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Passionate Love, Sexual Desire, and Mate Selection: Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives

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Aye, lord demon, attract, inflame, destroy, burn, cause her to swoon from love as she is being burnt, inflamed. Goad the tortured soul, the heart of Karosa ... until she leaps forth and comes to Apalos ... out of passion and love, in this very hour, immediately, immediately; quickly, quickly ... do not allow Karosa herself ... to think of her [own] husband, her child, drink, food, but let her come melting for passion and love and intercourse, especially yearning for the intercourse of Apalos. (An ancient spell designed to work love magic. Dug up in Eshmunen, Egypt, the prayer was inscribed on a lead tablet wrapped around strands of brownish red hair and placed in the mouth of a mummy, to whom the spell was addressed; Faraone, 2003)

THE MEANING OF PASSIONATE LOVE

Passionate love is a powerful emotional state. Hatfield and Rapson (1993, p. 5) defined it as:

A state of intense longing for union with another. Passionate love is a complex functional whole including appraisals or appreciations, subjective feelings, expressions, patterned physiological processes, action tendencies, and instrumental behaviors. Reciprocated love (union with the other) is associated with fulfillment and ecstasy. Unrequited love (separation) with emptiness, anxiety, or despair.

The *Passionate Love Scale* (PLS) was designed to assess the cognitive, physiological, and behavioral indicants of such love (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). The PLS has been found to be a useful measure of passionate love for young children, adolescents, and adults from a variety of cultures (see Doherty, Hatfield, Thompson, &

1 Choo, 1994; Landis & O'Shea, 2000) and to correlate well with neurocortical and
 2 fMRI measures of passionate love (see Aron, Fisher, Mashek, Strong, Li, & Brown,
 3 2005; Bartels & Zeki, 2000; Fisher, 2003.)

4 In recent years, passionate love, sexual desire, and mate selection have
 5 become topics of central concern to social psychologists. Three things account for
 6 the flowering of interest in these topics: (1) scientists have gained a new under-
 7 standing of the critical importance of culture in shaping people's thoughts, feel-
 8 ings and actions; (2) technological advances, such as the development of fMRI
 9 techniques have made it possible for scientists to study phenomena (such as pas-
 10 sionate love and darker emotions, like jealousy and vengeance) once thought to be
 1 "will-O'-the-wisps," too vague to study scientifically; and (3) recent advances in
 2 evolutionary psychology remind us that the challenges our ancestors once faced
 3 may have a profound impact on the ways men and women behave today (see
 4 Lieberman, this volume).

7 CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING PASSIONATE LOVE, 8 SEXUAL DESIRE, AND MATE SELECTION

20 *Culture and the Meaning of Passionate Love*

1 In all societies, people are able to understand basic emotional terms such as love,
 2 joy, anger, fear, and sadness (see Fischer, Shaver, & Carnochan, 1990; Jankowiak,
 3 1995). Yet, cultural values also have a profound impact on the subtle shadings of
 4 meaning people ascribe to such constructs (see Nisbet, 2003.)

5 Shaver, Wu, and Schwartz (1991) interviewed young people in America, Italy,
 6 and the People's Republic of China. In all three cultures, men and women iden-
 7 tified the same five emotions as "basic," or prototypic, emotions. These were:
 8

- 9 • Joy/happiness;
- 10 • Love/attraction;
- 1 • Fear;
- 2 • Anger/hate; and
- 3 • Sadness/depression.

4 They also agreed as to whether such emotions should be labeled as positive
 5 experiences (such as joy) or negative ones (such as fear, anger, or sadness). They
 6 agreed, that is, with one exception—passionate love. Americans and Italians tend-
 7 ed to assume that love is an intensely positive experience. Students in Beijing,
 8 China, on the other hand, possessed a darker view of love. In Chinese there are
 9 few "happy-love" words; love is associated with sadness. It is not surprising, then,
 10 that Chinese men and women associated passionate love with such ideographs
 1 (words) as infatuation, unrequited love, nostalgia, and sorrow love.

2 Today, social psychologists are busy exploring folk conceptions of love in a vari-
 3 ety of cultures—such as the People's Republic of China, Korea, and Indonesia (see
 4 Gaines et al., this volume, for a discussion of cultural issues). Researchers have found
 5
 6

1 that although in most cultures people possess surprisingly congenial views of love and
 2 other “feelings of the heart,” cultural differences do in fact exist (see Kim & Hatfield,
 3 2004; Shaver & Murdaya, 2001; and Jankowiak, 1995, for a review of this latest
 4 research.)
 5

6 ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

7
 8 At one time, scholars contended that passionate love was “invented” by the trou-
 9 badours in 12th century France. In truth, passionate love and sexual desire are as
 10 ancient as humankind. The Sumerian love fable of Inanna and Dumuzi, for exam-
 1 ple, was spun by tribal storytellers in 2000 BC! Today, anthropologists agree that
 2 passionate love is a cultural universal.
 3

4 In order to test this notion, Jankowiak and Fischer (1992) selected a sampling
 5 of tribal societies from the Standard Cross-cultural Sample. How prevalent were
 6 such feelings? They found that in almost all of these far-flung societies, young
 7 lovers spoke of passionate love, recounted tales of love, sang love songs, and
 8 admitted to the longings and anguish of infatuation. When affections clashed with
 9 parents’ or elders’ wishes, young couples often eloped. On this basis, the anthro-
 10 pologists concluded that romantic love is a cultural universal. There is consider-
 1 able evidence that they are right (see Buss, 1994; Hatfield & Rapson, 1993, 1996;
 1 Jankowiak, 1995.)
 2

3 Recently, social anthropologists have begun to explore folk conceptions of love
 4 in such diverse cultures as The People’s Republic of China, Indonesia, Turkey,
 5 Nigeria, Trinidad, Morocco, and the Fulbe people of North Cameroon. They have
 6 also studied the Mangrove (an Australian Aboriginal community,) the Mangaia
 7 people in the Cook Islands, the Palau people in Micronesia, and the Taita people
 8 of Kenya. In all these studies, people’s views of passionate love are surprisingly
 9 similar. Perhaps love is, indeed, a cultural universal. Or perhaps “the times they
 10 are a’changing.” One impact of globalization (and the ubiquity of MTV,
 1 Hollywood and Bollywood movies, chat rooms, and foreign travel) is to insure that
 2 when young people speak of “passionate love,” they are probably talking about
 3 much the same construct (see Jankowiak, 1995; and Kim & Hatfield, 2004, for a
 4 review of this field research).
 5

6 In spite of the fact that passionate love is a cultural universal—an emotion
 7 thought to exist in all cultures and in all historical eras—cultural pressures are
 8 proposed to exert a profound impact on the commonness and intensity of pas-
 9 sionate love, and on how lovers attempt to deal with these tumultuous feelings.
 10

1 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

2 Once upon a time, historians focused on the lives of kings and queens, and on
 3 important battles. Today, perspectives have broadened. Many historians are fasci-
 4 nated by the lives of common folk and are busily exploring (among other things)
 5 the topics with which this chapter is concerned: the history of passionate love, sex-
 6 ual desire, and mate selection.

230 CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

1 These social, cultural, and psychological historians point out that romantic and
2 sexual attitudes have varied greatly from culture to culture and from one era to
3 another. The sage Vatsyayana advised young men and women to marry for love;
4 the Medieval church condemned such sinful indulgence. The Inuit in Alaska con-
5 sidered it hospitable to share their wives with visitors; the Muslims jealously
6 locked their wives and concubines away in harems. Hellenes idealized the pure,
7 sexual love between older men and young boys; the Aztecs punished homosexu-
8 ality by tying men to logs, disemboweling them, covering them with ash, and
9 incinerating them; Sumerian and Babylonian temples were staffed by priests,
10 priestesses, and sacred prostitutes; while the ancient Hebrews stoned “Godless”
1 prostitutes (Tannahill, 1980). So much for the “never-changing nature” of love and
2 marriage, claimed by some modern-day politicians! In order to provide a sense of
3 this burgeoning psychological research, with its emphasis on variability and muta-
4 bility, let us now focus on one ancient and supposedly “stable” and “traditional”
5 society—China.

THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

1 China is an ancient culture. The Peking Man (an ancestor of early humankind)
2 lived approximately 578,000 years ago. China’s archeological cultural record
3 began 5000 years ago in the Hongshan (Red Mountain) dynasty, and its historical
4 record 4000 years ago in the Xia (or First Dynasty). The oldest Chinese medical
5 texts touching on passionate love and sexual desire date from 168 BCE.

6 Historians divide traditional Chinese history into three periods: the Formative
7 Age (Prehistory to 206 BCE); the Early Empire (206 BCE to 960 ACE); and the
8 Later Empire (960 BCE to 1911 CE). The Chinese historians Ruan and Lau (1999)
9 argue that for the first 4000 years of their history, Chinese attitudes toward love
10 and sex were generally positive—though complex and ever changing. In the Late
1 Empire (1000 years ago), however, attitudes began to darken, gradually becoming
2 increasingly negative and repressive with the passage of time.

Passionate Love and Sexual Behavior in Antiquity

1 The earliest Chinese romantic and sexual attitudes were shaped by folk religions,
2 Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. In all traditions, Ruan and Lau (1999)
3 argue that the concept of Yin–Yang has been of paramount importance. According
4 to the Yin–Yang philosophy, all in life is touched by two principles: Yin (the female
5 force), which is thought to be passive, negative, weak, and destructive; and Yang
6 (the male force), which is considered to be active, positive, strong, and construc-
7 tive. The Chinese have long used “Yin” and “Yang” to refer to sexual activities and
8 sexual organs. Thus “Yin Dao” (the passageway of Yin) means vagina and “Yang
9 Ju” (the organ of Yang) means penis. The phrases “Huo Yin Yang” or “Yin Yang
10 Huo He,” (the union of Yin and Yang) describe the act of sexual intercourse.

1 Ruan (1991, p. 12) observed:
2

3 In general, the Yin–Yang doctrine supported men’s higher social status, since
4 not only masculinity but also light, good fortune and all that is desirable were
5 associated with Yang, while darkness, evil, and femininity were associated
6 with Yin.
7

8 Archeologists have unearthed medical texts on passionate love and sexuality
9 dating back to 168 BCE. These texts, *Ten Questions and Answers, Methods of*
10 *Intercourse between Yin and Yang*, and *Lectures on the Super Tao in the World:*
1 *Seven Injuries and Eight Advantages*, make it clear that the ancients assumed that
2 passionate love and sexual pleasure were two of the great joys of life. Classical
3 scholars also possessed a great deal of scientific information about sexual
4 response. For example, the 4th-century classic, *Secret Instructions Concerning*
5 *the Jade Chamber*, provided information concerning the selection of romantic and
6 sexual partners, foreplay, and positions for intercourse. They taught men and
7 women how to identify the stage their partner had reached in the sexual response
8 cycle. These early court physicians obviously were careful observers! Their
9 descriptions of the stages of sexual response sound a bit like those of Kinsey and
10 his associates (1948, 1953) and Masters and Johnson (1966).
1

2 In ancient China, courtly love and sexual activity (homosexual and heterosexual
3) were considered virtuous, both for rulers and their subjects (Hinsch, 1990).
4 After a review of the surviving literature from the Spring–Autumn Period
5 (770–745 BCE), the Warring States Period (475–221 BCE), and the Chou and Han
6 dynasties (206 BCE to ACE 220), Gil (1992) concluded: “The dynastic record is one,
7 then, of general tolerance for the male homosexual, and an amoral if not moral
8 construction of the lifestyle itself” (p. 570). The royal courts not only accepted
9 homosexuality, but its practice was widespread among the nobility.
10

1 In early China, lesbian relationships, which were sometimes called mojingzi
2 (mirror grinding), were celebrated in Chinese literature and art. In households
3 where there were many wives, concubines, slaves and servants, liaisons among the
4 women were taken for granted (Ruan & Bullough, 1992.)
5

6 In the same century in which Christian theologians were preaching absti-
7 nence as critically important in attaining salvation, Chinese philosophers and
8 physicians were advocating sexual gratification as the way to health and longevity.
9 Taoist classics, for example, assured men they could increase sexual pleasure,
10 improve health, and live thousands of years (if not forever) if they had sexual rela-
1 tions with young, virginal boys and girls or with multiple partners—provided they
2 precisely followed recommended ritual practices. In *Secret Instructions*
3 *Concerning the Jade Chamber*, for example, Tao sexologists recommended:
4

5 Now men who wish to obtain great benefits do well in obtaining women who
6 don’t know the Way. They also should initiate virgins (into sex), and their facial
7 color will come to be like (the facial color of) virgins. However (man) is only
8 distressed by (a woman) who is not young. If he gets one above 14 or 15 but
9
10

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1 below 18 or 19, it is most beneficial. However, the highest (number of years)
 2 must not exceed 30. Those who, though not yet 30, have already given birth,
 3 cannot be beneficial (to the man). The masters preceding me, who transmit-
 4 ted the Way to each other, lived to be 3000 years old. Those who combine this
 5 (method) with (use of) medicines can become immortal. (Ruan, 1991, p. 57)

6
 7 In Taoist love and sex manuals, sexual intercourse was often described as a
 8 battle. Men should try to defeat their enemies (women) by keeping themselves
 9 under strict control. They should be careful not to “squander” their yang essence
 10 in ejaculation. They should try to excite their partner so that she will “surrender”
 1 her yin essence in orgasm. Men could then absorb this source of power. In
 2 *Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold for Emergencies*, the ancient
 3 Taoists promised: “If one can copulate with twelve women without once emitting
 4 semen, one will remain young and handsome forever. If a man can copulate with
 5 93 women and still control himself, he will attain immortality” (Ruan, 1991, p. 58).

6 Alas, these techniques for insuring immortality seemed not to have worked
 7 very well. Mythology may claim that the ancient Chinese lived exceptionally long
 8 lives, but the anthropological evidence indicates that, until recently, most people
 9 generally lived only into their early thirties (Chang, 1977).

20

1 *A Turning Point: The Sung Dynasty*

2 About 1000 years ago, during the Sung dynasty, as the Neo-Confucians gained
 3 political and religious power, Chinese attitudes toward love and sexuality began to
 4 change (Ruan & Lau, 1999). Men were now considered to be far superior to
 5 women. Displays of love outside of marriage were forbidden and erotic art and lit-
 6 erature were burned.

9 *The People’s Republic of China*

30 We must now leap ahead to fairly recent times. When the People’s Republic of
 1 China was established in 1949, Communist officials tried to impose even tighter
 2 controls on “inappropriate” sexual activity. On a visit to Beijing, Money (1977,
 3 p. 544) reported, “I came across a slogan: ‘Making love is a mental disease that
 4 wastes time and energy.’” Later, Gil (1992) noted:

6 A puritanical, if not heavy-handed, sexual “primness” became firmly estab-
 7 lished ... This included a denial of romantic love, the affirmation of the
 8 absolute role of the collective over the individual as a basic tenet toward which
 9 one should direct any affections. The Great Leap Forward demanded, in
 40 communist parlance, the “renunciation of the heart.” Party policy deliberate-
 1 ly constructed an altruism which sought (for every man and woman) hard
 2 work during the day, without being “deflected or confused” by love, sexual
 3 desire, or any strivings for private happiness. (p. 571)

5 In China—even today—sex education is almost nonexistent. Most couples are
 6 ignorant about the basic mechanics of sex (Ruan & Lau, 1999). According to Kristof

1 (1991) foreplay is often rudimentary or nonexistent—perhaps because many couples
2 keep on as much clothing as possible. Among peasants, 34 percent engaged in less
3 than one minute of foreplay. Partly because of the hasty and purposeful manner with
4 which sex is conducted, 37 percent of wives experienced pain during intercourse.
5 Only a third of urban women and a quarter of rural women said they “very often”
6 felt pleasure during intercourse. Pan (cited in Burton, 1990) found that while men
7 reached orgasm about 70 percent of the time, women did so only 40 percent of the
8 time. Urban couples appear to be a bit more knowledgeable, but not much more ful-
9 filled. Not surprisingly, more than 70 percent of couples reported that they were
10 unhappy with their sex lives (Ruan, 1991, p. 171). Similar results were reported by
1 Ruan and Lau, 1999 (see also Sprecher, this volume, for a discussion of sexual atti-
2 tudes and behavior in the present).

3 Since couples are expected to sacrifice their private feelings to the good of the
4 State, married couples have no recourse if the government assigns them to work
5 in different provinces. Some are granted only 14 days a year to meet. Such
6 enforced separations may continue for one to ten years or more. Couples who
7 have more than two children are punished.

8 In 1988, China’s top leader, Deng Xiaoping, suggested that anyone who pub-
9 lished pornography deserved the death penalty (Ruan, 1991, p. 103). Currently, it
10 is illegal to disseminate sexually explicit material. Publishers of such material can
1 be sentenced to life imprisonment. Recently, the Chinese Cultural Ministry
2 banned several “racy” novels—after they sold hundreds of thousands of copies
3 (Smith, 2000.)

4 Premarital sexual relations, homosexuality, and extramarital sex are taboo. The
5 Revolution of 1949 declared that homosexuality, “a bourgeois and decadent prac-
6 tice,” would be swept away. While China lacked explicit laws against homosexu-
7 ality, homosexuals were considered to be “hooligans,” engaging in “lewd conduct,”
8 and “perverse and immoral acts.” They were often sentenced to labor reform
9 camps, prison, or given electric-shock treatments (Gil, 1992).

10 A survey of young people (18 to 27 years of age) in Hong Kong (well before it
1 was officially returned to China) found that most of them disapproved of homo-
2 sexual behavior. When asked whether or not they agreed with two statements:
3 “Male homosexual behavior is acceptable” and “Lesbianism is acceptable,” only
4 15 percent of men and 6 percent of the women agreed that such activities were
5 acceptable. (Both men and women were less tolerant of gay relations than lesbian
6 relationships.) About a third were neutral in their feelings. A full 62 percent of
7 men and 70 percent of women disapproved of such activities (Family Planning
8 Association of Hong Kong, 1987).

9 In the last two decades, with the Cultural Revolution fast receding into the past,
10 Chinese sexologists have begun to collect more systematic information about homo-
1 sexual activity (Hinsch, 1990; Ruan & Bullough, 1992.) Two studies have been con-
2 ducted in Taiwan. In the first survey, Wen (1973, 1978) asked men and women if
3 they had ever had homosexual “inclinations” or engaged in homosexual practices.
4 Only 1 percent of them admitted having such feelings or engaging in homosexual
5 activities. In a second study, conducted five years later, Wen sought to determine
6 how many women had, at least on some occasions, felt lesbian “inclinations” or

1 engaged in pleasurable lesbian practices. In the later study, 21 percent of the women
2 admitted they had had lesbian inclinations at some time; 1 percent reported having
3 engaged in pleasurable lesbian practices.

4 5 *The Times They Are A'Changing*

6
7 Nonetheless, in China as everywhere else, the breath of change is in the air.

8 During the 1986–1987 nationwide demonstrations by university students,
9 posters advocating sexual freedom were prominently displayed.

10 Just recently, a new Museum of Chinese Sex Culture opened in Shanghai. A
1 sign outside the museum proclaimed it “the first such exhibit in 5000 years.” More
2 than 1200 historical objects and texts were on display. However, the authorities still
3 refused to allow the curator to advertise the museum, list it as a cultural attraction,
4 or even to allow the word “sex” to appear on the sign. Not surprisingly, at the date
5 of writing this, Dr Dalin Liu, the curator, is moving the museum to a small town,
6 Tongli in Suzhou Province, the officials of which are more enthusiastic about the
7 cultural project.

8 If you sign on to the Web a quick perusal of the headlines will give you a sense
9 of the immense social changes sweeping China (the Yen) and the attempts by
10 Chinese Communist officials to slow these changes, especially in the sexual realm:

- 1
2
- 3 • Internet Sex Column Thrills, and Inflames, China (Yardley, 2003).
 - 4 • China Cracks Down on Phone Sex Services (People’s Daily Online, 2004).
 - 5 • Shanghai Journal: Sex, Lust, Drugs: Her Novel’s Too Much for China (Smith, 2000).
 - 6 • Gays in China Step Out, With One Foot in Closet (Rosenthal, 2002).
 - 7 • Shezhen Journal: An Age-Old Quest Could Be at An End: Chinese Hail Viagra (Rosenthal, 2003).
 - 8 • China Seems Uncertain About Dealing Openly With AIDS (Rosenthal, 2001a).
 - 9 • With Ignorance as the Fuel, AIDS Speeds Across China (Rosenthal, 2001b).
- 30
1
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3 In almost every city in China, sex shops are sprouting up. Sex advice call-in
4 shows appear on late-night radio. In Beijing, popular newspapers such as
5 *Southern Weekend* and magazines have begun to give men and women sex
6 advice—telling them how to produce “high tide” (orgasm) (Tyler, 1994). Weige
7 (Viagra® or “Mighty brother”) is available under the counter (Rosenthal, 2002).
8 Walls in urban areas are decorated with fliers advertising sexually transmitted dis-
9 ease clinics (“One shot and you’re cured!”). Western ideas are arriving via tele-
10 phone, e-mail, the WWW, DVDs, VHS cassettes, and fax.

1 In 1989 and 1990, Liu and 500 volunteer social workers (Liu, Ng, & Chou,
2 1992) asked 23,000 men and women in 15 Chinese provinces to complete a
3 240-question survey. Eighty-six percent of the respondents said they approved of
4 premarital sex. Liu estimated that 30 percent of Chinese youth have probably
5 engaged in such relations (Burton, 1990).
6

1 At one time, the State weighted down adulterers and adulteresses with stones
2 and drowned them. Today, a surprising 69 percent of the respondents in Liu's
3 (1991) study said they saw nothing wrong with extramarital affairs. In a second
4 survey conducted by Professor Pan at Chinese People's University in Beijing,
5 10 percent of the 600 couples interviewed reported that they had had such extra-
6 marital relations (Ruan, 1991, p. 170).

7 In the largest cities gay dance clubs have begun to appear. Today, homosexu-
8 als in Shanghai are generally left alone so long as their activities involve consent-
9 ing adults. Beijing, Shanghai, and Canton have a few public areas and bars where
10 homosexuals can meet.

1 Currently, the soaring rates of STDs and AIDS are forcing the Chinese
2 Government to reconsider its ban on the dissemination of sex information. In 2004,
3 in light of the AIDS crisis, the Guangzhou Education Bureau decided to introduce
4 a single, revolutionary sex education course for kindergartners (Quanlin, 2004).

5 As modernization and industrialization spread in China, the desire (among
6 women as well as men) for love, happiness, personal freedom, and sexual experi-
7 ence is likely to further alter current norms among one-fifth of the world's popula-
8 tion. The consequences may be complex, a conservative counter-reaction will
9 doubtless set in someday, to be followed by demands for greater freedom (it is ever
10 thus), but the historical perspective remains clear: nothing stays the same—espe-
1 cially in the realm of sexual behavior. (Other historians who have studied the history
2 of Chinese sexuality are Chang, 1968; Henriot, 2003; Jankowiak, 1993; Ng &
3 Lau, 1990; Spence, 1988, 1996, 1999.)

6 CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES: THE THEORY

7 Americans are preoccupied with love—or so cross-cultural observers have claimed.

8 Anthropologist Hsu (1985) once contrasted Western and Chinese values con-
9 cerning passionate love and intimacy. American culture, he argued, is interested
10 in personality. It attaches great importance to personal and emotional expression.
1 In contrast, Chinese culture is situation centered. The Chinese are caught up in
2 “a web of interpersonal relationships” (p. 33). Group members are required to
3 conform to “the interpersonal standards of the society” (1971, p. 29). Chinese
4 men and women tend to “underplay all matters of the heart” (1971, p. 12).

5 Hsu (1953) maintained that such cultural differences have a critical impact on
6 the ways in which people view romantic love. The concept of romantic love fits in
7 well with a North American cultural perspective but not with a Chinese cultural
8 orientation, where one is expected to consider not just one's own personal feel-
9 ings, but one's obligations to others (especially one's parents) as well. Hsu wrote:
10 “An American asks, ‘How does my heart feel?’ A Chinese man or woman asks,
1 ‘What will other people say?’ ” (p. 50). He claimed that in China, the Western
2 ideal of romantic love has virtually no appeal for young adults. He pointed out that
3 the Chinese generally use the term love to describe not a respectable, socially
4 sanctioned relationship, but an illicit affair between a man and a woman.
5
6

1 More recently, a variety of cross-cultural researchers have proposed that
 2 romantic love will be less valued in traditional cultures with strong, extended fam-
 3 ily ties than in the West (Simmons, Vom Kolke, & Shimizu, 1986). On the basis of
 4 such testimony, early cross-cultural researchers (Goode, 1959; Rosenblatt, 1967)
 5 proposed that romantic love would be common only in modern, industrialized,
 6 countries.

8 CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES: THE EMERGING EVIDENCE

9 Existing evidence, however, suggests that men and women in a variety of cul-
 10 tures—individualist and collectivist, urban and rural, rich and poverty-stricken—
 1 may be every bit as romantic as Americans.

4 *How Common is Passionate Love?*

5 Sprecher and her colleagues (1994) interviewed 1667 men and women in the
 6 United States, Russia, and Japan. They found that in all three societies, the major-
 7 ity of young people were “currently in love.” They had expected American men
 8 and women to be most vulnerable to love, and the Japanese the least. In fact, 59
 9 percent of American college students, 67 percent of Russians, and 53 percent of
 10 Japanese students admitted they were in love at the time of the interview. In all
 1 three cultures, men were slightly less likely than were women to be in love at any
 2 given time. There was no evidence that individualistic cultures breed young men
 3 and women who are more love-struck than do collectivist societies, however.
 4 Similarly, surveys of Mexican American, Chinese American, and European
 5 American students have found that in a variety of cross-national groups, young
 6 men and women show high rates of “being in love” at the present time (Aron &
 7 Rodriguez, 1992; Doherty et al., 1994).

9 *Culture and the Intensity of Passionate Love*

10 What impact does culture have on how passionately men and women love? In one
 1 study, Hatfield and Rapson (1996) asked men and women of European, Filipino,
 2 and Japanese ancestry to complete the Passionate Love Scale. To their surprise,
 3 they found that men and women from the various ethnic groups seemed to love
 4 with equal passion. Doherty and his colleagues (1994), in a survey of European
 5 Americans, Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans, Japanese Americans, and
 6 Pacific Islanders, secured similar results.

7 Only one recent study—interviewing Chinese and American men and
 8 women—suggests that Chinese men are less passionate lovers than are American
 9 men and women (Gao, 2001). In any case, the cultural differences secured in
 10 these interviews were not as great as cross-cultural researchers once anticipated.

3 *What Do Men and Women Desire in Romantic Partners?*

4 Since Darwin’s (1871) classic treatise, *The descent of man and selection in rela-*
 5 *tion to sex*, evolutionary biologists have been interested in mate preferences.
 6

1 They, too, contend that there are cultural universals in what men and women
2 desire in a mate.

3 What do people throughout the world long for? Hatfield and her students
4 (1984) interviewed over 1000 dating couples, 100 newly weds, and 400 elderly
5 women, asking them to note the rewards (or lack thereof) most critical in their
6 relationships. The three groups, very different in age and life experiences, were
7 surprisingly similar in what they thought was most important in a love affair or
8 marriage. The “rewards in love relations” that they cared most about are itemized
9 below:

- 10
- 1 1. Personal rewards
 - 2 • Appearance. (Having mates who are attractive and take care of their
 - 3 appearance.)
 - 4 • Social grace. (Having mates who are sociable, friendly, and relaxed in
 - 5 social settings.)
 - 6 • Intelligence. (Having mates who are intelligent and informed.)
 - 7 2. Emotional rewards
 - 8 • Feeling liked and loved.
 - 9 • Feeling understood.
 - 20 • Feeling accepted.
 - 1 • Feeling appreciated.
 - 2 • Physical affection. (Being kissed and hugged.)
 - 3 • Sex.
 - 4 • Security. (Knowing partners are committed and there is a future
 - 5 together.)
 - 6 • Plans and goals for the future. (Being able to dream about your future
 - 7 together.)
 - 8 3. Day-to-day rewards
 - 9 • Smoothly running daily routine.
 - 30 • Comfortable finances.
 - 1 • Sociability and good communication.
 - 2 • Decision making. (Having partners who take a fair share of the respon-
 - 3 sibility for making and carrying out decisions that affect both of you.)
 - 4 • Remembering special occasions.
 - 5 4. Opportunities gained and lost
 - 6 • *Opportunities gained* include the things that one gets from being
 - 7 married: the chance to become a parent; the chance to be invited, as
 - 8 part of a “married couple,” to social events; having someone to count
 - 9 on in old age.
 - 40 • *Opportunities foregone* include the things that one has to give up in
 - 1 order to be in a relationship: other possible mates; a career; money;
 - 2 travel; sexual freedom.
 - 3
 - 4
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In a landmark cross-cultural study, Buss (1994) asked over 10,000 men and women, from 37 countries, to indicate what characteristics they valued in potential mates. The survey interviewed people from a variety of geographic, cultural,

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1 political, ethnic, religious, racial, economic, and linguistic groups. Men and women
 2 were asked to consider 18 traits and to rate how important they thought each trait
 3 was in choosing a mate. Buss and his colleagues found that, overall, the single trait
 4 that men and women in all societies valued most was “mutual attraction–love.”
 5 After that, men and women cared next about finding someone who possessed a
 6 dependable character, emotional stability and maturity, and a pleasing disposition
 7 (see also Lieberman, this volume).

8 Buss was interested in cultural universals, nonetheless he could not help but be
 9 struck by the powerful impact of culture on preferences. In China, India, Indonesia,
 10 Iran, Israel (the Palestinian Arabs), and Taiwan, for example, young people were
 1 insistent that their mate should be “chaste.” In Finland, France, Norway, the
 2 Netherlands, Sweden, and West Germany, on the other hand, most judged chastity
 3 to be relatively unimportant. (A few respondents even jotted notes in the margin of
 4 the questionnaire, indicating that, for them, chastity would be a disadvantage.)

5 In an alternative analysis of Buss’s (1994) data, Wallen (1989) attempted to
 6 determine which was the more important (culture or gender) in shaping people’s
 7 mate preferences. He found that for some traits—such as good looks and financial
 8 prospects—gender had a great influence on preferences (gender accounted for
 9 40–45 percent of the variance; geographical origin accounted for only 8–17 percent
 10 of the variance). For other traits—such as chastity, ambition, and preferred age—
 1 on the other hand, culture mattered most (gender accounted for only 5–16 percent
 2 of the variance, whereas geographical origin accounted for 38–59 percent of the
 3 variance). He concluded that, in general, cultural factors may play a more impor-
 4 tant role than one’s evolutionary heritage in shaping mate preferences.

5 Hatfield and Sprecher (1996) studied three powerful, modern, and industrial
 6 societies—the United States, Russia, and Japan. Men and women in Western, indi-
 7 vidualistic cultures (such as the United States and to some extent Russia) expected
 8 far more from their marriages than did couples in a collectivist culture (such as
 9 Japan). Cultural attitudes were also found to be critically important in determining
 10 what men and women desired in a mate. Cultural researchers, then, provide com-
 1 peling evidence that in different cultural, national, and ethnic groups, people often
 2 desire very different things in romantic, sexual, or marital partners (see also
 3 Gibbons, Richter, Wiley, & Stiles, 1996; Hetsroni, 2002; Ingoldsby, Schvaneveldt, &
 4 Uribe, 2003).

6 *Culture and the Willingness to Marry Someone You Do Not Love*

8 In the West, romantic love is considered to be the sine qua non of marriage
 9 (Kelley et al., 1983; Sprecher et al., 1994.) In the mid-1960s, Kephart (1967)
 10 asked more than 1000 college students: “If a boy (girl) had all the other qualities
 1 you desired, would you marry this person if you were not in love with him (her)?”
 2 In that era, men and women were found to possess very different ideas as to how
 3 important romantic love was in a marriage. Men considered passion to be essen-
 4 tial (only 35 percent of them said they would marry someone they did not love).
 5 Women were more practical. They claimed that the absence of love would not
 6

1 necessarily deter them from considering marriage (a full 76 percent of women
2 admitted they would be willing to marry someone they did not love). Kephart sug-
3 gested that while men might have the luxury of marrying for love, women did not.
4 A woman's status was dependent on her husband's, thus she had to be practical
5 and take a potential mate's family background, professional status, and income
6 into account.

7 Since the 1960s, sociologists have continued to ask young American men and
8 women "The Question." They have found that, year-by-year, young American men
9 and women are coming to demand more of love. In the most recent research, 86
10 percent of American men and a full 91 percent of American women answered The
1 Question (of whether they would wed without love) with a resounding "No!"
2 (Allgeier & Wiederman, 1991).

3 How do young men and women in other nations feel about this issue? Many
4 social psychologists have pointed out that cultural values have a profound impact
5 on how people feel about the wisdom of love matches versus arranged marriages.
6 Throughout the world, arranged marriages are still relatively common. It seems
7 reasonable to argue that in societies such as China, India, and Japan, where
8 arranged marriages are fairly typical, they ought to be viewed more positively than
9 in the West, where they are relatively rare.

10 To test this notion, Sprecher and her colleagues (1994) asked American,
1 Russian, and Japanese students: "If a person had all the other qualities you
2 desired, would you marry him/her if you were not in love?" The authors assumed
3 that only Americans would demand love and marriage; they predicted that both
4 the Russians and the Japanese would be more practical. They were wrong! Both
5 the Americans and the Japanese were romantics. Few of them would consider
6 marrying someone they did not love. The Russians were more practical. Russian
7 men were only slightly more practical than were men in other countries. It was
8 the Russian women who were most likely to "settle." Desperate times . . . ?

9 In a landmark study, Levine and his colleagues (1995) asked college students
10 in 11 different nations if they would be willing to marry someone they did not love
1 even if that person had all the other qualities they desired. In affluent Western
2 nations, young people were insistent on love as a prerequisite for marriage (in the
3 USA, Brazil, Australia, and England, few young people admitted they would say
4 "Yes" to a loveless marriage). College students in affluent Eastern nations tended
5 to vote for love as well (in Japan, Hong Kong, and Mexico—the first two of which
6 have a high standard of living—most insisted on love as a prerequisite for mar-
7 riage). Only in a very few traditional, collectivist, Third World nations, were stu-
8 dents willing to compromise (in the Philippines, Thailand, India, and Pakistan, a
9 fairly high percentage of college students said they would be willing to marry
10 someone they did not love). In these societies, of course, the extended family is
1 still extremely important and poverty widespread.

2 Research suggests that today, young men and women in many countries
3 throughout the world consider love to be a prerequisite for courtship and marriage.
4 It is only in a few Eastern, collectivist, and poorer countries that passionate love
5 remains a luxury.
6

CONCLUSION

The preceding studies, then, suggest that the large differences that once existed between Westernized, modern, urban, industrial societies and Eastern, modern, urban industrial societies may be fast disappearing. Those interested in cross-cultural differences may be forced to search for large differences in only the most underdeveloped, developing, and collectivist of societies—such as in Africa or Latin America, in China or the Arab countries (Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi-Arabia, Iraq, or the United Arab Emirates).

However, it may well be that, even there, the winds of Westernization, individualism, and social change are blowing. In spite of the censure of their elders, young people in a variety of traditional cultures are increasingly adopting “Western” patterns—placing a high value on “falling in love,” pressing for gender equality in love and sex, and insisting on marrying for love (as opposed to agreeing to arranged marriages). Such changes have been documented in Finland, Estonia, and Russia (Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 2003), as well as among Australian Aboriginal peoples of Mangrove and a Copper Inuit Alaskan Indian tribe (see Jankowiak, 1995, for an extensive review of this research).

Naturally, cultural differences still exert a profound influence on young-people’s attitudes, emotions, and behavior and such differences are not likely to disappear in our lifetime. In Morocco, for example, marriage was once an alliance between families (as historically it was in most of the world before the 18th century), in which children had little or no say. Today, although parents can no longer simply dictate whom their children will marry, parental approval remains critically important. Important though it is, however, these days most young men and women are at least allowed to have their say (see Davis & Davis, 1995).

Many have observed that today, two powerful forces—globalization and nationalism—are contending for men’s and women’s souls. True, to some extent, the world’s citizens may be becoming “one,” but in truth the delightful and divisive cultural variations that have made our world both such an interesting, and simultaneously dangerous place, are likely to add spice to that heady brew of love and sexual practices for some time to come. The convergence of cultures around the world may be reducing the differences in the ways passionate love is experienced and expressed in our world, but tradition can be tenacious and the global future of passionate love cannot be predicted with any certainty.

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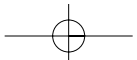
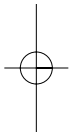
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Source for information on Women, Historical and Cross-Cultural Perspectives: Encyclopedia of Bioethics dictionary. The literature of courtly love notwithstanding, as dynastic power was reconstituted in bureaucratic and political structures, the separation of public and private arenas of human activity increased; and relative to aristocratic men, upper-class women faced new restrictions. Growth of the market economy, however, probably had a more liberating effect on rural and urban women of other classes. Historical and cross-cultural studies that belie many such interpretations have now been done. The new women's history, increasingly inclusive of women of color and international perspectives (Offen et al. Does it cross cultural and racial boundaries, existing in varying demographics? I disagree with the view of evolutionary psychologists who see "sex-evolved dispositions as psychological tendencies that have been built in genetically." I feel that cultural socialization weights heavily on people's preferences in mate selection. In my opinion, the author neglected to discuss a very large aspect of what creates differences between men and women. Sex differences in jealousy in evolutionary and cultural perspective: Tests from the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States. *Psychological Science*, 7, 359-363. DeSteno, D., Barlett, M. Y., Braverman, J., & Salovey, P. (2002). Cross-cultural studies further have suggested that passionate love is not a unidimensional construct, but rather composed of several related factors, including commitment, security, passion, affection, stability, and the degree to which people are focused on themselves or their partner (Landis & O'Shea, 2000). Thus, while it seems that romantic love is universal, its meaning and expression differ across cultures. References. Aron, A., & Westbay, L. (1996). Passionate love, sexual desire, and mate selection: Cross-cultural and historical perspectives. In E. Hatfield & R. L. Rapson (Eds.), *Close relationships: Functions, forms. and processes* (pp. 227-243).