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# Differences in Love Attitudes Across Family Life Stages

Marilyn J. Montgomery and Gwendolyn T. Sorell

*Differences in the endorsement of six love styles among four family life stage groups were investigated using the Love Attitude Scale. The sample included 250 adults in four groups: college-age single youth, young childless married adults, married adults with children living at home, and married adults with launched children. Significant differences in the groups' endorsements were found on several subscales, with most differences occurring between the non-married and married groups. Associations between the love attitudes and relationship satisfaction at all life stages are discussed.*

For most Americans falling in love is a highly valued experience. Indeed, in 20th century America romantic love (which is generally regarded as a feeling of intense yearning for and need to be with another who is passionately desired) is seen as the most appropriate basis for marriage (Cancian, 1987; D'Emilio & Freedman, 1988). Many people question the validity of relationships that are not characterized by high levels of passion and emotion, despite the fact that the intensity of new romantic love seldom seems to endure for more than a few months or a few years. On the other hand, many couples that have endured consider themselves to be in love and express satisfaction with their relationship. Family counselors are frequently asked by clients if changes experienced in attitudes or feelings toward a partner are the inevitable results of a maturing relationship, or if romance and passion can be sustained.

Several family science and human development theorists have suggested life-course-related differences in the types of love people experience. Some theorists imply that passionate love is an instigating phenomenon that serves the biological function of bringing partners together, but is ephemeral and temporary, with the strength of emotions declining as partners become committed (for a discussion of this perspective, see Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992). Working from Schachter's (1964) emotion theory, Berscheid and Walster (1978) and Walster and Walster (1978) proposed two major types of love: passionate and companionate. According to these writers, for couples who remain together, what usually begins as passionate love evolves over time into companionate love: with familiarity, the focus of intimacy shifts from love characterized by emotional intensity and strong physical attraction to love grounded in "the affection we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply intertwined" (p. 9). Josselson (1973), in her studies of the development of personal identity, argued that an integral component of the development of self across adulthood is a shift in relationship attitudes from an initial focusing on intense emotion and fantasy to a valuing of cooperative companionship. Sternberg, in his Triangular Theory of Love (1986; 1987), suggested that the intimacy, passion, and commitment a partner experiences would predictably change over the course of a relationship, with passion and certain aspects of intimacy decreasing while commitment increases and then gradually levels off. Psychotherapists and family educators have echoed these themes, cautioning couples that the initial flames of passion must die before the embers of a "true love" relationship can glow (e.g., Katz & Liu, 1988; Peck, 1978).

Research on proposed changes or differences associated with life-course changes in the experience of love has ranged from inquiries into the general experience of love (e.g., Cimbalò, Faling, & Mousaw, 1976), to tests of specific constructs such as *passionate love* (e.g., Tucker & Aron, 1993), *intimacy* and *commitment*, and *passion* (e.g., Acker & Davis, 1992). Typically, these studies have found some significant differences over the family life cycle

(though the differences tend to be small in absolute terms). For example, Tucker and Aron (1993) observed a decline in passionate love over three points of marital life. Acker and Davis (1992) found that intimacy did not decline (as expected) in longer relationships, but passion did decline for women (although not for men), and commitment was higher for married than for courting couples.

If there are changes across time in the experience of loving—from passionate to companionate, or from intimate to committed—differences in attitudinal orientations to love also might be expected among people who are at the different family life stages of adulthood. Lee's (1973) concept of different ways of loving provides a useful framework for testing the variations in attitudinal orientation toward love relationships that have been suggested. Based on extensive interviews and research using a card-sort technique, Lee identified six measurable "love-styles," each of which represents a different orientation toward what he calls partnering relationships. *Eros* involves powerful attraction to the partner, both physically and emotionally. *Ludus* is a playful, distant, noncommittal style that treats love as a game. *Storge* values the long-lasting friendship aspects of love, and *Pragma* is a practical attitude toward love that involves the individual's valuing a partner who fits a set of rational criteria. *Mania* is an obsessive style characterized by possessiveness and dependency. *Agape* is an altruistic, selfless love that gives priority to the partner's needs. Lee proposed that each of these styles represents a distinct, but equally valid, orientation toward loving and being in love.

Hendrick and Hendrick (1986), who have developed a scale measuring degree of endorsement of the love attitudes proposed by Lee, once suggested a developmental sequence of love attitudes over the course of the life span:

It may be that (in Western society at least) people go through a kind of modal developmental sequence of love styles... Manic love may be most characteristic of adolescents. In early adulthood the preferred style may evolve toward *Eros*, which in turn may evolve toward *Storge* and *Pragma* during the middle and later years. And we have all known at least one couple who appeared very *agapic*. Such a developmental sequence would account for the common observation noted by Walster and Walster (1978) that what

usually starts as passionate love (Eros) sooner or later settles down to companionate love (Storge, Pragma) (p. 402).

Later, these writers suggested that perhaps passion (Eros) and friendship/companionship (Storge/Pragma) are not consecutive in a romantic relationship after all—rather, they exist concurrently, and together play a part in both relationship initiation and later maintenance (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1993). In work that tests this notion, Inman-Amos, Hendrick, and Hendrick (1994) compared the love attitudes of 86 late adolescent children and their parents. Little similarity was evident between children and their parents; correlations of child/mother and child/father love attitudes were low and for the most part insignificant (the highest being a correlation of .29 for mother's Ludus with child's Eros). This finding seems to support the notion of a developmental sequence of love attitudes, but it is not clear whether the differences found represent cohort differences between the generations, differences related to the length of relationship (emphasized by those who predict passionate love's permutation into companionship love), or differences in the role transitions the two generations have undergone. Arguments by Glaser and Strauss (1971) support the last position; these writers reasoned that intragenerational continuity is likely to become more apparent as the younger generation moves into full adult status, undergoing major life transitions such as marriage, occupational commitment, and parenthood. Because Inman-Amos et al. (1994) compared only two life stage groups (young dating singles and married parents with launched children), interpretation of the differences as evidence for the modal developmental sequence of love attitudes is only speculative.

One aim of this research was to include a broad and balanced age-range of adults who were at different stages in the family life-course, so additional cohorts could be compared. In examining intimacy, passion, and commitment in the romantic relationships of a wide age range of adults, Acker and Davis (1992) found that more consistent effects emerged for stage of relationship than for simple relationship length. Thus, we deemed it appropriate to construct comparison groups that would reflect the life stage groups which had been studied previously, such as young dating singles, while including new groups not previously included in comparisons, such as those who were in young marriages but were childless. Because reviews of marital research (e.g., Nock, 1979) suggest that the presence or absence of children is a key variable, we constructed one comparison group to include those with children living in the home. Another group included adults whose children who were launched.

The research reported in this paper was designed to test the earlier hypotheses suggested by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) regarding family life-course-related differences in love attitudes. If, as they and others have suggested, an individual's love style evolves from a passionate, desperate need to friendly, committed companionship and self-giving love, the love attitudes of people in different family life stages would differ in predictable ways. On the other hand, if these patterns of differences in love attitudes are not observed across life stage groups, we then can deduce that adult love attitudes are influenced primarily by factors other than advancing maturity of the relationship or relationship partners. For example, if more similarities than differences are found across age groups, love attitudes may primarily reflect dominant cultural beliefs about appropriate attitudes about love in partnering relationships which affect individuals regardless of their age and stage of family life.

To test the notion of stage-related differences, we developed a set of hypotheses based on Hendrick and Hendrick's (1986) speculation of a sequence of changes:

(1) Unmarried young adults will endorse Mania more strongly than all of the married groups.

(2) Both unmarried young adults and childless married couples (in other words, those in "young," presumably still-passionate relationships) will endorse Eros as a love style to a greater extent than (a) people actively involved in child-rearing or (b) those whose children are launched.

(3) Those with children living at home and those whose relationships have endured into and beyond the child-rearing years will endorse Storge, Agape, and Pragma-indicants of companionate love to a greater extent than (a) unmarried youth or (b) childless married youth.

The uncommitted, "playing the field" type of attitude described by Ludus was not addressed by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) in their speculations; however, Frazier and Esterly (1990) found that lower Ludus scores were associated with greater length of relationship. Similarly, Grote and Frieze (1994), in their study of the friendship-based love of adults, observed lower Ludie scores for those who were married than for those who were dating or separated/divorced. Therefore, we predicted:

(4) Unmarried youth will endorse a Ludie love-style to a greater extent than all other groups, which include those who have made a marital commitment.

Previous research has demonstrated that several of the love attitudes are predictors of relationship satisfaction. For example, for dating couples, passionate love, and the absence of game-playing love (men only) and possessive, dependent love (women only) were predictors of relationship satisfaction (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988). In later studies of married couples, passionate love was the love attitude most strongly associated with marital satisfaction (Contreras, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1994; Inman-Amos, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1994). These studies suggest that there is some consistency in the importance of passionate love, at least for adult relationship satisfaction, regardless of life stage. However, we reasoned that a proposed sequence of changes in love attitudes also could imply changes in the associations of the love attitudes with relationship satisfaction. Thus, we posed the question: Which love attitudes are most strongly associated with relationship satisfaction at the various stages of the family life-course?

## Methods

### *Participants*

The hypotheses were tested in a sample of 122 males and 128 females ranging in age from 17 to 70 years and they were divided into four groups: (a) never married, childless, college-age young adults, ranging in age from 17 to 24 ( $n = 66$ ); (b) childless, married people under the age of 30 ( $n = 61$ ); (c) married people, ranging in age from 24 to 50 ( $n = 63$ ), with preschool or school-age children living at home; and (d) married people, ranging in age from 50 to 70 ( $n = 60$ ), whose children were launched. These groups were selected to approximate the common sequence of events in the life-course of individuals who marry "on time" (Neugarten & Danan, 1973) and remain married throughout adulthood. Participants were volunteers obtained first from a public

health fair, then from classes at two universities and church-based classes in a southwestern community. Recruitment continued until sufficient numbers of men and women in each category had been obtained; each volunteer received a coupon for free beverages at a local restaurant. Respondents were screened to assure that none were married to each other, and none had been divorced. Questionnaires were filled out under monitored conditions at the location where the volunteers were obtained. Seven participants did not complete the questionnaire and were subsequently excluded from the analyses. No information is available for persons who chose not to volunteer for the study. An assessment of the background characteristics of the participants in the study indicates that they are representative of a middle class (53% with annual family incomes greater than \$35,000), White (92%), and well-educated (80% had at least some college) population; thus, they were very similar to participants in previous research on love attitudes. A Protestant religious affiliation was denoted by 68% of the participants, 23% were Catholic, 2% were not religious, and 7% designated other religious affiliations. Analyses revealed no significant differences among the family life-stage groups on any of these background variables except education level, with the unmarried group indicating predictably less educational attainment than all other groups.

## Measures

*Background inventory.* This form requested the demographic information indicated above and information about gender, age group, children (preschool, schoolage, or launched), marital status, and whether the participant considered themselves currently in love. Frequency of church attendance was also assessed as a measure of participation in social institutions that promote particular values about relationships.

*Love Attitudes Scale (LAS).* This 42-item scale was developed by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986), based on Lee's (1973) love typology. The scale is composed of 7-item subscales assessing level of endorsement of Eros (e.g., "My partner and I have the right physical chemistry between us," "My partner and I became emotionally involved rather quickly"), Ludus (e.g., "I enjoy playing the 'game of love' with a number of different partners," "I try to keep my partner a little uncertain about my commitment to him/her"), Storge ("Genuine love first requires caring for awhile," "I expect to always be friends with the one I love"), Pragma ("A main consideration in choosing a partner is/was how he/she would reflect on my family," "I tried to plan my life carefully before choosing a partner"), Mania ("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"), and Agape ("I would rather suffer myself than let my partner suffer," "I try to always help my partner through difficult times"), thus assessing a respondent's attitude-belief system about love. The scale has frequently been used in studies of relationship attitudes and beliefs, and appears to reliably measure six psychometrically distinct factors which correspond to the love styles described by Lee (1973). Although the scale was developed on a college population and has been used primarily for research with college students, it also appears to be valid when used with non-college respondents (Inman-Amos et al., 1994). Participants were given the standard LAS instructions to respond to the items with their current partner in mind, or if they were not currently married or dating someone, with their most recent partner in mind. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert basis, with higher scores indicating higher levels of endorsement of the love style. In previous research, reliability

analyses produced alpha coefficients from .68 for Storge to .83 for Agape and test-retest values ranging from .70 for Mania to .82 for Ludus (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986; 1989). In the present study, reliability assessment of the scale with the total sample produced alpha coefficients ranging from .71 (Storge) to .82 (Agape). Thus, the reliability of the college-age normed LAS was replicated with an adult sample of diverse ages.

A factor analysis of LAS scores was conducted with this broad age-ranged sample to determine whether results obtained by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986; 1989) on their college-age samples would be replicated and to demonstrate that the structure of love attitudes evident for college students is also evident in a diverse adult sample. Item ratings were entered into a principal components analysis; six factors were suggested by eigenvalues greater than 1. Varimax rotation, with a six-factor designated solution and a cut-point of .3 for inclusion of an item in interpretation of a factor, yielded a factor model almost identical to the one consistently found by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986; 1989).

*Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS).* This seven-item Likert type scale has been used in other studies as a reliable measure of the satisfaction an individual experiences in a close romantic relationship (Hendrick, 1988). Previous analyses confirm the presence of a single factor with an alpha of .86 (for the present study, alpha = .89). In previous research (Hendrick, 1988), the scale correlated .80 with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976).

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

The young single group included 23 subjects (28%) who reported that they were not presently "in love." (Only four married subjects reported that they were not in love.) Previous research indicated that the attitudes of people who do not consider themselves to be in love differ from the attitudes of those who are in love (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). Therefore, the LAS subscale scores of young singles who were not in love were compared with the scores of young single subjects who were in love. The two groups differed significantly only in their Eros attitudes, with those in love endorsing Eros to a greater degree than those who were not ( $F(2,63) = 22.01, p < .001$ ). Subsequently, for the sake of group comparability, analyses for Eros included only those participants who reported being in love. All other analyses of love attitude scores included the total sample of young single adults.

As expected, participant age and life stage were strongly correlated. To assess for differences these two variables might have in their associations with the love attitudes, Pearson correlations were calculated for age and for life stage with each of the six love attitudes. Results revealed nearly identical patterns of associations for age and for life stage, suggesting that in this study, the two variables cannot be considered conceptually independent.

Correlations were also computed among raw scores on the six love style scales and the demographic variables (see Table 1). Because our sampling procedure included recruitment from educational and religious institutions, we deemed it important to ascertain how involvement with these institutions might be associated with our dependent variables. Frequency of church attendance and education level were significantly correlated with several of the LAS subscale scores. People who frequently attended

Table 1  
Intercorrelations Among Love Scale Sum Scores and Relationship Satisfaction Covariates

Scale	Ludus	Storge	Pragma	Mania	Agape	Church Frequency	Educ. Level
Eros	-.16*	-.12	.09	.14	.28*	-.07	.03
Ludus		.00	.11	.15	-.40*	-.34*	-.20*
Storge			.24*	-.02	.18*	.23*	.15
Pragma				-.01	.12	.17*	.07
Mania					.14	-.21*	-.19*
Agape						.29*	-.01

Note.  $N = 243$  (except for Eros, when  $N = 198$ ).

\* $p < .01$ .

church strongly endorsed Storge, Pragma, and Agape, but did not endorse Ludus or Mania. Those with more education were also unlikely to endorse Ludus or Mania. In addition, church attendance and education level differed as a function of age group when tested with one-way ANOVAs,  $F(3,238) = 27.34, p < .001$  for church frequency, and  $F(3,241) = 6.55, p < .001$  for education level. Inspection of means showed that young single adults were least likely to attend church; they were also the least educated. In order to isolate effects of life stage group from effects that church frequency might have on love attitudes, scores on this demographic variable were included as a covariate in the remaining analyses. Because the educational difference probably was due to the age of the young adults and the fact that most of them were presently enrolled in college, education level was not included as a covariate.

Because gender differences have sometimes been found in research with the LAS (e.g., Frazier & Esterly, 1990; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986), gender was included as an independent variable in the tests of the hypotheses.

The love attitude data and the relationship satisfaction data were analyzed in a series of 4 (life-stage group) X 2 (gender) ANCOVAs in which raw scores on the six LAS subscales and the relationship assessment scale were the dependent variables.

The unadjusted means and standard deviations for LAS scores are shown in Table 2. A significant effect for the covariate church frequency was found in the ANCOVA for every subscale except Mania. No interactions reached significance, but main effects for group membership were found for Mania, Ludus, Pragma, and Agape subscale scores and for relationship satisfaction. No main effects for gender were found.

### Tests of Predictions of Love Attitude Differences

Planned contrasts testing the specific hypotheses were conducted, including the covariate. As shown in Table 2, unmarried young adults had significantly higher scores on the Mania subscale than did all groups of married adults, thus supporting Hypothesis 1.

None of the predictions for Eros (Hypothesis 2) were confirmed. Eros subscale scores of "in love" single youth and of young married adults did not differ from those of married people with children living at home and those of the married adults with launched children.

Married adults with launched children and married adults with children living at home were expected to endorse the Storge, Pragma, and Agape love attitudes to a greater extent than the young singles (Hypotheses 3, a and b). However, there were

Table 2  
Means and Standard Deviations of IAS Scores and Specific Contrasts for Predicted Differences

Love Style	Life Stage Group				Total ( $N = 243$ ) <sup>t</sup>	Significant Contrasts ( $F$ )
	1 ( $n = 66$ ) <sup>1</sup>	2 ( $n = 58$ )	3 ( $n = 59$ )	4 ( $n = 60$ )		
Eros	3.88 <sup>a</sup>	4.02 <sup>a</sup>	3.92 <sup>a</sup>	4.07 <sup>a</sup>	3.97	
<i>M</i>	.69	.53	.63	.68	.67	
<i>SD</i>						
Ludus	2.56 <sup>c</sup>	1.74 <sup>b</sup>	1.97 <sup>b</sup>	2.00 <sup>b</sup>	2.08	1>2, 16.46***
<i>M</i>	.94	.58	.79	.73	.83	1>3, 9.92***
<i>SD</i>						1>4, 4.66*
Storge	3.60 <sup>c</sup>	3.94 <sup>c</sup>	3.68 <sup>b</sup>	3.99 <sup>b</sup>	3.80	
<i>M</i>	.67	.71	.69	.74	.72	
<i>SD</i>						
Pragma	3.37 <sup>c</sup>	3.32 <sup>c</sup>	3.05 <sup>b</sup>	3.56 <sup>a</sup>	3.33	1>3, 6.86**
<i>M</i>	.85	.78	.83	.84	.84	2>3, 4.73*
<i>SD</i>						
Mania	3.12 <sup>c</sup>	2.52 <sup>b</sup>	2.59 <sup>b</sup>	2.37 <sup>b</sup>	2.66	1>2, 12.48***
<i>M</i>	.87	.70	.84	.76	.85	1>3, 11.09***
<i>SD</i>						1>4, 17.05***
Agape	3.93 <sup>c</sup>	4.41 <sup>b</sup>	4.25 <sup>b</sup>	4.41 <sup>b</sup>	4.24	
<i>M</i>	.74	.50	.53	.56	.63	
<i>SD</i>						
Relationship Satisfaction	2.13 <sup>a</sup>	4.32 <sup>b</sup>	4.11 <sup>b</sup>	4.10 <sup>h</sup>	3.34	
<i>M</i>	.89	.52	.75	.67	1.19	
<i>SD</i>						

Note. Higher means indicate greater endorsement of the love attitude. Means without shared superscripts differ from one another,  $p < .05$ .

<sup>1</sup>Except for the analysis of Eros, when  $n = 43$ , and total  $N = 220$ .

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .  $df = 1,234$ .

no significant differences in Storge subscale scores between any of the life stage groups. Married adults with children living at home and those with launched children did endorse Agape to a significantly greater degree than the unmarried youth, thus confirming Hypothesis 3a for Agape, but they were not more Agapic than the young marrieds without children (3b). Hypotheses 3 for Pragma were not confirmed; both unmarried young adults and the childless young marrieds were significantly *more* Pragmatic than those who were married with children.

As predicted, young singles endorsed a Ludic love style at a significantly higher level than all married groups, confirming Hypothesis 4. Plots of the group means indicated that the young single adults differed substantially from the young married and childless adults on Agape, though this difference was not predicted. Post-hoc tests using the Scheffe technique did in fact reveal that young marrieds, compared to young singles, had significantly more Agapic love attitudes ( $F(1, 234) = 11.93, p < .01$ ). Post-hoc tests also showed that Pragma was endorsed by the married adults with launched children to a significantly greater extent than by married adults with children living at home ( $F(1, 234) = 7.17, p < .01$ ). Additionally, young single adults experienced substantially less relationship satisfaction than any other group ( $F(1, 234) = 84.81, p < .001$ ). These differences were not predicted and thus must be interpreted conservatively. The test of differences on relationship satisfaction included all participants, including young singles not currently in love, so the lower relationship satisfaction for that group may be an artifact of that sampling. Nevertheless, the results of the post-hoc comparisons, when considered with the results of the predicted group comparisons, indicate that the most substantial differences in love attitudes exist between young single adults and married adults at various points in the life-course.

### Love Attitudes and Relationship Satisfaction

In addition to stating hypotheses predicting stage-related differences in love attitudes, we asked which of the love attitudes are most strongly associated with relationship satisfaction at the various stages of the family life-course. This question was addressed by calculating correlations between the scores on the love attitude scales and scores on the relationship satisfaction measure. These correlations are reported in Table 3. Substantial and positive associations were observed for Eros and relationship satisfaction for all life stage groups (ranging from .47 to .77). Agapic attitudes were also positively associated with relationship satisfaction for all stages (ranging from .23 to .57), but the association was significant only for the single group and the married group with children at home. Ludus was not associated with relationship satisfaction for the young dating adults but was strongly and negatively associated for all three groups of married adults. Storge was significantly related to relationship satisfaction only for the married group with children at home. Pragma and Mania were not significantly related to relationship satisfaction for any life stage group. Intercorrelations between the LAS subscales were also calculated for each life stage group and are also reported in Table 3.

### Discussion

This study explicitly tested notions of differences in love attitudes at different family life stages, using the Love Attitude Scale (LAS). In contrast to much previous research on love atti-

Table 3  
Correlations between Love Attitudes and Relationship Satisfaction by Life Stage Group

Stage Group	Ludus	Storge	Pragma	Mania	Agape	Relationship Satisfaction
Eros						
1				.32*	.40*	.77*
2	-.03	-.06	-.06	.13	.16	.52*
3	-.24	-.05	-.10	.24	.44*	.64*
4	-.29	-.16	.23	-.04	.19	.47*
Ludus						
1		.06	.15	.07	-.33*	-.06
2		.04	.06	.01	-.32*	-.62*
3		-.01	.04	-.04	-.39*	-.45*
4		.28	.06	.09	-.23	-.59*
Storge						
1			.08	.23	.22	.02
2			.14	.07	.06	.04
3			.28	-.05	.27	.34*
4			.37*	-.10	-.02	-.08
Pragma						
1				.03	.06	-.09
2				-.05	.18	.03
3				-.03	.11	.08
4				-.06	.23	.11
Mania						
1					.35*	.25
2					.34*	-.05
3					.26	.14
4					.12	.02
Agape						
1						.51*
2						.26
3						.57*
4						.23

\* $p < .01$ .

tudes in adulthood, this study utilized a sample of adults representing a full range of age and relationship length. The LAS was found to be a reliable measure for adults in the range of life-stage groups (as well as for oft-studied college-age samples).

Based on suggestions by family theorists and practitioners that love attitudes may evolve through life or through the course of a relationship, we predicted specific differences in love attitudes for the various family life stage groups. However, the notion of a developmental progression of love attitudes across the life-span, involving the peaking of erotic, passionate love early in life and the rising valuation of Storgic love in midlife, as suggested by some, was not supported by the findings of this study. Admittedly, the cross-sectional design of this research did not allow for an analysis of the separate effects of age, length of relationship, and life stage upon the love attitudes of those in the study. Neither could the effects of the shifting cultural values that surround love relationships be distinguished with the available data. However, the data did permit a test of predictions pertaining to differences in love attitudes for various life stage groups across the family life span. Thus, despite some limitations, the results of this study can be seen as having important implications for family practitioners who inform others about the character of long-term relationships in the current cultural milieu.

Although a developmental model which includes the rising and falling of different love attitudes throughout the family life-course was not evident, a number of differences were found between young singles and all married adults, regardless of family life stage. Manic and Ludic love attitudes were held more strongly by young singles than by any of the married adult groups and, at the same time, unmarried youth were the lowest in Agapic love attitudes. These differences likely exist because the commitment endemic to marriage generally precludes low-commitment, "playing around" Ludic attitudes and the obsessive, uncertain

Manic attitudes that are characteristic of courtship. Marriage, on the other hand, may encourage self-giving love and the subordination of individual needs and preferences to those of the mate or the relationship to an extent that is not appropriate in courtship.

These results are somewhat consistent with other research which has found that individuals in different age groups conceptualize relationships differently (e.g., Knox, 1970). However, with all but one of the significant differences in love attitudes falling between the single and the married groups, we did not find support for the notions of developmental or generational differences in love attitudes among the three stages of married life. Rather, the pattern of results in this study are most consistent with Glaser and Strauss's (1971) argument that attitudinal continuity across cohorts is likely to become more apparent as the younger generation moves into full adult status and experiences the concomitant transitions in role structures; thereafter, little change is seen across the course of marriage.

We had expected that the presence of children in the home would be associated with differences in love attitudes. While we acknowledge the power of adult role transitions to affect attitudes in sweeping ways, we continue to find the relative absence of differences between the active parenting group and the married-without-children groups somewhat remarkable in light of research indicating that the presence of children in the family appears to impact levels of marital satisfaction and marital quality (Anderson, Russell, & Schumm, 1983; Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1985; Feeney, Peterson, & Noller, 1994). In our study, child rearing does not appear to be associated with differences in most love attitudes. Pragma was the only love attitude in this study which varied with the presence of children in the home; these parents have less Pragmatic love attitudes than couples in all other stages of family life. Pragma, the "shopping-list" attitude, is understandably high during young adulthood because of the emphasis placed on mate selection. Perhaps the later demands created by having children in the home cause partners to suspend an exchange-based, pragmatic valuation of their partner because it might weaken the mutual commitment needed to sustain the relationship during a time of ongoing marital stress.

The comparative importance of Pragma as a love attitude among the oldest life-stage group is notable; possibly, those whose practical equity concerns are not satisfied leave their marriages after children leave home, and thus are not represented in our sample. It is also possible that Pragma's "U-shaped curve" reflects generational differences in attitudes about love. D'Emilio and Freedman (1988) noted a recent cohort trend involving a movement away from valuing relationship partners for certain demographic or exchange-based characteristics toward a tendency to value relationship partners for their ability to elicit passionate feelings of being "in love." Perhaps the "married with children" group (who would also, in most cases, fit the category of "baby boomers") typify this attitude, whereas the older and the most recent cohorts have pragmatic attitudes reflecting generational pressures to form partnerships with social and economic viability. Alternatively, these results may in part be due to the fact that Pragma is the only love scale which requests retrospective information about the relationship; therefore, the interpretations of differences in pragma must be regarded as speculative.

### Implications for Practitioners

This study adds to the growing evidence that particular love attitudes have a strong association to relationship satisfaction for

a wide age-range of adults. Consistent with previous research (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988), the Eros and Agape styles were associated with high relationship satisfaction for all life stage groups, while Ludus was associated with low relationship satisfaction for all but the young single group. Erotic, Agapic, and Storgic orientations seem to have enhanced importance when children are in the home. Strategies for relationship enhancement which encourage partners to reduce their expectations and become resigned to the absence of Eros are not likely to increase a couple's satisfaction with their relationship. More helpful would be the abandonment of any Ludic tendencies, coupled with strategies that uphold the maintenance of the Erotic and Agapic relationship orientations. Hence, interventions which encourage exclusive commitment to the partner, partner-supportive attitudes, sexual intimacy, and the passionate valuing of the partner and the relationship are most likely to enhance the partners' mutual satisfaction. (For an example of a therapeutic approach consistent with this research, see Schnarch (1991).

We believe that the absence of significant gender differences in love attitudes in this study is notable and has implications for practice. Although men and women have been found to exhibit differences in some intimate behaviors in their relationships (e.g., Bell, 1981; Reedy, Birren, & Schaie, 1981), and differences in relationship beliefs (Frazier & Esterly, 1990; Sprecher & Metts, 1989), the findings in this study indicate that men and women are quite similar in their love attitudes across adulthood. Inspection of the means indicate that at all stages of the life-course adults endorse passion, friendship, and self-giving love attitudes as highly salient for them. In this respect, our research is consistent with other studies which find far more similarities than differences between the love attitudes of men and women (e.g., Inman-Jones et al., 1994; Tucker & Aron, 1993). Thus, we question the validity and utility of the recent proliferation of family life materials that emphasize radical differences in men's and women's approach to partnering relationships (e.g., Gray, 1992).

Additionally, the similarities that exist between all life-course groups and both genders in their endorsement of some love styles is noteworthy, perhaps reflecting widely-held cultural values about love. Endorsement of both passionate (Eros) and friendship/companionship love attitudes (Storge) was high for all groups and did not differ by family life-stage. It appears that, presently, people in love value partnering relationships that are emotionally and physically passionate friendships. The results of this study are consistent with the recent work by Grote and Frieze (1994) which indicates that passion and friendship/companionship are not consecutive in a romantic relationship after all- rather, they appear to exist concurrently, in both dating and married life stage groups.

### Limitations and Conclusions

There are certain limitations to the present study in addition to those imposed by a cross-sectional design. First, the common family life stage groups studied in this research do not represent the wide diversity of family forms and family transitions that exist in contemporary Western society, therefore, the generalizability of the results to many Western adults is questionable. It is possible, too, that the single group included people who have difficulty forming or maintaining relationships, whereas the married groups by definition included only those individuals who were reasonably successful at sustaining a committed partnering relationship, and these individual differences may have influenced the pattern of results.

Second, there is evidence that some demographic variables such as religious participation and education level are relevant for the study of love attitudes. Although our analysis allowed us to include these variables as moderators in the analyses of our data, a comprehensive inquiry into the processes and differences related to these variables was beyond the scope of this study. An inquiry focused on these variables or others like them may prove fruitful for future research on love attitudes.

Third, our data were primarily obtained from White, middle class adults. Although our work represents an advance in the inclusion of a broad and balanced age-range of adults, future work in the area of love attitudes must address generational differences across cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. Designs which allow for longitudinal study of individuals across these groups will yield information with the greatest potential for expanding our current theories of love to include a developmental perspective.

These limitations nevertheless permit an unexpected and perhaps encouraging conclusion. The love attitudes endorsed by the broad age-range sample contradicts notions that romantic, passionate love is the privilege of youth and young relationships, functioning primarily to bring partners together. Instead, individuals throughout the life-stages of marriage consistently endorse the love attitudes involving passion, romance, friendship, and self-giving love, and these results indicate that any popularization of young single adulthood as the enviable passionate ideal is erroneous. This result is consistent with other findings which show that for many individuals, feelings of romantic love for one's partner may diminish slightly, but generally remain high over the life-course (e.g., Mathes & Wise, 1983; Traupmann & Hatfield, 1981; Tucker & Aron, 1993). So it appears that the reports of passion's demise in marriage have been greatly exaggerated, at least among those whose marriages survive.

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