

# The components of love: Romantic attraction and sex role orientation

Joseph W. Critelli, Emilie J. Myers, and Victor E. Loos, *North Texas State University*

## Abstract

Hypotheses derived from both Erich Fromm and the feminist literature linking sex role orientation to type of love experienced were tested in a sample of 123 heterosexual dating couples. Five components of love were identified through factor analysis: romantic dependency, communicative intimacy, physical arousal, respect, and romantic compatibility. Type of love was related to sex role orientation ( $p < .01$ ), with traditionals characterized by romantic dependency and romantic compatibility, while nontraditionals emphasized communicative intimacy. Sex differences showed females being more emotionally expressive in their love than males and scoring higher on communicative intimacy ( $p$ 's  $< .01$ ).

The manner in which individuals are attracted to one another and come to fall in love is both one of the most fascinating and one of the most elusive of psychological phenomena. The love motif pervades the art, music, and literature of cultures throughout the ages. Yet historical analyses (e.g., Beigel, 1951) suggest that the particular ways in which love is manifested are culture-specific and, in fact, that what we currently think of as romantic love is a relatively recent phenomenon. In addition, both empirical analyses of song lyrics (Carey, 1969) and current conventions in colloquial speech suggest discriminations among several types of love, as exemplified in the popular distinctions between love and "in love," between true love and infatuation, and between romantic love and liking.

A number of theoretical sources suggest that the experience of love may depend on one's sex role orientation. Margaret Mead (1949) contends that all known societies have maintained a separation of gender roles. However, our society is now moving toward a possible elimination of role prescriptions based solely on gender. The relation between sex role traditionality and love is investigated in Part Two of this article. A better understanding of the various types or components of love, however, seemed essential before exploring this relation.

Requests for reprints should be addressed to Joseph W. Critelli, Department of Psychology, North Texas State University, Denton, TX 76203.

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## Part 1: Love Components

A number of theorists and researchers have attempted to distinguish among the types of love (e.g., Forgas & Dobosz, 1980; Stech, Levitan, McLane, & Kelley, 1982; Swenson, 1972). Fromm (1956), perhaps the most articulate of the theorists, emphasized the distinction between genuine love and "pseudo love." Genuine love is described as a rare expression of optimal functioning that involves active caring for a partner's needs and a desire to experience the other at an intimate level without masks and roles. In contrast, pseudo love emphasizes passivity (something one "falls into") and is characterized by neurotic dependency. This view is complemented by Maslow's (1962) distinction between "being love" which satisfies the being needs of sharing, communication, and friendship, and "deficiency love" which satisfies the needs to be loved and to receive esteem.

Among recent attempts to measure love, Rubin's (1970) development of love and liking scales is noteworthy. Rubin's subjects responded to items that on a priori grounds were thought to represent either love or liking. Items were completed in reference to both a dating partner and a platonic friend of the opposite sex, and were separately factor analyzed. Contrary to expectations, separate factors did not emerge on the basis of target person. The same factor (identified as the love scale) emerged as the main factor for both dating and platonic partners, and so the second factor for platonic friends was used as a measure of liking. Rubin describes his love scale as having an eclectic flavor in emphasizing affiliative and dependent needs, a predisposition to help, and an orientation of exclusiveness and absorption toward the partner. Considerable construct validity has been demonstrated for the love scale (Dermer & Pyszczynski, 1978; Rubin, 1970; Seligman, Fazio, & Zanna, 1980; White, 1980). The liking scale is more appropriately a measure of respect, emphasizing favorable "objective" evaluations of the partner (e.g., maturity, intelligence, and adjustment).

Driscoll, Davis, and Lipetz (1972) have developed a system distinguishing between romantic love and conjugal love (also see Berscheid & Walster, 1978, for the parallel distinction between passionate and compassionate love). Romantic love includes affiliative and dependent needs, feelings of exclusiveness and absorption, physical attraction, passion, and idealization. Conjugal love is defined as love between mature adults and is composed of close friendship, trust, lack of criticalness, appreciation, respect, sharing, genuine knowledge of the other, loyalty, and a willingness to sacrifice for the partner. Despite this well-articulated conceptual typology, however, Driscoll et al.'s 4-item love scale does not separate romantic from conjugal love. This was attempted by viewing love with trust partialled out as a measure of romantic love.



There appears to be a certain similarity between the Rubin and Driscoll et al. conceptual systems, since both identify a construct of "romantic love" and contrast it with a more neutral sentiment. However, Driscoll et al. place more emphasis on the traditional romantic components of physical attraction, passion, and idealization (Ellis, 1962), while they would situate Rubin's predisposition to help within conjugal rather than romantic love. For the correspondence between liking and conjugal love, it should be noted that Rubin's liking scale emphasizes objective evaluations and perceived similarity to the partner, while conjugal love more nearly approaches Maslow's *B*-love by emphasizing trust, friendship, and a willingness to sacrifice for the partner.

### *Item Pool Development*

This study was designed in accordance with Rubin's (1970) suggestion that the next stage in love research should be to distinguish among the different types of love. An initial item pool was constructed by including items with demonstrated construct validity for the measurement of love, i.e., Rubin's (1973) love and liking items and the Driscoll et al. (1972) items for love and love without trust (romantic love). The liking scale was included because both Fromm and Driscoll et al. view respect as part of love.

This initial item pool was then augmented in three theoretically crucial areas. First, it should be noted that the concept of "romantic love" has historical antecedents that link it to the phenomenon of romantic idealization, and thus distinguish it from other positive heterosexual attitudes and affects. Without assuming a literal belief in any particular romantic ideal, it must be recognized that contemporary romantic love has been influenced by beliefs and expectancies, for example: that true love lasts forever, that we are all in search of (or have already found) our one, "predetermined" partner and mate; that falling in love is accompanied by intense passion, rapid mood shifts, and other physiological signs; and that we all desire to be loved for ourselves rather than for our position or accomplishments. Since items measuring a love that expresses such romantic notions were not well-represented on existing scales, these items were generated from descriptions of the romantic ideal (Beigel, 1951; Crosby, 1973; de Rougemont, 1940; Ellis, 1962) and from existing measures of romanticism (Dion & Dion, 1973; Peplau, 1973; Spaulding, 1970). Thus statements such as, "As long as I'm with —, happiness will be inevitable" were generated for this area.

The second area of item augmentation involved the relationship quality and communicational emphases of Fromm's genuine love, Maslow's *B*-love, and Driscoll et al.'s conjugal love. An intriguing feature of this



domain is its characterization as a psychologically optimal form of love. Since existing measures of love have not tried to tap this domain, items relevant to this literature were generated: for example, "\_\_\_\_\_ and I have a very solid relationship."

The third area of augmentation dealt with partner-induced physical or sexual arousal (e.g., "I get very sexually aroused when kissing \_\_\_\_\_"). Virtually all conceptualizations specify intense emotionality and physical arousal as central features of "young love." In addition, the inclusion of arousal items reflects an important emphasis by Walster and Berscheid (1971), who view love as an attribution for states of heightened physical arousal. The final item pool contained 63 items.

### Method

#### Subjects

The subject sample was composed of 123 dating couples recruited as paid volunteers through campus posters and community newspaper ads. Couples had been dating an average of six months, with 79% of the couples seeing each other exclusively. Length of dating ranged from 2 weeks to 5 years. Ages for males ranged from 18 to 27 years ( $M = 20.2$ ,  $SD = 1.4$ ); for females, from 18 to 28 years ( $M = 19.6$ ,  $SD = 1.3$ ).

#### Procedure

Members of each couple were separated and given a questionnaire containing demographic, personal history (see Critelli, 1975), and love items. Love items were responded to on a 5-point scale of agreement with markers, "disagree," "tend to disagree," "neither agree nor disagree," "tend to agree," and "agree."

For a less structured assessment of these relationships, subjects were then asked to write a letter to their partner discussing their positive and negative feelings and attitudes toward the partner and the relationship. Subjects were told that they had about 20 minutes to complete the letter and that they should try to write at least two pages.<sup>1</sup> Pilot studies had indicated that undergraduates could express themselves fully and coherently in this time period. These "love letters" were selected because of their obvious relevance to love relationships and because pilot studies indicated that such letters, even when written in the laboratory, provide a surprisingly personal and comprehensive representation of the relationship.

#### Letter Content Ratings

Each letter was segmented into simple sentence units, with each unit rated by two independent judges blind to the subject's sex and sex role orientation.

1. Half the subjects were informed that the partner would read the letter and half were not. This manipulation produced no interaction with either sex or sex role and therefore does not affect the results of the present study. The results of this manipulation will be reported elsewhere.





Each unit was classified as to whether it expressed romantic or friendship sentiments, or neither (interrater agreement = 94%), and as to whether it contained an expression of emotion favorable to the relationship (interrater agreement = 97%). Romantic statements were defined as expressions of need, dependency, wanting, desire, absorption, exclusiveness, passion or attitudes associated with the romantic ideal, friendship included statements of liking, similarity, trust, respect, companionship, common interests, and compatibility. Expressions of favorable emotions were statements that expressed emotion and evidenced support for the relationship. For example, "I get angry when you have to stay late after work and can't be with me." Note that the emotion need not be a "positive" one, but it must express an interest in furthering the relationship. Such statements could, therefore, overlap with romantic or friendship statements. Letter contents were used to define three variables: number of romantic, friendship, and favorable emotional statements. Statement frequency was used to measure these variables because this is a standard method of measurement in psychological research, and because the length of a love letter is itself taken as a manifestation of the intensity of one's love

### Results

The 63 love items and 3 letter content variables<sup>2</sup> were pooled and their correlation matrix underwent a principle components factor analysis, using Kaiser's criterion for factor extraction. Following Nunnally (1978), the first five factors were selected after the initial varimax rotation on the basis of interpretability, and these were again rotated to the varimax criterion. These factors accounted for 42.2% of the total item variance, with the individual factors accounting for 25.7%, 6.0%, 3.9%, 3.5%, and 3.1% respectively. Love items with rotated factor loadings of .30 or greater were summed to define the component scales (see Rubin, 1970). In cases where an item loaded on more than one factor, it was included on the factor on which it loaded highest. Table 1 presents the sample items with factor loadings for these scales. In order of extraction, the five scales were labelled romantic dependency, communicative intimacy, physical arousal, respect, and romantic compatibility. Letter content variables did not noticeably load on any of the five factors, but they were differentially correlated with component scales (see below).

The correlation matrix for the five component scales appears in Table 2. The component scales show moderate intercorrelations, with an average correlation of .54 for males and .52 for females (calculated from  $r$  to  $z$  transformations). The highest correlation among scales, for males and females, was between romantic dependency and physical arousal.

2. The letter content variables represent another methodology for measuring the love domain and do not, as such, represent qualitatively different components. This alternative methodology was employed to complement and clarify the information obtained from self-report items



Table 1. Sample items for love component scales.

	Factor loadings				
	I	II	III	IV	V
<b>Factor I: Romantic dependency (21 items)</b>					
1. My relationship with _____ is more important than anything for me.	.70	.06	.28	.06	.17
2. It would be hard for me to get along without _____.	.70	.16	.14	.16	.06
3. _____ is the only real love for me.	.68	.19	.19	.03	.37
4. I need _____.	.65	.23	.14	.15	-.16
5. My friendship with _____ is more important to me than anything else.	.59	.17	.17	.14	.18
6. One of my primary concerns is _____'s welfare.	.55	.18	.27	.21	-.02
7. If I could never be with _____, I'd feel miserable.	.54	.04	.24	.09	.06
<b>Factor II: Communicative intimacy (13 items)</b>					
1. I feel that _____ understands me well.	.12	.65	.09	.17	.20
2. _____ and I have a very solid relationship.	.26	.65	.14	.32	.17
3. _____ is someone I can really communicate with.	.13	.63	.17	.28	.21
4. I feel that I can confide in _____ about virtually everything.	.09	.60	.18	.14	.12
5. _____ is the person I would be most likely to talk to if I had a problem.	.25	.58	.01	.09	.10
6. I find _____ very easy to get along with.	.04	.50	.08	.37	.25
7. _____ and I have very similar values.	.00	.50	.07	.17	.25
<b>Factor III: Physical arousal (8 items)</b>					
1. I feel very romantic about _____.	.39	.15	.62	.20	.16
2. I get very sexually aroused when kissing _____.	.10	.14	.57	-.03	.07
3. My feelings for _____ are often highly passionate.	.13	.16	.56	.07	.09
4. I spend a good deal of my time just thinking about _____.	.42	-.08	.55	.22	.18
5. When I see _____, my first reaction is one of excitement.	.22	.09	.50	.26	.15
6. I often notice my heart beating faster or other physical signs of excitement when I'm around _____.	.19	-.04	.49	.16	.21
7. I am very physically attracted to _____.	.24	.27	.49	.07	-.04

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Table 1. Continued.

	Factor loadings				
	I	II	III	IV	V
<b>Factor IV: Respect (8 items)</b>					
1. In my opinion, _____ is an exceptionally mature person.	.08	.30	.10	.61	.20
2. I think that _____ is unusually well-adjusted.	-.02	.15	.07	.54	.30
3. I would highly recommend _____ for a responsible job.	.14	.16	.03	.54	.07
4. I have great confidence in _____'s good judgement.	.12	.31	.11	.54	.14
5. I know I could count on _____ for anything if I needed help.	.22	.34	.04	.47	.01
6. I think that _____ is one of those people who quickly wins respect.	.07	.14	.17	.40	.25
7. Most people would react favorably to _____ after a brief acquaintance.	.10	.07	.17	.39	.08
<b>Factor V: Romantic compatibility (7 items)</b>					
1. As long as I'm with _____, happiness will be inevitable.	.51	.08	.13	.21	.63
2. When I'm with _____, we almost always are in the same mood.	-.05	.09	.02	.11	.49
3. _____ fulfills all my needs for love, affection, friendship, and security.	.40	.11	.20	.14	.42
4. _____ and I do not disagree on important matters.	-.06	.22	-.04	.11	.39
5. I think that _____ and I are quite similar to one another.	.08	.31	.09	.12	.38
6. Because I have _____, I am not attracted to members of the opposite sex.	.31	.16	.11	-.19	.37
7. I could never hate _____.	.23	.01	.13	.25	.35

The lowest correlation occurred between respect and romantic compatibility for males and between respect and romantic dependency for females. Males and females showed similar patterns of correlation among scales, with no significant sex differences in scale correlations.

Internal consistencies for the scales were good. Coefficient alphas for males were .90, .88, .86, .83, and .69 for romantic dependency, communicative intimacy, physical arousal, respect, and romantic compatibility, respectively; for females the coefficient alphas were, respectively, .92, .87, .83, .78, and .73.



**Table 2.** Correlation matrix for love component scale scores. ( $N = 123$  for males and for females.)

	1	2	3	4	5
			Males		
1. Romantic dependency		.66	.71	.55	.55
2. Communicative intimacy	.57		.43	.60	.49
3. Physical arousal	Females 64	52		.41	.48
4. Respect	37	62	.42		.37
5. Romantic compatibility	.53	.53	.41	.48	

Note.—All  $p$ 's < .01.

For the letter content variables, romantic statements were correlated with romantic dependency ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ) and physical arousal ( $r = .29, p < .01$ ) for males and with all component scales, but particularly with romantic dependency and physical arousal for females. Correlations were  $r = .43, .25, .40, .24, .25$  for romantic dependency, communicative intimacy, physical arousal, respect, and romantic compatibility, respectively (all  $p$ 's < .01). Friendship statements, on the other hand, were not significantly correlated with any of the component scales for males or females. Favorable emotional statements correlated with all component scales except romantic compatibility for males ( $r$ 's = .35, .17, .31, .20, .10, ordered as above; all  $p$ 's < .01) and for all scales for females ( $r$ 's = .33, .22, .32, .25, .17, ordered as above; all  $p$ 's < .01). Again, the two sexes showed similar patterns, with the highest correlations for favorable emotional statements being with romantic dependency and physical arousal.

#### Discussion

Five components of love were identified: romantic dependency, communicative intimacy, physical arousal, respect, and romantic compatibility. These factor-derived scales showed good internal consistencies and appropriate correlations with letter content variables; romantic statements and favorable emotional statements, but not friendship statements, were generally correlated with the love scales, particularly with romantic dependency and physical arousal.

The component scales appear to represent a directly interpretable and comprehensive assessment of the major conceptual discriminations found in the literature of love. Romantic dependency combines romantic-idealistic beliefs with emphases on the importance of the relationship, how much the partner is needed, the exclusivity of love, and how much one's happiness is dependent on a particular partner. As such, ro-





romantic dependency seems to reflect Fromm's pseudo love and Maslow's *D*-love. However, this scale also contains items involving a concern and feeling of responsibility for the partner's welfare, where the more active, interdependent focus of these items appears to fit Fromm's and Maslow's conception of a more mature love. It should also be noted that romantic dependency includes all three criteria that identified Rubin's conception of romantic love: affiliative and dependent need, a predisposition to help, and an orientation of exclusiveness and absorption toward the partner.

Communicative intimacy emphasizes feelings of being understood, having a solid relationship, and being able to really talk to and confide in the partner. Thus, it appears to reflect Fromm's genuine love, Maslow's *B*-love, and Driscoll et al.'s conjugal love. With regard to colloquial terminology, note that the item "I love \_\_\_\_\_" loaded on communicative intimacy, while being "in love with \_\_\_\_\_" loaded on romantic dependency.

The physical arousal scale accommodates Berscheid and Walster's conceptualization in its emphasis on feeling romantic, sexually aroused, passionate, and physically attracted to the partner.

The respect component includes many of the items from Rubin's liking scale; it emphasizes evaluations of the partner as being mature, well-adjusted, recommendable, and as having good judgment.

Romantic compatibility combines the romantic-idealistic emphasis found in romantic dependency with the content of mood similarity, harmonious interaction, total need satisfaction, and contentment. It should be noted that this romantic-idealistic emphasis is expressed in items that may be viewed as somewhat unrealistic (e.g., "As long as I'm with \_\_\_\_\_, happiness will be inevitable." and "I could never hate \_\_\_\_\_"). Nevertheless, subjects do differ on the extent to which they endorse such items for a given partner, and our Western history of idealization in romantic love suggests that such attitudes are important aspects of love for some dating couples.

The analysis of love into its separate components provides a basis for investigating apparently contradictory views on the relationships of sex and sex role to the experience of love. Part two presents this investigation.

## Part 2: Love and Sex Role Traditionality

Fromm (1956) theorizes that both sexual attraction and romantic love are motivated by the tension between opposing polarities. He maintains that just as sexual attraction is based on a need for psychological union with the opposite sexual pole, romantic love depends upon a need for



psychological union with the opposite sex character type. To a large extent, these opposite character types correspond to traditional sex role stereotypes for males and females. According to Fromm, the masculine character type is defined by qualities of activity, discipline, and adventurousness, while the feminine type reflects receptiveness, protection, and motherliness. With respect to sex roles and feminism, Fromm notes that women are calling for and gradually getting equality with men. However, the meaning of equality has changed radically over the ages. May (1969) suggests that in the world view of Christianity, equality referred to the paradoxical notion that, as elements of a common humanity, we are all "one," though each person is also separate and unique. Fromm suggests that in modern society equality has come to mean *sameness* rather than *oneness*, and he maintains that this change has affected erotic love. "Women are equal because they are not different any more. . . . The polarity of the sexes is disappearing, and with it erotic love, which is based on this polarity" (Fromm, 1956, p. 13).

Some theoretical support for Fromm's views is provided by Reik (1957), who contends that falling in love is an attempt, through the "possession" of an admired love object, to obtain those personal qualities that one lacks. He suggests that this is what underlies the reference in colloquial speech to the love object as one's "better self." The linkage between falling in love and the presence of oppositional polarities between the partners is also made by Jung (1921) and by Roszak and Roszak (1969). Although a good deal of evidence (e.g., Byrne, 1971; Duck & Craig, 1978) relates a similarity in values and personality to liking, oppositions between partners may be more likely to generate the arousal and emotionality that mediate romantic love (Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Driscoll et al., 1972; Kerchoff & Davis, 1962; Seyfried & Hendrick, 1973; Walster & Berscheid, 1971).

Some empirical support for Fromm's position is provided by Curran (1972). Before they went on a "blind date," Curran had subjects indicate their preferences for the personality characteristics of their prospective dates. Afterwards, dating satisfaction scores were obtained. Satisfaction was unrelated to stated preferences, i.e., subjects were not able to predict the personality characteristics that they would actually prefer. Instead, actual preference was related to sex role stereotypes: males preferred females who were submissive, dependent, conforming, and shy; females preferred males who were assertive, dominant, independent, and adventuresome.

Recent years have witnessed the increasing prominence of a social movement designed to give women equal status with men (Kaplan & Bean, 1976; Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Tavris & Offir, 1977; Tarris & Wade, 1984). Koedt, Levine, and Rapone (1973) maintain that the com-



mon thread running through the feminist movement is a desire to eliminate the sex role system, so that social roles and personality characteristics would no longer be ascribed on the basis of gender. Although these beliefs may seem quite reasonable, it is also true that from historical and anthropological perspectives, their implementation would be radical (Mead, 1949). In this light, we may wonder how our culture would be affected by an elimination of the sex role system. More specifically, how would the reduction of sex role differences affect romantic love? Since Fromm and others base romantic love on an oppositional polarity between the sexes, especially with regard to sex role stereotypes, they would predict that a reduction in sex role differences would lead to comparable reductions in romantic love.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the feminist movement truly represents a "liberation" for women (and men). It is possible that those who are relatively free from the sex role structure, and who have thus reduced their prescribed role polarization, may be in a better position to understand the opposite sex and develop closer, more loving, less conflictual relationships (Alsbrook, 1976; Bem, Martyna, & Watson, 1976; Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble, & Zellerman, 1978; Mahoney, 1975; Safilios-Rothchild, 1977). In contrast to Fromm, this view suggests that traditional subjects, (i.e., those espousing separate and distinct male and female sex role patterns), would score lower on love than would nontraditionals. Thus, two lines of thought lead to conflicting predictions as to the relation between love and sex role traditionality. The present study investigates this relation with the system of love components identified in Part One.

Fromm's theorizing suggests that traditional subjects, i.e., those espousing separate and distinct role orientations for males and females, would manifest a love in which romantic dependency, romantic compatibility, and physical arousal are emphasized. In a complementary fashion, the feminist literature suggests that nontraditionals would manifest a love emphasizing communicative intimacy and respect.

This study is also concerned with gender differences in the experience of romantic attraction. Despite Rubin's (1970) finding that males and females did not differ on love, several lines of thought suggest that differences might be revealed if the separate components of love were taken into account. For example, it appears that females are more expressive and affiliative (Ickes & Barnes, 1978) and more self-disclosing (Cozby, 1973) than are males, and that they like and respect their partners more than males do (Rubin, 1970). In addition, females are more likely to have fallen in love, and they rate their romantic experiences as more intense than do males (Dion & Dion, 1973). On the other hand, males score higher than do females on measures of romantic, idealistic beliefs (Dion



& Dion, 1973, Spaulding, 1970). The literature on sex differences, therefore, suggests that females will manifest a love in which communicative intimacy and respect are emphasized, while males will be characterized by romantic dependency and romantic compatibility. Rationales for predicting a sex difference on physical arousal are inconclusive, since some evidence (Dion & Dion, 1973) indicates that females view their romantic experiences as "more intense," but males are generally seen as placing more importance on physical arousal.

Thus the following hypotheses concerning sex, sex role traditionality, and types of love were pursued:

1. Traditional sex role subjects will describe their experiences of love in terms of romantic dependency, romantic-compatibility, and physical arousal.
2. Nontraditional sex role subjects will describe their experiences of love in terms of communicative intimacy and respect.
3. Females will score higher than will males on communicative intimacy and respect.
4. Males will score higher than will females on romantic dependency and romantic compatibility.

#### Method

##### *Subjects and Procedures*

The method in Part 2 refers to the same subjects and data collection described in Part 1, with the clarification that among the questionnaires completed was the Critelli (1979) measure of sex role orientation.

##### *Materials*

Critelli's (1979) Sex Role Differences Scale was used to operationalize sex role nontraditionality. This scale involves the endorsement of either separate and distinct social roles for men and women, or no difference in their appropriate roles. This scale was specifically designed to test hypotheses flowing from Fromm's (1956) conceptualization of sex role differences. Items deal with topics such as child rearing, male household responsibilities, deciding where the family will live, and the relative importance of a wife's career. The scale shows good reliability (coefficient alpha = .89) and construct validity in predicting liking differences between dating partners. In addition, it shows appropriate correlations with attitude toward the women's liberation movement and political conservatism, and is not correlated with the Crowne and Marlow (1964) measure of social desirability response set. The Sex Role Difference Scale also shows good criterion validity with the Bem Sex Role Inventory (1974). In a sample of 73 college students (mean age = 21.5 years), Bem sex-typed males scored significantly higher on traditionality than did androgynous males,  $F(1,17) = 10.27, p < .01$ , likewise, stereotypic females were significantly more traditional than were androgynous females,  $F(1,24) = 4.52, p < .05$ .





## Results

Forward step-wise multiple regression analyses were used to determine the relation between sex role orientation and love, as measured by the five component scales and three letter content variables. Table 3 presents the multiple regression solutions for males and females. The multiple  $R$  between love and sex role orientation reached .41 for males,  $p < .01$ , with 17% of the variance in sex role orientation accounted for by love scores. Traditional sex role attitudes were related to high scores on romantic compatibility and romantic dependency and to low scores on communicative intimacy and respect. For females, the multiple  $R$  reached .50,  $p < .01$ , with 25% of the variance in sex role orientation attributable to love scores. High scores on romantic compatibility, romantic dependency, and respect, along with low scores on communicative intimacy and favorable emotional statements predicted traditional sex role orientation.

A discriminant function analysis<sup>3</sup> for the component scales and letter content variables indicated that males and females can be separated on the basis of their love scores (Wilk's Lambda = .894,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < .0008$ ). As shown in Table 4, females were most likely to score higher than males on emotional, romantic, and friendship statements and on the communicative intimacy scale. Although males did not score higher than females on any love variable, sex differences were smallest on romantic compatibility and romantic dependency.

## Discussion

The present results support the positions derived from both Fromm and the feminist literature that the love experienced by dating couples would be, in part, a function of sex role orientation. Fromm's view that romantic love would depend on an oppositional polarity between males and females in sex role orientation was supported for males and partially supported for females. Traditional males were characterized by, among other things, high scores on romantic dependency and romantic compatibility. Similarly, traditional females showed high scores on romantic dependency, romantic compatibility, and respect. Physical arousal was not related to sex role orientation for either males or females. Thus, the maintenance of separate and distinct roles for men and women seems related to feelings of romantic need, idealized contentment, and de-

3. A discriminant rather than a regression analysis was used to investigate the relation between gender and experienced love because gender is dichotomous. Sex role orientation ranges on a continuum from low to high nontraditionality, so power would have been lost if it had been artificially dichotomized.





**Table 3.** Regression analyses for the relation of love component scales and letter content variables with sex role orientation.

Predictor	Step-wise R	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Final beta
<b>Males</b>				
Romantic compatibility	.21	.04	4.93**	-.24
Communicative intimacy	.32	.10	6.18**	.32
Romantic dependency	.37	.13	2.42*	-.24
Respect	.39	.15	2.34*	.17
Physical arousal	.40	.16	.73	-.11
Favorable emotional statements	.40	.16	.95	.12
Romantic statements	.41	.17	.54	-.08
Friendship statements	.41	.17	.05	.02
<b>Females</b>				
Romantic compatibility	.28	.08	7.61**	-.29
Favorable emotional statements	.36	.13	6.68**	.31
Communicative intimacy	.40	.16	9.49**	.37
Romantic dependency	.46	.21	8.89**	-.37
Respect	.48	.23	3.54**	-.20
Physical arousal	.49	.25	2.00	.16
Romantic statements	.50	.25	.44	-.08
Friendship statements	.50	.25	.37	.05

\* F values indicate the degree to which R<sup>2</sup> changes when this variable is added to the equation.

° df = 8/114.

\* p < .05.

\*\* p < .01.

pendency, but not necessarily to feelings of physical excitement and sexual arousal.

The feminist view that those with nontraditional sex roles would form more understanding, loving, and respectful relationships was also supported for males and partially supported for females. Nontraditional males scored high on communicative intimacy and respect, nontraditional females emphasized communicative intimacy and favorable emotional statements, but not respect. Apparently, the greater status and power differential between members of traditional couples mediates the greater relative respect of traditional women for their partners.

The present results on sex differences in love show females scoring higher than males on all letter content variables and on feelings of communicative intimacy. This supports the view of females as being more emotionally expressive than are males (Ickes & Barnes, 1978). Despite



**Table 4.** Discriminant function analysis for sex differences in love (Wilks' Lambda = .894,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < .0008$ ).

Love variables	Correlation with canonical discriminant function	Males		Females		F ( $df = 1/244$ )
		M	SD	M	SD	
Favorable emotional statements	.73	2.52	(2.18)	3.98	(3.52)	15.40**
Romantic statements	.72	5.63	(3.73)	7.74	(4.77)	14.88**
Friendship statements	.71	10.41	(5.84)	13.37	(6.30)	14.80**
Communicative intimacy	.39	54.10	(8.41)	56.25	(7.80)	4.34*
Physical arousal	.30	30.99	(5.85)	32.16	(5.59)	2.58
Respect	.29	32.44	(5.13)	33.43	(4.68)	2.51
Romantic dependency	.28	78.84	(13.60)	81.61	(14.92)	2.32
Romantic compatibility	.10	20.15	(5.16)	20.53	(5.51)	0.30

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

the evidence that males generally score higher than females do on abstract, romantic-idealistic beliefs, males did not score higher than females did on any measure of love, although differences were smallest on romantic dependency and romantic compatibility.

It can be concluded that although love is certainly one of the most subjective and elusive of psychological phenomena, meaningful discriminations among types of love can be made, and these discriminations can be systematically related to sex and sex role differences. Furthermore, to the extent that type of love is a function of sex role difference, and to the extent that sex role differences are being gradually eliminated, as appears to be the case, the present results for nontraditionalists suggest that communicative intimacy will receive increasing prominence in the years ahead. Further research testing this and other implications flowing from the analysis of love into its separate components is encouraged.

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