



A dark side of positive illusions? Associations between the love-is-blind bias and the experience of jealousy

Viren Swami^{a,b,*}, Shrinal Inamdar^a, Stefan Stieger^c, Ingo W. Nader^c, Jakob Pietschnig^c, Ulrich S. Tran^c, Martin Voracek^c

^a Department of Psychology, University of Westminster, London, UK

^b Department of Psychology, HELP University College, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

^c Department of Basic Psychological Research and Research Methods, School of Psychology, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20 February 2012

Received in revised form 1 June 2012

Accepted 7 June 2012

Available online 4 July 2012

Keywords:

Love-is-blind bias

Positive illusions

Jealousy

Partner perceptions

Lovestyles

ABSTRACT

Previous work has shown that the tendency to positively perceive a romantic partner's physical attractiveness (i.e., the love-is-blind bias) is associated with positive self and relationship outcomes. Here, we examined possible associations between the love-is-blind bias and a negative relational outcome, namely the experience of jealousy. A total of 217 participants provided ratings of the overall physical attractiveness of the self and their romantic partners and also completed measures of three types of jealousy (anxious, reactive, and possessive), lovestyles, and relationship satisfaction. Results showed that the love-is-blind bias positively predicted the experience of anxious jealousy even after controlling for the effects of lovestyles and relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, the love-is-blind bias was significantly and positively correlated with possessive jealousy, but did not emerge as a significant predictor once the effects of lovestyles had been taken into account. Finally, the love-is-blind bias was not significantly correlated with reactive jealousy. These results indicate that the love-is-blind bias may have a negative relational outcome.

© 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

It is now widely established that, within romantic relationships, perceptions of one's partner are frequently positively biased (Murray & Holmes, 1997). One such positive illusion has been referred to as the 'love-is-blind bias', and refers to the tendency of romantically-involved individuals to positively perceive the physical attractiveness of their partners (for a review, see Swami & Furnham, 2008a). More specifically, positive illusions of a partner's physical attractiveness are said to occur when an individual's ratings of their partner are higher than some benchmark. To date, studies have used different benchmarks, including ratings made of the partner by objective others (Barelds, Dijkstra, Koudenburg, & Swami, 2011), ratings made by partners themselves (Barelds-Dijkstra & Barelds, 2008; Barelds & Dijkstra, 2009), and self-ratings of physical attractiveness (Swami, 2009; Swami & Allum, 2012; Swami, Furnham, Georgiades, & Pang, 2007; Swami, Waters, & Furnham, 2010).

In terms of the latter, the love-is-blind bias has been operationalized by asking participants to rate their own and their partner's

physical attractiveness against (fictional) normative data (Swami et al., 2007). Given that individuals tend to rate themselves more positively than the average person, yet also rate their partners as more attractive than themselves, it has been suggested that the difference between both ratings reflects a tendency to positively perceive a partner's physical attractiveness (Swami, Stieger, Haubner, Voracek, & Furnham, 2009). That is, differences between ratings of self and partner physical attractiveness appear to provide a useful shorthand measure of the tendency to positively perceive a partner's physical appearance, at least relative to the self (Swami, 2009; Swami & Allum, 2012; Swami et al., 2007).

It has been proposed that the love-is-blind bias serves both ego-maintenance and relationship needs (Swami & Furnham, 2008a). That is, positive illusions about one's partner may allow for the construction of idealized images of one's partner in the face of reality, thus contributing to self and relationship happiness (Murray & Holmes, 1997). In the long term, the love-is-blind bias may also help to maintain feelings of attachment and commitment to the relationship (Swami & Furnham, 2008a). Consistent with these views, recent work has reported that the love-is-blind bias is positively associated, albeit weakly, with measures of self-esteem, relationship satisfaction, and romantic love directed at one's partner, and negatively correlated with a ludic or playful lovestyle (Swami, 2011; Swami et al., 2009).

* Corresponding author. Address: Department of Psychology, University of Westminster, 309 Regent Street, London W1B 2UW, UK. Tel.: +44 2079115000.

E-mail address: v.swami@westminster.ac.uk (V. Swami).

In addition, the available evidence suggests that the tendency to positively perceive one's partner is negatively associated with relationship length, although the association appears to be relatively weak ($r = -.14$; Swami et al., 2009). Taken together, the evidence to date would appear to suggest that the love-is-blind bias, like other positive illusions (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996), helps individuals to reach a cognitive resolution between their hopes and realities about a partner. In addition, insofar as partners are positively perceived, individuals may seek to invest more in the relationship, thus maintaining a sense of security in the relationship (Swami & Furnham, 2008a). Conversely, deterioration of the relationship appears to be related to less likelihood of positively perceiving a partner's physical appearance (Swami et al., 2009).

Although the available research would appear to suggest that there are several positive outcomes of the love-is-blind bias, scholars have not examined possible negative outcomes. For example, in the literature on positive partner illusions, it has been noted that positive biases are associated with unsafe sexual practices, including lower likelihood of condom use (Galligan & Terry, 1993; McNeal, 1997). Similarly, Swami and Furnham (2008a) have noted the possibility of a positive association between the love-is-blind bias and the experience of jealousy, which in turn is associated with negative relational outcomes, such as conflict (Puente & Cohen, 2003). In the present study, then, we sought to examine the associations between the love-is-blind bias and the experience of jealousy among individuals in romantic relationships.

There are reasons to believe that the love-is-blind bias will be associated with feelings of jealousy. First, physical appearance plays an important role in interpersonal attraction (Swami & Furnham, 2008b) and perceptions of partner physical attractiveness are positively related to levels of intimacy and commitment (Yela & Sangrador, 2001). Conversely, when an individual perceives his or her partner as having high mate value (e.g., as a function of their physical attractiveness), they may be more likely to engage in mate retention strategies (Buss & Shackelford, 1997). That is, perceived mate value discrepancy in physical attractiveness may be associated with strategies to prevent relationship dissolution, such as resource display, debasement, threats of violence, and feelings of jealousy (Goodboy, Myers, & Members of Investigating Communication, 2010). In addition, individuals who are physically attractive may have large social networks of members of the opposite sex, which may increase feelings of jealousy in a partner.

Although jealousy can be conceptualized and measured in a number of ways, perhaps the most comprehensive is the three-factor model proposed by Buunk (1991, 1997). This model distinguishes between three types of jealousy, namely reactive (the degree to which an individual experiences negative emotions when their partner has been unfaithful), possessive (attempts to prevent contact of their partners with individuals of the opposite sex), and anxious jealousy (a process in which an individual ruminates about and imagines a partner's infidelity and experiences negative emotions as a consequence). Unlike reactive jealousy, both anxious and possessive jealousy can be triggered in the absence of an extra-dyadic rival (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2001, 2006) and so would seem to be prime candidates for associations with the love-is-blind bias.

Utilizing Buunk's (1991, 1997) three-factor model, the present study sought to examine associations between the experience of jealousy and the love-is-blind bias. In addition to these variables, we also included measures of lovestyles and relationship satisfaction, given that these variables have been shown to predict positive illusions of a partner's physical attractiveness in previous work (Swami, 2011; Swami et al., 2009). In the first instance, lovestyles refers to different 'love schemas' or mental models of love, that is, the different ways in which people love (Hatfield & Rapson, 1996). In the view of Grote and Frieze (1994), there are three main lovestyles, namely romantic love with deep intensity and intimacy,

game-playing love with little intensity or intimacy, and friendship-based love based on affection and trust for a likeable partner.

In previous work, Swami et al. (2009) reported that the love-is-blind bias is positively correlated with romantic love and negatively correlated with game-playing love. To our knowledge, however, no previous work has examined the associations between Grote and Frieze's (1994) conception of lovestyles and jealousy. More importantly, it has been suggested that lovestyles are too transient to be considered stable personality traits (Morrow, Clark, & Brock, 1995). To the extent that lovestyles are malleable attitudes, this may explain why they only explain a small proportion of the variance in positive illusions of partner physical attractiveness (Swami et al., 2009). This also has implications of understanding the relationship between the love-is-blind bias and jealousy: in examining the association between positive illusions and jealousy, we sought to control for the more transient lovestyles, which would provide an indication of the direct association between the two former variables.

Similarly, previous work has shown that relationship satisfaction is associated with a lower tendency to positively perceive a partner's physical attractiveness (Swami et al., 2009), as well as more infrequent experiences of jealousy (Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2007). However, previous work has shown that relationship satisfaction may be an even weaker predictor of the love-is-blind bias than lovestyles, for which reason we sought to control for satisfaction in our study. Based on the available literature, then, we predicted that the love-is-blind bias would significantly predict the experience of both possessive and anxious jealousy once the effects of lovestyles and relationship satisfaction have been statistically controlled for. On the other hand, we did not expect a significant association between the love-is-blind bias and reactive jealousy.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were heterosexual 117 women and 100 men recruited from the community in London, England. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 54 years ($M = 26.94$, $SD = 10.01$) and the majority of participants were of British White descent (86.0%). The majority of participants were dating at the time of the study (66.0%), whereas 32.0% were married, and 2.0% were engaged. Of the total sample, 94.9% self-reported as being heterosexual and the remainder as being gay or lesbian. Because previous work has indicated that the love-is-blind bias does not vary as a function of sexual orientation (Swami, 2009) and because of the small number of non-heterosexual participants, we pooled all participants across sexual orientation for analyses. The mean relationship length was 57.65 months ($SD = 101.24$).

2.2. Materials

2.2.1. Ratings of self and partner physical attractiveness

Participants completed an abbreviated version of the Estimating Physical Attractiveness Scale (Swami et al., 2007), in which they were initially presented with a normal distribution of attractiveness scores ($M = 100$, $SD = 15$). Based on this normal distribution curve, participants were asked to rate their own overall physical attractiveness as well as that of their romantic partners (the full scale requests ratings for specific body characteristics, which were omitted for the present purposes). Following Swami et al. (2009), a love-is-blind bias score was calculated as the difference between ratings of partner and self overall attractiveness, with higher scores reflecting a stronger tendency to positively perceive the physical attractiveness of one's partner.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات