

Grad student explores psychology of love

By Daniella De Luca

For the Sun-News

LAS CRUCES — Whether for a summer fling or a longterm relationship, people fall in love the same way now as they did when they were teenagers.

As he speaks candidly in the semi-crowded university cafeteria about the things we all think about but do not discuss, he appears unshaken by the perplexed looks he receives from passersby within earshot.

Peter Jonason, 31, likes to talk openly about all aspects of dating and doesn't mind who overhears. To him, these are important topics both academically and as a part of our lives.

"The main preoccupations of our lives revolve around matters of the heart," he said.

Poets and playwrights have spent considerable effort trying to understand matters of love, and in today's age, a scientific view of these topics is likely to be more useful. The study of dating is the main focus on the work that Jonason has conducted as he pursues his Ph.D. in psychology at New Mexico State University's College of Arts and Sciences.

"I lean toward the 'sexy' titles and topics because it gets the average reader's attention, but more importantly, because these topics are just so much more sophisticated than most think," said Jonason, whose work has been recognized in the past

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Graduate psychology students at New Mexico State University's College of Arts and Sciences

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► For more information on Peter Jonason's research, visit his Web site at <http://web.nmsu.edu/~pjonason>.

year by ABC News, Psychology Today, In Shape Magazine and Cosmopolitan. He will also be featured in a sexuality research piece for the September issue of Men's Health Magazine.

Jonason's view is that dating is one of the most important, though overlooked, ways to account for things like why women dye their hair blonde and why men pump iron at the gym.

During his time at NMSU, he has focused on three main topics of research: investigation of short-term mating like "booty calls," anti-social personality traits and mating strategies. He confesses that many of his ideas come from passive observations at bars in El Paso like Shadow Lounge and Vanilla.

"Women are naturally attracted to the bad guys, the ones who ignore them. They want a persuasive 'James Bond' or a troubled hero like Johnny Depp," he said. The guy who ignores her presents her with a challenge. He adds, "Getting what you want, when you want it, often makes you lose interest in having it. That which you have to earn is that much more appealing."

Jonason and his international and national collaborators have extensively studied the "bad boys" like Bond. Men or women with this type of personality rank high on traits like narcissism. If given the choice, to take \$100 now or \$1,000 later, they would take the \$100, Jonason explained, as they are seeking instant gratification and tend to think more of themselves than others. Jonason says the next direction of his research will examine the "bad boy" love styles. Jonason has delved into other aspects of the psychology of dating. More on his research can be found on his Web site at

<http://web.nmsu.edu/~pjonason>.

Jonason has a master's in communication sciences from the University of Connecticut. He is the chief instructor of the NMSU Aikido club and said he enjoys martial arts because, as a series of actions, it allows for evaluation and interpretation much like psychology does.

"It's another way to understand how to deal with people," he said.

"I think he's headed for a positive and productive career in psychology. Although with the way the job market is due to the generally poor state of the economy, I fully expect PK will hit the ground running wherever he lands," said Laura Madison, his adviser and NMSU associate professor of psychology.

So, what about a steady girlfriend? Jonason doesn't have one at the moment but continues to apply these principles to his own life and even offers dating advice to his friends and others who are single or unhappy in their relationships.

"You can either change yourself or change your pool of candidates. By that I mean, you can either make yourself more appealing to others or you can find a way to expand the number of people you consider as candidate-mates," Jonason said.

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DATING 101

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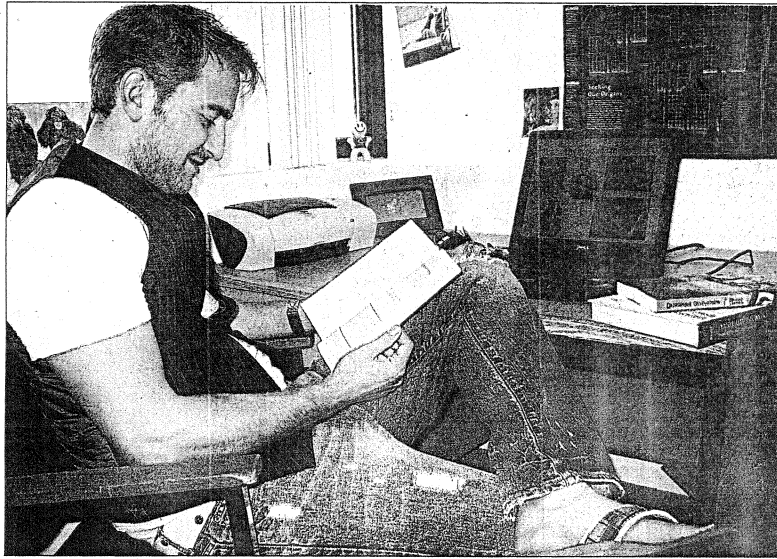


Photo for the Sun-News by Daniela De Luca

New Mexico State University graduate student Peter Jonason, 31, spends his time researching topics in dating and investigating matters of the heart. He has been recognized as a featured researcher and expert by national publications and media outlets.