

# Sex differences in jealousy



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## Abstract

Evolutionary psychologists theorize that humans, as a species, have established sex differences in jealousy due to the male's fear of paternal uncertainty, and a female's desire for paternal caregiving that stem from our evolutionary past. This suggests a male is likely to be more distressed over sexual infidelity, while a female is more likely to be more distressed over emotional infidelity. This stems from a theory proposed by David Buss (Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992). Recently, a study done by Tsukasa Kato has suggested that these differences might be due to the male's ability to visualize sexually explicit images more vividly. (Kato, 2014)

## Demographics

- There were 11 males and 23 females
- There were 7 African-American, 2 Asian-American, 20 Caucasian, 3 Hispanic/Latino, and 2 Multiracial participants
- There were 2 Bisexual, 2, Gay/Lesbian and 29 Heterosexual participants.
- There were 18 participants in a relationship, and 16 not in a relationship
- There were 16 participants in the control group, and 18 in the vivid group

## Aim

The main objective of this experiment was to test the validity of Kato's challenge to the established theory of evolved sex differences in jealousy. Is men's ability to imagine sex vividly responsible for the sex differences in jealousy, rather than the evolutionary psychological theory proposed by Buss et al.?

## Method

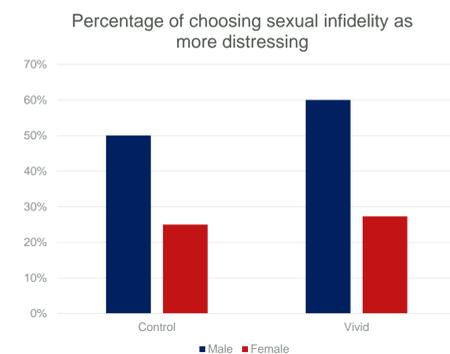
Participants were separated into four groups:

- Male control
- Male vivid
- Female control
- Female vivid

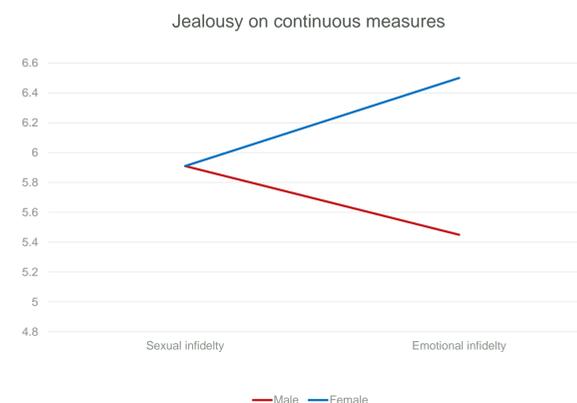
Men and women in the control condition were given the standard version of Buss et al.'s forced-choice infidelity dilemma as well as additional questions assessing emotional reactions on continuous scales. Men and women in the vivid condition were given the same questions but were first instructed to attempt to visualize the infidelity dilemma vividly. The independent variables in the analysis are: (a) participant sex (male or female), (b) experimental condition (control or vivid), and (c) relationship status (single or committed relationship).

## Results

It was found that more men than women were more upset by sexual infidelity than by emotional infidelity in both the vivid and control group in response to the forced choice infidelity dilemma. This is in line with Buss's claim.



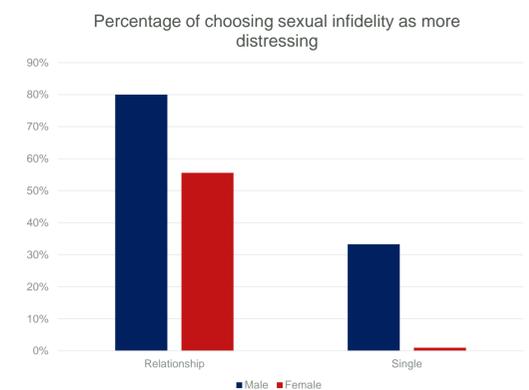
Continuous measure results also supported Buss,  $F(1,29)=6.28, p=.02$ .



It was found that when women were prompted to imagine their partner engaging in these acts vividly, they reported greater jealousy in response to sexual infidelity. This is in line with Kato's claim.

## Results (cont.)

In addition, both genders showed more jealousy to sexual infidelity when in a relationship, while those not in a relationship showed more jealousy to emotional infidelity.



## Conclusions

Supporting Kato's claim, when women were asked to imagine the infidelity vividly, they reported greater jealousy in response to sexual infidelity, but supporting Buss, this could not account for the overall sex differences in jealousy.

## Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the Research Rookies program. My mentor Brad Sagarin, Ellen Lee for assisting in the creation of this survey, and Kathryn Klement for helping to recruit subjects for the survey.

## References

- Buss, D. M., Larsen, R. J., Westen, D., & Semmelroth, J. (1992). Sex differences in jealousy: Evolution, physiology, and psychology. *Psychological Science*, 3, 251–255. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.1992.tb00038.x.
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