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Divorce as a Consequence of Spousal Infidelity

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Infidelity may have no rival in disrupting a marriage. Cross-culturally, a sexual infidelity by a woman, either actual or suspected, is the leading cause of wife battering and wife homicide (Daly and Wilson 1988; Wilson and Daly 1992). Anguish, depression, anger, and humiliation are among the emotional experiences of the partner of someone who has been unfaithful (Buunk and van Driel 1989; Lawson 1988). Of the 43 causes of divorce compiled by Betzig (1989) in her ethnographic study of 160 cultures, a spouse's infidelity was the most frequently cited cause, across cultures. Fully 79% of the cultures explicitly note infidelity as a cause of divorce.

Studies of divorce in Western countries suggest that between 25% and 50% of divorcees cite a spouse's infidelity as the primary cause of the divorce (Hunt 1974; Kelly and Conley 1987; Levinger 1976). Estimates of marital infidelity range from 26% to 70% for women and from 33% to 75% for men (Buss 1994; Fisher 1992; Hite 1987; Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 1948; Kinsey et al. 1979). The discrepancy between the ranges of estimates of divorce due to infidelity and estimates of infidelity suggests that, although some marriages continue following a discovered infidelity, some marriages do not (Buunk 1987; Levinger 1976).

The divorce process often debilitates the psychological, emotional, and physiological health of the parting spouses (Kitson and Sussman 1982; Levinger 1976). Despite the tremendous costs involved, many couples divorce following detection of infidelity. That so many couples *do* divorce following the revelation or discovery of infidelity attests to the perceived costs that accompany infidelity.

Given the prevalence of and costs associated with infidelity and with divorce, an important empirical issue is what differentiates couples who divorce from those who stay together following infidelity. In addition, infidelity and dissolution as a consequence of infidelity are important issues from several theoretical perspectives. From an evolutionary psychological perspective (Buss 1995; Wilson and Daly 1992), infidelity signals the diversion of important reproductive resources. From an equity theoretical perspective (Messick and Cook 1983; Walster, Walster, and Berscheid 1978), infidelity may signal serious inequities in a relationship. From an investment model perspective (Rusbult 1980, 1983), infidelity signals lack of commitment to a relationship.

It could be argued from each of these perspectives that the decision to divorce as a consequence of infidelity involves a cost-benefit analysis by the betrayed partner in which the perceived costs and benefits of remaining married are weighed against those of divorce. The more costly a marriage is perceived to be, the less incentive the betrayed partner has to remain married to an adulterous spouse. David Buss and I (Shackelford and Buss 1997) tested this general proposal using a sample of recently married couples.

To assess the salience of infidelity as a potential cause of divorce, we developed an instrument in which each spouse estimates the probability that he or she would seek divorce if their partner engaged in the following activities: flirting with someone else, passionately kissing someone else, romantically dating someone else, having a one-night stand, a brief affair, and a serious affair. Following Buunk (1987), we assume that these types of infidelity reflect different degrees of spousal cost-infliction. A one-night stand, for example, almost certainly inflicts greater costs on the betrayed spouse than does an illicit, passionate kiss. A one-night stand, among other things, places the betrayed partner at risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease carried by a spouse's lover.

Anticipations of seeking divorce as a consequence of spousal infidelity are clearly not assessments of actual divorces filed in response to spousal infidelity. Some individuals who anticipate seeking divorce as a consequence of spousal infidelity may refrain from doing so, and some who do not anticipate divorcing an adulterous spouse may do so. We have no reason to suspect, however, that estimates of the likelihood of divorcing an unfaithful spouse will consistently underestimate or overestimate actual divorce in response to spousal infidelity. Participants making these estimations may strive to appear intolerant of a spouse's philanderings rather than appear to be someone whom the spouse can "walk all over." At the same time, they may strive to appear forgiving, compassionate, and kind, the hall-

marks of a desirable mate (Buss 1989a). Several longitudinal studies of marriage (Devine and Forehand 1996; Gottman and Levenson 1992) have documented that anticipated dissolution reliably predicts actual dissolution. These studies support the use of anticipated dissolution as a proxy for actual dissolution as a consequence of spousal infidelity.

The use of newlywed couples to study anticipated dissolution as a consequence of infidelity has several advantages. Divorce is most likely to occur in the first few years of marriage for a variety of reasons, including infidelity (Betzig 1989; Buss 1994; Fisher 1992). In addition, the early years of marriage are marked by a time of relationship negotiation, wherein each partner seeks to establish what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior (Veroff and Feld 1970). As spouses successfully negotiate their marital expectations, conflict generated by the negotiation process diminishes, as does the likelihood of dissolution as a consequence of such conflict. Therefore, recently married couples provide a more appropriate context than longer-married couples for investigating marital dissolution.

We examined several sources of spousal and relationship costs that might facilitate increased estimates of seeking divorce as a consequence of spousal infidelity, including discrepancies in the attractiveness and mate value of the spouses, spousal sources of upset and irritation, and marital dissatisfaction. Later we present our specific predictions about the relationships between these sources of costs and anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse.

Relative mate value refers to the relative desirability of the two partners on the "mating market" (Buss 1994; Symons 1987). In our study, two interviewers independently assessed each spouse's mate value and attractiveness. Where a discrepancy existed, we expected that the partner higher in relative value would provide higher likelihood estimates of seeking divorce as a consequence of spousal infidelity. The rationale for this prediction was that in marrying, the more valuable partner incurs greater costs than the less valuable partner. These greater costs include opportunity costs associated with foregone marriage to a more valuable partner (see Buss 1994; Rusbult and Buunk 1993).

Spousal sources of upset and irritation provide relatively direct assessments of the costs inflicted by a spouse (Buss 1989b). According to Buss's (1989b) strategic interference model, the degree of upset felt in response to a particular spousal behavior tracks the perceived severity of the costs inflicted by that behavior. We expected, therefore, that spousal sources of upset would positively correlate with anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse.

Marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction may track the costs and benefits associated with a particular marriage (Shackelford and Buss 1996a). It could be argued from several theoretical perspectives (see above) that anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse involve assessments of the costs and benefits of the current marriage, weighed against the costs and benefits of divorce. Greater perceived costs and fewer perceived benefits, on these accounts, should facilitate increased anticipations of divorcing an adulterous spouse. We therefore expected that men and women who were less satisfied with their marriage would anticipate greater likelihoods of divorcing an unfaithful spouse.

In addition to general marital satisfaction, assessments of sexual and emotional satisfaction were secured. These two facets may be crucial, because of the known links between a woman's emotional dissatisfaction and her likelihood of ending the relationship and a man's sexual dissatisfaction and his likelihood of ending the relationship (Betzig 1989; Glass and Wright 1977, 1985, 1992). A man may be especially likely to anticipate divorcing an unfaithful partner if he is sexually dissatisfied with the marriage. A woman, in contrast, may be especially likely to anticipate divorcing an unfaithful partner if she is emotionally dissatisfied with the marriage.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 214 individuals, 107 men and 107 women, who had been married less than one year. Participants were obtained from the public records of marriage licenses issued within a large Midwestern county. All couples married within a six-month time period were contacted by letter and invited to participate in this study. The majority of participants were white. The mean age of the wives was 25.52 ($SD = 4.06$; range = 18 to 36). The mean age of husbands was 26.79 ($SD = 3.75$; range = 17 to 41). This was the first marriage for 96% of the sample. Ninety-six percent of couples had no children. Couples had been romantically involved for an average of 44 months ($SD = 24.64$; range = one month to eight years). Two-thirds of couples had cohabited prior to marriage for an average of 1.26 years ($SD = 1.8$ years). Thirty-two percent of the sample reported that they were Protestant, 22% Catholic, about 4% Jewish, and 11% "Other." Thirty-one percent of respondents reported no religious affiliation. The annual income of husbands ranged from \$0 (unemployed) to \$87,000, averaging \$21,000 ($SD = \$12,000$). The annual income of wives ranged from \$0 (unemployed) to \$68,000, averaging \$16,400

($SD = \$10,500$). Husbands had completed an average of 16.47 years of education ($SD = 2.71$; range = 11 to 23 years). Wives had completed an average of 15.99 years of education ($SD = 2.94$; range = 7 to 25 years).

Procedure

Participants participated in three separate waves of assessment. First, they received through the mail a battery of instruments to be completed at home in their spare time. Second, participants came to a laboratory testing session approximately one week after receiving the battery of self-report instruments. During this session, spouses were separated to preserve independence and to prevent contamination due to discussion. During this session, participants completed the instrument in which they provided the probabilities that they would end their marriage following each of the six forms of spousal infidelity. Participants also completed a marital satisfaction instrument and an index of spousal sources of upset and irritation.

Third, couples were interviewed toward the end of the testing session by one male and one female interviewer drawn from a rotating staff of ten interviewers to secure independent information about each spouse's mate value and attractiveness. Participants were asked a standard set of questions about how they met, the nature of their relationship, sources of attraction, sources of conflict, and their similarities and differences. Immediately following the interview, the interviewers completed a standard instrument in which they recorded their perceptions of the mate value and attractiveness of each participant. The confidentiality of all responses was assured. Not even the participant's spouse could obtain responses without written permission from the relevant partner.

Materials

Marital Satisfaction. The Marital Satisfaction Survey (Shackelford and Buss 1996a) consisted of thirty-one questions assessing the respondent's satisfaction with various aspects of their marriage and their spouse. Three items were employed in this study. *General marital satisfaction* was assessed by the item: "Thinking about things all together, how would you say you feel about your marriage?" *Sexual satisfaction* was assessed by the item "How do you feel about your sexual relationship?" *Emotional satisfaction* was assessed by the item "How do you feel about your spouse as a source of encouragement and reassurance?" All three items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 = unsatisfied and 7 = extremely satisfied. A

composite marital satisfaction index was created by summing with unit weighting scores on the general, sexual, and emotional satisfaction items ($\alpha = .72$).

Mate Value and Attractiveness Discrepancies. Two interviewers drawn from a ten-member team provided independent assessments of the husband's and wife's "overall attractiveness as a potential mate (mate value to opposite sex)" on a scale where 1 = extremely low and 7 = extremely high. A mate value discrepancy variable was created by subtracting husband's from wife's interviewer-rated mate value. The two interviewer-assessments of mate value correlated $r = .53$ ($p < .001$) and were averaged to create a more reliable measure of mate value discrepancy. Interviewers also provided assessments of overall physical attractiveness for each spouse. Overall attractiveness was assessed on a 7-point scale anchored by 1 = overall unattractive and 7 = overall attractive. The two interviewer-assessments of overall attractiveness correlated $r = .64$ ($ps < .001$). An overall physical attractiveness discrepancy variable was created using the same strategy employed to create the mate value discrepancy variable.

Spousal Sources of Upset. During the laboratory testing session when the husband and wife were physically separated, participants completed an instrument entitled "Sources of Irritation and Upset." This instrument contained the following instructions: "Below is a list of things that spouses sometimes do that irritate, annoy, anger, or upset each other. Please place an 'X' next to those acts your husband [wife] has performed *within the past year* that have irritated, annoyed, angered, or upset you." Following these instructions were 147 acts or events, previously nominated by a separate panel (see Buss 1989b).

Factor analysis (Buss 1989b) revealed fifteen factors (sample acts in parentheses): *Condescending* (S/he treated me like I was stupid or inferior), *Jealous* (S/he acted jealous), *Neglecting* (S/he would not spend enough time with me), *Abusive* (S/he hit me; S/he verbally abused me), *Unfaithful* (S/he had sex with another person), *Inconsiderate* (S/he did not help to clean up), *Physically Self-Absorbed* (S/he fussed too much with her/his appearance), *Moody* (S/he acted moody), *Sexually Withholding* (S/he refused to have sex with me), *Sexualizing of Others* (S/he talked about how good-looking another person was), *Abusive of Alcohol/Emotionally Constricted* (S/he drank too much alcohol; S/he hid emotions to act tough), *Disheveled* (S/he did not take care of her/his appearance), *Insulting of Partner's Appearance* (S/he told me I was ugly), *Sexually Aggressive* (S/he tried to force sex acts on me), and *Self-Centered* (S/he was self-centered).

Anticipated Dissolution Following Infidelity. During the testing session in which the spouses were separated from each other, each completed an instrument entitled "Events with Others" (Buss and Shackelford 1997). In addition to providing a series of other ratings, participants estimated the likelihood that they would end the marriage as a consequence of each of six types of spousal infidelity: flirting, passionately kissing, going on a romantic date, having a one-night stand, having a brief affair, and having a serious affair. Participants provided estimates on separate 11-point scales for each type of infidelity. The low end of the scale indicated 0%, and the high end indicated 100%, with the scale marked off in 10% increments.

RESULTS

Anticipated Dissolution Following Infidelity

Table 6.1 shows the means and standard deviations for the reported probabilities of ending the marriage in response to the six types of spousal infidelity. The probabilities increased as a function of the seriousness of the extramarital involvement. For example, husbands' estimates that they would end the marriage if their wife flirted with another man averaged about 4%, engaged in passionate kisses with another man 21%, went out on a romantic date 36%, had a one-night stand 49%, had a brief affair 55%, and had a serious affair 67%.

To determine whether the sexes differed in their estimates of anticipated dissolution following the various spousal infidelities, correlated-means *t*-tests were conducted for each of the variables. No significant sex differences were found (all *ps* > .05, two-tailed). For each of the six extramarital activities, men and women anticipated equal probabilities that they would end the relationship in response to spousal infidelity.

Mate Value and Attractiveness Discrepancies

None of the correlations between men's anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse and attractiveness discrepancy reached statistical significance (all *ps* > .05, one-tailed). A single significant correlation was obtained between men's anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse and mate value discrepancy. Men judged to be higher in relative mate value provided higher likelihood estimates of seeking divorce if their wife flirted with another man ($r = -.21$, $p < .05$, one-tailed).

Table 6.1
Anticipated Dissolution Following Spousal Infidelity

	Type of Spousal Infidelity					
	Flirt	Passionate Kiss	Romantic Date	One-night Stand	Brief Affair	Serious Affair
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Husband's anticipation of divorcing wife as a consequence of her infidelity	3.78 (9.75)	20.49 (29.89)	35.62 (35.25)	48.93 (38.91)	55.30 (39.09)	66.56 (37.46)
Wife's anticipation of divorcing husband as a consequence of his infidelity	2.50 (7.58)	21.60 (27.50)	37.32 (34.61)	49.20 (37.53)	57.75 (37.78)	69.03 (35.27)

Note: N (Men) = 107, N (Women) = 107. Means are average estimates of the probability of seeking divorce as a consequence of spousal infidelity. Estimates were provided on 11-point scales anchored by 0% and 100%, presented in 10% increments (i.e., 0%, 10%, 20%).

In contrast, women's anticipations of divorcing an adulterous husband consistently covaried with interviewer-rated mate value and attractiveness discrepancies. Women judged to be higher in relative mate value provided higher likelihood estimates of seeking divorce if their husband went on a date with another woman ($r = -.21$), had a one-night stand ($r = -.19$), or a brief affair ($r = -.18$; all $ps < .05$, one-tailed). Women judged to be more attractive than their husband provided higher likelihood estimates of seeking divorce if he went on a date with another woman ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$), had a one-night stand ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$), a brief affair ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$), or a serious affair ($r = -.18$, $p < .05$; all ps one-tailed).

Spousal Sources of Upset

Eight of the fifteen spousal sources of upset were significantly and negatively related to men's or women's anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse. Table 6.2 displays these correlations.

The upper panel of Table 6.2 shows that men's anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse were most consistently related to their complaints that their wife has previously been unfaithful. These correlations were significant for the four more serious types of infidelity: romantically dating, having a one-night stand, a brief affair, and a serious affair. Men who complained that their wife sexualized others reported higher probabilities that they would divorce her if she flirted with another man or had a one-night stand. Men who complained that their wife was inconsiderate also reported higher probabilities of divorcing a wife if she had a one-night stand. Men who complained that their wife abused alcohol and was emotionally constricted, and men who complained that their wife was condescending, respectively, reported higher probabilities that they would divorce their wife if she flirted with another man or had a brief affair.

The lower panel of Table 6.2 shows that women who complained that their husband is inconsiderate, and women who complained that their husband abused alcohol and was emotionally constricted, reported greater likelihoods that they would seek divorce if he flirted with another woman, passionately kissed another woman, went on a romantic date, had a one-night stand, a brief affair, or a serious affair. Women who complained that their husband was jealous, sexually withholding, and sexualized others reported greater likelihoods of seeking divorce if he flirted with another woman. Finally, women who complained that their husband was condescending, and women who complained that their husband was jealous, respectively, reported higher probabilities that they would divorce their husband if

he had a one-night stand or went on a romantic date with another woman.

Table 6.2
Correlations of Anticipated Dissolution Following Spousal Infidelity with Spousal Sources of Upset

Husband's Estimate That He Would End Marriage If Wife:

Spousal Source of Upset	<u>Flirts</u>	<u>Kisses</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>One-Night Stand</u>	<u>Brief Affair</u>	<u>Serious Affair</u>
Condescending	-.07	-.10	-.10	-.09	-.17*	-.11
Jealous	-.02	-.05	.07	.12	.06	.06
Unfaithful	.02	.16	.20*	.28**	.22**	.25**
Inconsiderate	.09	.04	.05	.17*	.10	.10
Moody	.15	-.05	-.06	-.01	-.07	.00
Sexually Withholding	.06	.05	.07	.07	.02	.07
Sexualizing of Others	.31**	.11	.14	.23**	.14	.15
Abusive of alcohol/ Emotionally Constricted	.19*	.01	-.05	-.01	-.05	.04

Wife's Estimate That She Would End Marriage If Husband:

Spousal Source of Upset	<u>Flirts</u>	<u>Kisses</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>One-Night Stand</u>	<u>Brief Affair</u>	<u>Serious Affair</u>
Condescending	.17	.09	.02	.16*	.15	.16
Jealous	.47***	.14	.16*	.13	.11	.14
Unfaithful	-.14	-.13	-.10	.01	.00	-.02
Inconsiderate	.26**	.21*	.25**	.24**	.19*	.23**
Moody	.21*	.01	-.01	-.07	.10	.13
Sexually Withholding	.24**	.03	.02	.02	.03	.00
Sexualizing of Others	.07	-.09	.02	.01	.00	.03
Abusive of Alcohol/ Emotionally Constricted	.21*	.20*	.19*	.29***	.30***	.28**

Note: N (Men) = 107, N (Women) = 107.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (one-tailed).

Table 6.3

Correlations of Husband's Anticipated Dissolution Following Wife's Infidelity with Husband's Marital Satisfaction

H's estimate that he would end marriage if W:

H's Marital Satisfaction	One-night stand				
	Flirts	Kisses	Dates	Brief affair	Serious affair
General	-.20*	-.16*	-.16*	-.13	-.03
Sexual	-.15	-.17*	-.09	-.11	-.09
Emotional	-.11	-.20*	-.25**	-.19*	-.12
Composite ^a	-.14	-.20*	-.25**	-.20*	-.10

^a Mean of general, sexual, and emotional satisfaction.

Note: H = Husband, W = Wife; N (Men) = 107.

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$ (one-tailed).

Marital Satisfaction

None of the correlations between women's general, sexual, emotional, or composite marital satisfaction and women's estimates that they would divorce an unfaithful husband achieved statistical significance (all p s > .05, one-tailed). Men's marital satisfaction, in contrast, displayed consistent relationships to their anticipated dissolution following spousal infidelity. Table 6.3 shows the latter correlations.

Men who reported lower general marital satisfaction reported higher probabilities that they would divorce their wife if she flirted with another man, kissed another man, or had a one-night stand. Men who reported lower emotional satisfaction, and men with lower composite marital satisfaction scores, reported higher probabilities that they would divorce their wife if she kissed another man, went on a romantic date with another man, or had a one-night stand. Finally, men reporting lower sexual satisfaction reported higher probabilities that they would divorce their wife if she passionately kissed another man.

DISCUSSION

The general hypothesis tested in this study was that anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse entail a cost-benefit analysis by the betrayed person in which the perceived costs and benefits of the marriage are weighed against the perceived costs and benefits of divorce. Greater perceived costs and fewer perceived benefits were expected to facilitate heightened likelihood estimates of divorcing a spouse as a consequence of his or her infidelity.

We examined several sources of spousal and relationship costs that might facilitate increased estimates of dissolution as a consequence of adultery. This discussion highlights the most important findings of the study and locates these findings within an evolutionary psychological perspective.

Mate Value and Attractiveness Discrepancies

From an evolutionary psychological perspective, women of higher mate value and attractiveness than their husband may be squandering their reproductive capacity on men who provide them with fewer financial resources or lower quality genes than these women might have received from alternative mating arrangements (Buss 1994; Gangestad 1993). Accordingly, we predicted that relatively more valuable wives would report higher probabilities of divorcing an adulterous husband. This prediction was supported for the more serious

types of husband infidelity, including having a one-night stand and a brief affair.

In contrast, men married to relatively less valuable and attractive women did not provide consistently higher estimates that they would divorce their wife if she were unfaithful. The use of interviewer assessments of women's mate value and attractiveness may have been inappropriate. Men married to women rated as relatively less attractive by the interviewers might perceive their wives to be equally or more attractive than the men perceive themselves to be. It may have been more appropriate to assess *husband's* perceptions of their wife's relative attractiveness and mate value rather than rely as we did on independent assessments of these variables. This speculation does not address, however, why men's, but not women's, perceptions of their spouse's mate value and attractiveness might deviate from independent parallel assessments. Future research should first test the replicability of the sex-linked findings. If these findings are replicated, future research could test the speculation that men's, but not women's, perceptions of their spouse's mate value and attractiveness deviate from independent parallel assessments. If this speculation is supported, additional research could profitably investigate the origin of the sex-linked discrepancies between spousal and independent assessments of mate value and attractiveness.

Spousal Sources of Upset

According to Buss's (1989b) strategic interference model of conflict between men and women, spousal sources of upset represent relatively direct assessments of spousal cost-infliction. Greater upset signals greater cost-infliction. If the perceived costs of marriage to the current spouse figure into the betrayed person's considerations of whether to divorce or remain married to an adulterous spouse, then spousal sources of upset should predict estimates of the likelihood of divorce as a consequence of spousal infidelity.

More than half of the spousal sources of upset reported by men and women in this sample negatively covaried, as predicted, with likelihood estimates of divorcing an unfaithful spouse. The most consistent predictor of higher likelihood estimates of divorcing an adulterous wife was a man's complaint that his wife had previously been unfaithful to him. Men who complained that their wife had previously been unfaithful anticipated higher likelihoods of divorcing her if she went on a romantic date with another man, had a one night stand, a brief affair, or a serious affair within the next year. The predictive importance of men's complaints about wifely infidelity can be placed squarely within an evolutionary psychological perspective.

From an evolutionary psychological perspective, one of the most serious transgressions of a presumably monogamous marriage is a partner's infidelity. A spouse's unfaithfulness is likely to have imposed serious reproductive costs on ancestral men and women alike (Buss et al. 1992; Buss and Schmitt 1993; Daly, Wilson, and Weghorst 1982; Shackelford and Buss 1996b). Because of the asymmetry in certainty of genetic parentage, however, a wife's infidelity is potentially much more costly to her husband than is a husband's infidelity to his wife. The wife of a philandering man stands to lose some portion of her husband's investment to another woman. Even if she loses the bulk of his investment, however, any children she bears are unquestionably her genetic progeny. The husband of an unfaithful wife stands to lose the entire reproductive capacity of his spouse, for at least one child-bearing cycle. In addition, the unsuspecting cuckold risks investing years, even decades, of precious tangible and intangible resources in a rival's offspring.

The results suggest that men married to an unfaithful wife may have issued an ultimatum to their partner upon discovery of her extramarital activities: If you ever cheat on me again, I will divorce you. Given the potentially tremendous costs of wifely infidelity, an important question is why some men offer their adulterous partner a second chance to demonstrate fidelity. These apparently more forgiving men might receive benefits from their wife, such as more frequent sexual access, that equal or outweigh the potentially huge costs of a wife's infidelity (see Baker and Bellis 1995).

Marital Satisfaction

If anticipations of seeking divorce as a consequence of a spouse's infidelity involve taking stock of the benefits and costs of remaining married to and divorcing an adulterous partner, and if marital satisfaction negatively covaries with spousal cost-infliction, then lower marital satisfaction should predict higher likelihood estimates of divorcing an unfaithful spouse. We found support for this prediction for men's, but not women's, likelihood estimates of divorcing an unfaithful spouse. Men's general marital dissatisfaction predicted higher likelihood estimates of divorcing a wife if she flirted with another man, passionately kissed another man, or romantically dated another man.

Previous research indicates that men are more likely to end a relationship when they are sexually dissatisfied with the relationship, whereas women are more likely to end a relationship when they are emotionally dissatisfied with the relationship. In our sample, however, sexual and emotional dissatisfaction are unrelated to women's

reports that they would divorce an unfaithful husband. Furthermore, our research suggests that men's emotional dissatisfaction is more consistently predictive of anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful wife than is their sexual dissatisfaction. Failure to find the predicted sex differences in anticipated dissolution due to sexual versus emotional dissatisfaction with the marriage might be due to the use of single-item measures of unknown reliability to assess sexual and emotional dissatisfaction.

We created a composite measure of dissatisfaction using all three single-item indexes of dissatisfaction (general, sexual, and emotional). The results indicate that men's (but not women's) composite marital dissatisfaction consistently and positively covaries with their likelihood estimates of divorcing an unfaithful spouse. Men reporting greater composite marital dissatisfaction provide higher likelihood estimates of divorcing a wife if she passionately kissed another man, romantically dated another man, or had a one-night stand.

An important question for future research is why men's, but not women's, marital dissatisfaction predicts anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse. From an evolutionary psychological perspective, we might have expected results opposite to those obtained. Because a spouse's infidelity is potentially much more reproductively costly for a man than for a woman, it might have been predicted that men's, relative to women's, anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse would be less predictable from feelings of marital dissatisfaction. The reproductive costs of cuckoldry are as certain and as devastating for the maritally satisfied man as they are for the maritally dissatisfied man. A man's reproductive resources, in contrast, can be partitioned between his wife and an extramarital lover. His wife's marital satisfaction might in part track the portion of his investment that she continues to receive. A woman's anticipation of divorcing an unfaithful husband, on this account, might vary with her marital satisfaction. Women married to unfaithful men might nevertheless express marital satisfaction, proportionate to the portion of her husband's investment she continues to receive. In light of the relative clarity of evolutionary psychological predictions regarding the sex-linked association between marital satisfaction and anticipated dissolution following spousal infidelity, future work should investigate the replicability of the findings of our study.

Limitations and Conclusions

This study contained some notable limitations. First, we assessed expectations of dissolution as a consequence of spousal infidelity, rather than actual divorces filed as a consequence of spousal infidel-

ity. Not all people who predict that they would divorce an unfaithful spouse actually do. Similarly, not all people who predict that they would remain married to an adulterous spouse actually do. Developmental changes across the marital life span, such as the birth of children, may have important and unanticipated effects on the betrayed person's deliberations about whether to seek divorce as a consequence of spousal infidelity.

We have no reason to suspect, however, that likelihood estimates of divorcing an unfaithful spouse will consistently underestimate or overestimate actual divorce as a consequence of spousal infidelity. Several results of our study, such as the linkages between men's marital dissatisfaction and increased anticipation of dissolution following infidelity, mirror Buunk's (1987) findings regarding the conditions that promote *actual* dissolution as a consequence of *admitted* infidelity. Furthermore, previous research has documented significant positive covariance between anticipated and actual dissolution, more generally. In sum, anticipated dissolution as a consequence of spousal infidelity appears to be a reasonable proxy for actual dissolution as a consequence of spousal infidelity.

A second limitation pertains to the sample of couples, all of whom had married within the previous year. The nature of the sample may have occasioned reduced variance in anticipations of dissolution in response to infidelity, since the first year of marriage may be a time when individuals are least concerned not only with future infidelities, but also with the possibility of divorce, whether due primarily to infidelity or to some other cause. This range restriction would have made it more difficult to detect the predicted relationships. Restricting the range of responses on two variables forces the responses to cover a smaller range and, consequently, forces the variables to have less variance. Correlations represent an attempt to account for the variance shared by two variables. A correlation coefficient describes the linear relationship between two variables that maximally accounts for the variance shared by the variables. The less variance there is to work with, the smaller the detectable relationship will become. To the extent that the variables we assessed were range-restricted, the magnitudes of the results may be lower-bound estimates of the actual relationships between anticipated dissolution as a consequence of infidelity and the sources of spousal and relationship costs examined in this study.

We have greatly simplified the complexity of events and processes that accompany marital dissolution. In addition, we recognize that infidelity is not the only cause of divorce. Other frequently cited reasons for divorce include infertility, physical abuse, and failure to provide expected financial resources (Betzig 1989; Gottman 1994; Kelly

and Conley 1987). The present study was specifically concerned, however, with the predictability of anticipations of marital dissolution as a consequence of spousal infidelity. A single study cannot offer the final word on marital dissolution, on marital dissolution following infidelity, or even on anticipations of dissolution following infidelity. This study represents one step toward gaining a better understanding of the conditions and contexts under which infidelity might lead to marital dissolution.

The results of this study are consistent with the hypothesis that anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse involve a cost-benefit analysis by the betrayed partner in which the costs and benefits of remaining married are weighed against those of divorce. This study highlights the importance of mate value and attractiveness discrepancies, spousal sources of upset, and relationship dissatisfaction in creating conditions conducive to dissolution upon discovering a spouse's infidelity.

An evolutionary psychological perspective provides a profitable interpretational framework for the results of this study. We note, however, that many of these results are consistent with other perspectives, including equity theory and Rusbult's Investment Model of close relationships. Regardless of theoretical orientation, however, a critical direction for future research is determining whether the sources of spousal and relationship costs we have identified as important predictors of anticipations of divorcing an unfaithful spouse are similarly predictive of actual divorce filed as a consequence of a discovered infidelity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The research reported in this chapter was conducted in collaboration with David M. Buss, who also provided many helpful suggestions on a draft of this chapter.

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