

Individualistic and Collectivistic Perspectives on Gender and the Cultural Context of Love and Intimacy

Karen K. Dion and Kenneth L. Dion

University of Toronto

Individualism and collectivism help explain culture-related differences in romantic love and in the importance of emotional intimacy in marriage. Three propositions are suggested: (a) Romantic love is more likely to be an important basis for marriage in individualistic than in collectivistic societies; (b) psychological intimacy in marriage is more important for marital satisfaction and personal well-being in individualistic than in collectivistic societies; and (c) although individualism fosters the valuing of romantic love, certain aspects of individualism at the psychological level make developing intimacy problematic. Evidence pertaining to these propositions is considered based on conceptual and empirical accounts of romantic love and psychological intimacy in marriage in two individualistic societies (Canada and the United States) and three collectivistic societies (China, India, and Japan). In addition, we suggest that consideration of individualism and collectivism as these constructs pertain to gender provides a framework for interpreting gender differences in the reported experience of love and intimacy in North American society.

They met, fell in love, decided to marry (or cohabit), and hoped to live happily ever after. To many North Americans, this depiction of the development of an intimate relationship between a woman and a man has been an enduring

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to either Karen K. Dion, Division of Life Sciences, Scarborough Campus, University of Toronto, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada M1C 1A4, or Kenneth L. Dion, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1A1.

Preparation of this article was facilitated by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) grant to the first author. The authors would like to express their appreciation to Arthur Aron, Val Derlega, Susan Sprecher, and Barbara Winstead for their helpful and constructive comments on earlier versions of this article.

prototype, and its features seem very familiar and self-evident. This depiction, however, reflects several assumptions about the nature of intimate, opposite-sex relationships that are culturally based. These assumptions are by no means universally shared, particularly in non-Western societies; even in Western societies, this view of love, intimacy, and marriage has not always prevailed.

We have contended that a cultural perspective is needed to understand the factors contributing to the development of close relationships (Dion & Dion, 1979, 1988). The first step in theory building in this area is to identify conceptual dimensions that have the potential to provide an integrative framework. We believe that the dimensions of individualism and collectivism are key constructs with this potential for the topic of close relationships. These dimensions have been acknowledged by scholars from diverse cultural backgrounds to be of conceptual relevance for understanding the social structuring of relationships. We have previously suggested that there are cultural differences in views of self and that these differences in self-construal have implications for understanding the experience of romantic love and intimacy in heterosexual relationships (Dion & Dion, 1988).

In the present article, we present a more fully elaborated conceptual framework linking individualism and collectivism to culture-related and gender-related differences in close relationships and consider the evidence relevant to three conceptual propositions. We discuss the contrasts in the social construction of love and intimacy in two societies where individualism has been a dominant value orientation (the United States and Canada) and three Asian societies in which a collectivistic orientation has prevailed (China, India, and Japan). Our analysis is therefore most directly applicable to the manifestations of individualism and collectivism in these societies. Moreover, although we focus on the contrasts between individualism and collectivism in this article, as work in this area develops, additional conceptual and empirical analysis of culture and close relationships will be needed to compare different individualistic societies and different collectivistic societies, respectively.

Individualism and Collectivism: Cultural Perspectives

The constructs of individualism and collectivism concern the relation between the individual and the group as reflected across many domains of social functioning (Hofstede, 1984). Individualism has been defined as “the subordination of the goals of the collectivities to individual goals” while collectivism involves the opposite, namely, “the subordination of individual goals to the goals of a collective” (Hui & Triandis, 1986, pp. 244–245). These constructs have been conceptualized at the cultural level and at the personal level, and it is important to distinguish these two levels (Kim, 1993). Societies are labeled as “individualistic” or “collectivistic” when these value orientations characterize the

majority of individual members (Hui & Triandis, 1986). Within a given society, however, individual differences exist in adherence to the prevailing orientation. We have proposed using the terms *societal individualism* and *societal collectivism* to refer to these constructs at the cultural level and *psychological individualism* and *psychological collectivism* to designate these constructs at the individual level (Dion & Dion, 1991).

In his seminal work in this area, Hofstede (1984) proposed that the following features distinguished individualistic as compared to collectivistic societies. In societies characterized by individualism, the emphasis is on promoting one's self-interest and that of one's immediate family. The individual's rights rather than duties are stressed, as are personal autonomy, self-realization, individual initiative, and decision making. Personal identity is defined by the individual's attributes. Prototypic examples of individualistic societies in Hofstede's study were the United States, Australia, Great Britain, and Canada. At the personal level, individualism is characterized by valuing one's independence and showing less concern for other persons' needs and interests (Hui & Triandis, 1986).

In contrast, collectivistic societies, according to Hofstede, are characterized as stressing the importance of the individual's loyalty to the group, which in turn safeguards the interests and well-being of the individual. Other features include reduced personal privacy, a sense of personal identity based on one's place in one's group, a belief in the superiority of group compared to individual decisions, and emotional dependency on groups and organizations. Among the Asian countries and city states in Hofstede's sample characterized by the above features were Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Pakistan. At the personal level, collectivism is manifested by concern about interpersonal bonds, greater awareness of and responsiveness to the needs of others reflecting a sense of interconnectedness, and interdependence (Hui & Triandis, 1986).

These contrasts between individualism and collectivism are reflected in the psychological concepts underlying North American compared to Asian analyses of personal and interpersonal functioning. For example, concepts that have been salient in North American personality and social psychology, such as locus of control, self-actualization, and self-esteem, can be regarded as different manifestations of individualism (Waterman, 1984). As a result of her or his personal choices across the diverse areas of life, the individual can "realize a variety of inherent potentialities and capabilities" and organize personal identity based on these choices (Roland, 1988, p. 330). In this context, a sense of self as independent is likely, characterized by features such as valuing personal uniqueness, self-expression, and the realization of personal goals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Asian scholars have contended that psychological concepts emerging from an individualistic orientation constrain a full understanding of human functioning. (Western scholars, too, have been critical of the pervasive impact of individ-

ualism as shown by Bellah et al., 1985; Hogan, 1975; Sampson, 1977, 1985). Asian and some Western behavioral scientists have identified psychological constructs pertaining to interpersonal functioning that are derived from a collectivistic social structure. Based on these analyses, there is evidence that the social construction of self and other differs greatly in individualistic as contrasted with collectivistic societies. Specifically, many important concepts in Asian societies, such as *amae*, are inherently relational (Ho, 1982). They reflect a sense of self as interdependent, rather than independent (Hsu, 1971; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

To illustrate the emphasis on interdependence that characterizes many constructs from Asian psychology, the Japanese construct of *amae*, which has been discussed extensively by Doi (1962, 1963, 1977, 1988) provides a good example. The verb form of this noun is *amaeru*, which is defined as “to depend and presume upon another’s benevolence” (Doi, 1962). A Japanese person who wishes to *amaeru* seeks to be a passive love object and to be indulged by another. The psychological prototype of *amae* is the mother–infant relationship (Doi, 1988). According to Doi (1988) and other scholars (Morsbach & Tyler, 1986), the expression of *amae* is aimed at psychologically denying the fact of one’s separation from the mother.

Doi (1988) has used the *amae* concept as a single, sovereign principle for understanding Japanese personality as well as Japanese society. The people one can *amaeru* with impunity define insiders and include one’s parents, relatives, close friends, and others with whom one stands in an hierarchical relationship. According to Doi, among outsiders, one must exhibit restraint or *enryo* and suppress the expression of any dependency needs, which Japanese find unpleasant.

A second example of cultural contrasts can be found in Roland’s (1988) discussion of the *familial self* in India, which he compared with the North American *individualized self*. In his analysis, the Indian conception of self is basically relational rather than autonomous. Roland suggested that the familial self developed in hierarchical relationships within the extended family in which the following qualities were present: strong emotional interdependence, reciprocal demands for intimacy and support, mutual caring, and a high degree of empathy and sensitivity to another’s needs and desires within the family structure.

Individualism and Collectivism: Gender Perspectives

There are some conceptual parallels between the above discussion of cultural differences in the social construction of self–other relationships and analyses of gender differences in self–other construal within North American society. The characteristics of the relational self hypothesized to be prevalent in various Asian societies are similar to some aspects of self-construal suggested as characterizing

many North American women. Various scholars have proposed that the social construction of self for many North American women is relational, while for many men, it is autonomous. Before discussing this hypothesized contrast, it should be acknowledged that individual differences in self-construal *within* gender also seem likely. Nonetheless, hypothesized gender differences in self-construal provide a provocative analytical framework. The following two examples illustrate this viewpoint. (See also Lykes, 1985, and Markus & Kitayama, 1991, for an additional example and discussion of this issue.)

Chodorow (1978) analyzed the relation between the role of women as primary care givers in the family and the development of a sense of personal identity in their daughters and sons. She argued that primary parenting by women fostered the emergence of a “sense of self . . . continuous with others” for girls, while boys were encouraged to develop a more autonomous and distinct sense of self (Chodorow, 1978, p. 207). She suggested that this autonomous orientation ultimately made satisfying the emotional needs of others more problematic for men than for women.

Bardwick (1980) suggested that the predominant mode of self-construal for women has been either a dependent or an interdependent mode, both of which involve the self defined in the context of relationships. The former involves a sense of dependency, both psychologically and economically, as would be the case in a traditional marriage. The latter type involves both a “sense of self” but at the same time an awareness of the reciprocal aspects of an intimate relationship. With reference to Levinson’s (1978) theory of adult development in which individuation is a key developmental task, Bardwick commented that this particular view of development was “very American and very male” and contrasted markedly with a view of adulthood as a time for “meeting responsibilities within relationships” (p. 40). She suggested that an individualistic, egocentric view of self characterized only a small minority of women.

Considered together, the above conceptual analyses suggest that in some individualistic societies there are gender differences in self-construal that in turn may be related to the experience of romantic love and the capacity for intimacy in close relationships. Although the focus here is on gender differences, there are other important individual difference dimensions that also are related to the experience of love and intimacy for both women and men (see Dion & Dion, 1985; Worell, 1988).

Finally, this perspective raises some intriguing questions about the relation between gender and the experience of love and intimacy in collectivistic societies. Specifically, if the mode of self-construal is interdependent for women and for men, this social construction of self should facilitate the capacity for intimacy for both sexes. As will be evident however, in collectivistic societies both gender and cultural factors are related to the expression of intimacy in particular close relationships, such as marriage.

In the remainder of this article, we propose that individualistic societies (the United States and Canada) differ from collectivistic ones (China, India, and Japan) in the social construction of love and intimacy. Moreover, we suggest that gender and cultural differences in the reported experience of love and intimacy in heterosexual relationships are related in part to differences in self-construal.

Love and Intimacy

Proposition 1: Romantic love is more likely to be considered an important basis for marriage in societies where individualism as contrasted with collectivism is a dominant cultural value.

As noted at the start of this article, marriage based on romantic love may seem like a description of the natural progression of intimacy to many North Americans. It has been suggested, however, that romantic love is most likely to emerge in particular societal contexts. For example, Averill (1985) suggested a relation between aspects of romantic love such as idealization of the lover for his or her unique qualities and “individuation of the self” (Averill, 1985, p. 101). Both during earlier periods of Western history and in some Asian societies, Averill argued that since personal identity was not highly differentiated from the group, the social context did not provide the conditions in which romantic idealization could develop.

The conceptual link between the presence of romantic love and societal individualism has been commented on by other scholars. Bellah and his colleagues discussed the pervasive impact of individualism in both the public and the private domain of American life (Bellah et al., 1985). They used the term “expressive individualism,” referring to the need for self-expression and self-realization, to describe the role of individualism in the private domain of life, including intimate relationships. In this context, romantic love provided the chance for exploring and revealing dimensions of oneself, with each member of the couple seeking to share their “real selves” with one another (Bellah et al., 1985).

Interestingly, although undertaken from a very different theoretical perspective on love, similar themes emerged in Sternberg and Grajek’s (1984) research on the core components of love, based on adults’ completion of several psychometric measures of love across different types of relationships. Among the features of love identified as central by Sternberg and Grajek were several which pertain to intimate self-expression and personal fulfillment such as “sharing of deeply personal ideas and feelings” and “personal growth through the relationship.”

In more collectivistic societies, such as China, traditionally, love and intimacy between a woman and a man were less important than other factors as a

basis for marriage. Hsu (1981) suggested that the concept of romantic love did not fit particularly well with traditional Chinese society since the individual was expected to take into account the wishes of others, especially one's parents and other family members, when choosing a spouse. The Western ideal of romantic love characterized by intense feelings, disregard of others' views of one's lover, and complete mutual absorption would be regarded as disruptive. Indeed it can be argued that in many collectivistic societies, romantic love as a basis for marriage would be dysfunctional.

Consistent with this line of reasoning, family structure has been found to be related to the occurrence of romantic love as a basis for marriage and autonomous selection of one's marital partner (Lee & Stone, 1980). Analyzing cross-cultural data from 117 nonindustrial societies, Lee and Stone found that marriage based on love and choice of one's own spouse was *less* likely to occur in societies characterized by extended family systems compared to those with nuclear family structures. An extended family system can be viewed as one manifestation of greater societal collectivism.

Among recent cohorts of young adults in some Asian societies, there are signs of change toward greater valuing of love as a basis for marriage. For example in Japan, the number of "love marriages" has increased over the past four decades. However, traditional values in the parents' generation have persisted (Fukada, 1991). As of the early 1980s, Buruma (1984, p. 40) reported that up to 50% of all marriages in Japan were still arranged ones. Survey data for the latter part of the 1980s presented by De Mente (1989), however, seem to indicate stronger pressure for "love" or "love-based" marriages among young Japanese women today. Specifically, 70% of unmarried women in Japan were said to prefer to find their own husband, and an "overwhelming majority" (the exact percentage was not stated) of young Japanese women were described as preferring a love-based marriage. Similarly, in the 1980s (prior to 1989), there were signs of individualistic trends pertaining to choice of spouse in the People's Republic of China (Honig & Hershatter, 1988; Xiaohe & White, 1990).

It is intriguing to speculate about the factors that may contribute to the importance assigned romantic love as a basis for marriage in the People's Republic of China in the future. As a function of the "one child per family" policy, there are now large numbers of families in which there is only one child, and this child occupies a special and favored place in a household where traditionally the needs of the family unit were dominant. It would seem that a sense of personal uniqueness, a desire for personal gratification and fulfillment—in essence a highly individualized sense of self—are likely to develop in many of these children. Paradoxically, in a society where a relational sense of self traditionally has been the cultural norm, the family structure resulting from the "one-child" policy may *ultimately foster a generation of individualists who may attach greater impor-*

tance than earlier cohorts to self-discovery and personal fulfillment in their relationships with opposite-sex peers.

Proposition 2: Psychological intimacy in a marital relationship is more important for marital satisfaction and personal well-being for adults in individualistic societies than for those in collectivistic societies.

Much conceptual analysis and research on dating and marital relationships has been undertaken by researchers in the United States and in Canada. This interest in understanding what factors contribute to satisfaction and to stability in these types of relationships reflects the cultural value placed on marriage or similar types of committed relationships as an important source of personal well-being. The social support, especially the emotional support provided by one's spouse, has been suggested as one important contributor to physical and psychological health (Ross, Mirowsky, & Goldsteen, 1990).

Moreover, gender is related to societal expectations about the responsibility for fostering this desired intimacy in marriage. Based on a content analysis of articles pertaining to marriage in U.S. women's magazines from 1900 to 1979, Cancian and Gordon (1988) found that despite a shift toward emphasizing the importance of self-fulfillment in marriage, the advice given to women still conveyed the expectation that the woman was responsible for the emotional tenor of the marital relationship. It was her role to keep the relationship functioning smoothly.

This valuing of emotional intimacy with one's spouse found in some individualistic societies contrasts with expectations about emotional intimacy in marriage occurring in some traditionally collectivistic societies, such as China, Japan, and India. In the following discussion, we are *not* suggesting that in collectivistic societies couples do not develop affection and caring for each other. We are suggesting that for married couples in collectivistic societies, personal well-being is not as strongly related to psychological intimacy in marriage when compared to married couples in individualistic societies. In China, even after marriage, the primary ties of intimacy in which the individual's psychological well-being was rooted were the family relationships with parents, siblings, and other relatives (Hsu, 1985). Dependency on the family and the virtues of filial piety and devotion were emphasized across the life span (Ho, 1975).

Based on definitions of intimacy provided by North American behavioral scientists, Perlman and Fehr (1987) suggested three major components: degree of self-disclosure, interdependence, and emotional warmth. Interestingly, in Hsu's (1981) description of the traditional Chinese marriage, intimacy, as defined by reciprocal self-disclosure, sharing of activities, and revealing strong personal feelings, was not emphasized. Hence, there was little, or at least, less concern with issues such as happiness or satisfaction in the marriage since the bond

between spouses was not their most important relationship. The man's primary responsibility was to his parents; the woman's primary responsibility after her marriage was to her husband's family.

There is, however, evidence suggesting some change. In Xiaohe and Whyte's (1990) study, the predictors of marital satisfaction among Chinese women were examined. The measure of marital satisfaction mostly assessed different facets of reported psychological intimacy (such as mutual disclosure of thoughts and feelings, affection given to and received from spouse, spouse's concern for wife's problems). The findings indicated that after controlling for a number of other background and family-related variables, degree of freedom of choice was the strongest positive predictor of marital satisfaction. In addition, reflecting the continuing importance of family relationships, parental approval of respondent's marriage, and having a good current relationship with husband's family also positively predicted marital satisfaction. This pattern of findings suggested the importance of individualistic factors (choice) and collectivistic factors (relations with other members of the family system) as correlates of Chinese women's satisfaction with their marital relationship.

According to Honig and Hershatter (1988), the depiction of the Chinese wife's role has begun to change from passive compliance and obedience to her husband and in-laws to a more active role in maintaining good family relations. For example, popular articles advised women that once married, they were expected to be a "skilled emotional manager," responsible for dealing with any friction with in-laws and for the emotional aspects of the relationship with their spouse. This portrayal of the wife's role in maintaining marital and familial harmony has its parallels in Cancian and Gordon's (1988) analysis of women's responsibility for maintaining intimacy, as depicted in advice to North American women in popular magazines throughout several decades of the 20th century.

Traditional Japanese society also illustrated the lesser importance of psychological intimacy in marriage in a collectivistic society. Marriages were generally arranged based on the two families' similarity of rank, occupation, and/or status (Fukada, 1991). Upon marriage, the bride was incorporated and effectively assimilated into her husband's *ie* (i.e., extended household), where she began a lengthy and demanding apprenticeship under the tutelage of her mother-in-law and, to a lesser extent, any sisters-in-law. Given the almost completely separate social spheres of women and men in the *ie* household, the married woman's primary relationships of emotional intimacy were focused primarily upon her children and secondarily with the other married women in the hierarchically structured, extended household (Roland, 1988). Fulfillment of needs for intimacy and nurturance were realized by a feeling of belonging in the context of the family group rather than by "sharing one's intimate self in companionship and communion" with one's spouse (DeVos, 1985, p. 165).

Among contemporary middle-class Japanese couples, it has been suggested that there continues to be relatively little psychological intimacy in the marital relationship for many couples (Roland, 1988). Although the influence of the *ie* extended household weakened in the post-World War II period, for many middle-class men, emotional and psychological needs are grounded in the intricate social relationships of their occupational context. The desire for a more intimate marital relationship on the part of some more educated Japanese women is difficult to realize given their spouse's long hours at work combined with the men's extensive postwork socializing. Thus for many middle-class Japanese women, the relationship with their children and to a lesser extent, long-standing friendships with women who were former classmates, are the principal sources of intimacy (Roland, 1988).

When considering the importance of psychological intimacy with one's spouse in Indian cultural contexts, the existence of religious and regional diversity in India must be kept in mind. In much of India, though there are some exceptions, the family structure is patriarchal, with age and gender defining one's position in the social hierarchy (Desai & Krishnaraj, 1990). A relational sense of self, although applicable to both sexes, has been suggested as more strongly descriptive of Indian women's self-construal (Kumar, 1991). For Hindu women, the complex family system structured women's relationships first in their family of origin, where they were prepared for their eventual roles as wife and mother. After an arranged marriage, they entered their husband's family where their relationships with the husband's mother and other female relatives became important. These relationships with the female relatives were traditionally a major source of concern and attention for married women, rather than the relationship with the spouse. Another source of emotional intimacy was the mother-child, especially the mother-son, relationship (Kumar, 1991).

Derlega (1984) suggested that to develop intimacy, it was important for individuals to accept each other's "true self," which involved in part a willingness to reveal negative as well as positive information about oneself. From this perspective, the findings of a study comparing marital satisfaction and communication in three types of marriages, Indian arranged marriage, Indian "love marriage," and American "companionate" marriage, are of interest (Yelsma & Athappilly, 1988). The data for the American couples were from a previous study and were used for comparison purposes with the Indian sample. For the Indian couples, most marriages were arranged by parents, but in urban areas, there were some "love matches," in which the individuals chose their own partners, sometimes from different religious, caste, or socioeconomic backgrounds. In the case of arranged marriages, both members of the proposed match could decline the choice made by the parents.

Individuals completed a measure of marital satisfaction (the Dyadic Adjustment Scale developed by Spanier, 1976) and a measure of reported interaction

with their spouse in three domains (verbal, nonverbal, and sexual). In the North American sample, many aspects of reported marital communication were related to marital satisfaction, while among the Indian couples in arranged marriages, very few reported behaviors were correlated with marital satisfaction. Yelsma and Athappilly (1988) interpreted their findings as suggesting that while “a desire for emotional excitement” contributed to satisfaction in companionate marriages, other variables such as “a sense of life-long commitment and cultural tradition” were more likely to be related to satisfaction in arranged marriages. Their observation raises an important issue—namely, the criteria for defining a “successful marriage” may well differ for persons from individualistic and collectivistic societies.

Examination of the specific reported behaviors that were correlated with marital satisfaction among the American respondents reveals that many items pertained to psychological intimacy, such as sharing feelings and personal concerns, including discussing personal problems as well as positive topics. Among Indian respondents, some aspects of psychological intimacy, such as “talk about intimate matters” and “can tell what kind of day spouse has had,” were related to marital satisfaction for those in love-based marriages but not for those in arranged marriages. However, compared to the American companionate marriages, the pattern of findings suggested that the type of intimacy reported by Indian respondents in the love-based marriages involved less extensive self-disclosure.

This pattern of findings raises an intriguing question about the nature of intimacy in close relationships. What is the role of verbal self-disclosure in the development of a sense of intimacy? Perhaps verbal disclosure is especially important in societal contexts where close relationships must be constantly negotiated, and a sense of mutual dependence and positive regard cannot be assumed, even after the initial formative phases of the relationship. This suggestion leads to our final proposition.

Proposition 3: Although individualism fosters the valuing of romantic love as a basis for marriage, certain aspects (or types of) individualism at the psychological level make developing intimacy problematic.

Problems with developing intimacy in a relationship should be most likely to occur among those persons characterized by “self-contained individualism” described by Sampson (1977), in which the emphasis is on valuing autonomy, personal control over one’s life outcomes, and disliking any form of dependency. Attempting to reconcile the needs of two people in a relationship, each of whom is striving for intimacy, yet at the same time trying not to sacrifice personal control, is difficult (see also Bellah et al., 1985).

In our own research, we recently examined the relation between psychological individualism—valuing individualism at the personal level—and romantic love among Canadian respondents (Dion & Dion, 1991). This study illustrates a point made earlier: namely, that within an individualistic society, there are differences in the degree to which people endorse the prevailing value orientation. We reasoned that one component of psychological individualism was a desire to maintain one's personal autonomy, as illustrated by endorsing the following types of items: "My freedom and autonomy mean more to me than almost anything else" or "The best way to avoid trouble is to be as completely self-sufficient as possible." If psychological individualism partly reflects the valuing of personal autonomy, there might be ambivalence about emotional dependence in an intimate relationship. This ambivalence was hypothesized to manifest itself in less reported affective involvement with one's partner and in a less satisfying experience of romantic love.

We found, as predicted, that "self-contained individualism" was negatively related to reported caring, need, and trust of one's partner. "Self-contained" individualists were also less prone to describe their experience of romantic love as rewarding, deep, and tender. They were more likely to view "love as a game," as a test of their skills and power in a love relationship. In essence, our study suggested that psychological individualism, at least the "self-contained" type, was related to emotional detachment in romantic relationships.

Given the above pattern of findings, it is plausible that psychological individualism may be one factor contributing to a high rate of divorce in the United States and in Canada. Cherlin (1981) speculated that an individualistic view of relationships that specifies that a relationship end when either party is dissatisfied, might well contribute to a greater likelihood of divorce. Consistent with this speculation, we found that university students scoring high on psychological individualism indicated a less positive attitude toward marriage and were less opposed to divorce (Dion & Dion, 1993).

There is a marked difference in the evaluation of interpersonal dependency in individualistic vs. collectivistic societies. For example, *amae* psychology in Japan affirms an essentially positive and constructive attitude toward dependency upon others, especially in familial and pseudofamilial social arrangements. *Amae* has generally positive connotations to the Japanese, who use it to describe a variety of positively toned and sentimentalized relationships between parent and child, wife and husband, where one partner depends upon the other to provide indulgent gratification and considerate affection. In contrast, the term "dependency" has primarily negative or ambivalent connotations in Western cultures, such as the United States, which value autonomy and individuality. There is no equivalent word to *amae* or *amaeru* in Western languages, a fact that apparently astonishes Japanese (Doi, 1988).

Research on gender and relationships is also consistent with the proposition

that some aspects of individualism may create problems for intimacy in relationships. As noted earlier, it has been suggested that women's construal of self is more relational (that is, more collectivistic) than men's views of self. Hui (1988) found some support for gender differences on his measure of individualism–collectivism in a cross-cultural study comparing university students from the United States and from Hong Kong. Women from both cultural groups scored higher on collectivism with regard to parents and friends than did their male peers.

Gender differences in reported social skills are also consistent with hypothesized gender differences in self-construal. Riggio (1986) found that women reported greater emotional expressivity and sensitivity as well as greater social expressivity and social sensitivity than men, qualities consistent with a relational view of self. Men in contrast reported greater emotional control and social manipulation than did women, qualities consistent with a view of self as autonomous. On another type of social skill that is consistent with a relational view of self, namely, the capacity to take one's partner's perspective, women were perceived both by themselves and by their spouse as more capable on this dimension (Long & Andrews, 1990).

In our research on the relation between gender and the reported experience of romantic love, the pattern of findings indicated that college-age women from the United States and from Canada expressed greater pragmatism than their male peers in their beliefs about love and more caution in their readiness to “fall in love.” Once involved in a romantic relationship, however, women reported more intense positive emotions and described their experience as more emotionally involving and rewarding than did men (Dion & Dion, 1985, 1991). We have suggested that these gender differences might reflect greater responsiveness and adeptness on the part of the women in relationships involving psychological intimacy, described by Shaver and Buhrmester (1983) as involving reciprocal self-disclosure, emotional supportiveness, and a low level of defensiveness. All of these qualities are those that one would expect to be associated with a relational sense of self.

After marriage, however, some North American studies on the correlates of marital satisfaction have found greater dissatisfaction reported by wives compared to husbands (see Dion, 1985; Worell, 1988). Of interest here, much of the greater reported dissatisfaction appears to center around the issue of psychological intimacy (e.g., Locksley, 1980; Thurnher, 1976). In an individualistic society, both women and men may expect psychological intimacy in marriage. However, gender-related differences in how self is viewed in relation to others may in turn be related to the capacity for providing psychological intimacy to one's spouse. In a recent review of North American research, Ross et al. (1990) suggested that marriage was related to greater physical and psychological health benefits for men than for women. One of the key factors they proposed as

underlying the relation between marriage and personal well-being was providing emotional intimacy and support to one's partner.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the need to take into account the cultural context in which women's and men's experience of love and intimacy is based. Most theoretical accounts of close relationships in the social psychological literature have not explicitly considered this issue. As we can attest from writing this article, there is relatively little empirical research on close relationships in other cultural contexts, especially non-Western societies. Much of the research that does exist is in other disciplines such as psychological anthropology, family sociology, or comparative family studies.

We have presented three propositions suggesting a relation between individualism and collectivism, on the one hand, and romantic love and emotional intimacy in marriage, on the other. Considered together, these propositions lead to the following paradox: In societies where individualism is prevalent, greater emphasis is placed on romantic love and on personal fulfillment in marriage. However, some features of individualism at the psychological level make the likelihood of realizing these outcomes more difficult. In contrast, collectivism (as illustrated by the examples from three Asian societies) fosters a receptiveness to intimacy, but at the psychological level, this intimacy is likely to be diffused across a network of family relationships.

What are the implications of this conceptual analysis? It can be argued that in some respects, the marital relationship in individualistic societies is under greater pressure than in collectivistic societies because marriage is expected to fulfill a diverse array of psychological needs. It is not coincidental that at both the level of professional services and popular advice, there are numerous individuals and groups proffering advice on how to maintain and improve marriage. Given the high expectations for personal fulfillment in marriage, the rate of divorce is likely to increase as individualism, especially the self-contained type of individualism, increases. It may be that other types of individualism are not as problematic, but this possibility remains to be empirically documented.

We have suggested that some of the gender differences in the reported experience of romantic love and satisfaction with emotional intimacy in marriage within North American society may reflect gender differences in self-construal. It should not, however, be assumed that differences in self-construal are inherent in gender per se. Instead, it seems more plausible that a sense of self as relational or autonomous develops within a particular context of social relationships. Accordingly, cohort differences in self-construal for women and for men, respectively, might well be expected if there were changes in the structure of social relationships at both the personal and the societal levels. One can speculate, for

example, that within North American society, there has been a trend for cohorts maturing in the 1970s and 1980s toward more individualistic self-construal. If so, we would expect that this trend might ultimately be related to greater reported dissatisfaction with emotional intimacy in marriage and similar relationships for both sexes compared to earlier cohorts.

Finally, although in recent years individualistic features (most notably, greater freedom of choice of one's spouse) have been present in some collectivistic societies, this particular trend should not necessarily be assumed to be a harbinger of the self-contained type of individualism. More collectivistic factors (such as parental approval of one's choice and maintaining a network of family and kin relationships after one's marriage) continue to be important. However, the analysis in this paper suggests that if some aspects of traditionally collectivistic societies change in the direction of greater individualism, the importance of psychological intimacy in marriage for marital satisfaction and personal well-being will increase.

References

- Averill, J. R. (1985). The social construction of emotion: With special reference to love. In K. J. Gergen & K. E. Davis (Eds.), *The social construction of the person* (pp. 89–109). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Bardwick, J. (1980). The seasons of a woman's life. In D. McGuigan (Ed.), *Women's lives: New theory, research and policy* (pp. 35–55). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1985). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Buruma, I. (1984). *A Japanese mirror: Heroes and villains of Japanese culture*. New York: Viking Penguin.
- Cancian, F., & Gordon, S. L. (1988). Changing emotion norms in marriage: Love and anger in U.S. women's magazines since 1900. *Gender and Society*, 2, 308–342.
- Cherlin, A. J. (1981). *Marriage, divorce and remarriage*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chodorow, N. (1978). *The reproduction of mothering: Psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- De Mente, B. (1989). *Everything Japanese*. Lincolnwood, IL: Passport Books.
- Derlega, V. J. (1984). Self-disclosure and intimate relationships. In V. J. Derlega (Ed.), *Communication, intimacy, and close relationships* (pp. 1–9). Orlando, FL: Academic.
- Desai, N., & Krishnaraj, M. (1990). *Women and society in India*. Delhi, India: Ajanta Publications.
- DeVos, G. (1985). Dimensions of the self in Japanese culture. In A. J. Marsella, G. DeVos, & F. L. K. Hsu (Eds.), *Culture and self: Asian and Western perspectives* (pp. 141–184). London, England: Tavistock.
- Dion, K. K. (1985). Socialization in adulthood. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (Vol. II, pp. 123–148). New York: Random House.
- Dion, K. K., & Dion, K. L. (1985). Personality, gender, and the phenomenology of romantic love. In P. R. Shaver (Ed.), *Self, situations and behavior: Review of Personality and Social Psychology* (Vol. 6, pp. 209–239). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Dion, K. K., & Dion, K. L. (1991). Psychological individualism and romantic love. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 6, 17–33.
- Dion, K. L., & Dion, K. K. (1979). Personality and behavioural correlates of romantic love. In M. Cook & G. Wilson (Eds.), *Love and attraction* (pp. 213–220). Oxford, England and New York: Pergamon.

- Dion, K. L., & Dion, K. K. (1988). Romantic love: Individual and cultural perspectives. In R. J. Sternberg & M. L. Barnes (Eds.), *The psychology of love* (pp. 264–289). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Dion, K. L., & Dion, K. K. (1993). *Correlates of psychological individualism and collectivism*. Manuscript in preparation.
- Doi, T. (1962). AMAE: A key concept for understanding Japanese personality structure. In R. J. Smith & R. K. Beardsley (Eds.), *Japanese culture: Its development and characteristics* (pp. 132–139). Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Doi, T. (1963). Some thoughts on helplessness and the desire to be loved. *Psychiatry*, 26, 266–272.
- Doi, T. (1977). The structure of amae. In M. Hyoe & E. G. Seidensticker (Eds.), *Guides to Japanese culture* (pp. 84–88). Tokyo: Japan Cultural Institute.
- Doi, T. (1988). *The anatomy of dependence*. Tokyo and New York: Kodansha International.
- Fukada, N. (1991). Women in Japan. In L. L. Adler (Ed.), *Women in cross-cultural perspective* (pp. 205–219). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Ho, D. Y. F. (1975). Traditional approaches to socialization. In J. W. Berry & W. J. Lonner (Eds.), *Applied cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 309–314). Amsterdam, Holland: Swets und Zeitlinger.
- Ho, D. Y. F. (1982). Asian concepts in behavioral science. *Psychologia*, 25, 228–235.
- Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hogan, R. (1975). Theoretical egocentrism and the problem of compliance. *American Psychologist*, 30, 533–540.
- Honig, E., & Hershat, G. (1988). *Personal voices: Chinese women in the 1980's*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hsu, F. L. K. (1971). Psychosocial homeostatis and Jen: Conceptual tools for advancing psychological anthropology. *American Anthropologist*, 73, 23–44.
- Hsu, F. L. K. (1981). *Americans and Chinese: Passage to differences* (3rd ed.). Honolulu, HI: The University Press of Hawaii.
- Hsu, F. L. K. (1985). The self in cross-cultural perspective. In A. J. Marsella, G. DeVos, & F. L. K. Hsu (Eds.), *Culture and self: Asian and Western perspectives* (pp. 24–55). London, England: Tavistock.
- Hui, C. H., & Triandis, H. C. (1986). Individualism-collectivism: A study of cross-cultural researchers. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 17, 225–248.
- Hui, C. H. (1988). Measurement of individualism-collectivism. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 22, 17–36.
- Kim, U. (1993). *Introduction to individualism and collectivism: Conceptual clarification and elaboration*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Kumar, U. (1991). Life stages in the development of the Hindu woman in India. In L. L. Adler (Ed.), *Women in cross-cultural perspective* (pp. 142–158). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Lee, G. R., & Stone, L. H. (1980). Mate-selection systems and criteria: Variation according to family structure. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 42, 319–326.
- Levinson, D. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York: Knopf.
- Locksley, A. (1980). On the effects of wives' employment on marital adjustment and companionship. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 42, 337–346.
- Long, E. C. J., & Andrews, D. W. (1990). Perspective taking as a predictor of marital adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 126–131.
- Lykes, M. B. (1985). Gender and individualistic vs. collectivist bases for notions about the self. *Journal of Personality*, 53, 356–383.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224–253.
- Morsbach, H., & Tyler, W. J. (1986). A Japanese emotion. In R. Harré (Ed.), *The social construction of emotions* (pp. 289–307). New York: Blackwell.
- Perlman, D., & Fehr, B. (1987). The development of intimate relationships. In D. Perlman & S. Duck (Eds.), *Intimate relationships: Development, dynamics, and deterioration* (pp. 13–42). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Riggio, R. E. (1986). Assessment of basic social skills. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 649–660.
- Roland, A. (1988). *In search of self in India and Japan*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Ross, C. E., Mirowsky, J., & Goldsteen, K. (1990). The impact of the family on health: The decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, 1059–1078.
- Sampson, E. E. (1977). Psychology and the American ideal. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35, 767–782.
- Sampson, E. E. (1985). The decentralization of identity: Toward a revised concept of personal and social order. *American Psychologist*, 40, 1203–1211.
- Shaver, P., & Buhrmester, D. (1983). Loneliness, sex-role orientation and group life: A social needs perspective. In P. B. Paulhus (Ed.), *Basic group processes* (pp. 259–288). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Spanier, G. B. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 38, 15–25.
- Sternberg, R. J., & Grajek, S. (1984). The nature of love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, 312–329.
- Thurnher, M. (1976). Midlife marriage: Sex differences in evaluation and perspectives. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 7, 129–135.
- Waterman, A. S. (1984). *The psychology of individualism*. New York: Praeger.
- Worell, J. (1988). Women's satisfaction in close relationships. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 8, 477–498.
- Xiaohe, X., & Whyte, M. K. (1990). Love matches and arranged marriages: A Chinese replication. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, 709–722.
- Yelsma, P., & Athappilly, K. (1988). Marital satisfaction and communication practices: Comparisons among Indian and American couples. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 19, 37–54.

KAREN K. DION is Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto. Her research interests include close relationships, particularly individual difference and sociocultural perspectives, and also adult development and socialization. Stemming from that latter interest, she wrote the chapter on socialization in adulthood for the most recent (third) edition of the *Handbook of Social Psychology*.

KENNETH L. DION is Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto as well as Consulting Editor to the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes Section) and the *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. He has authored numerous articles on gender, close relationships, and ethnocultural as well as cross-cultural aspects of social psychology. His paper, "Responses to Perceived Discrimination and Relative Deprivation," was commended by SPSSI's Gordon Allport Committee in 1984.