

world cultures

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Vol 13 No 1 Spring 2002

J. Patrick Gray, Editor

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J. Patrick Gray, Editor

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Contents And How To Use This Issue

This issue of WORLD CULTURES contains a number of articles and corrected codes for both SPSS and MAPTAB data files. Jankowiak, Nell and Buckmaster present a holocultural study of responses to extra-marital affairs that questions traditional wisdom on sex differences in responses to affairs. Boufoy-Bastick describes an instrument for measuring cultural identity in culturally heterogeneous societies, while Costa discusses two cases in the Azores that provoke questions about the role of power in social life. Maxwell, Pryor, and Smith introduce an exciting web-based program for cluster analysis. The program is easy to use and I hope it will provoke some interest in using cluster analysis in cross-cultural research. A production error in the last issue resulted in some of the figures in Korotayev's article on postmarital residence not printing in the hard copy (they were correct on the CD). The figures are reproduced in this issue. Finally, Khaltourina, Korotayev, and Divale have undertaken a careful review of the SPSS data files for articles reprinted in the Barry and Schlegel volume. They found many typographical errors and some incorrect data values. Their corrected SPSS data files (*.SAV) are located on the CD. They are named NEWSTDS01.SAV, etc. These should replace older files. I have reviewed the same MAPTAB *.DAT and *.COD files. I found fewer typographical errors, but some incorrect data values. I also altered some data and codes as suggested by Khaltourina et al. in their Table 2. These revised *.DAT and *.COD files are also on the CD. The files should be copied over existing versions. The file STDSAMPL contains new formatting information for MAPTAB, and should be copied over your existing file of the same name.

---*J. Patrick Gray*

Extra-marital Affairs: A Reconsideration of the Meaning and Universality of the “Double Standard”

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1. INTRODUCTION¹

Conventional wisdom holds that in many societies women express relative indifference to their spouse's infidelities. Numerous social science researchers ascribe this indifference, in some societies, to either male's propensity for psychological violence (Bourdieu 2001, MacKinnon 1988) or women's structural marginalization (Freeman 1990; Harris 1993; Leacock 1993; Ressler 1986; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974). These theories link degrees of patriarchy to stronger assertions of male superiority and, thus, the institutionalization of the double standard. A constant life lesson for women in these societies is their inability to forestall their spouse's infidelities. Reinforced by folk ideology, social convention, and the common practices of daily life, men come to believe that it is their right to have affairs, while women become indifferent to their spouse's infidelity. From this theoretical perspective, it is axiomatic that men believe that they have ownership of women's bodies whereas women own neither their own bodies nor the body of their spouse.

The strength of this axiom derives, in part, from a kind of folklore of professional anthropologists, and not from empirical documentation. To date there is no comparative study that systematically examines how husbands and wives respond to spousal infidelity. Thus, the conventional wisdom of ownership and indifference remain untested anthropological assertions.

In this paper, we examine the similarities and differences in how women and men respond to a mate's infidelity. We explore the impact of structural factors--degree of social complexity, type of descent ideology, the degree to which sexual practices are restrictive or permissive, and others--on the way men and women respond to an act of infidelity. Finally, we explore which sex-linked factors, if any, shape men and women's perception of and, thus, response to, spousal infidelity.

2. SOCIAL SCIENCE EXPLANATIONS FOR EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIRS

Half a century ago Ford and Beach's (1951) pioneering cross-cultural study of human sexuality found that less than 39 percent (54 out of 139) of societies approved of some form

of extramarital affair. Although not explored in any depth, the study determined that cultures overwhelmingly prefer to “circumscribe [extramarital affairs] in one way or another” (Ford and Beach (1951:114). Susan Frayser, in a more recent cross-cultural survey of human sexuality, found that extramarital affairs ranked just below incest “as the most strictly prohibited type of sexual relationships” (1985:20). This finding was reaffirmed in Steve Harrell’s (1997) cultural analysis, which found no society, not even America during the permissive 1960’s, legitimized extramarital affairs (1997:475). In spite of the above holocultural surveys and ethnographic insights, cultural anthropology has yet to develop a theory accounting for extramarital sex’s nearly universal approbation.

We do have partial theories that focus on one aspect of the phenomena. The most prevalent explanation is sociological. This perspective offers a gender specific explanation for why extramarital affairs are tolerated more for men than they are for women. Focusing exclusively on stratified societies, Randall Collins (1975) argues that men are the beneficiaries of a patriarchal ideology and a set of social practices that ensure and validate men’s perception of women as their sexual property. To strengthen this perception, men have developed numerous institutions to control women’s behavior (Goldberg 1976, Smuts 1992). These include: “arranged marriages, seclusion of women, chaperonage, obsession with virginity, ...[to] the men’s house complex,”(Gregor 1995:338). In some egalitarian societies, patriarchal ownership and control has become ingrained in what Marvin Harris called “a male supremacy complex” which is “characterized by male monopoly over weapons, [once the] training of males for combat, training of females to be the passive rewards for masculine performance...”(Harris 1977, cited in Johnson and Earle 2000:130).

The patriarchal explanation is most dramatically illustrated in the Mediterranean honor\shame social convention. A man’s reputation and, thus, his honor, is determined, by his successful performance of required social roles and familial duties, and is further influenced by the behavior of his close kin including, most importantly, his daughter, sister, and spouse. Mediterranean men are concerned with “two problems of identity: their place in the social hierarchy and their relationship to women” (Brandes 1980:6). In this social system, a man’s reputation is permanently and profoundly intertwined with his ability to create and maintain a properly functioning household. A man is potentially vulnerable to the public transgressions of his spouse, sister and daughter. An “out of control” wife implies that her husband, the de-facto head of household, is undisciplined, unorganized, ineffective and, thus, without authority or honor. Paradoxically, women are regarded as socially insignificant, while also perceived to be “the carriers of group identity... they are [thus] in a unique position to provoke a crisis within the group” (Goddard 1987:180). In this region, a woman’s uncontrolled sexuality can bring shame on her husband and, in some instances, the larger corporate descent group (Schneider 1971). Indeed in the contemporary Greek writer Nikos Kazantakis’s novel *Zorba the Greek*, the most dangerous woman in the village, the woman who ultimately creates devastating social chaos, is “the widow,” that is, a woman who is not owned and, thus, uncontrolled by any male. In the novel the widow has turned down many offers of marriage only to have an affair with a male not from the village and, as a consequence, the entire village itself is doubly shamed--by her wanton sexuality and her rejection of village mores. Though

the patriarchal explanation has been criticized as rigid, ethnocentric and dumb to women's desires, Rehbun tells us "the model remains influential" (2000:110).

Pierre Bourdieu (2001) extends the patriarchal explanation to the level of a cultural universal. For him, it is a powerful social force and is "the paradigmatic form of symbolic violence, albeit often invisible...and often with the willing consent of the dominated" (Bourdieu 2001:66)². For other such advocates, sexual jealousy and the corresponding "mate guarding" impulses are learned responses and, hence, differences in women's response to infidelity reflect differences in intensity to which a patriarchal ethos is internalized within a culture. It follows that men should be equally vigilant in mate guarding efforts around the world whereas women, due in large part to the internalization of a patriarchal ethos as well as to their continued structural marginalization, would be relatively indifferent to a spouse's infidelity. In Bourdieu's view, nothing is really at stake.

In contrast, the evolutionary model posits a bio-psychological explanation for the origins of the male sense of ownership and male sexual jealousy (Betzig 1989; Broude 1980). In this evolutionary explanation, men and women have different reproductive interests and, thus, different motives for entering into affairs and different responses to infidelity. For men, the sex differences are manifested in a quicker, often violent, reaction to real or imagined acts of infidelity; whereas women will assess the relative impact that an affair may have on the stability of their marriage (Buss 1999, Hrdy 1999, Symons 1979). In this analysis, men and women should be equally vigilant, albeit often using different criteria to determine the severity of the threat, in monitoring their mate's extra-marital sexual inclinations and actions.

Unlike the patriarchal or conventional wisdom explanation, the sexual jealousy or "mate guarding" explanation assumes that sexual propriety, at least as it is manifested in the interpersonal domain, is not an exclusively male concern or impulse. Rather it belongs to both sexes, who are often intensely involved in efforts to regulate and/or undermine their mate's ability to participate in a sexual liaison. What separates the sexes, therefore, is not the presumption of ownership but instead the sex differences in "the emotional weighing of the aspects of infidelity"(Buss et al 1999:126). In this analysis, social and personal contexts should influence a woman's response to infidelity, whereas a man's response should remain, more or less, the same around the world.

An extension of "the mate guarding" explanation is what we call of the pair bond hypothesis, which emphasizes the centrality of the sexual union and its role in the creation of an intimate dyadic or couple bond. It incorporates the evolutionary theory of sex-linked patterns of sexual jealousy into a more expansive framework that stresses the role of personhood as complimentary in nature and larger than the individuals themselves. A pair bond may be based on a straightforward exchange of the sexual division of labor, or anchored in an implicit, albeit often unspoken, idealization that promotes responsibility, intimacy, and a sense of mutual belonging (de Munck and Korotoyev 2000; Jankowiak and Fisher 1992;

Jankowiak 1995)³. Furthermore, the pair bond is present in most societies, even those that

discourage its formation, such as those that arrange marriages.

The pair bond explanation, unlike the sexual jealousy one, contends that, as long as men and women assume they have established a pair bond, they will be more discrete in how they seek to punish a mate's illicit encounter⁴. It can be inferred that men and women in pair bond societies are equally prone to worry about spousal infidelity. It then follows that women in a pair bond society are quicker to react to a husband's affairs than are women in a society where the pair bond is not primary. It also follows that the style of response selected would vary by descent ideology and social complexity. In societies grounded in the pair bond, women should be more reticent in the use of gossip to shame their spouses on account of the sexual indiscretion as it would also result in bringing shame upon them for not living up to the marital ideal. In contrast, women in patrilineal societies would employ gossip as a means of gaining allies and thus moral support in their efforts to influence and correct their husband's wayward behavior⁵.

3. METHODS

We drew our data primarily from Murdock and White's (1969) Standard Cross-Cultural Sample of 186 societies. We supplemented this sample, wherever necessary, with more recent ethnographic sources. The anthropological study of infidelity is surprisingly sparse. The most extensive data is from South America, the least from sub-Saharan Africa. Since we were looking to determine the presence of private sentiments, we looked closely, whenever possible, at individual actors, from their perspective, and at the strategies used to respond to a mate's infidelity. We assumed that, if the ethnographer presented both men and women's sexual practices, marriage arrangements, and adultery norms, but noted only men's responses to adultery, women were not involved in monitoring a spouse' behavior. However, if the ethnographer did not systematically explore the topic of adultery, but did mention men's reactions, and not women's, we assumed there were shortcomings in the ethnographer's methodology. There is only one culture (Canala, an Amazonian culture) in our sample where the ethnographers (e.g. William and Jean Crocker 1994) discussed extra marital affairs in depth and noted men's, but again not women's, tactics used to punish a mate's infidelity. We suspect that the absence of women's responses, common in other Amazonian ethnographies, reflects an oversight in the Crocker's wonderfully rich and detailed ethnography. Nonetheless, we coded the Canala as a society in which women did not employ self-help measures to control a mate's sexual encounters.

There are other limitations to our study. Our sample drawn from sub-Saharan Africa is the smallest (n=18). Ethnographers working in Africa appear to have focused more on religious systems, ethnic formations, political integration, and economic development, and not on family life and the inner workings of marriage. When African family life is studied, it is usually looked at from a normative or structural perspective. Consequently, there are few studies that explore the rich world of African private experience, or the compelling complexity of African love affairs (for an exception see Bell 1995, Shostak 1983). This is especially evident in

studies of infidelity where the ethnographic record is shockingly thin.

The fact that sub-Saharan Africa is notorious for institutionalized affairs or individually negotiated pair bonds (Phil Kilbride, in conversation, 1997) makes this ethnographic oversight even more extraordinary. It is difficult to determine whether or not spouses are relatively indifferent to one another's extramarital affairs, yet are highly involved in regulating a lover's encounters. Since no one has written on the topic, we were not able to determine whether a lover's response to infidelity differs from a spouse's response to it (Helle-Valle 1999).

Given these limitations (e.g., we could not find information on some cultures), as well as other considerations (e.g., we did not use historical communities or European cultures as we assumed that response would be uniform and thus did not want to distort our small sample set), 110 cultures were dropped from the Murdock and White sample. An additional 22 cultures were excluded since the ethnographers noted only men's response to adultery. We were, however, able to increase the sample size through contacting contemporary ethnographers (n=12) who had worked in the same or similar societies (e.g., Kevin Birth, Jiemin Bao, Patricia Draper, Tom Gregor, Victor De Munck, Lee Munro, Barry Hewlett, Frank Malone, Charles and Cheryl Lindholm, Robert Levy, Steve Parish, Alice Schelgel). This supplemental sample boosted our overall total to 66 cultures; counting responses for both genders gave us a total of 132 responses. This constituted our sample universe. Although smaller in size than we would have preferred, the remarkable consistency across cultural areas suggests, as we will demonstrate below, that there is a striking uniformity in men's and women's response to sexual betrayal. The findings are robust and suggest that our relatively small sample set is representative.

An additional methodological step was taken in order to insure that our coding and categorization procedures were coherent and uniform. Each author of this paper independently coded the data. Discrepancies (n=17) in the coding were then re-analyzed. It was agreed beforehand that if consensus could not be reached on any datum, it would be dropped. However, this did not happen, as we were able to reach unanimous agreement on all the data.

Infidelity is defined as sexual intercourse without a spouse's permission. A spouse's response style was determined by an analysis of both written and verbal ethnographic accounts that included individual responses to spousal infidelity. Since no ethnographer indicated the speed with which men and women sought to terminate a mate's extra marital affair, we could not determine whether or not women were slower than men to respond to a particular infidelity, nor determine whether any particular tactic was more effective in terminating an affair. Ethnographers did report whether specific acts of adultery were permitted, restricted or tolerated, and did record the types of punishments inflicted on the offenders. In addition, ethnographers provided one, or more, in-depth accounts of cases of adultery. From these

data, we were able to categorize and code similarities and differences in how women and men respond to sexual betrayal.

For each culture, all documented responses to infidelity were collapsed into three larger categories: use of self-help, appeals to higher authority and appeals to the general public. The self-help category was used in those incidences where men and women tried to resolve the matter between themselves. In effect, acting alone is the characteristic that distinguishes this category from the other two. Self-help actions were divided between those that used verbal and/or physical violence against a spouse or rival's person or property, and those that relied upon "distancing the self from a spouse." This was done to tease out subtle gender differences in self-help style of response. Thus if the ethnographer noted that the response includes both physical violence and distancing self, both responses were counted (see Table 2). Distancing one's self included banishing or leaving a spouse, emotional withdrawal, and suicide.

Suicide was coded as a form of self-help response to infidelity only when the ethnographer specifically noted that the suicide was motivated out of an effort to shame a spouse for his or her infidelity. Women's reaction to their husband taking a second wife was coded, in polygamous societies, as adultery, provided that the wife responded by fighting the new wife or leaving her husband. These societies (n=3) were functionally monogamous and, thus, from the perspective of the wife, her husband was engaged in an adulterous affair.

The appeal to the higher authority category was used if the parties took the matter to a formal institution for support or resolution. This included utilization of formal institutions to punish spouse or rival, to divorce the spouse, or to invoke supernatural agents too correct or bring to justice illicit sexual behavior.

The criteria used to code for the presence of gossip was whether or not the ethnographic account noted specific instances where men and women talked, in a public setting, about a spouse's adulterous behavior in order to shame him or her into terminating the affair. The appeal to general public category includes gossip for the purposes of shaming the spouse and thus correcting the spouse's behavior or obtaining emotional support.

Though pair bond societies are often associated with bilateral descent, this is not always the case. Even in a patrilineal descent system, pair bonds often exist, albeit in proto-pair bond formations. We were not able to confirm the presence or absence of pair bond affinities in unilineal descent systems. In order to determine if descent ideology and social stratification impact the way men and women respond to infidelity, we clustered our sample into two categories: descent ideology (e.g., patrilineal, matrilineal and bilateral) and social complexity (e.g., egalitarian and stratified.). Societies were classified as egalitarian if all persons of a given age or sex category had equal access to economic resources, power, and prestige, whereas they were classified as stratified if there was unequal access to status positions and prestige. Using this classification, we were able to determine how men and women respond to infidelity

If a descent system significantly shapes men's and women's response to infidelity, we think that self-help acts among women would be more frequent in bilateral societies than in matrilineal and patrilineal ones. In patrilineal societies most marriages are exogamous,

necessitating women to be married into a husband's family, thus she is without kin support and must appeal to non-kin for assistance. In matrilineal societies women usually live with blood relations and typically have less need to petition for support.

We also sought to determine how social complexity might impact men's and women's responses to adultery. We assumed that the patriarchal ethos would find its fullest expression in highly stratified societies organized around patrilineal descent. In these societies women would resort to self-help measures less frequently. Conversely, we assumed that, in bilateral societies, men and women would have more or less similar social resources and, thus, would more likely resort to self-help tactics before making emotional appeals for assistance from the community. If this supposition is accurate it refutes Bourdieu's claim that women in all cultures are relatively powerless.

4. RESULTS

1. The patriarchal model posits that women's response to a mate's infidelity should vary by descent ideology or social complexity, while men's response should be constant. Our research found that in every society sampled women and men were equally vigilant in their efforts to curtail a mate's extra sexual liaison (see Table one). This is consistent with the evolutionary hypothesis that asserts men and women would be equally concerned with monitoring and thus managing a mate's extra sexual affairs. Moreover, men and women were equally inclined to use self-help tactics regardless of descent ideology [$X^2 = .19$, $df = 1$, N.S.]

Table I. Gender, Descent, Stratification and Type of Response to Infidelity

		Matrilineal	Patrilineal	Bilateral	Stratified	Egalitarian
Total cultures	66	16	32	18	35	31
I. Self-help	M	15	30	18	33	30
	F	13	26	18	27	30
Physical violence	M	13	29	16	29	29
	F	9	19	14	21	21
Distance Self	M	2	7	10	9	10
	F	8	18	7	19	14
II. Higher Authority	M	9	24	4	26	12
	F	3	9	4	11	5
III. Gossip	M	0	0	0	0	0
	F	4	19	7	25	5

2. There is a difference in the tactics employed by men and women in response to infidelity. There is a tendency for men to prefer physical violence in 58 out of 66 cultures (or 88 %); while women relied upon physical violence in 42 out of 66 cultures (or 64%). Women overwhelmingly prefer forms of distancing themselves from the relationship. In 50 percent (33 out of 66) of our sample, women preferred to distance themselves. In contrast, in only 29 percent (19 out of 66) of the cultures did men emotionally or physically withdraw.

3. The degree of social complexity does affect the frequency with which men and women

select self-help tactics as opposed to other forms of response. Out of a total of 132 sample responses, 57 (43%) use self-help exclusively. In egalitarian societies we found 58 percent (34 out of 58 occurrences) of self-help only. In stratified societies, we found 31 percent (23 of 74 occurrences) used self-help exclusively [$X^2 = 14.3$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.05$]

4. There is a positive relationship between social complexity and the frequency with which men and women appeal to higher authorities. This pattern is especially pronounced in stratified societies, with men appealing to higher authority 71 percent of the time (25 out of 35 occurrences) whereas the percentage drops to 41 percent (or 12 out of 31) in egalitarian societies. On the other hand, women appeal to higher authority in only 16 percent (or 5 out of 31) of the egalitarian societies and 31 percent (or 11 out of 35) in the stratified societies.

5. In support of the pair bond hypothesis, we found that gossip is invoked most often in patrilineal cultures (59 percent, or 19 out of 32) and least often in matrilineal cultures (25 percent, or 4 out of 16) and in bilateral cultures (39 percent, or 7 out of 18 cultures).

5. DISCUSSION

Our study found that men and women, especially within the interpersonal domain, are actively involved in mate-guarding tactics. The level of interest and involvement does not change with a culture's notion of descent, level of social complexity, or the degree to which a culture is normatively permissive or restrictive in sexual matters. In effect, sexual propriety is the presumed right of both sexes. Seldom is it an exclusively male monopoly. Sexual propriety, therefore, appears to be a fundamental component of every marital union.

To illustrate our findings, we provide nine ethnographic examples displaying various responses of women and men to spousal infidelity.

1. Women's tendency to use physical and symbolic violence in response to spousal infidelity is found in Caughey's (1977) account of Faanakkan, a Micronesia society, where women customarily protected their marriage by threatening to use weapons on their rival and engaging in hair pulling fights with their husband's lover. On occasion a Faanakkan woman would argue with her rival by asserting that her own genitals were superior, or by challenging the rival to a contest in which the two women pull up their skirts and expose their genitals to each other (Caughey 1977:114).

2. Another example of women's use of physical and symbolic violence to punish a husband's infidelity can be found in the following summation of a Western Apache woman's efforts to take revenge. When a woman discovered that her husband was having an affair, she told him to stop going to his relatives' weekly *tulibai* (alcohol) parties. Not long after, some relatives of the wife invited the husband to their *tulibai* party. He accepted and, as the husband walked up to the pots of *tulibai*, he saw his wife standing there. She jumped at him, catching hold of his g-string. In the ensuing struggle the man's belt broke and his wife grabbed hold of his

penis. Another man tried to make her let go, but she held on tightly. Other men there told the woman to let go or else she would kill him. Finally, she did let go. Her husband was so exhausted that he just covered himself with a blanket and lay down. This is how she punished him for running about with other women too much--a shaming in front of many others (Goodwin 1969:341).

3. Another example from Goodwin's (1969) study of western Apache illustrates how certain forms of physical violence are used to intimidate a mate and punish him or her for infidelity. An Apache woman suspects that her husband may be engaged in an extramarital affair, she will accuse him of philandering in an effort to have him stop. Although an Apache woman could not beat, or kill, her husband when he was guilty of infidelity, she could throw rocks at him or attack him with a knife. A husband, on the other hand, may beat his wife if he suspects that she is involved with another man. In former times the Apache husband might even attempt to kill his wife and her lover if the affair was felt to be serious. In former days, a husband could punish unfaithfulness by cutting off the end of his wife's nose, then telling her to "do what she wanted," knowing full well that other men would not desire her in her deformed state. This extreme punishment was rare, judging from the number of times that it is mentioned" (Goodwin 1969:340).

4. An example of sex differences implicit in men and women's response to an extramarital affair can be found in Tuareg society, where women use possession song rituals and men use the culture's traditional legal system. Much like their counterparts in other Middle East communities, Tuareg women prefer "to voice personal problems, particularly marital conflicts, covertly, either during possession exorcism rites in divination, or at secular courts away from the local village or camp. Men, on the other hand, consider exorcism rites effeminate and prefer to express their grievances in poetry and oratory at a village meeting, or at the chief's council of elders, or confide their case to a local marabout" (Rasmussen 1995:30).

5. Women's use of moral pleading--referred to some as "a weapon of the weak"--as a means to persuade her husband from forming an attachment with a prostitute and, thus, start a new family is nicely illustrated in the following account. Most Thai women prefer not to know when their husband is going to visit a local brothel. In one case, a Thai woman upon learning that her husband was planning to go urged him "go see a different one" (Jiemin Bao, personal communication, 1998). Various kinds of pleading are not, however, a Thai woman's only resource of power. There are other more drastic tactics, as evidenced by the fact there are many Thai doctors who specialize in sewing back a severed penis cut off by a betrayed and enraged wife (Don Brown, personal conversation, 1986).

6. Women's reliance on tactics other than pleading and confrontation can be found in the following story of how Tiv co-wives, living in Jos, Nigeria, responded to their husband's philandering. When confrontation failed to alter his behavior, they sought the services of a native practitioner who supplied them with a special ingredient that caused him to have an erection that would not subside. His wives refused to supply him with the antidote until he

promised them his fidelity. The ethnographer Len Plotnicov (written communication, 2001) was never able to determine if the tale was about an actual event or merely reflected an underlying male anxiety over possible repercussions that may arise from his infidelity. Nonetheless, the tale is highly suggestive that men often believe that women - even in so-called double standard societies - are seldom indifferent to their extra sexual behavior.

7. An example of women's attempt to control spousal infidelity through gossip is evident among Igbo men who dread women's verbal scorn. This dread is manifested in a very common expression that likens this kind of scorn to "spreading a person in the sun" (Joseph Agbasiere, 2000).

8. Gene Anderson (written communication, 2001) observed the following incident, a wonderful example of how one Malaysian woman used public humiliation to shame her husband for philandering. When a village wife discovered her husband was having an affair with a lady from Batu Maung, a near by city, she asked her mother to accompany her in secretly following her husband to observe his actions with the other women. When they caught him, Anderson writes, "in flagrante delicto, they pulled him out doors and while still in his underwear and gave him a monumental tongue lashing - which attracted everyone in the village who, (the ethnographer included) stood around laughing their heads off."

9. Male infidelity is never easy for women to endure as the following account of a Brazilian wife's efforts to regain her husband illustrate. The ethnographer writes: "The trouble began with the arrival one Saturday of anonymous letter detailing her husband's infidelity ... Prior to the arrival of the letter, neighbors had gossiped that her husband was living with a woman in one of the small towns on his weekly market circuit. [The wife later acknowledged that she had followed her husband and saw with her own eyes that he really was living with and sleeping with another woman]. The scorned woman reveals that "I order a letter written and then he couldn't keep saying that he hadn't gone out with her if it was the letter and not me saying everything." The man's wife collapses and is diagnosed as suffering from high blood pressure, weak nerves, and a mild stroke. The doctor advised her husband to end the affair, asking him whether his sexual satisfaction was worth killing his wife and dishonoring his daughters. [In response] the husband cuts off the affair" (Rebhun 1999:22-24). This account is remarkably similar in its action and reaction, as well as its emotional repercussions, to the story lines of many 19th century European and American novels of marriage and adultery, particularly those of Tolstoy, Flaubert and Edith Wharton.

The representative nature of the above accounts finds further support in our cross-cultural survey, which found that, in over 86 percent of the cultures (57 out of 66), women actively relied upon self-help tactics to punish a spouse. Men, on the other hand, used self-help tactics in 95 percent (63 out of 66) of cultures sampled. This finding does not support the patriarchal hypothesis, which asserts that women, especially those in patrilineal descent systems, would be indifferent to a mate's infidelity. To the contrary we found that women in almost every culture found their mate's sexual indiscretion to be unacceptable and, in most instances, sought to terminate the encounter. We also found little support for Bourdieu's extension of

the patriarchal thesis in which he argues that women are victims of psychological violence around the world and are thus confined to using “weapons of the weak” (e.g., spells, passivity, and emotional withdrawal) which, to Bourdieu, are ineffective and thus “always weak” (2001:32)⁶. We found, on the contrary, that men often fear some of the “weapons of the weak” (e.g., distancing of self and use of public gossip), implying that women are intensely involved with micro managing their spouse’s extra marital behavior⁷. They exercise a whole host of different strategies that range from direct physical confrontation to distancing of self and appeals to the neutral public for assistance. Clearly, it would appear that these strategies employed by women can be highly effective. For most women, adultery is a private affair that demands a personal response. It is only when that fails, that women turn to their neighbors and the public for further assistance.

We also found a positive relationship between social complexity and the frequency in which men and women appeal to higher authorities. The difference in usage is consistent, albeit in a modified form, with the patriarchal hypothesis. Presumably, because men think their interest will be upheld more readily, they seek satisfaction in court more often than women. That the cultural mores are such that women may not be able to get a divorce should not also be taken to mean that they are indifferent. Most are not.

Women’s motives for appealing to higher authority are more varied than men’s. Women appeal to the courts to terminate a marriage, obtain child support, or elicit societal or moral support to reconcile the marriage. In contrast, men use the courts to terminate a marriage and seldom to manage a spouse’s infidelity. This finding should not, however, obscure a much larger pattern: men and women overwhelmingly prefer first to resolve issues of infidelity amongst themselves and failing this, men will appeal to a higher authority, while women, especially those living in patrilineal descent based societies, will often appeal to the general public for sympathy and support. The pattern is also consistent with the sexual jealousy hypothesis that claims that women’s response to adultery is more measured and often depends upon whether or not a particular sexual liaison is perceived as a threat to the continuance of the pair bond.

None of this means that women are indifferent to their partner’s sexual liaison. Even in “double standard” societies, women, in their late teens and early twenties, often try to undermine a sexual liaison. Our survey of restrictive and permissive societies (N=50) found no difference in men and women’s response to adultery. For example, in 79 percent (22 out of 28) of permissive societies listed in Gaulin and Schelgel’s (1980) study, women used self-help tactics and another 6 (or 21 percent) appealed to the “public” to cease their mate’s involvement in an extra-marital affair. In 93 percent (26 out of 28) of permissive cultures men used self-help tactics to punish and thus correct a spouse’s extra marital liaison. Clearly, the moral conventions governing sexual expression do not affect how women or men respond to a spouse’s extra marital affairs. For both sexes, adultery is an unacceptable act that demands a negative sanction that can range from emotional withdrawal to physical confrontation. If this interpretation is correct, it lends support to the sexual jealousy and pair bond hypotheses which posit that, although there are sex differences in the emotional

weighting of a spouse's infidelity, the majority of women do not ignore or welcome their mate's extra-marital sexual adventures.

We found support for the sexual jealousy hypothesis that posits men and women in every culture would take an active interest in managing their spouses' extra-sexual behaviors. This is consistent with Sarah Hrdy's (1999) thesis that suggests women are sexual entrepreneurs who seek out extra sexual partners because they may prove helpful to them and their children. Implicit within Hrdy's revisionist account is that female sexual entrepreneurship also involves mate guarding. If it is to a woman's advantage to seek additional partners, it is also highly advantageous to monopolize her mate's resources, with the most effective form being the monopolization of her mate's sexuality. In effect, everyone has an individualized "double standard" that implies: "you cannot, but maybe I will."

Our findings also document cultural variation in style of response between men's and women's tactics for punishing a mate for infidelity. In 50 percent (33 out of 66) of our sample, women preferred to distance themselves (e.g., either by sulking, refusing to converse, stopping the performance of domestic chores such as cooking, running away, or by resorting to suicide to humiliate a spouse) to achieve their goals. In contrast, in only 29 percent (19 out of 66) of the cultures did men emotionally or physically withdraw. Clearly, men (n=58 cultures) prefer tactics of more direct physical confrontation (e.g., by beating a spouse or the rival, or both) whereas women employed a more broad base strategy (i.e., beating a spouse or rival, or emotionally or physically distancing themselves from their spouse). Furthermore, suicide, as a way to shame a spouse for infidelity and, thus, damage his reputation, appears to be exclusively a female response (n=6), and is found mostly in stratified societies (n=5).

Men around the world also overwhelmingly prefer to use self-help tactics rather than going to more formal institutions (e.g., the courts) to punish an adulterous spouse or terminate a marriage. Men's preferred self-help tactic is physical violence, which they resort to in 88 percent (58 out of 66) of cultures. Women only relied on physical violence in 64 percent (42 out of 66) of cultures sampled. Our findings are consistent with Victoria Burbank's observation (1994) that women are capable of engaging in physical aggression much more frequently than has been previously acknowledged in the anthropological literature⁸. In the domain of sexual betrayal, women's use of violence is not at all symbolic and is often highly effective.

The lower incidence of women using physical violence as a mate retention tactic does not mean that women are less effective in influencing a spouse's behavior⁹. The discrepancy in the expression of physical aggression, and the relative infrequency in which women appeal to the official courts, should not distort the significant finding that in almost every culture women actively monitor, discipline and, thus, attempt to correct or punish their spouse's extra marital liaison(s). This is consistent with both the mate guarding and pair bond hypotheses, which hold that men and women are seldom indifferent, to the point of inaction, to spousal infidelity.

In contrast to men who rely on the local courts, women rely on the unofficial culture or the

“court of public opinion” (e.g., public censure or the barbs of gossip). This, albeit “unofficial” social institution is often highly effective. In stratified societies, 71 percent (25 out of 25) of the cultures demonstrate that gossip has proven to be a highly effective cultural and political tool. Men fear women’s disapproval and scorn, seeking primarily to avoid collective censure as opposed to that of the closed-door disapproval of a wife.

The frequency in which women employ gossip to counter a spouse’s extramarital liaison varies by descent system. This is consistent with the pair bond hypothesis, which argued that in bilateral societies women would be more reticent to gossip about the quality of their marriage than in societies. Gossip is invoked most often in patrilineal cultures (59 percent, or 19 out of 32) and least often in matrilineal cultures (25 percent, or 4 out of 16) and in bilateral cultures (39 percent, or 7 out of 18 cultures). In patrilineal societies, women are usually outsiders, and are less concerned with upholding a husband’s reputation. This is especially evident when upholding male honor results in the loss of resources necessary to survive or thrive. In contrast, a woman in matrilineal societies is already living with her maternal kin and, thus, she has no need to appeal to the wider community for sympathy or support. In bilateral societies, her response is more restricted. A woman’s social identity is organized around an image of intimacy and, thus in effect, “coupleness.” The strength of this image is such that both men’s and women’s response to sexual betrayal tend to emphasize self-help measures and not appeals to the public through gossip in order to shame a spouse into breaking off an affair.

Although men often speculate on other people’s sexual activities, surprisingly we did not find a single incident where a man gossiped or spoke publicly about his wife or lover’s sexual conduct. In all societies men are reluctant to publicly discuss a partner’s extra marital behavior. If men and women are equally predisposed to punish a mate’s infidelities, why are men less willing to use sexual innuendo as a means to shame their spouse into ending the affair?

A possible answer comes from research on adolescence that shows that women tend to be more “absorbed into all female groups than men are into all male groupings” (Schlegel and Barry 1991:31). This finding suggests that men’s solidarity is of a different nature than women’s solidarity. For men, the illusion of male unity often disguises men’s competitiveness amongst themselves for mates and relative social status.

From an evolutionary perspective, men pay a larger cost for publicly acknowledging a spouse’s infidelity. Not only does acknowledgment result in social humiliation, but it also raises concerns, especially in cultures that do not value multiple fathers over paternal certainty. In addition, a man’s public condemnation of a spouse’s sexual behavior could also be regarded as evidence of her sexual availability and, thus, constitute a kind of advertisement to other men, his potential rivals, to take advantage of his predicament.

A husband’s reluctance to discuss publicly a wife’s sexual behavior is found in all cultures including those that use gang rape as a means to punish “wayward” women. Although

Bourdieu (2001:52) suggests that a primary motive for using gang rape is to instill fear into women while celebrating the unity of the male group, it is significant that there are no reported incidences of a husband participating in a gang rape of his wife (Tom Gregor, personal communication). Given the cultural tradition that sanctions this form of punishment, it is hard to understand why a husband does not initiate or call for a gang rape. Moreover, if the patriarchal hypothesis is correct, it is difficult to know why a man, as a member of an all male group, would not want to use the occasion to demonstrate his loyalty and solidarity to the group. If “the test of manliness is oriented towards the reinforcement of male solidarity” (Bourdieu 2001:52), what may account for the husband’s reluctance? Bourdieu is silent on this question. In any case, for the purposes of this paper, it is clear that men refuse to employ gossip or appeal to the public for sympathy and support. In general, men either respond on their own to spousal infidelity or not at all.¹⁰

6. CONCLUSION

Anthropologists have not systematically examined extramarital affairs. As a field, we are more fascinated with prostitution as a subject of research than we are with understanding the motives of mistresses, or the reasons that men and women have for seeking a “lover in the bush.” Consequently, the richness, complexity, and emotional turmoil that often surrounds an adulterous act is seldom commented upon, much less seen for what it often is--an impulse toward sexual release, connection and possibly love. When ethnographers (e.g., Barnes 1973; Evans Pitchard 1949; Gluckman 1972) do comment on a culture’s attitude toward adultery, it is usually to note which normative sanctions were discharged. There is little, or no, discussion of the mitigating factors for whether or not a sanction is, or is not, enforced. The reader is left with the impression that, in many cultures, men and women are indifferent to infidelity or, that in some societies only men are concerned about regulating their wives’ extramarital liaisons.

As a correction, feminist scholarship has successfully examined the multiple ways women resist men’s efforts to control them. This scholarship has asserted that women (and men) have agency (or free will) and, thus, the capacity to undermine, in albeit historically small ways, many forms of male dominance (for an excellent review on the different meanings of agency, see Ahearn 2001). An unintended consequence of the importance of agency as resistance has been to re-focus anthropological analysis on women’s response to male policies, sanctions and actions. The various ways in which women assert, without male provocation, their own interests are often ignored.

We found that, in spite of a widespread male dominance ideology, the prevalence of the well-known double standard ethos, and varying degrees of social complexity, wives and husbands routinely seek to control, punish and terminate the extra-marital affairs of their mates. Moreover, men and women overwhelmingly prefer self-help tactics, turning only as a last resort to other means of retribution.

Our findings are consistent with both the sexual jealousy and the pair bond hypotheses, which hold that every marriage or love relationship is organized around a presumption of sexual

propriety. This presumption compels men and women to be vigilant in their efforts to neutralize, if not regulate, their mates' extra marital inclinations and conduct. Our finding that sexual propriety is a fundamental component of the human pair bond has enormous implications for the feminists and culturalogical analysis of sexual inequality and gender hierarchy as they pertain to the domain of interpersonal relations. It suggests that spousal infidelity and sexual betrayal are troubling to everyone. It further suggests that "ownership" of a mate's body is a presumption of both sexes.

7. NOTES

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2. Nowhere, however, does Bourdieu discuss the origins of this specific sentiment, or examine other egalitarian societies, especially hunter and gathering societies, for additional support for his thesis.

3. The impulse to form some semblance of a pair bond is ubiquitous throughout East Asia as evidenced in the typical mother-in-law/daughter-in-law conflict. Because mothers fear that their son might form an emotional attachment to his spouse and, thereby, lessen or wholly transfer his affections from them, mothers often demand continuous proof of filial loyalty. The pervasiveness of the maternal fear of being replaced as the primary focus of a son's love suggests that humans are predisposed to forming a pair bond

4. In some Arabic cultures, men, especially when not seeking to terminate their marriage, prefer to ignore the evidence of a spouse's infidelity. As long as a wife's adultery remains a secret, the man can hold onto the illusion of marital harmony (Wikin 1991).

5. Ethnographers often study gossip as a means by which to probe a culture's beliefs about what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior (Haviland 1977). Besides being an obvious source of amusement, gossip frequently wears a moral face and, thus, is effectively as much about altering another's behavior as it is about serving as a source of public recreation and pleasure.

6. Bourdieu's male dominance thesis implies that men have more "resources of power" and, thus, stronger collective agency than women. In contrast, our finding of the strength of the pair bond suggests that men and women have equal, albeit at times different, "resources of power" available to them and, thus, agency. In effect, sexual ownership is a presumed right of

both sexes and not just a male monopoly. This has implications for understanding the ways in which women and men respond to infidelity.

7. Our survey findings further demonstrate that women are involved with self-help strategies organized around issues of control as much as issues of resistance. We found that women appeal to supernatural agents for support in only 5 cultures, whereas men appeal to supernatural agents in 3 cultures. Few men or women appeal to the supernatural for assistance in responding to spousal infidelity.

8. The very nature of a pair bond union may lend itself to the physical violence that women sometimes use to punish their husband, or lover, for a sexual affair. The intensity of a partner's reaction implies that possessiveness is an integral component to the formation of a fully developed pair bond. Suzanne Frayser concurs, positing an underlying biological mechanism to the pair bonding accounts for "the inordinate violence that characterizes the husband's punishment of his wife and/or her lover"(1985:214). Because sexual fidelity "is necessary to the establishment of trust and for ease of mind, [infidelity will invariably] give rise to sorrow and dejection" (Schelgel 1983:312). Infidelity, then, not only constitutes a threat to an individual's sense of well-being and emotional security, but also can be a threat to the bond itself. As long as women and men view themselves as part of a pair bond, they will actively monitor their partners' sexual and romantic inclinations and, in their own way, attempt to prevent a mate from engaging in an extra marital affair.

9. Our finding that there is a 2:1 ratio in the frequency in which men and women use physical aggression to punish a mate's infidelity is, however, consistent with Eleanor Maccoby and C. Jacklin's (1998) study of male and female aggression.

10. Recent scholarship on masculinity assumes that gender identity is either a cultural process (Brod 1987; Brod and Kaufman 1994; Gutman 1997; Gilmore 1996, Kimmel 1995 and Sterns 1990) or a transmitted trait (Doyle 1983; Hearn 1992; Steidler 1994). Our findings suggest that one male trait that of public complaining about a spouse's sexual behavior - may not be entirely a matter of social construction.

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