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Passionate Love and Sexual Desire:
Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives
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The world of scholarship finds itself in a state of ferment—a highly creative ferment. Fragmentation gives way to multi-disciplinary cooperation, Western perspectives become global, new intellectual territories are being explored, new questions asked, and they are being answered through employment of some novel methodologies.

Few interdisciplinary marriages offer more promise than that between history and psychology. History, which until recently was the study of power—kings, presidents, generals, and war—has become the study of Everyone. History from the “top down” has been augmented by history from the “bottom up.” When that happens, the topics move increasingly from the public to the private spheres, particularly to family life, childrearing, women, emotions, marriage, love, and sexuality—topics traditionally associated with psychology.

Psychology, like the other social sciences, has inevitably centered its theorizing and data collection on one dimension of time: the present. It has also tended towards a geographical narrowness, with its Western orientation. But now new and exciting possibilities present themselves. The generation of scholars doing what we call “psychological history” has thrown dazzling light into

the dark corners of the intimate lives of our dead sisters and brothers, particularly those in Western Europe and North America over the past 500 years.

Their contingent observations and conclusions are fascinating in themselves, but they also offer vital aid for freeing psychologists from the timebound sphere of studies of today only. By opening up windows to the past, they furnish social scientists with greater possibilities for perspective on the present and even on informed speculation about the future. They shed powerful beams of light on the question of biology and culture in shaping our inner lives. And by charting transformations in the lives of Western men and women over time, they help us gain a stronger foothold in our cross-cultural research. So valuable is this research, that we think all social scientists should know about it. (To help to advance this goal, we'll cheerfully send our bibliography listing the main products of this research over the past 20 years to anyone who writes us asking for it.)

For now, let us indicate some of the kinds of data that we think may be useful in expanding our exploration of passionate love and sexual desire—two major components of the research explosion. As we try to indicate some of the potential pathways down which social scientists may find it illuminating to travel, the major roadsigns to look for may include these:

Do the new findings about love, marriage, passion, and sexuality in the past furnish not only perspective on the present, but they also allow us to make informed guesses about the future? We think “Yes.”

Do the historians and other non-psychologists, while they rarely deny the importance of biology and universals, make a powerful, undeniable case for the huge role of culture and ever-changing moral codes in shaping human, intimate behavior and belief? “Yes.”

Do those patterns of transformation and variability yield potential insights into the flow of change in non-Western cultures? Again, we believe, “definitely yes.”

Let us now, by turning to data and getting specific, see how we arrived at the positive answers to these three questions.

I. Definitions of Passionate Love and Sexual Desire

Passionate love (sometimes called “obsessive love,” “infatuation,” “lovesickness,” or “being-in-love”) is a powerful emotional state. It has been defined 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 (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993, p. 5).

The *Passionate Love Scale* was designed to assess the cognitive, physiological, and behavioral incidents of such love (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986).

Sexuality researchers tend to use the terms *passionate love* and *sexual desire* almost interchangeably. This is not surprising. Passionate love has been defined as “a longing for union,” while sexual desire has been defined as “a longing for *sexual* union” (Hatfield & Rapson, 1995, p. 3). As Susan and Clyde Hendrick (1987) noted:

It is apparent to us that trying to separate love from sexuality is like trying to separate fraternal twins: they are certainly not identical, but, nevertheless, they are strongly bonded (p. 282).

Pamela Regan and Ellen Berscheid (Regan & Berscheid, 1995) found that most young people assume that although platonic love exists, one cannot be in love with someone unless he or she is sexually attracted to the beloved. For most young people, to be in love *means* desiring the other sexually.

Today, anthropologists and evolutionary psychologists generally assume that passionate love and sexual desire are cultural universals. Cross-cultural researchers and historians point out that culture can have a profound impact on people’s perceptions, experiences, and feelings about love, and about what is permissible and appropriate in their expression of romantic and passionate feelings. Let us review what these scholars and scientists have learned about the nature of passionate love and sexual desire.

II. Anthropological and Evolutionary Perspectives

Recently, anthropologists have begun to document the universality of passionate feelings. William Jankowiak and Edward Fischer (1992), for example, argued that romantic love is a pan-human characteristic. They searched for

evidence of romantic love in a sampling of hunting and gathering societies included in the *Standard Cross-Cultural Sample*. They relied on five indicators to ascertain whether or not romantic love was present in a given tribal society: (1) accounts depicting personal anguish and longing; (2) the existence of love songs or folklore about such love; (3) elopement due to mutual affection; (4) native accounts affirming the existence of passionate love, and; (5) the ethnographer's affirmation that romantic love was present. They found clear evidence of passionate love in 147 of the 166 tribal cultures. In only one tribal society were they unable to find any compelling evidence of romantic love.

III. Historical Perspectives

Historians acknowledge that passionate love and sexual desire have always existed—in all times and in all places. For more than 4,000 years, China's art and historical accounts have been filled with stories of passionate love and sexual longing. In the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), for example, the *Jade Goddess* recounted the story of a passionate young couple who challenged convention, defied their parents' wishes, and eloped, only to fall into desperate straits (Ruan, 1991). The earliest Western literature abounds in stories of lovers, fictional and real, caught up in a sea of passion and violence: Odysseus and Penelope, Orpheus and Eurydice, Daphnis and Chloe, Dido and Aeneas, Abelard and Eloise, Dante and Beatrice, Romeo and Juliet.

Passionate love might be a cultural universal, but in different historical eras, the actual experiences of “love,” “sex,” and “intimacy,” have carried profoundly different meanings (Bullough, 1990; Degler, 1980; D’Emilio &

Freedman, 1988; Gay, 1984, 1986; Gillis, 1985; Mintz, & Kellogg, 1988; Phillips, 1988; Stone, 1977 and 1990). As D'Emilio & Freedman (1988) note:

Sexuality has been associated with a range of human activities and values: the procreation of children, the attainment of physical pleasure (eroticism), recreation or sport, personal intimacy, spiritual transcendence, or power over others (p. xv).

Although passionate love and sexual desire—whatever their definition—have always existed, they were rarely encouraged. Throughout history, most powerful political and religious authorities viewed passionate lovers' elemental and powerful feelings as a threat to the political, religious, and social order. Acting upon personal desires elicited a kind of individualism which could, if unleashed, challenge the rulemakers; hence, they endeavored to suppress such dangerous feelings.

In the West, during the early Christian era, for instance, suppression was especially harsh. For 1500 years—from the earliest days of the Roman Catholic Church to the 16th century Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation—the Church proclaimed passionate love and sex (even marital sex) for any purpose other than procreation to be a mortal sin, punishable by eternal damnation. The Church was also actually uncomfortable with procreative sex itself, even within marriage (Gay, 1984).

In those days, love was not expected to end well. Romeo and Juliet, Ophelia and Hamlet, Abelard and Eloise did not make love, get married, have two children, and live happily ever after. Romeo swallowed poison. Juliet

stabbed herself. Ophelia went mad and drowned herself. Hamlet was felled by a poisoned sword point. Peter Abelard (a real person) was castrated and his beloved Eloise retired to a nunnery. In Japan, love suicides have been an institution since the end of the 17th century (Mace & Mace, 1980).

Historically, different cultural groups have possessed very different ideas as to how society should deal with passionate love and sexual desire. Throughout the centuries, four cultures possessed the richest cultural traditions and the most political and economic power. The Big Four were East Asia (China, Japan, Korea, southeast Asia); South Asia (India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka); the “Middle East” or West Asia (Egypt, Persia [Iran], Mesopotamia [Iraq], Palestine, Syria, and other Arab countries); and Western civilization (Europe and North America). There have been other strong, original cultures—in Africa, Central and South America, the steppes of Asia, Polynesia, Oceania, and other places—but none of them could match the power and influence of those four.

Until 1500, the concept of “one world” barely existed. The four major regions were by-and-large separate and independent cultural units. They tended to move on parallel tracks, intersecting at times, but generally swerving away from one another. All that changed after 1500. In the wake of the Age of Discovery, the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution, *everything* changed. For most historians, Western and non-Western, the major theme in world history over the past 500 years has been the rise of the West and the subsequent “Westernization” of the rest of the world (McNeill, 1963; Rapson, 1988).

What do historians mean by “Westernization?” The term is a shorthand for the introduction of a plethora of modern and unique ideas and institutions. These have included democracy, capitalism, communism, materialism, industrialization, total war, environmentalism, women’s rights, evangelicalism, science, art as religion, socialism, and MacDonalds—a mixed bag indeed.

In the psychological sphere, “Westernization” (or “modernization”) has meant an increasing insistence on individualism, on a search for and justification of the attainment of personal happiness and the reduction of pain, and on a belief that things can change. The West, after 1500, re-generated or instigated such ideas and practices (among many) as: romantic and passionate love as a *desideratum* ; sexual freedom for men and women; marriage for love (as opposed to arranged marriage); the movement toward equality for women; and the tendency toward egalitarian families (as opposed to traditional patriarchal, hierarchical arrangements) (Aries, 1962; Coontz, 1988; Ladurie, 1979; Stone, 1990).

By 1800, the West had been transformed by these ideas. Arranged marriages increasingly gave way to love marriages. Sex only for procreative purposes increasingly gathered new meanings apart from procreation, particularly as an expression of love. Non-separating cultures began to permit people to separate from one another, to divorce, to have a second chance at life. Children—instead of being seen as miniature adults and working in the fields almost as soon as they could walk—were regarded as beings in a separate stage of the life cycle and upon whom love should be lavished. Women began the long

march to gender equality. Cultures of resignation and collectivism began to be replaced by cultures of possibility, hope, and individualism. These and a host of other factors made up the psychological revolution which has transformed modern life and continues to do so.

These transformations in personal life (from 1500 to the present) have been primarily Western in origin. But now, in the 20th century, particularly since the end of World War II, they are reaching, in their disruptive and transformative ways, into all corners of the world. We say “disruptive” because while the psychological alterations may represent an advance to many readers (as might the spread of democracy, science, improved health and education), other transformations have been far less benign: Western cultural arrogance; imperialism; materialism; unremitting exploitation of workers; violence; murder. The moral equation of Western expansionism is highly complex and far more interesting than the simplistic claims of Western superiority on the one side, and, on the other, those who blame the West for all of the ills of humankind.

This Westernizing process, if slowed in the political and military realm since 1914, still goes on in the cultural and psychological realms. One particularly intriguing and important phenomenon: it has taken the West over 500 years (from the Renaissance into the present) to even approach accepting “modern” ideas about love, sex, and intimacy. In non-Western cultures, however, these same historical changes seem to be repeating themselves in some places (not all) just in the past 50 years or less. This unsettlement comes as TV,

movies, the Internet, and expanded travel weave their webs. It is as if some historical deity has pushed the fast-forward button on global change.

Recently, of course, there has begun to be a backlash. Non-Western ethnic groups have begun to celebrate their own cultures, traditions, and religions, and to resist wholesale Western cultural expansionism. Throughout the world, people have begun to speculate about the possibilities of taking the best that the West has to offer, integrating it with cultural traditions that are uniquely their own, and rejecting the rest (KagitÁibasi, 1990). Some feel it is best to turn back the clock and reject Westernization entirely, as was attempted by Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and Mao during China's disastrous Cultural Revolution. The dialectic between Westernization and resistance to it defines much of international life today, and different societies are seeking different balances. It remains to be seen whether a nation can accept science, technology, rock and roll, and capitalism and keep out gender equality, democracy, avaricious materialism, and individualism.

The current historical perspective suggests several more questions for researchers interested in personal relationships: What aspects of love, sex, and intimacy are universal? Which are social constructions? Is the world becoming one and homogeneous . . . or are traditional cultural practices more tenacious and impervious to this sort of deep transformation than some have supposed?

IV. Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Cross-cultural researchers point out that culture has a profound impact on how susceptible people are to falling in love, with whom they tend to fall in love, and how their passionate affairs work out.

Cross-cultural psychologists have observed that the world's cultures differ profoundly in the extent to which they emphasize individualism or collectivism (although some would focus on related concepts: independence or interdependence; modernism or traditionalism; urbanism or ruralism; affluence or poverty). Individualistic cultures (such as the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, and the countries of northern and western Europe) tend to focus on personal goals. Collectivist cultures (such as China, many African and Latin American nations, Greece, southern Italy, and the Pacific Islands), on the other hand, press their members to subordinate their personal interests to those of the group (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990).

At one time cross-cultural theorists argued that passionate love was a uniquely Western phenomenon. Harry Triandis and his colleagues (1990), for example, pointed out that in individualistic cultures, young people are allowed to “do their own thing,” to put their own needs first. In collectivist cultures, they are pressed to subordinate their needs to those of the group. Godwin Chu (1985, 1993) pointed out that although in America, romantic love and compatibility were of paramount importance, in China such things mattered little. Traditionally, parents and go-betweens arranged young peoples' marriages. Their primary concern was not love and compatibility but *men tang hu tui*. Did the families possess the same social status? Were *they* compatible? Francis Hsu (1985)

and L. Takeo Doi (1963, 1973) also contended that passionate love was a Western phenomenon, almost unknown in China and Japan and so incompatible with Asian values and customs that it was unlikely ever to gain a foothold among young Asians. Recent scientific evidence suggests that they were wrong.

V. The Cross-Cultural Data

A. Culture and Susceptibility to Love

It has been claimed that Americans are preoccupied with love (Murstein, 1974, 1986). Early researchers (Goode, 1959; Rosenblatt, 1967) assumed that romantic love would be most prevalent in modern, industrialized, countries. The emerging evidence, however, suggests that men and women in a variety of cultures are every bit as romantic as Americans. Susan Sprecher and her colleagues (1992), for example, interviewed 1667 men and women in the United States, Russia, and Japan.

Passion was found to be more common worldwide than the researchers expected. Sprecher and her colleagues found that the percentage of those currently in love was surprisingly high in all three societies. They had expected American men and women to be most vulnerable to love, the Japanese the least. In fact, 59% of American college students, 67% of Russians, and 53% of Japanese students said they were in love at the time of the interview. In all three cultures, men were slightly less likely than were women to be in love at the present time. Surveys of Mexican-American, Chinese-American, and Euro-American students have found that in a variety of cross-national groups, young

men and women show high rates of reporting being in love at the present time (Aron & Rodriguez, 1992; Doherty, et al., 1994).

B. Culture and the Intensity of Passionate Love

What impact does culture have on how passionately men and women love one another? In one study, Elaine Hatfield and Richard Rapson (1987) asked men and women of European, Filipino, and Japanese ancestry to complete the Passionate Love Scale. To their surprise, once again they found that men and women from the various ethnic groups—individualist or collectivist—seemed to love with equal passion (see Table 1.) William Doherty and his colleagues (1994) in a survey of European-American, Chinese-Americans, Filipino-American, Japanese-American, and Pacific Islanders, secured similar results.

Insert Table 1 about here

C. Culture and the Willingness to Marry Someone You Do Not Love

In the West, people generally assume that couples should be romantically in love with those they choose to marry. In the mid-1960s, William Kephart (1967) asked more than 1,000 college students: “If a boy (girl) had all the other qualities you desired, would you marry this person if you were not in love with him (her)?” He found that in the 1960s, men and women had different ideas as to how important romantic love was in a marriage. Men thought passion was essential (only 35% of them said they would marry

someone they did not love). Women were more practical. They claimed that the absence of love would not necessarily deter them from considering marriage. (A full 76% of them said they would be willing to marry someone they did not love). Kephart suggested that while men might have the luxury of marrying for love, women did not. A woman's status was dependent on her husband's; thus, she had to be practical and take a potential mate's family background, professional status, and income into account. Since the 1960s, sociologists have continued to ask young American men and women The Question. They have found that, year by year, young American men and women have come to demand more and more of love.

In the most recent research, 86% of American men and 91% of American women answered The Question with a resounding "No!" (Allgeier & Wiederman, 1991). Today, American men and women assume that romantic love is so important that they insist that if they fell out of love, they would not even consider staying married! (Simpson, Campbell, & Berscheid, 1986). Of course, with more experience they might find that they are willing to "settle" for less than they think they would.

How do young men and women in other countries feel about this issue? Susan Sprecher and her colleagues (1992) asked American, Russian, and Japanese students: "If a person had all the other qualities you desired, would you marry him/her if you were not in love?" (Students could only answer yes or no.) The authors, of course, had expected that only the individualistic Americans would demand love and marriage; they predicted that both the

Russians and the Japanese would be more practical. They were wrong! Both the Americans *and* the Japanese were romantics. Few of them would consider marrying someone they did not love. (Only 11% of Americans and 18% of the Japanese said “Yes”). The Russians were more practical; 37% of them said they would accept such a proposal. Russian *men* were only slightly more practical than were men in other countries. It was the Russian *women* who were most likely to “settle.” Desperate times . . . ?

In a landmark study, Robert Levine and his colleagues (1995) asked college students in 11 different nations if they would be willing to marry someone they did not love even if that person had all the other qualities they desired. (Students could answer “yes” or “no” or admit that they were “undecided”). In the four affluent Western nations, young people were the most insistent on love as a prerequisite for marriage. (In the U.S., Brazil, Australia, and England, only a tiny percentage of young people said they would be willing to say “Yes” to a loveless marriage) (see Table 2). College students in Eastern, affluent nations tended to vote for love as well. In Japan, Hong Kong, and Mexico (the first two of which have a high standard of living), most insisted on love as a prerequisite for marriage. (Only a few college students in these countries said they would be willing to marry someone they did not love). It was only in the four Eastern, collectivist, underdeveloped nations that students were willing to compromise. (In the Philippines, Thailand, India, and Pakistan, a fairly high percentage of college students said they would be willing to marry

someone they did not love.) In these four societies, of course, the extended family is still extremely important.

Insert Table 2 about here

Research, then, suggests that, today, young men and women throughout the world generally consider love to be a prerequisite for courtship and marriage. It is only in a few Eastern, collectivist, and poorer countries that passionate love remains a bit of a luxury.

In summary: the preceding studies, then, suggest that the large differences that once existed between Westernized, modern, urban, industrial societies and Eastern, modern, urban industrial societies are 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 U. A. E.). However, it may well be that, even there, the winds of Westernization, individualism, and social change are blowing.

IV Directions for Future Research

Thus far, we have focused on what *past* cross-cultural, historical, and psychological researchers have learned about the nature of love and sexual desire. What about the future? What directions might we expect theorists and researchers to take?

A. Cultural/Historical Differences in the Meanings of Passionate Love and Sexual Desire

In the last decade, social psychologists have become increasingly interested in laypersons' "naïve" perceptions of a variety of emotions, including love. Social psychologists such as Beverley Fehr (1993, 1994; Fehr & Russell, 1991) and Julie Fitness and Garth Fletcher (1993) have used a "prototype analysis" to explore people's mental representations of "passionate love and sexual desire" (see also: Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). We suspect that in the next few years social psychologists (utilizing such techniques), will devote increasing attention to the way that passionate love and sexual desire are defined and the "meanings" they have had at various times and places.

There is some evidence that there may well be cultural/historical differences in the way men and women have viewed passionate love. In one study, Shelley Wu and Phillip Shaver (1992; Shaver, Wu, & Schwartz, 1991) interviewed young people in America, Italy, and the People's Republic of China about their emotional experiences. Passionate love is by definition a bitter-sweet experience. Whether the emphasis is on the sweet or the bitter, however, seems to depend on one's culture. American and Italian subjects tended to equate passionate love with happiness. Chinese students, however, had a darker view. In Chinese, there are few "happy-love" ideographs. Love tends to be associated with sadness, pain, and heartache. Chinese men and women generally

associated passionate love with such ideographs as infatuation, unrequited love, nostalgia, and sorrow-love.

If theorists interested in personal relationships do choose to explore the diverse meanings of passionate love and sexual desire that have existed in various cultures at various times, historians, cross-cultural psychologists, and social psychologists have offered some speculations on which to build.

A number of social psychologists interested in the “social construction” of emotions have pointed out that people may possess various “mental representations” of *passionate love* and differ markedly in the ways in which passionate love is perceived, interpreted, labeled, and expressed (see Fehr, 1993, 1994; Fehr & Russell, 1991; Fitness & Fletcher, 1993; and Hatfield & Rapson, 1993, 1995.)

What about *sexual desire*? Theorists have also speculated as to the various “meanings” and “social constructions” of sexual desire and sexual activity. This work is probably less well known by personal relationship researchers than the proceeding, so we will discuss it in more detail.

Historians such as John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman (1988) have observed that throughout history, people have assumed that people may possess very different reasons for engaging in sexual activity. To determine the meanings that sexuality has at any given time, historians asked a number of questions: In what kinds of sources did references to “sexuality” appear—sacred or secular, personal or public? In a given historical era, what was the language

of sexuality—were the dominant metaphors religious, medical, romantic, or commercial?

They found that in different historical eras, people have assumed that men and women should and do choose to engage in sexual activity for a variety of very different reasons. For the thousand years in Europe after the fall of Rome, the Church sanctioned only procreation, though the exercise of power (mostly, though not exclusively of men over women) constituted a large part of the reality of sexual behavior.

In the modern era, among the new meanings—sometimes culturally-sanctioned, sometimes not—which D’Emilio and Freedman and other historians have ascribed to sex are: passionate love; spiritual transcendence; kindness (a “mercy fuck,”); eroticism (the attainment of physical pleasure); mental and physical health (China’s recent emphasis on sex education), recreation (“sport fucking”); the formation of alliances, appeasement (the Bonobo), excitement-seeking and thrills; self-aggrandizement; duty; submission to others (the other side of power); revenge; money; health and long life (Yin and Yang); and to make a point!

Sex researchers and sociologists, too, have explored the various meanings of sex. They document that men and women from various groups cite many of the preceding reasons in explaining why they chose to engage in sexual activity (see, for example, the landmark research of DeLamater & MacCorquodale, 1979; Nelson, 1978).

We speculate that in the next decade, social psychologists will discover a great deal more as to the meanings that have been ascribed to passionate love and sexual desire in various cultures at different times.

VII. Gazing Into The Future

Yale historian Robin Winks once said that writing history is “like nailing jelly to the wall.” Setting out to describe sweeping historical trends and *then* attempting to predict future trends in love, sex, and intimacy is even more difficult. But despite the fact that history does not always move in a linear direction, let us make, with good cheer and a large, necessary dose of humility, a tentative effort.

First, recent evidence suggests that men and women in the West appear to be moving slowly and bumpily toward social equality in their sexual preferences, feelings, and experiences. Most modern societies are also moving in the direction of allowing greater sexual freedom for all individuals (although tolerance can be slowed by events such as the AIDS epidemic, backlash against permissiveness, and religious revivals.) The global village created by worldwide communication, computers and satellites, information exchange, travel, and trade makes it hard to imagine that non-Western cultures can long hold off the advancing currents of individualism or that they can forever restrain the spirit of sexual equality and experimentation. Of course, that revolution is far from being consummated—and healthy, honorable disagreement about the revolution remains ongoing.

We would predict that people throughout the world will come increasingly to accept a transforming trio of powerful ideas. First, a belief in the equality of women and members of minority groups. Second, a belief that the pursuit of happiness and the avoidance of pain are desirable goals in life. Third, a belief that it is possible to improve life and that action is preferable to the passive acceptance of age-old traditions. Let us end this paper by briefly considering each component of this trio.

A. From Male Supremacy to Gender Equality

The women's movement may be the most momentous social upheaval taking place in our lifetimes. Though its sources lie in Euro-America, it is rapidly spreading around the world.

Of course, the world is still far from achieving gender equality. As we approach the end of the 20th century, male supremacy continues to be the rule worldwide—even in the West. When Western and developing-world women joined together to speak first at United Nations human rights conferences in Geneva and then at the population control conference in Cairo, they itemized the staggering array of human rights violations that are routinely inflicted upon women throughout the world. Girls are ritually mutilated in the Sudan and Somalia. In Burma and Thailand very young girls are commonly coerced into prostitution. In Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, household maids are often beaten and raped. The list of abuses include female infanticide, genital mutilation, the sale of brides, dowry murders, suttee (in India, widows are still sometimes required to

immolate themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres), and discriminatory laws against women's civic, social, and legal equality.

Yet, there are signs around the world that existing assumptions of the worthlessness of women (and the absolute rights of men to have their way over them) may not be immutable doctrines. The recent Geneva and Cairo conferences are two examples. Dramatic transformations in the role of women are infiltrating into some sanctuaries of the most deeply-entrenched male-dominated cultures.

If these changes occur, they will continue to have an impact on the issues with which many of us are concerned. In the arena of love and sex, we would expect men and women to move toward gender equality in their sexual preferences, feelings, and experiences. We might expect to see the continued erosion of the sexual double standard. We might see greater acceptance of heterosexuality, bisexuality, and homosexuality. We might see broader cultural definitions of the institution of family combined with more creative social measures to support families while women work outside the home, with or without mates.

B. The Pursuit of Happiness and the Avoidance of Pain.

The subversive notion which lies behind all modernization is the simple idea that in life people are entitled to pursue happiness and avoid pain. Traditionally, many religions—including Christianity and most varieties of Hinduism and Buddhism, laboring to stem the tide of individualism and self-interest—asked people to accept what was given, to repress individual desire,

indeed to regard such desire as sin. Authoritarians, political and religious, have worked with great success to sell these propositions to their constituencies; they have been concerned with maintaining order and keeping down the unwashed masses.

Although the validation of the pursuit of happiness only regained currency in the 18th-century Enlightenment (after a very long absence), there is now evidence that the notion of pleasure and Thomas Jefferson's "pursuit of happiness" as a *desideratum* is gaining increasing acceptance worldwide. If this trend continues, we might expect societies around the world to begin to accept a more positive view of passionate love and sexual desire (no longer seeing them as evil).

We might also expect to see an increase in pre-marital sexual activity and sexual permissiveness, a growing acceptance of birth control, and a belief that individuals should be permitted to marry for love (rather than submitting to arranged marriages), and perhaps, even more important, the capacity to terminate unhappy marriages by divorce. Some historians (such as Lawrence Stone, 1990) regard the movement from non-separating to separating societies as among the most significant of all historical developments.

C. A Belief That Things Can Change for the Better

Modernism has wrought its most far-reaching change with its onslaught on fatalism. The possibility of progress outweighs hopelessness and resignation in most places in the world.

Each year, Richard L. Rapson teaches a graduate seminar in which students spend the semester attempting to imagine what life will be like in the 21st century, based on historical tendencies and contemporary innovations. They consider the changes in the world that have occurred since 1500 and attempt to predict what is likely to happen if such trends continue. The futurists at the University of Hawaii, fully cognizant of the perils of such an enterprise, have come up with the following predictions:

In the *economic/practical* realm: (1) both spouses working outside the home; a continuation of the movement toward gender and economic equality; more consensual unions; more long-distance relationships; and more cyberspace relationships.

In the *technological* realm: Improvement in birth control and abortion technology; more test-tube babies, clones, babies without fathers; a cure for AIDS and for male and female impotence, both of which may eventuate (for better or worse) in greater sexual permissiveness; increased availability of pornography; and technological sex.

In the *cultural* realm: increasing acceptance of interracial relationships; of homosexuality; and of more varied definitions of what society will mean by "family." (The last would suggest that there will be many more childless marriages and, on the other side of the coin, better childcare services—each, along with consensual and homosexual unions, eroding the traditional dominance of the nuclear family.) Men and women will be more experienced about sexual relationships. The norm will not be stability but change.

All of our readers surely possess their own theoretical frameworks in the arenas of love, sex, and intimacy. Whether or not you agree with our playful speculations, the attempt to look ahead into some sort of future has several advantages: (1) it provides an exciting test of existing psychological and historical theories and it introduces the element of time into our researches; (2) it is in the intersections of disciplines that some of the most productive intellectual activity is taking place these days. (The combining of cross-cultural, historical, and psychological insights is likely to yield new knowledge; (3) when one looks at the broader picture, it helps to put theorizing based primarily upon contemporary findings into a broader perspective.

By all this, we mean to suggest there is an explosion of new questions to ask and new ways to find answers. We may be at the threshold of an expansive and quite remarkable moment in intellectual inquiry.

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Table 1

Intensity of Passionate Love in Various Ethnic Groups

Ethnic Group	Average <u>PLS</u> Score	
	Men	Women
Euro-Americans (Mainland USA)	97.50	110.25
Euro-Americans (Hawaii)	100.50	105.00
Filipino-Americans	106.50	102.90
Japanese-Americans	99.00	103.95

Table 2

Question 1: “If a man (woman) had all the other qualities you desired, would you marry this person if you were not in love with him (her)?”

Cultural Group	Response		
	Yes	Undecided	No
Australia	4.8%	15.2%	80.0%
Brazil	4.3%	10.0%	85.7%
England	7.3%	9.1%	83.6%
Hong Kong	5.8%	16.7%	77.6%
India	49.0%	26.9%	24.0%
Japan	2.3%	35.7%	62.0%
Mexico	10.2%	9.3%	80.5%
Pakistan	50.4%	10.4%	39.1%
Phillipines	11.4%	25.0%	63.6%
Thailand	18.8%	47.5%	33.8%
United States	3.5%	10.6%	85.9%

Based on Levine et al., (1995).