

“ Inquiring Love of This World”: An Implicit Love Theory of Chinese University Students

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Abstract

This paper reports a preliminary descriptive approach to the representation of the concept of love. Based on Spreading Activation Model, the word of love was presented as a stimulus to which 278 college students were asked to respond with at least 15 words/phrases that came to mind. Then top 100 love-related words/phrases with frequency above 4.3% were collected as units of analysis. Based on the interrelations among those words/phrases, a complete-linkage cluster analysis reached 5 high-order clusters, i.e. the five facets of the representation of love concept: 1) ethics and responsibilities; 2) romantic experience; 3) conflict and pain; 4) rationality; 5) friendly care. The results show that word associations can fundamentally reflect some differences in cognition and culture of love. Compared with Sternberg's triangular theory of love, the findings show differences in two clusters: "conflict and pain" and "rationality", which are not included in the triangle of love. More importantly, this research contributes to literatures on Chinese people's love and will also inspire future research with some meaningful results.

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