

# **Online-replication of results from evolutionary psychology research – sex differences in sexual jealousy in imagined scenarios of sexual vs. emotional mate infidelity**

*Martin Voracek<sup>1</sup>, Stefan Stieger & Alexander Gindl*

The results from the first online research project conducted at the Department of Psychology, University of Vienna (11/1998), are presented. At the same time to our knowledge this study is the first online-study in the field of evolutionary psychology. A specific hypothesis from evolutionary psychology states the following: men, when confronted with imagined scenarios of mate infidelity in relationships, should react more likely with sexual jealousy or should experience sexual infidelity more distressing, respectively (for reasons of paternity confidence), whereas women should react more likely with emotional jealousy or should experience emotional infidelity more distressing, respectively (for reasons of resource interests). In recent years, this hypothesis has been tested extensively and cross-culturally in studies using paper-pencil questionnaires and using campus samples mainly from the United States, China, the Netherlands, and Germany.

The (explorative) objective of the present study was, whether (or to what extent, respectively) the results from these prior investigations – sex differences in sexual jealousy – could be replicated, when using a sample from a comparable underlying population, but for the first time conducting such a study within the framework of an internet-based questionnaire. Using an online-questionnaire should result in a self-selection bias for study participation more pronounced, but at the same time in a more distal investigator-participant-interaction compared to a paper-pencil questionnaire survey.

For this online-replication a short HTML-form was generated, which comprised German translations of the items – so-called scenarios of jealousy – used by Buss et

---

<sup>1</sup> Univ.-Ass. Mag. Mag. Dr. Martin Voracek  
Univ.-Klinik für Tiefenpsychologie und Psychotherapie  
Allgemeines Krankenhaus der Stadt Wien – Universitätskliniken  
Währinger Gürtel 18-20  
A-1090 WIEN  
Tel.: +43 1 40400-3063, (-3068)  
Fax: +43 1 406 68 03  
eMail: martin.voracek@akh-wien.ac.at

al. (1992) and Harris & Christenfeld (1996). The online-questionnaire was made accessible under address [www.unet.univie.ac.at/~a9425748/fragebogen/](http://www.unet.univie.ac.at/~a9425748/fragebogen/). A large simple random sample (n=4,285) from the population of students at the University of Vienna, which had Internet and Internet Services access (including an e-mail account) at the time of the investigation (approx. 36,000 out of a total of approx. 95,000 students at this university) was contacted via e-mail, was referred to the URL of the online-questionnaire, and was asked for study participation. 239 of the questionnaires received were included for data-analysis, which equals a participation rate of 5.6%.

The main results of this online-study are compared with published results from research in evolutionary psychology, and are discussed particularly with regard to important features of online-research validity (quality of data): (1) participation rate (in connection with internet utilization behavior and participation motivation of the population under study); (2) sample characteristics (sex, age, and studies, as stated by the participants) with regard to sample representativeness; (3) portion of excluded responses (multiple, non-plausible, and „joke“ answers). Additionally, some further details relevant for online-research are discussed: (4) course of the response characteristic of the sample; (5) some sporadic negative responses (complaint mails) and handling of these by the investigators; (6) potential effects of the specific form of distal interaction (which is inherent for online-research design) upon openness and unbiasedness of the questionnaire data.

Keywords: evolutionary psychology, online-replication, questionnaire, quality of data