
BOOK REVIEW

Hamon, R. R. & Ingoldsby, B. B. (Eds.). (2003). *Mate selection across cultures*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 268 pages. ISBN 0-7619-2592-9.

Sage Publications, one of the most important publishers of family sciences monographs has recently released, *Mate Selection Across Cultures*. The editors, Hamon and Ingoldsby, describe their book in its introduction with the quote, "... we attempt to increase global awareness by describing the meaningful processes, traditions, and practices associated with couple formation around the world" (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003, p. vii). This important work comes to family sciences on the doorstep of 2004, the International of the Family. This anthology of articles on the comparative study of mate selection is timely also because it fills a serious gap in the current literature. Although there are a number of excellent narrative textbooks on ethnicity, multiculturalism and family, no book (in many years) has been released on this topic.

The first chapter of the book focuses on mate selection practices and customs in North America. This chapter alone makes the book worth adopting for the classroom. The chapter "provides a framework for comparison with the lesser studied groups" (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003, p. viii). Each chapter that follows discusses a different ethnic group from a variety of cultural settings throughout the world. Each chapter includes the basic format of: (1) case study, (2) conceptual and/or historical background information on society and culture, (3) customs and practices on dating and mate selection, and (4) customs and practices on courtship and betrothal, (5) wedding and honeymoon as well as the prescriptive and proscriptive expectations of marriage.

The readings are written in a logical, easy-to-read manner with a hint of developmental perspective. Students will appreciate the many anecdotal inserts (like case studies, examples, and poll data). The readings go on to selectively discuss mate selection in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia.

Mate Selection Across Cultures also touches on a number of important issues both historic and contemporary. The book provides superb examples of traditional practices including arranged marriage, dowry and bride-wealth, endo- and exogenous as well as homo- and heterogamous customs. Often these descriptions are accompanied by historical and contemporary contexts. Current global issues like HIV-AIDS, homosexuality, cohabitation, and singlehood are given interesting coverage and discussion. This book provides wonderful and fascinating glimpses into the intimate lives of peoples around the world today. This book affords a springboard for a number of classroom techniques to be utilized including reading and writing, class and small-group discussions on practices as well as issues, and can be easily adapted for a variety of outcome assessments. Numerous photographs of brides, grooms, couples, and families are provided, in addition to useful maps.

According to the publisher, the book is intended for both undergraduate and graduate students from family sciences, psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Due to the level of difficulty and writing style, it might be recommended to primarily utilize the book for use with advanced undergraduate classes or graduate classes specializing in relationship development issues. Likewise, some undergraduates may have some trouble managing the differences in writing style from one author to another. Both of these issues can be judiciously handled as learning opportunities, given proper management. Conversely, doctoral level students may wish to delve more deeply into the ethnic groups discussed and their mate selection practices.

In terms of discipline, the book seems to be ideally suited for the fields of family science and sociology. The contributors provide a fine balance between macro- and micro-social considerations. Some instructors in psychology and anthropology, however, might feel that the book does not analyze the relationship processes in enough depth to adopt the book for their courses. In such cases, the instructor may simply use the readings as a starting point and provide the added detailed analysis as needed. Another notable “limitation” of the book is its selective nature. The book was not designed to be a comprehensive or even necessarily representative depiction of the breadth of customs and practices of mate selection worldwide. For those instructors seeking a more systematic coverage of the topic, supplemental readings in ethnology and ethnography of kinship will be needed. Also note that this book, given a proper context, might also be an interesting addition to a Women’s Studies course on marriage and family life.

In conclusion, *Mate Selection Across Cultures* is an excellent tool for advanced use in the classroom for the family sciences and related fields. The book affords excellent opportunities for discussion and analysis of family life in other cultures and for comparison with practices in the United States. Hopefully, other publishers will follow the lead of Sage Publications and offer more useful and interesting monographs on marriage and family life around the globe, especially today in the International Year of the Family. Thank you and congratulations to Drs. Hamon and Ingoldsby on an excellent work of editorship.

About the Editors and Contributors: Raeann R. Hamon, Ph.D., is a Professor of Family Science and Gerontology in the Department of Human Development and Family Science at Messiah College. Bron B. Ingoldsby, Ph.D., was an Associate Professor in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University. The editors are/were also important contributors to the field of family science through their professional work with both the National Council on Family

Relations and the Family Science Association, the latter of which publishes this journal. The contributors also have/had strong backgrounds and experiences in the scholarship and teaching of a wide variety of themes related to marriage and family life. They come/came well-credentialed from the fields of human development, family sciences, psychology, and sociology as teachers, researchers, and service-providers to families.

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