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Gender Differences Concerning Thoughts on Love Attitudes and Romance

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In the present study, the question of which gender has more romantic views on love was investigated. Thirty participants were given a 30-question survey regarding their thoughts on love. Using a coded rating system, certain responses were considered to be more romantic and other responses were categorized as less romantic and more idealistic. Results of this study showed that males, more often than females, supplied the romantic response to the survey questions. These findings might imply that males are the more romantic gender.

Which gender has more romantic views on love? Oftentimes, women think of their sex as the more romantic gender and complain that their partners are not romantic enough. Yet, is this truly the case?

Repeatedly, it has been found that in matters dealing with selecting a partner, females place more emphasis on education and jobs, whereas with males, attractiveness and affection was rated higher. In Davies (2001) research, he noted that women are traditionally more conservative and look to marry a partner who will be a good provider. In one study, it was found that men were more idealistic, and also more cynical about love, whereas women were more pragmatic (Davies, 2001). Moreover, in Davies (2001) study, he established that more men than women are prone to find Eros (romantic, passionate love) to be socially desirable.

A correlation can be seen in the animal kingdom. Commonly, the role of the female is to procreate. Therefore, females seek a male mate for fertilization so that they can bear children. Thus noted, it could be inferred that human women are also simply looking for a partner that can aid them in fulfilling their purpose(s), whether it be children, wealth, or companionship.

Researchers Knox, Zusman, Kaluzny, Cooper (2000) conducted a study on gender differences in ending love relationships. In their study, most women reported “medium difficulty with their recovery with men reporting more difficulty than women.” One cannot necessarily say that these men are more romantic simply because they had more difficulty recovering from a break-up. However, it could be implied that committed men may allow themselves to get more emotionally involved in a relationship.

After observation and literature review, the question of which is the more romantic sex was presented. Having found interest in this subject, I decided to research this question. I hypothesize that if a random sample of males and females are given a survey on their ideas of love, males will be found to be more romantic.

Method

Participants

Fifteen males and 15 females from Lindenwood University’s Human Subject Pool were participants in this experiment. In total, there were 30 participants. Demographic information, other than sex, was not of particular interest in this experiment, but was noted to look for any possible trends. Participants were asked their sex, age, and to choose a status of single, involved, or married. The participants were given an informed consent form, which detailed the experiment and explained that, as a participant, they

would be asked, in written form, questions about their love attitudes. They were also informed that at any time they were free to dismiss themselves from the experiment.

Materials

A quiet room with a table and chair were provided. The survey was 30 questions long and typed in 12-point Times New Roman font on standard 8 ½" x 11" white computer printer paper. The survey asked the participant to rate their feelings concerning questions about love using a coded rating system of "strongly agree" (SA); "mildly agree" (MA); "undecided" (U); "mildly disagree" (MD); "strongly disagree" (SD). A sample question from the survey was "When you fall "head over heels" in love, it's sure to be the real thing." (See attached survey as Appendix A) The pages of the survey were unstapled and the questions were not numbered. A new black-inked medium ballpoint pen and an unmarked folder were also supplied. On standard 8 ½" x 11" white computer paper in 12-point Times New Roman font, a typed informed consent form and feedback letter were employed as well.

Procedure

The participant was led into the room by the experimenter and was asked to be seated on the chair at the table. Already prepared on the table was an informed consent form, a pen, and the survey, which was turned face down. The experimenter told the participant that once he or she has left the room, the participant should first read the consent form; if after reading the consent form, the participant chose not to participate, they were to exit the room. If this occurred, the experimenter thanked him or her for their time and excused them. The experimenter also instructed that, upon agreeing to participate by signing the consent form, the participant may turn the survey over. The

participant was instructed to place his or her completed survey into the unmarked folder and exit the room. All of the proceeding instructions must take place while the experimenter is outside of the room to reduce any feelings of being coerced to contribute to the experiment on the participant's part. The experimenter waited outside of the room while the participant completed the survey. Upon the participant exiting the experiment room, the experimenter then gave the participant a feedback letter and asked if he or she had any questions regarding the experiment. If so, the experimenter answered the questions to the best of his or her knowledge. Once all explanations were given, the experimenter thanked and excused the participant.

This was a between-subjects experiment. One inherent problem with a between-subjects design is the individual differenced of the participants. I planned to overcome this by testing many participants. The difference between the groups I tested was their sex.

Results

In order to test the hypothesis that men are more romantic than women, an independent t-test was conducted with the participant's sex as the independent variable and the participant's survey responses as the dependent variable. The overall results revealed no statistically significant effect of gender on a participant's romance level, $t(28)=1.701, p>.05$. However, when comparing the means scores of each sex on the survey, a significant difference was found. Each response on the survey was given a numerical value as follows: "strongly disagree" equaled 5; "mildly agree" equaled 4; "undecided" equaled 3; "mildly disagree" equaled 2; and "strongly disagree" equaled 1. The mean for male responses was higher on 16 of the 30 questions, which is over half.

Of the remaining 14 questions, the women's mean was higher on 11 questions and on three questions, males and females had the same mean. On certain questions, the difference between the two means was somewhat higher. On question number 5, which read "common interests are really unimportant; as long as each of you is truly in love, you will adjust", the mean for males was 4.00, whereas the mean for females was 2.20, making a difference of 1.80, which was also the highest difference between means. Question number 14, which read "usually you can really love and be happy with only one or two people in the world", resulted in a mean of 2.33 for males and 3.27 for females, making a difference of 0.94. Another notable difference was on question number 28, which read "love is often a violent and uncontrollable emotion", the male mean was 3.13 and the female mean was 2.00, making a difference of 1.13.

The participants were also asked whether they were single, involved, or married. Of the male participants, 10 were single, four were involved, none were married and one male participant was unsure as to whether he was involved or single. As for the female participants, 5 were single, 9 were involved, none were married and one female also was unsure as whether she was involved or single. The fact that more female participants were involved than were male participants could be a factor in the results. The participant's age was also requested on the survey. For males, the ages ranged from 18 to 30 year old, with 30 being the most significant outlier. For females, the ages ranged from 19 to 24, with 24 being the most significant outlier.

Discussion

One interesting finding was that the average for males and females was the same on three questions, 15, 16, and 25. Question 15 read "regardless of other factors, if you

truly love another person, that is good enough reason to marry that person” and the mean was 2.87. Question number 16 read “it is necessary to be in love with the one you marry to be happy” and the mean was 4.40. Question 25 read “most divorces probably result from falling out of love rather than failing to adjust” and the mean was 3.00. This is worthy of note, because all three questions regard marriage.

An incidental finding after the fact was that the response for both sexes was quite high on several questions. On question number 8, which read “as long as two people love each other, the educational differenced they have really do not matter”, the mean was 4.13 for males and 4.00 for females. On question number 16, which read “it is necessary to be in love with the one you marry to be happy”, the mean was the same for both sexes at 4.00. For question number 20, which read “somewhere there is an ideal mate for most people”, the mean for males was 4.47 and for females it was 4.33. Question number 24, which read “when you are in love, you are motivated by what you feel rather than by what you think” and question number 24, which read “love is best described as an exciting rather than a calm thing also had means over 4.00 for both sexes.

One limitations of the study could have been the participants understanding of question number 28, which reads “love is often a violent and uncontrollable emotion”. Some participants may have seen the word violent and initially inferred it to mean cruel or vicious and not passionate, intense and powerful, as it was intended to be understood.

For future replications of this study, some improvement could be made. The survey could include more of a variety of questions by perhaps asking the participants about their romantic practices. Also, the sexual orientation of the participant could be looked at to see if that makes a difference in how they score on the survey. The sex of

the researcher may have affected the results. One possibility is that my sex as a female may have swayed the male participants to respond more romantically to look impressive. To repair this flaw, the sex of the researcher could be kept confidential by administering the experiment on a computer.

References

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