



Sexual regret in US and Norway: Effects of culture and individual differences in religiosity and mating strategy



Mons Bendixen^a, Kelly Asao^b, Joy P. Wyckoff^b, David M. Buss^b, Leif Edward Ottesen Kennair^{a,*}

^a Department of Psychology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway

^b Department of Psychology, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 8 March 2017

Received in revised form 22 April 2017

Accepted 24 April 2017

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Sexual regret

Religiosity

Sociosexual orientation

Culture

Sexual strategies

One night stands

ABSTRACT

Sexual regret was investigated across two disparate cultures: Norway ($N = 853$), a highly secular and sexually liberal culture, and the United States ($N = 466$), a more religious and more sexually conservative culture. Sex differences, individual differences in preferred mating strategy, religiosity, and cultural differences in sexual regret were analyzed. Men were significantly less likely to regret having had casual sex than women and were significantly more likely to regret passing up casual sexual opportunities than women. Participants who were more religious regretted having had casual sex more and regretted passing up casual sex less. Sexually unrestricted participants were less likely to regret having had casual sex and were more likely to regret passing up casual sex. Finally, North Americans and Norwegians did not differ significantly in overall amount of sexual regret nor in patterns of sex differences in sexual regret. Discussion focuses the robustness of sex differences across cultures, the importance of explaining individual differences within cultures, and on future directions for cross-cultural research.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The counter-factual cognitive processing and emotion of regret is hypothesized to be an evolved information-processing mechanism designed to motivate avoidance of past errors in decision making (Galperin et al., 2013). Through anticipatory scenario-building, emotional regret could function to avoid errors before they occur. From an evolutionary perspective, regret might motivate individuals to alter current or future decisions to avoid errors that are costly in terms of fitness. Since nothing is more central to the process of natural selection than sex, regret may be a uniquely important within the domain of sexual conduct (Kennair, Bendixen, & Buss, 2016).

According to Sexual Strategies Theory (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), based on differences between the sexes in minimum obligatory parental investment (Trivers, 1972), men and women will differ in the types of sexual decisions that they regret. Since women have a higher obligatory parental investment in offspring (e.g., 9-month internal gestation), poor sexual decisions are, on average, costlier for women than for men. With this higher cost, women are hypothesized to regret some classes of poor sexual decisions—sex with low quality partners, sex at unpropitious times, and sex in unfavorable circumstances. In contrast, men's reproductive success historically has been limited heavily by access to fertile,

sexually receptive women. Therefore, men are hypothesized to regret missed sexual opportunities, especially those involving low cost, low commitment, and few risks. According to the logic of Sexual Strategies Theory, women are more likely to regret decisions to engage in casual sex whereas men are more likely to regret decisions *not* to engage in casual sex.

Previous research has provided empirical support for sex differences in regret about sexual conduct consistent with Sexual Strategies Theory. Eshbaugh and Gute (2008) found that engaging in casual sexual intercourse (e.g., having sex with someone only once) predicted regret in women, but that non-coital sexual behavior (e.g., oral sex) did not predict regret in women. Fisher, Worth, Garcia, and Meredith (2011) reported that women regret having had casual sex more than men did. Roesse et al. (2006) found that, while there was no overall sex difference in regrets about having had sex, men regretted missed sexual opportunities more than women did.

1.1. Cultural differences and sexual regret

A recent study suggests that these sex differences may be robust across at least some cultures. If sex differences in sexual regret were primarily due to different social roles imposed upon men and women, then the findings would not be replicable in more egalitarian cultures. Kennair et al. (2016) investigated whether sex differences in sexual regret were replicable in Norway, one of the least religious and most sexually liberal countries in the world. They found that women regretted

* Corresponding author at: Department of Psychology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 7491 Trondheim, Norway.

E-mail address: kennair@ntnu.no (L.E.O. Kennair).

their most recent casual sex experience more than men did, while men regretted having missed their most recent chance to have casual sex more than women. This finding suggests that differences in sexual regret between men and women may be a universal feature of human sexual psychology grounded in fundamental differences between men and women in reproductive biology and constraints on reproductive success. Following this logic, we predicted that women in both Norway and the United States will regret having had casual sex more than men do and men will regret passing up casual sex more than women do.

1.2. Individual differences in sexual regret

Individual differences in sexual regret have been neglected in the literature, with the exception of Kennair et al. (2016). However, individual differences in sexual regret may help to explain both within and between culture variations in sexual regret. Religiosity is a good candidate for explaining individual differences in sexual regret. Weeden and Kurzban (2013), for example, found that highly restrictive sexual morals were correlated with degree of religiosity. Indeed, most religious scriptures include prohibitions against certain sexual actions, notably promiscuous or casual sex. Religions often advocate regret and repentance as routes to divine forgiveness for past sexual transgressions. Thus, individuals' religiosity could influence their experience of sexual regret. We predicted that individuals higher in religiosity would regret having had casual sex more and regret passing up casual sex less.

Sociosexual orientation is another key individual difference variable that likely influences people's experience of sexual regret. Across all cultures studied, relative to men, women report more restricted sociosexual orientation (Schmitt, 2005). Kennair et al. (2016) found that more restricted sociosexual orientation was associated with greater regret for casual sex, both within the sexes and between the sexes. Thus, we expect both men and women with a restricted sociosexual orientation will regret casual sex more and regret passing up casual sex opportunities less, while those with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation will show the opposite pattern of effects.

Although we did not predict that Norway would differ from the U.S. in the direction of sex differences in sexual regret, we investigated whether cultural differences between Norway and the U.S. in religiosity and sociosexual orientation would affect levels of sexual regret or sex differences in sexual regret.

1.3. The current study

The first goal of the current study was to investigate whether sex differences in sexual regret are robust across two extremely different cultures: Norway, a highly secular and sexually liberal culture, and the U.S., a highly religious and more sexually conservative culture. If the pattern of sex differences is consistent across the two cultures, this lends support to the idea that sex differences in sexual regret are universal features of human psychology that stem from fundamental differences between men and women's reproductive biology. If, however, the pattern of sex differences is not consistent across culture, as predicted by social role theory, then findings of sex differences could be due to differential cultural socialization of men and women, as predicted by social role theory (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Eagly & Wood, 1999). Our second goal was to determine whether the individual differences variables of religiosity and sociosexual orientation influence levels of sexual regret and sex differences in sexual regret within cultures.

1.4. Hypotheses

1.4.1. General expectation

We expect that there will be differences between Norwegian and North American students in their reported religiosity. The World and European Value Surveys (Gallup, 2010) suggest that Europeans and Scandinavians score far lower on religiosity than North Americans. We

also expect cultural differences in sociosexuality. Prior cross-cultural studies of sexually liberal attitudes toward pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, and homosexuality suggest that Scandinavians are far more liberal than North Americans (Scott, 1998).

1.4.2. Hypothesis 1

Feelings of regret over having had casual sex and feelings of regret over having passed up casual sex will be associated with religiosity and sociosexual orientation. We expect participants high in religiosity and restricted sociosexual orientation to regret casual sex more and regret passing up casual sex less.

1.4.3. Hypothesis 2

Women will regret having had casual sex more than men (Fisher et al., 2011; Galperin et al., 2013; Kennair et al., 2016), but if social role theory (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Eagly & Wood, 1999) is correct this sex difference will be attenuated in a highly sexually egalitarian culture.

1.4.4. Hypothesis 3

Men will regret having passed up casual sex more than women (Galperin et al., 2013; Kennair et al., 2016; Roese et al., 2006), but if social role theory (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Eagly & Wood, 1999) is correct this sex difference will be attenuated in a highly sexually egalitarian culture.

1.4.5. Hypothesis 4

Sex differences in sexual regret are expected to be influenced by level of sociosexuality (Kennair et al., 2016) and religiosity. Due to previous findings showing large sex differences in sociosexuality relative to sex differences in having had casual sex, we predict individual differences in sociosexuality to account for the sex difference in regret for having had casual sex (Kennair et al., 2016). As the sex difference in passing up casual sex is relatively large, we do not expect sociosexuality to fully account for this sex difference (Kennair et al., 2016). As noted by Kennair et al. (2016) one needs to avoid naively controlling for fundamental aspects of being male or being female, and thereby erroneously drawing the conclusion that sex does not explain differences (see also, Schmitt et al., 2012). Therefore, interpretation of this finding has to be tempered by an understanding of how sexual desire is a fundamental aspect of biological sex. If individual differences in sociosexuality account for the sex difference in sexual regret, we cannot assume that biological sex is not driving the effect. The magnitude and universality of sex differences in sociosexuality suggest that mating orientation is a fundamentally differentiated aspect of biological sex. While we expect a sex difference in religiosity, this is not equally conceptually tied to biological sex.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

2.1.1. Norway

Nine hundred and twenty-nine students (60.3% women) were recruited from multiple lectures at the faculties of Social, Natural and Human Sciences at a large public Norwegian university to participate in a four-page questionnaire on sexual regret. After removing participants who did not self-report heterosexual orientation (4.8%), 853 heterosexual students between the ages of 19 and 30 years old reported on their most recent casual sex incidence. Mean ages for women ($N = 513$) and men ($N = 340$) were 21.4 ($SD = 2.0$) and 21.7 ($SD = 2.3$) respectively. Fifty percent of the women and 59% of the men reported their relationship status as "single."

2.1.2. United States

Five hundred and twenty-four students (61.3% women) were recruited from the undergraduate research subject pool at a large public

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات