

Amores interactive experience

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AMORES INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the process of the immersive experience, we share the investigations made, the justification, all user approaches and prototypes, the name of this experience is "Amores". The project is based on previous research on how young adults could struggle in having self-esteem and self-love, diminishing their capability to create strong and healthy bonds, while inhibiting the joy of practicing pleasant activities, as well as not having a positive notion of themselves. Interviews with experts on human behavior topics were made to obtain insights; research through websites and books was made to obtain as much valuable information as possible and design research methodologies were put into practice, such as Graffiti Walls and Image Boards. Following this, the design of prototypes started, using design thinking to achieve a project that connects with the pains and needs of the user.

The fundamental objective of this study is to understand emotional experiences and emotional expressions, along with identifying the potential obstacles and understanding their impact on young adult relationships. This Interactive Experience: "Amor-Es" pretends to help people translate their inner thoughts into words and actions. Reinforcing values such as active listening, self consciousness and empathy, which are tools that can help our user to create healthy connections with themselves and their environment.

Keywords

Love, Self-Love, Self-Esteem, Social Relationships, Immersive, Interactive, Museum.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current context of self-love, self-esteem and the perception of love, young adults lack self-awareness about how their self-love influences their relationship with themselves and their social interactions, mostly because they experience a low level of self-concept, enclosing them into a vicious circle leading them to social isolation, loss of affective and meaningful relationships, loss of interest in activities that used to be joyful and provoking insecurities, as well as causing disorders in personality and mental health such as Antisocial Personality Disorder and anxiety.

The question: How does this happen? should be answered. Hence, self-concept is the perspective we have about ourselves, it is made and formed by many factors but most importantly, it is made by the interaction with important people in our lives. Self-concept is how we interpret our behaviors, skills, and personal characteristics, according to the psychologist Kendra Cherry in her article: *What is self concept?* (2022)

If a person sees itself as funny, extrovert, responsible, kind, a good friend, passionate about sciences, good at logical areas, that is self-concept. With that mentioned, the self-concept shapes with the interactions we have in our lives, mostly, with the ones we have during our early years. These important persons are our parents and family, who can teach us how to treat ourselves and others, they tell us what we are good at, raise us around their ideas, their context and the self-concept they have about themselves. When this new and emerging self-concept is surrounded by traumatic experiences, unsafe spaces, hostile or absent relationships and a lack of love, the malleable self-concept of a young person can consist of insecurities, poor perceptions about themselves, low social skills and many other factors that affect future relationships.

A young adult does not count with the tools of being aware of all these past situations that shaped the way it sees itself and interacts with others unless it receives professional assistance. Acting with what has been learned from these experiences and said about itself.

This lack of awareness affects the relationships a person has, generating conflicts that isolate them from new experiences and healthy connections. The absence of a solid understanding of their self-conception can have a significant impact on their emotional well-being and the quality of their social interactions.

According to the psychologist Beatriz Ticalli in her article: *Self-Love in teenagers* (2022) she mentions that "As teenagers is when we first become aware of various facts of reality that we had never noticed before."

That's why the psychologist and thanatologist Yadira Vargas in an interview made for this project (2023) mentions that self-love is a central axis of any person's life, that's why it is the first petition of people when having their first contact in therapy.

But not everyone is conscious about the importance of self-love and its consequences. Currently, in Mexico and in the world, there

is a crisis of self-esteem, as people rate their self-esteem with fifty nine points out of a hundred. Also, six out of ten people would like to have more self-respect, and four out of ten say they sometimes feel as a useless person. These are all figures from a study conducted by the British beauty company *The Body Shop* and pollster *IPSOS* interviewing 22,000 people in *twenty one countries* to compile a *Global Self-Love Index*.

This study also indicates that feelings of depression and anxiety are particularly acute for young people of all genders: more than three-quarters of those aged 18 to 24, compared with half of those aged 45 and older say they have experienced anxiety, which tells us that a low level of self-concept can have a negative impact on one's self.

Furthermore, the need to have healthy relationships at an early age is crucial in order to have a good self-concept, which then allows the experience of love in a satisfactory way. "Self-esteem can be learned. It's not something we're born with. We don't come programmed with the chip to love ourselves," says *María Delfina Marín Soto* (2023), in charge of psychology content design for the *Jenny app*, developed by mental health specialists to help people get to know themselves better and have a better handle on emotions.

Juan Federico Zúñiga (2022), a clinical psychologist, mentions that "If we strengthen our self-esteem, we will have more problem-solving tools, less stress, less anxiety, and that will impact in many areas of our lives". Self-care becomes the ability to love and respect ourselves," he explains in a piece of information released by Studio Fitness Soulcore. Showing that the way each one of us treats our relationships can be enhanced by being conscious of our own self, improving our self-esteem to be better at knowing how we can change anything that makes us uncomfortable or how to feel better about ourselves, leading to healthier bonds with others.

The same statement also quotes *Sofía Rivera*, an academic at the Faculty of Psychology at UNAM, who explains that the lack of self-love is noticeable in different ways, for example in dependent relationships, in physical or emotional neglect, in the constant thought of feeling incomplete, in insecurity and fear. This is the main reason for unhealthy relationships with oneself and others in young adults.

Thus, self-love or self-esteem are concepts that are built throughout life, so it is never too late to conscientize about the importance of it. In consequence, the project that has been developed tries to make this connection between a person who has not questioned the importance of love with how much it affects the life of a person. With the insights made on the research, it was found that the concept of love is never the same for every human, but through sensorial approaches, a user can enhance its capability to process the information experiencing moments of awareness and reflection.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Young adults are not aware of how their relationship with themselves influences others; therefore, they end up affecting their social relationships causing their interactions to be conflictive. Isolating them from new experiences and healthy relationships, Eric Fromm (1989). The context in which the research was defined shows us how these young adults can have completely different college experiences depending on the bonds they build in this space, making it a better phase in life when the relationships are built through assertive communication, empathy,

reciprocity and love, turning into a place where they can comment their feelings and thoughts with trust. On the other hand, when the young adult cannot create these bonds it becomes a phase of isolation where social anxiety may appear and other disorders can emerge.

During the research as a team, we found that young college students in social and professional environments often have difficulty identifying and expressing their needs, which prevents them from understanding and respecting the needs of their peers. Some of the reasons why this happens is that college students may still be defining their identities, which can make it challenging to clearly say their needs. Furthermore, college environments can be intense because of peer pressure and social dynamics inside groups, where selectiveness or discrimination can come into place. Students might feel compelled to fulfill expectations, setting aside their authentic needs in the process. The fear of judgment or rejection lowers open and honest expression.

This challenge can lead to isolation, mental health problems, underachievement, and difficulties in social functioning. Due to the social stigma around mental health, these students may not recognize the impact of self-love in their daily lives and often reject support or recreational activities offered to them. To address these issues, college students must learn to manage their emotions, reinforce self-love, and accept love from their environment. This involves identifying how love influences their activities, discovering self-expression activities, and understanding how their peers express affection.

This project aims to understand the common struggles of college youth and provide tools for self-expression to foster self-love and positive relationships.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is the section where the theories used in the research are defined, and it explains how they support the research. All this is to create a project that is relevant to established ideas. This framework allows us to present and explain what has been learned on the topic.

This theoretical framework focuses on understanding the influence of self-love in the social relationships of young Mexican university students, taking as a starting point different definitions and approaches to love, subsequently, proposing an experience that allows users to learn how to identify the effect that love has on their personal relationships. We mainly focus on analyzing the social and philosophical concept of love, the different expressions of love according to psychology, as well as the damage caused by a lack of love in young people. Not only to empathize with the user but to also find the best way to help them identify their own emotional needs and the different ways of expressing their love.

Henry Miller highlights the importance of the acceptance of the other, underlining that love implies recognizing and accepting the loved one as he or she is. On the other hand, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry stresses that love goes beyond the superficial look, implying a shared direction in life. Honoré de Balzac highlights the relationship between judgment and love, suggesting that constant criticism diminishes the capacity to love.

Plato proposes that love is related to philosophy, being the essential impulse to seek knowledge and truth in the other. Jean-Paul Sartre emphasizes freedom and choice in love, maintaining that each individual must maintain his or her autonomy. Aristotle describes love as a union of souls in two bodies.

Despite the differences in these perspectives, the convergence lies in the fact that love implies a relationship and mutual recognition.

Aristotle, the father of Western philosophy, states that self-love implies recognizing and accepting our virtues and defects, which is a prerequisite for loving others. Millán-Puelles defines it as a positive appreciation and a natural desire for one's own well-being. The Universidad del Rosario

describes it as the acceptance of feelings towards oneself and dependent on individual will.

According to the report *Cultivating Self-Love* (2020), "Until we love ourselves fully, we cannot genuinely love others."

Pablo Uriel Rodriguez warns that a negative concept of self-love hinders relationships with others and with oneself. This connection is reinforced in "The Importance of Self-Love" by StarMed HealthCare (2023), which makes the case that self-love is essential to loving others.

Social psychologist Eric Fromm (2014) approaches love as a will and an art. Loving involves focusing on caring, responsibility, respect, and knowledge of the other. The direct relationship between loving others and loving oneself is essential.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz highlights the connection between one's happiness and the happiness of others. Gary Chapman (2021), in *The 5 Love Languages*, explores how people express and receive love in different ways, influencing relationships.

Consequences of the Lack of Love in College Adolescents

It focuses on the importance of understanding the consequences of lack of love in young university students and the relevance of cultivating self-love since childhood. Psychologists such as Aldo Vazquez, Ph.D., explain the different consequences of the lack of love in young adults, such as the DSM-5 personality disorders according to the APA, which describe the behaviors and alterations that occur in the different personality types and their affective qualities.

Cooking and Emotions

It explores how emotions and feelings, particularly in the act of cooking, are intrinsically linked, highlighting the importance of passion in any activity. In addition, cooking is seen as an activity that helps to concentrate and analyze emotions closely, allowing them to be identified and expressed healthily.

Definición de problemática. (David de Yta, 2023)

Love as a Source of Motivation

In the sports context, the relationship between love for sport and intrinsic motivation is highlighted. It is argued that love of sport drives perseverance and effort, being essential for success and satisfaction in the sporting arena.

(Investigacion Secundaria, 20203)

This project aims to help people find their way of expressing love. We try to offer activities that allow them to identify their way of understanding and feeling love, to project it, and to accept the expression of love from other people. We focus mainly on the concept of love previously established by *Eric Fromm* to generate a main idea of the emotion or feelings that we want our user to identify; we also used *Gary Chapman's* theory to define the different ways of expressing love, since we want our user not only to understand the concept but also to establish the basis for a healthy expression of their emotions.

Findings

This theoretical framework provides a comprehensive view of love and the different definitions of the main concepts of this topic, provided by experts and previous research. It includes diverse perspectives from writers, philosophers, and psychologists, as well as the connection between self-love and interpersonal relationships and the importance of love in various areas of life. Subsequent research seeks to address the difficulty of young students in identifying and expressing their emotions, using the concepts previously described to support our users in communicating their feelings assertively.

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in the development of this project is *Design Thinking* which is a non-linear, iterative process that teams use to

understand users, challenge assumptions, redefine problems, and create innovative solutions to prototype and test. Involves five phases: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test (*Interaction Design Foundation*, 2016)

4.1 INTERVIEW

As a first step in the development of *Empathize* there were approaches with both experts and users. Sixteen interviews were conducted in total, eight experts and eight users.

Interviews are a fundamental research method for direct contact with participants to gather personal accounts of experience, opinions, attitudes, and perceptions." (*Universal Methods of Design*, Martin, Bella & Hanington, B. 2012).

The interviews allowed us to know the users' position on love, and what they value: quality time and physical contact. Similarly, users are aware of the consequences of living with a lack of love for themselves and their environment, which shows that users find it difficult to talk about these situations. That is why we need to create a space where users can experience love with others and provide them with a moment where they can have meaningful experiences they do not have.

4.2 GRAFFITI WALL

This methodology consists of asking a key question through a paper that is pasted on the wall for a certain period to obtain interesting information that would not be easy to obtain through traditional methods such as observation or interview (*Martin, Hanington*, 2012, p. 96)

This first poster was focused on love with the aim of discovering: What is the perception that users have about this topic? How much can users explain love? What does it represent for them?

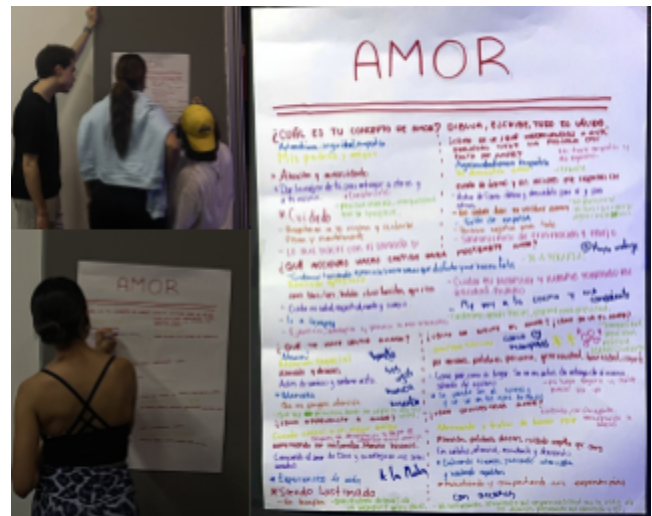


Image 1: Graffiti Wall (2023)

This poster gives an insight into what aspects users value about love and how they identify the absence of it.

Insights

- Self-care provides the user the security to love others.
- Lack of empathy is one way to identify a person with a lack of love.
- Users identify that a person with a lack of love relates aggressively to others.
- The first approach users have to show love is with physical contact. Someone who loves, shares with others.

4.3 IMAGE BOARDS



Image 2: Image Board (2023)

In this second approach with users the objective is to ground what users conceive as love and how they relate to this concept so we choose the *Imageboards methodology proposed by Martin, B. & Hanington, B. Universal Methods of Design.*

Which consists of a collage of images, illustrations, or images compiled to visually communicate an essential description of aesthetics, style, audience, context, or other specific aspects of the design intent. For our users love is seen as a community, family, and accompaniment with nature, our relatives, and the people we love. In that same way, users identify what part of love they find in themselves and in activities they like to do.

Highlight

The user gives value to the moments he/she/they shares with other people and relates this to the concept of love.

4.5 INSIGHTS

One of the main tools that were being used in order to find the needs of our users is the insights. These orderly written thoughts are not evident, they are intangible and undiscovered. This makes the researcher strive to find the less obvious information, to find that hidden truth not available in the research resources such as books, websites, blogs, or articles, but is in the feelings, motivations, attitudes, thoughts, or circumstances of the user. The importance of creating insights is that a large amount of data is turned into compelling findings, meaning that research data turns into new ideas for project development.

These pieces of understanding could not have been obtained without user outreach and the use of research methods.

We obtained 5 insights but we list the three main ones that are more present through the project.

- At the moment in which a user lives a prolonged grieving process, they identify that they need to build themselves as persons and they do it by performing self-care activities, so now they value their physical and mental health, affecting in a positive way how they perceive themselves and others.
- When people take care of themselves, they experience an increase in their self-esteem, which strengthens their motivation and willpower to maintain healthy habits and begin to generate meaningful relationships.
- When people discuss the concept of self-love with their close circle, they realize that love is a state of peace and tranquility, which is why they value the importance of love in their lives. Without love there is conflict.

4.6 JOURNEY MAP

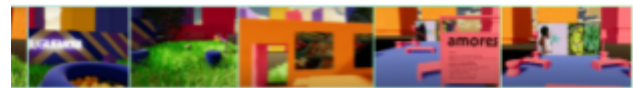


Image 3 - 4: Graffiti Wall (2023)

In this second version of the Journey Map, our medium fidelity project called "Amores" was taken as the basis. This Journey Map takes the situation of Fran, a guy with a lack of self-respect and low self-esteem, and transforms him into a user of our multi-sensory exhibition. In this journey, Fran begins the tour of the exhibition and observes, reflects, feels, and performs the activities of each area. What you want to achieve with this Journey Map is to simulate a user's experience of the exhibition and get to see the impact it had on their concept of love, helping him to question how he has lived love during his life, reveal situations in which the user probably had not noticed that there is love but that are part of their day to day, as well as awakening in

each user the importance of love in the individual and in the collective.

5. PROTOTYPES

5.1 LOW-FIDELITY PROTOTYPE



Image 4: Prototype A (2023)

Low-fidelity prototypes are quick to create and focus on conveying general ideas and basic concepts, says Rikke Friis Dam and Teo Yu Siang (2023).

Three prototype sketches were developed to get a primary view of the proposal to be tested with users.

In this version of the museum, the areas were established as well as the inner activities.

5.2 MEDIUM FIDELITY PROTOTYPE

According to *Vmware Labs*, a media fidelity prototype focuses on the visual part of the project and should contain a wide range of details such as colors, typography, content, etc. (2020).



Image 5: Prototype B (2023)

With the feedback obtained from the imaginary lab we proved it was wise to resort to a physical tour, new activities were planned and we restructured the message to be communicated: how my love moves others. How my love transforms my environment.



Image 5: Prototype C (2023)

Prototype C structured the accommodations of areas.

5.3 USER TESTING

The step in the design process known as usability testing, or user testing, allows us to test our project with real users and help us detail the project. Francis N. (2019)

The tasks given to the user were to complete the virtual experience, explore all the areas, read and think about the questions on the walls carefully and watch the images and videos.

During the test, evidence was taken with audio recordings, videos, pictures and notes. Highlighting the difficulties our user had during the test, interpreting its body language as well as the comments it made involuntarily on the process, once our user finished the experience, the following round of questions was made:

- What did you discover about yourself in this virtual exhibition?
- What did you realize when making this exhibition?
- What can you say today about love?
- What can you share today about love?
- What difficulties did you have during the experience?
- Any observations about the project?

When the feedback was received and the evidence taken, the collected information is analyzed to know the improvements that can be made to the project. This helps us determine what needs to be improved upon future iterations of our project.

Some of the positive feedback we received throughout our user tests was that the aesthetic of the project, mostly on the 3D render, is compelling and pleasant, the colors evoke the feeling of love and help connect emotions, as well as the song used as ambient music enhanced the experience.

On the other side, some of the negative feedback we received throughout our user tests was that the controls were not very intuitive, causing the user to have difficulties to explore around the areas with smoothness, also, sometimes the user did not understand what was the activity or how it was executed, mostly, on the activities where the team had limitations simulating reality on the virtual experience.

6. MEDIUM FIDELITY PROTOTYPE

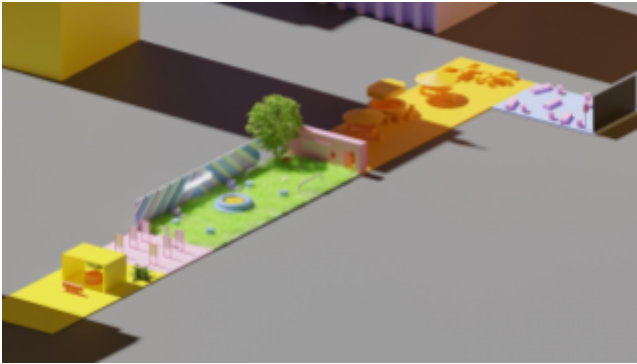


Image 6: Prototype D (2023)

For this medium fidelity prototype we took into consideration the comments made in the previous prototypes, as well as the feedback made in the *Imaginary Lab* located in Ibero Puebla University and user tests. This prototype is born again from the drawing, "The sketch on paper is fundamental in the design process, especially for designers it is a valuable tool for solving technical problems as well as to develop design concepts" (DESIGN, 2023) the route of the exhibition is proposed to reinforce the objective of each area.

The project titled "Amores" focuses on exploring the theme of love. The process involved creating a mood board for 3D construction. *Graphic* elements developed in *Adobe Illustrator* for *UI*, logo, and text, *3D* modeling in *Blender* with adjusted colors, and assembly in *Unity* with extra lighting for desired results, including programming.

Sketched: Utilized for problem-solving and design concept development.

User Journey Map was important for understanding user interactions in the experience process.

User experience emphasizes on creating user-friendly, effective, and visually appealing products, considering user needs.

Visual narrative is the animation design we used to tell stories visually, in order to enhance our audience engagement and message reinforcement.

Hierarchy: Important for organizing visual content by importance in any project, guiding users through the experience.

The theoretical framework incorporated concepts such as

Color Theory: Which governs color mixing for desired effects in various visual areas.

User Interface (UI): Blending vectors with photos for a museum setting, using *Neue Kabel* font, adjusting *Kerning* for readability, and employing colors such as black, white, and red for symbolic representation.

Typography theory understanding the letter components, classification, and spacing are crucial for *Kerning* adjustments.

Color psychology explores how colors stimulate emotions and influence attitudes.

Illustration is utilized as an artistic tool for expressing emotions related to self-love, personal growth, and relationships.

Information design synthesizes, organizes, and communicates information effectively through visuals, icons, and text.

Grids: Provide organization, structure, and consistency in design layouts.

UI Design: Involves creating visually appealing and user-friendly screen interfaces.

3D Modeling (*Blender*) Utilized low poly techniques for efficient graphic performance in *Unity*, focusing on a structure outlined in the sketch.

The project dives into the synthesis of various design principles, theories, and tools to create an immersive and impactful interactive museum experience centered around the theme of love.

7. CONCLUSION

Love is an emotion that humans feel and communicate based on the image they have about themselves. The self-concept of every human dictates how the interactions with other humans throughout their lifetime come to be. Furthermore, although this self-concept is mostly defined in the early years of a person, it can be changed and improved by being conscious of the environment, creating nurturing relationships, and having safe places to grow and develop as an individual.

For students to thrive and improve their relationships with themselves and others, the involvement of every member of the community is key to helping them find the appropriate authority figures in order to channel their worries and feelings adequately. While resilience is a human characteristic that is developed through life and shared experiences, it is important to take notice of the social aspect and help nurture bonds during the school phase to aid in the development of strong bonds and eventually build collective resilience.

A way to help build collective resilience in college students is to create a safe community between students and authorities, as shown during the development prototype of this project.

Furthermore, it is relevant to offer spaces where a person can reflect on behaviors, thoughts, and circumstances that are relevant and can even be concerning to them. An effective way due to the evolution of technology and the digital era, is to create products and experiences that can be consumed through a phone or a computer, this reduces the friction that exists in creating physical spaces because of the financial costs it involves. These digital products must be made emphasizing on the user and be made with an aesthetic that persuades a young user to interact and spend time with. We believe that crafting projects with social aims can normalize and enhance the relationship a user can have with talking and opening up about their struggles, unlocking spaces of safe dialogue, and unrolling opportunities to share and help other people who might be struggling.

We, as the team behind this project, hope this virtual experience can act as a tool to reflect and can have a positive impact on the user on how it sees itself and how it relates to others.

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