

P1 – Gratitude and Attachment Style as Predictors of Romantic Loneliness

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Research Purpose: This project examines gratitude, attachment, and romantic loneliness in a sample of people who are currently involved in a romantic relationship.

Research Description: Overall series of projects: Although Emmons, McCullough, and Tsang (2003, p. 327) argued that gratitude “enhances one’s personal and relational well-being”, most of the research linking gratitude to interpersonal relationships has focused on prosocial behaviour rather than ongoing personal relationships. Indeed, Algoe, Haidt, and Gable (2008) claimed that their recent study was the first to examine gratitude as a factor in the promotion of relationships. This project is one of a series of three studies that will explore the association between gratitude and relationship outcomes in ongoing romantic relationships. The students involved in the three projects will collect data together, but will focus on separate aspects of the overall study for their individual theses.

Project 1: The first project will examine the extent to which gratitude and attachment style predict romantic loneliness. According to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), individuals develop attachment styles based on their internal working models of self and others. For example, securely attached individuals have a positive view of self and others, while insecurely attached individuals have a negative view of self, others, or both. Previous research has shown that securely attached people tend to be less lonely (e.g., Man & Hamid, 1998). However, no previous study has examined the relationships between gratitude, attachment style, and romantic loneliness.

Participants: The overall study will include approximately 150-200 adult participants who have been in a relationship for at least six months (i.e., married, de facto, or dating). These participants will be recruited via the first-year psychology student experimental pool, community groups and organisations, and networks available to the three Honours students involved in the overall study. The supervisor will arrange for permission letters from any groups or organisations prior to data collection. Each student will be responsible for recruiting approximately 50-70 participants for the study.

Methodology: The following questionnaires will be used:

- (a) The Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test (GRAT; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003). This is a 44-item dispositional measure of gratitude that breaks down into three subscores: resentment, simple appreciation for common pleasures, and social appreciation for others.
- (b) Bartholomew and Horowitz’s (1991) Relationships Questionnaire, which measures four attachment styles: secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fearful.
- (c) The romantic subscale of the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA; DiTommaso & Spinner, 1993).

Data Analysis: Pearson product-moment correlations and regression analyses will be the

main analyses used. The three students involved in the overall study may choose to do the data screening either individually or together. However, each student will be responsible for individually analysing the data relevant to his/her specific project.

Student friendliness: This project is suitable for local or distance students. Weekly contact will be required in the early stages of the project, but can be more flexible throughout the year to reflect the different needs of the students. If two or more local students are involved in the project, I would prefer as many joint supervision sessions as possible. Contact with distance students will mainly be via email or phone. It may also be beneficial for distance students to allow a little extra time at the workshops (e.g., a day at the beginning or end) to provide more time for face-to-face supervision, though this can be negotiated. While the student will be able to find plenty of articles on gratitude, attachment, and loneliness, no studies have linked these three variables together. Therefore, the student will need to use critical thinking in order to integrate different bodies of research. If you are interested in this project, please send me an email and include two or three sentences indicating why you are interested in the project.

Expected research outcomes: It is hoped that the results of the overall study will be published in a journal article and/or presented at a psychology conference. The supervisor and the three students will all be co-authors on these papers.

Further reading:

Algoe, S. B., Haidt, J., & Gable, S. L. (2008). Beyond reciprocity: Gratitude and relationships in everyday life. *Emotion, 8* (3), 425-429.

Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. M. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61*, 226-244.

DiTommaso, E., & Spinner, B. (1993). The development and initial validation of the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA). *Personality and Individual Differences, 14* (1), 127-134.

Watkins, P. C., Woodward, K., Stone, T., & Kolts, R. L. (2003). Gratitude and happiness: Development of a measure of gratitude, and relationships with subjective well-being. *Social Behavior and Personality, 31* (5), 431-452.

Ethics:

Ethical approval will be sought by supervisor; or
 Ethics approved – number _____

Resources:

Project able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit
 Project not able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit – additional funds will come from: _____

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