Jealousy and Sexual Orientation

Testing the “Double-Shot” Hypothesis in a Heterosexual, Homosexual, and Bisexual Sample

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Abstract

Previous research (Buus et al., 1992) has found that men are relatively more distressed by a female partner’s sexual infidelity while women tend to be more distressed by a male partner’s emotional infidelity. Evolutionary theorists have related this sex effect to the differential adaptive strategies of men and women. This explanation was contested by the “double-shot” hypothesis (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996; Harris & Christenfeld, 1996) proposing that differential reactions to infidelity are solely driven by individuals’ expectations concerning their partner’s behavior. This hypothesis should explain the behaviors of all types of people, the present study investigates this hypothesis in a sample of heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual men and women (n = 537). Results showed that:

- Only heterosexual men were approximately equally concerned about their partner’s sexual and emotional infidelity whereas all other groups found their partner’s emotional infidelity more distressing.

At the same time, there was no support for the double-shot hypothesis. That is, with few exceptions, expectations of a partner’s behavior did not predict jealousy response.

In contrast to Buus et al. (1992), this study failed to find a difference in the pattern of jealousy as a function of sexual relationship experience among heterosexual men. Homosexual and bisexual men showed the opposite pattern.

The Jealousy and Infidelity Question

Please think of a serious committed romantic relationship with a woman that you have had in the past, that you currently have, or that you would like to have. Imagine that you discover that the woman with whom you’ve been seriously involved became...

The Jealousy Response by Participant Sex and Sexual Orientation

The Double-Shot Hypothesis

DeSteno and Salovey (1996) and Harris and Christenfeld (1996) argued that men and women are rational decision makers who base their judgments on available knowledge and expectations. People have different perceptions about the likelihood of a person’s sexual involvement given that person’s emotional attachment and vice versa. As a result, one type of infidelity may imply another type of infidelity to a different extent for men and women.

For example, if sexual infidelity strongly implies emotional infidelity in women, but not the converse, sexual infidelity should be more upsetting to men because it is a “double-shot” of infidelity.

Thus, according to the double-shot hypothesis, jealousy type depends not on the sex of the subject, but the sex of their partner and perceptions about that person. If people have similar stereotypes about all men and women, regardless of their sexual orientation, all people with female partners should show a greater degree of sexual jealousy than should all people with male partners.

The Differential Infidelity Index (DII) is a measure of beliefs about the implications of sexual or emotional involvement. It is obtained by taking the score (measured on a 3-point Likert scale) from question one below and subtracting the score from question two.

Positive values indicate the belief that emotional infidelity implies sexual infidelity more than the converse.

Negative values indicate the belief that sexual infidelity implies emotional infidelity more than the converse.

DII - The Differential Infidelity Index

Typical DII for Heterosexual and Homosexual Men and Women

Participant Demographics

References Cited


Although the group findings for heterosexual men did not replicate Harris and Christenfeld (1996), the correlation does not hold across all sexual orientation groups. In addition, partner DII does not predict individual differences in jealousy (p> .20), failing to replicate the findings of DeBruine and Salovey (1996).