

COMMUNICATION RESPONSES TO ROMANTIC JEALOUSY AND PERCEIVED
MATE VALUE IN RELATIONSHIPS: CHALLENGING EVOLUTIONARY
PERSPECTIVES ASSOCIATED WITH JEALOUSY COMMUNICATION

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my dear twin sister, Emily Kathleen Ely, who is my role model and hero, and who has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement. Thank you for believing in me and my research topic; your guidance gave me the confidence to follow my passion and pursue a thesis. I am so grateful for the unconditional love and support you have generously provided throughout my life.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined communication responses to jealousy in relation to biological sex, sexual orientation, and perceived mate value in romantic relationships by surveying 242 individuals. Evolutionary psychology is a popular theory tied to existing research on jealousy communication, attributing the origins of jealousy to an evolutionary need to procreate and care for offspring. Homosexuality adds a new perspective as partners must be of the opposite sex to naturally procreate. Perceived mate value in relationships was hypothesized to be an alternative reason for differences in communication responses to jealousy. Results indicated that differences in communication responses to jealousy vary based on sex, but sexual orientation is not related to communication responses to jealousy on its own. However, when sexual orientation was considered across sex, more nuanced patterns were revealed. Additionally, perceived mate value was found to impact men and heterosexual individuals' communication strategies. Overall, the findings support the idea that evolutionary theory alone does not offer a comprehensive explanation for communication responses, and that a dual evolutionary and social role perspective could help researchers more accurately assess communication.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to existing research on jealousy communication, people feel jealous as a result of an evolutionary need to protect their relationships against competition. Women are motivated to find a partner who can provide them with sufficient resources and men are motivated to ensure their paternity in order to support their offspring (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2011; Guerrero, Trost, & Yoshimura, 2005). Buss, Larsen, Westen, and Semmelroth (1992) concluded that feelings of jealousy are innate and have evolved as a result of evolutionary needs associated with reproduction, paternity uncertainty, and caring for offspring. Although this theory is the most frequently cited in research regarding jealousy communication, it is primarily based on the heterosexual experience and does not offer an explanation for homosexual individuals' responses to jealousy. Same-sex couples cannot procreate; thus, their jealousy is likely not due to the same evolutionary motives. Evolutionary perspective is based on psychological predispositions, and in contrast, communication is both innate and learned. Therefore, communicative responses could be better explained by also considering more social-based theories.

Researchers have considered situational and other factors that could influence jealousy experiences and responses. One such situational factor is individuals' perceived mate value. Mate value is conceptualized as individuals' perceived value in comparison to their partner in a romantic relationship (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007). People analyze their relationships by comparing themselves to their partners based on resources of value, including physical attractiveness, social status, affection, and financial

resources (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007). For example, individuals who feel they are more attractive, popular, and financially successful than their partner, are likely to have higher mate value in the relationship. Individuals who perceive themselves to have lower mate value than their partners experience more feelings of jealousy and increased levels of anxiety and insecurity (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007; Phillips, 2010). Because perceived mate value impacts how stable and confident individuals feel in a relationship, it might also differentially impact their jealousy communication.

For the purpose of this study, jealousy communication is conceptualized as individuals' communicative responses to feelings of jealousy that allow them to cope with their jealous feelings or fulfill relational goals (Guerrero, Andersen, Jorgensen, Spitzberg, & Eloy, 1995). For example, individuals may verbally demand some form of commitment, discuss their feelings with care and understanding for their partner, or avoid and ignore jealous feelings. The majority of current studies on jealousy communication are based on heterosexual individuals, male-female dyads (Guerrero, Eloy, Jorgensen, & Andersen, 1993) and convenience samples of undergraduate students (Kennedy-Lightsey & Booth-Butterfield, 2011; Goodboy & Myers, 2010; Guerrero et al., 2005). Therefore, further research and broader, inclusive samples are critical to understanding jealousy communication among homosexual and heterosexual individuals.

Purpose of Study

Comparing a broader sample of homosexual and heterosexual individuals in conjunction with an examination of mate value will add new insight to the field of

jealousy communication research. The purpose of this study is to identify whether sexual orientation and mate value discrepancy influence individuals' jealousy communication in romantic relationships. This research could challenge the extant evolutionary perspective of jealousy communication based on biological sex differences by revealing alternative causes and explanations for different communication responses. Though a review of the literature reveals substantial evidence of innate differences in men and women that could cause disparate jealousy reactions, it is also evident that a framework based on the motivations of reproduction may not account for feelings of jealousy in all romantic partnerships, especially homosexual relationships. To challenge evolutionary theory, sexual orientation and biological sex will be examined in this study to validate whether differences in communication responses to jealousy exist as a function of sex and sexual orientation. Then, in order to understand potential alternative explanations for differences in communication responses to jealousy, associations with perceived mate value will be considered. Findings from this study will (1) offer practical advice to enable individuals to better understand their communication responses to jealousy, (2) add new insight to the extant body of literature, and (3) help people better understand the limitations of research framed via an evolutionary lens.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Feelings of Jealousy

Jealous Feelings in Romantic Relationships. Jealousy can be defined as a psychological state in response to a perceived threat to a valued relationship due to a third party (Wilson & Martin, 1993). Feelings of jealousy apply to a romantic relationship when the valued relationship is considered intimate and/or sexual. It often arises because of a rival or due to a discrepancy between expectations and a partner's behavior (Bevan, 2006). White (1981) describes romantic jealousy as:

A complex of thoughts, feelings, and actions which follows threats to the existence or the quality of the relationship, when those threats are generated by the perception of a real or potential attraction between one's partner and a (perhaps imaginary) rival (p. 130).

Previous research has been conducted on physiological responses that men and women experience when thinking about two types of infidelity associated with romantic jealousy: sexual and emotional (Buss et al., 1992). Sexual infidelity is defined as engaging in a sexual activity with someone other than one's long-term partner; emotional infidelity occurs when one's partner shares romantic love, time, and affection with someone else (Shackelford, LeBlanc, & Drass, 2000). People experience feelings of jealousy when they suspect or find out infidelity has occurred because it presents a threat to their relationship (Guerrero & Afifi, 1998). Evolutionary theory offers an explanation for why infidelity is perceived as threatening.

Evolutionary Origins of Jealousy. Darwin's theory of evolution is based on the concept of natural selection, the idea that certain biological traits are more successful than others, and that these traits lead to healthier offspring and more "fit" species

(Wilson & Martin, 1993). Therefore, human beings choose mates with more desirable traits because these characteristics increase the chances of successful reproduction (Wilson & Martin, 1993). Hubble and Johnson (1987) describe people's selectivity as a function of survival of the population. Physical attraction is a sign of fertility and health, and as a result, humans choose attractive mates to ensure the successful transmission of genes (Ha, Berg, Engels, & Lichtwarck-Aschoff, 2012). Evolutionary theory proposes that jealousy arises as a natural response to sexual competition and the risk of cuckoldry (Wilson & Martin, 1993). When people experience feelings of jealousy, they feel dissatisfied with the relationship and often feel the need to react (Guerrero & Afifi, 1999). Communication is one way people express their emotions and cope with their feelings of jealousy.

Communication Responses to Jealousy

Individuals use a variety of communication strategies to manage and express their jealous feelings (Theiss & Solomon, 2006). Communication responses to jealousy serve three functions: (1) reduce uncertainty about the relationship or rival, (2) repair the relationship after jealousy has occurred, and (3) restore a jealous individual's self-esteem (Guerrero et al., 1995). Researchers have identified two different types of communicative responses to jealousy: general behavioral responses and interactive responses (Guerrero et al., 1995; Guerrero & Andersen 1998). General behavioral responses include verbal and nonverbal communication that does not involve the primary partner (for example, directly confronting the rival or acting violently towards objects). Interactive responses include verbal and nonverbal communication tactics that

involve the primary partner, and as a result, these six types are the focus of this study (Guerrero et al., 1995; Guerrero & Andersen, 1998).

Jealous individuals leverage interactive responses to invoke a reaction from their partner (Guerrero et al., 1995). Two indirect forms of interactive responses to manage jealousy include: active distancing (indirect modes of aggression) and avoidance / denial (passive strategies). Active distancing happens when individuals regulate communication with their partner in an aggressive, negative way, for example by physically pulling away, angrily ignoring, or decreasing affection (Guerrero et al., 1995). Individuals express avoidance / denial by acting passively towards their partner in non-aggressive ways, for example by pretending not to care, withdrawing, or becoming more silent (Guerrero et al., 1995).

Four direct forms of interactive, jealousy communication include: distributive strategies, violence / threats, negative affect expression, and integrative communication. Distributive communication tends to be antisocial and aimed at denigrating, offending, accusing, or attacking the partner; for example, an individual may use sarcasm, act rudely, or make demeaning comments towards their partner to try and make them feel guilt or shame (Guerrero & Andersen, 1998). Violent communication includes nonverbal actions an individual takes to physically harm his or her partner, such as aggressively grabbing or pushing him or her. This communication type also includes verbally threatening to hurt his or her partner (Guerrero et al., 1995). Individuals may choose to leverage violent and distributive communication in an effort to emphasize their anger or to express their dissatisfaction with the relationship (Andersen, Eloy, Guerrero, & Spitzberg, 1995). In addition, individuals may express their displeasure

through the use of negative affect expressions such as giving dirty looks, appearing sad or frustrated, or crying or sulking in front of a partner (Guerrero et al., 1995).

Alternatively, integrative strategies tend to be prosocial (meaning they are driven by mutual rather than individual relationship goals) and involve face-to-face disclosure and civil conversation with the partner (Guerrero et al., 1995). Asking for explanations, apologizing, calmly questioning, sharing the truth and openly discussing feelings are considered integrative communication tactics for managing jealousy (Guerrero et al., 1995). Distributive and violent communication strategies are aggressive towards the partner, negative affect expression is passive but non-confrontational, and integrative communication techniques tend to be the most peaceful and constructive (Guerrero et al., 1995).

Although it is not uncommon to mix communication strategies, individuals tend to rely on one type of response predominantly to manage their jealous feelings (Andersen et al., 1995). The type of response used is critical to maintaining or increasing relationship satisfaction; in fact, researchers found that when individuals are able to express their negative emotions about jealousy through civil and polite discussion, this expression is associated with increased satisfaction (Guerrero & Afifi, 1999). In addition, communication about jealousy can help partners renegotiate relational rules and express how much they value each other (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007). Integrative communication and negative affect expression are cited as the most effective strategies for expressing feelings and increasing relationship satisfaction after jealousy occurred (Andersen et al., 1995; Guerrero & Afifi, 1999). Distributive communication and active distancing approaches led to less satisfaction in the relationship (Andersen et

al., 1995). Bearing in mind that communication responses to jealousy influence relationship satisfaction, it is valuable to understand what causes people to use different types of responses (Bevan & Lannutti, 2002). In line with evolutionary theory, some scholars believe differences in jealousy communication are in direct response to biological factors, such as sex (Guerrero & Reiter, 1998; Aylor & Dainton, 2001).

Biological Sex Differences in Jealousy Communication

Feelings of jealousy must be present for the occurrence of communication responses to jealousy; thus, it is important to examine differences in the feelings experienced. The extant literature states that jealousy in romantic relationships can be tied to suspicion or fears related to either emotional or sexual infidelity (Buss, et al., 1992). The majority of existing studies indicate sex differences in the types of infidelity that cause the most arousal; men experience higher arousal when imagining sexual infidelity and women experience greater arousal when imagining emotional infidelity. Buss et al. (1992) theorized that men react more to sexual infidelity due to paternity uncertainty and to avoid cuckoldry (because fertilization occurs internally within females). In contrast, women experience higher arousal from emotional infidelity because they risk the potential loss of support from the male partner in terms of time, resources, and commitment that is necessary to properly care for offspring. Differences in investment exist between men and women because although men may invest minimally by having intercourse, women will carry the offspring for nine months (Ha et al., 2012) and are primarily responsible for their offspring's care and survival. Thus, men's and women's feelings of jealousy are argued to be innate and have evolved as a

result of evolutionary needs associated with paternity uncertainty, investment, and caring for offspring (Buss et al., 1992).

Past research has revealed several sex differences in communicative responses to jealousy, many of which align with evolutionary theory (Guerrero & Reiter, 1998; Aylor & Dainton, 2001). Men were found to have engaged in more rival contacts and aggressive behavior (distributive communication) and women reported using integrative communication and negative affect expression most often when they felt jealous (Guerrero & Reiter, 1998). Males also leverage violent communication / threats more than women, for example, by ending or threatening to end marriages as a result of romantic jealousy (White, 1981). Under the evolutionary perspective, men are desired for their physical strength and ability to protect women and children, which could explain why men are more likely to leverage violent behavior. Women's preference for integrative and negative affect expression is also evolutionarily consistent given that females are seen as the primary care-takers for offspring and are more relationally-focused. Face-to-face, prosocial discussion (integrative) may therefore come more easily to women. Additionally, negative affect is another direct response type but it is much less aggressive and argumentative than distributive communication. Women reported enhancing their appearance more when they felt jealous, which is consistent with men's preference for a reproductively fit mate. In contrast, jealous men were more likely to give gifts or spend extra money on their partner, which is consistent with women's evolutionary attraction to resources (Guerrero & Reiter, 1998).

Alternatively, some have considered the influence of gender on communication responses to jealousy by studying differences associated with various levels of

femininity and masculinity (Aylor & Dainton, 2001). Individuals who are more masculine tend to use distributive communication, manipulation attempts, rival contacts, signs of possession, and violence. Those who are more feminine more frequently leverage integrative communication (Aylor & Dainton, 2001). Through the evolutionary lens, masculinity and femininity align with biological sex. Therefore, this research supports the concept that communication happens because of the motivation to respond to jealous feelings to minimize threat to the relationship, thus increasing the likelihood of successful reproduction and long-term care for offspring.

Men and women who are homosexual (meaning they romantically desire people of the same sex) naturally challenge this rationale based on evolutionary sex differences because they are not motivated to choose an opposite sex partner with whom they can reproduce. A recent study examined same sex involvement, characterizing it as “context-free” (i.e., the “context” of reproduction is not possible) (Sagarin, Becker, Guadagno, Nicastle, & Millevoi, 2003). Specifically, there were fewer differences in feelings of jealousy among male and female homosexuals in comparison to male and female heterosexuals (Sagarin et al., 2003). Before delving into the research pertaining to jealousy communication and sexual orientation, it is important to understand the origins of homosexuality and its biological nature.

Sexual Orientation and Jealousy Communication

Origin of Sexual Orientation. Some people believe homosexuality is a choice or develops as a result of social factors (nurture), but research findings over the last three decades indicate biological differences between homosexual and heterosexual individuals that are present at birth and when a baby is still in the womb (Money, 1987).

Scientists have collected substantial data exploring three features (brain tissue, hormones, and genes) that address the biological nature of sexual orientation (Chernin & Holden, 1995). Bailey, Pillard, Neale, and Agyei (1993) found a significantly higher rate of homosexuality among identical and fraternal twins, supporting the claim that sexual orientation is hereditary. Other researchers have found genetic deviations in homosexuals that were not found in heterosexuals (Ellis & Ames, 1987) in addition to prenatal hormonal differences that influence sexual orientation later in life (Money, 1987). Ellis and Ames (1987) indicated that sexual orientation is a result of a complex combination of hormonal, genetic, and neurological elements operating before birth, despite the fact that an individual's orientation is not activated until puberty. Overall, researchers have clearly indicated biological links to homosexuality, challenging the notion that sexual orientation is a choice. These findings call into question how homosexuality fits with evolutionary theory that is founded on the experience of heterosexuals (Chernin & Holden, 1995).

Differences in Jealousy Communication Based on Sexual Orientation.

Although the majority of published studies on jealousy and communication responses to jealousy consist of heterosexual samples, homosexuals have been discussed in more recent publications. In these articles, the authors make the assumption that although their preference in mates is different, homosexuals' jealousy inclinations parallel those of heterosexuals of their own sex, such that homosexual women communicate about jealousy most similarly to heterosexual woman (Sheets & Wolfe, 2001; Harris, 2002). In support, Harris (2002) found that lesbians were consistent with the beliefs of heterosexual women that emotional infidelity is worse than sexual

infidelity. To further explore this limited research, the following research questions were developed:

RQ1a: Do feelings of jealousy differ based on a person's biological sex?

RQ1b: Do feelings of jealousy differ based on a person's sexual orientation?

The extant research on communication responses to jealousy reveals that gay men, lesbians, and heterosexual women tend to respond with less distress to sexual infidelity than do heterosexual men (Sheets & Wolfe, 2001). One study that examined same-sex and opposite-sex relationships found that only two communication responses were significantly different between the groups: manipulation attempts and violent communication / threats (Bevan & Lannutti, 2002). Manipulation attempts (e.g., trying to make the partner feel jealous or offended) have been studied as a unique form of jealousy communication, but are also considered to fall into the direct distributive communication category (Guerrero et al., 1995). Gay men were more likely to verbally threaten or physically harm their partner than heterosexual males, and lesbians were less likely to use manipulation attempts than heterosexuals or gay men, yet no differences were found with the other types of responses (Bevan & Lannutti, 2002). Another study found that gay males were more likely to seek out third parties, more likely to withdraw and act as if nothing was wrong (avoidance / denial), and less likely to confront the partner directly and engage in a conversation about their concerns (integrative communication) compared to heterosexual men (Bringle, 1995). Additional research is critical to validate these findings and further explore communication responses to jealousy based on sex and sexual orientation. Therefore, the following research questions were developed:

RQ2a: Do communication responses to romantic jealousy differ for men and women?

RQ2b: Do communication responses to romantic jealousy differ for homosexual and heterosexual individuals?

In addition to understanding these communication responses to jealousy based on sex and sexual orientation, it is also important to understand whether differences exist within each sex, across sexual orientations, as well as within each sexual orientation, across sex; thus the following questions are posed:

RQ3a: Do communication responses to romantic jealousy differ between homosexual and heterosexual women?

RQ3b: Do communication responses to romantic jealousy differ between homosexual and heterosexual men?

RQ3c: Do communication responses to romantic jealousy differ between heterosexual men and women?

RQ3d: Do communication responses to romantic jealousy differ between homosexual men and women?

Whereas research points to evolutionary theory as the primary cause for sex differences in jealousy communication in male-female dyads, homosexuality naturally challenges this perspective. Thus, it is possible that other factors contribute to relational jealousy and communication responses to jealousy.

Perceived Mate Value and Jealousy Communication

Mate value discrepancy is regarded by researchers as the inequity of individuals' perceptions of their partners' attractiveness and value (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield,

2007). People analyze their relationships by comparing themselves to their partner based on resources of value, including physical attractiveness, social status, affection, offering services, and financial resources (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007) and compete for the most desirable mates they can gain (Ben Hamida, Mineka & Bailey, 1998).

Individuals also assess their value in the relationship by comparing their own characteristics with those of a rival who they fear may seek the attention of their partner (Dijkstra & Buunk, 2002), which is consistent with feelings of jealousy. Aligning with evolutionary theory, mate value has been defined as one's observable characteristics that indicate genetic quality or fitness that lead to reproductive success (Fisher, Cox, Bennett, & Gavric, 2008). Meltzer, McNulty, Jackson, and Karney (2014) refer to this as "sexual selection theory" and explain that mate preferences and behaviors adapted over time to meet reproductive challenges. Moreover, the authors claim that people prefer mates who possess qualities indicative of providing resources and care for children (Meltzer et al., 2014).

Masculinity has been examined as a particularly important variable because it signals the ability to protect a mate and offspring, while physical attractiveness signifies good health and thus, an ability to produce healthy offspring (Kohl & Robertson, 2014). Also in line with evolutionary theory, heterosexual men find their mates to have more value as a function of their youth and attractiveness, and heterosexual women find their mates to have more value as a function of their economic potential (Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Ben Hamida et al., 1998). As a result, heterosexual men tend to feel more jealous (and thus, less mate value) in response to a rival's status-related characteristics, and

heterosexual women tend to feel more jealous (and thus, less mate value) in response to a rival's physical good looks (Dijkstra & Buunk, 2002).

Past research has presented a narrow view of mate value, with a focus on single items like physical desirability and economic potential; few studies have taken into consideration factors such as, parenting ability, fear of failure, relationship history, the desire to have children, or willingness to provide one's resources to a mate or offspring (Fisher et al., 2008). Self-esteem is one variable that has been integrated into measuring mate value because it is so closely tied to perceived value; in fact, the original "Self Perceived Mating Success Scale" (Landolt, Lalumiere, & Quinsey, 1995) considered self-esteem as a predictor of perceived mate value (Fisher et al., 2008).

Other studies indicate that relationship experience should be considered to understand attraction and jealousy in relationships. A body of research has provided evidence that males over-perceive females' sexual interest, hypothesizing that this happens because men cannot afford to pass up sexual partners, thus missing opportunities to reproduce. Some disagree and instead postulate that past experiences and socio-sexual (casual, short-term mating) relationships reinforce men's feelings of attractiveness causing men to feel increased confidence in how women perceive them in general (Kohl & Robertson, 2014). In other words, more recent studies suggest that relationship history and experience impact perceptions of men's sexual interest instead of men over-perceiving due to a biological predisposition (Kohl & Robertson, 2014). As a result, relationship history could also impact jealousy and communication responses to jealousy. While the defining characteristics of mate value could be expanded on, scholars should also consider it through the lens of homosexuality and take into account

qualities that may be desirable regardless of one's sexual orientation. Including homosexual individuals in future research could help more holistically capture what individuals consider to be of value in a partner.

Homosexuals Seek Mate Value in Partners. Although homosexual individuals may desire a child of their own, they are still motivated to be romantically involved with partners of the same-sex despite the fact that they cannot naturally procreate with that person. Moreover, homosexuals and heterosexuals judge themselves and potential partners based on the same characteristics (Ha et al., 2012). This challenges the notion that individuals choose mates based on characteristics that indicate reproductive success, and suggests that mate value may not solely align with evolutionary psychology. Phillips (2010) defines mate value more broadly as an individual's overall attractiveness (physical and other) as a spouse, which presents a more appropriate explanation for mate desirability among homosexuals. In addition, qualities a person possesses that are desired by others may also be relevant factors when considering mate value (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2009). Challenging evolutionary perspectives, several studies have revealed that homosexual and heterosexual individuals have similar mate preferences, showing similar levels of desire for attractive and high social status partners (Ha et al., 2012; Lippa, 2007). Preferences were similar among homosexual and heterosexual men and among homosexual and heterosexual women, and supports research reporting sex differences in mate value (Lippa, 2007). Small differences were found in rankings of traits based on sexual orientation; for example, gay men tended to emphasize age more than heterosexual men, and lesbian women ranked intelligence as more important in a partner than heterosexual women did (Lippa, 2007). Although the research is limited,

very few scholars have also examined how perceived mate value influences jealousy and communication responses.

Mate Value as an Influence on Jealousy Communication. Past studies indicate that having a partner with higher mate value increases feelings of jealousy because individuals with less value feel more of a threat of loss (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007). Even though individuals with less value experience more jealousy, they are more likely to give the other person more allowances and be more forgiving in an attempt to maintain the relationship with the person of perceived higher value (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007). For example, because heterosexual men perceive physical looks as a primary indicator of high mate value, if a male feels his significant other is more attractive, he is likely to avoid or deny any jealous feelings that arise.

Although the literature on mate value is limited, the findings align with *the principle of least interest*, which is the phenomenon that one person in the romantic relationship is usually more emotionally involved than the other, and that the less involved partner tends to exploit the more involved partner (Sprecher, Schmeekle, & Feilmlee, 2006). The notion that lower perceived mate value causes an individual to give more allowances to their partner aligns with the principle that a person who is less interested in the relationship has more control (Waller, 1937). For instance, individuals who feel they have greater mate value than their romantic partners are more likely to be up front and direct about their jealousy, utilizing distributive, negative affect, and integrative communication techniques (Phillips, 2010). Given the limited existing

research, the following research question was developed to better understand the effects of mate value on communication responses to jealousy:

RQ4a: Do individuals' perceptions of their mate value influence their communication responses to jealousy differently based on sex?

RQ4b: Do individuals' perceptions of their mate value influence their communication responses to jealousy differently based on their sexual orientation?

If perceived mate value is found to influence communication responses differently based on sex or sexual orientation, the following question will provide further exploration into understanding these associations.

RQ4c: Do associations between perceived mate value and the different types of communication responses to jealousy vary in strength?

In response to infidelity, lower levels of mate value have been associated with increased levels of anxiety and insecurity, which supports the notion that the distress felt due to infidelity is moderated by perceived mate value (Phillips, 2010). Because homosexuality is less common than heterosexuality and has been historically stigmatized in the United States (Herek, 1991, 1992), many homosexuals purposely hide their identity and prefer to be thought of as heterosexual at times (Cain, 1991). As a result, researchers should explore whether or not homosexuals ascribe lower mate value to themselves than heterosexuals would, feeling their sexual orientation is less accepted overall in society, and thus, impacting their perceived value.

Some scholars have studied mate preferences of homosexual individuals and concluded that social rather than biological factors shape preferences people value in

mates, considering that biological reproduction of offspring is not possible for two homosexual individuals. Eagly and Wood (1999), considered how mate value varied across 37 different cultures. Their research indicated mate preferences align with evolutionary findings in patriarchal, traditional societies (such as those found in the Western world), but in more egalitarian cities, the sex differences were not as pronounced, suggesting that societal norms and expectations impact mate value (Eagly, 1995). The following research questions were developed to explore the differences in mate value between heterosexuals and homosexuals based on sex:

RQ5a: Do heterosexual men perceive themselves to have higher mate value in romantic relationships than homosexual men?

RQ5b: Do heterosexual women perceive themselves to have higher mate value in romantic relationships than homosexual women?

This research is posed to challenge evolutionary perspectives associated with sex differences in jealousy communication by investigating the influence of sexual orientation and perceived mate value. Further exploration of these relationships could add new insight to the extant body of literature and offer people a better understanding of jealousy expression.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The previous chapter proposed five sets of research questions. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods and procedures used to test these research questions. The chapter is divided into three sections: participants are described, procedures related to data collection are outlined, and the third section focuses on how the variables were measured.

Participants

This study consisted of 242 participants (108 males and 134 females, of which included 51 heterosexual men, 57 homosexual men, 77 heterosexual women, and 57 homosexual women). The average age for all participants was 34.64 ($SD = 10.40$, $median = 31$). All but seven participants were either currently in a romantic relationship ($n = 192$) or had been in a romantic relationship within the past two years ($n = 43$). Out of the 192 individuals currently in romantic relationships, 37 (19.3%) were together one year or less, 66 (34.4%) were together two to five years, 30 (15.6%) were together six to nine years, and 59 (30.7%) were together 10 or more years.

The 50 individuals who were not currently in a romantic relationship were asked how long their most recent relationship had been. Compared to those currently in relationships, those recalling past relationships indicated shorter lengths of time with their last partner: 33 (66%) were together one year or less, 12 (24%) were together for two to three years, and 5 (10%) were together for 10 or more years. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics for participants.

Procedures

The participants were required to be over 18 years old and be in or have been in a romantic relationship to participate. Due to the complexity that accompanies collecting a homosexual sample, participants were collected from the following sources: LGBTQ online forums, LGBTQIA student organizations on two southern university campuses, lesbian and gay “meetups” and events hosted by the Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce in a large metropolitan area. In addition, to gather both homosexual and heterosexual volunteers, the researcher made Facebook posts and solicited referrals from friends, classmates, and professional acquaintances. Snowball sampling was leveraged to increase the sample size. For example, after participants took the survey they were asked to provide the names of several family members or friends that might be willing to participate.

Following consent, participants were asked to complete an online questionnaire. Participants were provided a link to the online survey which was created using [qualtrics.com](https://www.qualtrics.com). Four hundred and eight individuals voluntarily participated in the research study. Anyone who did not complete the survey or who completed it in less than six minutes was dropped from the study as completing the survey under six minutes was considered an insufficient amount of time to thoughtfully consider and respond to the questionnaire items.

Measures

The survey was comprised of three scales that measured the primary variables of the study: perceived mate value, feelings of jealousy, and communication responses to jealousy. Table 2 summarizes Cronbach’s alphas for each measure.

Mate Value. Landolt, Lalumière, and Quinsey's (1995) original Mate Desirability Scale was used to measure perceived mate value, which is conceptualized as the value one person feels they have in comparison to their romantic partner. The scale measures how people analyze their relationships by comparing themselves to their partner based on rewards versus costs. Since this scale was developed, researchers proposed new sub-scales to measure other factors influencing mate value: sociality, parenting, wealth, looks, fear of failure, and relationship history (Fisher et al., 2008). These sub-scales were more recently developed and research continues to show that variance is best explained by the original measure, and therefore, Landolt et al.'s (1995) scale is the one utilized for this study.

The scale measures how an individual feels members of the sex they are interested in perceive them (heterosexuals are judging how the opposite sex perceives them and homosexuals are judging how the same sex perceives them). Sample items included: "I can have as many sexual partners as I choose" and "Members of the sex that I like notice me." For this study, participants gauged the mate value they prescribed to themselves in a relationship by answering questions on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale. The original reliability of this scale was $\alpha = .83$ (Landolt et al., 1995). In addition, to supplement the scale, participants were asked to think about themselves and their current or most recent partner and rank who they felt was more desirable as a long-term partner.

Jealousy. Participants responded to questions on Pfeiffer and Wong's (1989) Jealousy Scale about how often certain thoughts about their current or most recent partner occurred. Sample items included: "I think that some other people may be

romantically interested in him/her” and “I suspect that s/he is secretly seeing someone else.” Participants were asked to indicate their level of jealousy by responding to statements on a 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*) scale. The original reliability of this scale was $\alpha = .92$ (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989). In addition to the Jealousy Scale, participants answered four questions to assess how often they felt jealous, overall how jealous they felt, and which type of infidelity (emotional and sexual) made them feel more jealous. Under the context of their current or most recent relationship, participants were asked “how often did you feel jealous?” on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 7 (*very often*) and “overall, how jealous did you feel?” on a scale of 1 (*not at all jealous*) to 7 (*very jealous*). They were also asked to respond to the following statements on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale: “I tend to feel most jealous if I suspect my partner is emotionally unfaithful to me” and “I tend to feel most jealous if I suspect my partner is sexually unfaithful to me.”

Communication Responses to Jealousy. Guerrero et al.’s (1995) Communication Responses to Jealousy Scale was adapted for this study and included two primary sub-scales: indirect communication responses to jealousy, which includes active distancing and avoidance / denial techniques, and direct communication responses to jealousy, which includes distributive communication and negative affect expression techniques. Although integrative communication falls under the direct communication category, this sub-scale was assessed separately because of its unique nature as the most neutral, constructive response type. Participants were asked to respond to items on a 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*) scale by indicating what they did when they felt jealous. Examples of indirect scale items are “when I felt jealous I acted like I didn’t care” and “when I felt jealous I

physically pulled away from my partner.” Examples of direct scale items are “when I felt jealous I quarreled or argued with my partner” and “when I felt jealous I displayed insecurity to my partner.” Examples of integrative scale items are “when I felt jealous I explained my feelings to my partner” and “when I felt jealous I tried to talk about the problem and reach an understanding.” Guerrero et al. (1995) found the following reliabilities for the individual sub-scales: integrative communication ($\alpha = .83$), active distancing ($\alpha = .83$), avoidance/denial ($\alpha = .75$), distributive communication ($\alpha = .83$), and negative affect ($\alpha = .82$).

Demographic Items. Nominal questions were included to capture demographic information. Participants were asked their age, sex, sexual orientation, and the length of their current or most recent relationship.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Upon reviewing the methods and procedures used to test the research questions outlined in the literature review, chapter 4 explains how analyses were conducted and offers an explanation of the research findings. This chapter is organized by the research questions that guided the study.

The first research question asked whether feelings of jealousy differed based on people's biological sex (RQ1a) or sexual orientation (RQ1b). T-tests were run to determine if differences exist based on the jealousy scale. Results associated with RQ1a revealed that feelings of jealousy do not differ between males ($M = 2.55, SD = 1.17$) and females ($M = 2.37, SD = 1.28$), $t(240) = 1.14, ns$. In conjunction, results associated with RQ1b revealed that feelings of jealousy do not differ between homosexual individuals ($M = 2.50, SD = 1.25$) and heterosexual individuals ($M = 2.41, SD = 1.23$), $t(240) = -.60, ns$.

Exploratory *t*-tests were also run to further understand how often participants felt jealous, the level of their jealousy, and which type of unfaithfulness made them feel more jealous. Results from these exploratory analyses indicated that there was no difference in the frequency of jealousy, level of jealousy, or jealousy resulting from sexual or emotional infidelity based on either sex (see Table 3) or sexual orientation (see Table 4).

The second and third set of research questions asked about communication responses to romantic jealousy and whether differences existed based on biological sex (RQ2a), sexual orientation (RQ2b), sexual orientation within biological sex (RQ3a and

RQ3b), and biological sex within sexual orientation (RQ3c and RQ3d). Results of the t-test analyses for RQ2a indicated that direct and integrative communication responses to jealousy differ based on sex. Specifically, females ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.18$) utilize direct response types more often than males ($M = 2.32$, $SD = .98$), $t(240) = -2.89$, $p < .005$. Females ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 1.33$) also utilize integrative communication responses to jealousy more often than males ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.40$), $t(240) = -4.84$, $p < .001$. Results revealed that indirect communication responses to jealousy do not differ between females ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.10$) and males ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.05$), $t(240) = -.65$, *ns*.

T-tests were then run to assess differences based on sexual orientation (RQ2b). Results indicated that none of the types of communication responses to jealousy differ based on sexual orientation, such that direct communication does not differ between heterosexual ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 1.16$) and homosexual individuals ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.06$), $t(240) = .61$, *ns*, indirect communication does not differ between heterosexual ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.06$) and homosexual individuals ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 1.10$), $t(240) = -.08$, *ns*, and integrative communication does not differ between heterosexual ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.39$) and homosexual individuals ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.47$), $t(240) = -.59$, *ns*. Thus, communication responses to romantic jealousy appear to differ based on biological sex, but do not vary based on sexual orientation.

To further examine the role of biological sex, participants were split into separate data files according to their sex, and t-tests were run examining whether differences in communication responses to jealousy exist based on sexual orientation among women (RQ3a) and among men (RQ3b). The results indicated that there are no differences based on sexual orientation for women (see Table 5) or men (see Table 6).

Similarly, to further examine the role of sexual orientation, participants were split into separate data files according to their sexual orientation, and t-tests were run examining whether differences in communication responses to jealousy exist based on biological sex for heterosexual individuals (RQ3c) and homosexual individuals (RQ3d). The results indicated that heterosexual females express significantly greater direct and integrative communication responses to jealousy compared to heterosexual men (see Table 7). Moreover, homosexual females express significantly greater integrative communication responses to jealousy compared to homosexual men (see Table 8).

To summarize, women in general report greater direct and integrative communication responses to jealousy compared to men. When this difference is examined by sexual orientation, parallel results are found for heterosexual women. Alternatively, homosexual women only report greater integrative, but not direct, communication responses to jealousy compared to homosexual men. There were no differences for sexual orientation in general or when considering sex differences within sexual orientation.

Correlation analyses were conducted to examine whether perceived mate value was associated with communication responses to jealousy differently based on sex (RQ4a) or sexual orientation (RQ4b). Results revealed that perceived mate value is associated with communication responses to jealousy, but that the correlations vary between men and women, and between heterosexuals and homosexuals (see Table 9). Specifically, among men, perceived mate value is significantly, negatively correlated with direct and indirect communication responses to jealousy, but is not correlated with integrative communication responses. In contrast, results revealed that females'

perceptions of mate value are not associated with any of the three communication responses to jealousy. The correlation analyses that were run on separate files based on sexual orientation revealed that among heterosexual individuals, perceived mate value is significantly, positively associated with integrative communication responses to jealousy, but is not correlated with direct or indirect communication responses. Homosexual individuals' perceptions of mate value are not associated with any of the three communication types. In summary, males who ascribe higher mate value to themselves engage in *less* direct and indirect communication types when they experience jealousy. In contrast, heterosexuals who ascribe higher mate value to themselves engage in *more* integrative communication types when they experience jealousy.

Given the significant, negative correlation for males between perceived mate value and direct and indirect communication types, further tests were run to assess whether the strength of these associations significantly differed (RQ4c). The VassarStats Correlation Coefficient Difference calculator was used to compute a Fisher r-to-z transformation to determine whether a significant difference existed between the correlation coefficients (Lowry, 2014). The association between mate value and direct communication is not significantly different from the association between mate value and indirect communication among males, $z = -.23$, *ns*. A parallel analysis was not conducted for females given the lack of a significant correlation among mate value and communication responses to jealousy among women.

Another research question asked whether perceived mate value differed based on sexual orientation for men (RQ5a) or women (RQ5b). Results from *t*-tests revealed that

perceived mate value does not differ between homosexual men ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.29$) and heterosexual men ($M = 4.60$, $SD = .92$), $t(101) = -1.23$, $p = ns$. In contrast, the results for women revealed that heterosexual women ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.11$) reported perceiving themselves to have higher mate value than homosexual women ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 1.01$), $t(132) = .54$, $p < .05$.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results of the present study. The first section reviews the argument set forth in the thesis. The second section offers interpretations of the research question results and the third discusses their implications. The fourth section of this chapter addresses limitations of this study. The fifth section offers possible directions for future research. Finally, a summary of the chapter is provided.

Review of Argument

The purpose of this study was to examine whether biological sex, sexual orientation, and mate value discrepancy impact individuals' jealousy communication in romantic relationships. This thesis presented an argument in two parts: 1) the evolutionary perspective that is prominent within the extant literature may be too limiting of a lens through which to view jealousy communication, and 2) mate value discrepancy may offer an alternative explanation for differences in jealousy communication. To support the first part of the argument, the following claims were set forth. First, evolutionary theory is based on the heterosexual experience and an innate desire to reproduce. Homosexuality naturally challenges this framework because individuals of the same sex cannot biologically reproduce, yet still desire and maintain romantic relationships with same-sex partners (Wilson & Martin, 1993). More specifically, the evolutionary perspective offers an explanation for why infidelity is perceived as threatening and invokes jealous feelings, but only for heterosexual individuals (Guerrero & Afifi, 1998). Furthermore, the evolutionary framework does not account for qualities that may be desirable in a partner that are not tied to reproducing or

supporting offspring, such as relationship experience, emotional involvement, and parenting abilities (Phillips, 2010).

Mate value discrepancy was considered as an alternative explanation for differences in individuals' jealousy communication for several reasons. First, within romantic relationships there is often one partner who feels they have greater value in the relationship, and this discrepancy impacts how partners communicate their feelings of jealousy with one another (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007). Second, although the word "mate" is derived from "mating," more recent research suggests that mate value is about partnership, overall attractiveness, and value sought in relationships, and is not limited to reproductive success characteristics (Phillips, 2010). Additionally, homosexuals judge themselves and potential partners on the same characteristics that heterosexuals judge themselves and their partners by (Ha et al., 2012). This suggests mate value may encompass more holistic characteristics, rather than attributes tied to reproducing offspring and biological sex (Ha et al., 2012).

Research questions were designed to validate existing literature on sex differences in jealousy communication, examine whether or not there are differences based on sexual orientation, and assess how sexual orientation and mate value discrepancy influence jealousy communication. The next section offers a discussion of the results associated with each research question.

Summary of Research Questions

Results associated with the first research question indicated no difference in feelings of jealousy based on biological sex or sexual orientation. This was true for frequency of and levels of jealous feelings (more or less jealousy felt) and the type of

infidelity that would cause most jealousy (sexual or emotional infidelity). In other words, this suggests that people experience jealousy similarly regardless of their biological sex or sexual orientation.

The results from this research question have the potential to challenge the evolutionary perspective often tied to jealousy given that no differences were found for frequency or level of jealousy based on sex or sexual orientation. Evolutionary theory is rooted in the argument that people experience romantic jealousy when they fear or know their partner has been unfaithful because infidelity is a threat to paternal certainty and reproductive success (Buss et al., 1992). The majority of the extant literature shows that men experience greater jealousy when imagining sexual infidelity, while women experience greater jealousy when imagining emotional infidelity (Buss et al., 1992). Similarly, this study revealed no difference between men and women when asked which type of infidelity caused them to feel most jealous.

The contrasting results found in this thesis could be a result of the inclusive sample. Most research on the topic has been based on heterosexual samples and has not accounted for homosexual experiences. Given that this sample included heterosexual and homosexual individuals, it accounted for how men and women feel in general without the constraint of a heterosexist sample. That is, it appears that homosexual individuals experience jealousy similarly to heterosexuals and as a result, jealousy may not be as tied to mating and reproductive motivations often referenced in the past (Wilson & Martin, 1993).

Though individuals were not found to be different based on sex or sexual orientation with regard to their feelings of jealousy, communication responses to

jealousy produced varying results. This discrepancy indicates that the interaction does not directly align with innate feelings, and therefore, the psychological components (feelings) do not necessarily predict communication. Moreover, this identifies the social environment as a critical factor in influencing communication and challenges evolutionary perspectives that are rooted in pre-disposed, innate traits. Past research alluded to several differences in communication responses to jealousy based on sex and sexual orientation. For example, research indicated that men use more aggressive behavior (distributive, a form of direct communication) and women leverage integrative communication and negative affect (also forms of direct communication) more often (Guerrero & Reiter, 1998). The results from this study were relatively consistent with the extant literature; females leverage direct and integrative communication more often, yet some inconsistencies were found within men. Contradicting past findings regarding aggressive behaviors (distributive), males were not found to use direct communication more often than females. For the purpose of this study, direct communication encompassed both distributive and negative affect response types together because these two types share similar antisocial, manipulative characteristics. Future research should study distributive and negative affect response types separately to examine other potential nuances. The contrasting finding in men could be a result of this combination of response types being examined together. It is important to note that this research also suggests that distributive jealousy was not found to be as strong of a strategy used by men, or else women would not have been found to leverage direct more often (because direct includes both types). Because women were found to use direct communication more often than men, this includes both distributive and negative affect types, alluding

to a stronger connection among women that outweighs any men's use of distributive. Additionally, this result could be due to a more diverse sample that includes both homosexual and heterosexual men and women, which presents a somewhat different picture than a sample based only on heterosexual men.

The few researchers who have examined jealousy communication under the context of sexual orientation have made contradictory conclusions; some studies have reported that gay men are more likely to use indirect and integrative communication tactics (Bringle, 1995), while others claimed homosexual men use direct communication most often (Bevan & Lannutti, 2002). Additionally, lesbians were found to engage in less distributive, direct communication in response to jealous feelings (Bevan & Lannutti, 2002). In contrast to the limited existing research, the results from this study revealed that sexual orientation is not related to communication responses to jealousy on its own. These results do not resolve the existing inconsistencies for sexual orientation in general; however, when sexual orientation was considered across sex, more nuanced patterns were revealed.

Heterosexual females use direct and integrative communication more often than heterosexual males (which is consistent with the aforementioned findings based on sex and the existing literature), whereas homosexual females use integrative, but not direct, communication more often than homosexual males (which is also consistent with the findings referenced above). These results indicate that women certainly have a preference for integrative communication in general. Yet, while heterosexual women are more direct compared to heterosexual men, homosexual women are not significantly different from homosexual men in terms of their directness. Under the evolutionary lens,

this nuance in women may have developed naturally in relation to the sex-related differences in women. There is evidence that women overall are predisposed to leverage integrative communication more often than men; this could be because females are more relationally focused as the caregivers for children and their families, and therefore, are more likely to use communication tactics that are prosocial and relational in nature. The variance based on sexual orientation could be explained by examining the female homosexual relationship dynamic itself; because women are pre-disposed to leverage integrative communication (and a homosexual female relationship consists of two women) perhaps they are more prone to leverage this type, rather than using direct or other forms of communication. This pattern of results validates and reiterates sex differences in communication responses to jealousy that are consistent with the previous research but offers some insight into these sex differences as they occur among individuals of the same sexual orientation. The difference found with direct communication should be further examined to understand why heterosexual women leverage direct strategies more than heterosexual men, but that direct was not found to be different between homosexual men and women. Perhaps living in a heterosexist society has influenced homosexuals of both sexes to use less direct communication overall. Future research should explore why homosexual men and women do not differ in direct communication and what evolutionary or social impacts can explain this difference.

These unique distinctions disappear, however, when considering sexual orientation across sex. In this case, there are no differences in communication responses to jealousy among homosexual versus heterosexual men or among homosexual versus heterosexual

women. Due to this, sex differences are likely unrelated to evolutionary heterosexual motives. If heterosexual reproductive motives drove sex differences in communication, homosexuals would have been found to have different patterns of communication. Instead, the results revealed no differences based on sexual orientation.

Some researchers have claimed that sex differences evolved due to *both* evolutionary psychology and social role theory, and that a clear picture of sex differences cannot be seen without considering the role of environmental *and* biological factors (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Archer (1996) suggested a co-evolutionary approach to account for cross-cultural sex differences in social behavior, stating that it is impossible to remove biology, just as it is to remove the environment. Wilson and Martin (1993) contributed to the “nature” versus “nurture” conversation by suggesting that you cannot have one without the other because biology influences social structure and in turn, social factors impact the evolution of innate, genetic mechanisms. These scholars offer an explanation accounting for the fact that sex differences in communication might exist outside the realm of biological, evolutionary motives. This study investigated mate value discrepancy as a potential factor influencing communication responses to jealousy.

Analysis of the fourth research question showed that only men and heterosexual individuals communicate differently about jealousy depending on their perceived mate value. Mate value and communication responses to jealousy were not correlated among women or homosexuals. Men engage in greater direct and indirect communication responses to jealousy when they perceive themselves to have lower mate value (and less direct and indirect communication when they perceive themselves to have greater mate value). Heterosexuals engage in more integrative communication responses to jealousy

when they perceive themselves to have higher mate value (and engage in less integrative communication when they perceive themselves to have lower mate value). It is important to note the discrepancy in these two findings: both homosexuals and heterosexuals were included in the sample of men, and both men and women were included in the heterosexual sample, yet the results do not align. Based on the findings associated with the third research question and the higher means found in women, it could be that females are driving this curious finding.

Although the research findings are limited, a few studies suggested that higher perceived mate value is associated with having more control in the relationship and more of an advantage, and therefore those who have high mate value are more likely to be up front and direct about their feelings of jealousy (Phillips, 2010; Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007). The thesis results are somewhat, but not completely, contradictory to this idea. The association tied to heterosexuality mirrored these findings, such that, heterosexuals leverage more integrative communication if they perceive themselves to have high mate value. Among homosexuals, no correlation between mate value and communication responses were found, which could be a result of the nature of the mate value scale questions. The questions in the mate value scale relate to reproductive success characteristics, and therefore, may not apply to homosexual individuals in the same way. The results associated with this research question also showed that men with high mate value reported using direct and indirect communication responses to jealousy less often. One reason for this pattern could be that men with high mate value feel less of a need to communicate their feelings overall because they already have more relational power. In support, men with lower perceived

mate value might communicate more to save the relationship because their partner is of greater value to them; therefore, they have more incentive to reach out and discuss their feelings in an attempt to solidify, improve, or strengthen the relationship (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Given this finding, it is important to examine explanations for why men were the only ones impacted.

An explanation could be related to societal expectations for men to be masculine, and thus, less revealing of their emotions. Masculinity tends to denote characteristics of confidence, assertiveness, and less disclosure of feelings (Sayers & Baucom, 1991) and has been tied to decreased communication in relationships (Wood & Inman, 1993). It should be noted that masculine stereotypes are typically associated with heterosexual men and the results associated with this finding included both heterosexual and homosexual males. Yet, the idea of societal expectations on men could also impact homosexual men, causing males overall to avoid communication that would reveal their emotions and feelings about jealousy, unless they have a mate value discrepancy where they perceive themselves to be of less value. If so, men could be willing to risk violating societal expectations to save the relationship with the individual of greater value.

Research questions 5a and 5b asked whether heterosexual individuals perceived themselves to have higher mate value in relationships than homosexual individuals and if this varied based on sex. The results from this study indicate that homosexual females perceived themselves as having less mate value than heterosexual females. In line with evolutionary theory, it could be hypothesized that heterosexual women have higher mate value because they have the ability to produce a child naturally, whereas homosexual women would need to be inseminated or reproduce with a male (i.e., not their partner).

Homosexual women may experience feelings of inadequacy or less value compared to their partner because they cannot naturally reproduce together. Evolutionarily this explanation makes sense under the notion that females innately want to bear children, but cultural expectations could also influence mate value. American society is heterosexist and as a result, individuals have been exposed to traditional male-female heterosexual expectations since childhood. Previous studies have not yet determined whether the stigma of homosexuality in heterosexist societies is associated with mate value differences by sexual orientation. Although mate value describes a feeling individuals have in a relationship, rather than feelings experienced in society, growing up in a heterosexist culture could impact how people perceive themselves when in romantic relationships.

In contrast to the females, no differences were found in perceived mate value between heterosexual and homosexual men. One explanation is that men have been socialized to value masculinity, which relates to protecting their partner and offspring by being strong, powerful, and in-control; America's patriarchal society has fostered men to feel they are the powerful sex (Kohl & Robertson, 2014). As a result, perhaps men overall are less concerned with their other qualities and values in comparison to their partner. Instead, perhaps men overall have been socialized to place more value on having control in relationships, whereas women have learned to appreciate other qualities, including gender equality.

Implications of Study

Interpersonal Communication Implications. This thesis was developed for several reasons, but one of the most significant reasons was to offer practical advice to

enable individuals to better understand their communication responses to jealousy. The research findings of this study clearly indicate that communication differs based on sex, but that the differences are more nuanced than the extant research suggests. For example, the differences in communication responses to jealousy for homosexual versus heterosexual women suggest that variables aside from sex may impact communication. Sexual orientation, cultural expectations for men and women, and other variables, such as perceived value in the relationship are likely to have some influence on innate, biological predispositions. By understanding these perspectives, people could be more willing to talk to their romantic partners about their feelings of jealousy because they are aware of their innate tendencies and sex differences, but they could also learn to understand how other factors could influence their jealous feelings and communication responses. This awareness may help individuals in romantic relationships better adopt integrative communication strategies since this type is typically most effective. Specifically, with the information from this study, men and women should be able to better interpret when their partner is using direct communication tactics. Although distributive techniques and negative affect expression are considered direct, integrative communication is the only type that involves directly conversing with the partner. The other types could lead to confusion and frustration unless an individual interprets sulking, yelling, displays of insecurity, and arguing as the potential result of jealous feelings. By understanding that women have a tendency to leverage integrative, but also other forms of direct communication that tend to be more antisocial, their partners can be better equipped to understand that 1) their communication could be in response to jealousy, and 2) they are predisposed to react this way. Knowing this, an individual is

likely to be more patient and can work on steering the communication to more effective, integrative strategies.

The results associated with perceived mate value and communication add new insights to the field and offer people a specific factor to consider when managing jealous feelings. Specifically, heterosexual men (and their partners) would benefit from realizing that their perceived mate value could influence their communication style. For example, if heterosexual men were socialized to feel they have more value when they fulfill masculine stereotypes, to maintain this image they may be communicating less about their feelings, while this may not be most effective for handling jealous feelings. Heterosexual women, and all couples in general, should seek to be aware of mate value discrepancies in their relationships and work towards a partnership where both parties feel they have equal value. Seeking out more of a symbiotic relationship could increase overall communication and the use of effective communication when discussing issues such as jealousy.

Expanding Theoretical Frameworks. The results of this study clearly provided rationale to expand on evolutionary theory, as well as, consider multi-faceted or alternative theoretical frameworks for understanding jealousy communication. The traditional evolutionary approach does not offer an explanation for homosexual experiences in romantic relationships and presents a limited perspective for heterosexual individuals. It could be argued that homosexuality itself has some ties to evolutionary perspectives because there are of hormonal, genetic, and neurological elements in individuals that indicate homosexuality versus heterosexuality (Ames, 1987). Because homosexuality is clearly not a choice, perhaps same-sex partnerships developed for

evolutionary reasons. Either way, evolutionary theory should be expanded to be more inclusive of homosexual experiences.

Existing and future research should be considered under different lenses, and the evolutionary perspective should not be relied on as heavily as the basis for interpreting sex differences in communication. I propose that by examining sex differences in communication through a dual evolutionary and social role lens, researchers will more accurately assess and understand communication. Past studies that support this dual-lens have alluded that a clear understanding of sex differences is not possible without consideration of both biological and social factors (Eagly & Wood, 1999).

A few studies propose that individuals' jealousy may be in response to external rather than innate, biological-sex factors (Pietrzak, Laird, Stevens, & Thompson, 2002; Grice & Seely, 2000). For example, one study discovered that females have similar physiological responses when imagining sexual and emotional infidelity, and thus, concluded that situational factors are more likely to cause different feelings and responses to jealousy than biological sex (Harris, 2000). This finding added ambiguity to the body of literature, posing the question of whether jealousy is a result of *situational* differentiation (i.e., different features of the situation cause unique reactions and feelings of jealousy) or *response* differentiation (in which the sexes are predisposed and have evolved to react differently to jealous feelings; Harris, 2000). One explanation for women's strong reaction to emotional infidelity than sexual infidelity may be because of societal expectations on women to be more involved and focused on relationships (White, 1981). Historically in patriarchal societies, women have taken on the role of caring for children and the home while men have been socialized to contribute to the

labor force. As a result, women were forced to be more dependent on men and to be more focused on maintaining the relationship, and thus, were socialized to be more concerned with emotional rather than sexual aspects (Eagly, 1995; Archer, 1996). It is also important to note how relationships have evolved due to social impacts; for example, women's right to vote and an increase in females working after childbearing could lead to sex role equality and some cases, some role reversals.

It is critical to consider other frameworks because "nurture" and "nature" are intertwined and influence each other (Wilson & Martin, 1993). Biological factors impact social norms and expectations, while societal, environmental factors can also alter biology and innate capabilities and mechanisms (Wilson & Martin, 1993).

Homosexuality represents a perfect example because there are genetic and other biological differences tied to homosexuality that are not present in heterosexual individuals (Ames, 1987). It could be that these innate changes have evolved over time to meet societal demands or environmental changes. If overpopulation was a real issue in society, it could be argued that homosexuality helps solve the problem. Conversely, biology can also influence society; for example, in an attempt to categorize and understand their place in the world, the first few people on the earth may have assumed that everyone with sex organs like theirs would feel the same way sexually towards others, and social role expectations were set accordingly. These simple, theoretical examples highlight different ways of thinking. Overall, the important take-away is to consider research about sex differences in communication, and specifically jealousy communication, under a dual evolutionary and social role framework.

Limitations

Several limitations exist in the current study. Although the majority of participants in this study were in relationships at the time they completed the survey, this study only included one partner's perspective. Future research should incorporate both partners in order to better understand their relational dynamics. For instance, the individuals who participated in this study were asked to answer questions about their value in comparison to their partner, but there is no way to know if both people in the relationship would rank themselves as having high value. Both partners could feel they have greater mate value than the other person, rather than the relationship having a clear discrepancy between one person holding greater value than the other. These patterns and their implications would be more evident if this study included data from both partners.

A second limitation is the nature of the mate value scale. Mate value qualities have typically only included characteristics that align with sexual reproduction needs and wants, and the scale has not been altered to include other variables that partners may find valuable. For example, the scale does not account for relationship experience, parental abilities, conversation skills, self-esteem, and emotional involvement. The scale assessed mate value based on physical attractiveness, sexual invitations / opportunities, compliments received, and feeling "liked." Adapting this scale and including more components of mate value would provide a more accurate picture of mate value discrepancy and individuals' feelings of value.

A final limitation is the research design. Correlation, regression, and t-test analyses do not necessarily indicate causal relationships between the variables. The use of longitudinal data would help identify causal patterns amongst the variables examined in

this study. Moreover, due to the complexity associated with obtaining homosexual participants, a nonprobability sampling technique was utilized. Probability sampling and a larger sample size would provide more valid and generalizable results. Soper's (2014) online calculator was used to determine the sample size needed to detect small effects at a statistical power level of .80 and $p < .05$. The calculator revealed that this sample would have required 278 participants, with 139 in each group (men versus women and homosexuals versus heterosexuals). Although the number of participants in this study was close to the overall desired amount, reaching 278 with the appropriate amount in each group there might have been more power to detect effects in this study.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should focus on three main areas: 1) relationship variables that may impact the association between mate value and communication responses to jealousy, 2) further exploring the qualities that individuals consider to be of value in relationships, and 3) examining alternative variables that may impact jealousy communication in addition to or instead of mate value discrepancy. First, examining how relationship variables, such as levels of satisfaction and / or commitment, relationship experience, age, length of time in relationship, and emotional involvement, may alter the association between jealousy and perceived mate value and offer new insights. For example, uncertainty about the relationship and varying levels of self-esteem impact how individuals communicate about jealous feelings (Andersen et al., 1995). Other studies have shown that relationship satisfaction is positively associated with physical attractiveness (Meltzer et al., 2014), and that past relationship experience shapes future expectations regarding what people value in a partner (Kohl & Robertson

2014).

Second, researchers should continue to investigate mate value and the qualities and characteristics people seek in a partner. The mate value discrepancy scale should be re-evaluated and adapted to be more inclusive of the qualities that individuals seek in a mate and consider when assessing their own value. Upon refining the scale, researchers should reconsider how mate value is associated with jealousy communication, sex, and sexual orientation.

Finally, other societal and cross-cultural factors should be assessed in relation to sex differences found in jealousy communication. For example, it would be revealing to compare individuals in matriarchal versus patriarchal societies to discover if they leverage communication in the same way to manage jealous feelings. Varying levels of masculinity and femininity in individuals could also provide further insight into communication differences based on sex. Examining environmental and social variables that could impact jealousy communication would help reveal why communication tactics differ based on sex, and help scholars better understand whether biology or social factors play a larger role in influencing communication.

Summary of Thesis

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of sexual orientation and mate value discrepancy on individuals' jealousy communication in romantic relationships in order to challenge the extant evolutionary perspective of jealousy communication based on heterosexual biological sex differences. This study examined associations between varying levels of perceived mate value and jealousy communication, and differences in jealousy communication based on sex and sexual

orientation.

Results indicated that although sex differences in communication responses to jealousy do exist, the reason for these might be partially due to factors of influence aside from biological differences, such as mate value discrepancy or societal expectations. The findings from this thesis provide evidence to support the importance of collecting a diverse sample that is inclusive of homosexual individuals when doing research on sex differences in communication, and in general. Furthermore, the results point to the significance of assessing and interpreting research through multiple theoretical standpoints, rather than relying on the extant evolutionary perspective that has historically been tied to jealousy communication literature.

List of Tables

Table 1: Basic Participant Demographics ($N = 242$)

Sex	%
Male	44.6
Female	55.3
Sexual Orientation	%
Heterosexual	52.9
Homosexual	47.1
Relationship Status	%
Currently in romantic relationship	79.3
Not currently in romantic relationship but had been in one within the past 2 years	17.8
Not currently in a romantic relationship and had not been in one within the past 2 years	2.9

Table 2: Cronbach's Alphas by Instrument

Scale	A
Perceived Mate Value	.87
Jealousy	.91
Communication Responses to Jealousy	
Direct Communication	.91
Indirect Communication	.91
Integrative Communication	.91

Table 3: Means in Response to Jealousy Questions Based on Biological Sex

	Biological Sex		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Males	Females		
How often did you feel jealous?	3.04 (1.79)	3.46 (2.00)	-1.73	240
Overall, how jealous did you feel?	3.31 (2.16)	3.60 (2.03)	-1.11	240
I tend to feel most jealous if I suspect my partner is emotionally unfaithful to me.	5.56 (2.91)	6.15 (2.92)	-1.55	240
I tend to feel most jealous if I suspect my partner is sexually unfaithful to me.	6.58 (3.18)	6.30 (3.06)	.707	240

Note: * $p < .05$. Standard deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Table 4: Means in Response to Jealousy Questions Based on Sexual Orientation

	Sexual Orientation		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Heterosexuals	Homosexuals		
How often did you feel jealous?	3.27 (2.05)	3.28 (1.76)	-.06	240
Overall, how jealous did you feel?	3.48 (2.08)	3.46 (2.11)	.11	240
I tend to feel most jealous if I suspect my partner is emotionally unfaithful to me.	5.81 (2.97)	5.97 (2.87)	-.43	240
I tend to feel most jealous if I suspect my partner is sexually unfaithful to me.	6.64 (3.09)	6.18 (3.13)	1.14	240

Note: * $p < .05$. Standard deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Table 5: Means for Communication Responses to Jealousy among Female Individuals Only Based on Sexual Orientation

Type of Response to Jealousy	Sex & Sexual Orientation		<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>
	Heterosexual Females	Homosexual Females		
Communication Responses Overall (Includes all types)	3.09 (.95)	3.03 (.84)	.39	132
Direct Communication	2.79 (1.26)	2.65 (1.08)	.69	132
Indirect Communication	2.80 (1.07)	2.70 (1.14)	.53	132
Integrative Communication	4.23 (1.26)	4.38 (1.43)	-.63	132

Note: * $p < .05$ and ** $p \leq .005$. Standard deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Table 6: Means for Communication Responses to Jealousy among Male Individuals Only Based on Sexual Orientation

Type of Response to Jealousy	Sex & Sexual Orientation		<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>
	Heterosexual Males	Homosexual Males		
Communication Responses Overall (Includes all types)	2.63 (.79)	2.78 (.88)	-.95	106
Direct Communication	2.28 (.92)	2.35 (1.04)	-.36	106
Indirect Communication	2.58 (1.04)	2.74 (1.06)	-.83	106
Integrative Communication	3.31 (1.40)	3.56 (1.40)	-.95	106

Note: * $p < .05$ and ** $p \leq .005$. Standard deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Table 7: Means for Communication Responses to Jealousy among Heterosexual Individuals Only Based on Biological Sex

Type of Response to Jealousy	Sex & Sexual Orientation		<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>
	Heterosexual Males	Heterosexual Females		
Communication Responses Overall (Includes all types)	2.63 (.79)	3.09 (.95)	-2.89**	126
Direct Communication	2.28 (.92)	2.79 (1.26)	-2.47*	126
Indirect Communication	2.58 (1.04)	2.80 (1.07)	1.15	126
Integrative Communication	3.31 (1.26)	4.23 (1.26)	-3.90**	126

Note: * $p < .05$ and ** $p \leq .005$. Standard deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Table 8: Means for Communication Responses to Jealousy among Homosexual Individuals Only Based on Biological Sex

Type of Response to Jealousy	Sex & Sexual Orientation		<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>
	Homosexual Males	Homosexual Females		
Communication Responses Overall (Includes all types)	2.78 (.88)	3.03 (.84)	-1.54	112
Direct Communication	2.35 (1.04)	2.65 (1.08)	-1.50	112
Indirect Communication	2.74 (1.06)	2.70 (1.14)	.22	112
Integrative Communication	3.56 (1.40)	4.38 (1.43)	-3.08**	112

Note: * $p < .05$ and ** $p \leq .005$. Standard deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Table 9: Correlations of Perceived Mate Value and Communication Responses to Romantic Jealousy based on Biological Sex and Sexual Orientation

Response Type	Males	Females	Heterosexuals	Homosexuals
Direct Communication	-.25*	.03	-.04	-.13
Indirect Communication	-.22*	-.03	-.10	-.13
Integrative Communication	.05	.11	.17**	.02

Note: *p < .05 and **p = .05

APPENDIX SECTION

A. CONSENT FORM..... 58

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

This project (2013S9903) was approved by the Texas State IRB on 1/22/2014. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser (512-245-3413 - lasser@txstate.edu) and to Becky Northcut, Director, Research Integrity & Compliance (512-245-2314 - bnorthcut@txstate.edu).

This research is being conducted by Graduate Student Arin Ely via Texas State University with the supervision of Dr. Tricia Burke, Professor in the Department of Communication Studies. This research project is not funded. This document is your consent form for your participation in the research project with said conditions listed below.

Principal Researchers: Arin Ely, ae19@txstate.edu, Supervising Faculty: Dr. Tricia Burke, tburke@txstate.edu

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the association between jealousy communication and sexual orientation. The study will also examine the relation between jealousy communication and relationship satisfaction, value, and commitment.

Selection: You have been selected to participate in this study because you are currently in or have been in a romantic relationship within the past two years. You meet the criteria for participation because you can recall how you felt and acted in the relationship.

Possible Benefits: This study will allow researchers to better understand how people communicate about jealousy in their relationships, and how this communication is associated with other aspects of their relationships. Further, this study extends research in this area to examine the incidence of jealousy in all types of relationships (e.g., heterosexual and homosexual relationships), which will contribute to our understanding of similarities and differences in jealousy as it is experienced in different types of relationships.

Preview of Interview Questions: To respond to the survey questions, you will be asked to think about your current or most recent relationship. You will use the provided scales to answer each question. For example, you will respond to “when I felt jealous I calmly questioned my partner about her/his actions and feelings” and “when I felt jealous I decreased affection toward my partner” using a scale from 1 to 7 with 1 representing “never” and 7 representing “always”. You will also respond to “I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner” and questions, such as, “how well does your partner meet your needs?”

Possible Risks: There may be some minimal risk involved in answering questions about how you felt and communicated in your current or most recent romantic relationship. These memories may elicit some emotions associated with your current or

most recent romantic relationship. If you feel that any of the items discussed trigger emotions too intense for you to handle, please feel free to stop the survey at any time. In this case, your data will not be used for the study. If you are a student at Texas State University, please consult the Counseling Center if you would like to seek some follow-up support. If you are not a student at Texas State University, you may contact Central Texas Counseling at 512-246-1490 or centraltexascounseling.net. Please be aware that all support services will be incurred at your own expense.

Approximate Time Needed to Complete Survey: 20-30 minutes

Any information obtained in connection with this study and provided by you will always remain anonymous (you will not be identified in any way). You will not be identified in any way in the final research paper. Names will not be recorded during the research. Only the principal investigator and Dr. Tricia Burke will have access to the results of the questionnaire. The researchers will store data in a locked physical location and through a secure website. Additionally, the Consent Form will be kept separately from the raw data and destroyed three years after the completion of the research project. You have the right to obtain a copy of the final research report derived from this study. Please email the researcher if you would like a copy of the final research report or if you have any questions: Arin Ely at ae19@txstate.edu.

I hereby agree to participate in the above-described research.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice or jeopardy to my standing with the University.

I understand that any information I may provide while participating will be used solely for research purposes.

I understand that I may ask for information regarding counseling services. If these services are sought out, I will be responsible for my own expenses.

Please check this box to indicate you read and understand the above and would like to begin the survey.

APPENDIX B: SELF-PERCEIVED MATE VALUE INSTRUMENT

Instructions: Please think about members of the sex you are most attracted to / like (males or females). Please indicate how much you agree with each item based on the following scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat Disagree
- 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 5 = Somewhat Agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Strongly Agree

- 1. Members of the sex that I like, tend to like me back.
- 2. Members of the sex that I like notice me.
- 3. I receive many compliments from members of the sex that I like.
- 4. Members of the sex that I like are not very attracted to me.*
- 5. I receive sexual invitations from members of the sex that I like.
- 6. Members of the sex that I like are attracted to me.
- 7. I can have as many sexual partners as I choose.
- 8. I do not receive compliments from members of the sex that I like.*

Note: *indicates items that were reverse-scored.

APPENDIX C: MULTIDIMENSIONAL JEALOUSY INSTRUMENT

Instructions: Please use this scale to indicate how often certain thoughts about your current or most recent partner occurred:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Seldom
- 4 = Occasionally
- 5 = Often
- 6 = Very Often
- 7 = Always

- 1. I suspect that s/he is secretly seeing someone else.
- 2. I am worried that someone may be chasing after him/her.
- 3. I suspect that s/he may be attracted to someone else.
- 4. I suspect that s/he may be physically intimate with someone else behind my back.
- 5. I think that some other people may be romantically interested in him/her.
- 6. I am worried that someone else is trying to seduce him/her.
- 7. I think that s/he is secretly developing an intimate relationship with someone else.
- 8. I suspect that s/he is crazy about other people.

APPENDIX D: COMMUNICATION RESPONSES TO JEALOUSY INSTRUMENT

Instructions: Please use this scale to indicate the extent to which you used the following behaviors when you felt jealous in your current or most recent relationship:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Seldom
- 4 = Occasionally
- 5 = Often
- 6 = Very Often
- 7 = Always

Integrative Communication

When I felt jealous I:

- 1. calmly questioned my partner about her/his actions and feelings.
- 2. explained my feelings to my partner.
- 3. disclosed jealous feelings to my partner.
- 4. discussed bothersome issues with my partner.
- 5. tried to talk about the problem and reach an understanding.

Direct Communication

When I felt jealous I:

- 6. yelled or cursed at my partner.
- 7. displayed insecurity to my partner.
- 8. acted rude toward my partner.
- 9. cried or sulked in front of my partner.
- 10. made hurtful or abusive comments to my partner.
- 11. quarreled or argued with my partner.
- 12. confronted my partner in an accusatory manner.
- 13. appeared hurt in front of my partner.

Indirect Communication

When I felt jealous I:

- 14. physically pulled away from my partner.
- 15. got quiet and didn't say much to my partner.
- 16. gave partner cold or dirty looks.
- 17. became silent around my partner.
- 18. decreased affection toward my partner.
- 19. acted like I didn't care.
- 20. ignored my partner.
- 21. pretended nothing was wrong.
- 22. gave my partner the "silent treatment."

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