

The Endurance of Love: Passionate and Companionate Love in Newlywed and Long-Term Marriages

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Abstract

Most theorists assume that the passage of time will have a very different impact on passionate versus companionate love. Passionate love is said to decline fairly quickly, while companionate love is thought to remain fairly stable (or actually increase) over time.

This hypothesis was tested in two studies. In Study 1, we interviewed 53 newlywed couples soon after their marriages and again one year later, when presumably (for some) the "honeymoon was over." In Study 2, we interviewed a random sample of 240 older women, ranging in age from 50-82, who had been married varying lengths of time. (The median length of marriage was 33 years.) We asked about their passionate and companionate love for their partners and their partner's love for them.

In Study 1, it was found that although newlywed men and women loved with equal passion, women tended to love their partners more companionately than they were loved in return. (This is in accord with previous research with dating couples.) The results for people married many years were more complex.

Finally, we turned to the question with which we are most concerned: What impact does time have on love? In both Study 1 and Study 2, time did have a corrosive effect on love—but to our surprise it appeared to have an equally detrimental effect on both passionate and companionate love.

Keywords: endurance of love; passionate love; companionate love; marriage

Study 1

The Endurance of Love: Passionate and Companionate Love in Newlywed Couples²

In almost all cultures, people distinguish between passionate and companionate love (Fehr, 1988; Fischer, Shaver, & Carnochan, 1990; Hatfield, Rapson, & Martel, 2007). *Passionate love* (sometimes called “romantic love,” “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) is associated with feelings of emptiness, anxiety, and despair (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993, p. 5).

Companionate love is a far less intense emotion. It combines feelings of attachment, commitment, and intimacy. It has been defined as: “The affection and tenderness we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply entwined” (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993, p. 9).

Scholars have argued that when ordinary people are asked what they mean by “love” they seem to distinguish “being in love” from “loving” (Myers & Berscheid, 1997). Passionate love is generally associated with passion, sexual desire, excitement, and a variety of other intense emotions—such as yearning, jealousy, anxiety, and so forth (see Aron, Fisher, and Strong, 2006; Sternberg, 1997). Companionate love is typified by attachment, trust, intimacy, closeness, and commitment (Fehr, 1988; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1989; Mikulincer & Goodman, 2006; Sternberg & Weis, 2007). (For a comprehensive summary of the nature of love, see Aron, Fisher, & Strong, 2006; Sternberg, 1987).

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In this paper, we will address two questions:

1. *Do men and women differ in how much love they feel for their partners?*
2. *What effect does the passage of time have on people's feelings of passionate and companionate love?*

A. Gender Differences in Love

According to cultural stereotypes, women generally love their partners more than they are loved in return. This stereotype has been echoed by a wide array of feminists, psychologists, and sociologists (see, for example, Firestone, 1983; Langhorn & Secord, 1955; Parsons, 1959; Parsons & Bales, 1960). In fact, however, there are few data to support this stereotype. Whether men and women love more (or less) appears to depend on the type of love under consideration, how love is measured, and perhaps the age and life stage of couples (we will consider this factor in Study 2).

When *passionate (or romantic) love* is examined, it is sometimes found that women love more, men love more, or that there are no differences between men and women in passion. Studies examining *attitudes* toward love suggest that men may have a more romantic or passionate view of love than do women (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993; Hobart, 1958; Knox & Sporkowski, 1968; Rubin, 1970). In contrast, in studies examining *feelings*, women have been found to feel more passionately (or romantically) than do men (Dion & Dion, 1973; Kanin, Davidson, & Scheck, 1970; Hatfield & Rapson, 1993). When men and women are asked specifically how much passionate or romantic love they feel, no gender differences have been found in love felt for partner (Rubin, 1973; Sprecher-Fisher, 1980).

When it comes to *companionate love*, however, the results are more clear-cut—and more supportive of the cultural stereotype of women as the more loving sex. In general, it has been found that women tend to like and companionately love their partners more than they are liked and loved in return (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993; Knox & Sporkowski, 1968; Rubin, 1973; Sprecher-Fisher, 1980.) Alas, all of the preceding studies were conducted with

dating couples; we know little about gender differences in love during marriage or in long-enduring marriages.

B. Changes Over Time in Love

According to the folklore, passionate love is characterized by its fragility. In an early review article, Hatfield and Walster (1978) concluded: “Passionate love is a fragile flower—it wilts in time. Companionate love is a sturdy evergreen; it thrives with contact” (p. 125). If a couple is lucky, passionate love presumably evolves into companionate love—a robust kind of love that can, and often does, last a lifetime (see Huesman, 1980; Safilios-Rothschild, 1977; Sternberg, 1998, for a discussion of this point.)

The idea of a linear passage from passion to companionship has been incorporated into traditional stage theories of relationship development (Coleman, 1977; Goldstine, et al., 1977). There is some sparse evidence that feelings of love may change over the course of a relationship as folklore and stage theories suggest they do (see Cimbalo, Failing, & Mousaw, 1976; Driscoll et al., 1972; Pam, 1970). Other studies fail to support this notion. A few researchers have found that companionate love and relationship satisfaction generally decline over time (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Tucker & Aron, 1993.) In a five year longitudinal study of dating couples, Sprecher (1999) found that although couples assumed their love was increasing over time, in fact their ratings of love declined year by year. It appears that couples assumed love was increasing even though in their own day-to-day experience it was not.

On the basis of the preceding research, in Study 1 we proposed:

1. Newlywed men and women will not differ in how passionately they love one another. Women will, however, feel more companionate love for their partners than their partners feel in return.
2. Time will have a more devastating impact on passionate love than on companionate love.

To test these hypotheses, we conducted the following survey:

Method

Participants

The names and addresses of all couples applying for a marriage license in Dane County, Wisconsin in the four months preceding the start of our project were obtained from the County Clerk's public records. The population of newlyweds consisted of 500 couples. Practical constraints dictated the elimination from the sample of all couples who lived more than 25 miles from Madison, Wisconsin. Couples who did not speak English or who were older than 45 years were also excluded.

Following exhaustive efforts to locate valid addresses and/or telephone numbers of the couples (e.g., by tracking down all four parents listed in the application after more direct approaches proved unsuccessful), we compiled a list of 284 couples who were eligible to participate. These couples were sent a letter introducing the researchers, describing the goals and procedures of the study, and emphasizing the importance of a cooperative response. They were told to expect a follow-up phone call in a short time. A week later, all couples were contacted by telephone. Fifty-six percent of couples agreed to participate in the year-long study. A number of the couples who agreed to participate were never interviewed. In the majority of cases this was because they were unable to find parking spaces near the interview site (the University of Wisconsin campus); a few others *were* interviewed, but coding and recording errors rendered the data unintelligible. In the end, 118 couples (236 individuals, or 42% of those originally contacted) ended up participating in Study 1.

At the time of their interview, couples had been married three to eight months. They ranged in age from 16 to 45 (the average bride was 24, the average groom 26). The newlyweds had a variety of occupations—accountants, teachers, farmers, construction

workers, and business people; a few were students. Most couples had dated approximately two years before marrying.

Men and women were interviewed by a staff of eight women and three men. The interviewers underwent 10 hours of training in interviewing techniques before conducting the interviews. Interviews took place in a home-like setting at the University of Wisconsin. (Coffee and rolls were served, for example. The walls were decorated with posters and the chairs and couches were bright and comfortable). Naturally, husbands and wives were interviewed separately.

Measures

Assessing Passionate and Companionate Love:

During the interview, respondents were told:

People seem to experience two different kinds of love—we call them “passionate love” and “companionate love.” Passionate love could be described as a wildly emotional state, with associated tender and sexual feelings, elation and pain, anxiety and relief. Companionate love is a more low-key emotion, with feelings of friendly affection and deep attachment. Using the scale below, and thinking over the last six months or so, please answer our questions about these feelings in your marriage.

1. What is the level of passionate love that you feel for your partner?
2. What is the level of companionate love that you feel for your partner?

Questions were, of course, counterbalanced. Possible answers ranged from (1) None at all, to (5) A tremendous amount.

One year later, couples were asked to return for a second visit and to answer all the questions yet again. In the end, 33 couples agreed (and were still available) to participate in both sessions. We were, of course, worried that the couples who participated in Year 1 and only Year 1, might differ in some critical way from the couples who were available to participate in both Year 1 and the Year 2 follow-up. To the best of our knowledge they do not. Dr. David Nerenz compared those couples who came for the follow-up interview with

those who did not attend on all of the variables we assessed at Time 1 (33 variables). This comparison revealed no significant differences above the chance level in participants.

Results and Discussion

Let us now examine and then discuss the questions previously posed:

Gender Differences in Love

Overall, men and women reported “a great deal” of passionate love for their partners. As indicated in Table 1, no differences were found in the amount of passionate love men and women reported ($F(1,104) = .66, ns$). Both men and women reported feeling from “a great deal” to “a tremendous amount” of passionate love for their mates. Women, however, felt significantly more companionate love for their mates than did men ($F(1,104) = 11.45; p < .001$).

These results, in combination with the studies reported earlier for dating couples, suggest that there may be a real gender difference in feelings of companionate love. It may be that while dating and newlywed men and women love with equal passion, when it comes to companionate love, women love their partners more than they are loved in return.

Table 1

Newlywed Couples' Feelings for Their Partners

| | (N) | How much Passionate Love? | How much Compan. Love? |
|---|-----|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Newlyweds Original Interview | | | |
| Men (SD) | 53 | 3.96 (.80) | 4.38 (.81) |
| Women (SD) | 53 | 3.90 (.69) | 4.72 (.54) |
| Newlyweds (1 year later) | | | |
| Men (SD) | 53 | 3.77 (.89) | 4.19 (.71) |
| Women (SD) | 53 | 3.70 (.77) | 4.57 (.57) |
| F-Tests Main Effect Sex | | .66 | 11.45*** |
| Main Effect Time | | 10.48** | 5.22* |
| Interaction Sex x Time | | .56 | .06 |

df = 1, 104

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

Changes Over Time in Passionate versus Companionate Love

Based on the folklore and the scientific literature, we predicted that the passage of time would have a different effect on passionate love versus companionate love. Passionate love should decline precipitously over time, while companionate love should remain fairly constant. Thus, a significant gender x length of relationship x type of love interaction was

expected. In order to test this hypothesis, we utilized a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial analysis of variance design, which included: gender of respondent (male versus female), time (original interview versus interview one year later), and type of love (passionate versus companionate love). In this design, time and type of love were considered to be within-subject factors.

When we examine Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1a and 1b, we see that in this newlywed sample, our second hypothesis was not supported. (In Table 1, for the readers' interest, we present Fs for each of the measures (Passionate love and Companionate love) separately. Table 2 presents the Fs which are appropriate to testing our hypotheses—i.e., the impact of Sex of respondent x Time on Passionate + Companionate love and Passionate versus Companionate love.)

Table 2

ANOVA for Ratings of Passionate and Companionate Love in Newlywed Sample

| Source | df | SS | F-value |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| Main effect: Sex | 1 | 1.60 | 1.77 |
| Subjects/Sex | 104 | .90 | -- |
| Main effect: Time | 1 | 4.57 | 13.81*** |
| Interaction: Sex x Time | 1 | .04 | .11 |
| Subjects/Sex x Time | 104 | 33 | -- |
| Main effect: Type of Love | 1 | 44.92 | 62.13*** |
| Interaction: Sex x Type of Love | 1 | 5.90 | 8.16*** |
| Subjects/Sex x Type | 104 | .72 | -- |
| Interaction: Time X Type | 1 | .15 | .57 |
| Interaction: Sex x Time x Type | 1 | .15 | .57 |
| Subjects/All | 104 | .27 | -- |

*** $p < .001$

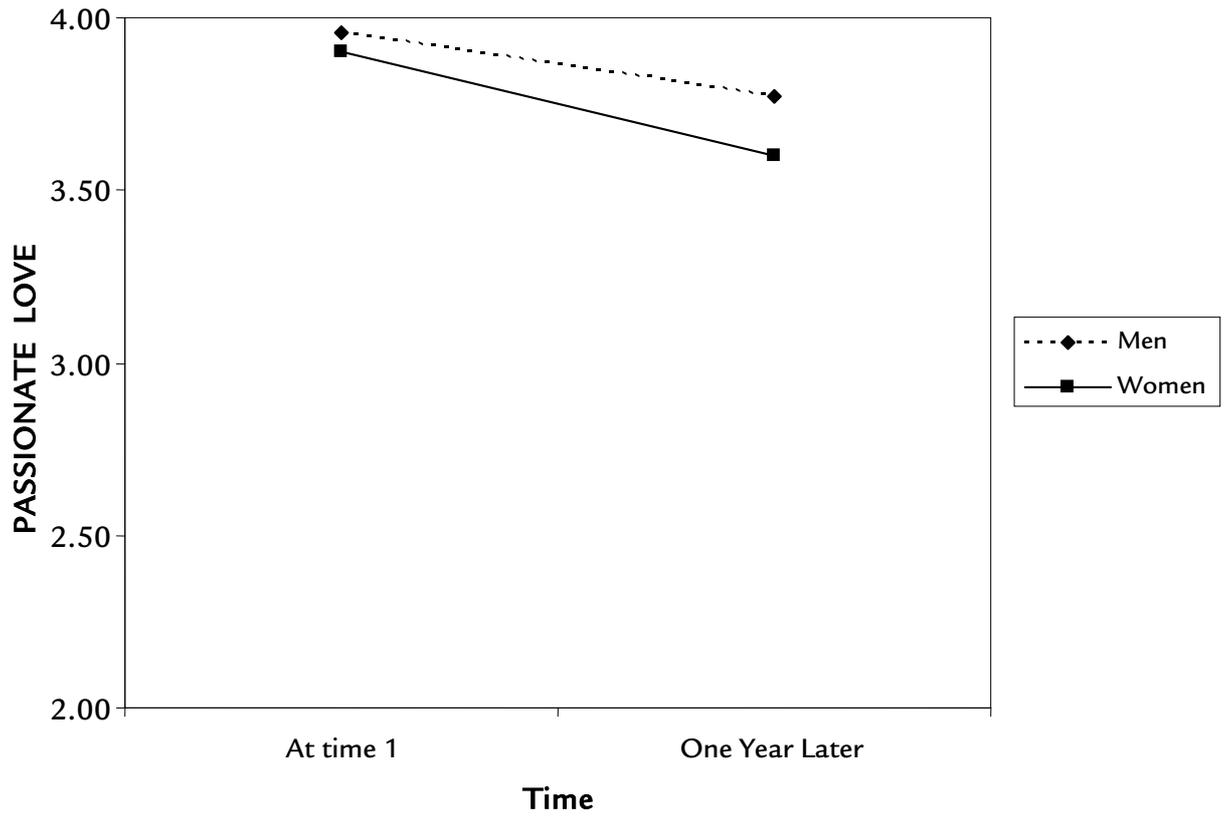


Figure 1a. The change of passionate love over time in Study 1.

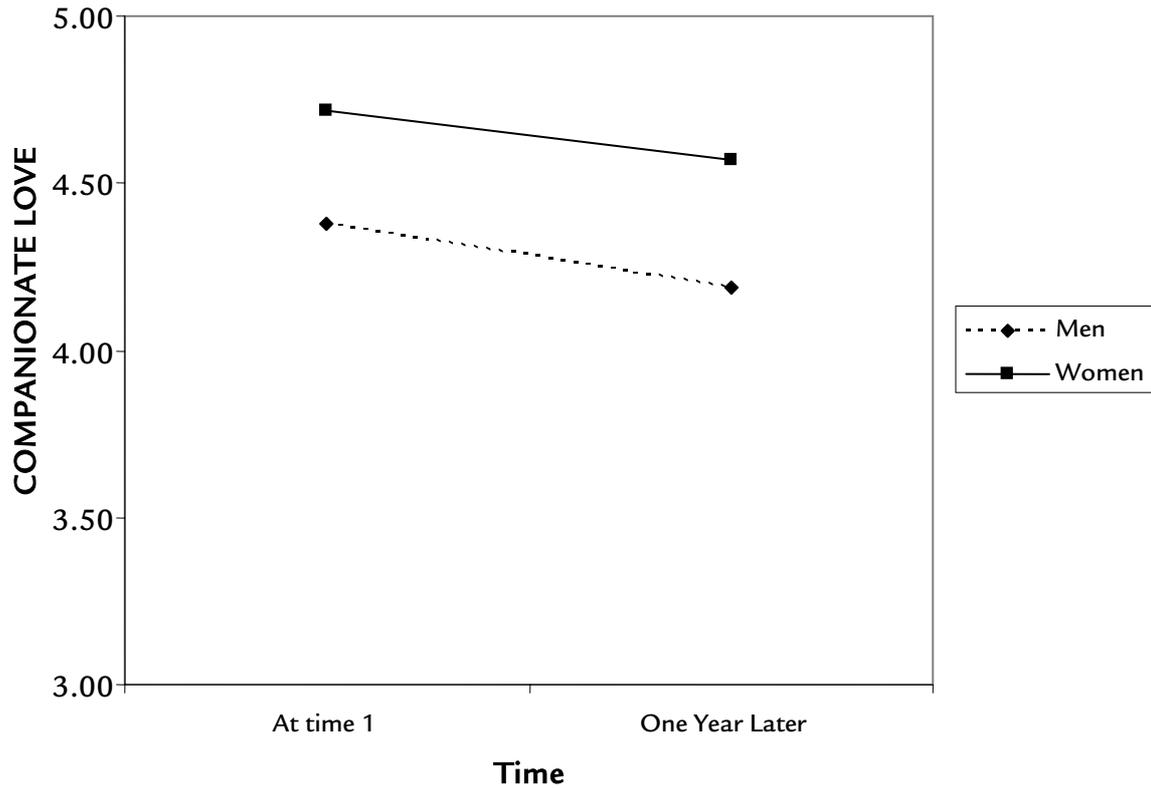


Figure 1b. The change of companionate love over time in Study 1.

As Table 2 indicates, time did indeed seem to have a corrosive effect on love ($F(1,104) = 13.81, p < .001$), but it appeared to be no more damaging to passionate love than to companionate love (Interaction $F(1,104)$ for time x type of love = .57, *ns*). (Similar results were secured by Sprecher, 1999.)

Although time did seem to have a corrosive effect on love, couples still reported a fairly intense level of love during the second year, even though the honeymoon was ostensibly over. At the time of the marriage, men and women started out feeling “a great deal” of passionate love and in between “a great deal” and “a tremendous amount” of companionate love for one another. A year later, these feelings of love were still surprisingly high. Couples reported feeling in between “some” and “a great deal” of passionate love, and in between “a great deal” and “a tremendous amount” of companionate love.

It could be argued that it is in the courtship period that passionate love reaches its peak and then declines precipitously, and thus the chosen sample was the wrong one to test the type of love x time interaction. However, casually and steadily dating couples have been asked about their passionate and companionate feelings in other survey studies (see Hatfield, Walster, & Traupmann, 1978). (In previous studies, however, dating couples felt *less* passion than do our newlyweds; see Figure 2.) It could also be argued that couples should be re-interviewed in multiple waves—after five years, 10 years, and 25 years of marriage. Perhaps only after several years of marriage will passionate love be found to wane dramatically. We attempted an initial test of this notion in Study 2.

Summary

A two-wave panel study of 53 newly married couples was conducted. No gender differences were found in how passionately men and women loved their partners. Women were found to companionately love more than men—which is consistent with the findings from research conducted with dating couples. While it was predicted that time would have a more corrosive effect on passion than on companionate love, we discovered that time was not discriminating in its effects. Both passionate and companionate love diminished slightly over the course of the first year of marriage.

We would suggest that future studies investigating these issues might employ longitudinal, dyadic studies, which would be able to better capture the dynamic nature of passionate and companionate love in marriage.

Study 2³

The Endurance of Love: Older Women's Perceptions of Their Intimate Relationships

This study was supported, in part, by the Faye McBeath Institute on Aging and Adult Life, University of Wisconsin, Madison, a NIMH Grant for Biomedical Research, and in part by HEW-AOA Grant #90 A-1230, awarded for multi-disciplinary research in aging women.

The study of love was once the province of poets and novelists. Today, however, social psychologists (in increasing numbers) have begun to investigate this phenomenon (see Cunningham & Antill, 1981; Duck & Gilmour, 1981 a, b, c; Hatfield and Rapson, 1993, 2005; Hatfield, Rapson, & Martel, 2007). Unfortunately, most of this research has been conducted with college students or newlywed couples. Currently, little is known about love and intimacy in the middle and later stages of the lifecycle. Yet, America is aging. The U. S. population, age 65 and older, has increased 9.5% since 1993. Today, one in eight Americans is age 65 or older. Aging women outnumber their male counterparts by three to two. A full 71% of men in this age group are married, compared to only 43% of the women (Johnson, 2007).

In general, love is the greatest source of marital satisfaction for older men and women (Eshlesman, 1978). In a study of 408 older couples, Stinnett and his colleagues (1972) found that most aging men and women rate their marriages as "very happy" or "happy." Many elderly men and women claim that "being in love" is the most important factor in achieving marital success.

Thus, it seems important to study love and intimacy among middle-aged and elderly couples. Only by interviewing men and women in this age group will it be possible to

³ This study was supported, in part, by a National Institute of Health Grant for Biomedical Research to the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

discover how love is experienced by aging couples, who may have been together for a quarter century or more.

Gender Differences in Love

In the Introduction to Study 1, we reviewed a number of studies indicating that although men and women seem to love with equal passion, women generally feel more companionate love for their partners than their partners feel for them. No evidence exists, however, to indicate whether or not these gender differences are typical of the feelings of older couples.

Changes Over Time in Love

In the Introduction to Study 1, we observed that most theorists assume that although passion is short-lived, companionate love can last a lifetime. A few theorists, however, have speculated that there may be a resurgence of passionate love *in older couples*. Knox (1970), for example, interviewed three groups of couples: dating high school seniors, couples married less than five years, and couples married more than 20 years. He found that both the youngest *and* the oldest groups experienced the most romantic love. Munro and Adams (1978) found that romantic love was higher for dating couples and couples married a long time than for young married couples. These authors proposed an ingenious explanation for this curvilinear relationship. They suggested that romantic (or passionate) love is highest when there is low role structure in the relationship. Role structure is especially low in the early dating period and then (again) later in the marriage, when the children have left home. Role structure is highest early in a marriage when a household is being established and children are arriving. Ergo: there should be a curvilinear relationship between age and love. Finally, Reedy, Bireen, and Schaie (1981) and Swensen, Eskew, and Kohlehepp (1981) observed that different aspects of love may be important at different stages in the life cycle.

Study 2 was designed to explore the issues described above in an age group typically ignored in past research—middle-aged and elderly couples. *From the perspective of the women in the relationship*, we will attempt to answer the following four questions:

1. In the later years of life, who loves more passionately or companionately—men or women?
2. What effect does length of a relationship have on passionate love versus companionate love?

Method

Participants

As part of a multidisciplinary study of aging women, conducted by the Faye McBeath Institute on Aging and Adult Life, University of Wisconsin, Madison, a random sample of 240 older women living in five different areas of the city of Madison, Wisconsin were interviewed in their homes or a place of their choosing. Women ranged in age from 50 to 82. (The average age was 54). At the time of their interviews, the women had been married from one to 59 years. (The average length of marriage was 33 years). They came from a variety of social, religions, and occupational backgrounds. (According to the terms of McBeath's NIMH grant, only aging *women* could be interviewed. We would, of course, have preferred to interview both men and women. Alas, this was not possible. However, we felt that the chance of a truly random sample, with interviews conducted by experienced interviewers in a congenial setting, were advantages that outweighed the disadvantages of conducting a study with these restrictions).

How representative was our Madison, Wisconsin sample of older American women in general? Because Madison is an exceptional city in its educational and cultural facilities, its population tends to be more highly educated than are populations from many other cities. This bias was reflected in our random sample. Overall, the Madison group was slightly more highly educated and better off financially than are most older American

women. The median annual income of the women was approximately \$2,000 higher than the national median income of older women. The respondents were also very highly educated compared to the national averages for older women. There were 31 B.A. or B.S. degrees, 15 Master's degrees, and three Ph.Ds in this group of 240. More than 75% of them reported being in very good health. They were a surprisingly active group, with 75 percent reporting that they got some regular physical exercise every day. Over 36% of them were working either full or part time.

The 240 women in the sample were asked to describe the most important person in their lives. If the relationship they described was a sexual one, they were invited to participate in the study. One hundred and six of the 240 women reported an ongoing sexual relationship. For most of these women, it was with their husbands; for a very few it was with a spouse equivalent.

We asked women "What was the date of your marriage?" In those few instances in which women were cohabitating, we asked on what date they and their partners began living together. On the basis of this information, we divided women into two approximately equal groups: those married a short time (less than 33 years) and those married a longer time (more than 33 years).

Measures

Assessing Passionate and Companionate Love

In this study, we assessed Passionate and Companionate love in the same way we did in Study 1. This time, however, we asked four questions:

1. What is the level of passionate love that you feel for your partner?
2. What is the level of passionate love that your partner feels for you?
3. What is the level of companionate love that you feel for your partner?
4. What is the level of companionate love that your partner feels for you?

Possible answers ranged from (1) None at all, to (5) A tremendous amount.

Results and Discussion⁴

Let us now turn to the questions that we posed.

Who Loves More—Men or Women?

As shown in Table 3, women perceived that their partners loved them more passionately than they loved their mates ($t(96) = 2.91, p < .01$). No difference was found between how much women companionately loved and how much they perceived their mates loved them ($t(98) = .42; ns$).

Table 3

Women's Feelings for Their Partners and Their Estimates as to Their Partners' Feelings for Them

| Respondents | (N) | How Much PL?¹ | How Much CL?¹ |
|---------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Women's Own Feelings | (93-99) | 3.11 | 4.10 |
| Guesses Husband's Feelings (SD) | (93-99) | 3.24 (.51) | 4.08 (.47) |
| t-value ² | | 2.91** | .42 |
| df | | 96 | 98 |

1. The higher the number, the more passionate love, companionate love, Resentment/hostility, and Depression the respondent feels or assumes her partner feels.
2. Main effect: Women's feelings versus their guesses as to their husband's feelings.

* $p < .05$
 ** $p < .01$
 *** $p < .001$

⁴ A preliminary report of these data appears in: Hatfield, E., Traupmann-Pillemer, J., & Sprecher, S. (1984). Older women's perception of their intimate relationships. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 2*, 108-124.

In previous studies of dating and newlywed couples, researchers have generally found that men and women love each other with approximately the same degree of passion. Women tend to companionately love more than they are loved in return. In this sample, however, we secured quite different results. Men were perceived to be *more* passionately in love than were their partners. For the first time, we secured no gender differences in companionate love. It appears that (according to women's perceptions) in the last stages of life, men and women have come to companionately love one another with equal intensity.

A note: In previous studies, couples reported feeling less passionate than companionate love for one another. Older couples, too, felt less passionate than companionate love for their partners. For the women's feelings, $F(1, 103) = 25.89, p < .001$. For women's estimates of their mates' feelings, $F(1,103) = 16.38, p < .001$.

How can we account for the fact that our results differ so markedly from those found in previous studies with samples of younger adults?

First, we must point out that our data are only suggestive. Because men were not interviewed, we had only the women's *perceptions* of how their mates felt. Perhaps the results are telling us more about gender differences *as perceived* by older women than about actual gender differences. At a minimum, however, the results tell us that older women *feel* more passionately loved by their husbands than they love in return.

However—assuming that the women can accurately assess how their husbands feel—what can we conclude from the results as we compare them to what has been found with younger men and women?

One possibility is that the results may be suggestive of a possible historical change in the “double standard.” For many elderly people, the term “passionate love” suggests *sexual love*. In the Victorian era, men were supposed to love sexually, while women were not. Older women generally report that the relational aspects of sexual activities—sitting and talking, saying loving words—are more important to them than to men. Men, however, view sexual activities (such as body caressing, masturbation, and intercourse) as more important. (Johnson, 1997). Perhaps that is why, in our older sample, women assume their husbands

feel more passionately about them than they feel about him (see DeLamater & MacCorquodale, 1979, for an elaboration of this argument.) Such gender differences (in how passionate men and women feel it is acceptable to be) may be disappearing, but they still exist (Hatfield, 1982; Johnson, 2007; Petersen, 2007; Siegel & Siegel, 2007).

Another possible historical shift is suggested by the results. Traditionally, women tended to be dependent upon their husband for status and economic wellbeing. They had to control their emotional yearnings in order to pursue a relationship with “Mr. Right,” a man with the proper social background and promising potential. Men, on the other hand, had the luxury of marrying a woman they passionately loved. Men also had the freedom to initiate relationships with those they loved, while women had to passively wait for suitors who were interested in them (see Allgeier & Wiederman, 1991, for a summary of this research.). As Safilios-Rothschild (1977) observed:

Women less often than men end up marrying the person they love. In the case of men, their own feelings tend to determine their marital choice more than their partner's feelings. In the case of women, the contrary trend has been true: the intensity of the future husband's love feelings carries more weight than their own feelings. There is research evidence that the type of love asymmetry in which the husband is perceived (by both spouses) as the most loving of the two is at least twice as frequent as the reverse asymmetry (p. 72)

Today, however, women may depend less on marriage for their status and financial wellbeing. They are allowed to pursue educational and career opportunities. It is more acceptable for women to initiate relationships with men to whom they are attracted (Peplau, 2002). Although many of these traditional gender differences remain (Buss, 1994), today, both men and women claim they would insist on a “love match” regardless of the other's practical merit (Allgeier & Wiederman, 1991). Perhaps that is why, although younger men and women tend to love with equal passion, older men and women do not.

A final explanation for our results should be considered. The differences may indeed reflect lifespan differences. At an early age, men and women may love another with intense, and almost equal, passion. Later in life, men's passionate feelings may decline less than do women's. Unfortunately for this hypothesis, however, theorists who have argued that men and women's sexual feelings for their partners should decline at different rates have posited that *men* should lose romantic and sexual interest in their aging partners more quickly than should women (Griffith, 1981; Symons, 1979.) Evolutionary theorists, for example, argue that for men, youth + beauty = sexuality. For women, power + position = sexuality. According to these theorists, in old age men are less capable of intense passionate love (for their mates) than are their wives (Buss, 1994). In this study, however, we found that women assumed their husbands loved them more passionately than they were loved in return. If we are to unravel this perplexing discrepancy, it is clear that more systematic research needs to be conducted. We need to track the feelings of men *and* women over a long span of time.

What Effect Does Time Have on Passionate and Companionate Love?

Ideally, of course, one would answer this question *via* a longitudinal study. This alternative was not available to us. We thought we could acquire some useful suggestive data *via* the following procedure. We utilized a 2 x 2 factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) design with included: length of marriage (short versus long) and type of love (passionate versus companionate love.) (In this design, type of love was considered a within-subject factor.)

As folklore and literature suggest, we predicted that the passage of time would have different effects on the two types of love. Over time, passionate love should decline fairly quickly, while companionate love should remain fairly stable (or even increase). Thus, we predicted a significant length of relationship x type of love interaction.

Once again, however, no support was found for this prediction (see Table 4). Length of time did have a corrosive effect on love in general [$F(1, 94) = 4.05, p < .05$], but it

seemed to be no more destructive of passionate love than of companionate love [Interaction $F(1, 94)$ for length of relationship \times type of love = .01, *ns*].

Table 4

Women's Feelings for Their Partners and Their Estimates as to Their Partners' Feelings for Them

| Respondents | (N) | How Much PL?¹ | How Much CL?¹ |
|------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Women's Feelings | | | |
| Married < 33 years | (43-46) | 3.27 | 4.24 |
| Married 33+ years | (51-53) | 2.98 | 3.98 |
| (S.D.) | | (.95) | (.71) |
| F-value ² | | 2.20 | 3.37 |
| df | | 1, 94 | 1, 95 |
| Guesses as to Man's Feelings | | | |
| Married < 33 years | (41-44) | 3.45 | 4.23 |
| Married 33+ years | (50-52) | 3.06 | 3.94 |
| (S.D.) | | (.96) | (.76) |
| F-value ³ | | 4.10* | 3.51 |
| df | | 1, 92 | 1, 93 |

1. The higher the number, the more passionate and companionate love the respondent feels (or assumes her partner feels).

2. Main effect: Women's feelings versus their guesses as to their husband's feelings.

3. Main effect: Length of Marriage.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

How do we interpret this surprising finding? One can draw an optimistic or a pessimistic conclusion. On the positive side, even after several years of marriage, women are still reporting high levels of both passionate and companionate love. Women married less than 33 years report feeling in between “some” and “a great deal” of passionate love for their partners. Women married much longer also continue to feel “some” passionate love and “a great deal” of companionate love. While we expected companionate love to remain uniformly high (or even increase) throughout the live cycle, the finding that passionate feelings also remained quite high is encouraging. Contrary to what is often portrayed by the mass media, older persons married for several years can still experience passion and excitement in their intimate relationships.

However, if one wants to interpret the results pessimistically, then emphasis can be given to the significant difference found between women married for less than 33 years and those married for over 33 years. Women married for longer periods of time did report slightly less passionate and companionate love than did women married for a shorter period of time. (This is especially discouraging since couples so unhappy they divorced are not, naturally, included in this sample.)

In Figures 2 and 3, we have—for purposes of illustration—combined the data from three studies on the level of passionate love and companionate love couples feel: We have graphed the results of studies of Dating couples (see Traupmann, Hatfield, & Wexler, 1983), Newlywed couples at Time 1 and Time 2 (see Study 1), and Older Women (see Study 2) onto Figures 2 and 3. We can see that in all cases, time appears to have a corrosive effect on passionate and companionate love. In Study 2, of course, we are concerned with only the final two data points on these figures—those couples married less than or more than 33 years.

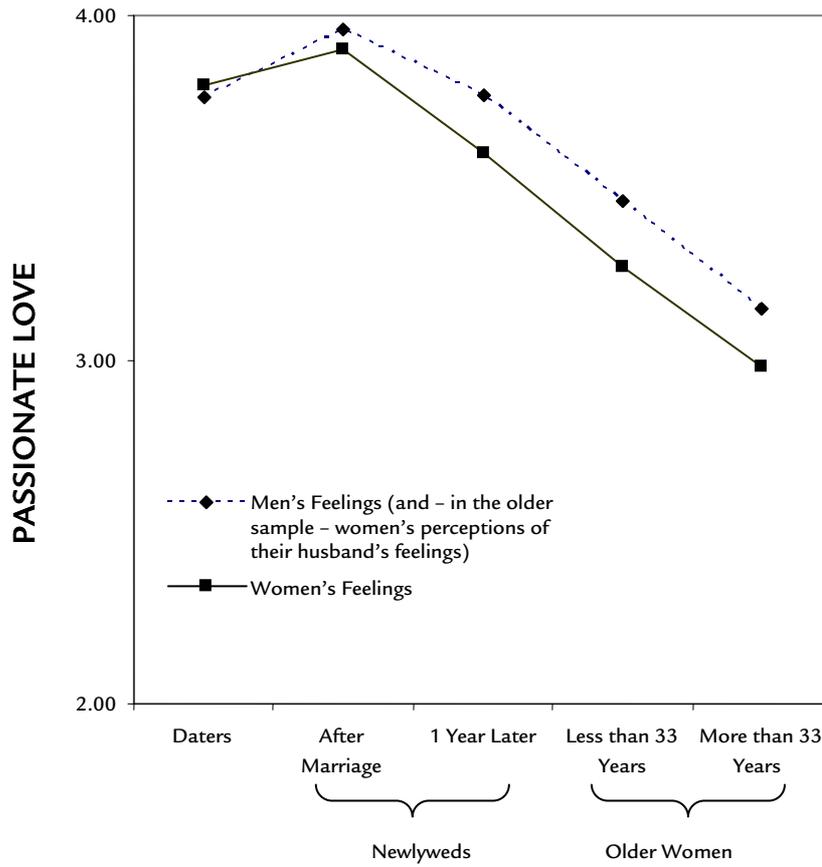


Figure 2. Dating couples', newlywed couples', and older women's passionate love for their partners.

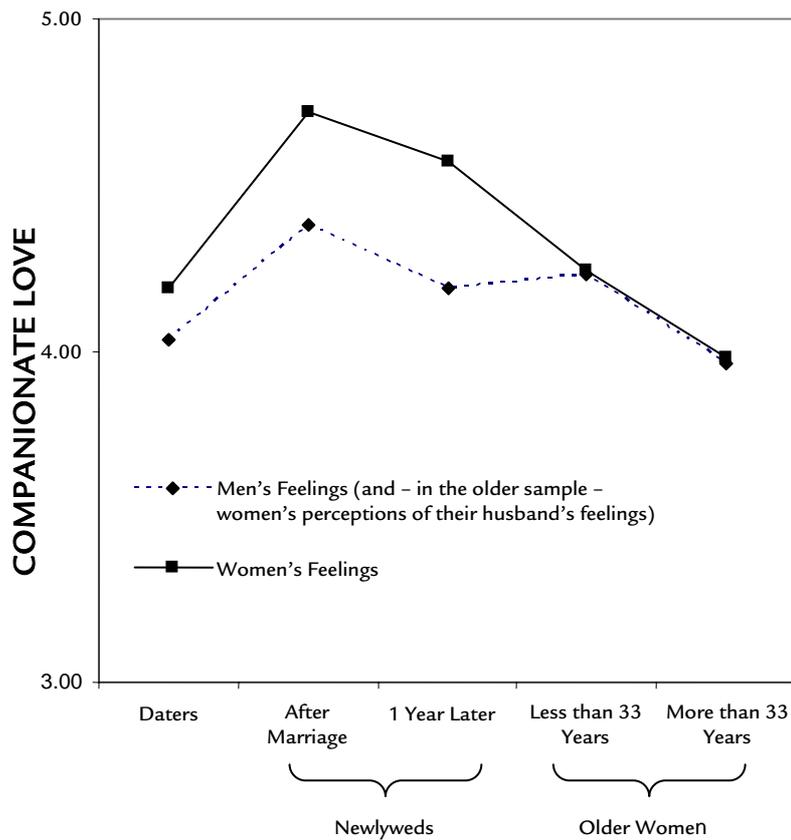


Figure 3. Dating couples', newlywed couples', and older women companionate love for their partners.

Summary

This investigation was initiated because we were disappointed with the lack of research conducted on older couples. One hundred and six women aged 50 years or older were interviewed about the feelings they had for their husband or intimate other. They were asked how much passionate love, companionate love, Resentment/hostility they felt for their partner and how much Depression they felt in the relationship. Women were also asked a parallel set of questions asking how they thought their husbands felt on these issues. The following results were secured and briefly discussed:

1. As perceived by women, men loved more passionately than did women. No differences were found, however, in how much men and women companionately loved.

2. Time did not have a more corrosive effect on women's feelings of passionate love than on companionate love—both declined somewhat as the length of the relationship increased.

Future Research Directions

Some time ago, Campbell & Fiske (1959) suggested that scholars ought to adopt a technique called “triangulation” in hypothesis testing. They argued that any single test of a hypothesis is inevitably flawed. One could gain confidence in one's conclusions by using multiple methods. This research strategy is usually labeled “multimethod/multitrait,” “convergent validation, or “triangulation” (Webb, et al. 1966). In brief, one tests one's hypotheses by interviewing different types of participants in very different settings, collecting qualitative and quantitative data, and using a variety of statistical techniques to test one's notions. A good explanation of this technique can be found in Jick (1979).

In subsequent research, we would hope to interview a random sample of men and women, of varying ages, and of varying SES statuses, in a variety of regions, as to their love for one another. In these studies, we would, of course, use more comprehensive measures of passionate and companionate love (see Hatfield & Rapson, 1993, for a description of more suitable scale than those we were able to employ in this pair of preliminary studies.) In accord with Campbell and Fiske's (1959) recommendations, we might do well to interview these diverse populations via traditional interviews, qualitative measures, well developed scales of love, and behavioral observations of loving behavior.

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