


4-27-2001

Leader in Love II

Editor

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Recommended Citation

Editor (2001) "Leader in Love II," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 15 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol10/iss15/3>

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International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: Leader in Love II

Author: Editor

Volume: 10

Issue: 15

Date: 2001-04-27

Keywords: Leadership, Love

Abstract. This article continues the analysis of the political consequences of leaders in love.

In last week's Issue of IBPP, "Leader in Love" alluded to a study bearing on brain function and being in love. Specifically, the study linked being in love to brain phenomena that often relate to cognitive decrements and emotional functioning mitigating against adequate risk assessment.

Several readers have taken Issue with an aspect of the study's experimental procedure--viz., assessing members of the experimental group while they were looking at pictures of their beloved. As one reader opined, "those that [sic] are in love do not always focus on who [sic] they are in love with. It is very easy for the human mind to shift its attention to something other than one's love....what about when they are at work, focused on their work? Are the reactions that the brain has as a result of love constant, or do they subside when the image of the one someone loves is not immediately present?" Such a perspective bears significantly on the political relevance of research sharing the experimental procedure and deserves to be addressed.

Love as omnipresent. One can experience images of one's beloved without the need for photographs. Part of being in love may well include a degree of intrusiveness of these images along with other love-related verbal and nonverbal cognitions. In essence, the research's experimental procedure operationalizes only a part of the intrusiveness by constraining subjects to the photograph as opposed to also all non-photograph stimuli. If anything, the experimental procedure may only engender a conservative estimate of brain functioning and love by not addressing the phenomenology that love can seem to be anywhere and everywhere one turns.

The role of love awareness. One obviously can be in love and still have a professional life. Although being in love may feel like one can live on love, many people in love do not need to try this. As intrusive as love may be, it can be out of awareness as one approaches or engages in many tasks. The Issue then becomes whether the brain effects of love can occur out of awareness. Although the definitive series of experiments directly bearing on this question may not yet have been carried out, there are very significant bodies of research on subliminal perception, experimental validation of the construct of the unconscious, and variants of latent learning--all suggesting that out-of-awareness phenomena ontologically exist and have psychological, physical, and even spiritual effects.

The subject of leaders in love is just one of many that should be nurtured by political psychologists motivated to delineate the effects on leadership of what all people can have in common as opposed to what sets them apart. This motivation may generate the political consequences of attenuating tendencies to glorify, reify, and demonize leaders that can fuel utopian collective nightmares--even if the desire for love as an individual utopia seems impervious to attenuation. (See Bartels, A., & Zeki, S. (2000). The neural basis of love. *Neuroreport: For Rapid Communication of Neuroscience Research*, 11, 3829-3834; Komisaruk, B.R., & Whipple, B. (1998). Love as sensory stimulation: Physiological consequences of its deprivation and expression. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 23, 927-944; Regan, P.C., Kocan, E.R., & Whitlock, T. (1998). Ain't love grand! A prototype analysis of the concept of romantic love.

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 15, 411-420; Wolfe, J.L. (2000). Assessment and treatment of compulsive sex/love behavior. Journal of Rational-Emotive and Cognitive Behavior Therapy, 18, 235-246.) (Keywords: Leadership, Love.)