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Individual Differences in Jealousy

Kevin L. Bennett

University of New Mexico

Address correspondence to Kevin L. Bennett, University of New Mexico, Department of Psychology, Albuquerque, NM 87131-1161; via e-mail: kbenn@unm.edu

Abstract

Previously unexplored dimensions of jealousy were examined using an evolutionary psychology approach in an effort to clarify the nature of jealousy and identify possible individual differences. Previous studies have shown that responses to infidelity differ between men and women as a function of the type of the infidelity – sexual or emotional. However, there is a substantial amount of variation within sexes that has yet to be accounted for. A number of analyses were performed to better understand this variation. Differential responses to infidelity were explored by looking at the relationships between sex, infidelity situations, and the emotions that jealousy elicits. Emotional responses vary as a function of jealousy tendencies and the nature of infidelities. The relationship between birth order and jealousy suggests that middleborns are less likely than firstborns or laterborns to turn to family members for support in the event of an infidelity. Finally, the impact of social networks on the expression of jealousy was examined. Findings provide support for the claim that jealousy serves a particular adaptive function in the domain of human mating. Results are discussed in the context of evolutionary theory and conditional jealousy strategies.

KEYWORDS: jealousy, infidelity, romantic relationships

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