

What is Love? An Analysis of Established Frameworks and Individual Western Beliefs

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Abstract

The desire to measure love has a history that spans everything from magazine quizzes to machinery purporting to quantify the amorous nature of the individual. The construct of love as the focus of assessment has been attempted with various self-reporting questionnaires. Despite using different terminology like romantic, passionate, and intimacy, are they measuring the same construct? Is the construct of love purely a cultural phenomenon? Has the construct of love gotten lost between the feeling and the application in real life? This research is attempting to answer some of these questions and to begin to develop a definition for the construct of love. The first part of the research set out to validate several of the widely used love (or related area) self-reporting measures (Steinberg's Triangular Theory of Love (1986), Zick Rubin's Love Scale (1970), Romantic Belief Scale (Sprecher & Metts, 1989), Love Attitude Scale (Hendricks et al., 1998), Passionate Love Scale (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986), Dispositional Positive Emotions Scale (DPES) –Compassion Sub scale and Love sub scale (Shiota et al., 2006), Love Attitude Inventory (Knox & Sporkowski, 1968), Functional Analytic Psychotherapy Intimacy Scale- FAP Intimacy Scale (Leonard et al., 2014)) and conduct a factor analysis to determine the main factors (e.g. validate and expand the work of Hendricks & Hendricks, 1989). 565 adults were surveyed and were given each of the above-mentioned measures as well as demographic questions, their overall rating of love (0-100), as well as an open-ended question for them to explain their definition of love. The factor analysis revealed that several of the measures had more factors than they reported to measure, the items were plagued with high collinearity, or they had items that did not meet the minimum threshold for model inclusion. The second part of the research will address the attitudes toward love in Western society using an Implicit Association Test (IAT) and love words which were taken from the measures and the self-reported terms in the first part of the survey. 1300 individuals in the United States and Europe have been surveyed regarding their attitudes towards love and specifically looking at the valences of "love" words. The IAT framework allows the respondents to identify whether they believe that a word is associated with love, its valence as positive or negative, and the cognitive load to make these assessments. The latter is measured by the time it takes to make the decision. This framework gives a correlation between the implicit and explicit beliefs of the respondents (Greenwald et al., 2016). The presentation

will give the results of this research as well as the implications of implicit beliefs about love to the overall construct of love as measured by the assessments and as presented in literature and media.

Keywords: love, implicit association test, emotion, feelings, romantic, intimacy, passion, commitment