

Abstract

Research on romantic relationships has suggested that spending time with a new relationship partner has costs for other existing relationships because resources invested in a new relationship leave fewer resources for pre-existing relationships (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). This suggests that friendships may be negatively affected by the emergence of a romantic relationship because more time and energy was afforded to the romantic relationship (Thomas, 2012). Although research has focused on how romantic relationships are negatively and positively affected, there is a lack of empirical evidence demonstrating the existence of bias in favor of romantic relationships. One goal of the present research is to assess whether this bias exists. We created an Implicit Association Test (IAT) to measure whether individuals in relationships will show a bias in favor of romantic relationships over their family and friends (i.e., view romantic relationships more positively than other close relationships). We also wanted to know whether this bias leads to greater commitment and more time spent with their romantic partners than their loved ones. To test this, participants completed a measure of commitment and time spent with various loved ones. The results of this study will provide empirical evidence as to whether individuals display an unconscious bias in favor of romantic relationships and the consequences of that bias for relationship decisions.