
Evolution, Sex, and Jealousy: Investigation With a Sample From Sweden

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When asked to choose which would be most upsetting, a mate's sexual or emotional infidelity, past research has demonstrated that men are more likely than women to choose sexual infidelity, whereas women are more likely than men to choose emotional infidelity. Explanation of this sex difference has been controversial. In the current study we attempted to replicate previous research by examining a sample of college students in Sweden. In doing so, we also investigated the "double-shot" explanation. In the current study, the majority of men chose the sexual infidelity scenario as most upsetting, whereas the majority of women chose the emotional infidelity scenario as most upsetting. Contrary to the double-shot explanation, choice of scenario was unrelated to attitudes regarding whether the other sex was capable of satisfying sexual relations outside of a love relationship. © 1999 Elsevier Science Inc.

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More than 50 years ago Alfred Kinsey noted that men appear to be more concerned about the sexual aspects of a mate's potential infidelity, whereas women appear to be more concerned about lost attention, emotional investment, and love from their mate (Kinsey et al. 1948: 592). More recently, writers have attempted to explain the evolutionary origins of these apparent sex differences (Daly and Wilson 1983; Daly et al. 1982; Wilson and Daly 1992). Specifically, sex differences in confidence of parenthood and the roles members of each sex play in childrearing have been used to explain why men and women can be expected to be differentially sensitive to cues of sexual versus emotional infidelity, respectively (Buss et al. 1992; Symons 1979; Wiederman and Allgeier 1993). Has recent empirical research supported such a claim?

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Buss et al. (1992) asked college students to imagine their dating partner "trying different sexual positions with another person" and to imagine their dating partner "falling in love with another person." The majority of men (60%) chose the sexual scenario as most upsetting, whereas the majority of women (83%) chose the emotional infidelity as most upsetting. Buss et al. (1992) performed a follow-up study in which these sex differences were replicated using measured physiological indications of upset rather than self-report measures. The self-reported sex differences were replicated further in college student samples using somewhat different scenarios (Wiederman and Allgeier 1993) and a variety of wordings (Buss et al., in press).

In a cross-cultural comparison, Buunk et al. (1996) presented the two jealousy-evoking scenarios used by Buss et al. (1992) to samples from the United States, Germany, and The Netherlands. In each sample, men were much more likely than women to choose the sexual infidelity as most upsetting. This sex difference was largest in the U.S. sample and more moderate in the other two samples. Examining these three countries was considered a rigorous test of evolutionary hypotheses, because The Netherlands is known for being much more egalitarian and liberal than the U.S. with regard to sexual attitudes (e.g., acceptability of extramarital sex) and codes of sexual conduct for men compared to women.

Buunk et al. (1996) interpreted the cross-cultural *consistency* in sex differences as evidence for sexually dimorphic psychological mechanisms regarding sensitivity to particular cues likely to elicit jealousy. The cross-cultural *differences* in the size of the sex difference were taken as an indication that these psychological mechanisms are sensitive to cultural norms and values having to do with sex role egalitarianism and sexual conduct.

Harris and Christenfeld (1996a) and DeSteno and Salovey (1996a) each criticized Buunk et al.'s interpretation of the findings. These commentators asserted that the apparent sex differences may be due to respondents' beliefs that women are less likely than men to have sex with an interloper without any emotional involvement. That is, if respondents assume that men may have sex with someone outside of the primary dyad and *not* experience any emotional involvement, but that women are unlikely to make such a sharp distinction between their own sexual and emotional involvement with an interloper, the apparent sex differences in elicitation of jealousy can be explained by such sex differences in the implications of the infidelity.

From this perspective, women would be most upset by a mate's emotional infidelity because it is the choice that has the greatest implications for the continuation of the primary relationship (i.e., for men, emotional involvement implies sexual involvement, whereas sexual involvement does *not* necessarily imply emotional involvement). Men, however, would be most upset by a mate's sexual infidelity because it implies *both* sexual and emotional involvement with the interloper (as opposed to only emotional involvement). DeSteno and Salovey (1996a) called this the "double-shot" hypothesis, and both they and Harris and Christenfeld (1996a) provided data from U.S. college students indicating that respondents' beliefs regarding the emotional implications of men's versus women's sexual involvement with an interloper are different [also see Buss et al. (in press); Sprecher et al. 1998)]. Additionally, DeSteno and Salovey (1996b) and Harris and Christenfeld (1996b) noted that, across all three samples in Buunk et al. (1996), the majority of *both* men and

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