



Violence and social love: a research proposal

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Pathway to violence

Something we are missing

Adverse childhood experiences and/or exposure to violence in the local community, home and at school

Lack of support at home for a variety of reasons (parents working long hours, chaotic lives, parents unable to offer support)

Lack of community provision or youth support due to reduction in funding, look for alternative things to do

Lack of support, exclusion & expulsion from education system, resulting in poor educational attainment

Involvement in anti-social behaviour & criminality. Potential criminal exploitation by older adult 'friends'

Reduced prospects for legitimate work. Lack of support from 18+ (fall off the cliff edge)

Become entrenched in a world of violence and criminality. Criminal record further impedes ability to find legitimate work

Potential prison sentence or death due to violence

Un-identified and un-addressed mental health need

Social love?



What is social love?

It is not new – you
will have heard it
called other things

It's importance in
improving people's
lives is recognised
(3,4,10–15)

Confusion around
the definition has
led to views that it
is unscientific or
unprofessional to
discuss love

Euphemisms have
been developed in
evidence-based
professions to refer
to it (e.g., care,
attachment¹)

¹Dr John Bowlby originally talked about **love** in his 1953 book 'Child Care and the Growth of Love', but later dropped this terminology, replacing it with the word **attachment**, due to the many different meanings that one word attempts to convey, and a feeling that it is unscientific and unprofessional.



What is social love?

Working definition:

Social love is both the ***motivation*** and ***freely chosen actions*** of a person (and/or community, organization, or system), given ***for the purpose of increasing the wellbeing of the other, the self, community, and the environment*** in which we live.

It is not to be confused with romantic or sexual love.

It involves:

- ***Care*** - The provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance and protection of the other, self, community and environment
- ***Respect*** - A fundamental valuing of the other, self, community, and environment, regardless of circumstance
- ***Commitment*** - The state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, person, or thing
- ***Knowledge*** - Some degree of accurate understanding of the situation, community, environment, other, and self
- ***Responsibility*** - An obligation to behave in a socially and morally just way towards or in respect of the other, self, community and environment
- ***Trust*** - A firm belief in the reliability, truth or ability of someone or something (including oneself)
- ***Open and receptive*** - An 'inspired', 'divine' or open and receptive quality (not necessarily religious)

Background & the gap

- Love articulated regularly by young people – especially in the context of community, friendship and brotherhood (For example: Unity Gym)
- Violence is a serious social and public health issue. It mostly affects men – as both victims and perpetrators.
- Large investments have been made nationally to reduce violence – VRUs were established in 2019 and have been awarded a further 3-year commitment to 2025. The total investment for 2021/22 alone is £130m.
- Numerous guidance documents exist to help commissioners understand and take action to address the complex causes of violence, but action often takes place within systems (like the Criminal Justice System, education system, health & care system, and welfare system) that marginalise and disadvantage people, creating and perpetuating social and health inequalities
- There are two notable missing dimensions from the available guidance and the work of people in the violence space:
 1. Emergent socially oriented theories on the role of social love are not considered in the production and reproduction of violence (or its prevention)
 2. There is no exploration of how the concept of social love could be used to transform dominant systems of inequality

If we are missing a piece of the puzzle, how can we ever complete it?

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features an open book with its pages fanned out. Several circular cutouts of varying sizes are placed over the book, revealing the pages underneath. The background behind the book is a dark, blurred image of a person's face, possibly a woman, looking towards the camera. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

Research Question:

In what ways can the concept of social love be utilised to prevent or reduce violence?

What am I proposing?

- Application to the National Institute for Health and Social Care Research (NIHR) to undertake a doctoral fellowship (PhD) – funding dependent
- Three phases
 - Phase 1: Context Setting
 - Phase 2: Learning from lived experience
 - Phase 3: Generating impact

Phase 1: Context setting

Systematic concept analysis (define the concept in an evidence-based way, exploring the components that make it up to develop a conceptual framework)



Articulate an evidence-based concept system and/or conceptual framework



Explore the presence and/or absence of social love throughout the violence literature/guidance and within existing interventions, as well as within local and national institutions designed to support society (for example: the criminal justice system (CJS), the legal system, the welfare system, the healthcare system (specifically mental healthcare))

Phase 2: Learning from lived experience

Target population – eight men who have had previous contact with the CJS and have mental health issues (can be self-identified or formally diagnosed). Between 3-5 interview sessions each

Recruitment - through trusted community members, posters in community centres and a snowball approach – currently looking at South Yorkshire although exploring West

Method – Biographical narrative interviews, with creative methods as discussion tools

Analysis –Socio-narratology (Frank) - allowing the participants' stories to remain intact and considered as a whole, whilst also exploring the social, cultural and structural influences, including issues of power, like gender inequalities, racial oppression and other structural practices of power

Phase 3: Generating impact

- Deliberative dialogue
 - To identify if/how the concept of social love can be applied to how public health creates, designs, delivers and evaluates interventions and make recommendations
 - To identify if/how the concept of social love can be operationalised to overcome injustice and transform dominant systems of inequality and make recommendations

Participation



STAKEHOLDER
NETWORK



PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION
GROUP

The ask

- What are your initial thoughts?
- Any comments or helpful suggestions?
- Would this research be valuable to you in your field of work? If so, in what ways? If not, help me to understand why please.
- Would this group like to be part of the stakeholder network? (I would keep you updated regularly; ask for your support with interpretation of findings and highlighting the most important elements etc.)
- Would you be happy to sign a letter of endorsement to be included in my application?



Thank you for engaging

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