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## **Elaine Hatfield**

### **I. Family Background**

Charles Hatfield was my father and his family arrived in America long before the American Revolution. They are the Hatfields of Hatfield and McCoy fame. They are mostly English, but there was a sprinkling of Irish, Scottish, French, and American Indian thrown in. My Grandfather, Hally Hatfield, was a “hardshell” Baptist minister but when the Baptists failed to be “fire-and-brimstone” enough to suit him, he started his own religion—named, modestly enough: “the Hatfields.”

My father was very good at any number of things and after he left school in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade (in the midst of the Great Depression of the 1930s), he worked at more than thirty-five jobs. He finally became a Detroit policeman.

Eileen Kalahar Hatfield is my mother. Her parents were immigrants too—they traveled from Ireland to Canada, and then to the United States. She was an Irish-Catholic and a housewife. Ideologically, the Church's views on women, birth control, mixed marriages, and so forth were not congenial to her. Had she the courage, she would have been a critic of the Church, but she grudgingly followed its dictates.

I was born in Detroit, Michigan on October 22, 1937 and I have two younger sisters—Patricia Rich, a social worker, and Mary Hatfield, a psychologist—who has also held a number of jobs ranging from advertising executive to stock broker.

I grew up during World War II in a then racially-segregated, low-income housing project (Herman Gardens), in a then-segregated city, Detroit. Detroit has long been marred by ethnic and racial conflict. Soon after my father joined the police force, a fight between Black and White teenagers exploded into a full-scale "race-riot" (in June of 1943). Portions of downtown Detroit went up in flames and 34 people were killed. Finally, the Detroit police and Federal troops restored order. A few weeks before my father's retirement (in July of 1967), rioting broke out when an after-hours speak-easy was raided in a Black section of Detroit. Rioters looted 1,700 stores and set fire to 1,383 buildings. This time 43 people were killed. After more than a week, Detroit police officers, state police, national guardsmen, and Federal troops were finally able to contain the riot.

In spite of the fact that my family was caught up in the midst of social change, none of us ever thought seriously about issues of gender, social class, race, or ethnicity. We never talked about much of anything. We simply existed.

## **II. Education**

College and graduate school were wonderful, liberating experiences for me. I entered a world I hadn't known existed! I felt truly at home. I attended the University of Michigan (from 1955-1959) and graduated with highest honors in both English literature and psychology. They remain the two main interests of my life—although I have also long been intrigued by cultural anthropology, history, world literature, and film as well.

In 1959, I entered the Ph.D. program at Stanford University. By then, I had become intellectually interested in passionate love and sexual desire. I was, of course, aware that it was “taboo” to theorize about such topics. Passionate love was considered to be a “trivial” phenomenon”; it wasn't a “respectable” topic of study; it wasn't amenable to scientific investigation; there wasn't any hope of finding out very much about it in my lifetime. And it wasn't "hot"—the hot topic in the 1960s was mathematical modeling.

Math modeling and rat runways. If we ignored the first and last thirds of the runway in rat experiments (too much variability in rat behavior there) and concentrated on the middle third (where rat behavior generally settled down) we had a real chance of making intellectual breakthroughs and contributing importantly to the field of psychology. Thus, the conventional wisdom.

At the same time, late in the evenings at Stanford University after our work was done, we confided endlessly to one another about our personal problems. There our concerns went beyond the perambulations of rodents. For most people, the rigors of graduate school were taking a toll on their romances. At one time, all the members of our group were having terrible trouble in their close relationships. Some of us couldn't find anyone to date, others were trapped in unhappy romantic relationships, or getting divorces. One night several in the corridor lamented that things were so horrific that they sometimes thought about committing suicide. One set of topics was interesting in the day; another, a source of near-obsession in our evening chats. Because of the bravery and generosity of my mentor, Leon Festinger, I was permitted to start

rigorous investigations of love as part of my graduate work, but the road was never easy.

### **III. Career Developments**

The first signs of trouble appeared when I tried to find a faculty position. I came on the job market during the “Sputnik era.” America was in a race—fueled by misinformation and terror—with the USSR and huge amounts of money were being poured into education. Anyone could get a job—or so I thought. My advisor Leon Festinger kindly told me that I was the “best graduate student” he’d ever had—probably he told *everyone* that—and, in a burst of hubris, promised that he could get me a job “anywhere” I wanted. I wanted the best—which at that time meant Harvard, Yale, or Bell Labs. We soon discovered that it was not to be so easy as we had supposed. Chairs were frank about saying that a woman would not “fit in” at their universities. They assured us that they were “personally in favor of hiring women,” but lamented that “their colleagues” or “their students” would not accept such an appointment. I finally found and accepted a job at the University of Minnesota, at the Student Activities Bureau, arranging dances. . . . and embarked on a program of scientific research on close relationships in dating situations. I volunteered to teach two social psychology courses and to supervise graduate students and so, in the next year—apparently not having offended anyone—I was offered a position in the University of Minnesota psychology department and tenure.

I had a wonderful time. The Minnesota social-psychology laboratory was wonderful then. I worked with Ellen Berscheid (then a student, now the winner of an APA Distinguished Scientist award), Elliot Aronson (also an APA winner—

both for his teaching and for his research), Dana Bramel, and Ben Willerman. . . Stanley Schachter was a frequent visitor.

A few years later, in 1967, I moved to the University of Wisconsin (the Department of Sociology—the UW Psychology Department was not yet considering the appointment of woman to faculty positions), where I had a chance to work with another collection of social psychology luminaries—Jerry Marwell, Jane Piliavin, John DeLamater, and Shalom Schwartz, among others.

My prime interests then were equity theory, research on physical attraction, and close relationships—focusing primarily on passionate love (crushes, obsession, infatuation, and the like) and sexual desire.

The most damaging blow to my research program came in 1975. Wisconsin's U.S. Senator William Proxmire discovered that the National Science Foundation had granted Dr. Ellen Berscheid, one of my research partners, and me \$84,000 to further our work on passionate and companionate love. He awarded us his first “Golden Fleece Award,” Proxmire’s famous Public Relations effort to “save” taxpayers from funding “unnecessary” scientific research.

He launched his well-publicized publicity campaign by firing off a press release:

I object to this not only because no one—not even the National Science Foundation—can argue that falling in love is a science; not only because I’m sure that even if they spend \$84 million or \$84 billion they wouldn’t get an answer that anyone would believe. *I’m also against it because I don’t want the answer.*

I believe that 200 million other Americans want to leave some things in life a mystery, and right on top of the things we don't want to know is why a man falls in love with a woman and vice versa . . . .

So National Science Foundation—get out of the love racket. Leave that to Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Irving Berlin. Here if anywhere Alexander Pope was right when he observed, "If ignorance is bliss, tis folly to be wise." (cited in Hatfield & Walster, 1978, p. viii).

In subsequent weeks, Senator Proxmire and his supporters issued a series of *reduction ad absurdum* press releases. I received bags of mail, mostly critical. A Chicago tabloid—*The Chicago Tribune*—ran a contest. People could call in and vote: Who was right—Proxmire or me? Three University of Chicago Nobel Prize winners wrote in to say "Hooray for research on love!" but massive numbers of readers (and even a few friends!) wrote in to say I was "naive" to think love and sex could be studied scientifically, or to carp: "If she can't even manage her own love life (they must have been foretelling marital problems I didn't yet see) how can she advise other people what to do?" and to present *their* academic or clinical views. I lost the "election": Proxmire 87.5%, me 12.5%.

Even my mother's bishop got into the act. He issued a message to the Detroit parishes denouncing the National Science Foundation for awarding scientists \$84,000 to unravel the "most sacred mysteries of love and life." "Who granted these 'scientists' the ability to see into men's minds and hearts?" he asked. Were our findings going to eliminate pride, selfishness, jealousy,

suffering, and war? “Jesus Christ has taught us all that we need to know about love and life,” he insisted. “His Word waits there, in The Holy Bible, for us. He has been waiting for us for almost 2,000 years. It is His commands we must follow, not the childish ‘advice’ of some arrogant, secular scientist, who presumes to know more than Our Lord.”

Senator Barry Goldwater came to my defense. So did columnist James Reston. In his column in *The New York Times* Reston wryly agreed that love will always be a mystery. “But if the sociologists and psychologists can get even a suggestion of the answer to our pattern of romantic love, marriage, disillusion, divorce—and the children left behind—it would be the best investment of federal money since Jefferson made the Louisiana purchase.”

How did I cope? Not very well, I’m afraid. Though some of my friends think I must look back at this time as one of personal and scholarly triumph—given the centrality of love research in psychology today—it was actually very hard for me. I am essentially a shy person, not on the lookout for conflict; I just like to pursue my intellectual interests. So the *L’Affaire Proxmire* was actually painful to me and when I remember it, I do so mostly with embarrassment, despite the eventual positive outcome.

I was blessed in this instance, however, by coming from a family and a community that cared not a whit about academic pursuits. It comes as no surprise to me that most of the world thinks my interests—in books, foreign films, and scholarly pursuits—are a bit absurd. In my working class family, I was not expected to succeed brilliantly at anything—simply to “do my best.” So, when things are terrible, I

tend to be shell-shocked for a few hours, then, reeling, begin plodding doggedly along. Sooner or later, the tide changes.

A sweet man, Dr. Roland W. Radloff, Program Director of the Social Psychology Program, Division of Social Sciences counseled me to refrain from submitting anything for awhile. "Let it blow over." The peer-review process might approve it, the Program Director might approve it but at great cost for science and in the end it wouldn't be funded. I agreed.

In 1978, I wrote a little book (*A New Look at Love*) in an attempt to review what social psychologists knew about passionate and companionate love and to explain why the study of love is important. In 1979 the book won the American Psychological Association's and the American Psychological Foundation's National Media Award. Even so, not everyone welcomed such a book.

I have hung around long enough to see things change. Eventually it became clear to politicians, scholars, and the general public that even "irrational" emotions such as passionate love can be studied scientifically. In 25 years, the field of social psychology has become much smarter about the nature of relationships. In 1969, when Ellen Berscheid and I wrote the first text that considered passionate love (*Interpersonal Attraction*), we had difficulty finding much material on the topic. The 1980s and 1990s have seen a tremendous surge in interest in love and intimacy.

In the 1980s, Steve Duck and Robin Gilmour inaugurated a series of volumes on the initiation, maintenance and dissolution of relationships. Scientists banded together to form four international, interdisciplinary organizations designed to foster research on close relationships—the

International Society for the Study of Personal Relationships (ISSPR), the International Network on Personal Relations (INPR), the International Society for Research on Emotions, the International Academy of Sex Research, and the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex. In 1984, Steve Duck and his colleagues at INPR founded *the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* which is devoted entirely to research on close relationships. Later, in 1994, Patricia Noller and her colleagues at ISSPR inaugurated a second journal, *Personal Relationships*, dedicated to publishing research on the same topics. Since then, thousands of studies concerning love, sex, and intimacy have been published in these and various other journals.

#### **IV. The Hawaii Factor**

In 1981, I moved to the University of Hawai'i to be Chair of the Psychology Department. (I met my current husband, Richard L. Rapson, a year later, in 1982.) At that time, he was deeply committed to a program called "Semester at Sea." The S.S. Universe is a college afloat that spends 100 days each year traveling around the globe. Dick wanted to know if I would be interested in sailing on the next voyage. I was . . . but because I had agreed to serve as Chair at UH for three years, I could not. Since then, of course, we have spent all our summers traveling around the world.

For both Dick and I, our moves to Hawaii assumed critical importance in increasing our fascination with, and a realization of the importance of cultural and ethnic variety in shaping psychological behavior. Hawai'i is a multicultural society—approximately 28% European-American, 26% Japanese-American, 16% part-Hawaiian, 12% Filipino-American, 6% Chinese-American, and sizable

numbers of African-Americans, Samoans, Korean-Americans, Tongans, southeast Asians, and so forth. Everyone is a member of a minority and so everyone must adapt to unexpected conditions for which few were prepared. Hawaii forms an extraordinary spectacle which, though far from perfect and universally harmonious, functions rather well—probably as well as any multicultural society in the world.

One remarkable dimension to life in Hawaii is that over 60% of the marriages performed in the past 15 years have been interracial marriages. (Since more than 99% of ethnic Hawaiians are already products of intermarriage, these statistics count all marriages involving part-Hawaiian as already mixed.) No matter how it's counted, the roughly 60% may be compared with less than 4% on the American mainland! Families are often so mixed in their ethnic expectations that the younger generation has a great deal of trouble answering questions as to their ethnic identity. In Hawaii one often notices the striking combinations of the cosmopolitan names one routinely hears: Farouk Wang, Tennyson Yamasaki, Kenji Klein, and so forth. Each individual may represent a brief truce among surprisingly juxtaposed cultures, peoples who would never have crossed paths in previous ages. Now they are joined in the pedigrees of living persons.

When asked to identify their ethnic heritage they often (and proudly) recite "Portuguese, Chinese, Swedish, Hawaiian, and Irish." When asked to "check one" on a demographic questionnaire, they can be at a total loss. Soon, survey researchers in Hawaii learn to repeat the mantra: "If you don't know what to check, just check the ethnic group with which you identify the most." (If people

were to check "Other," almost everyone would fall into that category.) As a consequence, it is not unusual for one child in a family to claim to be European-American while his brother checks off Chinese-American.

When I first came to Hawai'i, one of my colleagues, Jerold Shapiro, asked if I would fill in at his psychotherapy practice at King Kalakaua Clinic while he was on sabbatical. My first step was to secure a Hawai'i license. At that time, in Hawai'i, licensing was much more informal than it is now. In 1981, I was merely required to take the American Psychological Association national examination, a Hawai'i examination to make sure I was *au courant* with Hawai'i laws, and submit to an interview with a Hawai'i licensing board. [By chance, in the course of my career I had taken all the clinical psychology courses Hawai'i required. I had completed two "internships" as well. In Wisconsin, I had worked with Drs. Morton Perlmutter and Constance Arons (at the Wisconsin Family Practice Institute) and Dr. and Mrs. Carl Whitaker (in the Wisconsin Psychiatry Department) as a volunteer therapist. At that time, Family Therapy and husband and wife teams were much in vogue.)

I accepted Dr. Shapiro's offer and liked dealing with a wide spectrum of Hawaiian society so much, that I decided to stay on. Dick Rapson soon agreed to share co-therapy duties with me. [At that time, co-therapists were allowed to participate in therapy sessions, given that: (1) They were volunteers—i.e., they did not charge, and (2) A note was filed with the state of Hawai'i outlining their function in the therapy session.

As co-psychotherapists in a wide-ranging practice, my husband and I have gotten to know clients from a variety of cultural and ethnic groups. We

have seen three-generations of Japanese, Chinese, and Pacific Islanders; adherents of every religious group . . . or none; couples who had arranged marriages and who had married for love; and couples who formed a single, nuclear family or who congregated in large extended families.

In most of the states of the United States and in most of the nations of the world such casualness about ethnicity is not the norm. In most societies, unlike Hawaii, there is a definite majority—and minority members are often made to feel it. With the breakup of Communism in Eastern Europe and the renewed rise of tensions in the Balkans, we have seen a resurgence of malignant ethnic, national, and religious identity. Like Rip Van Winkle, hatreds and passions that were asleep for decades have awakened among peoples with names that had been mistakenly consigned to the dustbin of history: Estonians, Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Uzbeks, Georgians, Slovaks, Lithuanians, Latvians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Azeris, Kosovars, Albanians, Macedonians, and on and on.

There are currents that flow in the opposite direction from ethnic, national, and religious division. Beside the intermarriage rate in Hawaii, the growth of the Web, increased trade and travel, and the communications revolution, there is the epochal movement toward European unity called the European Union which seeks to stem the tide of fragmentation in favor of the larger human community. No one can predict whether disintegration or integration will define the future. But we can safely predict that sensitivity to other cultures will be required by individuals and nations in that future.

We personally have found such sensitivity and knowledge to be an enlarging dimension to life. In our most recent research, we are attempting to broaden the

range and reach of psychological research itself, first by trying to help move scholarship beyond Western perspectives. This we have done through our cross-cultural studies of love and sex. Second, we have integrated a generation of historical studies of marriage, love, sex, and emotions over the past 500 years to provide richer perspective to the contemporary scene and even attempt some informed speculation about future possibilities.

### **V: Major Contributions**

It is extremely difficult to decide what one's own "contributions" to psychology might be. Thus, I asked my husband and co-author and co-therapist Dick Rapson, an American historian at the University of Hawai'i—whose business it is to look at the "big picture"—to address what *he* considered to be my major contributions to psychology. Our combined wisdom follows:

At a time when the study of passionate love and sexual desire was considered to be "unscientific, trivial, or impossible to study," my colleagues and I pioneered the rigorous scientific study of these "taboo" topics. We focused on the passionate beginnings of relationships: how people meet, mate, fall in love, and make love. But this led us also to the study of later events in the cycle that, alas, befall many: falling out of love, only to risk it all over again. And sometimes: again and again . . .

Soon, this led us to investigate issues of equity in relationships, an attempt to find patterns for what works and what doesn't work when it comes to love.

After that—in a series of tightly conceived laboratory experiments—my colleagues and I began the study of emotional contagion—the process by which people coordinate their facial expressions, vocal expressions, and postures with

those of others and thereby gain the ability to “intuit” what others are feeling. We have explored the factors that make people good “senders” versus good “receivers” of emotion and we have tried to assess the advantages and costs of being sensitive or insensitive to others’ emotional states.

Most recently, we have tried to broaden the range and reach of psychological research itself, first by trying to help move scholarship beyond Western perspectives. This we have done through our cross-cultural studies of love and sex. Second, we have integrated a generation of historical studies of marriage, love, sex, and emotions over the past 500 years to provide richer perspective to the contemporary scene and even attempt some informed speculation about future possibilities.

While our research topics have varied and our interests continue to evolve and grow, the common thread appears to be the effort to move psychology into territories that have been previously unexplored or under-explored, to investigate areas that were once regarded as marginal or even thought to be taboo. We have not been afraid.

I have certainly been more highly acclaimed for these efforts than I deserve and I am grateful for all the honors that have been bestowed on me.

Currently, I am president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex (SSSS) and a professor of psychology at the University of Hawai’i. I am probably best known as the scholar who pioneered the scientific study of passionate love and sexual desire. In 1993, I won my University's Award for Excellence in Research. In 1994, Ellen Berscheid and I became the first two women ever to receive the Distinguished Scientist Award of the Society of Experimental Social Psychology and in 1995 I earned the Distinguished Scientist Award from the

Society for the Scientific Study of Sex (preceded among women only by Mary Calderone and, decades later, Virginia Johnson). In 1998, I won the Alfred Kinsey Award from the Western Region of SSSS. For the past two decades I have been ranked in citation reviews as the most frequently quoted social psychologist in the world. I have written many books on my research, among them two books which both won the American Psychological Foundation's National Media Award: *A New Look at Love* (1978) and *Mirror, Mirror: The Importance of Looks in Everyday Life* (1986).

My husband, Dr. Richard L. Rapson and I have collaborated on three recent books. *Love, Sex, and Intimacy: Their Psychology, Biology, and History* was published in 1993 by HarperCollins. *Love and Sex: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* in 1996 by Allyn & Bacon. The first book was consciously multi-disciplinary, while the second reached into the area of cultural comparisons. Cambridge University Press published our third book, *Emotional Contagion*, in 1994, to complete the trilogy.

In my "old age" I have returned to an interest of my youth—creative writing. My first novel, *rosie* was published by Sterling House in the Spring of 2000. I have also published more than thirty poems and short stories in American, Canadian, Australian, and Indian literary magazines such as *Aim*, *Aura Literary/Arts Review*, *fourW*, *Green's*, *Nite-Writer's Literary Arts Journal*, *Manushi*, *Phoebe*, *Pleiades*, *Studio*, and *Tucumcari Literary Review*.

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