

Upset in response to a child's partner's infidelities

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Abstract

The weight of existing evidence suggests that men display greater upset in response to a long-term partner's sexual infidelity, whereas women display greater upset in response to a partner's emotional infidelity. This sex difference was first hypothesized by evolutionary psychologists, who argued that the difference may reflect sex-differentiated evolved psychological design. Some socialization theorists, in contrast, have argued that the difference may be attributable to sex-differentiated socialization practices. A. Fenigstein and R. Peltz (2002) collected data from parents of undergraduates about upset in response to a child's partner's infidelities and found that both sexes report greater upset in response to a son's partner's sexual infidelity and in response to a daughter's partner's emotional infidelity. The key variable therefore is the sex of the child, as predicted from a heuristic application of an evolutionary perspective, and not the sex of the parent, as predicted from a heuristic application of one socialization perspective. We report a replication of these findings using data collected from retirees with an average age of about 70 years who have at least one son and one daughter and most of whom have grandchildren. Copyright © 2004 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Romantic jealousy is a key emotion experienced by both men and women (e.g. Bringle & Buunk, 1991; Salovey & Rothman, 1989; Shackelford, LeBlanc, & Drass, 2000). Empirical work over the past decade documents that both men and women report that they would experience high levels of upset in response to a long-term partner's real or imagined infidelity. The weight of this research also documents a sex difference in the psychological weighting of the aspects or content of a partner's infidelity: Men report greater distress than do women in response to a partner's sexual infidelity (for example, having sexual intercourse with someone else), and women report greater distress than do men in response to a partner's emotional infidelity (for example, falling in love with someone else). In addition, when a partner is imagined or discovered to be involved in an affair that is both sexual and emotional in nature, men report greater distress in response to the sexual aspect of the infidelity,

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whereas women report greater distress in response to the emotional aspect of the infidelity. This sex difference in the nature of jealousy has been found by different investigators and using different methodologies, although this difference has not been consistently replicated using psychophysiological assessments (Harris, 2000; Pietrzak, Laird, Stevens, & Thompson, 2002; and see Buss, 2000). Pietrzak et al. (2002) replicated the sex difference in jealousy for the same sample of participants across three different methods: a forced-choice methodology, a continuous scale methodology, and a psychophysiological assessment, suggesting that the sex difference does not depend on the particular methodology used. In addition, the sex difference in jealousy has been replicated in many different cultures, although the size of the sex difference varies across cultures, from relatively small in Korea, Japan, and The Netherlands (e.g. Buss et al., 1999; Buunk, Angleitner, Oubaid, & Buss, 1996) to relatively large in the United States and Sweden (e.g. Pietrzak et al., 2002; Wiederman & Kendall, 1999).

Evolutionary psychologists hypothesized over two decades ago that men and women would differ psychologically in the weighting given to cues that trigger jealousy (Daly, Wilson, & Weghorst, 1982; Symons, 1979). Both sexes, of course, are distressed by both forms of infidelity, and the evolutionary hypothesis suggests that they should be, given their correlated nature in everyday life and the fact that both forms would have signalled the loss of important reproductive resources in ancestral environments (Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992). Nonetheless, the hypothesized sex difference is anchored in sexual asymmetries that men and women recurrently faced over human evolutionary history. Because fertilization occurs internally within women, a man's partner's sexual infidelity threatened his paternity certainty. On the other hand, from a woman's perspective, a partner's emotional involvement with another woman was hypothesized to predict the long-term loss of her partner's time, resources, and investments, all of which could get diverted to the rival woman and her children. Thus, the *evolved psychological design* of romantic jealousy was hypothesized to differ for the sexes, with women giving relatively greater weight to signals of emotional infidelity and men giving relatively greater weight to signals of sexual infidelity.

Although the weight of previous research indicates a sex difference in jealousy, there remains disagreement as to the causes of this difference. Evolutionary psychologists have argued that the sex difference in jealousy might be generated by sex differences in evolved psychology. Several socialization theorists, social role theorists, and other social learning theorists have argued that the sex difference in jealousy may be attributable to sex differences in socialization and social role training and acquisition (e.g. DeSteno & Salovey, 1996; Eagly & Wood, 1999; see Fenigstein & Peltz, 2002). In effect, socialization and social role theorists have argued that men report greater upset in response to a partner's sexual infidelity because they are taught by society to behave this way. Women, in contrast, report greater upset in response to a partner's emotional infidelity because they are taught by society to behave this way. The result is that, for every study indicating a sex difference in jealousy, both academic camps claim victory. What is needed is a methodological strategy for comparing the relative heuristic value of an evolutionary perspective and a socialization perspective. Fenigstein and Peltz (2002) offer one such strategy.

Fenigstein and Peltz (2002) argued that one way to disentangle these hypotheses is to ask parents of both sexes (mothers and fathers) to report the upset they would experience if their child's long-term partner was unfaithful to their child. The key to disentangling the hypotheses is provided by the opportunity to investigate the responses of parents to the infidelities of a daughter-in-law and the infidelities of a son-in-law. According to one socialization perspective, the key variable is the sex of the respondent—in this case, the sex of the parent. As a man or a woman, the parent expresses the life views and belief system according to which he or she has been socialized. If the parent is a man, he has been taught that sexual infidelity is more upsetting. If the parent is a woman, she has been taught that emotional infidelity is more upsetting. Nothing in this version of the socialization perspective suggests that this sex difference will disappear or be attenuated if the victim of the infidelity happens to be one's

child rather than oneself. This socialization perspective therefore can be used heuristically to generate the hypothesis that men will report greater upset in response to a child's partner's sexual infidelity, whereas women will report greater upset in response to a child's partner's emotional infidelity. Whether one's child is male or female is not relevant; instead, what is important is the sex of the respondent and his or her concomitant socialized set of beliefs (Fenigstein & Peltz, 2002). There may, of course, be alternative socialization or 'cultural' perspectives, but these have not been articulated in the published literature. Until such alternatives are articulated, we present one version of a socialization perspective that can be used heuristically to generate hypotheses that are different from those than can be generated heuristically from an evolutionary perspective.

According to an evolutionary psychological perspective, the sex of one's child is the critical variable. Men, but not women, recurrently faced the adaptive problem of uncertain genetic relatedness to a putative offspring. This is just as true for one's child as it is for oneself. If a son's partner is sexually unfaithful, she places him at risk of cuckoldry—unwittingly investing his limited resources in a child to whom he is genetically unrelated. By virtue of shared genetic interests, a son's cuckoldry and the attendant reproductive losses are reproductive losses for a son's parents as well. Although a son's partner's emotional infidelity also is likely to be upsetting to his parents insofar as it may be a correlate or harbinger of sexual infidelity, an evolutionary perspective can be used to generate the hypothesis that a son's partner's sexual infidelity—as the most direct indicator of possible cuckoldry—will be more upsetting than a son's partner's emotional infidelity, for *both* mothers and fathers. Of key interest here is that the same woman who reports that her own partner's emotional infidelity would be more upsetting than his sexual infidelity is hypothesized to display a reverse pattern of upset when imagining a daughter-in-law's infidelity.

According to an evolutionary psychological perspective, women but not men faced the adaptive problem of a long-term partner diverting resources to a mating rival and that rival's children. A man's sexual infidelity might be upsetting insofar as it may predict his eventual emotional infidelity. A man's sexual infidelity will not, however, place his partner at risk of unwittingly investing in offspring to whom she is genetically unrelated. Maternity is always certain—or at least was throughout human evolutionary history. According to an evolutionary psychological perspective, therefore, a partner's emotional infidelity is a graver adaptive problem for women than a partner's sexual infidelity. Women, therefore, report greater upset in response to a partner's emotional infidelity than in response to a partner's sexual infidelity. By virtue of their shared genetic interests, a woman's parents are hypothesized to be more upset by their son-in-law's emotional infidelity than by his sexual infidelity. His emotional infidelity inflicts greater potential reproductive costs on their daughter than does his sexual infidelity. These greater reproductive costs incurred by a daughter translate into greater reproductive costs for them, as her parents and the grandparents to any children she might have now or bear in the future. An evolutionary perspective thus can be used heuristically to generate the hypothesis that, for *both* mothers and fathers, a son-in-law's emotional infidelity will be more upsetting than his sexual infidelity. Of key interest here is that the same man who reports that his own partner's sexual infidelity would be more upsetting than her emotional infidelity is hypothesized to display a reverse pattern of upset when imagining a son-in-law's infidelity.

Independent of the current researchers, Fenigstein and Peltz (2002) collected data to test these hypotheses about sex differences in jealousy. The results supported the evolutionary psychological hypothesis and were not consistent with this particular socialization hypothesis. After replicating the standard sex difference in upset about a partner's infidelity, Fenigstein and Peltz documented that the same women who report that a partner's emotional infidelity is more upsetting than his sexual infidelity also report greater upset in response to a daughter-in-law's sexual infidelity than in response to a daughter-in-law's emotional infidelity. Similarly, the same men who report that a partner's sexual infidelity is more upsetting than her emotional infidelity also report greater upset in response to a

son-in-law's emotional infidelity than in response to a son-in-law's sexual infidelity. The critical variable therefore appeared not to be the sex of the participant, but the sex of his or her child. When the adaptive problem is a child's partner's infidelities, it is the sex of the child that determines whether a sexual infidelity or emotional infidelity is likely to lead to greater reproductive costs. By virtue of shared genes, in turn, greater reproductive costs for a child translate to greater reproductive costs for the child's parents.

The current study was conducted prior to the publication of Fenigstein and Peltz (2002) and without knowledge of that research. The current research therefore represents an independent attempt to replicate the results of Fenigstein and Peltz. The current research differs from that of Fenigstein and Peltz in two important domains. First, Fenigstein and Peltz collected data from middle-aged parents (about 90% of whom were Caucasian) of undergraduate students attending a prestigious liberal arts college in the Midwestern United States. In contrast, the current study collected data from retirees living in south Florida with an average age of nearly 70 years who have at least one son and one daughter, most of whom have grandchildren, and nearly 25% of whom classify themselves as non-Caucasian.

A second important difference between the Fenigstein and Peltz (2002) study and the current study is a methodological difference. Whereas Fenigstein and Peltz used single-item measures of unknown reliability to assess upset in response to own partner's or child's partner's infidelities, the current research used multi-item assessments of known reliability to assess these responses.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 69 men and 138 women residing in one of several retirement communities located in a large metropolitan area in south Florida. Participation was voluntary and not rewarded. The average age of participants was 67.1 years ($SD = 8.7$ years; for men, $M = 66.7$ years, $SD = 9.1$ years; for women, $M = 67.3$ years, $SD = 8.5$ years). About 24% (24.4) of participants indicated that they were non-Caucasian, 32.0% of which were African American, 28.0% Hispanic, 24.0% Native American, 14.0% 'Other', and 2.0% Asian American. About 60% of the sample were currently married, 20% were widowed, 10% divorced, and the remaining 10% either in a non-marital but committed relationship or 'single'. A separate article presents the results of analyses of data provided by this sample (Shackelford, Voracek, Schmitt, Buss, Weekes-Shackelford, & Michalski, in press), but the current article presents the results of different analyses designed to test different hypotheses.

Materials

Participants responded to two sets of forced-choice questions about a child's partner's infidelities. Both sets of questions asked participants which aspect of a child's partner's infidelities would be more upsetting—sexual infidelity or emotional infidelity. One set of questions assessed upset in response to a son's partner's infidelities. The other set of questions assessed upset in response to a daughter's partner's infidelities. These questions paralleled the structure of questions designed to assess upset in response to a partner's infidelities (see, e.g., Buss et al., 1992, 1999). Participants responded to the same four forced-choice questions for a son's partner's infidelities and a daughter's partner's

infidelities. The questions differed only in the sex of the child and, correspondingly, the sex of the in-law (the person to whom the child is mated). For responses to a son's partner's infidelities, the questions were prefaced with the following instructional set:

Instructions: Please think of your *oldest biological son* and a serious or committed romantic relationship that he has had in the past, that he is currently having, or that he might have in the future. Imagine that you discover that the person with whom your *oldest son* has been seriously involved became interested in someone else (other than your son). What would upset or distress you more (please *circle only one* answer, (A) or (B), for each question)?

The instructional set for responses to a daughter's partner's infidelities was identical, with the exception of the gender-relevant substitutions. Some participants had more than one son or more than one daughter. To ensure that participants imagined the same son or daughter across the questions, we asked them to think about their oldest son or their oldest daughter (a methodological strategy also used by Fenigstein & Peltz, 2002). Participants that did not have a biological child of the relevant sex were asked to skip that set of questions.

Four different forced-choice dilemmas were presented to participants to allow for a multi-item assessment of the emotional reactions (see Dijkstra et al., 2001). Two of these dilemmas were structural replications of previous studies (Buss et al., 1992, 1999). In the first dilemma, participants indicated which of the following two events would be more distressing: '(A) Imagining your [CHILD'S PARTNER] enjoying passionate sexual intercourse with someone other than your [child]' or '(B) Imagining your [CHILD'S PARTNER] forming a deep emotional attachment to someone other than your [child]'. In the actual items, '[CHILD'S PARTNER]' appeared as 'SON'S PARTNER' or 'DAUGHTER'S PARTNER', and [child] appeared as 'son' or 'daughter'.

In the second dilemma, participants indicated which of the following two events would be more distressing: '(A) Imagining your [CHILD'S PARTNER] trying different sexual positions with someone other than your [child]' or '(B) Imagining your [CHILD'S PARTNER] falling in love with someone other than your [child]'. A third dilemma was constructed with strong wording requiring participants to evaluate each type of infidelity in the absence of the other: 'Which would upset or distress you more? (A) Imagining your [CHILD'S PARTNER] having sexual intercourse with that person, but you are certain that they will *not* form a deep emotional attachment. (B) Imagining your [CHILD'S PARTNER] forming a deep emotional attachment to that person, but you are certain that they will *not* have sexual intercourse'. In this dilemma, participants were instructed to consider only cases in which one type of infidelity occurs, with a certainty that the other type will not occur.

A fourth dilemma read as follows: 'Which would upset or distress you more? (A) Imagining your [CHILD'S PARTNER] having sexual intercourse for just one night with another person, with no chance of any further involvement. (B) Imagining your [CHILD'S PARTNER] becoming emotionally involved with another person, with no chance of any sexual involvement'. This dilemma offers a contrast between the purely sexual infidelity, which would have compromised an ancestral man's certainty in paternity, with the emotional involvement, which may have signalled to a woman the longer-term diversion of her partner's commitment and resources.

In addition to responding to the dilemmas about a child's partner's infidelities, participants completed the same set of dilemmas for their own partner's infidelities (see, e.g., Buss et al., 1992, 1999). This allowed us to assess the established sex difference in jealousy. Participants responded to the dilemmas about their own partner's infidelities before responding to the structurally similar dilemmas about a child's infidelities. The two sets of dilemmas (assessing own partner's infidelities and child's partner's infidelities) were separated by several pages of questions assessing grandparental investment (the results of which will be reported in a separate article).

RESULTS

To capitalize on the use of multiple items, and following Dijkstra et al. (2001), we created a composite Sexual Jealousy Score (SJS) from responses to the four dilemmas, separately for responses to own partner's infidelities, a son's partner's infidelities, and a daughter's partner's infidelities. For each set of four dilemmas, a response of 'emotional infidelity' was assigned a value of '0' and a response of 'sexual infidelity' was assigned a value of '1'. The SJS was computed as the mean of the four recoded responses to the four infidelity dilemmas. The SJS could vary from '0' (if the participant selected emotional infidelity as more upsetting than sexual infidelity for all four infidelity dilemmas) to '1' (if the participant selected sexual infidelity as more upsetting than emotional infidelity for all four infidelity dilemmas). A key reason for presenting the results of analyses of the SJS is that single-item measures such as the individual infidelity dilemmas are of unknown reliability. Use of the SJS allowed us to assess differential responses to the infidelity dilemmas with a composite measure of known reliability. The across-sex reliabilities of the SJS in these data were $\alpha = 0.80$ for own partner's infidelities, $\alpha = 0.87$ for son's partner's infidelities, and $\alpha = 0.91$ for daughter's partner's infidelities. Thus, the composite SJS variable displayed exemplary reliability across the three conditions (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991).

We first investigated whether the standard sex difference in response to one's own partner's infidelities was replicated with this older sample. Consistent with an alternative composite presentation of these data as reported in Shackelford et al. (in press), the standard sex difference replicated (Shackelford et al. presented composites based on six dilemmas; the current study used four of the dilemmas that parallel the four dilemmas used to create composites for responses to a child's partner's infidelities). The mean SJS for men responding to their own partner's infidelities was significantly greater than the mean SJS for women responding to their own partner's infidelities [for men: $M = 0.61$, $SD = 0.39$; for women: $M = 0.38$, $SD = 0.37$; $t(187) = 3.91$, $p < 0.001$; *Cohen's d* = 0.60, a medium effect size. *Cohen's d* reflects the standardized mean difference and is interpreted according to the conventions provided by Cohen (1988): *d* around 0.20 is 'small', *d* around 0.50 is 'medium', and *d* around 0.80 is 'large.']. Men reported greater upset about a partner's sexual infidelity, whereas women reported greater upset about a partner's emotional infidelity. Having replicated the standard sex difference in jealousy about a partner's infidelity, we turned next to investigating whether upset in response to a child's partner's infidelity varied with participant sex and with the sex of the child (and hence with the sex of the child's partner).

An analysis that includes a within-subjects component provides the clearest assessments of the effects of sex of participant and sex of child's partner on upset in response to a child's partner's infidelities. In this analysis, the upset responses of the same group of people can be compared in two conditions—when imagining a son's partner's infidelities and when imagining a daughter's partner's infidelities. To conduct this analysis, we selected those participants who had at least one son and at least one daughter (27 men, 50 women). We conducted a repeated-measures analysis of variance on the composite SJS provided by these participants, with the composite SJS serving as a within-subjects variable (one SJS for a son's partner's infidelities and a second SJS for a daughter's partner's infidelities), and participant sex serving as the between-subjects variable. This analysis produced a significant effect of sex of in-law [$F(1, 75) = 7.67$, $p < 0.01$; *Cohen's d* = 0.67, a medium effect size], but no effect for participant sex [$F(1, 75) = 0.31$, $p > 0.05$] and no interaction between sex of in-law and participant sex [$F(1, 75) = 0.01$, $p > 0.05$]. Follow-up planned comparisons revealed that the mean SJS for men in response to a daughter-in-law's sexual infidelity was significantly greater than the mean SJS for the same men in response to a son-in-law's sexual infidelity [for daughter-in-law: $M = 0.59$, $SD = 0.43$; for son-in-law, $M = 0.49$, $SD = 0.45$; paired-samples $t(26) = 2.02$, $p < 0.05$; *Cohen's d* = 0.39, a small effect size]. Similarly, the mean SJS for women in response to a daughter-in-law's

sexual infidelity was significantly greater than the mean SJS for the same women in response to a son-in-law's sexual infidelity [for daughter-in-law: $M = 0.54$, $SD = 0.42$; for son-in-law, $M = 0.44$, $SD = 0.45$; paired-samples $t(49) = 2.13$, $p < 0.05$; *Cohen's d* = 0.30, a small effect size].

DISCUSSION

Both mothers and fathers report greater upset in response to (1) the emotional infidelity (relative to the sexual infidelity) of a son-in-law and (2) the sexual infidelity (relative to the emotional infidelity) of a daughter-in-law. These same mothers and fathers report greater upset in response to their *own partner's* emotional infidelity and sexual infidelity, respectively. The sex of the parent therefore appears not to be the key predictor of upset in response to the infidelities of children-in-law. Instead, the key predictor of upset in response to a child's partner's infidelities appears to be the sex of the child (or sex of the in-law). These results replicate those of Fenigstein and Peltz (2002) and provide evidence consistent with a hypothesis generated heuristically by an evolutionary perspective on sex differences in jealousy. These results also provide evidence that is not consistent with a hypothesis generated heuristically by one version of a socialization perspective on sex differences in jealousy.

Ancestral mothers and fathers recurrently faced the adaptive problem of a child's long-term partner diverting reproductively valuable resources away from their child. This adaptive problem was driven by the costs inflicted on parents by virtue of shared genetic interests with their children. These reproductively valuable resources are specific to the sex of the child, and not the sex of the parent. Men, but not women, faced the adaptive problem of paternity uncertainty, which was exacerbated by a partner's sexual infidelity more than her emotional infidelity. This is as true for a son as it is for his father. Women, but not men, faced the adaptive problem of resource diversion to a rival mate, which was exacerbated by a partner's emotional infidelity more than by his sexual infidelity. This is as true for a daughter as it is for her mother. Accordingly, an evolutionary psychological was used heuristically to generate the hypothesis that *both* mothers and fathers will be more upset by a son's partner's sexual infidelity and by a daughter's partners emotional infidelity. The results are consistent with this hypothesis and corroborate the results presented by Fenigstein and Peltz (2002).

The use of forced-choice scenarios might represent a methodological limitation. We assessed upset using several forced-choice items, the responses to which we collapsed into a reliable scale with continuous properties. There is a considerable body of research (reviewed in Buss, 2000) documenting that, when given the option of rating upset along an interval scale, most people indicate substantial upset in response to a partner's sexual infidelity and in response to a partner's emotional infidelity. Clearly, both sexes are terribly upset about a partner's infidelity, whether that infidelity is primarily sexual, primarily emotional, or equally sexual and emotional. The same is likely to be true for parents reporting about their upset in response to a child's partner's infidelities. The specific hypothesis tested in the current research focused on whether people might be *differently* upset about one or the other type of infidelity, depending on whether it was a son or a daughter who was the victim of the infidelity. Given the methodological problem of ceiling effects often (but not always, see Pietrzak et al., 2002) encountered when using a Likert-type format in these contexts, forced-choice methods may provide the opportunity to discover actual differences that might otherwise be obscured—in this context, in a kind of 'Sophie's choice' of types or aspects of infidelity. Buss et al. (1992, 1999) provide additional discussion of the appropriateness of the forced-choice design for identifying group differences in responses to infidelity. Although not without its critics (e.g. DeSteno, Bartlett, Braverman, & Salovey, 2002; Harris, 2003), many independent investigators have concluded that the forced-choice method has excellent validity (e.g. Buss et al., 1999; Geary, Rumsey, Bow-Thomas, & Hoard, 1995; Pietrzak et al.,

2002; Wiederman & Kendall, 1999). In addition, Fenigstein and Peltz (2002) documented a pattern of results consistent with the current results using a single-item forced-choice measure *and* a single-item continuous measure. Their results using the continuous measure suggest that the effects identified in that study and in the current study do not depend on the structure of the items used to assess upset.

A potential limitation of the current research is the reliance on imagined scenarios. An important, albeit considerably more difficult extension of this work would involve collecting data from parents whose children-in-law have been sexually unfaithful, emotionally unfaithful, or both. Do both mothers and fathers experience greater upset in response to a son's partner's sexual (versus her emotional) infidelity and a daughter's partner's emotional (versus his sexual) infidelity? Examining these issues directly poses formidable methodological and ethical challenges, but if these could be overcome, such work would constitute the most direct tests of the current hypotheses.

Future research also could investigate whether the child's sex or the child's partner's sex is the relevant trigger of upset in response to a child's partner's infidelities, using a sample of participants with homosexual children. Such a sample would provide the opportunity to control naturalistically for the sex of the child's partner. For participants with homosexual sons, for example, we hypothesize that, if the sex of their child is the relevant trigger, then participants will report greater upset in response to his partner's sexual infidelity than in response to his partner's emotional infidelity. If the sex of the child's partner is the relevant trigger, however, we hypothesize that a different pattern of results will obtain: Participants will report greater upset in response to a homosexual son's partner's emotional infidelity than in response to his partner's sexual infidelity.

It is possible that a socialization perspective might be used heuristically to generate a *post hoc* explanation for the current pattern of results, and for those presented by Fenigstein and Peltz (2002). One might argue, for example, that parents have been socialized to react differently to the infidelities of a son-in-law and the infidelities of a daughter-in-law. Although intriguing and worth investigating, such an argument was not articulated prior to the results obtained in the current study or by Fenigstein and Peltz. Furthermore, this *post hoc* argument begs several other questions, including: Why have parents been socialized to respond differently to the infidelities of a son-in-law and the infidelities of a daughter-in-law? Why does this particular socialization process act similarly on men and women (as fathers and mothers, respectively), whereas the socialization processes proposed to account for the observed sex differences in response to one's own partner's infidelities are sex-differentiated? Future research will need to address these questions before we fully embrace a *post hoc* socialization explanation for the current results and those of Fenigstein and Peltz.

In conclusion, the current results are not consistent with the hypothesis that sex-specific socialization spills over into sex-specific responses to the imagined infidelities of a child's partner. Women who rate their own partner's emotional infidelity as more upsetting than his sexual infidelity display a reverse pattern of upset when imagining their son's partner's infidelity. And men who rate their own partner's sexual infidelity as more upsetting than her emotional infidelity display a reverse pattern of upset when imagining their daughter's partner's infidelity. These results suggest that the key variable therefore may be the sex of the child or, correspondingly, the sex of the child's partner, as predicted from a heuristic application of an evolutionary perspective, and not the sex of the participant, as predicted from a heuristic application of one socialization perspective.

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