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Taking stock of reality: biased perceptions of the costs of romantic partners' sacrifices

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Supplemental Materials 1: Assessments in Studies 1 and 2

Study 1

Laboratory conversation

Couples came to the laboratory and were instructed to discuss a situation of divergent interests that they were currently experiencing in their relationship and to try to resolve this issue. They were instructed that the topic of this conversation could be any situation in their relationship in which they have different preferences, and were provided with various examples that varied in terms of costliness, such as “. . . on Saturday you would like to go to visit your family while s/he prefers to spend time with common friends; you would like to go on a trip to USA while your partner wants to go to Thailand; you would like to move to another country while your partner would like to stay in the Netherlands; you would like to have children while your partner would prefer not to; you would like to meet with a friend while your partner feels uncomfortable if you do so etc.” Right after, partners went to separate rooms to answer some questions regarding this conversation. Specifically we assessed costs, mood and relationship satisfaction.

Items

Costs

- “If you had to sacrifice your preference, how big would the sacrifice be?”
- “If your partner had to sacrifice his/her preference, how big would the sacrifice be?”

(1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*)

Additionally, participants were also asked to indicate who would sacrifice their preference. In about half of the cases (49.6%) participants reported that they will sacrifice their preference, or they would compromise (they and their partner will both sacrifice), with the other

half of the participants (50.4%) reporting that their partner, or neither of them, would sacrifice. Importantly, whether or not the participant decided to sacrifice did not affect their costs ratings of the sacrifice ($p = .434$), and did not moderate either the directional bias (i.e., the discrepancy between partners' reports), or the effects of "truth" and "assumed similarity" on perceived sacrifice costs. Thus, these findings suggest that whether or not the divergence of interests issue was resolved by sacrificing one's own preference did not affect the findings reported in the manuscript.

Mood

- "How positive is your mood?"
- "How negative is your mood?"

Relationship Satisfaction

- "I feel satisfied with our relationship"

All items were assessed on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*)

Bi-hourly experience sampling

- "In the past hour... Have you encountered a situation of divergence of interests? (even if it was not communicated with your partner) *yes / no*
- "Who sacrificed?" *Me, my partner, we reached a compromise and we both sacrificed a little bit, None of us sacrificed (we went separate ways)*

Note. In total, participants reported 1,064 situations of diverging interests, which were reported to be resolved by the participant themselves having sacrificed (28%), their partner having sacrificed (20%), reaching a compromise (i.e., both partners sacrifice a bit; 18%), no sacrifice (i.e., partners went separate ways; 0.8%), or postponing the resolution to a later time

(26%). We only analyzed timepoints when both partners reported on one partner's sacrifice (or compromise) (i.e., sacrifices that were accurately detected; see Visserman et al., 2019) in order to compare partners' reports on this event. Across all bi-hourly surveys, on average participants reported 1.97 cases in which they sacrificed ($SD=1.94$, range=0-10), and 1.63 in which their partner sacrificed ($SD=1.64$, range=0-7), with 135 timepoints when both partners reported on the same sacrifice (i.e., an accurately detected sacrifice). We also assessed the costs of the sacrifice, the participant's mood, and relationship satisfaction at that time point.

Items

Costs

- "About your sacrifice, how costly was it?"
- "About your partner's sacrifice, how costly was it?"

Mood

- "I am in a positive mood."
- "I am in a negative mood."

Relationship Satisfaction

- "I feel satisfied with my relationship."

All items were assessed on a 7-point scale (0 = *not at all* to 6 = *very much*).

Study 2

Sacrifice Scenario

Note. This scenario was first validated in an additional experimental study (not reported in the manuscript) that preceded the present study (see Supplemental Materials 2).

Partner sacrifice condition

“We will present you with a situation now in which your partner makes a sacrifice in your relationship, and would like to ask you to carefully read the scenario. Try to really imagine that this is happening in your relationship with your romantic partner right now.

After a set amount of time you will be able to continue and we will ask you a few questions about the sacrifice.”

“You and your partner are making plans for this Saturday night. You would really like to go to the movies with your partner and watch a new movie that you have been looking forward to seeing, and that has a special premier this Saturday night. Your partner has a different preference for this Saturday night. S/he really wants to go out with his/her best friends, as they are all available that night. S/he hasn’t seen them for a long time and was looking forward to finally catching up with them again.

Eventually your partner decides not to go out with his/her friends to go instead to the movies with you.”

Own sacrifice condition

“We will present you with a situation now in which you make a sacrifice in your relationship, and would like to ask you to carefully read the scenario. Try to really imagine that this is happening in your relationship with your romantic partner right now. After a set amount of time you will be able to continue and we will ask you a few questions about the sacrifice.”

“You and your partner are making plans for this Saturday night. Your partner would really like to go to the movies with you and watch a new movie that (s)he has been looking forward to seeing, and that has a special premier this Saturday night. You have a different preference for this Saturday night. You really want to go out with your best friends, as they are all available that

night. You haven't seen them for a long time and were looking forward to finally catching up with them again.

Eventually you decide not to go out with your friends to go instead to the movies with your partner."

Control sacrifice condition

"We will present you with a situation now in which someone makes a sacrifice in their relationship, and would like to ask you to carefully read the scenario. Try to really imagine that this is happening in this person's relationship with their romantic partner right now. After a set amount of time you will be able to continue and we will ask you a few questions about the sacrifice."

"Imagine a couple—Sam and Blair—who are making plans for this Saturday night. Sam would really like to go to the movies and watch a new movie that Sam has been looking forward to seeing, and that has a special premier this Saturday night. Blair has a different preference for this Saturday night. Blair really wants to go out with their best friends, as they are all available that night. Blair hasn't seen them for a long time and was looking forward to finally catching up with them again.

Eventually Blair decides not to go out with their friends to go instead to the movies with Sam."

Items

Partner sacrifice condition

Costs

- How costly would this sacrifice be for your partner?
- How big would this sacrifice be for your partner?
- How hard would your partner find it to make this sacrifice?

Benefits

- How beneficial would this sacrifice be for your partner?
- How positively would your partner feel about this sacrifice?
- How beneficial would your partner feel this sacrifice would be for your relationship?

Mood

- How much would you be in a positive mood?
- How much would you be in a negative mood?

Relationship satisfaction

- How satisfied would you feel with your relationship?

Own sacrifice condition*Costs*

- How costly would this sacrifice be for you?
- How big would this sacrifice be for you?
- How hard would you find it to make this sacrifice?

Benefits

- How beneficial would this sacrifice be for you?
- How positively would you feel about this sacrifice?
- How beneficial would you feel this sacrifice would be for your relationship?

Mood

- How much would you be in a positive mood?
- How much would you be in a negative mood?

Relationship satisfaction

- How satisfied would you feel with your relationship?

Control sacrifice condition

Costs

- How costly would this sacrifice be for Blair?
- How big would this sacrifice be for Blair?
- How hard would Blair find it to make this sacrifice?

Benefits

- How beneficial would this sacrifice be for Blair?
- How positively would Blair feel about this sacrifice?
- How beneficial would Blair feel this sacrifice would be for their relationship?

Mood

- How much would Blair be in a positive mood?
- How much would Blair be in a negative mood?

Relationship satisfaction

- How satisfied would Blair feel with their relationship?

All items were assessed on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*)

Attention check

(To probe for English proficiency and coherency of writing to verify validity of responses)

“Below, please write a few sentences about the scenario you just imagined and that we asked you some questions about. Please describe what you imagined thinking and feeling in this situation:”

.....

Manipulation check

In the scenario we asked you to imagine, who made a sacrifice?

- *I sacrificed.*

- *My partner sacrificed.*
- *Someone I don't know (Blair) sacrificed.*
- *I don't remember.*

Ease of imagination

(To probe how well participants could imagine the scenario)

- How easy did you find it to imagine this scenario would happen in a relationship?