

# LOVE

THE LAST CHAPTER

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR  
GERONTOLOGY STUDENTS





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**Written to accompany the feature-length version of “Love: The Last Chapter”  
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# INTRODUCTION

Relationships, love and intimacy are central forces in the lives of older people. However, western societies typically see older adults as non-sexual and non-intimate beings. Because of this perception, the topic of intimacy and love in the lives of older adults is seldom talked about. Research in this field has largely looked at older adults' sexual functioning rather than the meaning they give to their loving relationships. Much of the research has been quantitative and has largely centered on medical issues, such as decline in sexual activity over time.

Love is an active power that connects people with each other. It makes isolation and loneliness disappear, providing the feeling of unity and security. Although the physical capacity of older adults has altered through the aging process, their emotional life is still strong, and their perception is sensitive (Schulz, 1982). Emotional, social and mental abilities are not age-bound, nor does the ability to love disappear as one ages (Bergman, 1988).

The Theory of Social Integration (Berkman et al., 2000) and the theory of Successful Aging (Rowe & Khan, 1997) have been illuminated in the film ‘**Love: The Last Chapter**’ (Keller Media & The National Film Board of Canada). Social integration theory argues that integration in the social structure can influence health. These relationships can shape resources available, provide a sense of purpose, and increase motivation to take better care of one's health, as portrayed in the stories of the various individuals within the ‘**Love: The Last Chapter**’. This supports Rowe and Kahn's Successful Aging theory, which states that social relations are linked to health and successful aging. Additionally, the film portrays older adults as beings that are continuously learning and growing. They are able to create new chapters in their

lives, such as developing a relationship, getting married and/or creating friendships. These new relationships and life decisions will continue to shape who they are as a person, despite their late age.

As gerontology students, **'Love: The Last Chapter'** can spark conversations about finding love later in life, maintaining love, identifying different kinds of love, as well as intimacy in old age and the role of love in navigating aging minds and bodies, death and dying, and social connectedness. The film's characters break social stereotypes as they express strength and resilience, revealing voices that we can strive to highlight in the classroom discussions.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How important do you think love and intimacy are in the lives of older adults? How can they help navigate through aging? Use references from the film and from your own lives.
2. What are some of the barriers that older adults face when trying to find intimacy and love? Think of barriers that can be experienced in a long-term care setting and community setting displayed in the film and discuss.
3. What is an intervention or service that you think can alleviate some of the barriers that older adults experience when trying to find love? Think of interventions that can be done in a long-term care setting and/or a community-dwelling older adults.
4. Think about the gendered experience of love. How does the perception and, consequently, importance of romantic love differ between older men and women? How does the experience of losing one's spouse differ between genders?
5. What different kinds of love were portrayed in the film and how do they differ? What kind of support do each of them provide in the lives of older adults?





# GROUP EXERCISES

1. Role-play: You're a researcher interviewing older participants who have recently lost a loved one about their experience through grief. Create two questions and perform a semi-structured interview with your classmate (one as the interviewer and one as the older adult). Switch roles, then debrief. What did you do to make the participant feel comfortable talking about this topic?
2. The following two scenes focus on George and Doreen's life in two different timepoints of her disease:
  - **[Scene Timecode #1: 8:20-9:40]** In this first scene, Doreen talks about staying in her place of residence until her death. Discuss the importance of place in the life of older adults. Why is dying in that place important for Doreen?
  - **[Scene Timecode #2: 38:15-39:50]** In this next scene, we see that she has been relocated due to her deteriorating health. How did this impact Doreen's experience? Is there another choice? What impact does this relocation have on George and the rest of their family?
3. Select and link one existing theory or conceptual framework to the topic of love and intimacy in old age. Explain how the framework helps explain this topic. Contextualize your responses with links to the literature, examples and scenarios from the film, and other sources.
4. Identify themes and important topics that emerge from the film and apply it into your own research interest. Develop a conceptual framework based on concepts from your area of research and your chosen theme(s), which include love and intimacy, grief, social support, end-of-life care, social isolation and loneliness, etc.

# ADDITIONAL READING

Määttä, K. (2011). The fascination of love never fades—how do the elderly describe their experiences of falling in love. *International review of social sciences and Humanities*, 2(1), 14-25.

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Bergmann, M. S. (1988). Freud's three theories of love in the light of later developments. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 36(3), 653-672

# DISCUSSION SHEETS MADE POSSIBLE BY



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