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RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION: THE ROLE OF LOVE STYLES AND ATTACHMENT STYLES

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ABSTRACT

The current study used three adult attachment styles: secure, avoidant and anxious/resistant (Hazan and Shaver 1987) and six lovestyles: Eros, Ludus, Storge, Mania, Pragma and Agape (Lee 1973) to predict sexual and relationship satisfaction. The sample of 111 (64 women, 46 men, 1 sex unstated) were either currently or recently in a relationship of three months or more. Regressions to test a mediational model of sexual satisfaction on relationship satisfaction showed that the Eros lovestyle had a direct positive effect on relationship satisfaction and an indirect positive effect on relational satisfaction via sexual satisfaction, while Ludus and avoidant attachment both exhibited direct negative effects on relationship satisfaction, and indirect negative effects on relationship satisfaction via sexual satisfaction.

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INTRODUCTION

"The urgent and intense feelings that attract and hold adults in relationships get labeled as love. Love is not enough, however, to make a relationship work." (Pistole 1994, p.155). Research has found that the varied attitudes and beliefs about love brought to a relationship impact differentially on perception of satisfaction. In this investigation two theoretical approaches conceptualizing the nature of love were used to predict sexual and relationship satisfaction. The two approaches, adult attachment theory (Hazan and Shaver 1987) and a lovestyles typology (Lee 1973), were compared in terms of their relationships to one another and ability to predict relationship satisfaction.

The idea that adult romantic love is a process of attachment, the quality of which is related to an individual's attachment history with a caregiver has found support in a number of studies (Collins and Read 1990; Bowlby 1979; Hatfield and Rapson 1996; Hazan and Shaver 1987; Levy and Davis 1988). The theory of attachment, first described by Bowlby (1969), postulates that the emotional availability and responsiveness of parents to their infants' needs in stressful situations, especially separation, becomes the standard by which infants learn to view the world. Beliefs and expectations about the trustworthiness of others and, concurrently, whether the self is worthy of care and attention are thus developed. Within this framework it is postulated that infants and children create inner working models representing the self and others that become stable components of personality, and subsequently influence future relationships.

Using empirical methods, Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall (1978) identified three primary attachment styles: secure, avoidant and anxious/ambivalent, later renamed anxious/resistant. Following the pioneering work of Bowlby and Ainsworth et al., longitudinal studies have found evidence of these styles of attachment into the early school years (Main et al. 1985) and the adolescence (Kobak and Sceery 1988). It is the persistence of these inner-working models, where rules are set in place to regulate emotion and govern behavior, that accounts for the continuity of attachment according to the theory (Kobak and Sceery 1988).

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Hazan and Shaver (1987) used attachment theory as a foundation for building an understanding of adult love. They found support for similar attachment styles in adulthood as described in infancy and predictable differences in the way love is experienced. Secure adult attachment was characterized by trust and a desire for closeness without the need to merge completely with another. In this group, the self was considered worthy of care and the partner was esteemed and expected to be responsive. Avoidantly attached adults reported discomfort with closeness and an expectation that the partner would be unresponsive. They found it difficult to trust and depend on others and so dismissed the importance of the relationship in order to keep emotions at low levels of intensity. Anxiously attached people, on the other hand, had a desire to merge with another. Their relationships were characterized by clinging and neediness, as the partner's responsiveness was uncertain. Self worth was low and the partner was often idealized. A number of subsequent studies have supported Hazan and Shaver's analysis of attachment history and working models (Collins and Read 1990; Hazan and Shaver 1987; Mikilincer and Nachshon 1991).

One of the ways that adult attachment styles can be operationalized is through Singelis, Choo and Hatfield's (1995) Love Schemas Scale. The scale includes six categories of love: secure, clingy, skittish, fickle, casual and uninterested; that have been found to exemplify the way men and women describe their experiences of love and relationships (Hatfield and Rapson 1996). Hatfield and Rapson referred to these categories as 'love schemas' or mental models of love. In this scale, the secure, clingy and skittish love schemes are conceptualized as measures of secure, anxious/resistant and avoidant adult attachment styles. The schemas are dependent on how comfortable one is with closeness and/or independence and how eager one is to be involved in romantic relationships. The first three items correspond directly to Hazan and Shaver's (1987) attachment style measure, such that secure, anxious/resistant and avoidant styles are represented

by secure, clingy and skittish love schemas respectively. The remaining love schemas account for minority beliefs about love that would not otherwise be represented.

An alternative approach to classifying love can be found in Lee's (1973) lovestyles typology. He proposes that different attitudes to love, stemming, in part, from previous family experiences, influence emotions and behaviors and can be classified into six main styles. These lovestyles are named Eros, Ludus and Storge, (the primary styles), and Mania, Pragma and Agape (the secondary types).

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The Eros style involves the need for an intense physical and emotional attraction and commitment to another. This lover is passionate about love itself. In contrast, Ludus is a game playing style of love where rules govern behavior and the love object is expected to understand and play by those rules. There is no genuine commitment to one partner nor is there any jealousy. In this way love can be anxiety free and fun; the way this lover believes love should be. Love can be played with multiple partners, or in a series of one after the other. Storge is a lovestyle that lacks intensity, but is deep in affection and devotion once a commitment to the relationship has been made. It is often likened to a long-term friendship where trust has been built up over time (Lee 1998).

Of the secondary lovestyles, Mania combines features of Eros and Ludus. The mix results in an obsessive, intense, possessive and anxious kind of love. The loved one is thought of continually and there is a desperate need to be loved and be reassured of that love regularly. Pragma is a mix of some of the characteristics of Ludus and Storge. These lovers see love as a practical matter of finding a lover with the demographic and personality qualities needed for compatibility and, therefore, a successful relationship. Agape combines features of Eros and Storge, making this style of lover intense and friendly. They have the added quality of altruism, thereby placing loved ones' needs before their own (Lee 1998).

The Love Attitudes Scale (LAS; Hendrick and Hendrick 1986) was devised to measure these lovestyles. It has six subscales found by factor analysis to represent the six distinct styles. Numerous studies have since supported the validity of the measure and the notion that Lee's typology encapsulates many vital elements of love experiences (Davis and Latty-Mann 1987; Frazier and Esterly 1990; Mallandain and Davies 1994; Morrow, Clarke and Brocke 1995).

It is possible that a clearer understanding of satisfaction in romantic relationships may be established by combining both the lovestyles and attachment/love schema perspectives. Indeed, Lee's empirical definitions of his lovestyles are seen by Shaver and Hazan (1988) as encompassing more than just attitudes to love. They believe that the lovestyles of Eros, Ludus and Mania subsume the other styles and have their foundations strongly embedded in attachment theory. Consistent with this, a study by Levy and Davis (1988) found significant correlations between lovestyle and attachment. Eros and Agape were positively correlated with secure attachment, while being negatively related to avoidant attachment. Ludus was positively related to avoidant attachment and negatively related to secure attachment. Finally, Mania correlated

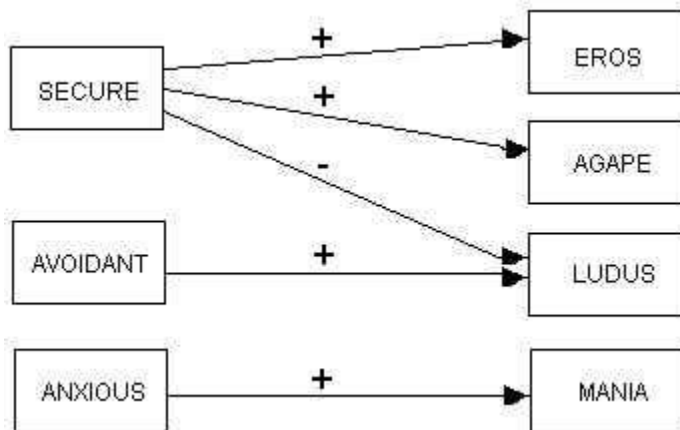
positively with anxious/resistant attachment. A later study by Hendrick and Hendrick (1989) resulted in comparable findings.

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The fundamental difference between these theoretical approaches is that adult attachment describes a proclivity towards adult love that is firmly rooted in early experiences of attachment, focusing on themes of intimacy and trust (Hazan and Shaver 1987). Lovestyles, on the other hand offer rich descriptions of the current beliefs adults hold about love, rather than emphasizing developmental issues. In effect, attachment styles can be seen as "the building blocks of interpersonal relationships" (Hendrick and Hendrick 1989, p.792), while the lovestyles mirror the many beliefs and attitudes about love that result. Figure 1 shows the relationship between the two approaches.

Figure 1. Relationships Between the Attachment Styles and the Lovestyles



Previous research using Hazan and Shaver's (1987) attachment style dimensions found a link between the three styles of attachment and relationship satisfaction (Collins and Read 1990; Hazan and Shaver 1987, 1990; Kirkpatrick and Davis 1994; Levy and Davis 1988). Greater levels of satisfaction were reported, and maintained over time, by securely attached individuals, while insecure styles (particularly avoidant), were characterized by significantly lower satisfaction, that declined over time (Keelan, Dion, and Dion 1994).

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With regard to the lovestyles, a number of studies using the LAS (1986) found relationship satisfaction to be greater for high Eros and Agape scorers and lower for those who score highly on Ludus (Frazier and Esterly 1990). Similarly, Contreras et al (1996) found the strongest predictor of relationship satisfaction was passionate love (Eros), with altruistic love (Agape) also a positive predictor of satisfaction for women. Associations between the remaining styles and satisfaction were mixed.

In addition to these perspectives on love, scholars have recognized that a sexual component differentiates romantic relationships from other types of relationships, although the precise nature of this sexual component has not been easy to pinpoint (Hendrick and Hendrick 1987; Regan 1998). It follows that studying love and sex together should provide a more complete picture of what constitutes satisfaction in romantic relationships. Evidence indicates a strong relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction (Byers, Demmons and Lawrance 1998). Dissatisfaction with relationships appears to impact on sexual relations, but the extent to which sexual satisfaction affects relationship satisfaction overall is not as clearly understood. A study of the predictors of sexual satisfaction by Haavio-Mannila and Kontula (1997) revealed reciprocal love, considering sex important and monogamy affect levels of sexual satisfaction. These factors are also elements of attachment and/or lovestyle, suggesting the relevance of these theories to the study of sexual satisfaction. In addition, recent studies have found that intimacy and sexual communication influence the relationship between sexual and overall relationship satisfaction (McCabe 1999). Intimacy and communication are also integral elements of adult attachment and the lovestyle typologies. The present study continues efforts to delineate the impact of sexual satisfaction on the quality of relationships within the context of these theories.

The major aim of this study was to determine whether attachment styles or lovestyles (or a combination of both) could predict overall relationship quality. The relative importance of these two theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing romantic/love relationships was assessed through charting the relationships of the three attachment styles and the six lovestyles with overall relationship satisfaction and, through statistical regression, estimating percent of the variance accounted for by the variables comprising the two models. Expectations were that relationship satisfaction would be predicted positively by secure attachment and negatively by the two insecure attachment styles (anxious/resistant and avoidant). From the lovestyle model, it was expected that relationship satisfaction would be positively predicted by Eros and Agape, and negatively by Ludus. The role of Mania, Pragma and Storge was unclear both from a theoretical and past research perspective. Unlike previous research, the present study included the variable of sexual satisfaction along with the approaches of attachment and love style theory in the prediction of relationship satisfaction. A model in which sexual satisfaction is a proposed mediator between the attachment and love style variables and relationship satisfaction was tested (Baron and Kenny 1986).

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A secondary aim was to examine the relationships between the variables comprising the two theoretical approaches to love – attachment styles and lovestyles. Here the predictions, based on past research, were that secure attachment would be positively correlated with Eros and Agape, and negatively correlated with Ludus. Avoidant attachment was expected to positively correlate with Ludus, and anxious/resistant attachment with Mania. The relationships between Pragma, Storge and the attachment styles were not predicted, as the literature appears unclear on the potential associations. Theoretically, it might be expected that these relatively stable yet somewhat passionless lovestyles could be a function of attachment histories that combined the secure styles (relating to stability) with the insecure styles (relating to an apparent inability to

invest too much intensity into the relationship). However this prediction is somewhat speculative.

METHOD

Participants

The sample comprised 46 men and 64 women (one sex unstated) who were currently or had recently been in a romantic relationship of three months or more. Of the 220 questionnaires distributed, 111 were returned, giving a response rate of approximately 50%. The mean age of the respondents was 38.7 years ($SD = 10.6$), and the age range was 20 years to 75 years. Respondents presently married or cohabiting made up 66.6% of the sample; the rest were single (including 6.4% separated or divorced). Thirty-six per cent of respondents had children. The mean length of their current or most recent relationship was 11.5 years ($sd = 12.4$).

Most of the sample (83.6%) had some tertiary education and 42.5% were employed in professional occupations. Full-time students made up 18.9% of the sample, 6.6% were not employed, and the rest were employed in full-time or part-time occupations. The majority of participants were born in Australia of Anglo-Celtic background.

Materials

The questionnaire consisted of four scales described below, along with demographic questions pertaining to age, sex, marital status and other aspects of relationships, education, employment, number of children living at home and ethnicity.

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The Love Schemas Scale (Singelis et al. 1995). This scale is a self-report measure designed to tap the extent to which each of the six love schemas described by Hatfield and Rapson (1996) is representative of respondents' own feelings and experiences. The measure contains six one-item subscales that describe each of the schemas: secure, clingy, skittish, fickle, casual and uninterested; mentioned previously. The first three items, secure, clingy and skittish, were taken directly from the Adult Attachment Questionnaire (1987), developed by Hazan and Shaver, and they represent the adult attachment styles of secure, anxious/resistant and avoidant respectively. These items are shown in Appendix 1. Respondents rate their level of agreement for each of the items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from, "Never true of me" (0%) to "Always true of me" (100%). Descriptions of the love schemas to be rated incorporate aspects of independence, closeness, and interest in romantic relationships. For example, the secure description reads as follows:

I am comfortable with closeness and/or independence; I find it easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.

In addition to the scales, participants were asked to nominate which one of the love schemas best described their style of loving.

The Love Attitudes Scale. An 18-item short version of the Love Attitudes Scale (LAS, Hendrick et al. 1998) was used to measure Lee's (1973) lovestyles. The scale consists of subscales measuring each of Eros, Ludus, Storge, Mania, Pragma and Agape. The items in each subscale are shown in Appendix 1. Each subscale has three items, and respondents are asked to rate the extent to which each item pertains to them on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating 'strongly agree' and 5 indicating 'strongly disagree'. Examples of items include: Eros - "My partner and I have the right physical chemistry"; Ludus - "I believe that what my partner doesn't know about me won't hurt him/her". Item ratings are added to form subscales in which higher scores represent higher levels of the named lovestyle. Cronbach alpha coefficients for the subscales ranged from .61 to .83 in this study.

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The Global Measure of Relationship Satisfaction. This scale (GMREL) is a subscale of the Lawrance and Byers' (1998) Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction Scale (IEMSS). Participants are asked to rate their *overall* relationship by responding to the question, "In general, how would you describe your overall relationship with your partner?" The items consist of five 7-point bipolar scales: 'good-bad', 'pleasant-unpleasant', 'positive-negative', 'satisfying-unsatisfying' and 'valuable-worthless', with 1 indicating dissatisfaction (endorsement of the negative pole) and 7 indicating satisfaction (endorsement of the positive pole). Items are added to form a scale in which higher scores indicate greater satisfaction. Alpha reliability of the scale in this study was a high 0.95.

The Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction. This scale follows the same format as the GMREL, except participants are asked to respond to the question, 'Overall, how would you rate your *sexual* relationship with your partner?' by rating the relationship on five bipolar adjective pairs as above. Again possible total scores range from 5 to 35, with higher scores indicating greater sexual satisfaction. Alpha reliability was 0.96 in the current study.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from a university population and from the wider community in Melbourne, Australia. Student participation partially fulfilled a first year psychology course requirement. Several associates of the researcher agreed to administer between 10 and 20 questionnaires each to their friends and/or colleagues to enable a wide cross-section of adult participants. Clear instructions as to the purpose of the study, anonymity, confidentiality and the time commitment needed (20 minutes) to complete the questionnaires were provided on an information sheet. In an effort to encourage honest answers, respondents were instructed not to include their partners in the activity, but partners were permitted to complete their own questionnaire. Questionnaires were returned anonymously in individual mail-back envelopes.

RESULTS

Relationships between Lovestyles and Attachment Styles

As predicted, the secure attachment style was associated with Eros ($r = 0.27$; $p < 0.01$), and the anxious style with Mania ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$). There was, however no significant association

between avoidant attachment and Ludus, or between secure attachment and Agape. The only other significant correlation between the attachment styles and the lovestyles was a negative correlation between the avoidant style and Eros ($r = -0.29, p < 0.01$).

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When attachment style was assessed through the participants nominating the love style which best described them, 70% nominated the secure style, and 10% each the anxious and avoidant styles. Another 10% nominated love schemas not theorized as relating to attachment (fickle, casual or uninterested). When the three attachment groups (secure, anxious and avoidant) were compared with respect to scores on the lovestyle measures, securely nominating individuals scored significantly higher on Eros than anxious or avoidant individuals ($F(2,86) = 4.01, p < 0.05$); avoidant individuals scored significantly higher than securely or anxiously attached on Ludus ($F(2,86) = 5.33, p < 0.01$), and anxiously attached scored significantly higher than secure or avoidant individuals on Mania ($F(2,86) = 7.64, p < 0.01$). The attachment groups did not differ significantly on Agape, Storge or Pragma. Thus, measuring attachment style in this categorical manner as opposed to scores on the separate styles gave further support to postulated attachment-lovestyle links, in particular uncovering the avoidant-Ludus link not apparent in previous analyses.

The relationships within the set of lovestyle variables were not strong (as expected, given they are conceptualized as separate factors), and indeed only three of the 15 correlations were significant at $p < 0.01$. These were the positive correlations between Agape and three other lovestyles: Eros ($r = 0.28, p < 0.01$), Storge ($r = 0.27, p < 0.01$) and Mania ($r = 0.32, p < 0.01$).

Among the attachment styles, secure and anxious/resistant styles were not associated, however the scores on secure and avoidant style measures were strongly negatively correlated ($r = -0.62, p < 0.001$).

Predictors of Sexual Satisfaction and Relationship Satisfaction by Lovestyles and Attachment Styles

Prior to regression analyses to predict relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction, correlations between the love variables (lovestyles and attachment styles) and the satisfaction variables were determined. Relationship satisfaction was significantly correlated with sexual satisfaction ($r = 0.72, p < 0.001$), anxious attachment ($r = -0.22, p < 0.05$), avoidant attachment ($r = -0.32, p < 0.01$), Eros ($r = 0.75, p < 0.001$), Ludus ($r = -0.35, p < 0.001$), Storge ($r = 0.26, p < 0.01$) and Agape ($r = 0.27, p < 0.01$). Variables significantly related to sexual satisfaction were Eros ($r = 0.67, p < .001$), avoidant attachment ($r = -0.19, p < 0.05$), and Ludus ($r = -0.23, p < 0.05$).

When attachment styles were measured categorically as described previously, the securely attached group were significantly higher on both relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction than the anxiously or avoidantly attached groups ($F(2,86) = 4.27, p < 0.05$; $F(2,86) = 3.46, p < 0.05$ respectively).

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The next series of analyses were designed to determine which of the attachment style and lovestyle variables predicted sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction, respectively. The sample (N = 111) was considered large enough to carry out a standard multiple regression using 10 independent and one dependent variable. Table 1 displays the Beta weights, F values and Adjusted R² figures for the simple regressions predicting sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction.

The three attachment variable ratings and the six lovestyle variable ratings were first regressed against sexual satisfaction. This produced a significant regression equation accounting for 47 % of the variance. The Eros subscale was the only variable that independently contributed significantly to the sexual satisfaction score. The second regression assessed the prediction of relationship satisfaction via the attachment and lovestyle variables without including sexual satisfaction. This regression shows that relationship satisfaction was significantly predicted, 67 % of the variance being accounted for. Eros was the only positive predictor and Avoidant attachment, Ludus Pragma and Mania were negative predictors.

Table 1. Multiple Regressions Predicting Sexual Satisfaction and Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Predicting Sexual Satisfaction Standardized Beta	Predicting Relationship Satisfaction (1) Standardized Beta	Predicting Relationship Satisfaction (2) Standardized Beta
Secure	-0.03	-0.14	-0.13
Anxious	0.04	0.03	-0.04
Avoidant	-0.03	-0.16*	-0.15*
Eros	0.68***	0.67***	0.42***
Ludos	-0.08	-0.15*	-0.12*
Storge	0.05	0.10	0.09
Pragma	-0.12	-0.14*	-0.10
Mania	0.03	-0.17*	-0.18**
Agape	-0.02	0.13	0.14*
Sexual Satisfaction	--	--	0.37***
F	9.83***	21.72***	27.25***
df	9, 98	9, 98	10, 97
Adjusted R ²	0.47	0.67	0.74

Note. *p< .05; **p< .01; p< .001.

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An additional regression was performed using the attachment style and lovestyle variables as well as sexual satisfaction ratings against relationship satisfaction. The regression analysis was again significant, accounting for 74 % of the variance in relationship satisfaction. Addition of sexual satisfaction improved prediction by 7% and slightly altered the pattern of significant predictors emanating from the attachment and lovestyle variables. Eros remained a positive predictor. Agape also reached significance as a positive predictor. Ludus, Mania and Avoidant attachment remained negative predictors, but Pragma did not. Sexual satisfaction itself was a strong significant positive predictor of relationship satisfaction.

To test whether sexual satisfaction acted as a mediator between the set of attachment/lovestyle variables and relationship satisfaction, a more sophisticated analysis was set up following the strategies set out by Baron and Kenny (1986). These researchers, in their conceptualization of the meaning of mediator variables (as opposed to moderator variables) note that multiple regression is not applicable in a mediational model if the dependent variable predicts the mediator. Relationship satisfaction, the dependent variable in this case, has been found to predict sexual satisfaction, the mediator, in a number of studies (Byers et al. 1998; McCabe 1999). Furthermore, a set of conditions must be met in such a model. Firstly, the independent variable (e.g a lovestyle) must relate to the mediator, and both the independent variable and the mediator should be related to the dependent variable. The effect of the mediator can be seen by comparing, the regression of the dependent variable on the independent variable and the regression of the dependent variable on both the independent variable and the mediator. When the mediator is controlled, the independent variable should have less effect on the dependent variable directly (Baron and Kenny). In this way, both the direct effect of a lovestyle or attachment style on relationship satisfaction and the indirect effect of the particular style through sexual satisfaction on relationship satisfaction can be found.

The Eros and Ludus lovestyles, along with the Avoidant (skittish) attachment style met the above criteria, as assessed by the significant correlations between these three variables and both sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction (see above). Therefore, regression analyses were performed to test whether sexual satisfaction mediated the relation between these variables and relationship satisfaction. Table 2 summarizes these analyses. In each case, the independent variable did have less effect when sexual satisfaction was included in the regression (See beta weights in Table 2).

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Table 2. Regression Analyses Testing a Mediation Model

Variables Entered	Beta	df	F	Adjusted R²
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Relationship Satisfaction on Sexual Satisfaction	.72***	1, 106	115.62**	.52
Sexual Satisfaction on Eros	.67***	1,106	88.42***	.45
Relationship Satisfaction on Eros	.75***	1, 106	135.45***	.56
Relationship Satisfaction on Sexual Satisfaction	.40***	2, 105	96.44***	.64
Eros	.48***	2, 105	96.44***	.64
Sexual Satisfaction on Ludus	-.23*	1, 106	5.95**	.04
Relationship Satisfaction on Ludus	-.35***	1, 106	14.89***	.16
Relationship Satisfaction on Sexual Satisfaction	.68***	2, 105	66.18***	.55
Ludus	-.20***	2, 105	66.18***	.55
Sexual Satisfaction on Avoidant	-.19*	1, 106	4.16*	.03
Relationship Satisfaction on Avoidant	-.31**	1, 106	12.01**	.09
Relationship Satisfaction on Sexual Satisfaction	.69***	2, 105	65.45***	.55
Avoidant	-.19**	2, 105	65.45***	.55

Notes. Values are standardized beta weights. The independent variables were Eros, Ludus and Avoidant; the mediator was Sexual Satisfaction; and the dependent variable was Relationship Satisfaction.

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

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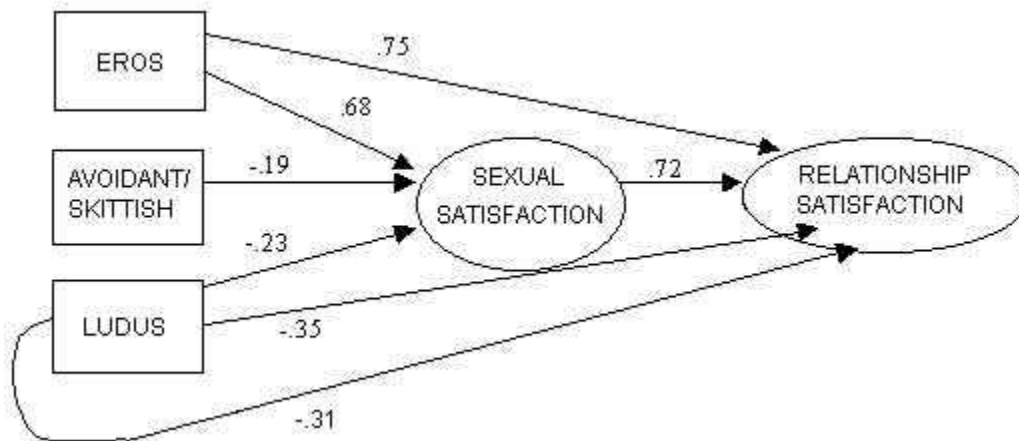
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The first regression (Relatsat on Sexsat) showed sexual satisfaction was a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction. The next set of regressions showed that Eros was a significant predictor of sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. Finally in this set, relationship satisfaction was regressed on sexual satisfaction and Eros, indicating this lovestyle had a direct positive

effect on relationship satisfaction and an indirect positive effect on relationship satisfaction through its effect on sexual satisfaction.

The next two sets of regressions followed the same pattern. Results indicated that both the Ludus lovestyle and avoidant (skittish) attachment style had direct negative effects on relationship satisfaction and indirect negative effects on relationship satisfaction via sexual satisfaction. Figure 2 illustrates these relationships (Figure 2 shows significant beta weights only).

Figure 2. The Direct and Indirect Association Between Styles and Relationship Satisfaction.



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DISCUSSION

Predictions concerning the relationships between attachment styles and love styles were mostly supported. As expected, secure attachment correlated with Eros, a finding consistent with that of Levy and Davis (1988), who note that inherent in these styles is the capacity to form intimate, committed attachments. Contrary to expectations, secure attachment was not positively associated with Agape. Shaver and Hazan and Shaver (1988) also did not find a correlation between Agape and secure attachment and suggest the self-sacrifice described as characteristic of Agape is more extreme than the caregiving aspects of Eros. It has an anxious quality not commensurate with secure attachment. In our study, Agape appeared to involve a complex mix of Eros, Mania and Storge. The relationships with Eros and Storge fit predictions from Lee's theory that Agape effectively combines these two styles, but the relationship with Mania does not. Interestingly, Hendrick and Hendrick (1989) also found Agape to be correlated with Mania, supporting the notion that both styles involve a level of intensity that has something of an obsessive or overly concerned element. Nevertheless, Agape was not associated with the anxious/resistant attachment style, so this 'anxious' element of Agape may be quite small in comparison with its more stable caring characteristics.

Results of the present study highlight the empirical overlap between the anxious/resistant or 'clingy' attachment style and the Mania lovestyle, as these variables are significantly correlated

(Shaver and Hazan 1988; Hendrick and Hendrick 1989; Levy and Davis 1988). This overlap is further supported by the correlation between Mania and Agape, which, as discussed previously, could suggest a level of obsessionality in the provision of nurturance in relationships – driven perhaps by fear of abandonment. Levy and Davis (1988) concluded that the styles of Mania and anxious/resistant, while overlapping, still contributed unique elements to the conceptualization of love, with the anxiously attached individual reflecting more of a pathological desire to merge with another than is necessarily reflected in the Mania lovestyle. This idea is supported by the relatively weak correlation found between these styles in the present study.

The expected negative correlation between scores on secure attachment and Ludus scores was not found, as it had been in the studies of Shaver and Hazan (1988) and Levy and Davis (1988). Neither was Ludus positively correlated with avoidant attachment scores (Levy and Davis 1988). However, using a different approach to the attachment scale and categorizing individuals into one of secure, anxious or avoidant groups did uncover a relationship between Ludus and attachment. Those individuals who described themselves as mainly avoidant in style scored higher on Ludus than the other two groups. Lee (1998) describes ludic lovers as ‘carefree’, recovering quickly from broken involvements and with little expectation of longevity in relationships. In this sense of being relatively uncommitted to relationships, they resemble the avoidantly attached and differ from the committed Eros types. Ludic lovers are not, however, described as having a negative view of themselves, in contrast to avoidant lovers. Further research into the precise elements of each style captured by their respective measures may help shed further light on the nature of this lovestyle and its correlates. It is possible that the Ludic style may be, for some individuals at least, related as much to life stage as to more permanent personality traits. For example individuals who have recently been involved in a relationship break up, or who are at a life stage where they feel unable to commit because of job or financial pressure, may temporarily take on a ludic style, but be capable, in different circumstances, or more committed and mature relationships.

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In summary, our findings corroborate the notion that adult attachment styles and lovestyles are to some extent conceptually overlapping, but the weak correlations suggest that each of these models offers something relatively independent in their conceptualizations of ways of loving. Exploring links between these concepts and broader relationship variables (such as relationship satisfaction) is a next step in the understanding love and attachment styles, and it is to these results that we now turn.

The major aim of the study was to analyze the associations between relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction and the love variables. As predicted and consistent with prior research (Davis and Latty-Mann 1987; Frazier and Esterly 1990; Morrow, Clark and Brock 1995) the Eros and Agape lovestyles were positively associated with relationship satisfaction, while Ludus and avoidant attachment were negative correlates. Simple regressions also showed Eros, Agape, Ludus and avoidant attachment to consistently predict relationship satisfaction whether or not sexual satisfaction was included as a predictor variable. Morrow et al. (1995) propose that people who endorse Eros and Agape lovestyles may employ relationship-nurturing behaviors that influence the quality of their relationships. Conversely, Ludus and avoidant attachment styles

discourage the forming of genuine intimacy, leaving little wonder that satisfaction in relationships is low.

One initially surprising result was that secure attachment scores did not correlate with nor predict relationship satisfaction. This may be because the variance for secure attachment is low. According to Hatfield and Rapson (1996) and Hazan and Shaver (1987) most people tend to report high scores on secure attachment, and this was indeed the case with the current study. The wording of the secure attachment description is more socially desirable than that of the insecure types. Alternatively, as secure attachment is characterized by an ability and desire to commit to an intimate relationship, it may be that secure types, having made a commitment to a partner remain in the relationship despite dissatisfaction. This latter suggestion does not square particularly well with our data. Categorizing individuals (as opposed to scoring them) on secure attachment did lead to the finding that the securely attached group was more satisfied with their relationships, generally and sexually, than the anxious or avoidantly attached groups.

Multiple regression analyses showed Eros was the only significant predictor of sexual satisfaction. The strong positive effect of this lovestyle on sexual satisfaction is consistent with the findings of Groti and Frieze (1998) and with qualities of reciprocal love and sexual idealism found by Haavio-Mannila and Kontula (1997) to promote sexual satisfaction. The remaining styles may interact with other variables, such as stress, fatigue and emotional states, which McCabe (1999) postulated as impacting sexual satisfaction.

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A key feature of the present study was to determine whether sexual satisfaction has a mediator role between particular styles and relationship satisfaction. The mediational model regressions showed that the Eros lovestyle had a direct positive effect on relationship satisfaction and an indirect positive effect on relational satisfaction via sexual satisfaction, while Ludus and avoidant attachment both exhibited direct negative effects on relationship satisfaction, and indirect negative effects on relationship satisfaction via sexual satisfaction.

Sex appears to play an integral part in the development of a satisfying relationship for the Eros lover. Conversely, the permissive and casual attitude to sex found to accompany the both avoidant attachment style (Hazan and Shaver 1988) and the Ludus lovestyle (Hendrick and Hendrick 1987) is not, as results would indicate, conducive to satisfying sex.

One limitation of this study is that it is cross-sectional in nature. The dynamics of relationship satisfaction have been found to change across time (Kirkpatrick and Davis 1994; Grote and Frieze 1998). Longitudinal studies tracing correlates of satisfaction during various stages of a relationship would be of interest, as would the developmental/ life stage monitoring of both attachment and lovestyles. Nevertheless, the current study has been successful in providing further support for the role of attitudes and beliefs about love in individuals' perceptions of sexual satisfaction and the overall quality of their relationships. The commonalities and unique contributions of both lovestyle and attachment theory were demonstrated, illuminating the

potential for theoretical integration of the attachment styles and lovestyles perspectives in relationship research.

Love and relationships are an integral part of the human experience, deserving of scientific attention. As evidenced in this study, a successful relationship requires more than love alone. A more complete picture of what constitutes satisfaction in romantic relationships requires future research to be approached with the passion of Eros and the realism of Pragma. A definitive answer may never be reached, but as with the Ludus approach to love, the thrill may be in the search.

NOTES

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APPENDIX

Key items from the Love Schemas Scale and the Love Attitudes Scale

The Love Schemas Scale (Attachment Styles) (Singelis et al. 1995):

Secure Attachment Item (Secure)

I am comfortable with closeness and/or independence: I find it easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about somebody getting too close to me.

Anxious Attachment Item (Clingy)

I need a great deal of closeness: I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.

Avoidant Attachment Item (Skittish)

I need a great deal of independence: I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.

The Love Attitudes Scale (Lovestyles) (Hendrick et al. 1998):

Eros Items

My partner and I have the right physical "chemistry."

I feel that my partner and I were meant for each other.
My partner fits my ideal standards of physical beauty/handsomeness.

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Ludus Items

I believe that what my partner doesn't know about me won't hurt him/her.
I have sometimes had to keep my partner from finding out about other lovers.
My partner would get upset if he/she knew about some of the things I've done with other people.

Storge Items

Our love is the best kind because it grew out of a long friendship.
Our friendship merged gradually into love over time.
Our love relationship is the most satisfying because it developed from a good friendship.

Pragma Items

A main consideration in choosing my partner was how he/she would reflect on my family.
An important factor in choosing my partner was whether he/she would be a good parent.
One consideration in choosing my partner was how he/she would reflect on my career.

Mania Items

When my partner doesn't pay attention to me I feel sick all over.
I cannot relax if I suspect that my partner is with someone else.
If my partner ignores me for awhile, I sometimes do stupid things to try to get his/her attention back.

Agape Items

I would rather suffer myself than let my partner suffer.
I cannot be happy unless I place my partner's happiness before my own.
I would endure all things for the sake of my partner.

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