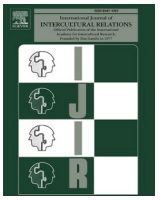
International Journal of Intercultural Relations 107 (2025) 102203

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Journal of Intercultural Relations

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel



Love of place: Conceptual framework and template for measuring the contributory and unitive affection towards a place

Victor Counted [a,b,*], Matthew T. Lee [b,d], Tim Lomas [b,c], Richard Cowden [b,c], Kelly-Ann Allen [e], Jayanti Basu [f], Daniel Laidler [g], Clay Routledge [h], David Seamon [h,i], Tyler J. VanderWeele [b,c]

[a] College of Health and Behavioral Sciences, Regent University, Virginia Beach, United States
[b] The Human Flourishing Program, Harvard University, Cambridge, United States
[c] Department of Epidemiology, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, United States
[d] Institute for Studies of Religion, Baylor University, Waco, TX, United States
[e] Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, Australia
[f] Department of Applied Psychology, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India
[g] Independent Researcher, Etchingham, East Sussex, England, UK
[h] Human Flourishing Lab, Archbridge Institute, Washington, DC, United States
[i] Department of Architecture, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Love of place
Place attachment
Belonging
Nostalgia
Solastalgia
Well-being
Sacred Space
Biophilic connection

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the construct of 'love of place'—a deep connection with a significant place (unitive love) and a desire to see it flourish (contributory love), which is distinct from and extends beyond traditional notions of place attachment, nostalgia, or belonging that are common in the literature on place. Drawing from interdisciplinary perspectives, including environmental psychology, urban studies, and cultural geography, we explore how individuals form deep affections to places that shape their admiration, care, and a sense of reverence or affection for a significant place. Using the Delphi method, a panel of experts and scholars with expertise on love, place, or the intersection between the two formed the basis for the thematic analysis, which helped refine the construct across seven core dimensions: identity, emotional attachment, biophilic connection, sacred spaces, communal harmony, and heritage. We operationalized each dimension according to unitive and contributory domains, emphasizing how this framing of love might foster personal and collective flourishing. Our findings highlight how environmental changes,in some cases leading to solastalgia, disrupt the spatial affections associated with some expressions or manifestations of love of place. Unlike related constructs, the contributory aspect of love of place involves a desire to contribute to the good of a place, akin to how people express unconditional love for individuals. We argue that a key difference lies in the nature of the affections involved. Love of place invokes deeper emotional and existential elements, as well as aspects beyond emotions, while an emotion like place attachment, for example, may focus more on functionality and familiarity. Our proposed framework of love of place offers a new lens for exploring place-related experiences and could inform future research on spatial affection and environmental stewardship.

* Correspondence to: College of Health and Behavioral Sciences, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA 23464, United States.
E-mail addresses: vcounted@regent.edu, connect@victorcounted.org (V. Counted).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2025.102203
Received 16 January 2025; Received in revised form 22 April 2025; Accepted 30 April 2025
Available online 10 May 2025
0147-1767/© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Introduction

Love, as an emotion, act, virtue, and more, has been extensively dissected and debated through various lenses—philosophical (Kant, 1788), theological (Aquinas, 1274), and psychological (Stanberg, 1986, 1997). This multi-faceted view, however, often bypasses a deep-seated and universal yet underexplored connection: our profound 'love' of and for specific places (Counted et al., 2021; Lewicka, 2011; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). The loving bond with a place transcends the typical associations we have about love focused solely on relationships with other beings (Lomas et al., 2024; Scannell et al., 2020). The attachment and sense of fondness between a person and a place, be it their home, a cherished vacation spot, or a sacred pilgrimage site, carries a meaning that is often as profound as any interpersonal relationship (Counted et al., 2023). Yet, while there is abundant research on interpersonal love (Langner et al., 2015), 'love of place' has remained a relatively untouched topic. This gap in existing literature presents a fertile ground for exploring the unique complexities of 'love of place', a concept that transcends mere geographical connection to include a rich understanding of emotions, memories, beliefs, experiences, behaviors, and identities tethered to people's affection for their spaces and environments.

We acknowledge that the word 'love' is used to signify a variety of nouns, verbs, and other parts of speech (Lee 2022). Love comes in many cultural 'flavors' (Lomas, 2018) and often seems like "an AustroHungarian Empire uniting all sorts of feelings, behaviors, and attitudes, sometimes having little in common" (Murstein, quoted in Berscheid, 2010, p.6). There are many types of love such as parental, romantic, spiritual, compassionate, and so on (Lomas, 2018). If there is an essential core present in all expressions of love, it would probably involve a disposition to 1) contribute to the good of the beloved (*contributory love*) and 2) to relate to the beloved in healthy, life-affirming ways (*unitive love*) (Aquinas, 1274/1948, parts 1–2, 26, 4; Lee, 2022; VanderWeele, 2023; VanderWeele and Lee, 2022). Love is perhaps most often understood as a feeling (noun), and less often as an action (verb). It is reasonable to assume that love of place would include both feelings and actions—and much else—as people will likely have strong emotions when their beloved places are threatened or are thriving and they may take 'loving' actions to protect and nurture such places (Counted et al., 2023). 'Love of place' is related to other constructs, such as place attachment, but it is not reducible to them because it includes so many possible meanings and expressions.

In light of the rich historical and philosophical background hinting at the spiritual and emotional resonance that places hold in our lives (Counted et al., 2023), how can we study and operationalize 'love of place'? What constitutes love as a deep-rooted emotion for a specific place, or as a set of actions aimed at contributing to the flourishing of a place, or as a desire to dwell in, feel connected to, and identify with such a place? How does love of place mirror, complement, or even contrast with other well-recognized forms of love? Historically, love of place may find its roots in religious scriptures and indigenous tales where the land itself becomes a character, a deity, or even a part of one's identity (Counted & Watts, 2017; Seamon, 2018). For example, the Maasai's spiritual connection to their territories, the Jewish love for their Promised Land in the Bible while in the wilderness, and the Cherokee's reverent bond with their ancestral lands are testament to this, highlighting the historical roots of this profound connection (Counted & Watts, 2017; Lomas et al., 2024; Shuck, 2022).

In this paper, we collectively bridge the evident gap left by mainstream studies that have historically underrepresented the nuanced affections and relations that humans have with significant places. We conceptualize 'love of place' alongside other more recognized affective forms of connection to place to enrich our understanding of human emotions, offering a fresh perspective that embraces the cultural richness and historical depth of this connection. But we do not limit love of place to affections. Thus we ask, how do diverse disciplinary perspectives illuminate the distinctive characteristics and impacts of 'love of place' on human emotions, actions, and communal flourishing? This primary research question yielded the following questions: 1) What are the distinctive characteristics that define the construct of 'love of place' across different cultures and communities? 2) In what ways do interdisciplinary perspectives conceptualize the understanding of 'love of place'? 3) How is 'love of place' operationalized as a psychological construct? We recognize that the need to understand the nuances of 'love of place' necessitates an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, we will employ the Delphi methods to study 'love of place', bringing insights from a panel of experts from various disciplines including anthropology, indigenous studies, psychology, sociology, and urban studies. We plan to operationalize the 'love of place' construct, identifying its distinctive measurable characteristics and its role in shaping human emotions and flourishing in place. We synthesize our findings to present a consolidated view of 'love of place' that not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge but also lays the groundwork for future research. It is our hope that such research might enrich the understanding of human connections and foster a renewed appreciation for the places that hold a significant place in our lives.

Methodology

This study adopted the Delphi method, a well-regarded decision-making and iterative qualitative research technique, to harness, analyze, and forecast expert insights into the concept of love of place. The Delphi method is particularly suited for exploring complex topics by leveraging the collective intelligence of experts in a structured, iterative manner (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). The choice of the research method was motivated by its efficacy in gathering, synthesizing, and refining expert knowledge on multifaceted subjects like 'love of place,' which spans across disciplines (Skulmoski et al., 2007).

Unlike traditional focus groups or meetings, the Delphi method involves a series of rounds of questionnaires sent to experts. These questionnaires are designed to collect expert opinions and insights on the topic being studied. Experts were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on professionals and academics with significant contributions to fields relevant to the study of love of place, including environmental psychology, urban studies, cultural geography, and sociology. Experts provided their feedback anonymously. This is thought to prevent the dominance of one opinion over others and to encourage free expression of ideas, reducing the influence

of group dynamics or powerful voices on the collective intelligence. Criteria for selection included publication history, leadership in relevant professional organizations, and recommendations from peer networks. An initial pool of 15 potential experts were identified, with 8 agreeing to participate after receiving detailed information about the study's aims and the Delphi process (Hasson et al., 2000).

The data collection was structured into three distinct rounds, designed to progressively refine the understanding of love of place. *Round 1 (Document Submission)*. Expert participants were asked to submit a document of 500–1000 words summarizing their personal and professional understanding of love of place or write about a particular aspect of this construct. This step aimed to gather a broad spectrum of perspectives, drawing on each expert's unique insights, research, and experiences. The documents served as a foundation for the subsequent rounds of inquiry and analysis.

Round 2 (Iterative Feedback)

After the first round of questionnaires, the responses are summarized and shared with the group (see Table 1), and then a second round of questionnaires may seek more specific insights or clarifications based on some preliminary analysis. Summaries from the first round were distributed among the panel for review. Expert participants rated the relevance of identified themes and concepts using a Likert scale (1−5) and provided feedback for refinement. This round encouraged reflective consideration and modification of initial thoughts in light of peer input (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963). This process of iteration can continue for several rounds until a consensus or a comprehensive understanding of the topic is reached.

Round 3 (Consensus Building)

The final round focused on reaching consensus on the core themes and their definitions. Expert participants reviewed a synthesized summary of themes, refined through feedback from the second round, and confirmed their agreement or suggested final adjustments. This round aimed to finalize the thematic structure representing a collective expert understanding of love of place (Rowe & Wright, 1999). Given its flexibility and the structured, iterative nature of the research process, the adopted Delphi method is especially suited to topics like "love of place" that span multiple disciplines. It allowed for the integration of diverse expert insights, facilitating an interactive exploration of love of place in order to produce a refined, collective judgement or a set of conclusions about the construct.

Data analysis involved a combination of qualitative content analysis for the initial documents and round feedback. The Delphi method facilitated an iterative refinement process, enabling the emergence of a consensus-driven, expert-endorsed framework for conceptualizing love of place (Keeney et al., 2006). Given the qualitative nature of the data, particularly the initial 500–1000 word documents (see Table 1) and subsequent rounds of feedback, we employed thematic analysis as our core analytical strategy. Initially, we immersed ourselves in the data by thoroughly reading and re-reading the expert-submitted documents (see Table 1) and feedback from all rounds of the Delphi process. This familiarization phase was crucial for understanding the depth of insights on the concept of love of place. Subsequently, initial codes were generated by systematically identifying and labeling meaningful units of text that captured essential ideas or meanings related to love of place. These codes were then collated into potential themes, grouping related codes to identify significant patterns that emerged across the dataset. A critical review of these themes followed, assessing their coherence and relevance to ensure that each theme accurately represented the experts' insights and was distinctively and comprehensively developed in relation to the primary research question: how do different disciplinary perspectives illuminate the distinctive characteristics and impacts of 'love of place' on human emotions and flourishing? The themes were refined, split, or merged as necessary, leading to the development of well-defined themes, each with a concise and informative name that captured its core concept. The final step involved weaving the thematic analysis findings into a coherent narrative, integrating the data with relevant literature to corroborate the experts' nuanced understanding of love of place, supported by direct quotations and examples from the expert documents. This approach ensured a balanced interpretation of the data in order to deepen the understanding of love of place.

Related and similar themes

This section summarizes experts' written documents gathered through the Delphi method. We begin by summarizing the initial perspectives submitted in Round 1, highlighting related themes and key concepts identified as conceptually analogous to love of place (please see the next sections for summary of themes). Subsequent sections will summarize the iterative feedback from Round 2, where expert input was synthesized and evaluated to refine the thematic structure. In the final section, we focus on the consensus achieved in Round 3, outlining the core themes and items that emerged from the collective expert judgment. Throughout these sections, direct quotations and examples are integrated to provide a rich understanding of the "love of place" across multiple disciplines.

Iterative synthesis of themes and thematic analysis of data

We explored the concept of 'love of place,' which transcends traditional notions of place attachment, including but not limited to a broader and richer panoply of emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and communal connections that individuals and communities develop with specific places, as well as actions they might take to enhance the well-being of such places. This experience includes the profound affection, belonging, and identity derived from places, which are interwoven into personal and collective narratives, thus becoming integral to our sense of self and community. Our findings highlight the uniqueness of love of place, characterized by emotional depths such as nostalgia and attachment, which differentiate it from simpler preferences or biophilic connections, which might partially constitute love of place but cannot account for it in its most holistic sense. Emotional resonance is key in understanding how specific

Table 1
Expert Contributions on Related Themes of Love of Place. This table outlines entries from experts on themes closely related with love of place. These contributions help us to better understand the multifaceted nature of love of place and its impact on human well-being, community cohesion, and environmental stewardship.

S/N	Expert	Discipline	Theme	Entries
1	Counted	Psychology	Place Attachment	Adult attachment theory provides an evolutionary lens to understand the attachment behavioral system and its psychological implications throughout life. This framework explores how repeated interactions with significant individuals shape internal working models—cognitive structures that influence expectations for future relationships (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969, 1973). These working models play an important role in human development (Ainsworth et al., 1978), serving as mental templates for identifying and evaluating surrogate attachment objects. Such objects offer proximity, a safe haven during distress, and a secure base for exploration. The need for proximity to a new attachment object often arises when an existing attachment relationship is disrupted, whether through loss, geographical or emotional separation, or perceived insensitivity of the previous attachment figure or object (Cicirelli, 2004). This dynamic is key to understanding place attachment, as places often become surrogate attachment objects, providing comfort, stability, and a sense of security amidst life's uncertainties. Adult attachment theorists see the environment as an object of attachment that people develop a relationship with (e.g., Counted et al., 2020; 2021). Object relations theorists, on the other hand, stress the importance of ecosystem object relationships. These different points of view both emphasize underlying mental representations that shape the neurological substrates that inform people-place relationships and the idea that place is a relational object (Counted et al., 2020). The attachment theoretical framework offers a much broader and more scientific lens through which to conceptualize and operationalize the positive emotional bond to meaningful places and seems to be the most preferred perspective amongst environmental psychologists (Counted et al., 2021; Lewicka, 2011; Scannell & Gifford, 2017). Place attachment has garnered significant attention in the field of environmental psychology. It is often conceptualized as the emotional bond between individuals and specific locations, a bond that includes feelings of affection (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). In this contribution, I will discuss love of place using the theory of place attachment, showing how layers of how emotional connections with places shape our experiences, behaviors, and identities which shape our tendency to love a place. The foundation of place attachment lies in the interplay between people and their environments, suggesting that our connections to places go beyond mere physical or geographical considerations. Tuan (1977) was among the first to explore the emotional significance of place, suggesting that 'place' becomes meaningful through the experiences and meanings we attach to it. This emotional bonding with place, as Tuan posits, is essential for understanding the concept of 'topophilia,' or the love of place. Recent scholarship has expanded on Tuan's foundational ideas, introducing a multidimensional framework to conceptualize place attachment. Based on a seminal review of literature (Scannell & Gifford, 2010), place attachment is structured around three main dimensions: person, place, and process. The person dimension acknowledges individual differences in the formation of place attachments, including personal history and identity. The place dimension considers the physical and social characteristics that make a place unique. The process dimension includes the interactions and experiences that contribute to the development of attachment over time. This framework is useful for understanding the complexity of place attachment, yet it also invites skepticism regarding the universality of its application when considering the variability in how people experience and form attachments. Moreover, the role of memory in shaping place attachment offers another layer of complexity. Hummon (1992) suggests that memories associated with specific places can intensify our emotional connections to them, influencing our sense of identity and belonging. This perspective highlights the temporal dimension of place attachment, where past experiences play a role in the formation of emotional bonds. However, it also raises questions about the potential for nostalgia, where one longs for the past, to color our perceptions of places, possibly leading to an idealized or distorted sense of attachment. The relationship between place attachment and community well-being has also been a topic of interest, which also has implications for love of place. Research highlights that strong place attachments foster community cohesion and well-being by nurturing a shared sense of belonging and social support (Lewicka, 2011). This connection underscores the beneficial aspects of loving a place (especially in a unitive sense, although contributory love is likely relevant as well), not just for individuals but for communities at large. However, the link between place attachment and love of place is not straightforward. On one hand, strong attachments can sometimes act as barriers to change, making it difficult for communities to adapt to necessary environmental and social shifts (Counted et al., 2021; Devine-Wright et al., 2020). The COVID−19 pandemic and other environmental disruptions have further complicated this dynamic, challenging our emotional bonds with places as physical spaces change or become inaccessible (Counted et al., 2021). For instance, coastal communities facing rising sea levels may experience a profound sense of loss as cherished landscapes alter or disappear, potentially weakening the bonds of community and place. Yet, in urban environments, community gardens or parks can serve as focal points for developing and strengthening place attachments, demonstrating how positive engagement with our environments can enhance community well-being and resilience. Developing such positive spaces within a place could be seen as an act of contributory love that in turn strengthens the unitive love that residents feel for the place as a whole. While strong attachments to place have clear benefits for social cohesion and individual

(*continued on next page*)

Table 1 (*continued*)

S/N	Expert	Discipline	Theme	Entries
				well-being, they also pose challenges in times of change. However, over time, a strong attachment to a place may evolve into a profound love of place, a transformation that can be observed in the ways individuals and communities interact with their environment. This process typically unfolds through accumulated experiences and shared memories that imbue a place with deep personal and collective significance. For instance, a city park where families gather for picnics, friends meet for walks, and festivals are celebrated becomes more than just a green space—it transforms into a repository of cherished memories, a symbol of community, and a place of refuge and joy. These layers of emotional investment and positive associations foster a strong sense of belonging and identity among the people who share these spaces. Consequently, what begins as mere attachment—perhaps based on convenience or aesthetics—deepens into a love of place, characterized by a profound connection and commitment to the well-being and preservation of these spaces. This natural development highlights the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between people and places, where deep emotional bonds not only enrich individual lives but also contribute to the vibrancy and resilience of communities.
2	Seamon	Architecture	Place Vibrancy and Wholeness	The question is how love of place happens and whether it might be facilitated in some intentional, self-conscious way. In *Life Takes Place* (Seamon, 2018), I argued that this phenomenon is auxiliary to a more central place dynamic that I described generatively in terms of six interconnected place processes: *place interaction, place identity, place release, place realization, place intensification,* and *place creation*. Briefly, place interaction refers to the typical, everyday events and situations of a place, and place identity refers to the ways that a place contributes to one's sense of self and group. Place release refers to the serendipitous encounters and experiences happening in a place, and place realization refers to the independent power of a place to sustain a particular environmental order and constancy. Place intensification refers to the active ways that the physical qualities and environmental ensemble of a place supports or stymies the life of a place, and place creation refers to the making of thoughtful designs, plans, and policies whereby a place becomes stronger and more its best possible self. In my book, I suggested that love of place, attachment to place, and care for place will most likely be present because, first of all, these six processes are working in an intensive, constructive way whereby the place provides some quality of robustness and life: a vibrant stretch of city sidewalk; a well-used plaza; an office building housing a sense of work camaraderie; a dwelling contributing to its family's "good life." I emphasize that each of the six place processes also has a destructive side: for example, a city neighborhood struck by the undermining place interaction of soaring crime faces deteriorating place identity, unsettling episodes of place release, and a failing environmental order that may provoke an out-migration of residents and users or the construction of defensive barriers and "urban fortresses" that interfere with the neighborhood's physical and social integrity. One important counter is improvements via place creation and intensification whereby workable design and planning improvements provide ways to reverse place entropy and kickstart a virtuous cycle whereby the place regains in vibrancy and wholeness. Some of the best guides for effective place creation are Jane Jacobs' *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961); Christopher Alexander and colleagues' *Pattern Language* (1977); Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson's *The Social Logic of Space* (1984); Ian Bentley and colleagues' *Responsive Environments* (1985)*;* and Matthew Carmona's *Public Places, Urban Spaces* (2021). Place vibrancy and wholeness are crucial for facilitating love of place and care for place and presuppose and require the vigorous presence of the six place processes. Without this vigor of place, love and care are probably pipedreams.
3	Allen	Psychology	Belonging	In psychological and social sciences, the construct of belonging has been described as a core human need and driver for human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1965; Ryan & Deci, 2002). Some conceptualisations of belongingness are based on the innate human desire to form and maintain lasting, satisfying, and meaningful positive interpersonal relationships with others, however, broader conceptualisations exist that extend beyond people alone and include the experience of feeling a deep connection and sense of belonging to place (see Allen et al., 2021 for a review). The Australian Aboriginal connection to land provides a compelling example for understanding "love of place" through the lens of belonging. Land, in Aboriginal culture, is not merely a geographical entity or destination; it is a living, spiritual entity that holds a collective memory, meaning, identity, and source of connection for Aboriginal culture. Moreton-Robinson (2015) describes this relationship as ontological, suggesting that for Indigenous peoples, land is central to identity, law, and sovereignty. The land serves as a repository of narratives and stories, traditions and rituals, and generational wisdom. However, the loss of land due to colonisation and subsequent policies that triggered misplacement, marginalisation, and relocation, has had a profound impact on Indigenous culture and disrupted belonging. It is well established that the absence of belonging can result in adverse psychological outcomes and mental health problems. The forced removal from ancestral lands (e.g., through stolen generations in Australia) serves not just a physical connection, but also a spiritual and psychological one, leading to what has been described in the literature as a trans-generational and collective trauma that pervades today. Moreton-Robinson (2015) frames this disruption as part of a colonial logic of possession that denies the relationship Indigenous peoples have with their land. In contrast, Dorothea Mackellar's nationalistic poem My Country encapsulates a Eurocentric love of the Australian landscape. Lines such as "I love a sunburnt country, A land of sweeping plains"

(*continued on next page*)

Table 1 (*continued*)

S/N	Expert	Discipline	Theme	Entries
				reflect a narrative of attachment to place that is widely taught in schools, yet this perspective often fails to account for the complex and layered experiences of belonging across Australian communities. For Indigenous Australians, this connection to land is spiritual and ontological, while for others, such as immigrants, it may reflect different histories, memories, or identities. The experience of indentured laborers in Fiji offers another example to examine the complexities of love of place through a belonging lens (Prasad, 2008). Originally referred to as "Girmitiyas," these individuals were brought to Fiji from India in the late 19th and early 20th centuries under the British colonial "Girmit" system to work on sugar plantations. Despite being physically separated from their homeland, the Girmitiyas and their descendants have maintained and even strengthened their cultural, linguistic, and religious practices, fostering a strong connection to India (V. Mishra, personal communication, November 20, 2024). While they have been described to have developed their own version of Hindi, reflecting the evolution of language, their cultural heritage remains closely aligned with that of India—arguably more so than in other parts of the Indian diaspora such as Trinidad, Mauritius, Malaysia, and South Africa (V. Mishra, personal communication, November 20, 2024). For many descendants of these laborers, Fiji has become a place they love and feel a deep sense of belonging to. However, systemic and structural barriers to full belonging have existed over time through political tensions and rigid ethnic classifications. Historically, despite being born in Fiji and identifying themselves as integral members of the nation, many descendants of indentured laborers were officially classified as "Indo-Fijian" or "Indian" rather than "Fijian" (Prasad, 2008). This classification emphasized a societal divide that impacted their national identity—the understanding of oneself as belonging to a nation—and hindered their ability to fully claim a Fijian identity. The term "Fijian" was traditionally reserved for indigenous Fijians, reinforcing distinctions between the indigenous population and those of Indian descent. Following the coup of 2006 and the promulgation of a new constitution, everyone in Fiji is considered "Fijian," a change intended to create a more inclusive national identity. However, this shift has been met with resistance from the indigenous Fijian people, who believe the term is sacrosanct to them (V. Mishra, personal communication, November 20, 2024). This ongoing tension shows the complexities of belonging for many communities who navigate their love of place within systemic barriers. When societal systems restrict how individuals identify, they risk complicating or even disrupting their sense of belonging and, consequently, their love of place.
4	Basu	Psychology	Biophilia	What does a person mourn when they have to leave their home – by force or by choice? In traditional Indian culture, married women have to stay with their in-laws. The bride is supposed to please the in-laws and adjust to the culture of the groom's home. Sometimes, especially in villages, this takes the form of stressful demands, torture and loss of rights (Rao, 1997). In earlier eras, the pathos of many lonely child brides, barred from visiting her parental family, had been expressed in folk songs and poems. The first two lines of one such Bengali poem roughly translates as follows: 'On the other bank of the river, the chilli plant is glittering with bright red fruits. O my dear talented brother, I pine for you.' While these two lines have always brought tears to my eyes, they also generated the question that why this yearning for the beloved brother starts with the description of a chilli plant on the other bank of the river – a common household plant in villages. Does the pain of displacement from a safe haven, the desire to reconnect with the lost family, remind us of familiar shelter from nature, which is on the other bank of the river and hence not easily accessible? The biophilia hypothesis, used by the socially inclined psychoanalyst Fromm (1973), and later taken up in evolutionary context by Wilson (1984) and Kellert and Wilson (1993) suggests an innate affiliation of human beings with nature and other living beings. Although genetic research is yet to support this hypothesis, it is assumed that biophilia is directly challenged by technological and consumerist encroachment (Kellert & Wilson, 1993). Advanced technological development may diminish the biophilic sensitivity (the human ability to feel connected to and appreciate natural elements), and this might be a major source of species extinction and environmental pollution. Recent reviews including meta analytical studies lend support to the biophilia hypothesis (Barbiero & Berto, 2021; Gaekwad, 2022) and also the fact that affiliation to nature is good for human physical, mental and social health (Grinde & Patil. 2009). Hence the promotion of biophilic design (Tekin et al., 2023). In this section, I argue that forced displacement is associated with greater biophoilia as a part of the remembered lost place, while voluntary displacement associated with consumerist motivation may not. I will share two research findings conducted in Kolkata, myself being a part of both. The Indian subcontinent has seen repeated violent bloodbath in the form of riots between Hindus and Muslims for many centuries. In 1947, partition took place causing the birth of two nations, India and Pakistan. During this time, and subsequently in another violent riot between 1950 and 1952, many persons migrated to the other side of the border leaving their ancestral homes behind. Memoirs and sociological and literary analyses of those who migrated to India from East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, have revealed a deep affinity and mourning for nature, especially the rivers and the greenery (e.g., Chakrabarty, 1996; Mahbub & Saba, 2018). The same was supported in my own research with a psychoanalytical perspective of partition memories (Basu, 2014). Flowing water and vegetation were the two major things that appeared repeatedly in the memory of lost land, often symbolizing a regressive mood to mother nature. The second research was held at selected villages inside the Himalayan range. Once a haven of natural beauty, many such places are now an adventure sports town with many facilities. This qualitative

(*continued on next page*)

Table 1 (*continued*)

S/N	Expert	Discipline	Theme	Entries
				research concerned the hill people's attitude toward climate change and urbanized development (Misra, 2023). As yet unpublished findings reveal that while the elderly participants had palpable nostalgia about lost natural beauty, the younger ones, especially those who had the scope for going out of the village and working in metropolitan cities, demonstrated little sensitivity toward destroyed nature. The development of tourism and the career opportunities thereof were welcomed by all. Therefore, it seems that when change is forced, nature is mourned. When change is triggered as a package within development, inculcating modern and consumerist values, mourning for lost place is minimized. This supports the notion of gradual weakening of biophilia.
5	Cowden	Psychology	Saudade for Place	In the Portuguese language, *saudade* is a frequently used word that broadly "covers reactions to a number of circumstances that involve separation from familiar and loved persons and places" (Neto & Mullet, 2020, p. 1). Saudade has been described in different ways, and because of its complexity there is little consensus about the precise meaning of the concept. For example, one study of its prototypical features among Portuguese laypeople found that "each participant was able to evoke about seven different features, which resulted in a total list of 182 separate features" (Neto & Mullet, 2014, p. 668). Some of the most commonly identified features included memories, sensation of loss, pain, joy, loneliness, and love. Although there is no direct English equivalent for saudade, it generally refers to a bittersweet cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and motivational experience that involves yearning for a beloved person (e.g., close friend), object (e.g., place of personal significance), or prior state (e.g., specific period of time in the past) that is absent, missing, or can no longer be accessed or experienced (Neto, 2021; Silva, 2012). Saudade is related to nostalgia, but there is a future-oriented component to saudade [e.g., the yearning or hope for a reunion with what is currently absent, lost, or inaccessible] that is not characteristic of nostalgia (Neto & Mullet, 2014). From some of the earliest recorded applications of the term, people have used saudade to describe an experiential state associated with being separated from a place to which they have an emotional bond, such their country of origin, a sacred place they long to visit, or their childhood home (Magalhães, 2020). At the root of many place-related experiences of saudade is a unitive love of place, which might be understood as a desire to be united with a particular place. For example, COVID−19 pandemic travel restrictions in many parts of the world may have elicited saudade for personally significant places (e.g., country of origin) that people had a diminished possibility of accessing (Malet Calvo et al., 2022). Such experiences reflect a kind of place attachment disruption that has been used to describe a distressing experience that can arise "when people are separated from a place that holds significance" (Counted et al., 2023; Cowden et al., 2021, p. 47), although descriptions of saudade as being "suffused with melancholic sweetness" suggest that saudade will often also involve positively valenced emotions as well (Counted et al., 2020; Feldman, 2001, p. 51). Other forms of place-related experiences of saudade could originate principally from a contributory love of place, which might be understood as desiring the good of a particular place. For example, a person might experience saudade in response to learning that a cherished place they visited with some frequency while growing up (e.g., family holiday destination) had experienced extreme weather that caused irrecoverable damage, or saudade may be evoked by news that land pollution is changing the quality of wildlife habitat areas in a national park of the country in which a person lives. With increased global attention toward planetary flourishing and growing concerns about the impacts of climate change, these kinds of placed-related saudade may become increasingly prevalent.
6	Counted	Psychology	Sense of Place	Sense of place theory provides a lens through which we can understand the phenomenon of love of place. This theory explores the different relationship between individuals and their environments, focusing on the subjective feelings, perceptions, and meanings that constitute a person's experience of a specific location (Raymond et al., 2021). As I conceptualize love of place through the prism of sense of place theory, the emotional and affective dimensions of sense of place come to mind as foundational in understanding love of place. This affection for a place is not merely a reaction to the physical characteristics of a location but also to the meanings and experiences associated with it (Tuan, 1974). The emotional connection to a place is often vividly seen in people's hometown pride. For instance, individuals born and raised in a small town may feel a profound connection to it, not solely because of the town's physical attributes but more so because of their childhood memories, experiences of community events, and the familiar faces that represent comfort and belonging. Sense of place theory also emphasizes the cultural-social dimensions in shaping our connections to place. According to Relph (1976), the essence of place comes from the meanings constructed through our experiences and social interactions within specific settings. The cultural-social aspect of sense of place is exemplified through the collective celebration of local festivals that reinforce a community's identity and unity. For example, consider the annual Mardi Gras in New Orleans and Sydney, which is not just a tourist attraction but a cultural cornerstone for the local community, embodying a sense of belonging, shared heritage, and collective memory. Participants and spectators, both local and visitors, partake in traditions that are deeply ingrained in the city's social fabric, thus reinforcing their love for the place through shared cultural practices. These meanings are deeply influenced by cultural narratives and collective memories that pervade our understanding of love of place. The relationship between place, identity, and belonging is another aspect of love of place within the affordances of sense of place theory. This environmental dimension of love of place can be

(*continued on next page*)

Table 1 (*continued*)

S/N	Expert	Discipline	Theme	Entries
				seen in the actions of local environmental groups dedicated to protecting natural and cultural sites. Proshansky et al. (1983) introduced the concept of 'place identity,' suggesting that physical environments contribute significantly to the development of personal and social identities. This connection implies that love of place may be related with our sense of self and belonging. For example, community-led conservation efforts in national parks demonstrate a collective love of place that goes beyond personal enjoyment to include a commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability. Volunteers who work to maintain trails, clean up litter, or engage in reforestation projects do so out of a deep love and respect for the natural environment. This illustrates how love of place encompasses not only an appreciation for the beauty and recreational opportunities that these natural settings offer but also a recognition of the importance of preserving them for future generations. In conclusion, love of place is a multifaceted phenomenon that is deeply embedded within the emotional, cultural-social, and environmental engagements with specific locales. However, the impact of environmental changes and place disruptions presents a new challenge to the sense of place, because as places change due to environmental degradation, urban development, or natural disasters, the emotional, cognitive, and environmental connections that define love of place are also threatened (Counted et al., 2021; Stedman, 2002).
7	Laidler	Psychology	Hagioptasia	In the Spring of 2012, I was walking with my father in the countryside of my childhood home, when we came across a recently cleared patch of scrub. A large, corrugated iron shed had stood on this site when I was a very young boy. I have vague memories of being inside the building; standing on the bare, boarded floor, looking out across the fields towards home through a large, windowless opening. Decades later it still excited me to see the remaining traces, rekindling the same enigmatic and almost 'magical' feelings that my memories of the shed had aroused in me as a child. I was not surprised to hear that my father did not share these wonderful feelings, as this was a place he came to know as an adult - he had his own 'special' memories in the places of his own childhood. A desire to explain the existence of such mysterious psychological phenomena in myself and others, led me to develop the theory of hagioptasia (holy vision) as a common tendency to perceive certain people, places or things as possessing a preternatural quality of 'specialness' (Johnson & Laidler, 2020). The influence of hagioptasia can be characterised as fleeting notions of an abstract, unfathomable—almost otherworldly—sense of 'special', which tend to evoke feelings of wonderment and longing.[a] The 'longing' inspired by hagioptasic notions has often been referred to as 'sehnsucht'; a German term, which the writer and theologian C.S. Lewis described as an "inconsolable longing" for "we know not what". As a consequence of its mysterious, ethereal nature, hagioptasia is commonly interpreted as mystical or 'divine' - a glimpse of heavenly glory. However, our research points to such perceptions as being the influence of an evolved psychological mechanism; an instinctive drive that evolved to direct the behaviour of our ancestors, yet one which continues to have a profound impact on the minds and cultures of modern humans. Hence, we (I) recognise hagioptasia as an 'illusory' influence, creating a mirage of desirability or 'specialness' that always remains out of reach—inevitably leading to 'inconsolable longings'.[b] One example of where we can discern the illusory quality of hagioptasia is in how adult memories of everyday life can, over time, acquire a romanticising gloss that transforms these recollections into something far more wonderful, and seemingly more 'meaningful'. This 'rose tinting' of our past plays a significant role in creating nostalgic emotions and fresh notions of attachment to places we have known. Childhood attachments of hagioptasia regularly endure well into adulthood and beyond. Some of these attachments appear quite arbitrary - a cupboard under the stairs, or an old shed perhaps - while others appear to be more socialised; a religious monument, or the gated entrance to grand house, for example. Recognising hagioptasia as illusory may be problematic for many people, as it will no doubt conflict with personal beliefs of what these perceptions of specialness 'mean', or perhaps it will appear to undermine their own, more earthly pursuits for 'social status'. While much remains to be explored in the relation between hagioptasia and psychological well-being, it would seem evident that an awareness of its illusory nature negates the feelings of longing it otherwise evokes. Also, an understanding of hagioptasia theory enables us to avoid futile (unattainable) attempts to realise these wonderful notions of glory - and the disappointment, frustration and despondency that may result. Like the poets and artists of the Romantic movement, we might benefit from embracing hagioptasic experiences and drawing on Romanticism's notions of spirituality. Hagioptasia may be the product of an evolved psychological function, yet this need not invalidate the wonderment it inspires in us for evening skies and pastoral scenes. Hagioptasia feels deep, authentic and timeless - fitting for a primeval essence that colours our thoughts. Indeed, in this respect hagioptasia really does connect our 'love of place' with the wider natural world; ineffable thoughts and feelings of connection, beauty and wonder - previously considered exclusive to human sensibilities - are rooted in a shared evolutionary heritage.
8	Lee	Sociology	Solastalgia	Whenever we love, we become vulnerable to the suffering of our beloved (Lewis, 1960). Through an experience of empathy, we feel what they feel. Parents know that it is possible to endure greater vicarious distress over their child's suffering than the child does from the suffering itself. Such experiences are relevant for love of place, especially with regard to *solastalgia*: emotional or

(*continued on next page*)

Table 1 (*continued*)

S/N	Expert	Discipline	Theme	Entries
				physical distress caused by significant environmental degradation, involving some combination of "the loss of ecosystem health and corresponding sense of place, threats to personal health and wellbeing and a sense of injustice and/or powerlessness" (Albrecht et al., 2007, p.S96). Drawing on our discussion of unitive and contributory forms of love, we note that that suffering is likely to ensue when we are: 1) separated from the places we love (*deprivation of unitive love*) and 2) unable to contribute to the flourishing of such places (*deprivation of contributory love*). For example, residents may love a place that is experiencing significant environmental devastation—as with open-pit mining that destroys a large swath of the surface area of a place. One interviewee explained their ire at the company that engaged in this practice near their home: "You love that land, even though I married into it. I came to love it because I knew the history of it…. And I thought, the love of that place, it doesn't mean anything now that we've got all those wretched international companies. They don't care" (Albrecht et al., 2007, p.S97). This individual expresses the feeling of powerlessness to protect the place from the environmental degradation imposed by this form of mining. One Indigenous interviewee stated, "It is very depressing, it brings you down…. We take different routes to travel down south just so we don't have to see all the holes, all the dirt … because it makes you wild" (Albrecht et al., 2007, p.S97). That experience of separation creates a deficit of unitive love. The inability to stop the destruction represents a deficit of contributory love, or at least the prevention of the expression of such love. For many young people, solastalgia might attach to the planet as a whole rather than a specific homeland. One recent study of 10,000 children and young people (aged 16–25 years) in ten countries found that a majority experience high levels of "climate anxiety" (59 %) and sometimes think that "humanity is doomed" (55.7 %), that "people have failed to take care of the planet (82.6 %), and that "my government is/other governments are betraying me and/or future generations" (58.5 %) (Hickman et al., 2021, p.e868–9). Young people from the Global South in this study tended to express higher levels of concern and impact on functioning than those in the Global North. The authors of the study conclude that adults and governments have created a "culture of uncare" (with regard to the well-being of youths and the planet, and that, "Subjecting young people to climate anxiety and moral injury can be regarded as cruel, inhuman, degrading, or even torturous" (Hickman et al., 2021, p.e871). On this view, the failure to express adequate forms of contributory love for a place (the Earth) corresponds to a similar inability to love people (youths and future generations). The degree to which a group of people will suffer with, and suffer for, a place that is being degraded will at least partly depend on the strength of their love and the depths of their connection to it, among a great many other factors. Relational cosmologies, as opposed to extractive ones that objectify nature, might involve a deeply felt experience of grief whenever the living planet ("Mother Earth") is harmed. However, "we can only grieve for what we know" (Leopold, cited in Burton-Christie, 2011, p.42), suggesting that where unitive love is lacking so too are we likely to find a contributory love deficit. To love requires deep understanding and this depth of knowing encourages a profound sense of attachment. Seeing a place more fully, with a lens of love—which may include framing it as "sacred"—is very different than seeing it superficially with an objectifying lens that renders the place as a collection of natural "resources" to be exploited. If we are alienated from a place (geographically or emotionally) we may not be in a position to grieve it. Depending on the level of attachment, people may experience solastalgia as a debilitating form of distress. This could include excess mortality due to cardiovascular and respiratory ailments at the group level, as appears to have resulted from the destruction of ash trees caused by the invasive emerald ash borer (see Frumkin, 2013, p.196 for a discussion of this specific example in the context of the broader question of what "dose of nature" is necessary for human health). If we cannot see that our actions to contribute to the good of a place are making a meaningful difference, it might be protective to experience a psychological "numbing, resulting in an inability or unwillingness to acknowledge or respond to this loss lest it completely overwhelm and perhaps debilitate us" (Burton-Christie, 2011, p.29–30). But this kind of coping is a poor foundation for collective action in the service of effective contributory love of place.
9	Routledge	Psychology	Nostalgia	In 1688, a Swiss medical student named Johaness Hofer coined the term nostalgia by combining two Greek words: *nostos* (return to the native land) and *algos* (pain) to represent what he believed to be a medical illness experienced by Swiss mercenary soldiers who were serving in European wars far from their homeland (Hofer, 1688/1934). Hofer proposed that nostalgia was causing these soldiers a significant amount of physical and mental suffering. Their longing for home involved symptoms such as sadness, anxiety, fatigue, insomnia, irregular heartbeat, loss of appetite, thirst, indigestion, and fever. Though Hofer conceptualized nostalgia as a Swiss disease, eventually, it became a diagnosis given to soldiers and other travellers across different regions of the world. For example, during the American Civil War, Union physicians reported that many northern soldiers fighting in southern states suffered from the disease (Matt, 2007). Thus, from its early scholarly conception, nostalgia was strongly associated with attachment to place. Essentially, nostalgia was similar to what we would refer to today as homesickness (Davis, 1979). During the 20th century, psychologists began recognizing that just as people experience negative emotions associated with a longing for home, they also experience both negative and positive emotions associated with longing for a range of places, people, objects, events, and abstract aspects of the past (Routledge, 2023b). It was at this point that the concepts of nostalgia and homesickness began to part ways. Whereas homesickness remained focused on psychological

(*continued on next page*)

Table 1 (*continued*)

S/N	Expert	Discipline	Theme	Entries
				distress associated with separation from home (Thurber and Walton, 2007), nostalgia started to be thought of as a more emotionally complex sentiment towards various features of the past (Wildschut et al., 2006). In the last quarter century, scholarly interest in nostalgia has exploded as researchers in the social, behavioral, and brain sciences have examined how people experience nostalgia, what causes people to feel nostalgic, and how nostalgic reflection affects a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral variables. This new science of nostalgia has revealed that the sentimental longing individuals feel for the past has many psychological benefits. For instance, distressing psychological states such as sadness, loneliness, and anxiety trigger nostalgia and nostalgia counteracts these negative states (Routledge et al., 2013). Experimental studies find that having individuals spend a few minutes reflecting on a memory that makes them nostalgic increases numerous positive psychological states and behaviors such as positive mood, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-continuity, feelings of belongingness, social confidence, perceptions of meaning in life, optimism for the future, creativity, and charitable giving (Wildschut & Sedikides, 2023). In other words, nostalgia is a self-regulatory and motivational resource that supports human flourishing (Routledge, 2023b). Even though nostalgia is now conceptualized as being distinct from homesickness, the concept of home is still an important component of nostalgia. Critically, contemporary empirical research on nostalgia can help elucidate the deeply social and existential nature of love of home and love of place more broadly. Specifically, studies find that nostalgic memories typically involve loved ones (Sedikides et al., 2015). Indeed, when asked to classify the general nature of their nostalgic memories, around three quarters of American adults indicate that these memories are best characterized as social experiences involving family, romantic partners, or close friends (Routledge, 2023a). Furthermore, loneliness and other forms of social disconnection are powerful triggers of nostalgia (Sedikides et al., 2015) and nostalgia reduces social pain by reminding people of socially fulfilling past experiences (Zhou et al., 2008), which helps them gain confidence that they can resolve their current social problems and achieve social goals (Abeyta et al., 2015). Nostalgia is also deeply existential. Nostalgic memories are personally meaningful memories (Routledge et al., 2013). Eighty-four percent of American adults agree that their nostalgic memories remind them of what is most important in their lives (Routledge, 2023a). When people engage in nostalgic reflection, they perceive life as more meaningful in the present and are more motivated to pursue goals that they identify as personally meaningful (Abeyta & Pillarisetty, 2023). In addition, these existential benefits of nostalgia are social in nature. Specifically, feelings of love and belongingness (to place) mediate the relationships between nostalgia and meaning in life (Routledge et al., 2011) and individuals are most likely to view nostalgia as a source of comfort, inspiration, meaning, and guidance if their nostalgic memories are focused on close relationships (Routledge, 2023a). In short, a growing literature on the psychology of nostalgia suggests that love of place is strongly connected to the love of people associated with that place. When individuals bring to mind a nostalgic memory involving love of a specific place, ultimately, they are often bringing to mind a memory involving the close relationships that support existential meaning.

[a] This also suggests that while the immediate intensity of hagioptasic might wane, the memory of the experience and its associated emotions can be revisited and rekindled, maintaining a long-term influence on personal meaning and connection to certain places or objects. This enduring nature likely reflects the enduring psychological roots of hagioptasia.

[b] To add in context, positioning hagioptasia as 'illusory' implies the idea that the perceived 'specialness' or 'sacredness' is not an inherent quality of the place or object itself but rather a subjective, evolved psychological response. This does not necessarily mean the experience is false or invalid; rather, it suggests that our minds attribute sacredness or specialness as part of a deeply ingrained tendency, possibly shaped by evolutionary pressures (e.g., attachment to resource-rich environments and building social bonds through shared rituals).

locales play significant roles in shaping our identities and experiences, contributing to our emotional and psychological well-being. The loss of beloved places leads to solastalgia (Albrecht et al., 2007), underscoring the critical impact of this spatial emotion on our well-being.

Furthermore, the spiritual dimension of certain places evokes feelings of transcendence, which can enhance the existential connections we have with these places (Counted & Meagher et al., 2024). These dimensions are expressed in unitive and contributory ways (Aquinas, 1274/1948), where unitive love reflects our deep emotional and existential connection to places that we value intrinsically and find delightful in themselves. This intrinsic value is seen in how places shape our identities and offer profound emotional and spiritual satisfactions. On the other hand, contributory love is evident in our desire for the preservation and flourishing of these places for their own sake, recognizing their right to exist and be preserved, which enhances our communal and cultural well-being. Both forms of love highlight a reciprocal relationship between individuals and their environments, where the love of place not only contributes to individual and communal flourishing but also fosters a collective commitment to the stewardship of meaningful places. We discuss these nuances of love of place in subsequent sections to enrich our understanding of human emotional landscapes and offer a robust framework for future research and policies on this psychological construct.

The thematic analysis, informed by the iterative rounds of the Delphi method, synthesized contributions from a panel of experts ($N = 8$; Male 75 %) across environmental psychology, urban planning, sociology, and related disciplines. This process led to the analysis of seven core themes that articulate the unique understanding of love of place, each reflecting the depth of insight offered by

the panel.

Theme 1: identity of place

The concept of 'love of place' ties into how individuals and communities construct their sense of self and belonging (i.e., identities) in relation to their affections for the physical and cultural landscapes they inhabit. This theme reflects the dynamic relationship between place and self, illustrating how one's sense of identity is deeply tethered to specific places (Counted et al., 2021; Allen et al., 2021). As summarized in Table 1, Allen explores the intricate bond between identity and place, observing, "The Australian Aboriginal connection to land…is not merely a geographical entity…it is a living, spiritual entity that holds collective memory, meaning, identity" (Allen). This perspective underscores the profound ways in which place shapes individual and communal identities, offering a nuanced understanding of belonging. Lee adds a sociological dimension, emphasizing the emotional impact of environmental degradation on identity, through solastalgia, where "residents…express the feeling of powerless[ness] to protect the place from environmental degradation" (Lee). Seaman, from an architectural standpoint, discusses how urban planning and design contribute to place identity, suggesting "place creation…whereby a place becomes stronger and more [than] its best possible self" (Seaman). Together, these contributions illustrate the dynamic interplay between place, identity, and belonging in capturing how people's love of place shapes personal and communal identities.

Theme 2: emotional echoes of place

This construct of 'love of place' captures the spectrum of emotions tied to place, from deep affection and nostalgia to the anguish of loss or change. The discussions by experts Cowden, Lee, and Routledge illustrate the profound emotional and psychological impact of disconnection from the meaningful places we love. Cowden illustrates how the love of place involves a complex mix of memories, sensation of loss, and a bittersweet longing for what is absent, underscoring the emotional resonance places hold in our lives and the void their absence leaves. Lee explains this phenomenon as solastalgia, describing it as "emotional or physical distress caused by significant environmental degradation," highlighting a form of existential distress related to environmental change (Lee). This contributes to our understanding of love of place by showing how the degradation or loss of cherished environments can lead to a profound sense of loss and helplessness, which inadvertently impacts our well-being and sense of identity. Routledge's discussion on nostalgia further enriches this theme, portraying it as a sentimental longing for the past that can include longing for places we (once) love. Importantly, the echoes of place highlights how emotional bonds with places are formed, maintained, and sometimes painfully altered, emphasizing the profound impact of these attachments on personal well-being (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). This emotional resonance of place attachment plays a pivotal role in shaping the human experience (Counted et al., 2021), with several other experts contributing insights into how our environments evoke a profound sense of emotions. Cowden explores the concept of saudade, clarifying that "Saudade covers reactions to a number of circumstances that involve separation from familiar and loved persons and places" (Cowden). This description highlights the multifaceted nature of our emotional connections to place, which include both the joy and pain associated with memories and the longing for what has been lost or changed. Similar to place attachment disruption (Counted et al., 2021), saudade embodies the bittersweet nature of love of place, where emotional bonds are strong enough to elicit profound feelings of yearning for a return or preservation of the status quo. Routledge's exploration of nostalgia further enriches our understanding of emotional ties to place. He states, "Nostalgia is a self-regulatory and motivational resource that supports human flourishing" (Routledge), suggesting that reminiscing about cherished places can offer psychological benefits, reinforcing our sense of identity and belonging. This insight reveals the power of place-based nostalgia not just as a longing for the past but as a catalyst for emotional resilience and connection, thus emphasizing its significance in the construct of love of place. Allen also provides a psychological perspective on belonging, stating that "belonging…extends beyond people alone and includes the experience of feeling a deep connection and sense of belonging to place" (Allen). This conceptualization positions emotional attachment to place as a core aspect of human motivation and well-being, illustrating how love of place is intertwined with our need for belonging and identity. The emotional echoes of place, therefore, are not mere reflections of individual experiences but resonate through community and cultural narratives, shaping our collective understanding of feelings of attachment, nostalgia, and saudade towards the places we love.

Theme 3: biophilic connections

The human connection to nature, known as biophilia, is a critical aspect of understanding love of place, with several experts offering insights into its significance. Basu explores the deep-seated affiliation humans have with nature, positing, "The biophilia hypothesis suggests an innate affiliation of human beings with nature and other living beings" (Basu). This notion underscores the psychological and emotional comfort derived from our relationship with the natural environment, highlighting how biophilic connections are essential for fostering a love of place. Basu's reflection on the loss and mourning of nature in the context of displacement emphasizes the profound impact environmental changes have on our sense of belonging and identity. Furthering this discourse, Seaman discusses the concept of place vibrancy and wholeness, and notes how the physical qualities and environmental ensemble of a place support the life and well-being of its inhabitants. He argues that "love of place, attachment to place, and care for place… presuppose and require the vigorous presence of [place processes]" (Seaman), implicating the importance of biophilic design and interaction in creating spaces where love of place can flourish. This perspective illustrates how environmental empathy, the awareness, and concern for the natural environment, is intertwined with our emotional and psychological well-being, reinforcing the necessity of sustainable and empathetic interactions with our surroundings. Lee's exploration of solastalgia provides a poignant reflection on the

emotional distress caused by environmental degradation, stating (citing Albrecht et al., 2007, p.96): "Solastalgia involves…the loss of ecosystem health and corresponding sense of place" (Lee). This concept captures the deep sense of loss and longing for an unaltered natural environment, illustrating the negative impacts of environmental change on our love of place. Lee's examination highlights how a disrupted biophilic connection can lead to profound emotional and psychological distress, emphasizing the importance of maintaining and nurturing our natural environments to preserve the love of place (as the innate human affinity for natural environments).

Theme 4: mystique of the sacred space

This construct involves the perceptions of places as possessing an otherworldly quality or 'specialness'. This theme reflects on how certain locations evoke feelings of wonderment, spiritual connection, and an ineffable sense of belonging, beyond their physical attributes (Johnson & Laidler, 2020). Laidler introduces the concept of hagioptasia, which he defines as the perception of certain places (or things) as possessing a 'specialness' that evokes feelings of wonderment and longing (Laidler). This concept resonates deeply with the love of place by suggesting that certain locations hold an almost magical or sacred quality in our minds, sparking a profound connection that is both emotional and spiritual. Laidler's theory posits that these feelings are not just fleeting emotions but are deeply rooted in our psyche, shaping our perception of and attachment to these places. In discussing solastalgia, Lee extends the conversation to the impact of environmental degradation on our connection to place. While his focus is primarily on the distress caused by the loss of ecosystem health, his insights also touch upon the sacredness of place. He highlights how the destruction of cherished environments not only results in emotional distress but also in a profound sense of loss for the sacred spaces that once fostered a sense of peace and belonging (Lee). This loss reflects a disruption in the mystical bond between individuals and their environment, further emphasizing the depth of love we hold for places that resonate with our soul. Laidler's and Lee's discussions illustrate the multifaceted nature of love of place, involving not only emotional and psychological dimensions but also spiritual and sacred connections. The mystique of sacred spaces speaks to the human tendency to imbue places with meanings that transcend the tangible, fostering a deep, almost ineffable sense of attachment and reverence.

Theme 5: communal harmony and creative placemaking

This theme emphasizes collaborative efforts, thoughtful design, and planning as essential for fostering environments where people feel connected and engaged (Jacobs, 1961; Huang et al., 2023). Seaman articulates, "the phenomenon [of love of place] is auxiliary to a more central place dynamic that I described generatively in terms of six interconnected place processes: place interaction, place identity, place release, place realization, place intensification, and place creation" (Seaman). This view highlights the significance of designing environments that support the life of a community and its connection to place. He emphasizes that "each of the six place processes also has a destructive side," pointing out the importance of thoughtful design and planning in reversing negative trends and fostering a sense of well-being and attachment within communities (Seaman). In complement to Seaman's architectural and urban planning perspective, other experts provide insights into the psychological and sociological dimensions of love of place within the context of communal harmony and creative placemaking. For instance, Allen's insights on belonging underscores the psychological need for connection not only to other people but also to places that hold collective memory and meaning. This sense of belonging is pivotal for the development of communal harmony, as it fosters a shared identity and attachment to place (Allen). Similarly, Counted's work on place attachment discusses the emotional bonds between individuals and specific locations, emphasizing how these bonds contribute to a sense of identity, belonging, and community well-being (also see Counted et al., 2021, 2023). Through creative placemaking initiatives that enhance place attachment, communities can become more vibrant and engaging, promoting a deeper love of place among its members (Counted). Moreover, the concept of biophilia, discussed by Basu, aligns with communal harmony and creative placemaking as it highlights the innate human affinity for nature and its implications for designing spaces that connect people not only to each other but also to the natural environment. This connection can amplify the love of place, reinforcing communal bonds and fostering environments that are empathetic and sustainable (Basu). Collectively, these perspectives offer a multifaceted view of how communal harmony and creative placemaking are essential for cultivating love of place.

Theme 6: heritage and memory

This theme explores the ways in which places serve not just as physical locales but as repositories of collective memory and cultural heritage, shaping identities and fostering a deep sense of belonging and love. Routledge's work on nostalgia offers an insightful perspective into the emotional resonance of heritage and memory landscapes. He explains nostalgia as a complex sentiment that, while often associated with a longing for the past, also involves both negative and positive emotions related to places, events, and people from our personal and collective histories. "Nostalgic memories typically involve loved ones…around three-quarters of American adults indicate that these memories are best characterized as social experiences involving family, romantic partners, or close friends" (Routledge). This highlights the social dimension of our connection to heritage places, which underpins the love of place, thus weaving together the threads of past experiences, relationships, and the sense of self within the broader fabric of community and cultural heritage. Allen's examination of belonging through the lens of the Australian Aboriginal connection to land further enriches our understanding of heritage landscapes. She describes land as "a living, spiritual entity that holds a collective memory, meaning, identity, and source of connection for Aboriginal culture," emphasizing how the disruption of this connection through colonization and displacement of the Indigenous people has profound psychological impacts (Allen). This theme underscores the critical role of heritage landscapes in maintaining cultural continuity, identity, and a sense of belonging that frames love of place as a deep-rooted emotional

and spiritual bond that transcends mere physical attachment. Counted's conceptualization of place attachment complements these perspectives by highlighting the emotional bonds individuals form with specific settings, suggesting that these connections are integral to one's identity and sense of community. Contributions from our panel experts suggest that heritage and memory landscapes, through their capacity to evoke shared histories and cultural narratives, play an important role in shaping community cohesion and individual well-being, and thus a significant exemplar of love of place.

Towards love of place: a conceptualization

The complex relationship between humans and their beloved environments, which we refer to as 'love of place,' can be understood through the disposition of unitive and contributory love (Aquinas, 1274/1948; Lee, 2022; VanderWeele, 2023; VanderWeele and Lee, 2022). Drawing on longstanding philosophical and theological traditions—most notably the Thomistic distinction between *amor amicitiae* (the love of friendship) and *amor concupiscentiae* (the love of desire)—unitive love refers broadly to the desire for union with the beloved, where the beloved is seen as a source of joy in itself (Aquinas (1274/1948). This is the kind of love one might feel in the longing to be near a close friend or spouse, where presence and shared identity are inherently fulfilling. Contributory love, on the other hand, is the desire for the good for the beloved, manifesting in actions or intentions aimed at supporting, nurturing, or advancing their well-being—such as caring for a child, helping a neighbor in need, or protecting a vulnerable loved one (VanderWeele, 2023; VanderWeele and Lee, 2022). These two dimensions—wanting to be with the other and wanting good for the other—together capture the richness of what it means to love. In many relationships, they are mutually reinforcing: the more we feel united with someone, the more we are inclined to contribute to their flourishing, and vice versa.

In the context of place, unitive love refers to the desire for deep connection or union with a place—such as feeling at home in a childhood neighborhood, experiencing awe in a sacred landscape, or identifying a particular location as central to one's identity. Contributory love, by contrast, reflects the desire to actively promote the good of that place—such as preserving its natural beauty, advocating for its cultural significance, or working to improve its communal life. These two facets are often intertwined: one might feel a deep emotional bond with a significant place (unitive) while also volunteering to maintain it (contributory). Both offer a fuller picture of how people not only feel about the places they love, but also how they act on that love. These concepts provide a rich framework to explore how our bonds with places extend beyond mere attachment, embodying both a strong connection with these places and a desire to see them flourish. For example, in the first dimension (Identity of Place), unitive love is evident as individuals and communities see their identities interwoven with specific places, making the connection inseparable from their sense of self (Counted et al., 2021; Counted, Ramkissoon, et al., 2023). This identification with place fosters a union where the place itself becomes a part of one's identity. On the other hand, contributory love is demonstrated when communities actively engage in preserving or enhancing these places, acknowledging their essential role in community identity, thus desiring good for these places for their own sake (Allen et al., 2021). In the second dimension (Emotional Echoes of Place), the emotional bonds that define love of place illustrate unitive love through the deep affection and nostalgia individuals feel for certain places, integrating these places to support and sustain individual well-being (Counted et al., 2021; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Contributory love emerges when individuals or groups take steps to preserve or restore these places, driven by a recognition of their emotional significance and the desire to maintain their integrity for the emotional health of the community (Counted et al., 2021). For example, this can be seen in actions taken to combat or mitigate environmental degradation or to rehabilitate places that have been lost or changed, driven by a desire to restore these places for the benefit of the community and future generations.

With regards to the third dimension (Biophilic Connection and Environmental Empathy), unitive love is reflected in the inherent satisfaction and joy individuals derive from their innate connection to nature, suggesting a deep-seated connection with the natural world. Contributory love manifests in efforts towards environmental conservation and sustainable practices, aimed at ensuring the health and vitality of these natural spaces, recognizing their critical role in human well-being and ecological flourishing. Fourth, the theme mystique of the sacred space conveys unitive love through the spiritual and transcendent experiences individuals associate with certain places, where the connection feels almost sacred (Johnson & Laidler, 2020). Contributory love is evident when these places are protected or maintained in a manner that respects and preserves their sacred qualities, ensuring that these spiritual experiences can continue for others (Sheldrake, 2011).

Unitive love within communal harmony arises when the shared experiences and interactions in a place foster a collective sense of belonging and identity (Jacobs, 1961). For example, longtime residents and new arrivals in a neighborhood could come together to share stories and local dishes to strengthen their community bonds and reinforce their shared identity as members of a neighborhood. On the other hand, contributory love within this dimension (Communal Harmony and Creative Placemaking) is reflected in the collaborative efforts of placemaking that enhance the quality and character of communal spaces, ensuring that they remain supportive environments for all members of the community (Huang et al., 2023). For instance, contributory love is evident when local artists collaborate to paint a mural in a public park, transforming the space into a colorful, inviting area that reflects and enhances the community's cultural identity (Bublitz et al., 2019).

Lastly, the unitive aspect of love of place in the heritage and memory landscapes dimension is expressed through the collective memory and heritage that places hold, which forges a bond that is both personal and shared across generations (Routledge et al., 2012). The annual commemoration at a historic battlefield, where community members of all ages gather to honor their ancestors and learn about their shared history, exemplifies this aspect of unitive love of place. This event not only reinforces their personal connection to the land but also strengthens their collective identity. Contributory love is demonstrated through preservation and storytelling efforts that maintain these cultural narratives or a sort of *morphic resonance* (Sheldrake, 2011), allowing the history and identity encapsulated in these places to persist and inspire future generations. Consider a local historian leading guided tours (or

pilgrimage) and publishing a book about the architectural heritage of a small town as an example of this contributory love. Through these efforts, the historian helps preserve the town's unique stories and architectural details, ensuring that both residents and visitors appreciate and sustain the community's rich cultural legacy. These themes collectively illustrate how unitive and contributory love interact dynamically within the construct of love of place, emphasizing a relationship that is both personal and collective, where the love of places is intertwined with human identity, emotion, and community well-being.

A template for love of place

In this section, we present a template for assessing love of place, designed to be adaptable across various community settings such as nations, cities, neighborhoods, families, workplaces, schools, and religious communities. The template is abstract to allow modification for specific contexts by replacing references to "place" with more specific terms, such as "workplace", "neighborhood", or "home," and by adjusting other items appropriately. The generic items provided are outlined below and can be replaced as needed in more specific settings. The items are structured to gauge sentiments related to love of place through a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), where participants rate their agreement based on their personal experiences with the place in question. The proposed measure is structured around seven dimensions. These are structured to capture both emotional and practical engagements individuals have with their beloved surroundings: Identity and Belonging; Emotional Attachment; Biophilic Connection; Sacred and Spiritual Significance; Communal Harmony and Engagement; and Heritage and Memory. Each dimension features specific items of love of place that distinguish between Unitive Love — a deep, intrinsic connection and identification with a place — and Contributory Love — active participation in maintaining or enhancing that place.

Identity

Unitive Love:

"My sense of self is deeply rooted in my connection to this place."

Contributory Love:

"I am committed to the preservation of this place because I see this place as part of my identity."

Emotional Attachment

Unitive Love:

"I feel a deep emotional attachment to this place."

Contributory Love:

"I strive to sustain the aspects of this place that create strong positive emotions in me."

Biophilic Connection

Unitive Love:

"I feel a natural pull towards this place."

Contributory Love:

"I engage in conservation efforts to preserve the natural beauty of this place for future enjoyment."

Sacred Significance

Unitive Love:

"I seek to experience moments of awe or transcendence in this place."

Contributory Love:

"I desire to preserve the significant aspects of this place for others."

Communal Harmony and Engagement

Unitive Love:

"I seek to engage with others here to feel a profound sense of belonging."

Contributory Love:

"I deeply desire to foster a supportive community atmosphere in this place."

Heritage and Memory

Unitive Love:

"I am committed to engaging with the history of this place."

Contributory Love:

"I advocate for the recognition of the cultural or historical significance of this place."

Single Item Assessment

Single General Item for Love of Place (LoP):

"I truly love this place."

Unitive Love of Place (ULoP):

"I feel a deep sense of love for this place that is central to my identity."

Contributory Love of Place (CLoP):

"I actively contribute to making this place good because of my love for it"

Integration with interpersonal love measures

The Love of Place Assessment introduced here is intentionally grounded in a broader conceptual framework of love developed by the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University (funded by John Templeton Foundation grant 62731). While this measure is

designed to capture place-based affections, its underlying structure—organized around the twin pillars of Unitive Love (a disposition toward union with the beloved object) and Contributory Love (a disposition toward the good of the beloved)—parallels those used to assess interpersonal love across different relationship domains, including family, romantic, and community bonds (please see Appendix 1 for additional information).

As such, the template for assessing love of place may be understood as a spatial extension of interpersonal love, adapted to relational contexts where the object of affection is not a person but a meaningful environment or setting. Like the interpersonal measures, the Love of Place Assessment offers the possibility of reclassification across emotional, motivational, and behavioral domains, and aligns with the sixfold typology of love (Passionate, Caring, Connected, Intimate, Appreciative, and Committed; see Lomas, 2018; VanderWeele, 2023). Thus, the items of Love of Place Assessment not only serve as a standalone tool for understanding how individuals connect to and invest in their environments, but may also be integrated into larger multi-domain studies of love. Future expansions of this template may further adapt it for use alongside interpersonal love items in cross-contextual, longitudinal, or experimental studies exploring how love functions across human and spatial relationships.

A research agenda

Developing a research agenda on love of place would involve examining its many aspects and impacts. This may include, but is not limited to, focusing on how it differs empirically from related constructs (e.g., place attachment, biophilia, belonging), through the use of psychometric tools such as factor analysis. Although love of place is characterised by a deep connection to specific locations that are also reflected in other place-related constructs, love of place is both more focused on emotional affection, akin to how people experience loving attachments for individuals, and also on acts that contribute to the well-being of the place. It captures the rich experience—a deep affection, reverence, or even devotion—that goes beyond a functional bond. Place attachment may not necessarily involve a desire for the good of the place, it might be a self-oriented type of phenomenon where the connection to place is tied to what the place does for the individual (e.g., security, comfort). In contrast, love of place implies, for some people, an emphasis on the good of the place. Empirical research might reveal the extent to which the presence of both unitive and contributory aspects of love of place might be associated with better outcomes for individuals, communities, and places, relative to the presence of just one of these aspects. Love of place includes feelings of awe, joy, or sacredness, suggesting a commitment to the place's well-being, unlike attachment, which may focus more on how the place serves individual needs. Thus, while both constructs overlap somewhat, love of place introduces elements of experiential depth and existential meaning. Therefore, researchers may need to explore the different aspects that make love of place unique and how these experiences function within the love of place (Tuan, 1974; Relph, 1976).

Research could also focus on identifying the role of sacred places in the development of love of place. Spiritual experiences in sacred locations often deepen the emotional bond, going beyond the ordinary connection people have with places. Sacred spaces, such as pilgrimage sites or ancestral lands, provide unique settings for understanding how love of place can transcend the physical environment, merging with spiritual and existential elements (Counted & Watts, 2017; Counted et al., 2024). Cross-cultural studies are essential to understanding how love of place varies across different societies and environments. Indigenous connections to land or spiritual practices tied to specific locations can reveal how cultural narratives shape love of place. Researchers should examine these cultural variations to identify universal and context-specific dimensions of love of place. Further research might involve comparing different settings, such as urban, rural, or spiritual environments, to better understand how different communities express love of place and how this love influences their emotional and psychological well-being. In addition, the relationship between love of place and human flourishing needs further investigation. Love of place, with its deep emotional affection, can considerably impact personal and community well-being. While constructs like place attachment may foster identity and belonging, love of place adds layers of emotional depth that can enhance resilience and attachment, promote communal harmony, and contribute to flourishing. Future studies should explore how this spatial affection strengthens communities, fosters environmental stewardship, and promotes well-being in times of environmental or social change (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; VanderWeele, 2023).

Another area for future research could focus on the distinct psychological mechanisms underlying unitive love of place, which involves a deep, emotional identification with a place, and contributory love of place, which reflects an active desire to contribute to its flourishing. Studies could examine how these two aspects differ in terms of motivational drivers, particularly how unitive love is shaped by personal experiences and memories associated with a place, while contributory love may stem from broader cultural, ethical, or environmental concerns. Exploring these distinctions may help clarify whether individuals who experience strong unitive love are more likely to engage in actions that support the sustainability and well-being of a place, or whether contributory love motivates a different set of behaviors that are more outwardly focused on preservation and community engagement (VanderWeele, 2023). Additionally, longitudinal studies could explore how love of place evolves over time, focusing on the dynamic interaction between unitive and contributory love as people develop stronger or weaker emotional connections to a place. Researchers could investigate how life transitions, such as moving to a new environment or experiencing environmental degradation, affect the balance between unitive and contributory aspects. For example, how does love of place change as individuals grow older and gain more memories tied to a particular location? Does unitive love deepen as personal ties to a place grow, while contributory love becomes more urgent when a place is under threat? Understanding these temporal dimensions could shed light on the resilience of place-based love and its role in long-term community cohesion and environmental stewardship (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). A promising direction would be to explore the cultural and cross-national variations in unitive and contributory love of place. Different cultural contexts may prioritize one aspect over the other, depending on how places are valued, either for their emotional significance or for their role in communal and environmental well-being. Comparative studies could investigate whether collectivist cultures place greater emphasis on contributory love, where caring for and enhancing the environment is seen as a community responsibility, while individualistic

cultures may exhibit stronger unitive connections, where personal identification with place drives emotional investment. Understanding these cross-cultural differences could inform urban planning, environmental policies, and community development strategies that are sensitive to the cultural values surrounding love of place (Counted et al., 2023).

Limitations

While our study explores the concept of love of place, it is important to recognize several limitations in our conceptual framing. First, the scope of disciplinary representation among our expert panel may have limited the breadth of perspectives, potentially constraining the theoretical framework's diversity. For instance, the primary disciplines involved—environmental psychology, urban planning, sociology, and architecture—may shape interpretations of love of place with a focus on spatial, communal, and psychological dimensions, possibly underrepresenting insights from other fields like anthropology, philosophy, or theology. Consequently, the underlying assumptions may reflect a bias toward specific interpretations or methodologies, potentially overlooking other facets of love of place that are emphasized in different disciplines. Additionally, the personal backgrounds of the participants (e.g., 75 % male) could influence their perspectives on place-related concepts, possibly embedding cultural or experiential biases within our findings. Given that most experts were situated within Western contexts, the cultural lens might affect the universality of the themes, potentially diminishing the applicability of the findings to non-Western or Indigenous perspectives, which often hold distinct views on place, spirituality, and community (Counted et al., 2023). Future research could benefit from a broader range of disciplinary and cultural perspectives to enhance the inclusivity and cross-cultural relevance of the love of place construct.

Conclusion

Our theorizing of love of place positions it as a multifaceted positive disposition that extends beyond mere attachment or familiarity. Unlike traditional place-based constructs, love of place is characterized by two interrelated domains: unitive love, which denotes a deep sense of connection and identification with a place; and contributory love, which reflects a commitment to the care, preservation, and betterment of that place. These domains offer a richer understanding of how human–place affections shape well-being, meaning, and community life. Love of place includes different experiential dimensions—such as identity, emotional attachment, biophilic connection, sacred spaces, communal harmony, and heritage—which together show how places come to hold emotional, symbolic, and spiritual value. Importantly, this framework also provides a basis for interpreting experiences of environmental grief, such as solastalgia, as expressions of disrupted love for place. This dual framework of unitive and contributory love of place contributes to ongoing theoretical efforts to link people–place bonds with broader concerns of human flourishing and ecological stewardship. Future research should explore how different cultural, religious, and social contexts shape expressions of love of place; identify the psychological mechanisms that underlie these forms of love; and examine how such dispositions foster resilience in the face of environmental and social change. A more systematic understanding of love of place may not only enrich place theories (e.g., place attachment) but also support interventions that foster psychological resilience and promote sustainable, thriving communities.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Laidler Daniel: Data curation. **Basu Jayanti:** Data curation. **Seamon David:** Data curation. **Routledge Clay:** Data curation. **VanderWeele Tyler:** Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Supervision, Conceptualization. **Lee Matthew T.:** Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Data curation. **Counted Victor:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Cowden Richard:** Writing – review & editing, Data curation. **Lomas Tim:** Project administration. **Allen Kelly-Ann:** Data curation.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation (Grant ID #62731), The Construct and Assessment of Interpersonal Love, awarded to Tyler VanderWeele and Matthew Lee. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation.

Appendix 1. love of place assessment and general love construct definitions

The Construct and Assessment of Love Project at the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University (funded by John Templeton Foundation grant 62731) aims to employ long-standing philosophical and theological traditions on love to propose a new series of measures for the assessment of different forms of love. The focus of the proposed measurement and assessment project will be interpersonal love. The specific construct that will be examined related to love is the "disposition to desire the good of the other" where the ambiguous phrase the "good of the other" may itself be understood either as "good *for* the other" or as the "good *constituted by* the other". We will refer to the former as "contributory love" and the latter as "unitive love". This two-fold understanding of love can be

found in Aquinas (1274/1948), referred to, respectively, as "love of concupiscence" and "love of friendship" (Summa Theologica, I. II.26.4). This understanding is likewise present, in more contemporary form, in the work of Eleonore Stump (2006) and elsewhere. As part of the present project, we have also argued that a particular specification of this understanding of love – namely the non-exclusive disjunction of what is proposed as unitive and contributory love – is sufficient to characterize ordinary-language uses of the word "love" when it is employed as a verb (VanderWeele, 2023). In addition to these distinctions of unitive and contributory love, we will also be considering both the giving of love and the receiving of love, and moreover how these different forms of love might vary across different interpersonal relationships or "offices" (Stump, 2006), including relationships of parent-child, spouse, friend, God, neighbor, stranger, and enemy.

For each type of interpersonal relationship, we are proposing six items to assess unitive love, and six items to assess contributory love, along with a single more generic one-item assessment. The items were developed and refined through a series of discussions oriented around the philosophical, theological, and psychological literatures on love within each type of relationship. The items were developed both with regard to patterns of motivation, emotion, and action that might manifest a disposition towards desiring good for, or union with, the beloved, and also with an eye towards the generalizability of analogous items across relationship types.

The items were further refined and developed so as to also accommodate other potential conceptualizations and categorizations of love. We recognize that item sets can be grouped in different ways, either accordingly to statistical factor-analytic criteria, or according to conceptual or theoretically-grounded criteria. A cross-cultural lexical analysis of "untranslatable words" related to love was carried out by one of the project members (Lomas, 2018) resulting in a six-fold categorization of love: Passionate Love, Connected Love, Caring Love, Intimate Love, Appreciative Love, Committed Love. Building on the work of Lomas (2018), proposed construct definitions for each of these forms of love, along with unitive and contributory love are provided below. The proposed items were thus further refined and chosen so as to also be amenable to be grouped according to Lomas' analysis, with two items corresponding to each of these six forms, or "flavors" of love. Likewise, the items might alternatively be grouped into (i) motives and causes of love; (ii) attitudes and emotions related to love; and (iii) behaviors and actions arising from love, and the proposed items can likewise be grouped into each of these categories, with four items per category.

After further item refinement, initial data collection, and psychometric evaluation, once these items are embedded into various longitudinal cohort studies, these various ways of considering different facets of love may give rise to a deeper understanding of how different facets of love shape different life experiences and outcomes. For an outline of the proposed methodological approach see VanderWeele (2022).

The material presented below on love of neighbor begins with the various proposed construct definitions; proceeds with the single item assessment and the set of twelve items corresponding to unitive and contributory love; and then provides an enumeration of various ways these items might be re-categorized.

General love construct definitions

Abstract definitions

Unitive Love: A disposition towards desiring a perceived good or desiring union with it, either as an end itself or with it being a source of delight in itself

Contributory Love: A disposition towards desiring good for a particular object for its own sake

Definitions as concerns persons

Unitive Love: A disposition towards desiring to be united with someone, either as an end itself or with it being a source of delight in itself

Contributory Love: A disposition towards desiring good for a person for his or her own sake

Construct definitions for facets of love

Passionate Love: A disposition towards desiring to be united to a person or desiring good for that person *that is especially intense*

Connected Love: A disposition towards desiring to be united to a person or desiring good for that person *that is particularly concerned with union with that person*

Caring Love: A disposition towards desiring to be united to a person or desiring good for that person *that is particularly concerned with that person's well-being*

Intimate Love: A disposition towards desiring to be united to a person or desiring good for that person *that is particularly concerned with the deepest knowing or experience of or with that person*

Appreciative Love: A disposition towards desiring to be united to a person or desiring good for that person *that is grounded in an appreciation of that person's worth, dignity, or qualities*

Committed Love: A disposition towards desiring to be united to a person or desiring good for that person *that arises from or results in commitment*

Loving Attitudes and Emotions: A disposition towards desiring to be united to a person or desiring good for that person *as manifest in one's attitudes and emotions*

Loving Actions and Behaviors: A disposition towards desiring to be united to a person or desiring good for that person *as manifest in one's actions and behaviors*

Motives for or Causes of Love: A disposition towards desiring to be united to a person or desiring good for that person *as manifest in arising from specific motives and reasons*

Love in Itself: A disposition towards desiring to be united to a person or desiring good for that person *as manifest in the frequency and strength of those desires*

Effects of Love: A disposition towards desiring to be united to a person or desiring good for that person *as manifest in its effects on one's values, emotions, and behaviors*

Love of place assessment

Place Unitive Love (Construct Definition): A disposition towards desiring to be united with a particular place

Place Contributory Love (Construct Definition): A disposition towards desiring the well-being of a particular place

Each item has response types: 1 - Never true of me; 2 - Rarely true of me; 3- Sometimes true of me; 4 - Often true of me; 5 - Always true of me

Items for unitive and contributory love

Unitive Love:

U1. I feel a deep emotional attachment to this place

U2. I seek to engage with others here to feel a profound sense of belonging

U3. I feel a natural pull towards this place

U4. I seek to experience moments of awe or transcendence in this place

U5. My sense of self is deeply rooted in my connection to this place

U6. I am committed to engaging with the history of this place

Contributory Love:

C1. I deeply desire to foster a supportive community atmosphere in this place

C2. I engage in conservation efforts to preserve the natural beauty of this place

C3. I desire to preserve the significant aspects of this place for others

C4. I strive to sustain the aspects of this place that create strong positive emotions in me

C5. I advocate for the recognition of the cultural or historical significance of this place

C6. I am committed to the preservation of this place because I see this place as part of my identity

Re-Classification of the 12 Items According Motivations, Attitudes/Emotions, and Actions/Behaviors

Motives and Causes for Love:

U5. My sense of self is deeply rooted in my connection to this place

C5. I advocate for the recognition of the cultural or historical significance of this place

U6. I am committed to engaging with the history of this place

C6. I am committed to the preservation of this place because I see this place as part of my identity

Loving Attitudes and Emotions:

U1. I feel a deep emotional attachment to this place

C1. I deeply desire to foster a supportive community atmosphere in this place

U3. I feel a natural pull towards this place

C3. I desire to preserve the significant aspects of this place for others

Loving Actions and Behaviors:

U2. I seek to engage with others here to feel a profound sense of belonging

C2. I engage in conservation efforts to preserve the natural beauty of this place

U4. I seek to experience moments of awe or transcendence in this place

C4. I strive to sustain the aspects of this place that create strong positive emotions in me

Re-Classification of the 12 Items according to Passionate, Caring, Connected, Intimate, Appreciative, and Committed Love:

Passionate Love:

U1. I feel a deep emotional attachment to this place

C1. I deeply desire to foster a supportive community atmosphere in this place

Connected Love:

U2. I seek to engage with others here to feel a profound sense of belonging

U3. I feel a natural pull towards this place

Caring Love:

C2. I engage in conservation efforts to preserve the natural beauty of this place

C3. I desire to preserve the significant aspects of this place for others

Intimate Love:

U4. I seek to experience moments of awe or transcendence in this place

C4. I strive to sustain the aspects of this place that create strong positive emotions in me

Appreciative Love:

U5. My sense of self is deeply rooted in my connection to this place

C5. I advocate for the recognition of the cultural or historical significance of this place

Committed Love:

U6. I am committed to engaging with the history of this place

C6. I am committed to the preservation of this place because I see this place as part of my identity

References

Abeyta, A. A., & Pillarisetty, S. (2023). Nostalgia supports a meaningful life (Article) *Current Opinions in Psychology, 49*, Article 101520. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2022101520.

Abeyta, A. A., Routledge, C., & Juhl, J. (2015). Looking back to move forward: Nostalgia as a psychological resource for promoting relationship aspirations and overcoming relationship challenges. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 109*, 1029–1044.

Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1978). The bowlby-ainsworth attachment theory. *Behavioral and brain sciences, 1*(3), 436–438.

Albrecht, G., Sartore, G. M., Connor, L., Higginbotham, N., Freeman, S., Kelly, B., Stain, H., Tonna, A., & Pollard, G. (2007). Solastalgia: The distress caused by environmental change. *Australasian Psychiatry, 15*(1), S95–S98.

Allen, K. A., Kern, M. L., Rozek, C. S., McInerney, D. M., & Slavich, G. M. (2021). Belonging: A review of conceptual issues, an integrative framework, and directions for future research. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 73*(1), 87–102.

Aquinas, T. (1948). *Summa theologica. Complete English translation in five volumes*, 1274/. Ave Maria Press.

Barbiero, G., & Berto, R. (2021). Biophilia as evolutionary adaptation: An onto-and phylogenetic framework for biophilic design. *Frontiers in psychology, 12*, 700709.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (2017). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Interpersonal development*, 57–89.

Basu, J. (2014). Psychologists' Ambivalence toward Ambiguity: Relocating the Projective Test Debate for Multiple Interpretative Hypotheses. *SIS Journal of Projective Psychology & Mental Health, 21*(1), 25–36.

Berscheid, E. (2010). Love in the fourth dimension. *Annual Review of Psychology, 61*, 1–25.

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss, Vol. I: Attachment*. New York: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss, Vol. 2: Separation*. New York: Basic Books.

Bublitz, M. G., Rank-Christman, T., Cian, L., Cortada, X., Madzharov, A., Patrick, V. M., Peracchio, L. A., Scott, M. L., Sundar, A., To, N., & Townsend, C. (2019). Collaborative art: A transformational force within communities. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research, 4*(4), 313–331.

Burton-Christie, D. (2011). The gift of tears: Loss, mourning and the work of ecological restoration. *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology, 15*(1), 29–46.

Chakrabarty, D. (1996). Remembered villages: representation of Hindu-Bengali memories in the aftermath of the partition. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2143–2151.

Cicirelli, V. (2004). God as the ultimate attachment figure for older adults. *Attachment & Human Development, 6*(4), 371–388.

Counted, V., Cowden, R. G., & Ramkissoon, H. (2021). *Place and post-pandemic flourishing: disruption, adjustment, and healthy behaviors*. Springer Nature.

Counted, V., Meagher, B., & Cowden, R. (2024). The nature of spiritual ties to place: A conceptual overview and research agenda. *Ecopsychology, 16*(1), 60–70.

Counted, V., Neff, M. A., Captari, L. E., & Cowden, R. G. (2020). Transcending place attachment disruptions during a public health crisis: Spiritual struggles, resilience, and transformation. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 39*(4), 276–287.

Counted, V., Ramkissoon, H., Captari, L., & Cowden, R. G. (2023). *Place, spirituality, and wellbeing: a global and multidisciplinary approach*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-39582-6_1

Counted, V., & Watts, F. (2017). Place attachment in the Bible: The role of attachment to sacred places in religious life. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 45*(3), 218–232.

Cowden, R. G., Counted, V., & Ramkissoon, H. (2021). Place attachment and suffering during a pandemic. In V. Counted, R. G. Cowden, & H. Ramkissoon (Eds.), *Place and post-pandemic flourishing: Disruption, adjustment, and healthy behaviors* (pp. 45–54). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-82580-5_4.

Dalkey, N., & Helmer, O. (1963). An experimental application of the DELPHI method to the use of experts. *Management Science, 9*(3), 458–467.

Davis, F. (1979). *Yearning for yesterday: a sociology of nostalgia*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Devine-Wright, P., De Carvalho, L. P., Di Masso, A., Lewicka, M., Manzo, L., & Williams, D. R. (2020). Re-placed"-Reconsidering relationships with place and lessons from a pandemic. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 72*, 101514.

Feldman, B. (2001). Saudade: Longing and desire in the Brazilian soul. *The Sanoma Francisco Junguien Institute Library Journal, 20*(2), 51–56. https://doi.org/10.1525/jung.1.2001.20.2.51

Frumkin, H. (2013). The evidence of nature and the nature of evidence. *American journal of preventive medicine, 44*(2), 196–197.

Gaekwad, J. S., Sal Moslehian, A., Roös, P. B., & Walker, A. (2022). A meta-analysis of emotional evidence for the biophilia hypothesis and implications for biophilic design. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 750245.

Grinde, B., & Patil, G. G. (2009). Biophilia: does visual contact with nature impact on health and well-being? *International journal of environmental research and public health, 6*(9), 2332–2343.

Hasson, F., Keeney, S., & McKenna, H. (2000). Research guidelines for the Delphi survey technique. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 32*(4), 1008–1015.

Hickman, C., Marks, E., Pihkala, P., Clayton, S., Lewandowski, R. E., Mayall, E. E., & van Susteren, L. (2021). Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey. *The Lancet Planetary Health, 5*(12), e863–e873.

Hofer, J. (1934). Medical dissertation on nostalgia. (C. K. Anspach, Trans.). *Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 2*, 376–391.

Huang, J., Cui, Y., Li, L., Guo, M., Ho, H. C., Lu, Y., & Webster, C. (2023). Re-examining Jane Jacobs' doctrine using new urban data in Hong Kong. *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science, 50*(1), 76–93.

Hummon, D. M. (1992). Community attachment: local sentiment and sense of place. In I. Altman, & S. M. Low (Eds.), *Place attachment* (pp. 253–278). Plenum Press.

Jacobs, J. (1961). *Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House.

Johnson, J. A., & Laidler, D. (2020). Measuring hagioptasia: a case study in theory-testing through Internet-based personality scale development. *Personality and Individual Differences, 159*, Article 109919.

Keeney, S., Hasson, F., & McKenna, H. (2006). Consulting the oracle: Ten lessons from using the Delphi technique in nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 53*(2), 205–212.

Kellert, S. R., & Wilson, E. O. (1993). *The biophilia hypothesis*. Island Press.

Langner, T., Schmidt, J., & Fischer, A. (2015). Is it really love? A comparative investigation of the emotional nature of brand and interpersonal love. *Psychology Marketing, 32*(6), 624–634.

Lee, M. T. (2022). Love as a foundational principle for humanistic management. In M. Pirson (Ed.), *Love and Organization: Lessons of Love for Human Dignity, Leadership, and Motivation* (pp. 5–38). Routledge.

Lewicka, M. (2011). Place attachment: How far have we come in the last 40 years? *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 31*(3), 207–230.

Lewis, C. S. (1960). *The four loves*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

Linstone, H.A., & Turoff, M. (Eds.). (1975). The delphi method (pp. 3-12). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Lomas, T. (2018). The flavours of love: A cross-cultural lexical analysis. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 48*(1), 134–152.

Lomas, T., Case, B. W., Lee, M. T., Basu, J., Bear, L., Cowden, R. G., Greenberg, Y. K., Rashid, T., & VanderWeele, T. J. (2024). Love of creation: Exploring diversity and commonality among religious and philosophical traditions. *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science, 59*(2), 352–381. https://doi.org/10.16995/zygon.10856

Mahbub, R., & Saba, A. (2018). Homed, Unhomed and Rehomed in Partition Stories of East Bengal/East Pakistan. Asiatic. *IIUM Journal of English Language and Literature, 12*(1), 108–125.

Magalhães, B. (2020). Moving on with saudade: On bordered countries and vague terms. *The Sociological Review, 68*(2), 287–304. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026120905472

Malet Calvo, D., Cairns, D., França, T., & de Azevedo, L. F. (2022). There was no freedom to leave: Global South international students in Portugal during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Policy Futures in Education, 20*(4), 382–401. https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103211025428
Matt, S. J. (2007). You can't go home again: Homesickness and nostalgia in U.S. history. *Journal of American History, 94*, 469–497. https://doi.org/10.2307/25094961
Moreton-Robinson, A. (2015). *The white possessive: property, power, and indigenous sovereignty*. University of Minnesota Press.
Maslow, A. H. (1956). Humanistic science and transcendent experiences. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 5*(2), 219–227.
Mishra, A. (2023). Smart Cities and the Poor: Towards an Agenda for Inclusive Urbanization in India. Routledge India.
Neto, F. (2021). Psychometric properties of the Porto Saudade Scale. *Measurement Instruments for the Social Sciences, 3*(1), 4. https://doi.org/10.1186/s42409-021-00022-x
Neto, F., & Mullet, E. (2014). A prototype analysis of the Portuguese concept of saudade. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 45*(4), 660–670. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022113518370
Neto, F., & Mullet, E. (2020). Recalled saudade is associated with positive affect, close connectedness, and inspiration. *Personality and Individual Differences, 154*, Article 109623. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109623
Prasad, A. (2008). Moving beyond "ethnic" conflict in Fiji: from colonization to the coup of 2006. *International Journal of Social Economics, 35*(12), 951–962.
Proshansky, H. M., Fabian, A. K., & Kaminoff, R. (1983). Place-identity: Physical world socialization of the self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 3*(1), 57–83.
Rao, V. (1997). Wife-beating in rural South India: A qualitative and econometric analysis. *Social Science Medicine, 44*(8), 1169–1180.
Raymond, C.M., Manzo, L.C., Williams, D.R., Di Masso, A., & von Wirth, T. (Eds.). (2021). Changing senses of place: Navigating global challenges. Cambridge University Press.
Relph, E. (1976). *Place and placelessness*. Pion.
Routledge, C. (2023a). *Nostalgia in American: the power of looking back to move forward*. Human Flourishing Lab, Archbridge Institute. ⟨https://humanflourishinglab.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/HFL-Nostalgia-in-America_2023.pdf⟩.
Routledge, C. (2023b). Past forward: How nostalgia can help you live a more meaningful life.
Routledge, C., Arndt, J., Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., Hart, C., Juhl, J., Vingerhoets, A. J., & Scholtz, W. (2011). The past makes the present meaningful: Nostalgia as an existential resource. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101*, 638–652. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024292
Routledge, C., Sedikides, C., Wildschut, T., & Juhl, J. (2013). Finding meaning in the past: nostalgia as an existential resource. In K. Markman, T. Proulx, & M. Lindberg (Eds.), *The psychology of meaning* (pp. 297–316). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
Routledge, C., Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., & Juhl, J. (2013). Nostalgia as a resource for psychological health and well-being. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 7/11*, 808–818. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12070
Routledge, C., Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., Juhl, J., & Arndt, J. (2012). The power of the past: Nostalgia as a meaning-making resource. *Memory, 20*(5), 452–460.
Rowe, G., & Wright, G. (1999). The Delphi technique as a forecasting tool: Issues and analysis. *International Journal of Forecasting, 15*(4), 353–375.
Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. W. (2002). Overview of self-determination theory: An organismic dialectical perspective. In *In: E.L. Deci & R.M Ryan: Handbook of self-determination research*. University of Rochester Press.
Scannell, L., & Gifford, R. (2010). Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 30*(1), 1–10.
Scannell, L., & Gifford, R. (2017). The experienced psychological benefits of place attachment. *Journal of environmental psychology, 51*, 256–269.
Scannell, L., Williams, E., Gifford, R., & Sarich, C. (2020). Parallels between interpersonal and place attachment: an update. *In Place attachment* (pp. 45–60). Routledge.
Seamon, D. (2018). *Life takes place: phenomenology, lifeworlds, and place making*. Routledge.
Sedikides, C., Wildschut, T., Routledge, C., Arndt, J., & Hepper, E. (2015). To nostalgize: Mixing memory with affect and desire. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 59*, 189–258. https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.aesp.2014.10.001
Sheldrake, R. (2011). *The presence of the past: morphic resonance and the habits of nature*. Icon Books Ltd.
Shuck, K. (2022). *Noodle, Rant, Tangent*. Andover Street Archive Press.
Silva, Z. B. (2012). Saudade – A key Portuguese emotion. *Emotion Review, 4*(2), 203–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073911430727
Skulmoski, G. J., Hartman, F. T., & Krahn, J. (2007). The Delphi method for graduate research. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research, 6*(1), 1–21.
Stedman, R. C. (2002). Toward a social psychology of place: Predicting behavior from place-based cognitions, attitude, and identity. *Environment and Behavior, 34*(5), 561–581.
Sternberg, R. J. (1986). A triangular theory of love. *Psychological Review, 93*(2), 119–135. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.93.2.119
Sternberg, R. J. (1997). Construct validation of a triangular love scale. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 27*(3), 313–335.
Stump, E. (2006). Love, by all accounts. *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, 80*, 25–43.
Tekin, B. H., Corcoran, R., & Gutiérrez, R. U. (2023). The impact of biophilic design in Maggie's Centres: A meta-synthesis analysis. *Frontiers of Architectural Research, 12*(1), 188–207.
Thurber, C. A., Walton, E. A., & Council on School Health. (2007). Preventing and treating homesickness. *Pediatrics, 119*(1), 192–201.
Tuan, Y. F. (1974). *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values*. Prentice Hall.
Tuan, Y. F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. University of Minnesota Press.
VanderWeele, T. J. (2022). Constructed measures and causal inference: Towards a new model of measurement for psychosocial constructs. *Epidemiology, 33*, 141–151.
VanderWeele, T. J. (2023). On an analytic definition of love. *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy, 25*, 105–135.
Wilson, E. O. (1984). *Biophilia*. Harvard University Press.
Wildschut, T., & Sedikides, C. (2023). Water from the lake of memory: The regulatory model of nostalgia. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 32*(1), 57–64. https://doi.org/10.1177/09637214221121768
Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., Arndt, J., & Routledge, C. (2006). Nostalgia: Content, triggers, functions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91*, 975–993. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.91.5.975
Zhou, X., Sedikides, C., Wildschut, C., & Gao, D.-G. (2008). Counteracting loneliness: On the restorative function of nostalgia. *Psychological Science, 19*, 1023–1029. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02194.x