

LOVE STYLES AND DESIRE FOR CLOSENESS IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS¹

ALAN K. GOODBOY

MELANIE BOOTH-BUTTERFIELD

Bloomsburg University

West Virginia University

Summary.—This study investigated differences in love styles (i.e., eros, ludus, storge, pragma, agape, mania) associated with the romantic desire for closeness. Participants were 197 undergraduate students (M age = 19.8 yr., SD = 1.9; 92 men, 104 women) currently in a romantic relationship who completed a survey assessing their love styles and current desire for closeness with their partner (i.e., desired less closeness, the same level of closeness, or more closeness). Results indicated small significant differences in individuals' preferences for closeness with the eros and ludus love styles. Specifically, individuals who desired less closeness scored lower on eros love and higher on ludus love than partners who reported an ideal level of closeness or who desired more closeness.

Relational closeness and the experience of love are related (Aron, Fisher, & Strong, 2006). Closeness refers to having cognitive interdependence with a relational partner by promoting a connection between self and partner inclusion (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991; Aron, Mashek, & Aron, 2004) through sharing relational identities, resources, and perspectives (Aron & Aron, 1986). Although most satisfied romantic partners experience a considerable desire for relational closeness, around 12 to 30% of romantic partners actually would prefer less closeness in their relationship (Mashek & Sherman, 2004). Mashek and Sherman (2004) suggested that partners who desire more relational autonomy may perceive threats to personal control and identity in their relationships. Furthermore, Mashek and Sherman recommended that researchers examine relational correlates of the desire for less closeness in romantic relationships. One important correlate of relational quality is love styles (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986).

Love Styles

Romantic partners can communicate and experience love in fundamentally different ways. Based on work conducted by Lee (1988), Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) operationalized six styles of loving: eros, storge, ludus, pragma, mania, and agape. *Eros* love refers to a focus on passion and physical attraction. An eros lover is likely to value beauty. *Storge* love is a developmental love based on friendship. This love takes

¹Address correspondence to Alan K. Goodboy, 1128 McCormick Center, 400 E. 2nd Street, Bloomsburg, PA 17815 or e-mail (agoodboy@bloomu.edu).

a longer time to flourish and often emerges from established friendships. *Ludus* love is viewed as game-playing love. A ludic lover will manipulate situations and play strategic games that are advantageous for him. *Pragma* love is considered practical or logical, where compatibility with a partner is the primary focus. An ideal partner who matches certain criteria is sought. *Mania* love refers to an obsessive and possessive type of love. A manic lover tends to engage in intense and ruminating thought about the relationship. *Agape* love is considered altruistic and other-oriented love. The agape lover puts his partner before himself. These love styles have recently been linked to neurotransmitter genes (Emanuele, Brondino, Pesenti, Re, & Geroldi, 2007).

Generally, the eros and agape love styles are advantageous in romantic relationships (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988). Eros lovers tend to experience more relational and sexual satisfaction (Fricker & Moore, 2002), spend more time with their relational partners (Levine, Aune, & Park, 2006), and report falling in love more often (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). Agape lovers tend to use many relational intensification strategies (e.g., social support, rewards, tokens of affection, personalized communication, verbal or nonverbal expressions of affection) with their partners (Levine, *et al.*, 2006) and also report falling in love more often (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). Considering that the eros and agape love styles are associated with relational quality indicators, the desire for less closeness should not be a yearning for these types of lovers. Therefore, it was expected that (1) relational partners who report desiring less closeness will score lower on eros love (as measured by the Love Attitude Scale) than partners who possess a desirable level of closeness or desire more closeness (as measured by the Inclusion of Other in Self Scale); and (2) those who report desiring less closeness will score lower on agape love than partners who possess a desirable level of closeness or desire more closeness.

In contrast, the ludus love style is not associated with satisfying relationships (Hahn & Blass, 1997). The ludus love style is associated with lower relational and sexual satisfaction (Fricker & Moore, 2002). Ludus lovers tend to engage in more infidelity (Wiederman, 1999), are more narcissistic (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002), tend to have more defeatist attitudes about romance (Williams & Schill, 1994), and possess more liberal views concerning sex, and engage in sexual interactions more frequently (Hensley, 1996; Lacey, Reifman, Scott, Harris, & Fitzpatrick, 2004). Furthermore, ludus partners perceive they are in love either very rarely or very often, depending on whether they view romantic encounters as casual affairs or love affairs (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). Considering that the ludus lover views romance as a game and relationships are not viewed as particularly important, it could be expected that (3) relational partners who report de-

siring less closeness will score higher in ludus love than partners possessing a desirable level of closeness or who desire more closeness.

Like ludus love, the mania love style is also considered undesirable in relationships (Davies, 2001). Mania lovers tend to experience more loneliness (Rotenberg & Korol, 1995), have lower self-esteem (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986), use more secret tests in relationships (Levine, *et al.*, 2006), and experience more depression (Arnold & Thompson, 1996). Considering that mania lovers tend to be intensely obsessed with their romantic partners, are generally unhappy, and have a strong desire for companionship and interdependence, (4) those who report desiring less closeness likely will score lower in mania love than partners who possess a desirable level of closeness or who desire more closeness.

As far as the remaining love styles, storge and pragma, are concerned, it is not clear whether (5) relational partners who report desiring less closeness would differ from partners who possess a desirable level of closeness or who desire more closeness.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 197 undergraduate students (92 men, 104 women, 1 sex unreported; M age = 19.8 yr., SD = 1.9) enrolled in an introductory communication studies course at a large university in the Northeastern U.S. All participants were currently involved in a committed romantic relationship, ranging from 2 to 71 months (M = 18.9, SD = 14.8). A committed relationship was defined as monogamous and exclusive and participants had to be involved in such a relationship for a minimum of two months. Consequently, casual dating relationships were excluded from this study. Participants received minimal extra credit for their participation.

Procedures

Participants completed an anonymous survey in class that assessed their love styles along with their perceptions of the closeness in their romantic relationships. This survey consisted of the Love Attitudes Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986) and the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992).

Measures

Love Attitudes Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986).—This measure is a 42-item, Likert-type scale that asks participants to report on the love styles in their relationships. The scale measures six types of love styles: eros, ludus, storge, pragma, mania, and agape. Responses were solicited using a 5-point scale ranging from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree. Sample items include: "My partner fits my ideal standards of physical beauty"

(eros), "I enjoy playing the 'game of love' with my partner and a number of other partners" (ludus), "Our friendship merged gradually into love over time" (storge), "One consideration in choosing my partner was how he/she would reflect on my career" (pragma), "When my partner does not pay attention to me, I feel sick all over" (mania), and "I would rather suffer myself than let my partner suffer" (agape). Previous reliability coefficients for this scale have been: .71 for the Eros subscale, .69 Ludus, .75 Storge, .78 Pragma, .74 Mania, and .82 Agape (Kunkel & Burleson, 2003). In this study, obtained Cronbach coefficients alpha were: Eros ($\alpha = .74$), Ludus ($\alpha = .83$), Storge ($\alpha = .77$), Pragma ($\alpha = .81$), Mania ($\alpha = .75$), and Agape ($\alpha = .84$).

Inclusion of Other in the Self (Aron, et al., 1992).—This measure assesses relational closeness between self and one's partner. It includes seven Venn diagrams depicting two circles representing the self and the other. The circles overlap in different proportions ranging from being very independent to very interdependent. Responses are solicited by circling the diagram that best represents the person's perception of self and other interdependence on a 7-point continuum. To assess the desire for less closeness, two versions of this scale were included. One version asked participants to "Please circle the picture below that best describes your relationship with your romantic partner." The second version asked participants to "Please circle the picture below that best describes your *ideal* relationship with your romantic partner." Scores from version one are then subtracted from version two to measure Desire for Less Closeness ($M = -0.5$, $SD = 1.5$). Scores were then transformed to represent one of three levels of Relational Closeness. Participants whose scores are negative (indicating their current level of closeness was less than desired) were categorized as More closeness desired. Participants whose scores were zero (current and desired level of closeness identical) were categorized as desired closeness Achieved. Participants whose scores were positive (current level of closeness was too close) were categorized as Less closeness desired.

RESULTS

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) examined overall differences in scores of the love styles between partners who reported desiring Less closeness, reported desired closeness Achieved, and reported desiring More closeness (see Table 1). The MANOVA yielded a statistically significant model between the groups (Wilks $\lambda = .84$; $F_{12,378} = 2.8$, $p < .01$). Univariate effects were significant for Eros love ($F_{2,194} = 11.7$, $p < .001$; partial $\eta^2 = .11$) and ludus love ($F_{2,194} = 7.1$, $p < .01$; partial $\eta^2 = .07$). An examination of the mean scores using Scheffe *post hoc* tests indicated small significant differences for these styles. Hypotheses 1 and 3 were supported.

TABLE 1
DIFFERENCES OF LOVE STYLE SCORES WITH DESIRED LEVEL OF RELATIONAL CLOSENESS

| Love Style | Total (<i>n</i> = 197) | | Desire for Closeness | | | | | | <i>F</i> | η^2 |
|------------|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Less (<i>n</i> = 30) | | Achieved (<i>n</i> = 77) | | More (<i>n</i> = 90) | | | |
| | | | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | | |
| Eros | 28.1 | 4.2 | 24.9 | 4.9 _{ab} | 29.1 | 3.9 _a | 28.3 | 3.8 _b | 12.1† | .11 |
| Agape | 26.2 | 5.1 | 24.5 | 5.6 | 27.0 | 5.2 | 26.0 | 4.8 | 2.6 | .03 |
| Ludus | 16.3 | 6.2 | 20.0 | 6.5 _{ab} | 15.1 | 6.2 _a | 16.1 | 5.6 _b | 6.3* | .07 |
| Mania | 20.9 | 5.3 | 19.0 | 4.7 | 21.0 | 6.0 | 21.5 | 4.7 | 2.3 | .03 |
| Storge | 22.1 | 5.4 | 21.4 | 6.0 | 23.1 | 5.5 | 21.5 | 5.0 | 2.1 | .02 |
| Pragma | 19.2 | 6.0 | 18.2 | 6.2 | 19.4 | 6.3 | 19.3 | 5.6 | 0.5 | .01 |

Note.—Means sharing subscripts across each row are significantly different from each other. * $p < .01$. † $p < .001$.

Romantic partners who were categorized as desiring Less closeness scored significantly lower on the Eros love subscale than those categorized as desiring closeness Achieved or desiring More closeness. Additionally, romantic partners categorized as desiring Less closeness scored significantly higher on the Ludus love subscale than partners categorized as desiring closeness Achieved or desiring More closeness. In respect to Hypotheses 2 and 4, and the general research Question 5, no significant univariate effects were observed for the following love style subscales: Mania ($F_{2,194} = 2.4$, $p = .09$), Agape ($F_{2,94} = 2.6$, $p = .08$), Storge ($F_{2,194} = 2.1$, $p = .13$), or Pragma ($F_{2,194} = 0.5$, $p = .61$).

DISCUSSION

This study examined love styles and how they might be associated with the desire for closeness in romantic relationships. Results suggest that the desire for closeness may be due in part to eros and ludus love attitudes. The associations differ in direction with people who experience eros love style generally wanting to be closer, and those experiencing ludus desiring less closeness. These findings reinforce the notion that eros lovers may be suitable romantic partners whereas ludus lovers may jeopardize relational quality because of their orientation. Eros lovers may also actively move a relationship to a more intimate level in order to have their needs met, while ludus lovers are content playing relational games and maintaining distance. Considering the amount of variance explained in the current study, the desire for less closeness is, not surprisingly, influenced by additional individual differences, relational characteristics, and situational variables. Future research should examine these possibilities as predictors of closeness preferences.

A limitation of this study was that the sample consisted of college students; a sample of married couples or a noncollege sample could have

yielded different results. Alternatively, college students may be an appropriate target group in which to study love and romance, especially considering that their level of relational closeness may be just developing. Another limitation is the cross-sectional design. As Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) explained, "it would be desirable to monitor possible changes in love attitudes as a love relationship progresses from first encounter to binding commitment" (p. 401). These two limitations warrant caution in the interpretation of the data. Nonetheless, these findings suggest certain relational dynamics. That is, ludic lovers may attempt to distance themselves in romantic relationships, and eros lovers may not possess such a desire.

REFERENCES

- ARNOLD, M. E., & THOMPSON, B. (1996) Love style perceptions in relation to personality function. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 11, 425-438.
- ARON, A., & ARON, E. N. (1986) *Love as the expansion of self: understanding attraction and satisfaction*. New York: Hemisphere.
- ARON, A., ARON, E. N., & SMOLLAN, D. (1992) Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale and the structure of interpersonal closeness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63, 596-612.
- ARON, A., ARON, E. N., TUDOR, M., & NELSON, G. (1991) Close relationships as including other in the self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 241-253.
- ARON, A., FISHER, H. E., & STRONG, G. (2006) Romantic love. In A. L. Vangelisti & D. Perlman (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of personal relationships*. New York: Cambridge Univer. Press. Pp. 595-614.
- ARON, A. P., MASHEK, D. J., & ARON, E. N. (2004) Closeness as including other in the self. In D. J. Mashek & A. Aron (Eds.), *Handbook of closeness and intimacy*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. Pp. 27-41.
- CAMPBELL, W. K., FOSTER, C. A., & FINKEL, E. J. (2002) Does self-love lead to love for others? A story of narcissistic game playing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 340-354.
- DAVIES, M. F. (2001) Socially desirable responding and impression management in the endorsement of love styles. *Journal of Psychology*, 135, 562-571.
- EMANUELE, E., BRONDINO, N., PESENTI, S., RE, S., & GEROLDI, D. (2007) Genetic loading on human loving styles. *Neuroendocrinology Letters*, 28, 815-821.
- FRICKER, J., & MOORE, S. (2002) Relationship satisfaction: the role of love styles and attachment styles. *Current Research in Social Psychology*, 7, 182-204.
- HAHN, J., & BLASS, T. (1997) Dating partner preferences: a function of similarity of love styles. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 12, 595-610.
- HENDRICK, C., & HENDRICK, S. (1986) A theory and method of love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 392-402.
- HENDRICK, S. S., HENDRICK, C., & ADLER, N. L. (1988) Romantic relationships: love, satisfaction, and staying together. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, 980-988.
- HENSLEY, W. E. (1996) The effect of a ludus love style on sexual experience. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 24, 205-212.

- KUNKEL, A., & BURLESON, B. (2003) Relational implications of communication skill evaluations and love styles. *Southern Communication Journal*, 68, 181-197.
- LACEY, R. S., REIFMAN, A., SCOTT, J. P., HARRIS, S. M., & FITZPATRICK, J. (2004) Sexual-moral attitudes, love styles, and mate selection. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 41, 121-128.
- LEE, J. A. (1988) Love-styles. In R. J. Sternberg & M. L. Barnes (Eds.), *The psychology of love*. New Haven, CT: Yale Univer. Press. Pp. 38-67.
- LEVINE, T. R., AUNE, K. S., & PARK, H. S. (2006) Love styles and communication in relationships: partner preferences, initiation, and intensification. *Communication Quarterly*, 54, 465-486.
- MASHEK, D. J., & SHERMAN, M. D. (2004) Desiring less closeness with intimate others. In D. J. Mashek & A. Aron (Eds.), *Handbook of closeness and intimacy*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. Pp. 343-356.
- ROTENBERG, K. J., & KOROL, S. (1995) The role of loneliness and gender in individuals' love styles. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 10, 537-546.
- WIEDERMAN, M. W. (1999) Extradynamic involvement during dating. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 16, 265-274.
- WILLIAMS, D., & SCHILL, T. (1994) Adult attachment, love styles, and self-defeating personality characteristics. *Psychological Reports*, 75, 31-34.

Accepted May 27, 2009.