

Interpersonal Variability of the Experience of Falling in Love

José Manuel Sanz Cruces

Consorcio Hospital General Universitario de Valencia, España

María Fernández Hawrylak*

Universidad de Burgos, España

Ana Benito Delegido

Consorcio Hospital General Universitario de Valencia, España

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a study describing different psychological constructs that modulate the intensity and individual variability of amorous passion. The intensity and duration of romantic love -measured using Hatfield's *Passionate Love Scale*- are associated with different psychological variables: attachment styles, personality traits, impulsivity, anxiety and attitudes toward the myths of romantic love. 503 College students participated in the study. The research fits into a descriptive, correlational and cross-sectional methodology. The results show that college teens prone to anxious attachment adhere more to the romantic prototype as they obtain significant higher scores on intensity of falling in love and on accepting attitudes of the myths of romantic love. An opposite pattern was observed in people prone to avoidant attachment. The extraversion personality trait relates differently to amorousness in men and women. We also discuss the possible interpretations of the differences between men and women on different variables.

Key words: love, personality, interpersonal relations, gender identity, courtship.

Novelty and Significance

What is already known about the topic?

- Several investigations have examined the relationship between the way of loving and different psychological variables such as attachment and personality traits. These studies reveal significant relationships with the tag love but little research has been done specifically on falling in love and individual differences in variability to fall in love.

What this paper adds?

- The study attempts to answer this question from the perspective of individual differences using different, relevant found, variables, such as personality, attachment or attitudes toward romantic love.

The act of falling in love, even when required, entails suffering; hardly surprising therefore that Ortega y Gasset (1964) defined it as “a transitory state of madness”. In this sense, we could talk of “symptoms” of falling in love (Yela, 2000): frequent intrusive thoughts, in other words, an obsession with the beloved; a disturbing state of uncertainty, which includes doubts on the intensity and continuity of the feelings of another or about their faithfulness; and a feeling of defenselessness, due to a loss of control in the face of such a strong experience. In addition, Bosch *et al.* (2008, 2012) claimed that “unrestrained romanticism can turn into a serious danger”. This happens because those that believe in a model of romantic love and in the myths that arise from it are more prone to become victims of violence and to permit it, given that they consider that love is what makes sense of their lives and that to break up

* Correspondence concerning this article: María Fernández Hawrylak, Departamento de Ciencias de la Educación, Facultad de Educación, Universidad de Burgos, c/ Villadiego, s/n 09001 Burgos, España. Email: mfernandez@ubu.es

the couple, to renounce love, would be the most absolute failure in their lives. Other experiences such as *passionate jealousy*, *manic love*, or *Bovarism* (Gala *et al.*, 2005) provide further evidence that falling in love could bring suffering in its wake. Falling in love can also entail a deterioration in daily life as happens with addiction to love, an experience in which there is a prioritization of the person who is the object of the addiction; constant concern to approach that person (*dependence*); suffering in case of separation (*abstinence*), with depressive or anxious episodes; and the use of addiction to compensate psychological needs, among other symptoms (Melody, 2006).

Hatfield (1998) defined falling in love as “an intense desire for union with the beloved”. This desire for union may be observed through different response systems (Fisher, 2004; Yela, 2000): cognitive (idealization of the other, attentional focalization, frequent and intrusive thoughts about the other), emotional (intense desire for reciprocity and fear of rejection, changes of mood, sensation of longing), behavioral (serving the other and actions aimed at guiding the emotions of the other person), and physiological (strong physiological activation in the presence of the loved one).

Several types of love have been defined. Lee (1973) established three primary forms of loving: *ludus* (love is lived as a game, the end purpose of which is pleasure with no commitment), *eros* (passionate love that starts suddenly and with a strong physical attraction, of an intense and emotionally disturbing nature), and *storge* (the love felt by companions, based on trust and security between two people with similar values). On the basis of these categories, he proposed three combinations: *mania* (feverish, obsessive and jealous love; a combination of *ludus* and *eros*), *pragma* (practical, realistic and searching for compatibility; a combination of *ludus* and *storge*) and *agape* (altruistic, patient and respectful; a combination of *eros* and *storge*).

In turn, Sternberg (1989), in his *Triangular Theory of Love*, defined seven types of love in accordance with the combination of elements that, according to him, compose it: intimacy, decision/commitment and passion. The three most relevant are: *fatuous love* (solely composed of passion, consisting of a strong physical and emotional attraction that includes sexual desire); *romantic love* (combines intimacy and passion; physical and emotional attraction added to a feeling of closeness and feeling that implies a wish to share); and, *companionate love* (composed of intimacy and commitment; a close emotional bond to which the decision to maintain love over time may be added).

There are other types, but Yela (2000) made an interesting contribution by observing that what underlies them all is the *eros-agape dimension*, in other words, a love that goes from feelings based on desire, need, seduction, obsession and passion, to another based on friendship, kindness, acceptance, fondness and feeling.

Centering on falling in love (the *eros* of Lee and the love of Stenberg), various studies have sought to relate it with different personal characteristics. The first studies that linked styles of attachment with love were completed in the 1980s (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Shaver & Hazan, 1987). In these studies, it is noted that the type of adult attachment influences the way in which people fall in love. Hazan & Shaver (1987) found that people with avoidant attachment experienced much greater difficulty in getting closer to and depending on other people, while people with anxious styles are likely to experience love with an excessive need for closeness and a fear of abandonment. Other studies

have related the style of attachment with different attitudes towards love. Accordingly, people who perceive their style as safe tend to be relatively more in agreement with the styles of love known as eros and storge, while avoidant subjects have low scores for eros (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1994).

There are various studies that relate personality traits to falling in love (Fehr & Broughton, 2001). The results that crop up most are those that are found in relation to extraversion and the most intense and passionate component of love, while the trait of friendliness is related more to love between companions and intimacy (Fehr & Broughton, 2001; Engel, Olson, & Patrick, 2002; Schmitt et al., 2009; Ahmetoglu, Swami, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010). Moreover, Woll (1989) found relations between the factor involving a search for sensations and the theory of Lee, finding positive correlations between eros and ludus and negative relations between pragma and storge. Impulsiveness appears to be fundamentally present in ludic and manic (or possessive) lovers (Manladian & Davies, 1994).

With regard to anxiety, Hatfield, Brinton, and Cornelius (1989) found that states of anxiety among 12-14 year old adolescents were related to high levels of romantic love and they found that both state anxiety and trait anxiety in 13-to-16 year-old adolescents were related with the intensity of romantic love. In addition, some of the physiological processes of falling in love were very similar to those of anxiety: intrusive thoughts, loss of concentration, strong physiological activity, nervousness, sweating, accelerated heart rate, psychological vulnerability and affective ambivalence (Yela, 2000).

A further variable that can affect the likelihood of falling in love is self-esteem. People with higher self-esteem wait for longer until a person is present that complies with their aspirations as a partner, while people with lower self-esteem feel a greater need to be liked by others and are more vulnerable to falling in love (Hatfield, 1995). Dion and Dion (1988) found that people with high self-esteem engaged in amorous relations more frequently and presented greater congruency between their ideal and their actual partner, but less intensity of loving feelings. Various authors have studied the relation between self-esteem and styles of loving, finding positive correlations both for eros (Malladian & Davies, 1994) and for ludus (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986) and a negative correlation with the manic style (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988).

Another characteristic related to falling in love is locus of control. Dion and Dion (1973), in their classic investigation, found that people with an internal locus of control shared the myths of romantic love to a lesser extent. In parallel, both Elkins (1978) and Munro and Adams (1978) found positive correlations between the external locus of control and romantic attitudes. Dion and Dion (1988) themselves confirmed that the "external" subjects experienced more intense feelings, whereas the "internal" subjects tended to have more consequent and rational relations. Finally, Woll (1989) found a positive and significant relation between the external locus of control and the eros as a style of love.

With regard to the gender differences, some studies have reported that men fall in love more quickly, but that differences between men and women disappear over time (Rubin, Peplan, & Hill, 1981; Hatfield, 1988). Other researchers (Hatfield, Traupmann, & Sprecher, 1984) found no sexual differences with regard to the intensity of passionate

love, but they did in as much as elderly women said that their partners loved them in a more passionate way than they themselves loved their partners. Rubin (1970) found no significant differences with his *Scale of Love* between men and women, only a certain difference in the passion factor. It appears that women express a greater number of “symptoms”: “feeling as if I’m floating on a cloud” or “I would like to shout, run and jump.” There again, Fehr & Broughton (2001) found that men have a greater tendency than women to relate passion with love, but found no differences between the sexes in relation to romantic love.

We propose the individual characteristics on which the interpersonal variability of falling in love depends, due to the media and social relevance of falling in love (Rodríguez, 2012), and its frequency (Bruce & Sanders, 2001), the potential suffering that it can provoke, its influence on subjective well-being (Diener & Lucas, 2008) and on physical health (Gala *et al.*, 2005; Markey, Markey, & Fishman, 2007), if indeed some people are more vulnerable than others to the experience of falling in love. There is also a lack of research into unifying all the individual predictive variables of this experience. The present study attempts to respond to this question from the perspective of individual differences using different constructs found to be relevant, such as personality, attachment and attitudes towards romantic love. We set out to investigate the factors that could modulate vulnerability to falling in love in a population of university students, with the following objectives: (1) Describe the experience of falling in love in quantitative terms through the following variables: intensity, number of episodes, reciprocity and age of the first appearance in men and women; (2) Examine the relationship of anxiety, impulsiveness, (avoidant and anxious) attachment style, extraversion, and attitudes towards romantic love with the inter-individual variable among those variables of falling in love; and (3) Evaluate the existence of differences in the variables of falling in love and their relation with personal variables between men and women.

As a hypothesis, we proposed that individual differences in the personal variables under study (anxiety, impulsiveness, style of attachment, extraversion and attitudes towards romantic love) would explain a significant percentage of variability with regard to the intensity, the number of amorous relationships, the percentage of reciprocity in falling in love, and the age of the first amorous relationship. In particular, we expected avoidant attachment to be negatively related to the number, intensity, percentage reciprocity, and age of the first time they fell in love, while we expected to find positive relations between the variables of anxious attachment, anxiety traits, extraversion, impulsiveness and attitudes towards romantic love and the variables of number and intensity of amorous relations and the age of those concerned. No specific hypotheses are advanced with regard to relations between the variables and gender, due to the great inter-generic variety (Hyde, 1981).

METHOD

Participants

The sample was composed of 503 students from the *Universidad de Burgos* (Spain).

Incidental sampling was chosen for their selection, due to the importance of relying on heterogeneous participation to ensure a more representative sample that would allow comparisons to be drawn. By doing so, we sought an equal sample with regard to men and women and one that would also have an equal number of academic qualifications in sciences and the humanities, drawn from the first two years (1st and 2nd) and the final two years (5th and 6th); a combination that random sampling could not guarantee, as the number of both women and students from the early years who attended classes was much higher than the number of both men and students in the final years.

Procedure and Measures

Our research with the aforementioned survey method was conducted during 2012. With the informed consent of the participants, their sociodemographic variables were collected: gender, presence or absence of a partner in their lives, and, in case they had a partner, the duration of their relationship.

An abbreviated 14-item version of the *Passionate Love Scale* (PLS; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986; Spanish version by Carreño & Serrano, 1995) was firstly administered in a single session, with the objective of measuring the intensity of passionate love, understood as a “state of intense longing for union with the beloved, expressed through preoccupation, physiological activation, desire to know, obsessive thought and idealization of the beloved”. This version with a Likert-type response format (1 totally agree to 9 totally disagree) presented a reliability of 0.91. It measured cognitive aspects (example: *obsession* or *idealization*: “sometimes I feel I can’t control my thoughts, they are obsessively on _____”), physiological (example: *high activation*: “I sense my body responding when _____ touches me”) and emotional (example: “I would feel deep despair if _____ left me”). The survey specified that each item on the scale had to be answered in order “to know how you feel (or once felt) about the person you love, or have loved, most passionately”.

The respondents then answered a series of questions that quantify different amorous variables: the number of times they have fallen in love, the state of their amorous relationship right now, the number of times their love has been requited, and the age at which they fell in love for the first time. In view of the terminological confusion (Sangrador, 1993) and the different conceptualizations and ideas that the word *falling in love* can awaken in people, and the need for valid responses (that is, so that the respondents would answer the questions in accordance with a sole definition of falling in love), we chose to omit the word *falling in love*, referring instead to the feeling described in the questionnaire that they had just answered. For example, we asked “With how many people and how often in your life have you felt in the way that is described in the previous scale?”

Finally, the following psychometric tests were used:

BARRAT Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11) (Barratt & Patton, 1983, adapted by Oquendo, Baca García, Graver, Morales, Montalbán, & Mann, 2001). Contains 30 items with 4 obligatory options from which to choose (from “never or almost never” to “always or almost always”) with a threshold of $\alpha = .89$. It measures cognitive impulsiveness

(tendency to take rapid decisions) motor impulsiveness (propensity to act solely because of the stimulus at the time, without thinking of the consequences) and impulsiveness because of no planning (lack of planning of future actions and greater interest in the present than in the future situation).

State-trait anxiety inventory (STAI) (Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1970; adapted by Guillén Riquelme, & Buela Casal, 2011).

Five-factor NEO Inventory. (NEO-FFI) (Costa & McCrae, 1999) adapted by (Manga, Ramos, & Morán, 2004).

Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998, adapted by Alonso Arbiol, Balluerka, & Shaver, 2007). This questionnaire involves two scales each with 18 items. One item measures anxious attachment (example: "I worry about being abandoned"), with $\alpha = .87$, and the other measures avoidant attachment ("I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back"), with $\alpha = .85$.

Love Attitudes Scale. An adaptation of a scale used by Bosch *et al.* (2008). It consists of 8 items ($\alpha = .525$). It evaluates the myths of equivalence, of the "other half", of exclusivity, permanence and eternal passion, of omnipotence, fidelity, marriage and entering a relationship on the basis of a measurement consisting of a descriptive phrase of each myth, on which agreement or disagreement is expressed on a five-point scale (from 1 that indicates 'complete disagreement' to 5 that indicates 'complete agreement'). It is meant to measure the extent to which the respondents are influenced by the myths of romantic love (example: myth of eternal passion: "The intense passion of the first moments of a relation should last forever").

Data Analysis

The data from the study were analyzed with the SPSS version 19.0 software program. Student's *t*-test was used for the difference of means, to explore the differences between men and women in the quantitative variables, by applying the Bonferroni correction ($.05/4 = .0125$). For nominal variables, the Chi squared statistic was used. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used for the correlations between the variables.

Because of the gender differences that exist in the experience of amorous relations (Fehr & Broughton, 2001), we chose to divide the results of the study between men and women, so as to clarify and to maximize the information that was obtained.

RESULTS

From the sample in the survey ($N = 503$), 46.05% ($n = 240$) were men and 54.95% ($n = 263$) were women, ranging between 18 and 35 years of age (average = 21.20; $SD = 4.13$; mode = 18) (see Tables 1 and 2).

The correlations between age and the variables of falling in love were calculated, finding significant correlations with the intensity of falling in love ($R = .127$; $p = .05$) (only for women) and with age in their first love affair for both men ($R = .237$; $p < .001$) and women ($R = .279$; $p < .001$) (see Tables 3, 4, and 5).

Four models were created using step-wise linear regression that allowed us to predict the behavior of each of the dependent variables on the basis of the independent variables.

Table 1. Differences between men and women in variables of falling in love.

| Variables of falling in love | M | W | χ^2 | p |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|----------|-------|
| Present amorousness | 41.6% | 58.4% | 7.821 | .05 |
| Maintains relationship | 37.8% | 62.2% | 15.290 | <.001 |
| Reciprocal amorousness | 69.26% | 81.36% | 47.825 | <.001 |

Table 2. Variables of falling in love in men and women.

| | Mean | | SD | | t | p |
|--|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| | M | W | M | W | | |
| PLS score (intensity of passionate love) | 90.46 | 93.04 | 17.661 | 18.363 | -1.603 | .110 |
| Number of episodes | 3.06 | 2.16 | 3.873 | 1.330 | 3.534 | <.001 |
| Duration of the relationship (in months) | 30.17 | 30.81 | 46.376 | 33.932 | .245 | .807 |
| Age of the first appearance | 15.91 | 16.35 | 2.990 | 2.145 | -1.921 | .055 |

Table 3. Correlations between variables of falling in love (DV)

| | Intensity of passionate love | | Number of episodes | | Percentage of reciprocity | | Age of the first appearance | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|--------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|
| | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W |
| Intensity of passionate love | -- | -- | .036 | -.146* | -.004 | .165** | .126 | .169** |
| Number of episodes | .036 | -.146* | -- | -- | -.063 | -.287** | -.270** | -.387** |
| Percentage of reciprocity | -.004 | .165** | -.063 | -.287** | -- | -- | .197** | .230** |
| Age of the first appearance | .126 | .169** | -.270** | -.387** | .197** | .230** | -- | -- |

** Correlation is significant at $p < .01$ level (bilateral); * correlation is significant at $p < .05$ level (bilateral).

Table 4. Correlations between variables of individual differences (IV).

| | Ext. | | Impul. | | Anx. | | Av. attach. | | Anx. attach. | | Att. rom. love | |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|-------------|---------|--------------|--------|----------------|---------|
| | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W |
| Extroversion | -- | -- | .187** | .166** | -.363** | -.269** | -.241** | -.236** | .003 | -.027 | .158* | .045 |
| Impulsiveness | .187** | .166** | -- | -- | .150* | .182** | .022 | -.003 | .047 | .123* | -.010 | .000 |
| Anxiety | -.363** | -.269** | .150* | .182** | -- | -- | .253** | .186** | .337** | .375** | .091 | .186** |
| Avoidant attachment | -.241** | -.236** | .022 | -.003 | .253** | .186** | -- | -- | -.120 | -.069 | -.136* | -.237** |
| Anxious attachment | .003 | -.027 | .047 | .123* | .337** | .375** | -.120 | -.069 | -- | -- | .311** | .320** |
| Attitudes towards romantic love | .158* | .045 | -.010 | .000 | .091 | .186** | -.136* | -.237** | .311** | .320** | -- | -- |

** Correlation is significant at $p < .01$ level (bilateral); * correlation is significant at $p < .05$ level (bilateral).

Table 5. Correlations between variables of falling in love (DV) and variables of individual differences (IV)

| | Intensity of passionate love | | Number of episodes | | Percentage of reciprocity | | Age of the first appearance | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---------|--------------------|--------|---------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|
| | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W |
| Extroversion | .093 | .212** | .180** | -.090 | .229** | .110 | .033 | .057 |
| Impulsiveness | .069 | .002 | .050 | .083 | .035 | -.052 | -.043 | .067 |
| Anxiety | .070 | -.016 | .085 | .161** | -.200** | -.151* | -.109 | -.079 |
| Avoidant attachment | -.396** | -.549** | .134** | .164** | -.214** | -.279** | -.213** | -.186** |
| Anxious attachment | .424** | .402** | .037 | .052 | .006 | -.125* | .084 | .005 |
| Attitudes towards romantic love | .283** | .260** | .011 | -.026 | -.005 | .032 | -.032 | .042 |

** Correlation is significant at $p < .01$ level (bilateral); * correlation is significant at $p < .05$ level (bilateral).

The variables that allowed us to predict the intensity of falling in love in men were anxious attachment (IC95% = .260/.515; $p < .001$) and avoidant attachment (IC95% = -.528/-.272; $p < .001$) and their attitudes towards romantic love (IC95% = .066/.875; $p = .023$). These same variables for women were anxious attachment (IC95% = .305/.505; $p < .001$) and avoidant attachment (IC95% = -.652/-.446; $p < .001$) and the scores for extraversion (IC95% = .034/.620; $p = .029$). These variables explained 31.6% of the variance in the intensity of falling love in the case of men and 44.5% in the case of women.

With regard to the number of times they fell in love, avoidant attachment (IC95% = .015/.083; $p = .004$) and extroversion (IC95% = .058/.213; $p = .001$) explained 6.6% of the variance in men, while avoidant attachment (IC95% = .001/.021; $p = .025$) and anxious attachment (IC95% = .002/.039; $p = .029$) explained 5.5% of the variability in women.

As regards percentage reciprocity in the love affair, extroversion (IC95% = .303/.648; $p = .005$) and avoidant attachment (IC95% = -.680/-.091; $p = .011$) explained 7.9% of the variability of the scores in men, while avoidant attachment (IC95% = -.693/-.294; $p < .001$) and anxious attachment (IC95% = -.446/-.049; $p = .015$) explained 9.9% in women.

Finally, avoidant attachment (IC95% = -.068/-.017; $p = .001$) in men explained 4.5% of the variance in the age at which they first fell in love and anxious attachment (IC95% = -.039/-.008; $p = .003$) explained 3.4% in women.

DISCUSSION

With this study, we have sought to arrive at a better understanding of which individual variables can explain certain differences between people when they fall in love. Nevertheless, before commenting on the results, we have to consider the different limitations that we face in the way they were obtained.

First of all, although we have administered five instruments to measure variables, the relevance of which we have already discussed, there are many others such as self-esteem (Manladian & Davies, 1994) or Rotter's locus of control (Woll, 1989) which have not been included. This is due to the search for efficiency, given that it is impossible to evaluate all the relevant variables in a single research project and because of the difficulty of administering long questionnaires in university classes. Other possible covariates to study and control are the physical attractiveness (Sangrador & Yela, 2000) and the seductive capabilities (Gala *et al.*, 2005) of the survey respondents. It would also have been very interesting to include the sexual orientation of those surveyed in the study.

Another limitation is the low reliability of the scale used to measure attitudes towards romantic love, which increases the probabilities of finding no relevant results.

In addition, very weak results were found for the dependent variable *number of times you have fallen in love*. For example, it was not found to be age related. These results may be due to the particular limitations of the cross-sectional methodology. Although we have tried to define the term "to be in love", so that everybody would report the number of times they have fallen in love, taking our definition into account rather than their own concepts, it is likely that the respondents answered this question by comparing their different amorous experiences, forgetting or discounting those less

satisfactory amorous experiences that they may at the time have considered as falling in love, according to the different typologies under consideration (Lee, 1973; Sternberg, 1989; Hatfield, 1988). In addition, the survey methodology can entail a bias of social desirability or difficulty with the estimations (Hyde & DeLamater, 2008). A longitudinal method would probably be much more reliable when accounting for and analyzing episodes of falling in love in greater detail.

Despite the limitations, the descriptive results referring to the differences between men and women are similar to those of Hatfield & Sprecher (1986) with regard to the intensity of love as measured with the PLS, that is, an absence of significant differences. However, with regard to the variable *age at which you first fell in love*, both men and women stated that they had fallen in love for the first time at around 16 years old, which contrasts with the results of another study (Hatfield & Rapson, 1987) in which five-year-old children had already experienced romantic love. This difference may be due to the respondents in our study simply not recalling those feelings or not interpreting them as adult love. We also found differences in the number of times people fell in love, which was significantly higher among men. This behavior could be explained on the basis of the theories of sociobiology and differential socialization. Sociobiological theories are based on the explanation of gender differences in the acquisition, through an evolutionary process, of different genetically transmitted adaptive sexual strategies (Ubillos *et al.*, 2001; Ubillos, Zubieta, & Páez, 2004). From this perspective, adaptive means that the gender that invests most (the woman) has the most selective strategies (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). On the other hand, the theories of differential socialization base their explanations on learning, through the socialization process and different amorous and sexual behaviours in both sexes (Ubillos *et al.*, 2001; Ubillos, Zubieta, & Páez, 2004). Thus, men learn that having many partners is something positive while women learn that it is something of which to be ashamed.

We find a further significant difference in the variable *reciprocity of falling in love*, where women present higher percentages of reciprocity. In fact, at the time of the survey, a significantly higher percentage of women than men had a romantic partner. We have found no studies on this topic with which to establish comparisons. These differences in reciprocity between university students could be interpreted in different ways. According to Contreras, Córdoba, & Peretti (2005), it might be that women are more seductive and are more talented at making the people with whom they fall in love, also fall in love with them (the female chooses). It might also be because women, to a greater extent than men, make sure that they commit themselves emotionally and sexually to someone that corresponds to them (Harrison & Shortall, 2011). Another possibility is that men and women differ in their concepts of falling in love. Thus, women would be more selective when countenancing an amorous relationship, accepting only those that are truly required; they would therefore present a lower number of amorous relationships than men. Accordingly, when female participants in this study were asked about the number of times that they fell in love, they recalled those romantic engagements that were required, while men would remember those occasions on which they felt an intense attraction towards someone, regardless of whether or not it was required. This possible distinction is reminiscent of Yela (1997), who distinguished

between *romantic love* and *falling in love*. Falling in love would come first and would have as its distinctive characteristics individuality and unilateralism; a love that needs neither intimacy nor requited love to exist. On the other hand, romantic love would come a little later, after having cultivated a degree of intimacy, so it would be more dependent on the reciprocity of the other and in this way it would be turned into more of a dual experience. This possible discrepancy of interpretations might in part contribute to explaining the “conceptual confusion” (Sangrador, 1993) surrounding the concept of falling in love. However, different studies, both with Spanish (Ferrer *et al.*, 2008) and international samples (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1988; Ubillos, Zubietta, & Páez, 2004) found no gender differences with regard to acceptance of eros (which is close to the concept of falling in love that we evaluated in our study). Nevertheless, the fact that a majority of both sexes accept the style of love known as eros does not, in our opinion, mean that they necessarily use the same word to describe their feelings. In other words, we could consider that men and women do not differ in their form of loving, but they understand the amorous states or stages in different ways. This appraisal is corroborated by Harrison & Shortall (2011), who affirm that men feel they are in love and tell their partners faster than women.

With regard to the results of the correlation and linear regression, we found that the independent variables under study explained very low percentages of variance of the dependent variables *reciprocity in falling in love*, *age of first amorous relationship* and *number of amorous relationships*. However, the variable intensity of falling in love was explained by 31.6% in the case of men and by 44.5% in the case of women, especially by the contribution of styles of anxious and avoidant attachment. According to these data, the fact that a man or a woman falls in love more or less intensely (in other words, that he/she has higher or lower scores in dimensions like intense desire for union, obsessive preoccupation, desire for reciprocity, physiological activation and emotional dependency) depends to a great extent on the style of adult attachment. We find opposing patterns in the correlations between styles of attachment and attitudes towards romantic love; those people with a more anxious style of attachment show greater agreement with the myths of romantic love in opposition to those that tend towards avoidant attachment, who appear more likely to believe that “somewhere, there is somebody predestined for each person” or that “true love wins out”. These results are in line with earlier research that relates attachment to falling in love (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Ortiz, Gómez, & Apodaca, 2002). Subjects with a greater predisposition towards anxious attachment could give higher scores for intensity of falling in love, due to their fear of loneliness, which would generate a greater tendency towards an obsessive preoccupation of being abandoned and a more extreme desire for union and reciprocity. This high preoccupation could be understood as a passive strategy of confrontation faced with the fear of abandonment, which could be completed by a constant search for confirmation that they are in fact loved and of the approval of others. On the contrary, people with a more avoidant style of attachment have a fear of depending on others, to surrender to falling in love, because of a lack of confidence and fear of intimacy. The strategy used by avoidant people would consist in the negation of affective needs and in

emotional self-sufficiency, with the aim of maintaining a positive image of themselves as against the others (Mayseless, 1996). These people believe neither in falling in love nor in its stability and see themselves as self-sufficient, which would in part explain their tendency to have lower scores on the scale of romantic love.

In conclusion, seeking to respond to the questions that we set ourselves out to in the introduction (are some people more vulnerable to falling in love than others? And if so, on what psychological factors do these differences depend?), it appears that men (when falling in love on more occasions and/or giving themselves before amorous passion) would be more likely to fall in love, and those people that tend towards an anxious attachment (which appears to involve more extreme levels of desire for union and reciprocity, obsession and acceptance of the myths of romantic love) would fall in love with greater intensity.

REFERENCES

- Ahmetoglu G, Swami V, & Chamorro-Premuzic T (2010). The relationship between dimensions of love, personality, and relationship length. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *39*, 1181-1190. DOI: 10.1007/s10508-009-9515-5
- Alonso-Arbiol I, Balluerka N, & Shaver PR (2007). A Spanish version of the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) adult attachment questionnaire. *Personal Relationships*, *14*, 45-63. DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2006.00141.x
- Barratt ES & Patton JH (1983). Impulsivity: Cognitive, behavioral and psychophysiological correlates. In M Zuckerman (Ed), *Biological bases of sensation seeking, impulsivity and anxiety* (pp. 77-116). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bosch E, Ferrer VA, García ME, Ramis MC, Mas MC, Navarro C, & Torrens G (2008). *Del mito del amor romántico a la violencia contra las mujeres en la pareja [On the myth of romantic love to violence against women in the couple]*. (Research report NIPO 207-08-050-7). Madrid: Ministerio de Igualdad & Universitat de les Illes Balears. Retrieved from http://www.inmujer.migualdad.es/mujer/mujeres/estud_inves/770.pdf
- Bosch E, Ferrer VA, Navarro C, Ferreiro V, Escarrer C, Ramis MC, & García E (2012). *Profundizando en el análisis del mito del amor romántico y sus relaciones con la violencia contra las mujeres en la pareja: análisis cualitativo [Deepening the analysis of the myth of romantic love and its relations with the violence against women in the couple: a qualitative analysis]*. (Research report NIPO 685-12-031-7). Madrid: Ministerio de Igualdad & Universitat de les Illes Balears. Retrieved from http://www.inmujer.gob.es/areasTematicas/estudios/estudioslinea2012/docs/Profundizando_analisis_mito_Web_854.pdf
- Brennan KA & Shaver PR (1995). Dimensions of adult attachment, affect regulation, and romantic relationship functioning. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *21*, 267-283. DOI: 10.1177/0146167295213008
- Brennan KA, Clark CL, & Shaver PR (1998). Self-report measurement of adult attachment: An integrative overview. In JA Simpson & WS Rholes (Eds), *Attachment theory and close relationships* (pp. 46-76). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Bruce NW & Sanders KA (2001). Incidence and duration of romantic attraction in students progressing from secondary to tertiary education. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, *33*, 173-184. DOI: 10.1017/S0021932001001730

- Buss DM & Schmitt DP (1993). Sexual strategies theory: An evolutionary perspective on human mating". *Psychological Review*, 100(2), 204-232. DOI: 10.1037/0033-295X.100.2.204
- Carreño M & Serrano G (1995). Análisis de instrumentos para la medida del amor [Analysis of instruments for the measurement of love]. *Revista de Psicología Social: International Journal of Social Psychology*, 10, 131-148. DOI: 10.1174/021347495763810938
- Costa PT & McCrae RR (1999). *Inventario de la personalidad NEO revisado (NEOPI-R). Inventario NEO Reducido de Cinco Factores (NEO-FFI). Manual profesional [Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) and NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI). Professional Manual]*. Madrid: TEA Ediciones.
- Contreras J, Córdoba A, & Peretti AV (2005). La elección femenina [The female choice]. *Ciencias. Revista de cultura científica de la Facultad de Ciencias de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*, 77, 40-47.
- Dion KL & Dion KK (1973). Correlates of romantic love. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 41, 51-56. DOI: 10.1037/h0035571
- Dion KL & Dion KK (1988). Romantic love: Individual and cultural perspectives. In RJ Sternberg & ML Barnes (Eds), *The Psychology of Love* (pp. 264-289). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Diener E & Lucas R (2008). Subjective well-being. In M Lewis, JM Haviland-Jones, & LF Barrett (Eds), *Handbook of emotions* (3rd ed.) (pp. 471-484). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Elkins GR (1978). Attitudes toward love, irrationality, and locus of control. *Psychological Reports*, 43(1), 246-246.
- Engel G, Olson K, & Patrick C (2002). The personality of love: Fundamental motives and traits related to components of love. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 32, 839-853. DOI: 10.1016/S0191-8869(01)00090-3
- Feeney JA & Noller P (1990). Attachment style as a predictor of adult romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58(2), 281-291. DOI: 10.1037/0022-3514.58.2.281
- Fehr B & Broughton R (2001). Gender and personality differences in conceptions of love: An interpersonal theory analysis. *Personal Relationships*, 8, 115-136. DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2001.tb00031.x
- Ferrer V, Bosch E, Navarro C, Ramis MC, & García E (2008). El concepto de amor en España [The concept of love in a Spanish representative sample]. *Psicothema*, 20, 589-595.
- Fisher H (2004). *¿Por qué amamos? Naturaleza y química del amor romántico [Why We Love: The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love]*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Gala FJ, Lupiani M, Guillén C, Gómez A, Bernalte A, Raja R, Miret MT, & Lupiani N (2005). El deseo y el amor: el hombre inacabado [The desire and love: the unfinished man]. *Cuadernos de Medicina Psicosomática y Psiquiatría de Enlace*, 74, 30-45.
- Guillén-Riquelme A & Buela-Casal G (2011). Actualización psicométrica y funcionamiento diferencial de los ítems en el State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) [Psychometric revision and differential item functioning in the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)]. *Psicothema*, 23, 510-515.
- Harrison MA & Shortall JC (2011). Women and men in love: Who really feels it and says it first? *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 151, 727-736. DOI: 10.1080/00224545.2010.522626
- Hatfield E (1988). Passionate and companionate love. In RJ Sternberg & ML Barnes (Eds), *The Psychology of Love* (pp. 191-217). Binghamton, NY: Yale University Press.
- Hatfield E (1995). Self-esteem and passionate love relationships. In GG Brannigan & MR Merrens (Eds), *The social psychologists: Research adventures* (pp. 129-144). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Hatfield E (1998). The juvenile love scale: A child's version of the passionate love scale. In CM Davis, WL Yaber, R Bauserman, G Schreer, & SL Davies (Eds), *Handbook of sexuality-related measures* (pp. 447-448). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hatfield E, Brinton C, & Cornelius J (1989). Passionate love and anxiety in young adolescents. *Motivation and Emotion*, 13, 271-289. DOI: 10.1007/BF00995539

- Hatfield E & Rapson RL (1987). Passionate love / sexual desire: Can the same paradigm explain both? *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 16, 259-278. DOI: 10.1007/BF01541613
- Hatfield E & Sprecher S (1986). Measuring passionate love in intimate-relationships. *Journal of Adolescence*, 9, 383-410. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-1971(86)80043-4
- Hatfield E, Traupmann J, & Sprecher S (1984). Older women's perception of their intimate relationships. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 2, 108-124. DOI: 10.1521/jscp.1984.2.2.108
- Hazan C & Shaver P (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 511-524. DOI: 10.1037//0022-3514.52.3.511
- Hendrick C & Hendrick SS (1986). A theory and method of love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 392-402. DOI: 10.1037/0022-3514.50.2.392
- Hendrick C & Hendrick SS (1988). Lovers wear rose colored glasses. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 5, 161-183. DOI: 10.1177/026540758800500203
- Hendrick SS, Hendrick C, & Adler NL (1988). Romantic relationships: Love, satisfaction, and staying together. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(6), 980-988. DOI: 10.1037//0022-3514.54.6.980
- Hendrick C & Hendrick SS (1994). Attachment theory and close adult relationships. *Psychological Inquiry*, 5, 38-41. DOI: 10.1207/s15327965pli0501_6
- Hyde JS (1981). How large are cognitive gender differences. A meta-analysis using *omega-2* and *d* statistics. *American Psychologist*, 36, 892-901. DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.36.8.892
- Hyde JS & DeLamater JD (2008). *Understanding human sexuality* (10th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Lee JA (1973). *The colors of love: an exploration of the ways of loving*. Ontario: New Press.
- Malladian I & Davies MF (1994). The colors of love: Personality-correlates of love styles. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 17, 557-560. DOI: 10.1016/0191-8869(94)90092-2
- Manga D, Ramos F, & Morán C (2004). The Spanish Norms of the NEO Five-Factor Inventory: new data and analyses for its improvement. *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy*, 4, 639-648.
- Maysseless O (1996). Attachment patterns and their outcomes. *Human Development*, 39, 206-223.
- Markey CN, Markey PM, & Fishman Gray H (2007). Romantic relationships and health: an examination of individuals' perceptions of their romantic partners' influences on their health. *Sex Roles*, 57, 435-445. DOI: 10.1007/s11199-007-9266-5
- Mellody P (2006). *La adicción al amor [Facing love addiction]*. Barcelona: Obelisco.
- Munro B & Adams GR (1978). Love American style: Test of Role Structure Theory on changes in attitudes toward love. *Human Relations*, 31, 215-228. DOI: 10.1177/001872677803100302
- Oquendo MA, Baca-García E, Graver R, Morales M, Montalbán V, & Mann JJ (2001). Spanish adaptation of the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11). *European Journal of Psychiatry*, 15, 147-155.
- Ortega y Gasset J (1964). *Estudios sobre el amor [Studies on Love]*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe.
- Ortiz Barón MJ, Gómez Zapiain J, & Apodaca P (2002). Apego y satisfacción afectivo-sexual en la pareja [Attachment and emotional and sexual satisfaction in the couple]. *Psicothema*, 14, 469-475.
- Rodríguez Salazar T (2012). El amor en las ciencias sociales: cuatro visiones teóricas [Love in the social sciences: four theoretical perspectives]. *Culturales*, 8, 155-180.
- Rubin Z (1970). Measurement of romantic love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 16, 265-273. DOI: 10.1037/h0029841
- Rubin Z, Peplau LA, & Hill CT (1981). Loving and leaving: Sex-differences in romantic attachments. *Sex Roles*, 7, 821-835. DOI: 10.1007/BF00287767
- Sangrador JL (1993). Consideraciones psicosociales sobre el amor romántico [Psychosocial considerations on romantic love]. *Psicothema*, 5, 181-196.
- Sangrador JL & Yela C (2000). 'What is beautiful is loved': Physical attractiveness in love relationships in a representative sample. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 28, 207-218. DOI: 10.2224/

- sbp.2000.28.3.207
- Schmitt DP, Youn G, Bond B, Brooks S, Frye H, Klesman JS, Peplinski C, Sampias J, Sherrill M, & Stoka C (2009). When will I feel love? The effects of culture, personality, and gender on the psychological tendency to love. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *43*, 830-846. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrp.2009.05.008
- Shaver P & Hazan C (1987). Being lonely, falling in love: Perspectives from attachment theory. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, *2*, 105-124.
- Spielberger CD, Gorsuch R, & Lushene RE (1970). *Manual for the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Sternberg RJ (1989). *El triángulo del amor: intimidad, pasión y compromiso [The triangle of Love: Intimacy, Passion, Commitment]*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Ubillos S, Zubieta E, & Páez D (2004). Relaciones íntimas: atracción, amor y cultura [Intimate relationships: Attraction, love and culture]. In D Páez, I Fernández, S Ubillos, & E Zubieta (Eds), *Psicología social, cultura y educación [Social psychology, culture and education]* (pp. 511-536). Madrid: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Ubillos S, Zubieta E, Páez D, Deschamps JC, Ezeiza A, & Vera A (2001). Amor, cultura y sexo [Love, culture and sex]. *Revista Electrónica de Motivación y Emoción (REME)*, *4*. Retrieved from <http://reme.uji.es/articulos/aubils9251701102/texto.html>
- Woll SB (1989). Personality and relationship correlates of loving styles. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *23*, 480-505. DOI: 10.1016/0092-6566(89)90016-0
- Yela C (1997). Curso temporal de los componentes básicos del amor a lo largo de la relación de pareja [Temporal course of basic components of love along the couple relationship]. *Psicothema*, *9*, 001-015.
- Yela C (2000). *El amor desde la psicología social: ni tan libres ni tan racionales [Love from Social Psychology: neither so free nor so rational]*. Madrid: Pirámide.

Received, April 14, 2014

Final Acceptance, January 13, 2015