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An evolutionary psychology perspective on responsibility attributions for infidelity and relationship dissolution

Kindra Lynn Edmonson

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AN EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE ON
RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTIONS FOR
INFIDELITY AND RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
in
Psychology:
Clinical Counseling

by
Kindra Lynn Edmonson
September 2011
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ABSTRACT

An evolutionary psychology perspective on jealousy was used to investigate the relationship between responsibility attributions for a romantic partner’s unfaithfulness and the likelihood of relationship dissolution. Nine hypotheses specifying relationships among factors including sex of participant, type of infidelity (emotional and sexual), responsibility attributions, and relationship dissolution were tested. More specifically, it was hypothesized that 1) more men than women will report being distressed by a partner’s sexual infidelity, 2) more women than men will report being distressed by a partner’s emotional infidelity, 3) men will make stronger responsibility attributions than will women for a partner’s sexual infidelity, 4) women will make stronger responsibility attributions than will men for a partner’s emotional infidelity, 5) men will report a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than will women following a partner’s sexual infidelity, 6) women will report a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than will men following a partner’s emotional infidelity, 7) the correlation between responsibility attributions and the likelihood of ending the relationship will be positive, 8) the correlation between responsibility attributions for a partner’s sexual
infidelity and the likelihood of ending the relationship will be stronger for men than for women, and 9) the correlation between responsibility attributions for a partner’s emotional infidelity and the likelihood of ending the relationship will be stronger for women than for men. The hypotheses were tested using participants’ responses to a battery of surveys including 1) Relationship Dilemma Scenarios (RDS), 2) Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM), and 3) Relationship Dissolution Questionnaire (RDQ). Consistent with previously reported evolutionary psychology research, more men than women were distressed by imagining a partner’s sexual infidelity, and more women than men were distressed by imagining a partner’s emotional infidelity. A partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity distressed roughly an equal number of men. The results also yielded the predicted positive relationship between responsibility attributions and the likelihood of relationship dissolution. However, this general relationship was qualified by the sex of the participant and the type of infidelity. In the discussion it was argued that several interesting outcomes, principally involving the men, could provide a plausible explanation for why men find a partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity distressing.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Overview

This thesis will accomplish several goals. First, research on evolutionary psychology and infidelity will be reviewed. Second, the evolutionary psychology and infidelity research will be integrated with current research on responsibility attributions for unfaithfulness and relationship dissolution. And third, the thesis will test nine specific hypotheses involving sex of participant, type of infidelity, responsibility attributions, and relationship dissolution.

Evolutionary Psychology and Interpersonal Attraction

Liking for and positive evaluation of another person has been found to be influenced by mundane factors such as physical closeness (Nahemow & Lawton, 1975; Newcomb, 1961; Segal, 1974) and repeated or mere exposure (Zajonc, 1968). Factors with considerably more explanatory and predictive power regarding interpersonal attraction and long-term partnerships such as interpersonal negotiation (Duck & Miell, 1983), physical appearance (Green, Buchanan, & Heuer, 1984; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986; Sprecher, 1989;
Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, & Rottman, 1966), genetic similarity (Rushton & Nicholson, 1988) and sharing similar attitudes, values and beliefs (Byrne, 1971; Clore & Byrne, 1974; Cramer Weiss, Steigleder, & Balling, 1985; Lott & Lott, 1968, 1972) also have been investigated. Although each of these factors have been found to play a lessor or greater role in liking, interpersonal attraction and mate selection, Buss and Schmitt (1993) criticized much of the early research because, with the exception of work on physical appearance and genetic similarity, the research did not attempt to explain the motivation underlying the use of these factors or the specific survival and reproductive purposes these factors serve. Moreover, and perhaps more critically, most of the traditional approaches to understanding liking, interpersonal attraction and mate selection failed to consider the possibility of sex differences.

To address the limitations of the existing theories of interpersonal attraction, evolutionary psychologists like Buss and Schmitt (1993) relied on the concept of sexual selection (Darwin, 1871) and on the premise that human attraction and mating promote reproduction and survival. Darwin divided sexual selection into two different yet related processes: intersexual selection and
intrasexual selection. Intersexual selection involves a member of one sex selecting a member of the opposite sex as a mating partner based on the possession of desirable attributes. For example, a peahen is attracted to a peacock for the quality and length of the male's feathers, because these specific traits represent good health, strength, and status (Kodric-Brown & Brown, 1984; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997). In contrast, intrasexual selection involves members of the same sex competing with each other to gain access to members of the opposite sex. For example, males will compete with other males to acquire resources that are desirable to females.

While intersexual and intrasexual selection are two different processes, they are related in that they both promote reproduction, and consequently, survival (Darwin 1871). Interestingly, not all preferred characteristics in sexual selection are "obviously" adaptive, and can actually "appear" to hinder survival (Buss & Barnes, 1986). For example, the peacock's long feathers inhibit him from moving quickly to escape predators. Why do male peacocks possess elaborate plumage if their survival is at risk? According to sexual selection, the plumage is a desirable characteristic in peacock mating because it
promotes reproduction and survival (Kodric-Brown & Brown, 1985; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997).

According to evolutionary psychology, men and women have evolved different preferences when seeking a mate based on the unique survival problems each gender had to solve in the ancestral past (Buss, 1989; Buss, 2004; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Symons, 1979; Trivers, 1972, 1985). Buss and Schmitt (1993), in particular, referred to the goal-directed, problem-solving approaches displayed by men and women seeking a mate as strategies. According to their sexual strategies theory, men and women have developed sexually dimorphic psychological mechanisms as adaptations for solving potential mating problems that have occurred throughout the course of evolution (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

According to sexual strategies theory, women more than men, value social dominance. That is, women seek a mate with earning potential, social status, ambition, and material resources that he is willing to share. These preferences result from women having to invest heavily in time and energy necessary for gestation, child bearing, child rearing, and protection. Hence, women have evolved preferences for a mate who can help her personally and materially in rearing and sheltering their children.
Conversely, men more than women, prefer mates who are young, physically attractive, and sexually exclusive. These specific personal traits signal a potential partner's general good health and fertility. Men prefer mates who are exclusive in order to increase paternity certainty, and consequently, avoid cuckoldry.

These predicted sex differences have been supported in numerous studies of human attraction and mating (e.g., Buss, 1989; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Cramer, Schaefer, & Reid, 1996; Kenrick, Groth, Trost, & Sadella, 1993; Kenrick & Keefe, 1992; Kenrick, Sadalla, Groth, & Trost, 1990; Landolt, Lalumiere, & Quinsey, 1995; Sadalla, Kenrick, & Vershure, 1987; Sprecher, 1989; Townsend, 1989; Wiederman, 1993; Wiederman & Allgeier, 1992, 1993). For example, Buss (1989) conducted a study across 37 cultures to determine attributes that men and women find desirable in mates. After asking participants to identify the general characteristics they valued in a potential mate, the results showed that men preferred mates who were young, physically attractive and virgins, and women preferred mates who were older and good financial prospects; older men with material resources would, in most cultures, have high social status.
Sexual strategies theory is extremely complicated, as there are many problems that men and women have had to solve when seeking mates (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). In particular, these strategies depend on context, and are sensitive to temporal parameters, such as the differences between short-term and long-term dating relationships. A long-term mating strategy involves an extensive relationship with ongoing commitment and sexual access, whereas in a short-term mating relationship copulation is the goal (e.g., choosing a mate for sex only).

Men in the ancestral past focused on having as many short-term mating relationships as possible with the intention of increasing the number of offspring produced. It is hypothesized that men who pursued short-term mating strategies looked for mates who did not require significant financial and personal investment or commitment before engaging in sex (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Compared to women, men are, in theory, more interested in short-term mating (see Clark & Hatfield, 1989 for strong support of this expectation). Moreover, men preferred a larger number of mates over the course of a given amount of time (i.e., one week, one month), were willing to engage in sex after a shorter amount of time had elapsed (i.e., one hour, one day), and lowered their mate
standards when seeking a short-term mate. In contrast, men pursuing long-term mating strategies valued sexually exclusive, celibate, and faithful women, and avoided women who are sexually experienced and promiscuous (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). The primary benefit for men pursuing a long-term mating strategy is the lifetime access they gain to a woman’s reproductive resources, such as high mate value, avoidance of the costs of not pursuing a long-term mate, and an increase in the genetic quality of offspring. Pursuing a long-term mating strategy has the immediate benefit of mutual cooperation and divided household duties, and perhaps more importantly, solves the problem of having to determine if the child a man is helping to raise is his own (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

Women pursue short-term mating strategies for completely different reasons than men. A short-term mating strategy allows women to gain immediate access to resources, provides increased protection, and allows her to evaluate her mate for possibly pursuing a long-term relationship (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). In any event, the costs of pursuing a short-term mating strategy are high for women including being labeled promiscuous, and like men, having the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Gaining a negative social reputation, for
example, is especially costly to women because of the possibility of losing a potential long-term mate. As noted above, men who pursue long-term mates value chastity and paternity certainty (Buss, 1989; Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

Women who pursue long-term mating strategies gain economic security of male parental investment (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Male parental investment provides a woman and her children material resources, social and economic benefits, and the potential of inheriting these resources that will, in turn, give her children a reproductive advantage. Clearly, the pursuit of long-term mating strategies has powerful reproductive advantages that men and women will make every effort to sustain. Evolutionary psychologists, in fact, have argued that any threats to these strategies will activate sex-specific psychological jealousy mechanisms in men and women (Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992; Buss et al., 1999; Shackelford & Buss, 1997).

Evolutionary Psychology of Infidelity and Jealousy

In their seminal article, Buss et al. (1992) linked male and female reproductive interests to sex differences in response to a romantic partner's infidelity. In theory, women are hypothesized to be more distressed than men by a
partner's emotional infidelity, and men are hypothesized to be more distressed than women by a partner's sexual infidelity. Both men and women are concerned about a partner being sexually or emotionally unfaithful. However, both sexes weigh the risks of each form of infidelity according to the specific mating strategy pursued and the specific threats to that strategy (Buss et al., 1992; Buss et al., 1999). Consequently, sexually dimorphic jealousy mechanisms have evolved to respond to sex-linked threats that signal a romantic partner's reproductively harmful acts (Buss et al., 1992; Buss et al., 1999).

Paternity uncertainty, for example, is a problem that is unique to men because fertilization takes place internally in women. Men prefer a sexually exclusive relationship because they do not want to invest their resources in genetically unrelated offspring, and as a result be referred to as a cuckold. Men, therefore, are assumed to be more attuned to and distressed by cues that signal a partner's sexual infidelity because sexual infidelity represents for men, in particular, the greater threat to successful reproduction (Buss et al., 1992; Buss et al., 1999). Women, more so than men, prefer mates who are economically stable, with resources they are willing to share. Hence, women are predicted to be more distressed
than men by a partner’s emotional infidelity. Emotional involvement with another woman could potentially put her partner’s commitment to her and to their offspring at risk by diverting his resources to someone else. Women, therefore, are assumed to have evolved a jealousy mechanism attuned to and distressed by cues that signal a partner’s emotional infidelity (Buss et al., 1992; Buss et al., 1999).

To test an evolutionary perspective for sex differences in infidelity distress, Buss et al. (1992) asked participants to

Please think of a serious committed romantic relationship that you have had in the past, that you currently have, or that you would like to have. Imagine that you discover that the person with whom you have been seriously involved with became interested in someone else. What would distress or upset you more (please circle only one? (p. 252)

In one scenario participants were given two choices: “(A) Imagining your partner forming a deep emotional attachment to that person,” or “(B) Imagining your partner enjoying passionate sexual intercourse with that other person” (p. 252). As predicted by an evolutionary perspective, more women than men were distressed by imagining their
partner's emotional infidelity and more men than women were distressed by imagining their partner's sexual infidelity. Using the now familiar force-choice format, these initial results have been frequently replicated (e.g., Abraham, Cramer, Fernandez, & Mahler, 2001; Buss et al., 1999; Buunk, Angleitner, Oubaid, & Buss, 1996; Cramer, Abraham, Johnson, & Manning-Ryan, 2001; Cramer, Lipinski, Bowman, & Carollo, 2009; Cramer, Lipinski, Meteer, & Houska, 2008; Cramer, Manning-Ryan, Johnson, & Barbo, 2000; DeSteno, Bartlett, Braverman, & Salovey, 2002; DeSteno & Salovey, 1996; Sagarin, Becker, Guadagno, Nicaste, & Millevoi, 2003; Shackelford, Voracek, Schmitt, Buss, Weekes-Shackelford, & Michalski, 2004).

Compelling evidence for an evolutionary psychology explanation for sex differences in distress to emotional and sexual infidelity has also been found in the United States using African-American and Mexican-American men and women (Abraham et al., 2001; Cramer et al., 2009). Cross-cultural research conducted in Chile and Spain (Fernandez, Sierra, Zubeidat, & Vera-Villarroel, 2006), China (Geary, Rumsey, Bow-Thomas, & Hoard, 1995), Germany and the Netherlands (Buunk et al., 1996), Korea and Japan (Buss et al., 1999), and Sweden (Wiederman & Kendall, 1999) also reported the predicted asymmetries in
subjective distress to imagining a partner’s sexual and emotional infidelity.

Criticism of an Evolutionary Approach to Jealousy

Other theoretical approaches, in particular social-cognitive approaches, have posited post hoc explanations for the sex differences in response to imagining a partner’s sexual and emotional infidelity. For example, DeSteno and Salovey (1996) argued in favor of their “double-shot” hypothesis. That is, the sex differences in response to the two infidelities are the result of the unique logical inferences that men and women have learned to draw about sex and love. Sex and love, Desteno and Salovey argued, are not independent (See Harris & Christenfeld, 1996 for a comparable argument). According to their double-shot hypothesis, when research participants are confronted with the infidelities presented in a forced-choice format, men and women choose the option that implies both infidelities are occurring: the double-shot. In theory, women have learned that when a man is in love he is also likely to be engaged in sex. Women have also learned that, for men, sex does not imply the co-occurrence of love. Hence, women choose emotional infidelity as most distressing because emotional
infidelity, not sexual infidelity, implies that both infidelities have occurred. On the other hand, men have learned that when a woman is having sex she is also likely to be in love. Men have also learned that, for women, being in love does not imply the co-occurrence of sex. Therefore, men choose sexual infidelity as most distressing because sexual infidelity, not emotional infidelity, implies that both infidelities have occurred.

When tested, the double-shot hypothesis has received, at best, mixed support (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996; Buss et al., 1999; Cramer et al., 2001; Cramer et al., 2000; Harris & Christenfeld, 1996). For example, DeSteno and Salovey (1996) found that women believed a typical man’s emotional infidelity implied sexual infidelity more so than sexual infidelity implied emotional infidelity. Hence, for women, the double-shot hypothesis could be seen as a logical explanation for the sex differences in the infidelity, emotional or sexual, selected as most distressing. DeSteno and Salovey did not find support for their predicted chain of logical inference in their sample of men. Interestingly, the ambiguous results found in the DeSteno and Salovey paper foreshadowed the general lack of support for the double-shot hypothesis reported by other
researchers (Buss et al., 1999; Cramer et al., 2001; Cramer et al., 2000).

For example, Buss et al. (1999) used a series of logistic multiple regressions to assess the differences accounted for by the gender of the participant and their beliefs about the conditional probabilities of sexual and emotional involvement in the type of infidelity selected as the most distressing. Interestingly, Buss et al. found that men and women’s beliefs about the conditional probabilities of one type of infidelity given the other did not significantly predict the type of infidelity participants indicated as most distressing. However, Buss et al. did find that, whether entered alone, hierarchically, or together with learned beliefs, sex of the participant was the strongest predictor of infidelity choice. These results are consistent with an evolutionary perspective on the cues to jealousy.

As noted above, the familiar forced-choice methodology, first used by Buss et al. (1992) to assess sex differences in response to a partner’s infidelity, has been a source of criticism. According to DeSteno and Salovey (1996), use of the forced-choice methodology fails to recognize that sexual and emotional infidelities are independent, and therefore, the participants respond to a
false dichotomy (See also DeSteno et al., 2002; Harris & Christenfeld, 1996). In response to the criticism surrounding the use of the forced-choice method, Buss et al. (1999) presented the infidelities to participants in two new formats: mutually exclusive and combined. Participants exposed to the mutually exclusive format read,

Which would upset or distress you more? (A) Imagining your partner having sexual intercourse with another person, but you are certain that they will not form a deep emotional attachment or (B) Imagining your partner forming a deep emotional attachment to that other person, but you are certain that they will not have sexual intercourse. [Italics added] (p. 132)

The phrases italicized above reveal that the infidelities where presented to the participants as mutually exclusive, or independent. Participants exposed to the combined format were asked first to, "Imagine that your partner both formed an emotional attachment to another person and had sexual intercourse with that other person. Which aspect of your partner’s involvement would upset you more?" [Italics added] (p. 132). Participants were then asked to indicate whether the emotional or sexual aspect
of their partner's combined infidelity was the most distressing.

By presenting the infidelities in either a mutually exclusive or combined format, the expectation, proposed by the double-shot model, that participants make their selections based on conditional probabilities between love and sex is made irrelevant. That is, in the mutually exclusive format the infidelities are rendered independent, and in the combined format the infidelities are presented as co-occurring. Hence, the participants do not need to draw any inferences regarding their partner's emotional involvement leading to sex or their partner's sexual involvement leading to love. According to the double-shot hypothesis, the sex differences in distress to a partner's emotional and/or sexual infidelity should not be observed. However, as predicted by evolutionary psychology, more men than women were distressed by sexual infidelity and more women than men were distressed by emotional infidelity (Buss et al., 1999; see also Cramer et al., 2001; Cramer et al., 2009; Cramer et al., 2008).

Beyond Self-Report Data

In addition to self-report data, evolutionary psychologists have found support for sexually dimorphic
jealousy mechanisms using physiological and cognitive data (Buss et al., 1992; Pietrzak, Laird, Stevens, & Thompson, 2002; Schützwohl, 2005; Schützwohl & Koch, 2004). For example, to detect sex differences in cues that signal emotional and sexual infidelity, Buss et al., (1992) collected several physiological measures: heart rate, electrodermal activity (EDA), and corrugator supercilii. Consistent with an evolutionary psychology perspective, the EDA, in particular, was greater for women imagining an emotional infidelity compared to a sexual infidelity, and the EDA was greater for men imagining a sexual infidelity compared to an emotional infidelity (Buss et al., 1992).

Pietrzak et al. (2002) measuring EDA, electromyographic (EMG) activity, and heart rate also found gender differences in response to infidelity: physiological responses were greater for women when imagining emotional infidelity compared to sexual infidelity and greater for men when imagining sexual infidelity compared to emotional infidelity. It should be noted, however, that Harris (2000) reported physiological results challenging an evolutionary perspective. Her measures of heart rate, blood pressure, and EDA showed no predictable effects in women. Men's autonomic arousal increased when imagining sexual activity, with the
increase occurring whether infidelity was involved or not. These findings suggest that the physiological changes in men resulted from imagining sexual activity, not from a sexually dimorphic jealousy mechanism anticipated by an evolutionary perspective.

Additionally, researchers have found sexually dimorphic mechanisms in cognitive processing of emotional and sexual infidelity cues. For example, Schützwohl and Koch (2004) asked men and women to read descriptions of a partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity. When the participants were tested seven days later, they found that women recalled cues signaling their mate’s emotional infidelity better than cues signaling sexual infidelity. In contrast, men recalled cues signaling their mate’s sexual infidelity better than the cues signaling emotional infidelity. These results indicated that men and women differ in terms of the type of infidelity to which they are most sensitive, and to the type of infidelity receiving greater cognitive processing.

Schützwohl (2005) also reported cognitive processing differences in men and women exposed to cues signaling either emotional or sexual infidelity. He presented to men and women a series of cues signaling a greater and greater likelihood of sexual or emotional infidelity, and asked
them to indicate by pressing a button which cue would cause them to be intolerably jealous. During the presentation of the sexual cues men, compared to women, indicated that they were intolerably jealous after reading fewer cues; when indicating their intolerable jealousy men also pressed the button faster than did women. In contrast, during the presentation of the emotional cues women, compared to men, indicated that they were intolerably jealous after reading fewer cues; when indicating their intolerable jealousy women pressed the button faster than did men. The results of the experiments reported in this section (Buss et al., 1992; Pietrzak et al., 2002; Schützwohl, 2005; Schützwohl & Koch, 2004) strongly support the claim that an evolutionary account of the sex differences in response to emotional and sexual infidelity extends to procedures beyond the self-report paradigms used in much of the initial research.

Evolutionary Psychology and Responsibility Attributions

Emotional and sexual infidelities are not the only “violations of trust” anticipated by an evolutionary psychology perspective which can threaten a romantic relationship (Cramer et al., 2000). Other sex-linked violations of trust include, for women, a partner who no
longer wants to work, who loses life savings, or who loses a job, and for men, a partner who longer looks physically attractive or who is not sexually accessible. Like emotional and sexual infidelity, these violations of trust and their causal connection to jealousy are linked to the sexual strategies men and women pursue (e.g., Buss et al., 1992; Buss & Schmitt, 1992).

Violations of trust can result from a romantic partner making a choice (no longer wanting to work) or by circumstance (not being able to work), with the distinction being consistent with dispositional/internal and situational/external causation (Jones & Nisbett, 1972). From an evolutionary perspective, whether a partner's violation occurs by choice or by circumstance there should be no distinction in the level of threat to the relationship. To test this expectation, Cramer et al. (2009) asked men and women to imagine that their partner had committed female-linked and male-linked violations of trust either by choice or by circumstance. For example, men and women were asked to imagine a partner who chose to no longer work and who chose to no longer make an effort to look attractive. Men and women were also asked to imagine that their partner, due to a medical complication, was no longer able to work and no longer able to have

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sexual intercourse. Following each scenario participants were asked to assume that both violations had occurred and to indicate which violation distressed or upset them more. As expected, more men than women were distressed by the male-linked violations, and more women than men were distressed by the female-linked violations. However, the magnitude of the sex differences varied depending on whether the violation occurred by choice or by circumstance. The violations occurring by choice yielded a pooled sex difference that was 26.5% greater in magnitude than the pooled sex difference for the violations occurring by circumstance.

These results suggest that men and women are particularly sensitive to threats to the success of their unique mating strategies when a partner chooses to violate their trust. Why would men and women find a violation of trust resulting from a partner’s choice more threatening than a violation of trust resulting from unforeseen circumstances? One plausible explanation rests on the strength of the responsibility attributions (i.e., blaming the partner) men and women are likely to make when a partner violates their trust (Hall & Fincham, 2006).

Recall that, according to attribution theory, choosing to violate a romantic partner’s trust is likely
to be recognized as a cause that is internal to the violator. And, if the violation results from circumstances beyond the violator’s control, the violation is likely to be recognized as a cause that is external to the violator (Jones & Nisbett, 1972; see also Kelley, 1972). There exists a wealth of research that investigated partner attributions for negative behavior and their consequences in romantic relationships (e.g., Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; 1992; Buunk, 1987; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992). Hall and Fincham (2006), more specifically, tested predictions about the relationship between responsibility attributions for a partner’s unfaithfulness and relationship dissolution. They found that romantic relationships that had experienced infidelity were less likely to survive when the responsibility attributions for the infidelity (e.g., "My partner deserves to be blamed for his/her unfaithful behavior.") were strong rather than weak. In other words, when an unfaithful partner was held responsible or blamed for the infidelity, the relationship was more likely to dissolve. Hall and Fincham’s results were consistent with Buunk’s earlier findings indicating that relationships were less likely to survive when conflict-promoting attributions were made.
Conflict-promoting attributions, like attributions of blame, are dispositional or internal in nature.

The Hall and Fincham (2006) research, while interesting, failed to consider the well-recognized sex differentiated sensitivities men and women have demonstrated when asked to respond to a partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity. That is, their findings represent men’s and women’s responses, together, to a partner’s infidelity, whether emotional, sexual or both. Evolutionary psychological research covering the last 20+ years indicates that our understanding of the consequences of infidelity is strongly determined by recognizing the nature of the infidelity, whether emotional or sexual, and the sex of the respondent, whether female or male (e.g., Abraham et al., 2001; Buss, 1989; Buss et al., 1992; Buss et al., 1999; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Buunk et al., 1996; Cramer et al., 2001; Cramer et al., 2009; Cramer et al., 2008; DeSteno et al., 2002; DeSteno & Salovey, 1996; Sagarin et al., 2003; Shackelford et al., 2004).

Research Goals

The goal of this thesis research was to illuminate the relationship between responsibility attributions and the likelihood of relationship dissolution. The research
goal was met by addressing specific limitations of the Hall and Fincham (2006) findings. Guided by evolutionary psychology, the thesis tested eight specific hypotheses regarding sex differences in response to a romantic partner's sexual infidelity and emotional infidelity. Hypothesis 7 tested the reliability of Hall and Fincham's general finding that the relationship between responsibility attributions and the likelihood that a relationship will end is positive. The evolutionary psychology hypotheses asserted that men and women will respond in a predictably different way depending on the specific type of infidelity a partner commits. More specifically, men and women were expected to vary on 1) subjective distress to infidelity, 2) responsibility attribution strength, and 3) likelihood of ending a relationship. The nine hypotheses tested are listed below.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1
More women than men will report being distressed by a partner's emotional infidelity.

Hypothesis 2
More men than women will report being distressed by a partner's sexual infidelity.
Hypothesis 3

Men will make stronger responsibility attributions than will women for a partner’s sexual infidelity.

Hypothesis 4

Women will make stronger responsibility attributions than will men for a partner’s emotional infidelity.

Hypothesis 5

Men will report a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than will women following a partner’s sexual infidelity.

Hypothesis 6

Women will report a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than will men following a partner’s emotional infidelity.


The correlation between responsibility attributions and the likelihood of ending the relationship will be positive (i.e., the stronger the responsibility attributions for a partner’s infidelity, the greater the likelihood the relationship will end).

Hypothesis 8

The correlation between responsibility attributions for a partner’s sexual infidelity and the likelihood of ending the relationship will be stronger for men
(hypothetical $r = .35$) than for women (hypothetical $r = .25$).

**Hypothesis 9**

The correlation between responsibility attributions for a partner's emotional infidelity and the likelihood of ending the relationship will be stronger for women (hypothetical $r = .35$) than for men (hypothetical $r = .25$).
CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Participants and Recruitment

Participants were 101 undergraduate, heterosexual men ($N = 52$) and women ($N = 49$) recruited in the Santos Manuel Student Union at California State University, San Bernardino. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 31 years: for the men, $M = 20.673$ years ($SD = 2.112$) and for the women, $M = 21.102$ years ($SD = 2.778$). All of the participants reported being in a committed dating relationship lasting at least 4 months ($M = 24.2$ months and $SD = 18.1$). Women and men, alike, indicated on a 7-point scale that they were very satisfied with their current relationship: for the women $M = 6.057$ and $SD = .878$; for the men $M = 5.842$ and $SD = 1.141$. Younger women did report greater satisfaction with their current relationship, $r(49) = -.672$, $p < .01$. The self-reported ethnicity of the sample was 41% Hispanic, 21% African American, 14% Caucasian, 8% Asian American, and 1% American Indian; 15% of the participants selected “Other.” An initial inspection of the demographic data revealed three outliers ($Z = \pm 3.00$): one man for “length of relationship” and two women for “age in years.”
Consequently, these three participants were dropped from the analysis. Participation was voluntary, and when the survey battery was returned the participants received a candy bar as a reward. Participants were treated in accordance with the Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 1992).

Materials

Demographics Questionnaire

The Demographics Questionnaire collected information regarding age, gender, ethnic background, country of birth, sexual orientation (a check to certify the participant was heterosexual), parents' yearly household income, mother and father's highest education level, current relationship status (a check to certify the participant was single), length of the relationship in months (a check to certify the participant was currently in a relationship of at least four months in duration), sexual activity (yes/no), and experience with infidelity (See Appendix C).

Relationship Satisfaction Survey

The Relationship Satisfaction Survey (RSS) was adapted from the Investment Model Scale developed by Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998). The RSS (Satisfaction
Level-Global Items, p. 370) is a five-item measure designed to assess the participant’s level of relationship satisfaction. Rusbult et al. (1998) report that the satisfaction items have adequate internal consistency (α’s range from .92 to .95) and discriminant validity (r’s range from .83 to .90). The participants read: please read each item carefully. After reading each item, “please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your current relationship.” (Rusbult et al., 1998, p. 388) The initial item reads: I feel satisfied with our relationship. Participants responded to each item using a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored with 1 = Disagree Strongly and 7 = Agree Strongly. Higher scores indicate a greater degree of agreement with the statement, and therefore a greater degree of relationship satisfaction. See Appendix D for the RSS.

Relationship Dilemma Scenarios

The Relationship Dilemma Scenarios (RDS), adapted from Buss et al. (1992; 1999) and Shackelford, Buss and Bennett (2002), is a five-item measure designed to assess (a) a participant’s subjective distress to imagining a romantic partner’s sexual and emotional infidelity, (b) which infidelity, emotional or sexual, the
participants would hold a partner most responsible, (c) which infidelity, emotional or sexual, the participant would find the most difficult to forgive a partner, (d) which infidelity, emotional or sexual, would most likely lead the participant to break up with a partner, and (e) which infidelity, emotional or sexual, the participant believes would most likely lead a partner to break up with you. Only the first item, which has been used in a large number of studies, will be analyzed to test Hypothesis 1 and 2. To date, only Shackelford et al. have used the remaining items.

The RDS describes a partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity presented in a combined format, indicating that the infidelities were co-occurring. The participants read,

Please think of a serious committed romantic relationship that you have had in the past, that you currently have, or that you would like to have. Imagine that you discovered that the person with whom you have been seriously involved with became interested in someone else. Imagine your partner both formed an emotional attachment to that other person AND had sexual intercourse with that other person. (Buss et al. 1992, p. 252; Buss et al. 1999)
The first RDS item read: What aspect of your partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity would upset or distress you more? Participants responded by circling letter (A) The sexual intercourse with that other person or (B) The emotional attachment to that other person. The RDS can be found in Appendix E.

Relationship Attribution Measure

The Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM) is a six-item self-report measure with adequate internal consistency (α’s > .70 for men and women, see Fincham & Bradbury, 1992) designed to assess a participant’s causal and responsibility attributions for a partner’s negative behavior. Adequate levels of convergent validity have also been reported (see Table 3, p. 463, Fincham & Bradbury, 1992). The RAM required some modification in order to be applicable to the current study which focused specifically on a partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity. Hall and Fincham (2006) also found it necessary to modify the RAM to investigate a participant’s attributions of responsibility for a partner’s unfaithfulness. The “modified” RAM consists of seven items. The first item reads: My partner’s sexual/emotional infidelity was due to something about him/her. Participants responded to each item using a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored with
1 = Disagree Strongly and 7 = Agree Strongly. Higher scores on six target items indicate stronger attributions of personal responsibility for the infidelity. A seventh item was added to the RAM to measure the participant's belief that it may be something about the participant that caused the partner's infidelity. The item read: My partner's sexual/emotional infidelity was due to something about me. See Appendix F for the RAM-S and the RAM-E, measuring participant's attributions of responsibility for a partner's sexual infidelity and for a partner's emotional infidelity, respectively.

**Relationship Dissolution Questionnaire**

The Relationship Dissolution Questionnaire (RDQ) is a four item scale designed for the current study to measure the likelihood a relationship would continue following a partner being both emotionally and sexually unfaithful. Once again, participants were asked to please think of a serious committed romantic relationship that you have had in the past, that you currently have, or that you would like to have. Imagine that you discovered that the person with whom you have been seriously involved with became interested in someone else. Imagine your partner both formed an emotional attachment to that other person
AND had sexual intercourse with that other person.  
(Buss et al. 1992, p. 252; Buss et al. 1999)

Participants were asked first to think about either the emotional component or the sexual component of a partner's combined infidelity and then to indicate the likelihood that YOU would end the relationship and then to indicate the likelihood YOUR PARTNER would end the relationship. The combination of infidelity type, emotional or sexual, and who would end the relationship, you or your partner, constitutes the four items. Participants responded to each item using a 10-point scale anchored with 1 = Not Likely to End Relationship and 10 = Very Likely to End Relationship. See Appendix G for the RDQ.

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory

The Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18) is an 18-item scale designed to measure interpersonal forgiveness across three domains: revenge, avoidance, and benevolence (McCullough, Fincham & Tsang, 2003; McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown, & Hight, 1998; McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006). The three subscales measured the extent to which the victim (a) is motivated to seek revenge against the transgressor (revenge), (b) is motivated to avoid the
transgressor (avoidance), and (c) harbors good will for the transgressor (benevolence). The revenge subscale includes five items such as "I’ll make him/her pay," the avoidance subscale includes seven items such as "I live as if he/she doesn’t exist, isn’t around," and the benevolence subscale includes six items such as "Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her" (McCullough et al., 2006, p. 897). The subscales evidence adequate internal consistency with α’s ≥ .75 and validity (McCullough et al., 1998, 2003). Participants read,

Please think of a serious committed romantic relationship that you have had in the past, that you currently have, or that you would like to have. Imagine that you discovered that the person with whom you have been seriously involved with became interested in someone else. Imagine your partner both formed an emotional attachment to that other person AND had sexual intercourse with that other person. (Buss et al. 1992, p. 252; Buss et al. 1999)

Participants then read: For the following scale items please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the sexual component of your partner’s infidelity. That is, we want to know how you feel about that person right
now. Participants were asked to circle the number that best describes their current thoughts and feelings about their partner using a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored with 1 = Disagree Strongly and 7 = Agree Strongly. Participants also completed the TRIM-18 with reference to the emotional component of your partner's infidelity. See Appendix H for the TRIM-18S and TRIM-18E.

Procedure

Participants were informed about the general purpose of the study and about their responsibilities via an Informed Consent (See Appendix B). Each participant was asked to complete a test battery containing a Demographics Questionnaire, and seven additional measures: RSS, RDS, RAM-S, RAM-E, RDQ, TRIM-18S, and the TRIM-18E. To control for order effects, references to emotional infidelity and sexual infidelity were counterbalanced across two test batteries. That is, for the RDS, RAM, RDQ and the TRIM-18 half of the participants responded first to imagining a partner's emotional infidelity and then to imagining a partner's sexual infidelity. The other half of the participants responded first to imagining a partner's sexual infidelity and then to imagining a partner's emotional infidelity. Completing the battery took
approximately 45 minutes. After completing the battery all participants were provided with a written Debriefing Statement (See APPENDIX I), an opportunity to have any questions answered and a candy bar.
CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

Test of Hypotheses

Before testing the hypotheses, correlations were computed for the quantitative demographic variables and critical outcome variables: responsibility attributions and the likelihood of relationship dissolution. The most consistent findings were the relationships between the participant’s age and the strength of the responsibility attributions for the emotional and sexual components of a romantic partner’s combined infidelity. In general, older participants gave stronger responsibility attributions for a partner’s emotional infidelity, \( r(100) = .214, p = .033, r^2 = .046 \). However, this relationship was qualified when the women’s and men’s data were analyzed separately. The results revealed no relationships between the women’s age and the strength of the responsibility attributions for a partner’s emotional or sexual infidelity. In contrast, the relationships between the men’s age and the responsibility attributions for a partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity were statistically reliable: for emotional infidelity, \( r(52) = .396, p = .004, r^2 = .157 \), for sexual infidelity, \( r(51) = .346, p = .013, r^2 = .119 \). The
correlations between the participant’s age and the strength of the attributions of personal responsibility for a partner’s unfaithfulness were not statistically reliable. The statistical tests of relationships involving responsibility attributions included additional analyses controlling for age with each of the initial findings being confirmed.

**Hypothesis 1 and 2**

More men than women were expected to report being distressed by imagining a partner’s sexual infidelity (Hypothesis 1), and more women than men were expected to report being distressed by imagining a partner’s emotional infidelity (Hypothesis 2). Following evolutionary psychologists (e.g., Buss et al., 1992; Buss et al., 1999), a chi-square ($\chi^2$) test of independent categories was used to determine if men and women responded differently when asked to imagine a partner being emotionally and/or sexually unfaithful. As predicted, a larger percentage of men (51.0%) than women (32.7%) indicated they were more distressed by imagining a partner’s sexual infidelity, and a larger percentage of women (67.3%) than men (49.0%) indicated they were distressed by imagining a partner’s emotional infidelity, $\chi^2(1, N = 100) = 3.45, p = .06, \phi = .186$. 

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Hypothesis 3 and 4

Men were expected to make stronger responsibility attributions than were women for a partner's sexual infidelity (Hypothesis 3). In contrast, women were expected to make stronger responsibility attributions than were men for a partner's emotional infidelity (Hypothesis 4). In order to test Hypothesis 3, the six RAM-S scores were combined, with higher scores representing stronger responsibility attributions. Combining the RAM-S scores was justified: Cronbach's alpha = .77. Contrary to expectation, men \( (M = 5.06, \ SD = 1.31) \) did not make stronger responsibility attributions for the sexual component of a partner's combined infidelity than did women \( (M = 4.75, \ SD = 1.25), \ t(97) = 1.20, \ p = .23. \)

The six RAM-E scores were combined to test Hypothesis 4. Again, higher scores represent stronger responsibility attributions and combining RAM-E scores was justified: Cronbach's alpha = .75. Contrary to expectation, women \( (M = 4.65, \ SD = 1.00) \) did not make stronger responsibility attributions for the emotional component of a partner's combined infidelity than did men \( (M = 4.67, \ SD = 1.43), \ t(98) < 1, \ p = .92. \)

Post Hoc Analyses. An exploratory examination of the participant's responses to each of the RAM-S and the RAM-E
items revealed that men gave stronger responsibility attributions for the sexual component of a partner’s combined infidelity on three items than they did for the emotional component. The sexual infidelity compared to the emotional infidelity initiated stronger attributions of a partner’s purposefulness, $M = 4.92$ ($SD = 1.95$) vs. $M = 4.27$ ($SD = 2.19$), $t(51) = 2.34$, $p = .023$, $d = 0.654$, selfishness, $M = 5.33$ ($SD = 1.70$) vs. $M = 4.88$ ($SD = 1.69$), $t(51) = 2.67$, $p = .010$, $d = 0.747$, and blame worthiness, $M = 5.52$ ($SD = 1.94$) vs. $M = 4.87$ ($SD = 2.07$), $t(51) = 3.16$, $p = .003$, $d = 0.884$.

**Measure of Personal Responsibility.** Recall that an additional item was included on the RAM-S and the RAM-E. This additional item measured the participant’s belief that he or she may be personally responsible for a partner’s sexual and emotional infidelity. The item read: My partner’s sexual/emotional infidelity was due to something about me. The men’s attributions ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.86$) of personal responsibility for the sexual component of a partner’s combined infidelity were stronger than the women’s attributions ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.80$), $t(99) = 2.81$, $p = .006$, Cohen’s $d = 0.565$. Regarding the emotional component of a partner’s combined infidelity, the men’s attributions ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.89$) of personal
responsibility were stronger than the women’s attributions $(M = 3.89, SD = 1.98)$. This difference, however, did not reach significance, $t(99) = 1.21, p = .228$. Interestingly, women’s attributions of personal responsibility were higher for the emotional component $(M = 3.89, SD = 1.98)$ of a partner’s combined infidelity than they were for the sexual component $(M = 3.20, SD = 1.80), t(48) = 2.37, p < .05, d = 0.683$.

**Hypothesis 5 and 6**

Men were expected to report a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than were women following a partner’s sexual infidelity (Hypothesis 5). In contrast, women were expected to report a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than were men following a partner’s emotional infidelity (Hypothesis 6). Hypotheses 5 and 6 were tested using men’s and women’s RDQ(YOU) scores, with higher mean scores indicating a greater likelihood of ending the relationship. An inspection of RDQ(YOU) means revealed that both men and women were likely to end a relationship following a partner’s sexual and emotional infidelity: The lowest mean score was 7.571 on the RDQ’s 10-point scale. Contrary to expectation, men $(M = 8.40, SD = 2.67)$ did not indicate a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than did women $(M = 8.51, SD = 2.14)$ as a
result of the sexual component of a partner's combined infidelity, \( t(99) < 1, p = .826 \). Further, women (\( M = 7.57, SD = 2.49 \)) did not indicate a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than did men (\( M = 7.75, SD = 2.57 \)) as a result of the emotional component, \( t(99) < 1, p = .724 \).

**Post Hoc Analyses.** A mixed design 2(Women/Men) x 2(Sexual/Emotional Infidelity) x 2(YOU/YOUR PARTNER) ANOVA was used to clarify the RDQ results; the latter two factors were repeated measures. Two statistically reliable effects were obtained. First, the analysis revealed that the sexual component (\( M = 8.06, SD = 2.09 \)) of a partner's combined infidelity was more likely than the emotional component (\( M = 6.76, SD = 2.45 \)) to lead to relationship dissolution, \( F(1, 99) = 36.73, p < .001, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .271 \). The analysis also yielded a reliable interaction between the type of infidelity and the person, you or your partner, likely to end the relationship, \( F(1, 99) = 9.95, p = .002, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .091 \). Simple effects tests clarified the interaction. The participants were more likely to end a relationship because of the sexual component (\( M = 8.46, SD = 2.46 \)) than because of the emotional component (\( M = 7.66, SD = 2.53 \)), \( t(99) = 3.18, p < .005, d = 0.639 \). No infidelity effect was observed for
the participant’s estimates of the likelihood a partner, RDQ(YOUR PARTNER), would end the relationship. Simple effects tests also revealed, 1) participants indicated that the sexual component of a partner’s combined infidelity was more likely to result in he or she ending the relationship \((M = 8.46, SD = 2.46)\) than in the partner ending the relationship \((M = 6.60, SD = 3.19)\), \(t(99) = 7.163, p < .001, d = 1.439\), and 2) participants indicated that the emotional component was more likely to result in he or she ending the relationship \((M = 7.66, SD = 2.53)\) than in the partner ending the relationship \((M = 6.92, SD = 2.79)\), \(t(99) = 2.95, p < .01, d = 0.594\).

**Hypothesis 7**

Hypothesis 7 represented a replication of results reported by Hall and Fincham (2006). It was predicted that the stronger the responsibility attributions for a partner’s infidelity the greater the likelihood the relationship will end. Hall and Fincham, in supporting this particular relationship, did not distinguish between a partner’s emotional and sexual unfaithfulness or between who, the “victim” or the “perpetrator” (their categories), ended the relationship. Consequently, the test of Hypothesis 7 involved combining the participants’ responsibility attributions from the RAM-E and RAM-S and
combining the RDQ(YOU) and RDQ(YOUR PARTNER) scores. The results replicated Hall and Fincham's findings. The correlation between the responsibility attributions and the likelihood of relationship dissolution was positive, $r(98) = .432, p < .001, r^2 = .187$ (partial $r = .428, p < .001$). The strength of the relationship or effect size is estimated by the coefficient of determination ($r^2$); each variable accounts for 18.7% of the explained variance in other variable.

**Systematic Clarifications of Predicted Relationship.** Detailed information about this predicted general relationship was revealed when the factors participant gender, infidelity type, and "who" was likely to end the relationship were, in turn, examined. For example, the relationship between responsibility attributions for a partner's infidelity (for the emotional and sexual component) and the likelihood of ending a relationship (for you and your partner) was stronger for the men, $r(51) = .563, p < .001, r^2 = .317$ (partial $r = .540, p < .001$), than for the women, $r(47) = .199, p = .18, r^2 = .039$. Evidence for the difference in strength or effect size is estimated by $r^2$, with 31.7% of the explained variance for the men compared to 3.9% for the women. Further, the relationship between the
responsibility attributions for a partner's infidelity (for men and women) and the likelihood of ending a relationship (for you and your partner) was stronger for the emotional component of a partner's combined infidelity, \( r(98) = .444, p < .001, r^2 = .197 \) (partial \( r = .444, p < .001 \)) than for the sexual component, \( r(97) = .168, p < .001, r^2 = .028 \). The effect size difference is 19.7% of the explained variance for the emotional component compared to 2.8% for the sexual component. Finally, the relationship between responsibility attributions for a partner's infidelity (for the emotional and sexual component) and the participant's estimates (for men and women) of the likelihood he or she would end the relationship was stronger, \( r(98) = .506, p < .001, r^2 = .256 \) (partial \( r = .512, p < .001 \)), than the relationship between responsibility attributions and the participant's estimates of a partner ending the relationship, \( r(98) = .274, p < .001, r^2 = .075 \) (partial \( r = .262, p < .01 \)). The effect size difference is 25.6% of the explained variance for the participant compared to 7.5% for the partner.

The following set of analyses sought to clarify the finding that the relationship between responsibility
attributions, and relationship dissolution was stronger for men than for women. In this set of analyses one factor was held constant and the two remaining factors were varied. The initial post hoc analysis held the partner's infidelity constant and focused on the participant's gender and on their estimates of the likelihood you or your partner would end the relationship. Perhaps not surprisingly, the relationship between the responsibility attributions (for emotional and sexual infidelity) and YOU ending the relationship was stronger for the men, $r(51) = .645, p < .001$, $r^2 = .416$ (partial $r = .624$, $p < .001$) than for the women, $r(47) = .272$, $p = .065$. The effect size for the men represented 41.6% of the explained variance. This pattern held for the relationship between the responsibility attributions and YOUR PARTNER ending the relationship, for men, $r(51) = .379$, $p = .006$, $r^2 = .144$ (partial $r = .359$, $p < .01$) and for women, $r(47) = .089$, $p = .551$. The effect size for the men represented 14.4% of the explained variance.

Examining the participant's gender and the partner's infidelity, emotional or sexual, also shed some light on the previously reported gender differences. In these post hoc analyses no distinction was made between whom, the participant or the partner, was likely to end the
relationship. The relationship between the responsibility attributions for the emotional component of a partner’s combined infidelity and relationship dissolution was stronger for men, $r(52) = .492, p < .001, r^2 = .242$ (partial $r = .462, p = .001$), than for women, $r(48) = .377, p = .008, r^2 = .142$. The effect size difference is 24.2% of the explained variance for the men compared to 14.2% for the women. Further, the gender difference was starker for the relationship between the responsibility attributions for the sexual component and ending the relationship, for the men, $r(51) = .338, p < .015, r^2 = .114$ (partial $r = .308, p = .029$), and for the women, $r(48) = -.053, p = .721$. The effect size difference is 11.4% of the explained variance for the men compared to 0.00% for the women. These results, taken together, illuminate further the finding that the relationship between responsibility attributions and the likelihood of ending the relationship was, in the current study, stronger for the men than for the women.

A final set of post hoc analyses held the participant’s gender constant and focused was on the type of infidelity, the emotional or sexual component, and the person, participant or partner, likely to end the relationship. This analysis was justified because of the
previously reported finding that the relationship between
the responsibility attributions for a partner’s infidelity
(for men and women) and the likelihood of ending a
relationship (for you and your partner) was stronger for
the emotional component of a partner’s combined infidelity
than for the sexual component.

And, that the relationship between responsibility
attributions for a partner’s infidelity (for emotional and
sexual) and the likelihood of ending a relationship was
stronger when the estimates involved the participant than
when the estimates involved the partner. The analyses
revealed that responsibility attributions for the
emotional component of a partner’s combined infidelity and
the participant’s estimates of the likelihood he or she
would end the relationship were stronger, \( r(100) = .401, \)
\( p < .001, r^2 = .161 \) (partial \( r = .404, p < .001 \)) than the
participant’s estimates of the likelihood a partner would
end the relationship, \( r(100) = .388, p = .001, r^2 = .151 \)
(partial \( r = .385, p < .001 \)). The effect size difference
is 16.1% of the explained variance for the participant
compared to 15.1% for the partner. Further, the
responsibility attributions for the sexual component and
the participant’s estimates of the likelihood he or she
would end the relationship were stronger, \( r(99) = .297, \)
$p = .003, r^2 = .088$ (partial $r = .298, p = .003$) than the participant's estimates of the likelihood a partner would end the relationship, $r(99) = .029, p = .777$. The effect size difference is 8.8% of the explained variance for the participant compared to 0.00% for the partner.

**Hypothesis 8 and 9**

Hypothesis 8 predicted that the correlation between responsibility attributions for a partner's sexual infidelity and the likelihood of ending the relationship would be stronger for men than for women. In contrast, Hypothesis 9 predicted that the correlation between responsibility attributions for a partner's emotional infidelity and the likelihood of ending the relationship would be stronger for women than for men. These two hypotheses were tested using the combined RAM-S, the combined RAM-E and the RDQ(YOU) scores, the measure of the likelihood the participant would end the relationship. As predicted, the correlation between the RAM-S, given a partner's sexual infidelity, and the RDQ(YOU) for men, $r(51) = .417, p = .002, r^2 = .174$ (partial $r = .390, p = .005$), was stronger than the correlation for women, $r(48) = .139, p = .345, r^2 = .019$. The effect sizes testify to the different strengths of the two
relationships, 17.4% of the explained variance for the men compared to 1.9% for the women.

Contrary to expectation, the correlation between the RAM-E scores, given a partner’s emotional infidelity, and the RDQ(YOU) scores were not stronger for women, $r(48) = .282, p = .053, r^2 = .079$, than for men, $r(52) = .484, p < .001, r^2 = .234$ (partial $r = .443, p = .001$). Again, the effect sizes indicate that the men yielded the stronger effect: 7.9% for the women of the explained variance compared to 23.4% for the men.

Post Hoc Analyses. Several interesting findings emerged when the analysis included a measure of the likelihood the partner would end the relationship, RDQ(YOUR PARTNER). For the men, no relationship was found between the RAM-S, given a partner’s sexual infidelity, and the RDQ(YOUR PARTNER), $r(51) = .196, p = .169$. However, a strong relationship between the RAM-E, given a partner’s emotional infidelity, and the RDQ(YOUR PARTNER) was found, $r(52) = .391, p = .004, r^2 = .153$ (partial $r = .375, p = .007$). The effect size represents 15.3% of the explained variance.

For the women, no relationship was found between the RAM-S, given a partner’s sexual infidelity, and the RDQ(YOUR PARTNER), $r(48) = -.144, p = .328$. In contrast, a
strong relationship was found between the RAM-E, given a partner's emotional infidelity, and the RDQ(YOUR PARTNER),

\[ r(48) = .389, \ p = .006, \ r^2 = .151. \] The effect size represents 15.1% of the explained variance.
CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

Review of the Results

The discussion first provides a thorough review of the research results, and then an examination of several major implications of the findings.

Hypothesis 1 and 2

It was predicted that more men than women would report being distressed by imagining a partner’s sexual infidelity (Hypothesis 1), and that more women than men would report being distressed by imagining a partner’s emotional infidelity (Hypothesis 2). As predicted, a larger percentage of men than women indicated that they were more distressed by imagining a partner’s sexual infidelity, and a larger percentage of women than men indicated that they were distressed by imagining a partner’s emotional infidelity. The results, while not as strong as anticipated, were in the predicted direction and consistent with previously reported research (Abraham et al., 2001; Cramer et al., 2001; Cramer et al., 2009; Cramer et al., 2008) using the ethnically diverse population from which the men and women were sampled: Hispanic and African American participants constituted 62%
of the current sample. The findings were also consistent with previously reported results from other laboratories (e.g., Buss et al., 1999; Buunk et al., 1996; DeSteno et al., 2002; DeSteno & Salovey, 1996; Sagarin et al., 2003; Shackelford et al., 2004). In summary, using the Relationship Dilemma Scenarios (RDS), the present study was able to confirm previous findings of sexual asymmetries in subjective distress when men and women responded to a partner’s sexual and emotional infidelity presented in a combined format.

The present results were also consistent with previously reported findings showing that men, unlike women, find both emotional and sexual infidelity distressing. For example, in a meta-analysis conducted by Harris (2003), only 42% of the men chose sexual infidelity as more distressing than emotional infidelity. Carollo (2010) examined 21 studies that used the forced choice method for determining the most distressing infidelity and found that 54% of the men chose sexual infidelity over emotional infidelity. In the present study, 51% of the men reported that sexual infidelity was more distressing than emotional infidelity.

Men’s lack of distress to sexual infidelity, together with their apparent distress to emotional infidelity, is
particularly challenging for an evolutionary psychology account of jealousy. In theory, men should be predisposed to interpret a partner’s sexual infidelity as a stronger threat than a partner’s emotional infidelity to the success of their sexual strategy (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). A plausible explanation for these findings based on the men’s responsibility attributions for a partner’s sexual and emotional infidelity and the likelihood of relationship dissolution examined in the present study will be discussed in the section titled Examination of the Results.

**Hypothesis 3 and 4**

According to evolutionary psychology, men were expected to make stronger responsibility attributions than were women for a partner’s sexual infidelity (Hypothesis 3). And women were expected to make stronger responsibility attributions than were men for a partner’s emotional infidelity (Hypothesis 4). Unfortunately, neither Hypothesis 3 nor 4 were supported. Men did not make stronger responsibility attributions than did women for the sexual component of a partner’s combined infidelity, and women did not make stronger responsibility attributions than did men for the emotional component. Post hoc analyses revealed several interesting results.
Participants’ responses to each of the RAM-S and the RAM-E items revealed that the men gave stronger responsibility attributions for the sexual component of a partner’s combined infidelity than for the emotional component on three items: the partner’s purposefulness, selfishness, and blame worthiness. In summary, men rated their partners as more purposeful, more selfish and more blame worthy for the sexual component than for the emotional component of the combined infidelity. Because evolutionary psychology focuses on between-sex differences rather than on within-sex differences, these outcomes do not technically advance our understanding of an evolutionary approach to jealousy. However, it is interesting that sexual infidelity, at least for these three factors, evoked stronger responsibility attributions than did emotional infidelity, Women did not distinguish between sexual and emotional infidelity when rating their partner’s responsibility.

Recall that Hall and Fincham (2006) did not include a measure of personal responsibility for a partner’s unfaithfulness on the RAM. An additional item, used in the present study to measure the participant’s belief that he or she may be personally responsible for a partner’s sexual and emotional infidelity, did lead to two
interesting findings. Men’s attributions of personal responsibility for the sexual component of a partner’s combined infidelity were stronger than the women’s. This difference is partly explained by the second interesting finding. Women’s attributions of personal responsibility were higher for the emotional component of a partner’s combined infidelity than for the sexual component.

Do these interesting results support an evolutionary perspective of jealousy? Arguably, they do not. First, men’s distress to a partner’s sexual infidelity is linked, in theory, to the threat it represents to their evolved sexual strategy. Distress is not linked to men taking more responsibility for sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity. Second, the within infidelity difference found for women is not consistent with evolutionary psychology’s focus on sex differences. However, the result does suggest that a partner’s emotional infidelity may be more personally traumatizing - I am more responsible - than his sexual infidelity, and that further investigation is warranted.

Perhaps the most interesting finding was the conspicuous absence of a difference in the personal responsibility men took for a partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity. The mean ratings of responsibility for
the emotional and the sexual component of a partner's combined infidelity were, for the men, essentially equal. This finding, or lack of a finding, is particularly telling when one considers the fact that across a large number of studies examining men's responses to a partner's emotional and sexual infidelity, men frequently report that both are distressing (Carollo, 2010; Harris, 2003). When men are asked to imagine a partner's emotional and sexual infidelity, are the rough equalities in distress to unfaithfulness determined by men recognizing that, in some measure, they may be responsible?

Hypothesis 5 and 6

Following a partner's sexual infidelity, men were expected to report a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than were women (Hypothesis 5). And following a partner's emotional infidelity, women were expected to report a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than were men (Hypothesis 6). Unfortunately, neither Hypothesis 5 nor 6 were supported. Men did not indicate a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than did women as a result of the sexual component of a partner's combined infidelity. Further, women did not indicate a greater likelihood of ending a relationship than did men as a
result of the emotional component. Post hoc analyses did yield several interesting findings.

Two statistically reliable outcomes were obtained from a mixed design analysis of variance. First, the sexual component of a partner’s combined infidelity was more likely than the emotional component to lead to relationship dissolution. Second, the main effect for type of infidelity was qualified by an interaction between the type of infidelity and the person, participant or partner, likely to end the relationship. Simple effects tests conducted to clarify the interaction indicated that the participants were more likely to end a relationship because of the sexual component than because of the emotional component of a partner’s combined infidelity. The tests also revealed that for both the emotional and the sexual infidelity the participant indicated that he or she was more likely than their partner to end the relationship. In summary, men and women reported that they were more likely to dissolve a relationship than their unfaithful partners.

Hypothesis 7

Following Hall and Fincham (2006), it was predicted that the stronger the responsibility attributions for a partner’s infidelity the greater the likelihood the
relationship will end. The results replicated their findings: The correlation between the participants’ responsibility attributions and their estimates of the likelihood of relationship dissolution was positive. Indeed, the strength of the relationship or effect size was stronger in the present study than in the Hall and Fincham study, 18.7% of the explained variance compared to 9.6%.

Information qualifying this predicted general relationship was found via a series of analyses examining participant gender, infidelity type, and “who” was likely to end the relationship. Hall and Fincham (2006) did not provide this level of detail in their analyses. For example, the relationship between responsibility attributions for a partner’s infidelity (including the emotional and sexual component) and the likelihood of ending a relationship (including you and your partner) was stronger for men than for women. Further, the relationship between the responsibility attributions for a partner’s infidelity (including men and women) and the likelihood of ending a relationship was stronger for the emotional component of a partner’s combined infidelity than for the sexual component. Finally, the relationship between responsibility attributions for a partner’s infidelity and
the participant's estimates of the likelihood he or she would end the relationship was stronger than the relationship between the responsibility attributions and the participant's estimates of a partner ending the relationship. Each of these outcomes, the sex effect, the infidelity effect, and the effect due to the person likely to end the relationship, qualifies the general Hall and Fincham findings.

Another set of analyses further clarified the sex effect described above: the relationship between responsibility attributions and relationship dissolution was stronger for men than for women. The analyses revealed that the relationship between the responsibility attributions (including emotional and sexual infidelity) and YOU ending the relationship was stronger for the men than for the women. The sex effect held for the relationship between the responsibility attributions and YOUR PARTNER ending the relationship. Clearly, the relationship between responsibly attributions and the likelihood of ending a relationship is more robust for men and then for women.

Some light was shed on the previously reported gender differences when the participant's gender and the partner's infidelity, emotional or sexual, was examined.
That is, no distinction was made between whom, the participant or the partner, was likely to end the relationship. The results revealed that the relationship between the responsibility attributions for the emotional component of a partner’s combined infidelity and ending the relationship was stronger for men than for women. The sex difference was further delineated for the relationship between the responsibility attributions for the sexual component and ending the relationship; the relationship for the men was strong while for the women it was nonexistent. These sex differences, taken together, illuminate the finding that the relationship between responsibility attributions and the likelihood of ending the relationship was, in the current study, stronger for the men than for the women.

In a final set of analyses the participant’s gender was held constant while focusing on the type of infidelity and the person likely to end the relationship. The responsibility attributions for the emotional component and the sexual component of the partner’s combined infidelity entered the analyses separately and were consistent. The results indicated that the relationship between the attributions and the participant’s likelihood of ending the relationship were stronger than the
relationship between the attributions and the likelihood a partner would end the relationship.

Hypothesis 8 and 9

Hypothesis 8 predicted that the correlation between responsibility attributions for a partner’s sexual infidelity and the likelihood of ending the relationship would be stronger for men than for women. As predicted by Hypothesis 8, the correlation between the responsibility attributions for a partner’s sexual infidelity and the likelihood the participant would end the relationship was stronger for men than for women.

Hypothesis 9 predicted that the correlation between responsibility attributions for a partner’s emotional infidelity and the likelihood of ending the relationship would be stronger for women than for men. However, contrary to expectation, the relationship between the responsibility attributions for a partner’s emotional infidelity and the likelihood the participant would end the relationship was not stronger for women than for men. Indeed, consistent with the previously reported sex effects found in the present study, the relationship was stronger for the men than for the women.

Two interesting findings regarding responsibility attributions for a partner’s emotional infidelity emerged
when the analysis included a measure of the likelihood the partner would end the relationship. For both the men and the women, a strong relationship was found between the responsibility attributions for a partner’s emotional infidelity and the likelihood a partner would end the relationship.

Examination of the Results

An evolutionary psychology perspective on jealousy predicts that both women and men will be distressed by a romantic partner being emotionally and sexually unfaithful (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). However, women are expected to be especially sensitive to emotional infidelity because it threatens the success of their sexual strategy to mate with men who possess social power and material resources that they are willing to share. In contrast, men are expected to be especially sensitive to sexual infidelity because it threatens the success of their sexual strategy to mate with partners who are sexually exclusive, thereby ensuring paternity certainty. Consequently, a partner’s emotional infidelity is predicted to be more distressing to women than to men, and a partner’s sexual infidelity is predicted to be more distressing to men than to women. A wealth of support for these predicted sex differences has
been reported using national samples (e.g., Abraham et al., 2001; Buss et al., 1992; Buunk et al., 1996; Cramer et al., 2001; Cramer et al., 2009; Cramer et al., 2008; Cramer et al., 2000; DeSteno et al., 2002; DeSteno & Salovey, 1996; Sagarin et al., 2003; Shackelford et al., 2004) and international samples (e.g., Buss et al., 1999; Buunk et al., 1996; Fernandez et al., 2006; Geary et al., 1995; Wiederman & Kendall, 1999).

Hupka and Bank (1996) argued that the frequently reported sex differences in distress to a partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity merely supports what they termed “weak” hypotheses. They argued that “strong” hypotheses would find support in women being more distressed by a partner’s emotional infidelity than sexual infidelity, and in men being more distressed by a partner’s sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity. Recall, that the evolutionary perspective on sexual jealousy, advocated by Buss and his colleagues, assumed that both women and men would be distressed by a romantic partner being emotionally and sexually unfaithful. However, based on the unique sexual strategies pursued by men and by women, Buss and his colleagues derived predictions about between-sex differences, not within-infidelity differences (Buss et al., 1992; Buss et
Nevertheless, the Carollo (2010) and Harris (2003) findings, briefly described above, indicate that, across a large number of national and international samples of men, the differences in reported distress to a partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity is not as large as might be anticipated.

Carollo and Harris examined the results of studies using the forced-choice method for presenting the infidelities. Carollo focused on studies sampling heterosexual men in the United States and Harris focused on studies sampling heterosexual and homosexual men in the US and abroad. Carollo and Harris found that 54% and 42% of the men, respectively, chose sexual infidelity as more distressing than emotional infidelity. In the present study, 51% of the men chose sexual infidelity as more distressing than emotional infidelity. Taken together, these findings are difficult to reconcile with evolutionary psychology’s assumptions about the unique threat sexual infidelity represents to the success of men’s mating strategy. In contrast, Buss and his colleagues routinely report that a large majority of women select a partner’s emotional infidelity as more distressing than sexual infidelity (e.g., Buss et al.,
After imagining that a romantic partner has been unfaithful, why do some men report that the emotional infidelity is more distressing than the sexual infidelity while other men report that the sexually infidelity is more distressing than the emotional infidelity? And why are men roughly split in making these determinations? Carollo (2010) tried to answer this question. He asked heterosexual men to imagine a romantic partner being emotionally and sexually unfaithful, and then to indicate which infidelity was the most distressing. He also asked the men to respond to a series of questionnaires designed to measure individual differences including 1) beliefs about the logical relationship between love and sex (i.e., given that a women is in love, can you infer that she is also having sex), 2) importance of romantic commitment and having a good sex life to a man’s self-esteem, 3) value placed on emotional closeness and sexual closeness as sources of relationship rewards, 4) egalitarian attitudes about gender roles, and 5) chronic jealousy.

Across four different infidelity presentation formats, an average of 56% of the men (range = 47% to 66%) reported that a partner’s sexual infidelity was more
distressing than emotional infidelity. None of the
difference measures predicted which infidelity,
emotional or sexual, was the most distressing. So the
questions remain: Is there an individual difference
measure, or a combination of measures, that predict 1) a
man choosing a partner's sexual or emotional infidelity as
more distressing, and 2) an approximate equal distribution
of the choices? The findings observed in the present study
might provide an excellent starting point for answering
these questions.

The present study found, as expected, a significant
relationship between responsibility attributions for a
romantic partner's unfaithfulness and the likelihood the
relationship would end; the stronger the attributions of
personal responsibility the more likely the relationship
would dissolve. Guided by evolutionary psychology
principles, the present study investigated responsibility
attributions for a partner's emotional infidelity and for
a partner's sexual infidelity, and the likelihood that you
(the victim) or your partner (the perpetrator) would end
the relationship. Consequently, the results qualified the
general relationship Hall and Fincham (2006) found between
responsibility attributions and relationship dissolution.
Indeed, the more complex relationships found between
responsibility attributions and relationship dissolution, taken together, may provide the basis for an explanation of why men as a group find both a partner's emotional and sexual infidelity distressing. Before developing the argument, it should be recognized that at this time, the results do not provide an explanation of why some men select emotional infidelity as more distressing and some men select sexual infidelity. However, future research, illuminated by the argument below, may be able to provide such an explanation.

Several specific results listed below suggest that it should not be surprising that men are distressed by a partner's emotional and sexual infidelity. First, the strengths of men's attributions of personal responsibility for the emotional and the sexual components of her combined infidelity were consistent. That is, men assumed virtually an equal measure of personal responsibility for a partner's emotional and sexual unfaithfulness. Second, the relationship between responsibility attributions (combining emotional and sexual infidelity) and relationship dissolution (combining you and partner ending the relationship) was stronger for men than for women; in fact, this relationship was non-significant for women. Third, the relationship between responsibility
attributions for a partner's emotional infidelity and relationship dissolution (combining you and partner) was stronger for men than for women; the relationship involving sexual infidelity was even more robust in favor of men. It is important to recognize for the argument being developed here, that, for men, the strength of the relationship between responsibility attributions - for emotional infidelity and for sexual infidelity - and relationship dissolution were roughly equivalent: involving emotional infidelity, \( r(52) = .518 \); involving sexual infidelity, \( r(51) = .549 \). Fourth, for men, the responsibility attributions for emotional infidelity and for sexual infidelity were related to the likelihood the participant (you) would end the relationship. Indeed, the correlations were roughly equal: for emotional infidelity, \( r(52) = .484 \); for sexual infidelity, \( r(51) = .417 \). Fifth, for men, the responsibility attributions for a partner's emotional infidelity, but not sexual infidelity, were related to the likelihood the partner would end the relationship.

These results, taken together, support a reasonable explanation of why previously reported studies often showed that a partner's emotional and sexual infidelity is distressing to men. The results suggest that a partner's
emotional and sexual unfaithfulness can produce comparable outcomes and relationships, at least for men. For example, imagining a romantic partner's unfaithfulness, and more specifically her emotional and sexual infidelity, may have very strong implications for the long-term sustainability of a relationship. The relationship between responsibility attributions and the likelihood of relationship dissolution was stronger for men than for women. And this sex difference was sustained when the relationship between responsibility attributions and the likelihood of relationship dissolution was examined separately for a partner's emotional and for a partner's sexual infidelity. Further, men reported that they were equally personally responsible for a partner's emotional and sexual infidelity. And finally, the results suggest that both a partner's emotional and sexual infidelity are likely to lead the participant to dissolve the relationship.

According to evolutionary psychology, a partner's sexual infidelity should be particularly distressing to men because it threatens men's unique reproductive strategy (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). And, the present study did confirm that men, compared to women, find a partner's sexual infidelity as more distressing. However, the results also strongly suggest that, for men, emotional and
sexual infidelity are distressing because, given the strength of the responsibility attributions both infidelities induce, both infidelities threaten the long term health of a romantic relationship. From a practical standpoint, because emotional infidelity threatens the long term health of a romantic relationship, it will also threaten men's sexual strategy. That is, if men are motivated to secure sexually exclusive mates, and thereby ensure paternity certainty, it would be beneficial to maintain a long term relationship.

The present study provides a plausible explanation of why previous studies found men distressed by both emotional and sexual infidelity. It does not, however, directly answer the question: Why do some men select a partner's emotional infidelity as more distressing and some men select sexual infidelity? A series of exploratory regression analyses involving the infidelity found to be most distressing and responsibility attributions for a partner's sexual and emotional infidelity were conducted. Because the results were not promising, a satisfactory answer for this question must await future research.
Research Strengths and Limitations

The research reported in this thesis had the distinct advantage of having been conducted on an ethnically diverse university campus. Consequently, the sex differences in infidelity distress confirmed previously reported findings from our lab (Abraham et al., 2001; Cramer et al., 2001; Cramer et al., 2009; Cramer et al., 2008), and the hypotheses, tested here for the first time using an ethnically diverse population, involving responsibility attributions and relationship dissolution. Future research should exploit the advantages of being able to sample from an ethnically diverse population. For example, it would be interesting to see if the participant’s ethnicity influences the strength of their attribution responses or the likelihood of relationship dissolution following a partner’s unfaithfulness. More specifically, does the participant’s ethnicity play a role in the amount of responsibility he or she attributes to an unfaithful partner or in the degree of personal responsibility he or she assumes for a partner’s infidelity?

All research studies have limitations and this thesis is no exception. One particular limitation is worth noting: the use of self-report responses to a hypothetical
scenario. The thesis relied on participant's self-reports to a hypothetical infidelity scenario, a technique that is not unusual in evolutionary psychology research. Consequently, it is possible that not all participants were 1) familiar with relationship unfaithfulness, 2) completely honest in their responses or 3) motivated to respond as he or she thought the researcher wanted. Participants can often display response set effects - such as checking only the "Strongly Agree" option - when responding to "paper and pencil" measures. Moreover, the "real life" emotional impact of a partner's unfaithfulness cannot be fully captured by reading a statement merely describing such an event. However, the self-report measures used in this thesis have been validated in the evolutionary psychology literature using physiological measures and cognitive tasks (e.g., Buss et al., 1992; Pietrzak et al., 2002; Schützwohl, 2005; Schützwohl & Koch, 2004) and in the responsibility attribution literature as well (e.g., McCullough et al., 1998, 2003).
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
Human Subjects Review Board
Department of Psychology
California State University,
San Bernardino

PI: Cramer, Bob & Edmonson, Kindra

From: Donna Garcia

Project Title: An evolutionary psychology perspective on responsibility attributions for infidelity and relationship dissolution

Project ID: H-11WI-07

Date: Sunday, February 06, 2011

Your IRB proposal is approved. This approval is valid until 2/6/2012.

Good luck with your research!

Donna M. Garcia, Chair
Psychology IRB Sub-Committee
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT
INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Kindra Edmonson under the supervision of Professor Robert Cramer. If you participate in the study you will be asked to complete a battery of surveys collecting demographic information, and your responses to emotional and sexual infidelity, assignment of responsibility, and willingness to forgive; completing the battery should take about 30 minutes. The study investigates men and women’s responses to infidelity, responsibility and forgiveness in a romantic relationship.

IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE YOU MUST BE AN UNMARRIED, HETEROSEXUAL MAN OR WOMAN, WHO IS 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER. ALSO, YOU MUST BE IN AN EXCLUSIVE DATING RELATIONSHIP FOR AT LEAST FOUR MONTHS.

Focusing on one’s current intimate, personal romantic relationship may be temporarily uncomfortable for some people. Please consider this possibility before agreeing to participate in this study. Otherwise there are no foreseeable risks to you for participating in this study. If you experience any discomfort as a result of this study, you can contact the CSUSB Community Counseling Center at (909) 537-5569.

Any information that you provide will be anonymous. At no time will your name, or any other identifiable information; be reported along with your responses. All data will be reported only in-group format. At the study’s conclusion you may receive a report of the results. Results will be available after June 2011.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to withdraw without penalty or remove any data you have provided at any time during this study. Also, you do not have to respond to any items you feel uncomfortable answering. All participants will receive a candy bar upon completion of the battery.

This study has been approved by the Department of Psychology Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee of California State University, San Bernardino; a copy of the official Psychology IRB stamp of approval should appear somewhere on this form. If you have any questions regarding this study, or if you would like a report of the results please contact Professor Robert Cramer at (909) 537-5576 or rcramer@csusb.edu.

By placing a mark in the space below, I acknowledge that I have been informed of and understand the nature and purpose of this study, and freely consent to participate. Further, I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

Participant’s X

Date: __________

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
PSYCHOLOGY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SUB-COM
APPROVED 02/06 VOID AFTER 02/06
IRB# H-11WI-07 CHAIR

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APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY
Demographics Questionnaire

Please complete the following:

1) Age in years: _____

2) Gender (Please check one):
   _____ Male   _____ Female

3) Ethnic Background (Check which one best describes you):
   _____ American Indian
   _____ Asian-American
   _____ Black/African American
   _____ Caucasian
   _____ Hispanic/Latino
   _____ Other..... Please specify: _______________________

4) Country of Birth (Please check one):
   _____ Born in the United States
   _____ Not born in the United States

5) Sexual Orientation (Please check one):
   _____ Heterosexual
   _____ Homosexual
   _____ Bisexual

6) Parents' yearly household income (Please check one):
   _____ Less than $25,000
   _____ Between $25,001 and $35,000
   _____ Between $35,001 and $45,000
   _____ Between $45,001 and $55,000
   _____ Between $55,001 and $65,000
   _____ Over $65,000

7) Mother's highest education level (Please check one):
   _____ Less than high school
   _____ High School
   _____ Some college or vocational training
   _____ Bachelor's degree
   _____ Graduate degree
8) Father’s highest education level (Please check one):
   _____ Less than high school
   _____ High School
   _____ Some college or vocational training
   _____ Bachelor’s degree
   _____ Graduate degree

9) Current Relationship Status (Please check one):
   _____ Married..... **If checked**, how long? _____ years.
   _____ In an exclusive dating relationship.
   **If checked**, how long? _____ months
   **If checked**, does your relationship include sexual
   activity?..... Yes _____  No _____
   _____ Not in an exclusive dating relationship.
   _____ Other type of relationship..... Please explain:

10) Infidelity Experience
    **In the past**, a romantic partner has been unfaithful to me.
        _____ Yes
        _____ No
    **In the past**, I have been unfaithful to a romantic partner.
        _____ Yes
        _____ No
APPENDIX D

RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION SURVEY
Relationship Satisfaction Survey

Please read each item carefully. After reading each item, please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your current relationship. Circle a number from 1-7 that best represents your level of agreement with each statement.

1. I feel satisfied with our relationship.

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<td>Agree</td>
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2. My relationship is much better than others’ relationships.

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3. My relationship is close to ideal.

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4. Our relationship makes me very happy.

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5. Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.

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APPENDIX E

RELATIONSHIP DILEMMA SCENARIOS
Relationship Dilemma Scenarios

PLEASE READ THE BRIEF SCENARIO BELOW AND THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR EACH SCALE ON THE RELATIONSHIP DILEMMA SCENARIOS VERY CAREFULLY.

Infidelity Scenario

Please think of the exclusive dating relationship that you currently have. Imagine that you discovered that the person with whom you have been seriously involved became interested in someone else. Imagine your partner both formed a deep emotional attachment to that other person AND had passionate sexual intercourse with that other person.

Scale I.

1. Which aspect of your partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity would upset or distress you more? Please circle letter A or B.
   A. The passionate sexual intercourse with that other person
   B. The deep emotional attachment to that other person

2. For which aspect of your partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity would you hold your partner most responsible? Please circle letter A or B.
   A. The deep emotional attachment to that other person
   B. The passionate sexual intercourse with that other person

3. Which aspect of your partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity would be more difficult for you to forgive? Please circle letter A or B.
   A. The passionate sexual intercourse with that other person
   B. The deep emotional attachment to that other person

4. Which aspect of your partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity would be more likely to lead you to breakup with your partner? Please circle letter A or B.
   A. The deep emotional attachment to that other person
   B. The passionate sexual intercourse with that other person

5. Which aspect of your partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity would be more likely to lead your partner to breakup with you? Please circle letter A or B.
   A. The passionate sexual intercourse with that other person
   B. The deep emotional attachment to that other person

adapted from
APPENDIX F

RELATIONSHIP ATTRIBUTION MEASURE
Scale II (RAM-S)

Once again, please think of the exclusive dating relationship that you currently have. This scale measures your response to the sexual component of your partner’s infidelity. Using the rating scale below each statement, please circle the number that indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. My partner’s sexual infidelity was due to something about him/her (that is, something about the type of person he/she is, or his/her mood).
   
   
   
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

2. My partner’s sexual infidelity was due to something about me (that is, something about the type of person I am, or the mood I was in).
   
   
   
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

3. The reason my partner was sexually unfaithful is not likely to change.
   
   
   
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

4. The reason my partner was sexually unfaithful is something that affects other areas of our relationship.
   
   
   
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

5. My partner was sexually unfaithful on purpose rather than unintentionally.
   
   
   
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

6. My partner’s sexual infidelity was for selfish rather than unselfish concerns.
   
   
   
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

7. My partner deserves to be blamed for his/her sexual infidelity.
   
   
   
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Strongly
Scale III (RAM-E)

Again, please think of the exclusive dating relationship that you currently have. This scale measures your response to the emotional component of your partner’s infidelity. Using the rating scale below each statement, please circle the number that indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. My partner’s emotional infidelity was due to something about him/her (that is, something about the type of person he/she is, or his/her mood).
   
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2. My partner’s emotional infidelity was due to something about me (that is, something about the type of person I am, or the mood I was in).

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3. The reason my partner was emotionally unfaithful is not likely to change.

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4. The reason my partner was emotionally unfaithful is something that affects other areas of our relationship.

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5. My partner was emotionally unfaithful on purpose rather than unintentionally.

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6. My partner’s emotional infidelity was for selfish rather than unselfish concerns.

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7. My partner deserves to be blamed for his/her emotional infidelity.

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APPENDIX G

RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION QUESTIONNAIRE
Scale IV (RDQ).

Once again, please think of the exclusive dating relationship that you currently have. Imagine that you discovered that the person with whom you have been seriously involved became interested in someone else. Imagine your partner both formed an emotional attachment to that other person AND had sexual intercourse with that other person.

A1. Thinking only about the sexual component of your partner's infidelity, indicate the likelihood that YOU would end the relationship because of your partner's sexual infidelity, using the scale below. Circle the number from 1 to 10 that best indicates the likelihood YOU would end the relationship.

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A2. Thinking only about the sexual component of your partner's infidelity, indicate the likelihood YOUR PARTNER would end the relationship because of the sexual infidelity using the scale below. Circle the number from 1 to 10 that best indicates the likelihood YOUR PARTNER would end the relationship.

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B1. Thinking only about the **emotional component** of your partner’s infidelity, indicate the likelihood **YOU** would end the relationship because of your partner’s emotional infidelity, using the scale below. **Circle the number** from 1 to 10 that best indicates the likelihood **YOU** would end the relationship.

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B2. Thinking only about the **emotional component** of your partner’s infidelity, indicate the likelihood **YOUR PARTNER** would end the relationship because of the emotional infidelity, using the scale below. **Circle the number** from 1 to 10 that best indicates the likelihood **YOUR PARTNER** would end the relationship.

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APPENDIX H

TRANSGRESSION-RELATED INTERPERSONAL MOTIVATIONS INVENTORY
Scale V (TRIM-18S)

Again, please think of the exclusive dating relationship that you currently have. Imagine that you discovered that the person with whom you have been seriously involved became interested in someone else. Imagine your partner both formed an emotional attachment to that other person AND had sexual intercourse with that other person.

For the following scale items, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about only the sexual component of your partner’s infidelity. That is, we want to know how you feel about that person right now. Below each item, circle the number that best describes your current thoughts and feelings about your partner.

1. I’ll make him/her pay.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Disagree  Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Agree  Agree
   Strongly  Strongly  Strongly  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat

2. I am trying to keep as much distance between us as possible.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Disagree  Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Agree  Agree
   Strongly  Strongly  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat

3. Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Disagree  Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Agree  Agree
   Strongly  Strongly  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat

4. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Disagree  Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Agree  Agree
   Strongly  Strongly  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat

5. I am living as if he/she doesn’t exist, isn’t around.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Disagree  Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Agree  Agree
   Strongly  Strongly  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat

6. I want us to bury the hatchet and move forward with our relationship.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Disagree  Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Agree  Agree
   Strongly  Strongly  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat

7. I don’t trust him/her.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Disagree  Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Agree  Agree
   Strongly  Strongly  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat  Somewhat
8. Despite what he/she did, I want us to have a positive relationship again.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

9. I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

10. I am finding it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

11. I am avoiding him/her.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

12. Although he/she hurt me, I am putting the hurts aside so we can resume our relationship.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

13. I'm going to get even.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

14. I have given up my hurt and resentment.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

15. I cut off the relationship with him/her.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

16. I have released my anger so I can work on restoring our relationship to health.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly
17. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.

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18. I withdraw from him/her.

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Scale VI (TRIM-18E)

Once again, please think of the exclusive dating relationship that you currently have. Imagine that you discovered that the person with whom you have been seriously involved became interested in someone else. Imagine your partner both formed an emotional attachment to that other person AND had sexual intercourse with that other person.

For the following scale items, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about only the emotional component of your partner's infidelity. That is, we want to know how you feel about that person right now. Below each item, circle the number that best describes your current thoughts and feelings about your partner.

1. I'll make him/her pay.
   1    2    3    4    5    6    7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

2. I am trying to keep as much distance between us as possible.
   1    2    3    4    5    6    7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

3. Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her.
   1    2    3    4    5    6    7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

4. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.
   1    2    3    4    5    6    7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

5. I am living as if he/she doesn’t exist, isn’t around.
   1    2    3    4    5    6    7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

6. I want us to bury the hatchet and move forward with our relationship.
   1    2    3    4    5    6    7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

7. I don’t trust him/her.
   1    2    3    4    5    6    7
   Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree
   Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

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8. Despite what he/she did, I want us to have a positive relationship again.

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9. I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.

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10. I am finding it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.

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11. I am avoiding him/her.

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12. Although he/she hurt me, I am putting the hurts aside so we can resume our relationship.

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13. I'm going to get even.

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14. I have given up my hurt and resentment.

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15. I cut off the relationship with him/her.

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16. I have released my anger so I can work on restoring our relationship to health.

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17. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.

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18. I withdraw from him/her.

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adapted from
APPENDIX I

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT
Debriefing Statement

This research examined men’s and women’s responses to infidelity, responsibility and forgiveness in a romantic relationship. The goal of the research was to investigate sex differences in response to a romantic partner’s unfaithfulness, attributions of responsibility for the infidelity, and the likelihood of the relationship’s survival. We know from past research that attributions of personal responsibility for negative behavior in a relationship can decrease the likelihood of a relationship’s survival. This research was designed to contribute to this knowledge-base by predicting that relationship survival would depend more specifically on sex differences in response to a partner’s emotional and sexual infidelity, and on attributions of the partner’s responsibility.

Recall that all responses will be analyzed anonymously, in group form, and at no time will your responses be linked to you specifically.

Please do not discuss the nature of this research with any potential participants. Discussing the research with someone who at a later time participates in the study will invalidate its results.

If you have any questions regarding this research or if participating in this research upset you in any way, please contact Professor Robert Cramer or Kindra Edmonson at (909) 537-5576 or rrcramer@csusb.edu. Also, if you would like to obtain the results, please contact Professor Cramer or Kindra Edmonson. The results of this research will be available after June 2011.

Your participation in the research is greatly appreciated.
REFERENCES


Sprecher, S. (1989). The importance to males and females of physical attractiveness, earning potential, and expressiveness in initial attraction. Sex Roles, 21, 591-607.


