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LOVE IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Love in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Mozambique-France Comparison

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Abstract

The study aimed to characterize the conceptualization of love in Mozambique (a collectivist society) and France (an individualistic society) on three attributes: passion, intimacy, and commitment. The study sample comprised 310 Mozambican adults (females =57%; age range = 18-64) and 220 French adults (females = 54%; age range = 18-64). They completed 27 information scenarios on passion, intimacy, and commitment. The data were analyzed utilizing mixed-method estimation of the variance accounted for by the three components of love. Results indicated that for the Mozambican participants passion was the most important factor (46%) in love expression, followed by commitment (37%) and intimacy (17%). For the French participants, passion was the most important factor (50%), followed by intimacy (28%) and commitment (22%). Across countries, the weight given to passion was reported to decline over age while the weight assigned to commitment was reported to increase with age.

Keywords: conceptualization of love, cultural differences, Mozambique, France

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As a general concept, love refers mostly to a deep sense of affection towards someone. However, even this specific conception of love includes a wide range of different feelings, from passionate desire and romantic love to tenderness without sexual desire for a family member or platonic love and spiritual devotion linked to religious love (Meeks, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1998; Rubin, 1970).

Love in its various forms acts as a major factor in social relations and plays a central role in human psychology (Freud, 1951; Rubin, 1970). As matter of fact, several studies have revealed that love is an important predictor of happiness, satisfaction, and positive emotions (e. g., Kim & Hatfield, 2004). Various acts of loving such as kissing, sex, emotional contacts, and companionship exchanged in love relationships contributed to happiness (Ross, Mirowsky, & Goldsteen, 1990).

Sternberg (1986) proposed a theory of love in which love is made up of three components—*passion*, *intimacy* and *commitment*—that can vary in intensity. According to Sternberg (1986, p. 129–130) love expression is explained by the following equation: $\text{Love} = f(W_P \text{ Passion} * W_I \text{ Intimacy} * W_C \text{ Commitment})$. In this equation, the “w” expresses the weight of each component in a given relationship. For example, in the typical case of compassionate and romantic love, w_p and w_c would both be close to zero. In the typical case of consummate love, all w’s would be above zero. The loading of love elements may vary by country/culture setting.

Love in Collectivist Societies vs. Love in Individualistic Societies

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Several studies have compared love relationships in collectivist societies to love in individualistic societies (e. g., Braudel, 1984; Hatfield & Rapson, 1996; Kim & Hatfield, 2004). Findings from these studies suggest that passionate love (which tends to give more importance to passion and intimacy) is highly emphasized in individualistic cultures (as in Western Europe) and companionate love (which tends to give more importance to commitment) is emphasized in collectivist cultures (as in Asia, in Southern Africa, etc.) (Kim & Hatfield, 2004). Thus, in Mozambican culture, commitment in a love relationship may be more valued than passion and intimacy; while in France passion and intimacy in a love relationship may be more valued than commitment (Vera Cruz, 2015). Nonetheless, further evidence is needed on the weighting of love components to clarify findings from previous studies.

This study aimed to estimate and compare the weight assigned by Mozambicans (a Southern Africa collectivist society) and by the French (a Western European individualistic society) to the three components of love: passion, intimacy and commitment, and to determine which was considered the most important in the definition or the conceptualization of love. In addition, the study aimed at find out whether in the weight assessment of each component of love, Mozambican and French participants change over the course of their lives (with age).

The study was guided by the following questions: (a) What is the weight assigned by Mozambicans and the French to the three dimensions of love: *passion*, *intimacy* and *commitment*? Which of these is considered the most important in the definition or conceptualization of love? (b) Does the weight attributed to each component of love change during a person's lifetime (with age)? (c) What is the difference between the Mozambicans and French conceptualization of love (love equation)?

Method

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Participants

Mozambique. The sample was composed of 310 Mozambican adults aged 18–64 ($M = 29.7$; $SD = 17.05$; 133 men and 177 women). They were divided into three groups: 140 young adults ($M = 24.8$; $SD = 3.45$), 122 adults ($M = 38.9$; $SD = 5.49$), and 48 elderly adults ($M = 59.2$; $SD = 3.97$). Eleven percent of participants were single. Eighteen percent of participants lived with their partners. Fifty-four percent of participants were married, and 9% were divorced. Finally, 11% were widowed. At the time of the research field work, 45% of the participants reported being in love. The median number of times that participants reported being in love was 2 (71 participants), followed by 3 (53 participants), and 1 (24 participants). No participants said they had never been in love.

France. The sample was composed of 220 French adults aged 18–64 ($M = 24.2$; $SD = 13.22$; 102 men and 118 women). They were divided into three groups: 70 young adults ($M = 25.9$; $SD = 2.55$), 82 adults ($M = 40.1$; $SD = 4.33$), and 69 elderly adults ($M = 55.3$; $SD = 4.02$). Twenty-three percent of participants were single. Fourteen percent of participants lived with their partners. Thirty-one percent of participants were married, and 13% were divorced. Finally, 4% were widowed. At the time of the research field work, 53% of the participants reported being in love. The median number of times that participants reported being in love was 2 (88 participants), followed by 4 (39 participants), and 1 (61 participants). No participants said they had never been in love.

Material

The data collection materials involved 27 three-information-item scenarios created by the researcher. Each of the 27 scenarios was printed on a separate sheet of paper and described the characteristics of a relationship in terms of the degree of passion (low, intermediate and high), degree of intimacy (low, intermediate and high), and degree of

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commitment (low, intermediate and high). To have an idea of the characteristics of the entire set of 27 scenarios, see the first scenario below.

Marie and Pierre have a strong physical and emotional attraction to each other. They have a relationship of great intimacy. They do not hide anything from one another. Marie and Pierre have already decided to get married soon and have announced this decision to their loved ones.

The same question appears below each scenario: “In your opinion, what is the degree of love involved in this relationship?”. The participants were asked to answer the question on a bipolar scale ranging from 1 (Not at all in love) to 20 (Completely in love).

These 27 scenarios were devised as a function of an orthogonal factorial design with three factors: Passion x Intimacy x Commitment— $3 \times 3 \times 3$. Exactly the same set of 27 scenarios was used in the two countries. The only difference was that in the scenarios used in France, typically French names were used, and in Mozambique, typically Mozambican names were used.

The information scenarios were piloted on adults in both France and in Mozambique to check meaningfulness within each study setting.

Procedure

Ethics approval for the study was granted by Board of Trustees of the University Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique) and the University of Toulouse (France). The participants individually consented of the study. Data were collected by the researcher assisted by trained research assistants. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and those who agreed to participate in the study were invited to go to the university where the testing had to take place.

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In the testing room, the procedure consisted of two phases. During the first phase, subjects became familiar with the material. The 27 scenarios were presented to the participants in four counterbalanced random orders. They were asked to read each scenario aloud and place an X mark on the response scale, at the point at which they believed to be the most appropriate. At the end of this task, subjects were allowed to review, or compare their answers for different scenarios and possibly change their judgments on the scale until they were satisfied with all the ratings. The second phase was the real test phase. It was identical to the first phase except that the order of presentation of the scenarios was often changed and the subjects were not allowed to review and compare their answers. The testing took place in a quiet room at the University of Poitiers and at University of Toulouse (France), and at Eduardo Mondlane University (Mozambique). Participants worked individually at their own pace.

Data Analysis

For the main part, data were analyzed to separately estimate weights and scale values for the two samples (Mozambican and French) and for each of the three (age) subsamples. These analyses were carried out utilizing the AVERAGE program (Zalinski & Anderson, 1996, 1991). The AVERAGE program (often used in *functional measurements*) is considered effective to analyze data from subjective evaluation when inter-individual differences are likely to be important. It processes data by first reordering the factor levels or rescaling the participant's evaluation, before averaging data and estimating the variance accounted for by each factor and analyze the combination rule of those dimensions (see information integration theory and functional measurement (Anderson, 1981, 1991, 1996)). Secondly, to test the effect and the interactions of country and age on the conceptualization of love for the two populations, a mixed model analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. The significance level was set at 0.05.

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Results**Factorial Weight Analysis**

Table 1 shows the results of parameter estimation (the weight attributed to each love factor). For Mozambique, the love equation is: Love = Passion (46%) x Commitment (37%) x Intimacy (17%); for France, the love equation is: Love = Passion (50%) x Intimacy (28%) x Commitment (22%). In terms of comparison, the Mozambican love equation (conceptualization of love) is significantly different from the French one: $\chi^2(2) = 51.80, p = .001$.

[Insert Table 1 here]

The participants used the entire range of the response scale to rate the 27 scenarios in the main design. On the 1–20 scale, in the Mozambican sample, the highest score was 18 and the lowest score was 3 points; in the French sample, the highest score was 20 and the lowest score was 2.

Love Components by demographics Interaction Effects

The ANOVA revealed a significant country main effect on the conceptualization of love for the two populations, $F(1, 236) = 68.29, p = .021, \eta^2_p = .37$. However, the effect-size ($\eta^2_p = .37$) is moderate. Also, a significant effect of age on the conceptualization of love for the two populations was found, $F(2, 236) = 430.47, p = .001, \eta^2_p = .78$, and the effect-size is quite large ($\eta^2_p = .78$). There were no significant interactions between country and passion and country and intimacy.

[Insert Table 2 & 3 here]

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For the Mozambican sample, the higher the degree of passion, the higher the love is judged, $F(2, 476) = 1.423.54, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .59$; the higher the degree of intimacy, the higher the love is judged, $F(2, 476) = 467.87, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .46$; the higher the degree of commitment, the higher the love is judged, $F(2, 476) = 3352.61, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .54$. On the French sample, concerning the interaction (combined effect) between passion, intimacy and commitment, the results were as follows: the higher the degree of passion, the higher the love is judged, $F(2, 784) = 2238.24, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .77$; the higher the degree of intimacy, the higher the love is judged, $F(2, 784) = 1367.52, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .53$; the higher the degree of commitment, the higher the love is judged, $F(2, 784) = 692.27, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .45$.

Among the Mozambicans, an age and conceptualization of love interaction effect was evident in that the degree of passion was reported to decrease over age, and steeper (lower) for the 50–64 age group, $F(4, 283) = 9.87, p = .012, \eta^2_p = .60$. The degree of intimacy also was perceived to decrease with age, $F(4, 283) = 5.98, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .20$. The degree of commitment increases with age, $F(4, 283) = 8.25, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .49$. This was similar for the French sample; the degree of passion decreases with age, and the decrease is steeper for the 50–64 age group, $F(4, 392) = 6.57, p = .02, \eta^2_p = .63$. The degree of intimacy also decreases with age, $F(4, 392) = 12.18, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .47$. The degree of commitment increases with age, $F(4, 392) = 20.17, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .33$. See Table 3.

Discussion and Conclusion

First, the results of this comparative study suggest that the differences between the Mozambicans' (people from a southern African country with a predominantly collectivist society) conceptualization of love and the French (people from a Western European country with a predominantly individualistic society) conceptualization of love, with respect to what they think is most important within a love relationship are not vast, presumably because of the

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harmonization ways of thinking which is happening due to cultural globalization and the standardizing action of international media, such as television, the film industry and the internet.

Second, a country effect on the conceptualization of love was found. More specifically, the results of this study showed while passion was the most important love factor for Mozambicans as for the French participants, the Mozambicans valued commitment higher than the French. By contrast, the French considered intimacy more important than commitment. In one hand, these findings are consistent with the conclusions of the anthropological based studies which compared love in individualistic societies vs. love in collectivist societies and have shown quite similar differences (e. g., Braudel, 1984; Hatfield & Rapson, 1996; Kim & Hatfield, 2004). In fact, culture affects how people define love, how susceptible they are to love, with whom they tend to fall in love, and how their love relationships proceed (Braudel, 1984; Fehr, 1993). In other hand, the results of this study indicate the same tendency we have found in another research (Vera Cruz & Mullet, 2012) in which there is clear indication that even if there are differences between the sexual attitudes of Mozambicans and French, these differences are not vast; and that the effects of cultural globalization tended to harmonize the attitudes and behaviors of the two populations.

Third, regardless of country setting, with increasing age the weighting accorded to passion decreased. The fact that younger participants are more prone to passion and intimacy than the older ones has been shown in previous studies (e.g., Falconi & Mullet, 2003). It can be explained by the fact that (a) biologically the youth is linked to a high level of the male and the female hormone secretion, especially testosterone and estrogen, associated with the fact that (b) socially peer influences drive them to seek an intense and frequent intimate contacts (sexual intercourses) in a very passionate way (Vera Cruz, 2015). Also, concerning Mozambique, it is likely that older people are less affected by cultural globalization, and

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therefore their conceptualization of love is more impregnated by the local cultural tradition in which commitment is viewed as the most important construct on love relationship than passion and intimacy.

In sum, although there is a notable difference on conceptualization of love between Mozambican and French participants, this difference is not vast as would be expected regarding the different historical cultural background that frames the two societies.

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Table 1

Results of the Parameter Estimation (The Weight Attributed to each Love Component) Process Using AVERAGE: By Group Age and by Country

Age Group	Moz			Fr			Comparison Moz-Fr		
	Pass	Int	Com	Pass	Int	Com	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
All age group	.46	.17	.37	.50	.28	.22	21.80	.001	.56
18-29 age	.51	.28	.21	.53	.28	.19	18.46	ns	.09
30-49 age	.39	.27	.34	.52	.27	.21	11.19	.045	.51
50-64 age	.32	.16	.51	.44	.27	.31	13.44	.031	.47

Note. Moz = Mozambique; Fr = France; Pass = Passion; Int = Intimacy; Com = Commitment

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Table 2

ANOVA: The Effects of Country and Age on the Love Judgments, the Interaction of Country and Age with each of the Three Love Dimensions

Factor	Effects		Error		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2_p
	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>			
Country	1	356.03	236	9.54	68.29	.021	.37
Country x Pass	2	2.13	472	0.83	5.15	ns	.04
Country x Int	2	4.26	442	0.98	7.30	ns	.07
Country x Com	2	385.26	236	9.54	230.47	<.001	.52
Coun x Pass x In x Com	6	347.22	236	9.54	87.65	.021	.41
Age	2	6327.73	236	10.66	430.47	<.001	.78
Age x Pass	4	363.87	236	0.83	69.43	<.001	.40
Age x Int	4	1.27	472	0.98	9.33	ns	.09
Age x Com	4	425.33	236	9.54	663.30	<.001	.55
Age x Pass x Int x Com	8	352.05	236	9.54	75.15	<.001	.35
Coun x Age x P x I x C	8	651.47	236	12.14	678.27	<.001	.61

Note. Cou = country; Pass/P = Passion; Int/I = Intimacy; Com/C = Commitment

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Table 3

Partial ANOVA: The Effects of each of the Three Love Dimensions on the Love Judgments, the Interaction of Age with each of the Three Love Dimensions

Factor	Moz/ Love conceptualization					Fr / Love conceptualization				
	<i>df</i> -effect	<i>df</i> -error	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2_p	<i>df</i> -effect	<i>df</i> -error	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2_p
Pass	2	476	1.423.54	.001	.59	2	784	2238.24	<.001	.77
Int	2	476	467.87	.001	.46	2	784	1367.52	<.001	.53
Com	2	476	3352.61	.001	.54	2	784	692.27	<.001	.45
Ag x P	4	283	9.87	.012	.60	4	392	6.57	.02	.63
Ag x I	4	283	5.98	.001	.28	4	392	12.18	<.001	.47
Ag x C	4	283	8.25	.0001	.49	4	392	20.17	<.001	.33

Note. Moz = Mozambique; Fr = France; Pass/P = Passion; Int/I = Intimacy; Com/C = Commitment; Ag = Age