

WHAT WOMEN WANT--WHAT MEN WANT: WHY THE SEXES STILL SEE LOVE AND COMMITMENT SO DIFFERENTLY BY JOHN MARSHALL TOWNSEND



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From Library Journal

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Review

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Following the work of E. O. Wilson, Desmond Morris, and David Buss, *What Women Want--What Men Want* offers compelling new evidence about the real reasons behind men's and women's differing sexual psychologies and sheds new light on what men and women look for in a mate, the predicament of marriage in the modern world, the relation between sex and emotion, and many other hotly debated questions.

Drawing upon 2000 questionnaires and 200 intimate interviews that show how our sexual psychologies affect everyday decisions, John Townsend argues against the prevailing ideologically correct belief that differences in sexual behavior are "culturally constructed." Townsend shows there are deep-seated desires inherited from our evolutionary past that guide our actions. In a fascinating series of experiments, men and women were asked to indicate preferences for potential mates based on their attractiveness and apparent economic status. Women overwhelmingly preferred expensively dressed men to more attractive but apparently less successful men, and men were clearly inclined to choose more attractive women regardless of their professional status. Townsend's studies also indicate that men are predisposed to value casual sex, whereas women cannot easily separate sexual relations from the need for emotional attachment and economic security. Indeed, wherever men possess sexual alternatives to marriage, and women possess economic alternatives, divorce rates will be high. In the concluding chapter, Townsend draws upon the advice of couples who have maintained their marriages over the years to suggest ways to survive our evolutionary predicament.

Lucidly and accessibly written, *What Women Want--What Men Want* shows us why we are the way we are and brings new clarity to one of the most intractable debates of our time.

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women want status; men want beauty --

By Carol C.

If you're a woman over 30, less than a perfect ten, and wondering whether you'll ever find a good man, look no further. This book will confirm that you're doomed to spinsterhood. All men are looking for that beautiful

twenty-year old blonde with the perfect body. Seriously, the basic premise of the book is that men prize a woman's youth & physical attractiveness first and foremost (and almost to the exclusion of any other traits -- a woman's economic status, occupation, and to some extent, personality, are largely irrelevant to men). In choosing sexual partners and mates, men focus on physical attractiveness. Period. Women, on the other hand, look for economic and professional status and investment. A woman of any socioeconomic level wants to "marry up" and will often prefer to have a primary relationship with a higher status man who is married or involved with multiple women than to have a primary monogamous relationship with a lower status man. Men want to minimize their investment; women want to maximize a man's investment. Townsend explains why musicians and athletes have often had hundreds of sex partners, and typically have ten to twenty women whom they can call at any given time for commitment free, investment-free sex. Townsend creates serious doubt that men in high status positions will be faithful in relationships.

It seems that the vast majority of the individuals interviewed & quoted are twenty-something medical students, becoming aware of their status for the first time. They will have nothing to do with the "unattractive, overweight" women in their med school class, particularly when the universe of "chirpies" (nurses, therapists, etc.) are available & interested. The other group of men interviewed are, on the whole, high status men, many of whom engage in polygyny (multiple relationships during the same time frame with a variety of women).

This book was interesting, and filled with quotations from the interviewees, although it went on & on & on - reinforcing the conclusion that draws in the first few chapters, quoting one med student who sounds very similar to the next med student. Men want youth & beauty. Women want investment & status.

My guess is that some readers would bristle at the generalizations in this book -- though they undoubtedly ring true. The text doesn't contain a significant amount of commentary & editorialization; it just presents the interview results in a readable fashion.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Great Evolutionary Psychology Primer

By T.

When I started this book, I struggled to push through it. The prose is very, very dry. I don't mean that the book was overly technical or scientific, because I read many books that are technical and scientific, yet the prose is not so dry. What made the prose dry is that it was just a simple recitation of facts, especially in the beginning. The flat, recitation of facts was broken up by anecdotal case studies that illustrated the concepts just described.

What made the beginning of the book extra tortuous for me was also that I read a lot of evolutionary psychology books, so the information I was finding was all stuff I already knew. After reading the first quarter of the book, I was ready to just throw in the towel on the book but I persevered.

Lo and behold, after getting through the first quarter of the book, it got much better. The anecdotal case studies appeared more frequently, which made the prose seem less dry, and the scientific findings started going beyond the realm of very basic evolutionary psychology, and actually taught me a lot of things I didn't know already and provided new ways of interpreting the things I did know.

By the end of the book I was enjoying the reading experience very much and it ended on a very strong note, even providing relationship advice and ways of applying everything that had been discussed so far.

I highly recommend, and I would suggest making it a third of the way through the book before deciding whether or not it's for you.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Love is the result, not the cause

By Saad Butt

John Marshall Townsend's seminal book answers Freud's famous question "What do women want?" In ten chapters Mr. Townsend addresses various topics pertaining to male-female relationships: sexual differences between the two genders; what is sex what is love; what is sexually attractive to women in men; when choosing partners for marriage what men and women look for; men's criteria for choosing partners; whether there is a shortage of available men for dating; as women age and achieve professional success why their chances of dating decline; what both genders seek in marriage; whether women can have sex like men without emotional commitment; who does majority of household chores; whether women like dominant men; why male medical students don't date female medical students; whether men and women are alike in other parts of the world and, lastly, how to cope with evolutionary differences between the two genders. While responding to the above questions, Mr. Townsend convincingly debunks the notion that men and women contribute equally to the relationship and demonstrates there is always an overlap in terms of contribution and how it benefits the relationship. His analysis underscores the difficulty with egalitarianism and how fanciful expectations often undermine relationships. To wit, if something is rational doesn't mean it's preferable. The book counsels the readers to be committed to their relationship; to do things together; accept gender differences in task preferences; ignore the idea grass is greener on the other side; have lower expectations; know each partner must sacrifice some aspects of their personality for the success of relationship; remember in marriage some conflict and disappointment is inevitable and to restrict the desires to stray by avoiding to vent them. An engrossing book with potential to help a lot of people!

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