



Ladies, know yourselves! Gentlemen, fool yourselves! Evolved self-promotion traits as predictors for promiscuous sexual behavior in both sexes



Kevin Koban*, Peter Ohler

Institute for Media Research, Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 7 October 2015

Received in revised form 25 November 2015

Accepted 27 November 2015

Available online 12 December 2015

Keywords:

Self-promotion

Deception

Self-deception

Self-monitoring

Mating

Sex differences

ABSTRACT

Creating a convincing self-presentation which exalts one's own capabilities on the surface is often regarded as a crucial soft skill ensuring success in numerous interpersonal domains. Seen from an evolutionary perspective, strategic self-promotion might have evolved as a beneficial psychological mechanism in mating competition. While prior research is almost exclusively focused on different behavioral patterns, the present study examines relations between self-promotion and mating behavior on a trait level. Based on existing findings, we identified three different traits corresponding with determined self-presentation styles: impression management, self-deceptive enhancement, and self-monitoring. Using a sample of 232 heterosexual participants ($f = 143$; age $M = 23.88$ years; $SD = 3.42$ years), we tested to what extent these traits predict sociosexual orientation as well as the total number of intercourse partners in both sexes. Notwithstanding gender, all chosen traits showed a positive prediction towards short-term mating behavior. By taking sex differences into consideration, however, the results indicated that self-deception was a stronger predictor for promiscuous mating behavior in men compared to women, whereas impression management showed minor differences and self-monitoring even revealed an opposite trend. These findings suggest that women may possess more rigorous deception detection mechanisms forcing men to apply subtler self-promotion strategies.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Strategic self-promotion proved to be more likely the rule than the exception not only in competitive working environments, but also in human mating competition (Fisher & Cox, 2011). Seen from an evolutionary perspective, this behavioral tendency has its biological roots in a lack of clear fitness indicators opening up the door for unwarranted fakery. With this in mind, self-promotion can be characterized as an inflated display of one's own fitness within a reliability-seeking interpersonal environment. This psychological mechanism might have evolved to increase perceived mate value leading to a quantitative and qualitative improvement in reproduction until true fitness gets revealed (Schmitt & Buss, 1996).

Just recently some authors constituted an evolutionary psychological framework for personality explaining the variety of existing traits (Buss, 2009; Penke, Denissen, & Miller, 2007). Accordingly, different personality traits need to be regarded as highly discriminative psychological mechanisms, which evolved due to context-contingent fitness benefits within a multifaceted social environment. Using this approach, currently a great deal of research is concerned with an evolutionary justification of the so-called dark triad traits, otherwise referred to as

maladaptive (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013). Therein, a number of studies demonstrated that individuals high on one or more of these characteristics were more often involved in behaviors commonly associated with a fast life (such as mate poaching), which are considered beneficial under specific environmental conditions (Jonason, Koenig, & Tost, 2010).

Complementary to factual acts of self-promotion, particular traits might provide a favorable intrapersonal environment for these self-enhancing behavioral patterns. In this sense, dispositional tendencies which determine the processing of self-related information and, associated therewith, both individuals' self-perception and self-presentation might reveal a supportive function for self-promotion behaviors. Based on this consideration, the current examination addresses three distinct dispositions which differ conceptually in its relations to authenticity issues concerning an inflated fitness display: impression management, self-monitoring, and self-deceptive enhancement. Additionally, following the major assumption of sexual strategies theory (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), these self-promotion traits might have evolved as solutions to context-specific adaptive mating problems.

2. Current study

Evolutionary psychological research emphasized the adaptive relevance of deceptive acts (Schmitt & Shackelford, 2003). On a trait level, several authors were able to detect connections between the use of

* Corresponding author at: Institute for Media Research, Chemnitz University of Technology, D-09107, Germany.

E-mail address: kevin.koban@phil.tu-chemnitz.de (K. Koban).

deceptive tactics and dark triad personalities (e.g., Brewer & Abell, 2015; Jonason, Lyons, Baughman, & Vernon, 2014). These dispositions might have evolved as short-dated cheater strategies which maximize, at least temporarily, the chances of successful interpersonal deception (Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009). Analogically, a global disposition towards deceptive self-presentation might be evolutionary advantageous for short-term mating contexts as it considerably enhances an individual's perceived fitness while taking the risk of detection. Therefore, we supposed that a disposition towards deceptive self-presentation positively predicts short-term mating orientation (H1a) and total number of intercourse partners (H1b).

Prior research established a positive relationship between a disposition towards self-monitoring and successful deceit (Johnson et al., 2005). High levels of self-directed attention, thus, assure a continuously adjusted self-perception which reduces the risk of fatal inconsistencies. Additionally, this characteristic might lead to a more believable and, therefore, more likeable self-presentation (Robinson, Johnson, & Shields, 1995) – without making any claim for actual accuracy (Wilson & Dunn, 2004). Resulting in a higher sensitivity towards slight inconsistencies in self-presentation, this disposition might have evolved facilitating chances in prolonged courtship. Accordingly, self-monitoring also might be beneficial in terms of mate retention. To adjust one's own self-presentation to necessary requirements of several, sometimes critical relationship situations, therefore, might strengthen partner's commitment and, therefore, stabilize an individual's sex life. Nevertheless, this function might be most advantageous in the beginning of a romantic relationship, perhaps leading to earlier sexual contact between prospective partners or even supporting instrumental mating behavior. Based on these considerations, we expected that self-monitoring positively predicts short-term mating orientation (H2a) and total number of intercourse partners (H2b) as well.

Alongside with wide-ranging evidence for its adaptive value as kind of psychological immune system (Gilbert, 2006; Surbey, 2011), other authors strongly advocate that self-deception additionally fulfills an offensive evolutionary function (von Hippel & Trivers, 2011). The rationale underlying this assumption is that by truly believing a self-exaltation, authenticity issues can be either avoided or plausibly denied. According to this argument, self-deception has evolved in order to deceive others without suffering risks of detection. Yet these benefits are limited. In an innovative study by Epley and Whitchurch (2008) in which participants had to search for a more or less favorable morphed portraits of themselves among an array of numerous distractor pictures, it was found that not an accurate, but a slightly more pleasant version of the participants' appearance was recognized the fastest – as it, thus, can be assigned to an unconsciously enhanced self-perception. Interestingly, however, even more pleasantly morphed portraits needed more time for getting identified indicating that these were not sufficiently authentic to be accepted as portraits. Therefore, self-deceptive enhancements might be restricted to slight improvements of one's own fitness.

To the best knowledge of the authors, so far only a single study conducted by Lynn, Pipitone, and Keenan (2014) dealt with self-deceptive enhancement in mating context. Therein, self-deception positively predicted mating success in females, but not in males. Due to a rather young and, above all, sexually inexperienced sample these findings need to be expanded empirically in order to assure its generalizability. Following the argument proposed by von Hippel and Trivers (2011), we assumed that a self-deceptive enhancement would positively predict both short-term mating orientation (H3a) and plurality of intercourse partners (H3b).

Self-deception unites a limitedly exalting fitness display with a subjectively accurate self-perception and, therefore, ensures a slightly inflated but nonetheless authentic self-presentation. Analogously, self-monitoring can be considered ambiguous as it supports deceptive courtship as well as retention in long-term relationships. Compared to the 'take it or leave it' minded disposition towards deceptive self-presentation, both dispositions therefore may produce a more cautious

self-presentation; for that reason, latter traits might not be considered as pure short-term mating strategies. Based on these assumptions, we asked which self-promotion trait demonstrates the strongest prediction value regarding the chosen mating parameters (RQ).

Ever since its emergence as a discipline, large amounts of evolutionary psychological literature investigated sex differences in human sexuality taking into consideration diverse aspects of mating-related behavior (e.g. Buss, 1989). Mostly, these variations were attributed to differential parental investment in both sexes: While men spend comparatively little effort in sexual reproduction, women inevitably take on the major costs (Trivers, 1972). Bearing greater loss for being deceived, women might have developed superior deception detection mechanisms. Accordingly, prior research has shown that even though both sexes did not differ quantitatively in their use of self-promotion (Fisher & Cox, 2011), women are warier towards sexually deceptive behavior than men (e.g., Kruger et al., 2013). As being less vulnerable to detection, we assumed that self-deception might be an efficient short-term mating strategy only in men and, therefore, more predictive of men's short-term mating orientation (H4a) and total number of intercourse partners compared to women (H4b).

By contrast, previous research examining receptivity towards loose sexual offers indicated that men often are lacking a sufficient motivation to detect possible deceptions making subtle strategies ineffective or perhaps even counterproductive (e.g. Clark & Hatfield, 1989; Hald & Høgh-Olesen, 2010). Based on this consideration, we expected that relations between impression management and short-term mating orientation (H5a) as well as plurality of intercourse partners (H5b) might be stronger in women compared to men.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The study sample consisted of 235 heterosexual participants, who were recruited via university mailing lists and social networking groups. Since we excluded three outliers due to their age (z -values of 6.95, 6.74, and 4.89) the final sample consisted of 232 participants (age $M = 23.88$ years, $SD = 3.42$ years, range: 18–40 years) including 143 women and 89 men. Furthermore, two additional participants with exceptionally great number of intercourse partners (z -values of 10.24 and 8.08) as well as two who did not specify their current relationship status were partially excluded from particular analyses.

3.2. Measures and procedure

Self-monitoring disposition was assessed by means of the 27-item Self-Directed Attention Questionnaire (SAM; Filipp & Freudenberg, 1989), though effectively only the 9-item private self-directed attention subscale was applied. This modification is based on an empirical argument provided by Hoyer and Kunst (2001), who differentiate between the process (private self-directed attention subscale) and the result of self-directed attention (self-knowledge) by means of factorial analysis. Since we were only interested in the former, the items of the latter dimension were excluded from the questionnaire. Therein, participants rated how much statements like "I realize as I observe myself" correspond to themselves on a 6-point Likert scale. For statistical analysis, all items were added and averaged creating an index of self-monitoring tendency ($\alpha = .805$).

Dispositional self-deception as well as deceptive behavioral tendencies were measured via the 40-item Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1988). For each of the items, participants stated to what extent they agree with several statements on a 7-point Likert scale. Thereby, the first half of the scale reflects a disposition towards self-deceptive enhancement (BIDR-SDE) by providing indisputable testimonies, whose outright denial or affirmation can be regarded as delusive. For instance, full agreement with a statement

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/889780>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/889780>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)