thought. More recent theories question the validity of this concept. (CfC:297; emphasis in the original)

The definition of undifferentiated also provides interesting material:

undifferentiated A concept used in family therapy indicating that a person cannot distinguish between feelings and rational thought and is reactive in relationships rather than able to make self-directed choices. The implication is that this person is too dependent on others for his or her sense of self-worth. If a therapist believes that a lack of differentiation is the problem in a distressed relationship, then improvement involves helping the partners to create clear boundaries with each other and focus on making independent decisions. (CfC:298; emphasis in the original)

If anything, Johnson's system aims at clarifying the map of emotions inside the mind of the undifferentiated, and healing any reactivity. These parts of the definition do not seem to correspond to anything ideal in Johnson's system. What Johnson's system does claim is that dependency in the sense of secure connection actually empowers individuals. I think what Johnson is implying in all these definitions is that the real explanation of the pathologies defined is not whatever the other theories claim, but lack of secure connection. Her definition of effective dependency fleshes this out:

effective dependency A positive state of secure attachment that enables us to tune in to our need for others and successfully ask for support and comfort. This state promotes connection with others and helps us handle stress as well as explore and deal with the world. (CfC:295; emphasis in the original)

Johnson's best explanation of her position goes like this, “Paradoxically, the fact that they [children] could rely on a loved one, that they could effectively depend on this person, made them stronger and more independent” (CfC:254). In other words, there is no question Johnson values autonomy. She goes on to add that, “This reflects the way in which acknowledging our dependence on God also makes us stronger” (CfC:254).

A Cure for What?

Another theme that Hazleden finds in her material, in addition to love's unhealthy, narcotic effects, is that of detachment as the remedy to the pathologies of love. The cure for codependency suggested in Hazleden's material, for example, seems diametrically opposed to Johnson's views:

The pathologisation of care for one's partner is proposed to the extent that taking an interest in one's partner's happiness is deemed inappropriate. The reader is told that when her partner is upset or grouchy she should distract herself with self-care (Doyle, 2000: 143; Gray, 1993: 77) because ‘you're not his mom or his therapist’ (Doyle, 2000: 144), and all attempts to help are ‘a manifestation of her disease’ (Norwood, 1986: 185). Recovery from the affliction of codependency occurs with the realisation that ‘Each person is responsible for him- or herself. It involves learning one new behavior that we will devote ourselves to: taking care of ourselves’ (Beattie, 1992: 54).¹⁷²

¹⁷² Hazleden 2004:210.

But while for Johnson there is no love without caring for one's partner, being reliably responsive, and engaging whenever one's partner reaches out, we should note that in no place does Johnson say that each partner should not be responsible for themselves. Quite the contrary, Johnson in no uncertain terms states that each partner must own up to their moves and grow to maturity, learn to dance the tango that is the ideal of fully realized relationships. Neither does Johnson advocate selfless sacrifice – not even in *CfC* – but in every turn reminds one to communicate one's deepest needs and fears as well as to shape love in the form of one's dreams and hopes. I think these are further points in favor of the interpretation that Johnson's model is actually aimed at autonomy, at a very empowered agency, not what Hazleden's manuals discuss as loving too much in the sense of not knowing and holding on to what's best for oneself.

If we go back to Giddens' original book we notice that just as Johnson, he was acutely aware of what is at play in constructing autonomy versus dependency in communication. Giddens writes, "Opening to the other, paradoxically, requires personal boundaries, because it is a communicative phenomenon [...] The balance of openness, vulnerability and trust developed in a relationship governs whether or not personal boundaries become divisions which obstruct rather than encourage such communication."¹⁷³ This is actually the direction from which Johnson approaches personal boundaries as well. I think we can see Johnson's communicative ideal as a certain emotional style of sharing what Giddens calls "openness, vulnerability and trust." Johnson's emotional technology focuses on developing the ability to recognize and appropriately share these building blocks of one type of intimate relationship.

In Johnson's relationship counseling it seems that nothing but the quality of interaction is at play in shaping love. Giddens also takes note of a development in this kind of direction:

The social invention of motherhood presaged, and gave concrete form to, the idea that the mother should develop an affectionate relationship with the child, one that gives specific weight to the child's needs. Child-rearing manuals published in the early part of the current century advised parents not to become too friendly with their children on the grounds that their authority would become weakened. Later the view developed that parents should seek to foster close emotional ties with their children, but also give due recognition to the child's autonomy. Just as some have spoken of narcissism to refer to the position of the self in modern society, others have suggested that parent-child interaction has moved towards greater 'permissiveness'. But that is an inadequate label to refer to the endeavour to develop alternative child-rearing strategies to those of the past. *It is the quality of the relationship which comes to the fore, with a stress upon intimacy replacing that of parental authoritativeness. Sensitivity and understanding are asked for on both sides.*¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Giddens 1993:94.

¹⁷⁴ Giddens 1993:98; my italics.

What is typical of the therapeutic symbolic narrative, whether it is realized in Giddens', Hazleden's or my material, is the idea of reparenting the child within through psychological methods as a cure for relationship ailments. Giddens takes note of this by writing "In therapeutic discussions of codependent or fixated relationships, almost without exception, individuals who wish to develop personal ties with others are advised to 'heal the child within'." Giddens continues by investigating "Why is 'release from the past' so important for the attainment of intimacy?"¹⁷⁵ Giddens takes his findings as "clues to the significance of therapy and counselling in modern culture in general"¹⁷⁶ and while Johnson seems to be curing the diametrically opposed symptom and with an entirely opposite method, it seems clear that the disease is a variation of the same symbolic narrative structure of finding proper boundaries for one's authentic self through proper emotions.

In the self-help material that Giddens examines he finds a setting very close to what Johnson paints: "She gradually learned to 'reparent the child within her' and dispel the internal image of the critical father [...] All the energy she had spent in fruitless search for her father's love could now be used in pursuit of activities that were positive and meaningful to her."¹⁷⁷ Just as in Johnson's ideas about relationship trauma, the key is to let go of unhealthy past attachments, only her method stresses the key role of a reliable partner in freeing oneself from the hold of immature, negative patterns. Giddens also recognizes in his material what Johnson's system capitalizes on, the metaphoric contrast between negative recursive patterns and a positive, intentionally directed and cleaned straight path of inner and relationship development:

It is not fanciful to compare letting go in dissolved adult relationships with the effort to free an adult, such as Nicki, from a compulsive involvement with childhood events and traumas. In each case there is a cognitive and emotional coming to terms with the psychological past, and a rewriting of the narrative self. In both instances a failure to 'break away' is likely to mean the repetition of similar patterns of behaviour, forming a cycle rather than a path of autonomous self-development.¹⁷⁸

While Giddens seems rather hopeful about the actual emancipatory or gender democratizing effects of such therapeutic self-help cures, something that Hazleden is questioning in her article, Giddens' account of the reflexive and narrative nature of the late modern self itself has been very influential. Giddens discusses the idea of 'toxic parents' found in his material, an idea not very far from Johnson's idea of parents damagingly inattentive to their children's attachment needs, and notes that the cure comes

¹⁷⁵ Giddens 1993:99.

¹⁷⁶ Giddens 1993:99.

¹⁷⁷ Giddens 1993:102.

¹⁷⁸ Giddens 1993:103.

by narrating the self in a new way, coming up with ‘biographical accounting’ with which one feels emotionally comfortable. This is a method Johnson uses a lot in making the couple come up with stories about their afflicted past, the cure they found and the glorious future they shall have (see root metaphors in chapter 4.1.2). The ailments of agency in Giddens’ material, such as ‘lack of self-esteem’ or ‘unacknowledged shame’ are very similar to those in Johnson’s books. The symbolic narrative structure of reparenting oneself, of inner children claiming “rights as adults: to be cared for emotionally, to have their feelings respected and their views and feelings taken into account,” as Giddens puts it, is also similar.¹⁷⁹

The Semi-Autonomous Pair

A third theme that Hazleden discusses is how in her material break-ups are valorized as emancipatory acts that free one to take even more care about oneself. Hazleden writes, “Here we can see what the authors regard as the most problematic feature of love: it provides a distraction from, and threat to, the deliberate adherence to the care of the self. At all times, one must be aware of this risk, and remember to protect and promote the autonomous self on its own, distinct, individual life path.”¹⁸⁰ This, as I have argued, is not a problem for Johnson since in her system the biological imperative of dependency is so fundamental, that the cure can only be a committed, contractual dependency that furthers the ends of both selves. In Johnson’s system only a couple can be a proper subject with full agency, intentionality and authenticity. Or to put it in another way, Johnson is advocating shared, participatory agency as something more valuable than what she considers illusory or inauthentic autonomy.

What is interesting to note is how close effective dependency or secure attachment comes to the ability to be a talented communicator in a collaborative project of intimate teamwork, an empowered, creative and well-adapted individual with a good sense of self-esteem. One of the features of therapeutic culture is usually considered emphasizing communicative ideals based on the ideas of teamwork and empathy.¹⁸¹ This seems to be one key element of Johnson’s system although she does not consider herself teaching communication or negotiation, but rather shaping and creating love.

What Johnson seems to be saying is that we are biologically determined to need safety and trust so much that the project of becoming autonomous, mature, and whole is a project

¹⁷⁹ Giddens 1993:104–109.

¹⁸⁰ Hazleden 2004:213.

¹⁸¹ See for example Illouz 2008, Maksimainen 2010, Mannevuol 2015.

best accomplished in committed pairs. Johnson seems to further use biological models and psychological research to warrant re-defining (or transforming) romantic love into what to me appears a very highly abstracted relationship in which the couple make a contract to pursue their psychological or spiritual growth together. This contract involves adhering to a very strict emotional programme which pathologizes all negative emotions and expressing them; requires unfailingly responding to one's partner's communication in a very specific calm, accepting, engaging tone and manner; requires daily observation of relationship rituals of a similar nature; and normatively prescribes appropriate sharing of closeness or intimacy as the ultimate goal and measure of the health of the relationship.

I think in Johnson's EFT, love becomes something akin to what Hochschild described by the technical term emotion work (see chapter 1.2 for examples). Love is the continuous practice of emotion work aimed at more and more intimacy, growth, and all the other ideals that Johnson prescribes. Love may be spontaneous at best, but Johnson is saying this spontaneity cannot be sustained without tireless emotion work to communicate in the manner she prescribes.

What about the Christian version?

The introduction of Christianity does change some things. What is particularly interesting is that a manual such as *HMT*, advocating a semi-autonomous contract between the couple, can be adapted into *CfC*, where the setting seems so different. In this chapter I have dealt with the stance regarding effective dependency to the degree that it is basically similar in both of Johnson's manuals. But as we have seen throughout this study, the adaptation to Christianity, while keeping the core theory and practice intact, has a significant effect on the emotional programme (see chapter 4.1). And the same goes for the concept of effective dependency, which in the Christian setting of *CfC* puts God squarely at the root of the couple's relationship as a super-social relationship. In *CfC* this relationship with God is constructed as transforming agency in a way that makes both partners able to experience and express God's emotions. In *CfC* the setting is more akin to an eternally committed married couple spiritually depending on God for sustenance.

One way to look at this is to claim that in Johnson's adaptation of her manuals we can see the malleability of the therapeutic narrative. It seems that it can be adapted to serve the needs of, for example, Christians. In the context of the new host emotional regime (Christianity), the adapted emotional programme does prescribe a different emotional ideal, as my study has demonstrated. But can we look at this from still another point of

view to better understand what is the core of the narrative here, and what is its relationship to the therapeutic? We can still test some conceptualizations of therapeutic culture against Johnson's manuals to better make visible the cultural contradiction it is offering a solution for.

4.2.2 Individualism, Commitment and the Concept of Therapeutic Culture

Johnson's adaptation can be considered an instance of cultural hybridization between therapy and Christianity, a translation between a secular and a religious mode of expression. Hybridization (or fusion, assimilation, borrowing or pluralism depending on how we look at it) is another phenomenon that has been receiving increased attention, particularly as one feature of globalization (sometimes dubbed 'Americanization').¹⁸² When we speak of contemporary spirituality as the spiritual market place, for example, we are referring to its pick-and-choose nature. The idea of a therapeutic culture, ethos or narrative can itself be considered a theory trying to explain specific forms of cultural interaction as a process of homogenization (sometimes referred to as 'McDonaldization'). Given a global market, it is not uncommon for artists to build translatability into their art forms, or for writers to curtail local references and reflect more on what applies to the human condition in general. Some of the changes in Johnson adaptation can be understood in this context.¹⁸³ But what kind of a hybrid product are we really seeing here? How is the interplay of popular psychology and Christianity best conceptualized in the case of Johnson's adaptation? How do Johnson's manuals fit with the idea of a therapeutic culture; to begin with, the claim that we are experiencing a thoroughgoing psychologization of society?¹⁸⁴

There is no question about the psychologization of society if we (1) take it to be a subspecies of medicalization, (2) mean by it that many Western institutions in globalized countries have become saturated by (mental) health concerns, or (3) claim that we rely increasingly on professionals for diagnosing and treating psychological ailments. From these vantage points we can see *HMT* as an example of an officially recognized psy expert diagnosing and offering cures for ever new ills, in this case in the form of a self-help relationship manual. This type of argument about therapeutic culture usually goes along with the idea of secularization, that with such modern phenomena as, for example,

¹⁸² See, for example, Burke 2013, who discusses the objects, terms and theories, situations, responses and outcomes of hybridization.

¹⁸³ Cf. Burke 2013:105–106.

¹⁸⁴ I am indebted to Terhi Utriainen for discussions about the constellation of viewpoints on the intersection of the therapeutic and spiritual/religious, although my approach and conclusions are my own.

increasing rationalization and industrialization, we are experiencing a disenchantment of culture, especially in the sense of replacing religious authority. But as we have seen in discussing New Age in chapter 4.1.3, according to some also an opposite process of sacralization is at work. Within this framework we could consider *CfC* an example of such a current, an enchanted (or post-secular) version of what was originally secular.¹⁸⁵

While the concept of religion Bellah et al. operate under (religion as values) in *Habits of the Heart* would not alone characterize well the whole spectrum of Johnson's Christianity (religion as relationality), their framework can be used to highlight what is at stake in arguments about the therapeutic nature of modern religion. Bellah et al. analyze American moral vocabularies and make a distinction between the 'first language' of American individualism and 'second languages' that Americans also traditionally use (biblical, republican, utilitarian individualist, and expressive individualist). They basically claim that individualism is of such primary moral value for Americans that it can be called America's first language and shared by all secondary languages.¹⁸⁶ So, how do Bellah et al. analyze therapy in this context?

As we have seen in the quote from Bellah et al. on the stance of the therapeutic attitude regarding intimate relationships in chapter 4.2.1., in their view it divests love of any obligation of commitment. Indeed, according to them the "therapeutic attitude reinforces the traditional individualism of American culture, including the concept of utilitarian individuals maximizing their own interests, but stresses the concept of expressive individuals maximizing their experience of inner psychic goods."¹⁸⁷ They go so far as to claim that "therapeutic language with its stress on openness, self-development, and change, undermines a larger language of commitment."¹⁸⁸

In the context of Johnson's secular and Christian manuals, it is interesting to note that Bellah et al. consider American evangelical Christianity "at the opposite pole" from the therapeutic attitude.¹⁸⁹ They consider evangelicals best exemplifying the "traditional view of love and marriage as founded on obligation," and observe that "like the therapeutically inclined, the evangelical Christian worries about how to reconcile the spontaneous, emotional side of love with the obligations love entails."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ For a recent summary of the interaction between the therapeutic and religion, taking off from the thesis of psychologization, see Rakow 2013.

¹⁸⁶ Bellah et al. 1986:20, 334. Compare with the quote from Dolby in chapter 1.2.

¹⁸⁷ Bellah et al. 1986:104.

¹⁸⁸ Bellah et al. 1986:106.

¹⁸⁹ Bellah et al. 1986:98.

¹⁹⁰ Bellah et al. 1986:93–94.

From this point of view a form of therapeutic practice that manages to both speak the second language of evangelical Christianity in terms of commitment while also balancing it against the first language requirement of American individualism sounds like a morally appealing product. Adding conservative Christian values goes against the open-minded humanism of *HMT*, but not against the fundamental value of commitment that it already argues for. As we have seen, the process of ensuring compatibility with the Bible is done in such a way that practically nothing functionally essential in *HMT* needs to be deleted, only be wrapped within Christian rhetoric. The connecting thread that makes this hybrid possible is the fundamental value of commitment, a commonality that exists already between *HMT* and evangelical Christianity.

The moral combination between explicit commitment and implicit individualism is the core of the cultural product being hybridized (or perhaps more aptly put, localized for evangelical Christians). The versioning mostly changes second language semantics, not the solution to a key cultural contradiction between individualism and commitment that Johnson's work offers to the self-help relationship manual market (as we have seen in the contrastive analyses of chapter 4.2.1 under the notions of effective dependency versus autonomy).

In closing, it is interesting to note that Bellah et al. are looking for what Johnson in her own way is offering, "To reappropriate a language in which we could all, men and women, see that dependence and independence are deeply related, and that we can be independent persons without denying that we need one another, is a task that has only begun."¹⁹¹ This is the crux of many criticisms of the therapeutic, that it somehow makes commitment impossible. But we may ask whether a commitment to the first language of individualism already accomplishes this without the help of the therapeutic ethos.¹⁹² What we see in Johnson's manuals is a counter trend that argues for the value of binding commitment in intimate relationships both in the therapeutic and Christian second languages. It does not, however, relinquish a fundamental commitment to individualism, but offers a hybridized solution to the underlying cultural contradiction both to those

¹⁹¹ Bellah et al. 1986:111. Rose expresses a similar sentiment in his critique of the therapeutic: "There is a pervasive sense that, whatever might be gained by stressing the autonomy and rights to self-actualization of each and every one of us, something is lost: the ways of relating to ourselves and others that were encompassed in such terms as dependency, mutuality, fraternity, self-sacrifice, commitment to others." Rose 1999:xxiv.

¹⁹² Salmenniemi & Vorona 2014 provides an example of how the models of self inherent in therapeutic self-help thinking may provoke a different reaction in a culture with different value systems and dominant discourses.

secularly inclined and to those already committed to a biblical second language and value system.

5 Summary and Conclusion

I set myself the task of comparing two self-help relationship manuals, one a Christian adaptation of the other. Since both claimed to focus on emotions, require practice and produce love, I decided to compare them in the framework of emotional programmes of intimacy. My main research question or objective, as I broke it down into research tasks, was to establish how the emotional programme of love changes in the adaptation. To meet my objective I used Riis & Woodhead's theory of emotional regimes as well as the concept of therapeutic culture as a broad framework for organizing and interpreting my findings. I used qualitative content analysis as my main method. At first I established what was changed on the textual level and then grouped the results of this analysis into themes that I considered likely or unlikely to contain information relevant to answering my main research question.

After this I started by looking into the covers of the manuals to get an idea of what kind of emotional programmes of intimacy the manuals present themselves as and for what type of an audience. In this way I learned that *HMT* presents itself as a technical manual of achieving lasting love between partners, and that it can be used by anyone. *CfC*, on the other hand, was decidedly aimed at a Christian audience.

Next, I analyzed some key metaphors that Johnson uses to construct a sense of orientation for intimacy. I focused on how Johnson qualifies the metaphors in *CfC* and what kind of repercussions this has for the nature of the emotional programme. I found that the way Johnson qualifies her master metaphors in *CfC*, such as journey and growth, has far-reaching implications for the tone and scope of the emotional programme. In *HMT*, for example, love is referred to as a journey that leads the couple to increased intimacy. In *CfC* this journey to relationship bliss turns into a spiritual journey involving religious motivations, aims and emotions. Similarly, Johnson redirects key metaphors like 'dance' and 'attunement' to Christian motives, thus radically changing the purported nature of the emotional programmes.

Then I reorganized the potentially relevant changes thematically so that I could effectively compare the influence Johnson's changes have on the emotional programmes. I compared the spiritual outlook, explanatory models, modalities of knowing, values and exercises of the two manuals, and found that each of them influenced what was prescribed

and sanctioned by the emotional programmes. Finally, I analyzed the differences in the construction of intimate relationships between the manuals and found that the emotional programme Johnson offers to the couple has changed fundamentally. In *HMT* the focus of the programme is on improving the emotional intimacy between the couple by scientific and human means. In *CfC*, EFT becomes a technology of connecting properly with God in order to experience and express his love. I compared Johnson's Christian programme with some features of evangelical Christianity and found key similarities, especially in how the relationship between man and God can be understood as a therapeutic process of working on one's God-concept. I found that the way Johnson constructs the relationship between man and God can be best understood by the concept of super-social relations. However, I noted that this relationship is very one-sided in that God untiringly always offers only positive emotional empowerment.

Relying mostly on Hazleden's studies I situated Johnson's ideas in the context of other relationship manuals, especially what comes to their understanding of autonomy versus dependency as a relationship ideal. I found that on closer inspection Johnson does not advocate unconditional dependency (as in co-dependency) but rather highlights the value of commitment as a means of empowerment for the couple. Johnson implicitly argues for participatory agency, which she considers the ideal spring board also for increased autonomy.

Lastly, I considered my observations in the light of some conceptualizations of individualism, commitment and therapeutic culture, especially by using the framework Bellah et al. offer in *Habits of the Heart*. I considered Johnson's manuals also in the framework of cultural hybridization and argued that the rift between autonomy and dependency is already inherent in a moral commitment to individualism. From this point of view psychologization of society is not at the core of Johnson's offering, but rather a solution to the cultural contradiction inherent in individualism. In other words, Johnson is offering the import of commitment to both those holding secular and psychological models (and who may not already value dependency in relationships), as well to those who already agree on the fundamental value of commitment due to a specific religious inclination. In this sense what is adapted is the secondary value base or moral stance of the manuals, since the fundamental implicit commitment to individualism remains in both.

The way I went about answering my research question was just one possible route. It turned out to be a rather exhausting undertaking in the sense that I compared the manuals

on so many levels that the results turned out to be voluminous. This was to be expected since I chose to study an adaptation that involved such deep-going conceptual changes. I thought restricting my focus to intimacy would limit the number of my findings, but this had little to no effect since the manuals were about intimate relationships. Another way to look at this is that the choice of using emotional programmes as the interpretative framework proved to work well. All other theoretical commitments I made seemed to align with this choice, and this theoretical framework seemed to be able to catch what was essential about the changes. I could equally well have used a broad cognitive framework, but I was pleased with the smoothness of using the concept of emotional programmes. It was easy to analyze Johnson's manuals with this approach and it did not feel too arbitrary at any point.

Situating Johnson's manuals in the framework provided by *Habits of the Heart* helped me interpret the cultural value of her solution and to see that the translation between secular and Christian modes of expression may not involve changing the most fundamental commitments of late modern individualism. But the question remains how to more exactly analyze the various formulations of therapeutic culture and especially the role spirituality/religion plays in it. On the continuum between therapeutic counselling and spirituality/religion the shared commitment to individualism in many instances also involves a shared commitment to the value of emotional health and growth (often conceptualized as the ability to narrate a coherent biographical account which one feels progressively more comfortable with emotionally). From this point of view, it is difficult to capture what is the fundamental difference between what is spiritual/religious versus therapeutic. It is useful to ask ourselves whether we are really seeing a specifically psychologized narrative structure or whether the function of the therapeutic and the spiritual/religious is in many cases too similar to make a crucial distinction.

Johnson's spectrum of work as a whole from (1) professional psychology to (2) secular humanism open to spirituality to (3) evangelical Christianity suggests that it is possible to traverse the whole range without giving up the core theoretical models and practices prescribed. In Johnson's case the smoothness of this transition may in part be due to her single-minded focus on emotional health and underlying commitment to individualism, features consonant with many domains of late modernity in globalized Western societies. In this sense it would be interesting to study, for example, Buddhist relationship manuals, and see what they focus on, what place individualism and commitment have in them, and how love is constructed in them. The framework of emotional programmes might not

work as well as with Johnson's manuals if the construction of the individual is very different (not focus on establishing ego-level narrative coherence) and the relevance of autonomy (as the freedom of the individual) may not even be considered.

Without going this far from the setting of the present study, there are also many more relationship manuals based on the theme of attachment, and I think these would deserve a more detailed comparative study as the paradigm in them seems to be generally warmer than contemporary studies of relationship manuals suggest. I think further studying how Johnson's professionally oriented manuals compare with the self-help ones would also be interesting. What would be the differences in the continuum between professional manuals and customized self-help manuals?

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Appendices

Appendix I: Sections in *HMT* and *CfC*

Section Count	Section Code	Section Title	Beginning Page in <i>HMT</i>	Beginning Page in <i>CfC</i>	Notes
1	A.1	(Cover)			
2	A.2	About the Authors	i	323	There is no heading in <i>HMT</i> , just an About text on "Dr Sue Johnson."
3	A.3	Also by Dr. Sue Johnson	ii	ii	
4	A.4	(Title Page)	iii	iii	
5	A.5	(Copyright)	iv	iv	
6	A.6	(Dedication)	v	v	
7	A.7	(Epigraph)	vii	vii	
8	A.8	Contents	ix	ix	
9	B.1	Introduction (by Sue Johnson)	1	3	In <i>HMT</i> titled "Introduction" since there is only one introduction.
10	B.2	Introduction by Kenny Sanderfer	---	13	Separate, additional Introduction in <i>CfC</i> by co-author
11	C.1	PART ONE: A New Light on Love	9	17	
12	C.1.1	<i>Love - A Revolutionary New View</i>	11	19	
13	C.1.1.1	A New Theory of Attachment	14	22	
14	C.1.1.2	Love and Adults	18	27	
15	C.1.1.3	A Wealth of Evidence	22	33	
16	C.1.2	<i>Where Did Our Love Go? Losing Connection</i>	27	38	
17	C.1.2.1	A Primal Panic	29	40	
18	C.1.2.2	The Demon Dialogues	31	42	
19	C.1.2.3	Key Moments of Attachment and Detachment	35	45	
20	C.1.3	<i>Emotional Responsiveness - The Key to a Lifetime of Love</i>	39	50	
21	C.1.3.1	The Beginning of EFT	41	52	
22	C.1.3.2	A.R.E.	49	60	
23	C.1.3.3	The Seven Conversations of EFT	50	62	
24	C.1.3.4	Play and Practice	57	68	
25	C.1.3.4.1	The A.R.E. Questionnaire	57	68	
26	C.1.3.4.2	Exploring Your Emotional Connections	59	70	
27	D.1	PART TWO: Seven Transforming Conversations	64	73	
28	D.1.1	<i>Conversation 1: Recognizing the Demon Dialogues</i>	65	75	
29	D.1.1.1	Demon Dialogue 1 - Find the Bad Guy	68	78	
30	D.1.1.1.1	Play and Practice	73	83	
31	D.1.1.2	Demon Dialogue 2 - The Protest Polka	74	84	
32	D.1.1.2.1	Play and Practice	87	97	
33	D.1.1.3	Demon Dialogue 3 - Freeze and Flee	90	101	

34	D.1.1.3.1	Play and Practice	95	105	
35	D.1.2	<i>Conversation 2: Finding the Raw Spots</i>	99	109	
36	D.1.2.1	Recognizing When a Raw Spot Is Rubbed	105	115	
37	D.1.2.1.1	Play and Practice	108	118	
38	D.1.2.1.1.1	Identifying Your Raw Spots	108	118	
39	D.1.2.1.1.2	Finding the Source of Your Raw Spots	111	121	
40	D.1.2.2	Sharing with Your Partner	112	122	
41	D.1.2.2.1	Play and Practice	120	129	
42	D.1.3	<i>Conversation 3: Revisiting a Rocky Moment</i>	124	133	
43	D.1.3.1	De-Escalating Disconnection	127	136	
44	D.1.3.2	Recognizing Your Impact on Your Partner	133	141	
45	D.1.3.3	Recognizing How Fear Drives Your Partner	138	147	
46	D.1.3.4	Play and Practice	143	151	
47	D.1.4	<i>Conversation 4: Hold Me Tight - Engaging and Connecting</i>	146	154	
48	D.1.4.1	A Couple in Trouble	149	157	
49	D.1.4.2	What Am I Most Afraid Of?	151	159	
50	D.1.4.3	Play and Practice	157	165	
51	D.1.4.4	What Do I Need Most from You?	159	167	
52	D.1.4.5	The Neuroscience of Harmony	165	175	
53	D.1.4.6	Play and Practice	168	178	
54	D.1.5	<i>Conversation 5: Forgiving Injuries</i>	171	181	
55	D.1.5.1	Small Events, Big Fallout	172	182	
56	D.1.5.2	Six Steps to Forgiveness	179	189	
57	D.1.5.3	Play and Practice	186	195	
58	D.1.6	<i>Conversation 6: Bonding Through Sex and Touch</i>	192	200	
59	D.1.6.1	Sealed-Off Sex	194	202	
60	D.1.6.2	Solace Sex	196	205	
61	D.1.6.3	Synchrony Sex	200	208	
62	D.1.6.4	Resolving Sexual Problems	204	211	
63	D.1.6.5	Play and Practice	208	216	
64	D.1.6.5.1	On Your Own	208	216	
65	D.1.6.5.2	With Your Partner	210	217	
66	D.1.7	<i>Conversation 7: Keeping Your Love Alive</i>	212	219	
67	D.1.7.1	Danger-Point Detours	215	222	
68	D.1.7.2	Celebrating Moments of Connection	216	223	
69	D.1.7.3.	Marking Moments of Separation and Reunion with Rituals	218	225	
70	D.1.7.4	Safety First	222	230	
71	D.1.7.5	Creating a Resilient Relationship Story	225	233	
72	D.1.7.6	Creating a Future Love Story	231	237	
73	D.1.7.7	Holding On to Positive Changes: Creating New Models	232	239	
74	D.1.7.8	Play and Practice	236	243	
75	E.1	PART THREE: The Power of Hold Me Tight	239	247	

76	E.A.1.1	<i>Healing Traumatic Wounds - The Power of Love</i>	241	---	The whole section E.A.1.1 in <i>HMT</i> has been replaced by E.B.1.1 in <i>CfC</i>
77	E.A.1.1.1	Locking Up Feelings	244	---	
78	E.A.1.1.2	Turning to a Loved One	247	---	
79	E.A.1.1.3	Trauma's Echoes	250	---	
80	E.A.1.1.4	Staying Isolated	252	---	
81	E.A.1.1.5	The Biggest Obstacle	258	---	
82	E.B.1.1	<i>Our Bond with God</i>	---	249	The whole section E.A.1.1 in <i>HMT</i> has been replaced by E.B.1.1 in <i>CfC</i>
83	E.B.1.1.1	Longing for Connection	---	250	
84	E.B.1.2.1	A Safe Haven	---	252	
85	E.B.1.3.1	A Secure Base	---	253	
86	E.B.1.4.1	The Pain of Separation	---	257	
87	E.B.1.5.1	Ways of Engaging with Loved Ones - Effective and Less Effective	---	258	
88	E.B.1.6.1	Reflections	---	265	
89	E.B.1.7.1	Play and Practice	---	266	
90	E.1.2	<i>Ultimate Connection - Love as the Final Frontier</i>	261	271	
91	E.1.2.1	How Does Love Work?	263	273	
92	E.1.2.2	A Wider Circle	268	279	
93	E.1.2.3	Love Between Lovers, Love in Families	269	280	
94	E.1.2.4	Society	271	282	
95	F.1	Acknowledgements	277	289	
96	G.1	Glossary	281	293	
97	H.1	References	291	301	
98	I.1	Copyright Acknowledgements	(iv)	311	Copyright acknowledgements moved at the end in <i>CfC</i> and in <i>CfC</i> also include acknowledgements related to Scripture quotations.
99	J.1	Index	301	313	

Appendix II: List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1. Intimacy as 'closeness' and 'connection' on a tripartite metaphoric map. Page 37.

Figure 2. Attunement from surface emotions to authentic emotions. Page 40.

Table 1. Comparison of the Epigraphs. Page 41.

Appendix III: Summary in Finnish

Rakkauden tieteestä kristinuskon jalkauttamiseen

Läheisyyden rakentuminen parisuhdeoppaan sekulaarissa ja kristillisessä versiossa

1 Johdanto

Tämän pro gradu -tutkielman aineiston muodostavat kaksi kanadalaisen psykologin, Sue Johnsonin, kirjoittamaa self-help -kirjaa: *Hold Me Tight* (lyh. *HMT*) sekä siitä yhdessä Kenneth Sanderferin kanssa kristillisille pariskunnille muokattu versio *Created for Connection* (lyh. *CfC*). Sue Johnson on yksi tunnekeskeisen pariterapian (lyh. EFT) kahdesta kehittäjästä ja hän on kirjoittanut aiheesta useita artikkeleita sekä kirjoja 1980-luvulta alkaen. Pariterapian kentällä EFT luokitellaan yleensä humanistisen psykologian muodoksi, jossa keskeisessä roolissa ovat tunnekokemus vastakohtana teoriapainotteisuudelle ja älyllistämiselle sekä tukeutuminen kiintymyssuhdeteoriaan parisuhteiden selitysmallina. Johnson kuvailee *HMT*-kirjaansa yksinkertaistetuksi, populaariksi versioksi ammattikirjallisuudesta, versioksi jota tavalliset ihmiset voivat soveltaa ilman terapeutin apua. *CfC* puolestaan syntyi vastaamaan kristillisten pariskuntien tarpeeseen saada parisuhdeneuvontaa, joka sekä perustuu validiin tutkimukseen että on täydessä sopusoinnussa kristinuskon ja Raamatun kanssa. Uutena piirteenä *CfC* soveltaa kiintymyssuhdeteoriaa myös jumalasuhteeseen. Johnsonin mukaan parisuhteen laadun paraneminen kohentaa myös jumalasuhteen laatua. Samoin muutokset jumalasuhteen laadussa vaikuttavat suoraan parisuhteen laatuun.

Johnsonin mukaan riippuvaisuuden patologisoiminen parisuhteessa on tarpeetonta, mikä muodostaa mielenkiintoisen kontrastin sille, että terapiakulttuurin olennaisena piirteenä pidetään yleensä itsenäisyyden korostamista. Yksi länsimaiselle kulttuurille ominainen kasvava trendi on tunteiden ja kokemuksellisuuden painottaminen kuten esimerkiksi uskontososiologit Ole Riis ja Linda Woodhead ovat esittäneet kirjassaan *A Sociology of*

Religious Emotion. Johnsonin kristillinen itseaputerapian muoto, jossa keskitytään tunnekokemuksen laadun parantamiseen, on siis myös ajankohtainen tutkimuskohde.

Johnsonin terapiamuoto sijoittuu humanistiseen psykologiaan pohjautuvalle neuvontatyölle tyypilliseen maastoon, jossa henkisiä kokemuksia ei pidetä patologisina, vaan Carl Rogersin viitoittaman asiakaskeskeisyyden hengessä niiden katsotaan voivan edistää henkilökohtaista kasvua. Johnson soveltaa brittiläisen psykiatrin, John Bowlbyn, kiintymyssuhdeteoriaa aikuisten kiintymyssuhteisiin. Johnsonin mukaan aikuisten väliset intiimisuhteet ovat terveitä, mikäli niissä osoitetaan emotionaalista joustavuutta eli suhtaudutaan kumppaniin avoimesti, lämpimästi ja läsnäolevasti reagoiden. Sekä vaativainen (ahdistunut tai aggressiivinen) että vetäytyvä (irrationaalinen tai etäinen) suhtautuminen ovat Johnsonin mukaan epäterveitä vuorovaikutusmuotoja, joiden korjaamiseen EFT tarjoaa ohjeistusta.

1.2 Aiempi tutkimus

Itseapukirjallisuuden juuret sijoitetaan yleensä 1800-luvun lopun Amerikkaan ja sillä on nykyään Yhdysvalloissa miljardiluokan markkinat. Itseapukirjat tarjoavat ratkaisuja kulttuurin ristiriitaisuuksiin, kuten esimerkiksi siihen, että vaikka individualismi on amerikkalaisen kulttuurin perusta, individualismilla on myös kielteisiä vaikutuksia kuten yhteisöllisyyden tunteen menettäminen. Parisuhdeoppaat ovat saaneet nykymuotonsa 1970-luvun lopulla. Tutkielmani kannalta oleellinen aiempi tutkimus on psykologi Cathryn Hillin väitöskirja, jonka otsikon voisi suomentaa *Parisuhderetoriikka: Läheisyyden representaatiot modernissa itseapukirjallisuudessa*. Hill tutkii parisuhdeoppaiden retoriikkaa ja niissä esiintyviä metaforia. Hänen analyysinsä tarjoavat hyvää vertailumateriaalia erityisesti Johnsonin metaforia tulkitessani. Toinen keskeinen tutkimus on kulttuurisosiologi Rebecca Hazledenin artikkeli, jonka otsikko voisi suomeksi olla *Rakkauden patologiat moderneissa parisuhdeoppaissa*. Hazleden tarkastelee parisuhdeoppaiden rakkauskäsityksiä sekä sitä millaisiin minuuden rakentamisen käytänteisiin niissä ohjastetaan. Hazledenin tulkinnat omasta aineistostaan tarjoavat vertailumateriaalia Johnsonin käsityksiä tarkastellessani. Itseapukirjojen esitystavassa, sisällössä ja tavoitteissa on monia yhtäläisyyksiä ja useimmat tutkijat katsovatkin niiden muodostavan oman genrensä.

1.3 Tutkimuskysymys

Tutkimuskysymykseni ja sen pohjalta muodostamani tutkimustehtävät ovat:

Mitä eroavaisuuksia rakkauden tunneohjelmassa on *Hold Me Tight* -kirjan ja siitä muokatun *Created for Connection* -kirjan välillä?

(1) Mikä muuttuu kirjoja muokattaessa ja mitkä näistä muutoksista ovat tutkimuskysymyksen kannalta keskeisiä?

(2) Miten tehdyt muutokset vaikuttavat läheisyyden tunneohjelmaan?

(3) Mitä annettavaa löydöksilläni on teoreettisille keskusteluille parisuhdeoppaista ja terapiakulttuurista?

2 Teoreettinen ja käsitteellinen viitekehys

2.1 Tunteiden hallintojärjestelmät ja tunneohjelmat

Teoreettisena viitekehystenäni käytän uskontososiologien Ole Riisin ja Linda Woodheadin muotoilua tunteiden hallintojärjestelmistä (engl. emotional regime). Käsitteellistän kristinuskon tunteiden hallintojärjestelmäksi, joka jäsentää ja mallintaa tunne-elämää yksilön, ryhmän ja yhteisön tasoilla. Tunteiden hallintojärjestelmänä kristinusko tarjoaa tunteiden logiikkaa koskevia malleja, menetelmiä niiden kehollistamiseen sekä myös normatiivisesti vaatii oikeiden tunneskaalojen ja harmonioiden noudattamista. Tästä näkökulmasta katsottuna self-help -kirjallisuus tarjoaa opastusta yksilöille, jotka haluavat mukautua johonkin tunteiden hallintojärjestelmään. Johnsonin kristillinen parisuhdeopas tarjoaa keinoja mukautua kristinuskon tunteiden hallintojärjestelmään intiimisuhteiden alueella. Tässä mielessä *CfC* sisältää tunneohjelman (engl. emotional programme), jota Johnson on versioimalla pyrkinyt muokkaamaan paremmin kristinuskon tunteiden hallintojärjestelmän vaatimuksia vastaavaksi muun muassa lisäämällä jumalasuhdetta koskevaa ohjeistusta.

2.2 Metaforat

Kielitieteilijä Dilin Liun mukaan metaforien käyttäminen on samanaikaisesti sekä kulttuurin ohjaamaa että sitä muokkaavaa toimintaa. Metaforat ovat tutkielmassani teoreettinen käsite siinä mielessä, että ne ovat kulttuurisia malleja tai kollektiivisia representaatioita, joiden avulla jäsenämme maailmaa. Johnson käyttää metaforia hyvin systemaattisesti ja tutkin sitä, miten tunneohjelmien luonne muuttuu, kun Johnson antaa versioidessaan metaforille uusia merkityksiä. Metaforat muodostavat kielitieteilijä George Lakoffin ja filosofi Mark Johnsonin mukaan koherentteja oletusten verkostoja, joissa yhden metaforan muokkaaminen voi vaikuttaa merkitysten verkostoon huomattavasti.

2.3 Terapiakulttuuri

Historioitsija Eva Moskowitzin mukaan amerikkalaisten keskittyminen itsetunnon, psykologisen onnellisuuden ja tunteellisen kasvun tematiikkaan voidaan tulkita terapeutiksi eetokseksi, jonka keskeiset opinkappaleet kuuluvat:

- (1) Onnellisuus on tärkein päämäärä ja kaikki muut saavutukset ovat arvokkaita vain siinä määrin kuin ne tukevat onnellisuuden päämäärää. Toisin sanoen, kaikkea tulee arvioida psykologisen mittatikun avulla.
- (2) Kaikkien ongelmien syy on psykologinen, myös ongelmien joita pidettiin taloudellisina, poliittisina tai kasvatuksellisina.
- (3) Psykologisten ongelmien syitä on mahdollista hoitaa, ja niin tulee tehdä.

Tällaisten terapeuttien ajattelumallien juuret sijoitetaan yleensä yhdysvaltalaisen Phineas P. Quimbyn 1850-luvulla muotoilemaan New Thought -liikkeeseen, jonka keskeisiä periaatteita ovat parantaminen, itsen löytäminen ja voimaantuminen. Suuri osa terapiakulttuurin tutkimuksesta on kriittistä ja syyttää populaaripsykologiaa monista moderneista ongelmista, kuten individualistisesta eetoksesta ja yhteiskunnallisen osallistumisen vähenemisestä. Parisuhteisiin kohdistuvassa empiirisessä tutkimuksessa käytetään usein filosofi Michel Foucaultin työhön perustuvia kriittisiä teorioita, joissa populaaripsykologian tarjoamat minuuden mallit nähdään institutionaalisenä vallankäyttönä, jonka avulla luodaan itseään hallitsevia kansalaisia. Terapiakulttuurin voi nähdä myös kulttuurisosiologi Eva Illouzin tapaan symbolisena narratiivina, jota voi sen mukautuvan ja geneerisen luonteen takia soveltaa monien kulttuuristen ristiriitojen ratkaisemiseen.

3 Menetelmät

Noudatan sosiologi Pertti Alasuutarin esittämää tutkimuksen tiimalasimallia, jonka mukaisesti valitsen ensin teoreettisen viitekehylenei ja tutkimusongelmani, tutkin sitten näin määrittelemääni paikallista systeemiä ikään kuin se olisi kaikesta muusta irrallinen, ja palaan lopuksi pohtimaan löydöksieni laajempia kulttuurisia ja teoreettisia yhteyksiä sekä kyseenalaistamaan valitsemaani metodiikkaa. Pääasiallinen menetelmäni on laadullinen sisällönanalyysi tai aineistossani esiintyvien kulttuurisesti konstruoitujen merkitysten lähiluku.

Vertailllessani Johnsonin oppaita ensimmäisen tutkimuskysymyksen mukaisesti totesin tutkimuskysymyksen kannalta oleellisiksi muutuskategorioiksi: (1) uuden sisällön, joka määrittyy selkeästi kristilliseksi; (2) lisämateriaalin, jolla on selkeästi merkitystä kristityille; (3) muutokset joiden motivaationa vaikutti olevan tietynlaisen kristinuskon kuvaaminen; (4) muutokset siinä miten Johnsonia ja EFT:tä kuvailaan; (5) muihin uskontoihin liittyvien viittausten poistaminen sekä aiemman uskonnollisen sisällön uudelleen muotoileminen.

4 Analyysi

4.1 Tunneohjelmien vertailu

4.1.1 Lupaus: kestävästä rakkaudesta Jumalan rakkauteen

Kansitekstien perusteella *HMT* tarjoaa maailman parhaan ja omintakeisimman pariterapeutin kliiniseen kokemukseen ja loistokkaaseen tieteelliseen tutkimukseen perustuvia neuvoja ja harjoituksia, joiden avulla ilmeisen sekulaariseksi konstruoidulle kohdeyleisölle luvataan elämänmittaista rakkautta. *CfC* tarjoaa näiden asioiden lisäksi uskoon perustuvaa lähestymistapaa, jossa kaksi voimallista perinnettä, rakkauden tiede ja kristinuskko yhdistyvät saumattomasti ja tarjoavat avioliittoneuvontaa sekä mahdollisuutta parantaa jumalasuhdetta.

4.1.2 Läheisyyden metaforinen rakentuminen

Johnsonin keskeisiin metaforiin sisältyy ikään kuin läheisyyden koordinaatisto. Johnson puhuu parisuhteesta 'matkana' tai 'polkuna' kohti hyvin erityistä rakkaudellista suhdetta, jolle hän tarjoaa kartan. Metaforisella kartalla lukija 'liikkuu eteenpäin' ajassa ja paikassa kohti tunteellisia päämääriä, kuten suurempaa harmoniaa ja onnellisuutta. Johnsonin ohjeiden noudattaminen tuo pariskunnan toistensa lähelle ja linjaa heidän polkunsa. *CfC*:ssä 'matkasta' tulee henkilökohtainen henkinen matka kohti yhteyttä Jumalan kanssa. Kristillisessä kontekstissa matka merkitsee sitoutumista avioliittoon loputtomana kasvuprosessina, jossa pariskunnasta tulee niin hyviä ja Jumalan toiveiden mukaisia kristittyjä kuin mahdollista.

Samaan tapaan Johnson muuntaa sekulaarin tunneohjelmansa muitakin metaforia siten, että kristilliset arvot ja Jumalasuhteet piirtyvät sen keskiöön. *HMT*:ssä virittäytyään pinnallisista tunteista syvempiin tunteisiin ja opetellaan tangonkaltaista intensiivistä vuorovaikutustanssia kumppanin kanssa. *CfC*:ssä tanssitaan tämän lisäksi Raamatun sanoman tahdissa ja Jumala virittää ihmiskunnan kaipaamaan ja etsimään rakkauttaan.

4.1.3 Suhde henkisyteen: humanismista kristinuskoon

HMT on avoin henkisyydelle, mutta henkisyydellä ei ole mitään määriteltyä asemaa suhteessa kirjan olennaisesti sekulaariin, tieteelliseen argumentointiin. *CfC*:ssä kaikki viitteet muihin uskontoihin on poistettu ja tilalle on tuotu hyvin henkilökohtaista suhdetta toivova Jumala sekä kristinusko, joka on tarkka Raamatun käskyjen noudattamisesta.

4.1.4 Selitysmallit: biologia 'Jumalana' versus Jumala biologiassa

HMT vetoaa biologisiin ja neurotieteellisiin selitysmalleihin ja siinä läheisyyden tarve on evoluution tuottama selviytymismekanismi. Pariskunnan tehtävänä on kuunnella kiintymyssuhdebiologiaansa sekä tunnistaa turvallisuuden tunteen objektiivinen merkitys rakkauden luomisessa ja ylläpitämisessä. *CfC*:ssä Jumala on luonut kiintymyssuhdebiologian eikä sanaa 'evoluutio' enää käytetä. Biologiset mekanismit ovat Jumalan viestintää, jonka tarkoituksena on johdattaa ihminen hänen luokseen.

4.1.5 Tietämisen modaliteetit: oppimisen sisällyttäminen 'siihen että on aina tiennyt'

HMT nojaa tieteellisen tutkimuksen paradigmaan ja ajatukseen jatkuvasta oppimisesta. *CfC*:n retoriikan mukaan kristityt ovat aina tienneet sen mitä Raamattu sanoo, mutta haluavat myös pätevää tutkimustietoa, kunhan se vain on linjassa kristillisten periaatteiden kanssa. *CfC* yhdistelee tieteellistä tietoa, kristillisiä kirjailijoita sekä Raamatun lainauksia. Lopullinen auktoriteetti vaikuttaa olevan ihmissydän, joka voi tarvittaessa tunnistaa jonkin ilmiön niin kauniiksi, ettei se voi olla muuta kuin Jumalan tahto, mutta tietämisen eri modaliteettien suhde jää hieman epäselväksi, mikä saattaa olla myös tarkoituksellista oppikiistojen välttämiseksi.

4.1.6 Etiikka ja arvoteoria: liberaalista kohti konservatiivista

CfC:stä on poistettu viittaukset homoseksuaalisuuteen sekä kirosanat; seksuaalisuuteen liittyviä asioita on hieman karsittu.

4.1.7 Läheisyyden muuntaminen: haavoittuvuuden jakaminen ja suhteen narraatio

Johnsonin harjoituksissa mitataan, nimetään, jaetaan ja muunnetaan tunteita etukäteen suunniteltujen kaavojen ja valintalistojen avulla. Tavoitteena on haavoittuvuuden jakaminen positiivisesti läsnä ollen ja kumppanin luottamusta ennakoitavuudella vahvistaen. Näin liikutaan tunteiden muuntamisen polkua pinnallisista tunteista syvempien, haavoittuvaisuuden tunteiden kautta positiivisiin luottamuksen tunteisiin.

Pariskunnan edellytetään sitoutuvaan tällaiseen tunneilmaisuun sekä yhteiseen narratiiviin parisuhteen historiasta ja tulevaisuudesta, sillä näiden harjoitteiden katsotaan tuottavan rakkautta ja takaavan sen jatkuvuuden. *CfC* lisää pariskunnan harjoitteisiin Raamatun kohtien pohtimisen yhdessä sekä listan erilaisista tavoista, joilla uskon katsotaan voivan auttaa rakkaudellisten siteiden ylläpitämisessä. Harjoitteet säilyvät pitkälti samoina, mutta *CfC*:ssä niiden motivaationa ja mallina voivat toimia Raamatun lauseet, kristillinen kasvatus sekä Jumala.

4.1.8 Läheisyyden laajuus: pariskunnasta Jumalaan

CfC:ssä rukous laajentaa parisuhteen tunneohjelmaa uskonnollisten tunteiden piiriin. Rukous toimii parhaimmillaan Jumalan tarjoaman läheisyyden, turvan ja hoivan lähteenä. *CfC*:ssä pariskunnan suhtautuminen toisiinsa muuntaa heidän läheisyytensä laatua, ja tämä vaikuttaa heidän Jumalasuhteensa laatuun. Näin ollen parisuhdekommunikaation yhdeksi motiiviksi tuleekin Jumalakäsityksen parantaminen siinä mielessä, että se voi toimia voimauttavampana läheisyyden lähteenä.

Jumala on *CfC*:ssä lähinnä vastaanottava osapuoli, joka täydellisen terapeutin tavoin kohtelee pariskuntaa aina Johnsonin parisuhdeideaalien mukaista ymmärtävää läsnäoloa tarjoamalla. Jumalan onkin käytännössä niin yksipuolisesti positiivinen, että hänen roolinsa pariskunnan elämässä muistuttaa enemmän suojelusenkeliä sellaisena kuin se ilmenee globaalissa enkeliparantamisilmiössä kuin esimerkiksi Vanhan Testamentin rankaisevaa Jumalaa.

Linda Woodheadin uskontokäsitteiden jaottelun avulla tarkasteltuna Johnsonin kristinusko määrittyy kulttuurina, sillä Johnson pitää uskon kannalta keskeisinä Raamatusta löytyviä uskomuksia sekä konservatiivisia kristillisiä arvoja. Ennen kaikkea kristinusko määrittyy sosiaalisina suhteina: toisaalta usko on sosiaalinen suhde kumppaniin ja uskonyhteisöön, toisaalta metasosiaalinen suhde Jumalaan. Kristinuskoon kuuluu myös harjoitteita kuten rituaaleja sekä pyrkimys ilmentää Jumalan tunteita ja tahtoa, jalkauttaa kristinusko myös yhteisöllisyyden tasolla. Kristinusko on *CfC*:ssä myös valtaa, ennen kaikkea sosiaalista pääomaa tunteellisen voimaantumisen ja laadukkaamman läheisyyden muodoissa.

4.2 Johnsonin tunneohjelmat laajemmissa yhteyksissä

4.2.1 Myönteinen riippuvaisuus ja itsenäisyys parisuhteen ideaaleina

Hazledenin tutkimuksen parisuhdeoppaiden käsitykset rakkauden ja riippuvaisuuden suhteesta vaikuttavat ensi näkemältä täysin vastakkaisilta kuin Johnsonin. Tarkemmin analysoitaessa Johnson ei kuitenkaan kannata Hazledenin aineiston kammoksumaa 'läheisriippuvaisuutta'. Johnsonin mukaan läheisiin turvautuminen on myönteistä riippuvaisuutta, joka voimaannuttaa ja lisää kykyä toimia myös itsenäisesti. Hazledenin aineistossa rakkauden patologioiden ratkaisuksi esitetään etäisyyden ottamista, liiallisen läheisyyden välttämistä. Johnson puolestaan kannattaa toimijuuden optimoimiseen tähtäävää implisiittistä sopimusta, jaettua vastuuta vuorovaikutuksen laadun ylläpitämisestä, jotta molemmat osapuolet pysyvät voimaantuneina.

CfC:ssä asetelma on lähtökohtaisesti erilainen. Jumala asettuu parisuhteen keskiöön ja pariskunnalle avautuu mahdollisuus samaistua häneen, tuntea ja ilmentää hänen tunteitaan. *CfC*:ssä aviopari on riippuvainen Jumalan tarjoamasta turvasta ja henkisestä ravinnosta.

4.2.2 Individualismi, sitoutuminen ja terapiakulttuurin käsite

Johnsonin kristillinen mukaelma on esimerkki kulttuurisesta hybridisaatiosta terapian ja kristinuskon välillä, käännöksestä sekulaarin ja uskonnollisen ilmaisutavan välillä. Jos yhteiskunnan psykologisoituminen käsitteellistetään medikalisaation alalajiksi, *HMT* voidaan nähdä virallisesti tunnustetun psykologisen asiantuntijan pyrkimyksenä tuottaa uusia diagnooseja ja tarjota niihin hoitoja. Teesiin yhteiskunnan psykologisoitumisesta liitetään usein oletus kulttuurin sekularisoitumisesta. *CfC* on kuitenkin esimerkki vastakkaisesta prosessista, jossa alun perin sekulaari kulttuurituote sakralisoidaan.

Sosiologi Robert Bellahin ja hänen tutkimusryhmänsä *Habits of the Heart* jakaa amerikkalaiset moraaliset asenteet toisaalta individualismin *ensisijaiseen kieleen*, toisaalta *toissijaisiin kieliin* (joita ovat raamatullinen kieli, republikaaninen kieli, utilitaarinen individualismi sekä ekspressiivinen individualismi). Terapeuttinen asenne käsitteellistetään *Habits of the Heartissa* avoimuutta, itsen kehittämistä sekä muutosta painottaviksi ja siten individualismia vahvistaviksi kielen käyttötavoiksi, jotka vääjäämättä sabotoivat pyrkimykset laajamittaiseen sitoutumiseen. Evankelinen kristinuskko nähdään terapeuttisen asenteen vastakohtana siinä mielessä, että evankelikaaliset sitoutuvat perinteiseen ajatukseen avioliitosta velvollisuutena. Johnsonin hybridi on terapiatuote, joka puhuu sujuvasti evankelikaaliselle kristinuskolle tyypillistä sitoutumisen kieltä, mutta myös implisiittisesti sitoutuu individualismin

ensisijaiseen kieleen. Konservatiiviset kristilliset arvot eivät käy yksiin *HMT*:n humanismin kanssa, mutta hybridin mahdollistaa yhtäläinen sitoutumisen arvostaminen, joka vallitsee jo *HMT*:n ja evankelikaalisen kristinuskon välillä. Tuotteen ytimessä on samanlainen ratkaisu individualismin ja sitoutumisen väliseen kulttuuriseen ristiriitaan ja versiointi kohdistuukin pitkälti toissijaisen kielen mukauttamiseen sekulaarista raamatulliseen ilmaisutapaan.

*Habits of the Heart*ssa peräänkuulutetaan uutta kieltä, joka mahdollistaisi sen näkemisen, ”että voimme olla itsenäisiä kieltämättä tarvitsevamme toisiamme”. Moni terapiakulttuurin kritiikki voidaan pelkistää väitteeseen, että terapeutin maailmankuva tekee sitoutumisen mahdottomaksi. Sitoutuminen individualismiin ensisijaisena arvoperustana johtaa mielestäni tähän jo ilman terapeutin kielenkäytön apua. Johnson edustaa kulttuurista vastavirtaa, jossa argumentoidaan sitoutumisen puolesta sekä terapian että kristinuskon toissijaisilla kielillä. Johnson ei kuitenkaan luovu perimmäisestä sitoutumisesta individualismiin, vaan pyrkii tarjoamaan ratkaisun samaan kulttuuriseen ristiriitaan sekä sekulaariin että raamatulliseen arvoperustaan sitoutuneille.

5 Lopuksi

Neuvontapsykologian ja uskonnon välimaastossa, johon Johnsonin oppaat sijoittuvat, on välillä vaikea tehdä eroa henkisyden/uskonollisuuden ja terapeutisuuden välillä, koska individualismiin liittyy tällä saralla myös tunteellisen terveyden ja henkisen kasvun korostaminen. Johnsonin julkaisujen kokonaisuus viittaa siihen, että on mahdollista versioida sama teoreettinen ydin harjoitteineen (1) virallisesta psykologiasta (2) henkisydelle avoimen sekulaarisen humanismin kautta (3) evankeliseen kristinuskoon. Johnsonin tapauksessa siirtymä mahdollistuu osittain sillä, että hänen teoriansa keskittyy niin yksipuolisesti tunteelliseen terveyteen ja pohjimmiltaan kuitenkin sitoutuu individualismiin. Olisikin kiinnostavaa tutkia esimerkiksi buddhalaisia parisuhdeoppaita ja selvittää mihin niissä keskitytään, mikä on individualismin ja sitoutumisen paikka niissä sekä miten rakkauden käsite niissä rakentuu. Tunneohjelmien teoreettinen viitekehys ei välttämättä sovellu yhtä hyvin jos aineistossa yksilö rakentuu jotenkin hyvin eri tavalla kuin muodostamalla koherenttia ja tunnetasolla miellyttävää narratiivia itsestä.

Olisi perusteltua tutkia muitakin kiintymyssuhdeteoriaan perustuvia parisuhdeoppaita, koska niiden parisuhdeideaali vaikuttaa olevan lämpimämpi kuin useissa parisuhdeoppaista tehdyissä tutkimuksissa. Johnsonin teosten koko kirjoa voisi myös

tutkia, ja vertailla tarkemmin mitä eroavaisuuksia ammattikirjallisuuden ja versioitujen itseapukirjojen välillä on.