

Love helps solve the puzzle of human evolution

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Humans have long been a puzzle to explain in evolutionary terms, but a Victoria University of Wellington researcher says part of the answer is romantic love and the pair-bonding it motivates.

A recently published article by Professor Garth Fletcher from Victoria's School of Psychology, in collaboration with researchers from universities in New Zealand, London and the United States, argues that [romantic love](#) is a commitment device for motivating pair-bonding in

humans.

He says pair-bonding, in turn, facilitated the involvement of both parents and the wider family in providing the massive investment required to rear children.

"Managing the complexities of family life, along the way, facilitated the evolution of large brains and the extraordinary levels of social intelligence and cooperative skills found in [modern humans](#)."

The article, titled Pair-Bonding, Romantic Love, and Evolution: The Curious Case of Homo sapiens, provides the most integrative and extensive summary of evidence to date, across many scientific disciplines, supporting such claims.

In our closest relatives—the great apes—pair-bonding does not occur and the female raises offspring more or less on her own. "The likely existence of monogamy and [family](#) assistance for child-rearing in our distant ancestors, promoted the final steps in the evolutionary transformation from an ape brain to a modern human brain," says Professor Fletcher.

More information: "Pair-Bonding, Romantic Love, and Evolution: The Curious Case of Homo sapiens." *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. January 2015 vol. 10 no. 1 20-36 [DOI: 10.1177/1745691614561683](#)

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