

## **The Role of Loneliness, Gender and Love Status in Adolescents' Love Styles**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Three hundred fifteen adolescents were administered the Portuguese versions of the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale and the Love Attitudes Scale. Analyses showed that loneliness was negatively associated with Eros for males and females, and positively correlated with Ludus for males and with Pragma for females. Significant gender differences were found on Ludus, Storge, Pragma and Agape love styles. Males were more ludic, storgic, pragmatic, and agapic in their love styles than were females. Significant relationships were also found between love attitudes and current love status. Participants in love were more erotic, manic, and agapic than the participants not in love. The results indicated that falling in love is systematically related to broad changes in the most emotional love styles.

Love, romance, and courtship are rites of passage for young people in western society. Following an extensive review of the literature and an essentially qualitative analysis of intensive interviews with individuals across a wide age range and from different backgrounds, Lee (1973) proposed a comprehensive six-style model of love, with three primary styles and three secondary styles. The primary styles included Eros (passionate, romantic love), Ludus (game-playing love), and Storge (friendship-based love). Compounds of two of each of the primary styles formed the three secondary styles: Pragma (practical love, a compound of Storge and Ludus), Mania (possessive, dependent love, a compound of

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Eros and Ludus) and Agape (altruistic love, a compound of Eros and Storge). Lee proposed that each of these love styles represents a distinct, but equally valid, orientation toward loving and being in love.

Lee's effort to empirically capture how individuals approach relationships has received considerable empirical attention (Lasswell and Lasswell, 1976; Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986; Hendrick and Hendrick and Dicke, 1998; Neto et al., 2000). One interesting aspect of the love styles is that they vary in emotional intensity. Eros and Mania are high in emotion. Agape is average. Ludus, Storge and Pragma are low.

During the past decade Levesque (1993, p. 219) has pointed out that "Several researchers have embarked on the empirical quest to understand love's vicissitudes. The endeavour, however, has been significantly limited by the tendency to ignore adolescent love experiences." As this picture is yet valid, this research extends our field of inquiry to the adolescents' years. More specifically, this project attempts to broaden our understanding of loneliness, gender, and love status in adolescents' love styles. The aims of the present study were thus three-fold.

First was to explore the relationship between loneliness and love styles. Current research points out the pervasiveness of loneliness and its debilitating effects (Rokach and Brock, 1997; Rokach and Neto, 2000). Loneliness has been linked to such maladies as depression, suicide, alcoholism, poor self concept and psychosomatic illness (McWhirter, 1990) and although most research was conducted in North America, it is clear that the negative implications of loneliness are felt regardless of the culture in which it occurs.

Loneliness has been conceptualised as an individual's dissatisfaction with social relationships accompanied by a negative psychological state (Peplau and Perlman, 1982). Brennan (1982) reported that "adolescence seems to be the time of life when loneliness first emerges as an intense recognizable phenomenon" (p. 269).

Research indicates that lonely individuals have difficulty in the formation and maintenance of romantic relationships (Rotenberg and Korol, 1995). However researchers have only begun to understand the romantic relationships of lonely individuals (Damsteegt, 1992; Rotenberg and Korol, 1995), and many issues remain to be examined. For example, to our knowledge no attention has been given to the question whether lonely adolescents differ in their love styles from their not lonely counterparts. The present study purposed to fill that gap in our knowledge by examining whether

loneliness was associated with love styles among Portuguese adolescents.

Past research on the relation between loneliness and love styles is inconclusive. For example, Damsteegt (1992) failed to yield differences in the six love styles between high lonely and low lonely persons (college students and single-aged adults). Rotenberg and Korol (1995) have found among male college students a negative correlation between loneliness and Eros, and a positive correlation between loneliness and Ludus; among females they have found loneliness negatively correlated with Eros only. Thus, although Lee suggests that people experience love in numerous and "multi-colored" ways, the question still remains as to whether some styles of love are related to lower loneliness than others.

According to Lee (1988) individuals adopting the Eros love style seek open, honest and intimate relationship, whereas individuals adopting the Ludus love style tend to avoid intimacy and engage in deceptive game-playing. Thus it was expected in the current study that loneliness should be negatively associated with Eros love style for both genders and positively associated with Ludus for males. Concerning the four other love styles we will examine whether there were differences between the genders in the association between loneliness and love styles.

Second the issue of gender differences was of concern in the present study. Hendrick and her colleagues (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986; Hendrick, Hendrick, Foote and Slapion-Foote, 1984) have found gender differences in Pragma, Mania, Storge, and Ludus love styles, with females being more pragmatic, manic, and storgic than males, and males being more ludic than females. Some of the gender differences have not appeared as strongly in more recent research (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1992). Neto (1993) has found gender differences among college students in Portugal. Particularly, men were more ludic and agapic than females. The reliability of these gender differences will be examined in this study among adolescents.

The third aim of this study was to explore love status differences in love attitudes. One powerful environmental influence that can change love styles is to experience a phenomenon described in the Western world as falling in love. Falling in love is for most people a very positive experience, considered by Hendrick and Hendrick (1988, p. 164) "a selective response to a unique other person with an orientation to the whole person". The self-perception of being in love was also of concern in the current study. Hendrick and Hendrick (1988) reported that subjects who were in love were more erotic and agapic, and less ludic and pragmatic than subjects who

were not in love. Neto (1993) has found that subjects in love were more erotic, more agapic, and less ludic than those not in love. Thus falling in love should have shown changes in several love styles, relative to persons not in love. Specifically, in light of theory and previous research it was expected that Eros, Mania, and Agape types would tend to be in love, Ludus types would not, and Storge and Pragma types would not differ.

## METHOD

### Participants

The participants were 315 single students (118 males and 197 females), ages 16 to 19 years ( $M$  age 17.1 yr.,  $SD = 0.98$ ), who were enrolled in high education school in the Lisbon area.

### Material

All participants were administered the Portuguese versions of the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau and Cutrona, 1980) and the Love Attitudes Scale (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986). In designing these versions, we followed the guidelines proposed in the literature on cross-cultural methodology (Brislin, 1986): independent/blind/back translation, education translation, and small-scale pretests.

(a) The Portuguese version of the *Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale* (Russell, Peplau and Cutrona, 1980) has been described in Neto (1992). This is an 18-item questionnaire in which nine of the questions were reverse scored. The subject is asked to indicate how often she or he feels that way (never/rarely/sometimes/often).

(b) The Portuguese version of the *Love Attitudes Scale* (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986) was taken from Neto (1994). Each of the six love styles was measured by four items (Neto, Mullet, Deschamps, Barros et al., 2000). The statements chosen were those proposed by Hendrick, Hendrick and Dicke (1998) in their four-statement short form, with the exception that the statement "I believe that what my partner does not know about me won't hurt (him/her)" was replaced by "I can get over love affairs pretty easily and quickly" from the seven-item form. Items were scored on a 5-point scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

After completion of the two scales, participants were requested to complete a short biographical form.

## Procedure

The purpose of the study was explained to participants, and they were advised to answer the questions with their current partner in mind. If they did not currently have a partner, they were directed to respond with their most recent partner in mind. If they had never had a partner, they were directed to respond by giving what they thought their most likely answer would be. The data were collected in groups of about ten to twenty people.

## RESULTS

The sample was predominantly Catholic (73 percent), but 27 percent declared to be non religious. All participants were white and from urban areas.

For the question "Are you in love now?" 106 subjects (34 percent) were not in love and 209 (66 percent) were in love. Another question asked "How many times have you been in love?" Only 15 subjects (5 percent) responded no. The largest number (58 percent) reported having been in love one to three times, and 37 percent reported having been in love four or more times. Thus this data confirms the assumption that love strikes almost all members of an adolescent population at one time or another.

The sample characteristics consisted of white adolescent, middle class, catholic, high school students. It is well to keep in mind that our conclusions may apply only to such a population.

The means and standard deviations for the measures across the participants (all) and by gender are shown in Table 1. For the analyses, the Love Attitudes Scale was scored for each of the six love styles (4 items for each love style subscale) such that larger numbers denote greater endorsement of each love style. Also the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale was scored such that higher scores denoted greater loneliness. There were no appreciable differences between males and females on the standard deviations for the love styles or the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale.

The Cronbach coefficient alpha was .85 for the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale. The alpha coefficients were .61, .59, .70, .72, .62, and .74 for Eros, Ludus, Storge, Pragma, Mania, and Agape love styles scales, respectively. Table 1 indicates that Eros, Storge, and Agape were the most strongly endorsed, and in descending order Mania, Pragma and Ludus were rated lower.

The correlations among love styles, across participants and by gender are shown in Table 2. The present results replicated

TABLE 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Loneliness and Love Styles by Gender

Variable	Mean			Standard Deviation		
	All	Males	Females	All	Males	Females
Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale	32.2	32.6	32.0	7.9	7.9	7.9
Love Attitudes Scale						
Eros	14.8	14.6	15.0	2.8	2.9	2.8
Ludus	8.8	10.1	8.1	3.5	3.1	3.5
Storge	14.1	14.7	13.7	3.7	3.5	3.8
Pragma	9.8	10.4	9.5	3.6	3.8	3.5
Mania	12.9	12.7	12.9	3.5	3.2	3.7
Agape	13.7	14.9	12.9	3.7	3.2	3.7

previous modest but significant correlations among the different love styles (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986; Neto, 1993). Across the sample, the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale was negatively correlated with the Eros love style ( $r = -.19, p < .05$ ). For males, the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale was negatively correlated with Eros ( $r = -.18, p < .05$ ), and positively correlated with Ludus ( $r = .19, p < .05$ ). For females, and the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale was also negatively correlated with Eros ( $r = -.20, p < .05$ ), but positively correlated with Pragma ( $r = .19, p < .05$ ).

Gender and love status effects were analyzed by separate one-way ANOVAs because of unequal numbers of subjects per condition. Interaction effects were assessed by two-way ANOVAs, treating love status and gender as if they were fully crossed, orthogonal variables.

One-way ANOVAs on the six love styles with gender as the variable indicated that there were gender differences on Ludus, Storge, Pragma, and Agape ( $F(1, 313) = 26.0, p < .05$ ;  $F(1, 313) = 4.6, p < .05$ ;  $F(1, 313) = 4.9, p < .05$ ;  $F(1, 313) = 23.9, p < .05$ ), respectively. The means are shown in Table 1. Males reported themselves to be more ludic, storgic, pragmatic, and agapic than females.

Chi-square analysis was performed, crossing in love/not in love with gender. There were no differences between the two love status groups for gender ( $\chi^2(1) = 1.7, p = .19$ ).

TABLE 2

Correlations Among the Variables for All Participants and by Gender

Variables	Eros	Ludus	Storge	Pragma	Mania	Agape
All						
Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale	-.19**	.06	.02	.10	.09	.09
Love Attitudes Scale						
Eros		-.12*	.16**	.13*	.14*	.24***
Ludus			.02	.21***	.02	.05
Storge				.28***	.13*	.17**
Pragma					.17**	.26***
Mania						.24***
Males						
Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale	-.18*	.19*	-.13	-.05	.04	.12
Love Attitudes Scale						
Eros		.05	.27**	.22*	.19*	.34***
Ludus			.07	.31***	-.03	.09
Storge				.32***	.08	.12
Pragma					.13	.14
Mania						.12
Females						
Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale	-.20***	-.03	.10	.19***	.12	.06
Love Attitudes Scale						
Eros		-.18**	.12	.10	.11	.23***
Ludus			-.05	.12	.05	-.07
Storge				.25***	.16*	.15*
Pragma					.21**	.29***
Mania						.32***

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

One-way ANOVAs on the six love styles with love status as the variable indicated that there were relationship differences on Eros, Mania, and Agape ( $F(1, 313) = 11.7, p < .05$ ;  $F(1, 313) = 7.0, p < .05$ ;  $F(1, 313) = 6.0, p < .05$ ), respectively. The means are also shown in Table 3. Those in love were more erotic, manic and agapic than those not in love.

The two-way ANOVAs yielded no significant interaction effects.

TABLE 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Love Styles by Love Status

	Mean		Standard Deviation	
	In love (n=209)	Not in love (n=106)	In love (n=209)	Not in love (n=106)
Love Attitudes Scale				
Eros	15.2	14.1	2.7	2.8
Ludus	8.6	9.3	3.4	3.7
Storge	14.0	14.3	3.8	3.5
Pragma	9.6	10.3	3.7	3.5
Mania	13.2	12.1	3.6	3.3
Agape	14.0	12.9	3.9	3.2

## DISCUSSION

This study explicitly tested the role of loneliness, gender and love status in love attitudes. In contrast to much previous research on love attitudes on adulthood, this study utilized a sample of adolescents. The general picture to emerge from this research is that while there are similarities between young adults and adolescents in love styles, there are nevertheless some striking and interesting variations.

As hypothesized, loneliness was negatively associated with Eros for males and females, and positively correlated with Ludus for males. These results are in agreement with Rotenberg and Korol's study (1995). Additionally, the findings point to the importance of Pragma love style for females. If lonely individuals tend to experience inadequate romantic relationships, males may be disposed to the Ludus love attitude and females to the Pragma love

style rather than Eros love style. For both genders, Eros is incompatible with lonely individuals' tendencies toward low intimacy and low interpersonal trust. Males' greater tendency to adopt a ludic style was reflected in greater loneliness. For males Ludus is compatible with lonely individuals' tendencies toward low intimacy and low interpersonal trust. Females' greater practical concerns over selecting a mate was reflected in greater loneliness. Thus for females Pragma is also compatible with lonely individuals' tendencies toward low intimacy and low interpersonal trust. In fact the pragmatic lover has a more or less conscious "shopping list" of practical, everyday qualities she desires in a beloved.

The pattern of results concerning gender and love styles among adolescents replicated partially the results of previous studies. The results of gender and love attitudes were in line with what might be expected on Ludus and Agape. The male adolescents in the current study were more ludic than the females. These findings are in agreement with previous research among college students (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1988; Neto, 1993; Neto et al., 2000). For example, Hendrick and Hendrick (1992) have stated that "there is a consistent gender difference in Ludus, with males always reporting themselves as more ludic" (p. 70). As regards Agape, this result is in line with previous observations (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986; Hendrick, Hendrick and Dicke, 1998; Neto, 1993). The greater presence of Agape in men may be attributed to a more idealized, romantic concept of heterosexual relationships in that gender. In the same vein Frazier and Esterly (1990) speculated that men might be more agapic because they are more emotionally dependent on their relationships than are women. In addition, men are less economically dependent on their partners and tend to view their relationships with women as more unique than women view their involvements with men. Although our data did not allow us to specifically test these propositions, our findings further support for the notion that men are indeed more agapic.

However, contrary to what was expected in the current research males were more storgic and pragmatic than females. Future research needs to clarify the reliability of these two gender differences in adolescents.

The social meaning of falling in love and previous research (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1988) suggested that people in love should differ in the love styles, relative to people not in love. Specifically, in the current study people in love subscribed more strongly to Eros, Mania, and Agape. Falling in love is typically viewed as an intense emotional experience, and differences

between the two groups on the most emotional love styles were found. No differences between the two groups on Pragma and Storge were expected and none occurred. In addition, the two groups did not differ on Ludus contrary to what was expected. As previous research has been conducted among college students (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1988; Neto, 1993) and the current study was conducted among high school students, future research must clarify the reliability of the absence of significant differences in Ludus in adolescents.

Our conclusions are bound by several limitations in our data. First, the correlational nature of our data restricts inferences about causal direction. Alternative causal links underlying our results cannot be ruled out. For instance, loneliness and love styles are reciprocally intercorrelated. For instance, if lonely individual's tendencies towards low intimacy and low interpersonal trust may predispose to a low erotic style, it may also be possible that low erotic individuals may be prone to unsuccessful romantic relationships. Studies incorporating an experimental or longitudinal perspective are warranted to shed light on causality issues.

Different shortcomings concerning generalisations of these results to settings culturally different from ours should proceed cautiously.

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