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## Perceptions and Definition of Infidelity: A Multimethod Study

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PERCEPTIONS AND DEFINITION OF INFIDELITY:  
A MULTIMETHOD STUDY

by

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Bachelor of Arts, Psychology  
Columbia College  
2010

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

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## ABSTRACT

### PERCEPTIONS AND DEFINITION OF INFIDELITY:

#### A MULTIMETHOD STUDY

By

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Infidelity is not by any means a new problem; it is one that has been impacting couples for many years. Infidelity can cause significant challenges for couples, and it is one of the most difficult problems to treat in therapy (Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997). Most couples in committed relationships have implicit or explicit rules regarding infidelity. However, not all partners view infidelity in the same way, and the discrepancy in opinions can lead to problems in the relationship and can complicate the healing process. The purpose of this study was to better understand how people define infidelity and the variables that influence perceptions about infidelity. Researchers utilized a multimethod design to collect quantitative and qualitative data on participants' perceptions and definitions of infidelity. Quantitative data was collected through participants' answers to questions on a scale about perceptions of potentially unfaithful behaviors that was developed for the purpose of this study. The scale included physical, emotional, and cyber behaviors that could be perceived as unfaithful. Participants' answers were compared to certain variables including age, gender, relationship status, sexual orientation, religiosity, parental marital status, sexual orientation, personal involvement in extradyadic relationships, and knowledge of parental involvement in any extramarital involvement in order to determine whether or not these variables predicted

perceptions of infidelity. Qualitative data was collected through participants' answers to open-ended questions about how they define infidelity. The results of the study showed that perceptions of infidelity are most influenced by gender, sexual orientation, how frequently individuals attend religious services, knowledge of an affair within the family of origin, level of education, and personal experience with infidelity. The analysis of the qualitative data resulted in a richer understanding of how infidelity is defined, including: boundary violations, a type of infidelity (physical, emotional, or cyber), lack of consent from the betrayed partner, and hurt. These results can enhance the understanding of researchers and clinicians about how people define infidelity, what behaviors are perceived as infidelity, and how certain variables influence these perceptions.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### **Aims of the Study**

When working with couples seeking treatment for infidelity, it may be helpful for clinicians to understand how the general population defines infidelity and what behaviors are perceived to be unfaithful. The intent of this study was to understand the ways in which infidelity is perceived by those who participated in the study and the variables that influenced their perceptions. Other studies have attempted to formulate a definition of infidelity and understand perspectives based upon variables such as gender (Henline et al, 2007; Mark, Janssen, & Milhausen, 2011; Whitty, 2003a) and attachment style (Allen and Baucom, 2004). The results of the aforementioned studies concluded that variables such as gender and attachment style influence one's perception of infidelity. However, existing research is limited in understanding other variables that may influence an individual's definition and perceptions of infidelity. The purpose of this study has been to examine the influence of additional variables (e.g., relationships status, previous experience with infidelity, parents' relationship status and experience with infidelity) to determine how they differ and shape perception. Additionally, previous research has not attempted to qualitatively assess participants' definitions of infidelity. This study also conducted a qualitative analysis of participants' responses to an open-ended definition of infidelity.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Definition**

Infidelity, both extramarital and extradyadic, is a significant problem that seriously affects many relationships. Although the seriousness of affairs is widely recognized, there is no universal definition of infidelity. Fife, Weeks, and Gambescia (2008) proposed that "most committed relationships are characterized by an explicit or implicit commitment regarding intimacy, including both sexual and emotional fidelity to one's partner" (p. 316). They define infidelity as "a betrayal of this implied or stated commitment regarding intimate exclusivity. With infidelity, emotional and/or sexual intimacy is shared with someone outside of the primary relationship without the consent of the other partner" (p. 316). Nevertheless, both scholars and members of the general public have widely divergent perceptions and definitions of infidelity. Blow & Hartnett (2005) stated that,

infidelity is defined in a myriad of ways and can comprise a number of activities including: "having an affair," "extramarital relationship," "cheating," "sexual intercourse," "oral sex," "kissing," "fondling," "emotional connections that are beyond friendships," "friendships," "Internet relationships," "pornography use," and others (p. 186).

A variety of studies have been conducted to ascertain how people perceive and define an extradyadic relationship. Hertlein, Wetchler, and Piercy (2005) said, "What is especially complex about the broad definition of infidelity is that two different people in the same relationship might have different ideas about what represents infidelity or constitutes as an affair" (p. 6). Often, infidelity is relatively subjective and depends

greatly on the implicit and explicit rules established within a relationship. Terms such as affairs, cheating, unfaithful, extramarital, extrapremarital, external involvement, and extradyadic are all examples of how infidelity has been labeled. In addition to the varied labels, physical, emotional, and cyber are used to distinguish different types of infidelity (Hertlein et al., 2005). Prior research narrowly defined infidelity as sexual behavior outside of the relationship; however, Hertlein et al., (2005), explains that the definition of infidelity has expanded to be more inclusive of a more diverse group of behaviors. Given the idiosyncratic way in which infidelity is defined and experienced, the many definitions in the literature cannot possibly encompass the feelings of all those whose partner engages in an extradyadic physical, emotional, or cyber relationship.

### **Physical Infidelity**

One of the most highly recognized forms of infidelity is physical or sexual infidelity. Whitty and Quigley (2008) state that, “sexual infidelity is considered to be engaging in sexual intercourse with someone other than one’s partner” (p. 461). McAnulty and Brineman (2007) report, “For most students, spending excessive time with another person and virtually any form of extradyadic physical intimacy qualify as infidelity” (p. 97). Many would argue that sexual relations should only be between two people in a committed relationship so in most cases, physical interaction outside of the primary relationship is viewed as infidelity (Boekhout et al., 1999).

Behaviors such as hugging, kissing, touching, necking, oral sex, and intercourse may all be behaviors associated with physical infidelity, however, some may have differing opinions. According to Shackelford & Buss (1997) predictors of a sexual affair are “perceived exaggerated displays of affection” (p. 1042). In other words, an affair that

starts out as emotional or cyber can escalate into a face-to-face encounter incorporating aspects of physical infidelity.

### **Emotional Infidelity**

Emotional is another highly recognized and researched type of infidelity. This type of unfaithful behavior occurs more frequently than the physical type and can be defined as when someone falls in love with, shares emotional intimacy, or spends quality time with an individual outside of the primary relationship (Hertlein, Wetchler, & Piercy, 2005; Whitty and Quigley, 2008). “Pure emotional betrayals involve the development of an emotional bond (e.g., love) with an extradyadic partner” (Mattingly, Wilson, Clark, Bequette, & Weidler, 2010, p. 1466), and this emotional development can be equally as harmful or traumatic as a physical affair (Shackelford, Buss, & Bennett, 2002).

**Attachment and Infidelity.** Attachment styles, based on attachment theory, provide an approach to understand how human beings develop personality and their ability to maintain closeness in personal relationships (Belsky, 2002). Attachment styles are associated with infidelity, and some scholars suggest that attachment style can be predictive of unfaithful behavior (Russell, Baker, & McNulty, 2013). Those who have a secure attachment style are less likely to engage in extradyadic involvement than those with an anxious or avoidant style of attachment (Allen & Baucom, 2004; Bogaert & Sadava, 2002; DeWall et al., 2011). Avoidant attachment styles may lead to an individual being more argumentative and angry towards their partner in order to justify their unfaithful behavior (DeWall, et al., 2011; Shackelford & Buss, 1997). It may be challenging for certain individuals who did not develop healthy emotional attachments as a child to establish lasting emotional connections as an adult. “People who are high on

the avoidance dimension tend to be uncomfortable with psychological closeness and intimacy” (DeWall et al., 2011, p. 1303). Individuals with an avoidant attachment style have a difficult time developing deep emotional attachments to their partners, which reduces their overall level of commitment, and the less committed someone may be to their partner, the more they may be inclined to engage in unfaithful behaviors (DeWall et al., 2011, p. 1303; Mattingly et al., 2010). The more avoidant an individual’s attachment style is, the less likely they are to perceive infidelity as a problem (DeWall et al., 2011, p. 1304). Those who did not develop appropriate skills on how to maintain emotional connections with others may be more likely to engage in an emotional affair, especially if they witnessed their primary caregivers engaging in unfaithful behaviors, emotionally or physically (Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011).

### **Cyber Infidelity**

Although physical and emotional are often the most highly recognized forms of infidelity, cyber infidelity is becoming increasingly prevalent (Henline, Lamke, & Howard, 2007). Whitty (2008) researched cyber infidelity and found the effects of an online affair can be “almost as severe as sexual intercourse” (p. 463).

Smart phones and the Internet have provided the general public with more convenient mediums to engage in interactions outside of the primary relationship. Modern technology provides increased possibilities for communication and relationships with others, thus, creating more avenues for individuals to be unfaithful to their partners. The ACE model (anonymity, convenience, and escape) was developed to point out that certain variables made possible by technology influence choices to engage in cyber infidelity (Young, Griffin-Shelley, Cooper, O’Mara, & Buchanan, 2007). Additional

research has identified seven motivating factors that influence cyber infidelity (Hertlein, 2006). Cooper (2000) initially developed the “triple A” model that set cyber or Internet infidelity apart from both physical and emotional. Cooper (2000) defines the three As as availability, anonymity, and affordability (p. 526). Researchers have since expanded upon why individuals may utilize the internet for infidelity and have discovered four more As (Hertlein & Stevens, 2010). The most recently developed four As include: approximation, acceptability, ambiguity, and accommodation (Hertlein & Stevens, 2010). The aforementioned seven As model is significant in that it provides further understanding of the motivations related to internet infidelity. Because technology is rapidly evolving, it is valuable to understand what behaviors are perceived as being acceptable to the general population.

It can be argued that the development of cyber facilitated connections are appealing and convenient because individuals are able to present themselves in ways that may seem more appealing to others. “Individuals in face-to-face relationships do not typically have anonymity or the psychological comfort” (Merkle & Richardson, 2000, p. 189) as they would experience online. Encounters between two people who meet organically typically begin with physical attraction, and then escalate to the discovery of similarities and the sharing of personal details (Merkle & Richardson, 2000). In contrast, with individuals who meet online, the initial physical attraction does not have to be present, and individuals can hide less favorable qualities or personality traits. They are also able to hide facts about their real life, for example a relationship or marriage.

The capability to have an extradyadic Internet-based relationship that can potentially damage a relationship and elicit emotional harm to a partner is increasing.

Online infidelity can be divided into three categories: emotional online infidelity, sexual online infidelity, and pornography (Whitty, 2005). In reference to communicating in a chat room with an individual other than one's partner, Mileham (2004) argued that "never in history has it been so easy to enjoy both the stability of a marriage and the thrills of the dating scene at the same time" (p. 11). Chat rooms are one example of how someone may be able to maintain a committed face-to-face relationship and an additional relationship through the use of technology. Other options for cyber affiliations include but are not limited to, social networking, online gaming, sexting, cellphone gaming, cellphone texting, affair websites, dating websites, cellphone applications, and the viewing of pornography. "These types of interactions may have evolved because individuals are using the technology to supplant or augment face-to-face interactions" (Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011, p. 1697). Hertlein and Piercy (2008) state that, "social norms might also influence the prevalence of internet infidelity" (p. 482) because avid use of technology is now a fundamental part of day-to-day functioning.

Seeing certain online behaviors as a betrayal of trust for those in a committed relationship may be difficult based on the frequency of technology usage. The general population's dependency on technology is constantly increasing. For some it is questionable as to whether or not having online relationships with someone outside of a partnership is even considered unfaithful. Based on a study done nearly ten years ago, "it has been reported that one-third of divorce litigation is due to online affairs" (Mileham, 2004, p. 13); since then, over nine years have passed and an even stronger technology dependency has been established.



Depending on the boundaries within a relationship, pornography can also be considered infidelity. Research done by Sprin, Koricich, Jansen, and Cole (2004) showed that out of all sexual related queries done by research participants, “sex was the most frequently occurring term” (p. 69). Furthermore, a study done by Bergner and Bridges (2002) concluded that some women who discovered that their partners were utilizing pornography would label it as an act of infidelity. Although not all women view the use of pornography as infidelity, some have a significant problem with their partner’s undisclosed usage of pornography (Bridges et al, 2003). In contrast, “some couples bond through viewing together sexual information on the internet” (Hertlein, 2012, p. 380). Couples who utilize pornography as a component in their intimate lives may have differing perspectives as to what infidelity looks like.

### **Modern Lens and Infidelity**

Attempts to define or categorize different types of infidelity raise the question of whether there is a universal definition or understanding. A modern philosophical lens on extradyadic relationships operates under the assumption that there is only one reality and anyone who deviates from that reality is abnormal. Hertlein and Piercy (2005), define modernism as, “a philosophical position asserting that individuals are inherently rational and that reality and truth can be determined through objective, empirical means” (p. 83). This lens would imply that there is one definition or one truth that applies to infidelity and anyone who digresses from that is an unfaithful partner. Considering what is known about infidelity being a boundary violation based on the subjective implicit and explicit rules defined within each relationship (Fife et al., 2008), one of the motivating factors for

this study was to develop a more concise distinction between what actions are always or never infidelity.

### **Postmodern Lens and Infidelity**

Postmodernism is a philosophical tradition that challenges the assumptions of modernism. For example, postmodernism questions the notion that there is a single reality or universal truth for any one topic. From a postmodern lens, it can be argued that perception of infidelity is entirely subjective, discrediting the idea of an objective reality as presented by the modernists. As stated above, two individuals who come together in a relationship may bring expectations about fidelity and what constitutes as unfaithful behavior; however, there may be some discrepancy in perspective from two individuals who do not share the same background or experiences. Hertlein and Piercy (2005) argue that “we can see infidelity from multiple perspectives and thus define it in a variety of ways” (p. 84). The discrepancy between multiple perspectives can create disagreements within a partnership, which could lead to conflict and inhibit change, reconciliation, or healing. Although the definition and perception of infidelity is idiosyncratic, there may be some commonalities. Furthermore, certain variables, individual characteristics, and experiences may influence the way in which infidelity is perceived. The understanding that certain variables may influence how an individual perceives infidelity can provide insight regarding the belief that the actions of one’s partner are unfaithful.

### **Prevalence**

Regardless of the lens utilized to describe infidelity, clinicians and researchers would agree that it is a severe problem with significant consequences for couples (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Blow & Hartnett, 2005a; Fife et al., 2012). If infidelity was

not problematic for relationships, it would not be responsible for numerous divorces and separations (Abraham, Cramer, Fernandez, & Mahler, 2001).

Typically, people in committed relationships expect emotional and sexual exclusivity of one another (Treas & Giesen, 2004), yet infidelity continues to be a relatively common problem among couples. According to Hertlein et al. (2005) fifteen to seventy percent of the married population and thirty percent of dating couples engage in infidelity of some kind. Hansen (1987) concluded that over seventy percent of men and over fifty-seven percent of women have participated in an extradyadic relationship of some kind. Men are more likely to engage various types of physical behaviors that could be considered unfaithful than women (Sheppard et al., 1995). Certain variables such as gender have been explored when attempting to understand infidelity; however, perceptions of infidelity might also be influenced by age, sexual orientation, religiosity and previous experience with infidelity, whether committed by oneself, one's partner, or one's parents.

### **Gender Perceptions**

Research shows that traits associated with gender and personality types can contribute to why individuals choose to engage in unfaithful behaviors. Gender and differing personality types also shape perceptions of infidelity. Studies have looked at how both men and women perceive either emotional and/or physical infidelity.

According to Whitty (2005):

Men were more likely to state that a sexual encounter with a different partner was an exemplar of infidelity. In contrast, women were more likely to state that

spending time with another and keeping secrets from a partner were acts of infidelity (p. 58-59).

Thornton and Nagurney (2011) reached similar conclusions:

Research has demonstrated that women consider an intense emotional relationship outside of their own as an unfaithful involvement, even when there is no physical component. Men, on the other hand consider primarily physical contact, typically sexual, to constitute infidelity much more so than an emotional involvement out of their relationship (p. 52).

It is not surprising that studies have concluded that men prioritize sexual satisfaction in a relationship; whereas women value more of well-matched and emotional connection with their spouses (Sheppard, Nelso, & Andreoli-mathie, 1995).

The relationship between gender and perceptions of infidelity is the most frequently researched “demographic factor” (Mark, Janssen, & Milhausen, 2011, p. 972) and studies consistently draw the same aforementioned conclusions regarding differing perceptions between men and women. For example, Whitty (2003a) explored gender differences and Internet infidelity and concluded that “women were more likely than men to believe that online sexual acts were an act of betrayal” (p. 918), whereas men find sexual infidelity to be considerably more harmful (Whitty, 2008). An intention of the current study was to examine difference in perception between men and women regarding potentially unfaithful behaviors.

### **Evolutionary Perspective**

A gendered based evolutionary perspective from Buss et al. (1999) offers a different viewpoint on perceptions of infidelity. From this perspective, men are more

inclined to experience jealousy if their partner engaged in an act of physical infidelity. Reasoning for this could be that a man, “could never be certain if he is the biological father of his mate’s child” (Carpenter, 2012, p. 26), and this unknowing can increase anxiety and promote jealousy. “If his mate does not birth his children, his genes will not be passed on; therefore any genetic variation that helps men prevent other men from having sex with his mate will be selected” (Carpenter, 2012, p. 26). On the contrary, women know that the children that they birth will contain half of their genes regardless of the father (Buss, 1999). “However, if her mate becomes emotionally attached to another woman, he may decide to devote his resources to the rearing of that woman’s child rather than her own” (Carpenter, 2012, p 26), leaving the woman alone with the responsibilities of childrearing.

Although there is much debate regarding evolutionary perspectives, the aforementioned conclusions still support how infidelity impacts each gender differently. Cramer, Manning-Ryan, Johnson, and Barbo (2000) conducted a study that shows that women were more concerned about the depletion of a savings account than a physical affair, whereas men were more concerned about their heterosexual partner having a physical affair. These results do not suggest that a woman would be void of any hurt as a result of a physical affair, nonetheless a woman does not share the same fears as a man regarding her offspring. Although the research shows differences in opinion based on gender, it does not specify what acts are perceived to be unfaithful, providing only ambiguous statements regarding physical, emotional, and cyber infidelity.

## **Age**

Certain behaviors may be more common for one age range than another for example the use of technology may be more prevalent for younger generations. There is little research done that supports whether or not age can predict perceptions of infidelity. Morgan and Docan (2007) reported that a limitation of their study on infidelity was that the research participants were mainly younger adults, not older adults in long-term relationships. In regards to online infidelity, younger generations depend on, or are more familiar with, technology compared to older generations; they may see what some would classify as online infidelity as part of their everyday life. Looking at physical and emotional infidelity and excluding online infidelity, older individuals may have more rigid boundaries and rules within their relationship than that of younger populations. Certain activities and behaviors that could be defined as potentially unfaithful may be a part of normative behavior for younger generations, whether or not they are in a committed relationship.

## **Sexual Orientation**

In the past, it has been widely assumed that gay men are incapable of maintaining a long-term monogamous relationship; however, it has been suggested that gay men can be influenced by societal norms to maintain a monogamous relationship (Bonello & Cross, 2010). Gay men have reported emotional affairs to be more traumatic than physical affairs (Dijkstra et al., 2001). From an evolutionary perspective, there is no possibility of procreation, so the only feasible threat would be for a partner to leave the primary relationship to be in another, which would deplete resources in the previous partnership (Buss, 1999). According to Bonello and Cross (2010) many gay men are able

to separate emotions from sex, explaining why, “for them, cheating on their partners constituted the formation of an emotional bond with another man” (p. 125). Thus, an extradyadic sexual relationship that may occur outside the primary same sex partnership could be something that has been previously negotiated within the relationship and may not be considered infidelity.

The use of the Internet by gay men to meet other men is has become increasingly popular for a myriad of reasons, including safety concerns, lack of judgment, experimentation, and infidelity (Ross, Simon, Rosser, McCurdy & Feldman, 2007). The anonymous nature of the internet allows men in a heterosexual marriage who believe that they may be gay to pursue other men without having to disclose information about their current relationship (Ross et al, 2007). This anonymity allows those in a heterosexual relationship to furtively experiment with same sex fantasies or feelings without many implications.

### **Religiosity**

There is limited research done on perceptions of infidelity and religiosity. Religious beliefs often instill values that promote monogamy and usually have a significant influence on the opinions of premarital sex (Sheeran, Abrams, Abraham, & Spears, 1993). Because these values and beliefs often influence the choices that people make, an obligation to a religious commitment may influence one’s decision on whether or not to engage in unfaithful behavior. More individuals who claim to have no religious affiliations reported having an extradyadic relationship than those who sanction a specific religion (Burdette, Ellison, Sherkat, & Gore, 2007; Mattingly et al., 2010). Atkins and Kessel (2008) determined that those who were religious but did not attend services

regularly were more likely to have an extradyadic relationship than those who did attend religious services on a regular basis.

### **Relationship Status**

The majority of research that is done on infidelity excludes those in non-marital and premarital relationships. “Yet conceivably it is while dating that people first uphold or violate exclusivity expectations” (Wiederman & Hurd, 1999, p. 266). Dating relationships fortune individuals with the opportunity to determine what they are comfortable with in their relationships and what qualities in a partner are preferred. Although the term “dating” is fairly subjective, it is usually understood as two people who have negotiated certain rules and boundaries within a relationship and includes some mutual exclusivity. “Dating partners may rely on an implicit agreement of what is acceptable without having articulated the precise extradyadic behaviors that are unacceptable” (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007, p. 95) and this lack of communication can cause damage to the relationship, Behaviors that may be more acceptable while dating may not be as acceptable when a couple is married. Boekhout, Hendrick, and Hendrick (2003) explain that, “partners might come into conflict if they disagree about what activities should be exclusive to their relationship” (p. 285). An individual in a relationship will often assume that their partner shares the same feelings, morals, values, and beliefs about what constitutes as infidelity without any open dialogue (Helsper and Whitty, 2010). “When evaluating a partner’s behavior or values an individual often sees their partner as more similar to themselves than they actually are” (Helsper & Whitty, 2010, p. 917) and this assumption can either create a stronger relationship allowing each other to understand “attitudes, views, and expectations of one’s partner” (p. 917) or these



differing opinions may stimulate conflict. McAnulty and Brineman (2007) conducted a study on infidelity in non-marital relationships; concluding that most college students had engaged in some form of an extradyadic relationship. Since then, a myriad of new behaviors have developed that may or may not be considered unfaithful a population similar in age.

### **Impact of Infidelity**

In addition to the numerous ways in which infidelity is defined, there are also a variety of ways in which it affects individuals and relationships. The impact can be emotionally, psychologically, and relationally damaging. An affair of any kind can be rather traumatizing and it shows that “much of our emotional and psychological well-being depends on a committed relationship with a significant other” (Boekhout, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1999, p. 98). When a violation of a boundary involving extradyadic involvement occurs within a committed relationship both individuals in the relationship, and the relationship itself, will inevitably suffer.

### **Physical Impact**

Because infidelity can be so damaging, some individuals may endure physiological symptoms as a result. If one has a physical affair with someone that is not their partner, they increase the odds of contracting a sexually transmitted disease or infection and they could potentially pass it on to their current partner (Fisher et al., 2009; Snyder & Doss, 2005). The physical impact of infidelity can also expand into psychological symptoms, such as depression and anxiety, which can contribute to the development of serious health problems. At times, the response to infidelity is so severe that it has been known to include symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Bird,

Butler, & Fife, 2007). “There are psychological impacts for both those having the affair and for their partners” (Hertlein, Wetchler, & Piercy, 2005, p. 7). According to the study done by Cano and O’Leary (2000) research participants who experienced infidelity in their relationship were six times more likely to be diagnosed with a major depressive episode than other participants who did not report infidelity in their relationship.

### **Relational Impact**

Infidelity can significantly impact relationships and is one of the most reported reasons for divorce, not just in Western culture, but across many different cultures (Amato & Previti, 2003; Betzig, 1989; Lammers, Stoker, Jordan, Pollmann, & Stapel, 2011). Unfaithful behavior represents a betrayal of commitment and exclusivity within a relationship and can elicit harmful consequences for couples, affecting attributes within a relationship, such as trust, emotional and physical intimacy, communication, and interpersonal conflict. Extradyadic involvement can cause trauma within the relationship and can often motivate couples to separate, divorce, or seek out counseling services (Fife, Weeks, & Gambescia, 2008; Hertlein, 2011). If the couple decides to separate as a result of an extradyadic relationship, the experience with infidelity may impact future relationships (Hall & Fincham, 2006). Hall and Fincham (2006) discuss forgiveness and moving on after an extradyadic affair occurs; however, there is no research to show how perception of infidelity changes after one is previously involved in infidelity. Perceptions may differ depending on whether or not the individual was the betrayed partner or the partner who engaged in unfaithful behaviors.

## **Emotional Impact**

The emotional impact of infidelity can affect both the partner who has been unfaithful in addition to the partner who was cheated on. Infidelity can cause feelings of betrayal, loss of trust, an overwhelming sense of hurt, and often times can deeply impact one's self-esteem. Self-worth has been examined as a motive for engaging in unfaithful behavior and the impact of such behavior further diminishes one's self-worth (Eaves, 2007).

If a couple who experiences infidelity decides to separate, there can also be a sense of loss and grief. Similar to the death of a loved one, infidelity mirrors similar reaction cycles of shock, disbelief, and grief (Young et al., 2000). If the couple decides to stay together, the couple must work through forgiveness and acceptance, in order to rebuild the trust within the relationship.

On the extreme end, infidelity promotes jealousy (Mullen & Martin, 1994), and jealousy may escalate to violent behavior. Daly, Wilson, and Weghorst (1982) found that, "Criminologists in the United States and elsewhere have regularly found sexual jealousy to be a leading homicide motive" (p. 15). Jealousy or the thought of one's partner having an emotional or physical extradyadic relationship can elicit violent thoughts, behaviors, and stress on an individual both within the couple and family system (Harris, 2003). It is quite apparent that monogamous partnerships are valued in our society or infidelity would not elicit such intense reactions.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to develop a deeper understanding of how infidelity is defined and what behaviors are perceived as unfaithful. Specifically, this study explored how basic demographics, individual relationship status, family of origin relationship status and experience with infidelity, and previous personal experience with infidelity influenced participants' perceptions of infidelity. The study was designed to enhance the understanding of researchers and clinicians about what behaviors are perceived as infidelity and how certain variables influence these perceptions.

The study utilized a multimethods design (Gambrel & Butler, 2013). The research questions were separated into different groups. Answers to the questions in groups 1-4 constituted the quantitative portion of the study. Questions in group five made up the qualitative portion of the study.

- (a) The first group was utilized to assess demographic variables such as age, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation or preference and how they influence how people view infidelity. Research participants were asked to identify their age, gender, sexual orientation, and what religion they practice, if any and if they do practice a religion, how frequently they attended religious congregations or services. The attendance of religious congregations and services has allowed the researchers to measure how religious the participants are.
- (b) The second group was based on relationship status. The proposed question was whether relationship status (i.e., people identifying themselves as in a

committed relationship or single) affects the way in which individuals perceive potentially unfaithful behaviors as infidelity. Henline, Lamke, and Howard (2007) conducted a study on perceptions of online infidelity, only surveying those in a “committed relationship” and not providing a comparison of the perceptions of those who are not in a relationship. The options for this question defining relationship status asked participants if they are single, married or in a domestic partnership, cohabitating, in a committed relationship, not exclusively dating, widowed, divorced, or separated. For those who identified themselves as being in a committed relationship were asked how long they have been in their current relationship. Participants also had the option to say that they were not currently in a relationship or that they are dating multiple people.

- (c) The third group addressed family of origin and infidelity. Another variable that may also influence how people interpret behaviors as infidelity is marital status of primary caregivers or parents, and whether or not the child had knowledge of an extradyadic relationship within the parental subsystem. Do parental marital status and knowledge of infidelity affect how people view infidelity? Participants were asked about their parent’s current marital status, if they are married or if they were ever married. Then participants will be asked about any knowledge of an extramarital/dyadic relationship with their primary caregiver or parents. Participants were also asked if their parents or primary care-givers had been divorced or separated, if it was a result of infidelity.

- (d) The fourth group included individual experience with infidelity. Do research participants who have been unfaithful to a partner or have had an unfaithful partner perceive behaviors that could be labeled as infidelity differently than those who have never experienced infidelity? Participants were asked about whether (based on their own or their partner's perception) they had ever been unfaithful to a partner. The participants were also asked if they have ever had a partner who was unfaithful to them.
- (e) The fifth group of questions asked participants to define infidelity in their own words at the beginning of the survey. At the end of the survey, they were asked if after reviewing the content of the survey, their definition of infidelity has changed at all, and if so, how? The assumption was that based on the content of the material, research participants' views about infidelity may have changed in some way through their participation in the research.

### **Recruitment**

Qualified research participants of this study were any individuals 18 and older. Of the 289 participants, most were primarily graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The survey was administered electronically online. The researchers used snowball sampling through social networking sites, such as Facebook, by posting the link on Facebook and asking other Facebook friends to repost the link (see appendix B). Participants were also recruited in in graduate and undergraduate classrooms at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas by the instructors of various courses. A total of 447 participants were recruited to participate in the study; 288 participants completed the survey in its entirety. If at any time the participant felt uncomfortable

taking the survey, they had the option of stopping. Approval to use human research subjects was granted to the researchers on this present study by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

## **Measures**

### **Survey Questions**

Participants completed an online survey developed by the research team for the purpose of this study (See Appendix A). The research team carefully collaborated to ensure that the survey was sensitive to diversity. Initially, the participants were asked to define infidelity in their own words. Next, participants were asked to provide information on their age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, how frequently they attended religious congregations or services, relationship status, and questions about their history with infidelity as it pertains to themselves and their family of origin. Next, participants were presented with a number of behavioral scenarios and asked to rate on a four point Likert-type scale whether or not they perceived these behaviors as unfaithful or not. The first point on the scale was for behaviors that are never considered infidelity; the fourth point on the scale was used to represent behaviors that are always considered infidelity. The two points in the middle were used to identify behaviors that were sometimes infidelity and usually infidelity. The scenarios were modeled after a combination of studies on perceptions of infidelity and extradyadic relationships (Hacakthorn et al., 2011; Hansen, 1987; Henline, Lamke & Howard, 2007; Thornton & Nagurney, 2007).

The infidelity scale questions were divided into three categories: physical infidelity, emotional infidelity, and cyber infidelity. Each question was asked two different ways. One was how the behavior pertained to the participants themselves and

the other asked how the behavior pertained to the participant's partner (For example, hugging someone who is not your partner or your partner hugging someone who is not you). If the participant was not currently in a relationship, the participant was instructed to answer the questions based on the standards of their previous or future relationships. These behavior questions were randomized in order to assess any double standards that a participant may have about themselves and their partner. Finally, the research participants were asked if their definition of infidelity changed based on the content of the survey and they were provided with a space to indicate how their definition changed.

## **Participants**

### **Demographics**

Participants were asked to answer demographic questions about their age, sexual orientation, gender, race or ethnicity, which U.S. State they resided in, relationship status, and the length of their current relationship. Out of the total 288 participants, there were 215 females (75%), 72 males (24.7%), and one who identified as other (.3%). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 69 with a mean of 29.7. The participants self-identified as Caucasian or white (76.4%), Hispanic/Latino (9%), Black or African American (4.2%), Asian/Pacific Islander (4.5%), Native American or American Indian (.3%), and Other (5.6%). The other category was composed of mixed white and Asian, multi-ethnic, Moroccan and Philipino, black and Caucasian, human, Jewish, Ethiopian, Eastern European, and Hispanic Caucasian. (See Tables 1-5 for results).



Table 1

*Gender Table: Ethnicity or Race*

Predictor Variables	Male	Female	Other	Total
Hispanic/Latino	7	19	0	26
Black or African American	2	10	0	12
Native American or American Indian	1	0	0	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	10	0	13
Caucasian or White	56	164	0	220
Other	3	12	1	16
Total	72	215	1	288

Table 2

*Gender Table: Have you ever been cheated on?*

Predictor Variables	Male	Female	Other	Total
<i>Have you ever been cheated on? If yes, was the infidelity:</i>				
Physical	23	47	0	70
Emotional	2	12	0	14
Cyber	0	5	0	5
Combination	9	74	0	83
This question does not apply to me	38	77	1	116
Total	72	215	1	288

Table 3

*Gender Table: Have you ever cheated on a partner?*

Predictor Variables	Male	Female	Other	Total
<i>In your opinion, have you ever cheated on a partner? If yes, was the infidelity:</i>				
Physical	13	31	0	44
Emotional	3	18	0	21
Cyber	1	1	0	2
Combination	8	40	0	48
This question does not apply to me	47	125	1	173
Total	72	215	1	288

Table 4

*Gender Table: In your partner's opinion, have you ever cheated?*

Predictor Variables	Male	Female	Other	Total
<i>In your partner's opinion, have you ever cheated? If yes, was the infidelity:</i>				
Physical	10	33	0	43
Emotional	4	10	0	14
Cyber	2	1	0	3
Combination	2	21	0	23
This question does not apply to me	54	150	1	205
Total	72	215	1	288

Table 5

*Gender Table: Family of Origin History of Infidelity*

Predictor Variables	Male	Female	Other	Total
<i>If your parents or primary care-givers are divorced or separated, was it as a result of infidelity?</i>				
Yes	12	37	0	49
No	14	40	1	55
This question does not apply to me	46	138	0	184
Total	72	215	1	288

Participants were asked to identify the state in which they currently reside. Over half of the participants said they were currently living in the state of Nevada (58%), other participants were from various U.S. states. The researcher was able to generate participants from many U.S. states by utilizing snowball sampling through social media. After completing the survey, many participants reposted the survey onto their Facebook wall, allowing other potential participants the opportunity to complete and repost the survey. Participants were also asked to identify the highest level of education they had completed. 2 of the 288 participants had completed some high school or received no diploma (.7%), 16 participants had a high school diploma or the equivalent (5.6%), 65 had attended some college but have not completed a degree (22.6%), 7 have completed trade/tech/or vocational training (2.4%), 24 had an associate's degree (8.3%), 123 have completed a bachelor's degree (42.7%), 40 a Master's degree (13.9%), 3 a professional degree (1%), and 7 a doctorate degree (2.4%).

Participants were asked to identify their sexual orientation. 267 participants identified as heterosexual (92.7%) and 21 participants identified non-heterosexual or as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or other (7.3%). (See Tables 6-10 for results).

Table 6

*Sexual Orientation Table: Ethnicity or Race*

Predictor Variables	Heterosexual	Non-heterosexual	Total
Hispanic/Latino	25	1	26
Black or African American	11	1	12
Native American or American Indian	0	1	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	13	0	13
Caucasian or White	205	15	220
Other	13	3	16
Total	267	21	288

Table 7

*Sexual Orientation Table: Have you ever been cheated on?*

Predictor Variables	Heterosexual	Non-heterosexual	Total
<i>Have you ever been cheated on? If yes, was the infidelity:</i>			
Physical	64	6	70
Emotional	12	2	14
Cyber	5	0	5
Combination	75	8	83
This question does not apply to me	111	5	116
Total	267	21	288

Table 8

*Sexual Orientation Table: Have you ever cheated on a partner?*

Predictor Variables	Heterosexual	Non-heterosexual	Total
<i>In your opinion, have you ever cheated on a partner? If yes, was the infidelity:</i>			
Physical	43	1	44
Emotional	21	0	21
Cyber	2	0	2
Combination	37	11	48
This question does not apply to me	164	9	173
Total	267	21	288

Table 9

*Sexual Orientation Table: In your partner's opinion, have you ever cheated?*

Predictor Variable	Heterosexual	Non-heterosexual	Total
<i>In your partner's opinion, have you ever cheated? If yes, was the infidelity:</i>			
Physical	41	2	43
Emotional	14	0	14
Cyber	2	1	3
Combination	15	8	23
This question does not apply to me	195	10	205
Total	267	21	288

Table 10

*Sexual Orientation Table: Family of Origin History of Infidelity*

Predictor Variables	Heterosexual	Non-heterosexual	Total
<i>If your parents or primary care-givers are divorced or separated, was it a result of infidelity?</i>			
Yes	43	6	49
No	50	5	55
This question does not apply to me	174	10	184
Total	267	21	288

The participants were also asked to best identify their current relationship status. 105 number of participants identified themselves as married or in a domestic partnership (36.5%), 81 stated that they were in a committed relationship (28.1%), 66 stated that they were single (22.9%), 14 stated that they were cohabitating (4.9%), 9 stated that they were not exclusively dating (3.1%), 12 stated that they were divorced (4.2%), and 1 stated that they were separated (.3%). Participants were then asked to identify how long they had been in their current relationship or if they were in a relationship at all. Out of the 288 participants, 21 of the participants have been in a relationship for six months or less (7.3%), 19 have been in a relationship for six months to one year (6.6%), 28 participants have been in a relationship for one to two years (9.7%), 54 participants have been in their relationship for two to four years (18.8%), 89 participants have been in their current relationship for five or more years (30.9%), 70 participants are not currently in a relationship (24.3%), and 7 stated that they were dating multiple people (2.4%).

### **Religion**

Participants were asked to identify their religious affiliation in addition to how frequently they attended religious services or congregations. Out of the 288 total participants, 32 identified as Protestant Christian (11.1%), 46 identified as Roman Catholic (16%), 16 identified as Evangelical Christian (5.6%), 8 Jewish (2.8%), 1 Muslim (.3%), 2 Hindu (.7%), 5 Buddhist (1.7%), 24 Agnostic (8.3%), 20 Atheist (6.9%), 60 LDS (20.8%), 49 did not affiliate themselves with any religion (17%), and 25 listed other (8.7%). The other category was composed of Non-denominational Christian, Eclectic Wiccan, Lutheran, Amalgamist, and the belief in God. When asked how frequently the participants attended religious services or congregations, 87 said that they

do not participate in religious congregations or services (30.2%), 2 daily (.7%), 81 weekly (28.1%), 32 monthly (11.1%), 34 yearly (11.8%), and 52 stated that they are not religious (18.1%). (See tables 11-20 for results).

Table 11

*Religious Affiliation Table: Ethnicity or Race*

Predictor Variables	Religious	Non-Religious	Total
Hispanic/Latino	17	9	26
Black or African American	5	7	12
Native American or American Indian	1	0	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	12	1	13
Caucasian or White	148	72	220
Other	12	4	16
Total	195	93	288

Table 12

*Religious Affiliation Table: Have you ever been cheated on?*

Predictor Variables	Religious	Non-Religious	Total
<i>Have you ever been cheated on? If yes, was the infidelity:</i>			
Physical	42	28	70
Emotional	10	4	14
Cyber	4	1	5
Combination	54	29	83
This question does not apply to me	85	31	116
Total	195	93	288

Table 13

*Religious Affiliation Table: Have you ever cheated on a partner?*

Predictor Variables	Religious	Non-Religious	Total
<i>In your opinion, have you ever cheated on a partner?</i>			
Physical	27	17	44
Emotional	12	9	21
Cyber	0	2	2
Combination	32	16	48
This question does not apply to me	124	49	173
Total	195	93	288

Table 14

*Religious Affiliation Table: In your partner's opinion, have you ever cheated?*

Predictor Variables	Religious	Non-Religious	Total
<i>In your partner's opinion, have you ever cheated?</i>			
Physical	25	18	43
Emotional	10	4	14
Cyber	1	2	3
Combination	15	8	23
This question does not apply to me	144	61	205
Total	195	93	288

Table 15

*Religious Affiliation Table: Family of Origin History of Infidelity*

Predictor Variables	Religious	Not Religious	Total
<i>Are your parents divorced or separated?</i>			
Was it a result of infidelity?			
Yes	29	20	49
No	31	24	55
This question does not apply	135	49	184
Totals	195	93	288

Table 16

*Religious Frequency Table*

Predictor Variables	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	I do not attend religious services	I am not religious	Total
Hispanic/Latino	4	9	4	4	5	0	26
Black or African American	2	5	2	3	0	0	12
Native American or American Indian	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	2	4	4	3	0	13
Caucasian or White	45	63	23	17	71	1	220
Other	1	8	1	4	1	1	16
Totals	52	87	34	32	81	2	288



Table 17

*Religious Frequency Table*

Predictor Variables	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	I do not attend religious services	I am not religious	Total
<i>Have you ever been cheated on? Was the infidelity:</i>							
Physical	14	24	8	7	17	0	70
Emotional	2	4	1	1	6	0	14
Cyber	0	0	0	4	1	0	5
Combination	17	27	13	10	15	1	80
This question does not apply to me	20	32	12	9	42	1	119
Totals	53	87	34	31	81	2	288

Table 18

*Religious Frequency Table*

Predictor Variables	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	I do not attend religious services	I am not religious	Total
<i>In your opinion, have you ever cheated on a partner? Was the infidelity:</i>							
Physical	6	21	6	4	7	0	44
Emotional	4	7	2	4	4	0	21
Cyber	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Combination	8	16	9	7	7	1	48
This question does not apply to me	32	43	17	17	63	1	173
Total	52	87	34	32	63	2	288

Table 19

*Religious Frequency Table*

Predictor Variables	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	I do not attend religious services	I am not religious	Total
<i>In your partner's opinion, have you ever cheated? Was the infidelity:</i>							
Physical	8	16	7	5	7	0	43
Emotional	2	8	2	0	2	0	14
Cyber	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
Combination	2	10	3	3	4	1	23
This question does not apply to me	38	53	21	24	68	1	205
Total	52	87	34	32	81	2	288

Table 20

*Religious Frequency Table*

Predictor Variables	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	I do not attend religious services	I am not religious	Total
<i>If your parents/caregivers are divorced/separated, was it a result of infidelity?</i>							
Yes	11	14	7	6	11	0	49
No	10	23	6	6	10	0	55
This question does not apply	31	50	21	20	60	2	184
Totals	52	87	34	32	81	2	288

### **History of Infidelity**

Participants were asked to answer questions regarding their parents' or primary caregivers' relationship status and history of infidelity. They were also asked to answer questions regarding their personal experience with infidelity.

The largest proportion in the sample was those who identified their primary caregivers or family of origin as married. The total sample was composed of 9 never married (9%), 60 divorced (60%), 2 separated (.7%), 159 married (55.2%), 14 married more than twice (4.9%), 23 remarried (8%), and 21 widows/widowers (7.3%). When asked about knowledge of infidelity within parent's or primary care-givers relationships, 92 answered yes (31.9%), 86 said not to the extent of their knowledge (29.5%), 17 suspect or suspected infidelity (5.9%), and 94 answered definitely not (32.6%). Participants were then asked if their parents or primary care-givers had divorced or separated as a result of infidelity. The total sample was composed of 49 respondents who said yes (17%), 55 responded no (19.1%), and 185 stated that the question did not apply to them (63.9%).

When participants were asked whether or not they had ever been cheated on, the largest proportion of 142 stated that they had been cheated on (49.3%), 118 said no (41%), 28 responded that they suspect or suspected infidelity (9.7%). Of the population that responded that they had been cheated on 70 responded that the infidelity was physical (24.3%), 14 responded emotional (4.9%), 5 responded cyber (1.7%), 80 responded that it was a combination of physical, emotional, and/or cyber (27.8%), 116 responded that the question did not apply to them (40.3%), and there was missing data for 3 participants (1%). Participants were also asked whether or not they had ever cheated on a partner in their opinion. 112 responded yes (38.9%) and 176 responded no (61.1%). For those who responded that they had been unfaithful to a partner 44 responded physical (15.3%), 21 responded that the infidelity was emotional (7.3%), 2 responded cyber (.7%), 48 responded that it was a combination of physical, emotional, and/or cyber (16.7%), and 173 stated that the question did not apply to them (60.1%). Participants were then asked to identify whether or not they have ever cheated on a partner, in their current or former partner's opinion. 77 responded yes (26.7%) and 211 responded no (73.3%). Of those who said yes, 43 identified the infidelity to be physical (14.9%), 3 cyber (1%), 14 emotional (4.9%), 23 said it was a combination of physical, emotional, and/or cyber (8%), and 206 stated that the question did not apply to them (71.2%).

### **Proposed Hypotheses**

The following anticipated outcomes can be broken down into the following groups and hypotheses:

1. Group one: Demographic variables will impact how participants see infidelity.

- a. Participants who are older will score lower on the infidelity scale than the younger participants, excluding cyber infidelity.
  - b. Participants who identify as non-heterosexual will score lower on the infidelity scale and believe that fewer behaviors are always or usually unfaithful.
  - c. Participants who are female will perceive unfaithful behaviors differently than men and they will score higher on the infidelity scale in regards to emotional infidelity.
  - d. Participants who are religious and who frequently attend religious services or congregations will perceive infidelity differently than those who are not religious or do not attend frequent religious services and will score higher on the infidelity scale.
2. Group two: Relationship status will impact how participants perceive infidelity.
- a. Participants who are single will score lower on the infidelity scale.
  - b. Participants who are in a relationship will have different perceptions of infidelity and will score higher on the infidelity scale.
3. Group three: Family of origin history of infidelity will impact how participants perceive infidelity.
- a. Those with a knowledge of an affair within a parents' or primary caregivers' relationship will score higher on the infidelity scale and perceive infidelity differently than someone who had no knowledge of an affair in their family of origin.

4. Group four: Individual experience with infidelity will impact how participants perceive infidelity, whether the individual has been cheated on or has engaged in the unfaithful behaviors themselves.
  - a. Participants who have been cheated on will score higher on the infidelity scale.
  - b. Participants who have cheated will score lower on the infidelity scale.
5. Group five: After completing the survey, one's definition of infidelity will change based on the content of the material in the survey.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Data analysis was conducted by an analysis team and consisted of both qualitative and quantitative analyses.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

The analysis of the open-ended questions regarding participants' definition of infidelity utilized qualitative data analysis procedures of open and thematic coding. The qualitative analysis was conducted by a qualitative analysis team that consisted of an associate professor who has extensive qualitative research knowledge and experience and expertise on infidelity research, three Marriage and Family Therapy graduate students who have experience with qualitative data analysis, and an undergraduate student who has interest in research and qualitative analysis. Each team member independently coded participants' responses with descriptive labels. Following the open coding, team members consulted together in research meetings and by electronic mail, utilizing a process of constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and triangulation between research team members. This process resulted in the identification of common themes found in the answers provided by the research participants. Some of the common themes identified in the analysis of the qualitative data are described below.

Boundaries, violations, trust, and contracts identified within the relationship were prominent aspects of infidelity as described by participants. *Boundaries* are unique guidelines within each relationship that are not intended to be crossed. To *violate* is to break rules that have been established or to disrespect an individual or the guidelines established within a relationship. *Trust* is the belief that someone is dependable and honest. *Contracts* within a relationship are terms that a couple has negotiated upon that

dictate how they behave within their relationship. Many participants identified that infidelity involves a partner breaching the contract that they have within their relationship. Participants also commented that infidelity is a boundary violation or a breaking of the rules of the relationship. For example, one participant answered that infidelity was, “a breach of trust, sexual in nature.” Another defined it as, “a breach of intimacy”. One participant defined it as, “Any acts of breaking trust within a committed relationship involving another person that crosses the line of what you and your partner have deemed appropriate for your relationship.” The aforementioned quote was similar to many others in that it discussed crossing lines, boundaries, or some contract that has been negotiated within a relationship. It was common for the participants to state that they believed infidelity to be a betrayal, deceitful, and it is any behavior that a partner feels as if they should hide from the other.

The *type of infidelity* mentioned was a recurring theme amongst the participant’s definitions. Many answers identified infidelity as physical behaviors, most specified sexual behaviors and/or with some sort of sexual intention. Many participants only included physical infidelity in their definition, for example, “having intercourse with someone who is not your current partner.” Whereas other participants chose to incorporate both emotional and physical infidelity in their definition, for example:

“Infidelity can occur physically, such as kissing or having sex with someone who is not your partner or emotionally, such as opening up to someone who is not your partner about intimate things that you may or may not share with your significant other.”

Emotional attachment, connection, flirting, and intimacy were other recurring themes that were quite prevalent. For example, “Infidelity can be both emotional and physical or a combination of both. Once you start to feel/show interest in someone else besides your significant other, you have crossed the line. Any type of flirting via text, email, or in person is a form of infidelity.” Another common theme in terms of types of infidelity was cyber infidelity, or the use of technology in some way to facilitate an extradyadic relationship. Including but not limited to the mentioning of cyber-sex, the use of the Internet, sending inappropriate photos to someone outside the relationship, sexting, and texting. Some participants also identified the element of fantasy or cognitive infidelity. Although many participants included statements about an affair including another person, others wrote about pornography and fantasies about other people outside of the relationship. There were many times that language such as “mental infidelity”, “lusting”, and “thoughts” were utilized to describe a type of infidelity. For example, one participant said, “Any physical or mental situation in which one partner is led away from the other” in their definition. The use of the word “mental” was common; identifying that certain types of thoughts themselves may be defined as infidelity and that cognition can sometimes lead to an unfaithful behavior, which can be defined as infidelity.

*Consenting to an act of infidelity* was mentioned many times. In addition to consent, participants mentioned knowledge or knowing, breaking of promises in a relationship, and obligations to a committed relationship. For example, “knowingly or unknowingly making choices that change the course of a relationship, by being unfaithful to your partner.” Consent is when both parties involved in an extradyadic relationship



agree to engage in certain behaviors knowing that there may be potential consequences or harm done to another.

In their definitions of infidelity, participants utilized many *synonyms*, such as: cheating, adultery, affair, and unfaithful. One participant responded infidelity is an, “emotional, sexual, or physical action, speech, or thoughts of a romantic attraction or interaction with one who is not your spouse or significant other. Basically seeking or acting to replace spouse or significant other in emotional, sexual, and intellectual relational context with another person.”

The element of another *person outside of the marriage* was added by some participants to complete their definition of infidelity. Many participants used language consistent with marriage, spouse, wife and/or husband more frequently than language used about a committed partner, girlfriend, or boyfriend. For example, one respondent stated, “I once heard it defined as any activity you would not be comfortable doing with or in front of your spouse.-loyalty to the feelings of your spouse.” A participant also responded, “It is the moral, physical, and emotional unfaithfulness of one’s spouse toward the other. Unfaithfulness is any act of intimacy, physical or otherwise, with a person who is not one's spouse. It can also be considered as an act of disloyalty.”

Other participants were more inclusive of other partners, not just spouses. For example, “I define infidelity as the act of been unfaithful to your partner or someone you love. Been unfaithful means disrespecting your partner or someone you love by your own actions and thoughts.” Another theme found highlighted commitment, relationships, and partnerships. Participants talked about exclusivity. They mentioned the difference

between a friendship and an intimate extradyadic relationship. There were also few participants who mentioned family or breaking a commitment to the family.

Another prominent element amongst the infidelity definitions was the emotional impact of infidelity, including the mentioning of hurt, harm, or damage. Adding the emotional reaction, or hurt, to the definition gives the behavior more meaning. One participant wrote, “Participating in activities with individuals outside of a committed relationship that would be harmful to the other individual or union.” If the behaviors were not hurtful, then people probably would not label them as infidelity. It is also important to recognize that infidelity is not only harmful to the individuals involved but the relationship itself.

A religious component was another theme found. Participants mentioned God, religion, the Bible, and spirituality. For example, one participant responded, “Against Gods plan for men as the hunters and for Gods plan for women as the procreators of the world”. The religious component in this data set may imply that a motivating factor for fidelity for some people may be the expectations and commitment they have to their religious beliefs and values, not necessarily the fear of hurting their partner.

The final question on the survey was also an open-ended question that required qualitative analysis. Participants were asked to identify how, if at all, their definitions of infidelity changed based on the content of the survey.

One of the most common themes identified by the research team was *intent*. Many participants commented on the intention behind many of the behaviors listed. Certain behaviors, without intimate intent, would not be categorized as infidelity. Some behaviors may be seemingly innocent acts, unless the element of intimate intention or

sexual fantasy about the other person is present. Some participants said that it is not infidelity until some sort of meeting or physical connection occurs and would disagree that the buildup or the initial communication prior to a sexual encounter are acts of infidelity. Others would argue the exact opposite, if there is intent to have a sexual encounter or intimate relationship then the initial communication is a form of infidelity. One participant wrote:

“I think infidelity is different for every situation based on INTENT. If the motivation is for some sort of gratification, then it can be cheating. But if it is not of sexual intent, it doesn't necessarily mean cheating. You could 'like' a former boyfriend or girlfriend's Facebook picture without wanting anything from it, and you could like a picture and it could mean you want a sexual relationship with that person again. It depends on the person, relationship, and situation.”

Participants often acknowledged that they hold themselves to a different standard than their partner, for example, one participant said “It changed slightly cause I noticed things I said were somewhat infidelity for my partner were not for me when it was reversed. So I guess I noticed things I do that could be considered infidelity that I never thought of.” Most responded that they knew that they could trust themselves, but it is more of a challenge to trust that their partner's intentions are pure.

Another recurring theme was the addition of an element of *cyber infidelity*, to participants' definition, including but not limited to texting, sexting, pornography use, social media, and other elements of technology. Some participants stated that technological mediums are not problematic and they should not be considered infidelity

because in “today’s world or society” they are more socially acceptable. For example, “I realized that a lot more things nowadays can be considered as being unfaithful to one’s partner. Just talking to someone of the opposite sex can be considered cheating. Social networks have made communication between a partner and someone else creates a suspicion of infidelity.” Another responded, “I never really thought about how social media affects a relationship in regards to infidelity. Made me think about how serious some of your actions on FB Twitter & Instagram can be a form of infidelity.” On the contrary, one participant said that some behaviors are more acceptable today than they were in the past. This particular participant wrote, “In today’s generation grinding and hugging people that aren’t your partner are normal today, but before it would probably be considered cheating”.

Others identified that social media and popular technological resources may be problematic in relationships and they did not realize that certain behaviors that are engaged in daily could be hurtful to partners. One participant identified that their previous definition of infidelity only encompassed physical behaviors; the new definition stated:

“The survey asked so many sexual questions regarding intimacy and infidelity and I realized that my definition of infidelity covers more than just sexual situations. Some of the situations the survey described may be defined as minor to some people, but to me, because of a committed relationships, those situations and behaviors do fit the definition of infidelity to me (i.e., going on internet dating sites, making a profile...while not really sexual in nature, this behavior does break the trust of a committed relationship).”

Other participants discussed reevaluating the contracts or the boundaries that they have established within their current relationship or future relationships. One participant responded, “Got me to realize that in future relationships I must be more specific on exactly what constitutes infidelity in which the way I define it.”

Some participants identified that their definition of infidelity differed from that of their partner’s. The participants’ acknowledgement of differences in perceptions of infidelity was prevalent. Many were able to state that they have conflicting opinions with their partners. Some even went as far as to say that the content of the survey completely redefined what they believed infidelity to be all together. One participant wrote, “I never thought of dancing, or having a one-on-one dinner date as infidelity, but now I’m double thinking it.” In addition, prior to the survey, participants said that they would never consider certain things to be infidelity because they had never thought about it before, but once they started thinking about it, they are not comfortable with their partners engaging in certain behaviors.

Many participants stated that their definition of infidelity *did not change* at all. Some went as far as to say that the content of the survey only confirmed and strengthened the beliefs that they held about infidelity. Some people shared that they have more rigid opinions and view many behaviors as unfaithful, for example: dancing with someone who is not your partner or e-mailing someone who is not your partner. Others stated that they do not believe that anything but sex is infidelity. Other participants listed not applicable.

During the thematic coding of the qualitative data, the analysis team found that participants specifically referenced their current primary relationship and made a comment about the rules that they choose to follow within their relationship. Other participants referenced past or current relationships and identified specific events that were hurtful or damaged their relationship in some way. Some participants commented that they often make mistakes within the boundaries of the relationship, but after the act has been done, they try to correct the behavior. Furthermore, some participants discussed that if the partner never finds out or are never hurt by the behavior in question then it is not infidelity. On the opposing side, many participants said that the secrecy of behaviors from one's partner is infidelity, regardless of the act.

After combining all of the aforementioned prominent themes together based on the first and last open-ended questions, the research team was able to develop a comprehensive definition of infidelity, which synthesizes the responses of those who participated in this study:

Infidelity constitutes a breach of trust through the violation of implicit or explicit boundaries, contracts, or agreements between parties in a relationship without the knowledge or consent of a committed partner. These actions may include physical, emotional, and/or cyber components, with intimate intent that elicits emotional pain and hurt in the betrayed partner.

## Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis focused on the participants' responses to the demographic questions, personal experiences with infidelity, family of origin questions, and the behavioral scenarios of potential infidelity (Roscoe et al., 1998; Henline, Lamke, & Howard, 2007; Buss et al., 1999; Hansen, 1987).

Participants were asked to rate behaviors on a four point Likert-scale. As aforementioned, these questions included behaviors that could be labeled as physical, emotional, and cyber infidelity. Each question was asked in two different ways, one way to apply it to the participant's self and one way inquiring about the participant's partner. The intention was to determine whether or not individuals were more accepting of themselves engaging in potentially unfaithful behaviors than their partners. The research team developed their own scale to measure unfaithful behaviors for the purpose of this study. Because this infidelity scale had never been used before, researchers used Cronbach's alpha in order to determine internal reliability of the questions. Acceptable scores to predict generalizability are determined by alpha being greater than or equal to .9 ( $\alpha \geq 0.9$ ) or if alpha is greater than or equal to .7 and less than or equal to .9 ( $0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.9$ ). (Please review Table 6 for results).

Table 21  
*Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test*

Behavior Category	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
<i><u>Physical Infidelity</u></i>		
All Physical	.941	38
Physical Self	.883	19
Physical Partner	.883	19
<i><u>Emotional Infidelity</u></i>		
All Emotional	.954	26
Emotional Self	.908	13
Emotional Partner	.913	13
<i><u>Cyber Infidelity</u></i>		
All Cyber	.950	34
Cyber Self	.901	17
Cyber Partner	.900	17
<b>Total:</b>	<b>.953</b>	<b>98</b>

An intention of this study was to identify to what extent certain behaviors are unfaithful. The behaviors were ranked on an infidelity scale created for the purpose of this study with four options to choose from. The closer the mean behavior was to the number four, the more likely the behavior is always infidelity. The closer the mean number is to one, the more likely the behavior is never infidelity. (See Tables 22, 23 and 24 for results). The tables are organized in descending order with the behaviors having the highest average score listed first.



Table 22  
*Means of Physical Behavior Questions*

		Mean	SD
1	Vaginal intercourse with someone who is not your partner	3.92	0.336
2	Your partner has vaginal intercourse with someone who is not you	3.92	0.341
3	Your partner receives oral sex from someone who is not you	3.91	0.372
4	Your partner performs oral sex on someone who is not you	3.91	0.366
5	Anal intercourse with someone who is not your partner	3.91	0.356
6	Your partner has anal intercourse with someone who is not you	3.91	0.366
7	Oral sex performed on you by someone who is not your partner	3.90	0.392
8	You perform oral sex on someone who is not your partner	3.89	0.408
9	Paying for sexual favors	3.88	0.395
10	Your partner receiving vaginal or penile stimulation from someone other than you	3.86	0.425
11	Your partner paying for sexual favors	3.86	0.433
12	Vaginal or penile manual stimulation to someone who is not your partner	3.85	0.441
13	Mutual masturbation with someone who is not your partner	3.81	0.528
14	Your partner engaging in mutual masturbation with someone who is not you	3.81	0.536
15	If you engage in sexual behavior with someone other than your partner while under the influence of illicit drugs or alcohol	3.80	0.537
16	Your partner engages in sexual behavior with someone other than you while under the influence of illicit drugs or alcohol	3.79	0.539
17	Your partner intimately kissing someone who is not you	3.78	0.549
18	Intimately kissing someone other than your partner	3.76	0.566
19	Your partner touching someone who is not you with intimate intent	3.59	0.688
20	Receiving a lap dance from a stripper	3.58	0.691
21	Your partner receiving above clothing genital contact with someone other than you	3.58	0.699
22	Touching someone who is not your partner with intimate intent	3.57	0.700
23	Above clothing genital contact with someone who is not your partner	3.56	0.691
24	Participating in same sex sexual behavior if you are in a heterosexual relationship or participating in heterosexual behavior if you are in a same sex relationship.	3.36	0.877
25	Grinding; a type of dancing that involves above clothing rubbing of genitals while dancing on someone who is not your partner	2.85	0.996
26	Your partner grinding; a type of dancing that involves above clothing rubbing of genitals on someone who is not you	2.82	0.966
27	If your partner holds hands with someone that is not you	2.79	0.894
28	Holding hands with someone that is not your partner	2.73	0.878
29	Your partner watching a strip show performed by someone other than you	2.36	1.083
30	Watching a strip show performed by someone who is not your partner	2.36	1.076
31	Your partner receives a lap dance from a stripper	2.25	1.136
32	Your partner dancing with someone other than you	1.78	0.615
33	Dancing with someone who is not your partner	1.77	0.674
34	Your partner hugging someone who is not you	1.60	0.582
35	You masturbating alone without your partner's knowledge	1.56	0.939
36	Your partner masturbating alone without your knowledge	1.53	0.937
37	Your partner hugging someone who is not you	1.53	0.618
38	Your partner dancing with someone who is not of their preferred gender	1.47	0.613

Table 23  
*Means of Emotional Behavior Questions*

		Mean	SD
1	Your partner having intimate or private meetings with a coworker	2.63	0.886
2	Having intimate or private meetings with a coworker	2.58	0.911
3	You keeping a secret from your partner, example: if you are a heterosexual man and you keep a secret from your wife with or about another woman	2.52	0.895
4	Your partner keeping a secret from you, example: if your spouse is a heterosexual man and he keeps a secret from you with or about another woman	2.52	0.851
5	Seeking emotional support from someone other than your partner, example: assume you are a heterosexual married man and you seek emotional support from a woman other than your wife	2.29	0.867
6	Your partner seeking emotional support from someone other than you, example: assume your partner is a heterosexual married female and she seeks emotional support from a man other than you	2.27	0.838
7	Your partner prioritizing time for someone other than you	2.16	0.790
8	Your partner contacts a former partner through a technological medium, example: via Facebook	2.15	0.729
9	Prioritizing time for someone other than your partner	2.13	0.776
10	Contacting a former partner through a technological medium, example: via Facebook	2.11	0.743
11	Your partner meeting a former partner face-to-face	2.10	0.777
12	Your partner sharing personal information with someone other than you, example: assume your partner is a heterosexual female and she shares personal information with another man	2.06	0.749
13	Meeting a former partner face-to-face	2.04	0.720
14	Your partner giving gifts to someone who is not you	2.01	0.735
15	Sharing personal information with someone who is not your partner, example: assume you are a heterosexual man and you share something personal with a woman who is not your partner	1.99	0.718
16	Private conversations with someone who is not your partner	1.98	0.685
17	Your partner having private conversations with someone who is not you	1.98	0.720
18	Your partner receiving gifts from someone who is not you	1.90	0.716
19	Your partner giving gifts to someone who is not you	1.88	0.703
21	Receiving gifts from someone who is not your partner	1.83	0.687
22	One-on-one lunch or dinner with a coworker	1.78	0.643
23	Your partner having one-on-one lunch with a coworker	1.75	0.643
24	Your partner sharing a meal with someone who is not you	1.69	0.607
25	Sharing a meal with someone who is not your partner	1.67	0.576
26	Your partner developing relationships with classmates or coworkers	1.61	0.592
27	Developing relationships with classmates or coworkers	1.59	0.595

Table 24  
*Means of Cyber Behavior Questions*

		Mean	SD
1	Your partner joining online groups with the intention of making intimate/sexual connections	3.69	0.599
2	Joining online groups with the intention with he intent of making intimate/sexual connections	3.68	0.615
3	Your partner sexting (text messaging explicit messages that may create arousal) someone who is not you	3.67	0.656
4	Your partner using a website intended to facilitate affairs while in a committed relationship (example: ashleymadison.com)	3.67	0.634
5	Sexting (text messaging explicit messages that may create arousal) someone who is not your partner	3.66	0.664
6	Using a website intended to facilitate affairs while in a committed relationship (example: ashleymadison.com)	3.64	0.685
7	Sending explicit photos to someone who is not your partner	3.64	0.695
8	Your partner sending explicit photos to someone who is not you	3.64	0.638
9	Creating an online dating profile while in a committed relationship	3.47	0.751
10	Your partner creating an online dating profile	3.45	0.764
11	Your partner viewing online dating profiles	2.95	0.892
12	Posting sexually provocative photos of yourself while in a committed relationship (example: social networking site -- Instagram)	2.91	1.025
13	Your partner posting sexually provocative photos of themselves while in a committed relationship (example: Instagram)	2.88	1.013
14	Viewing online dating profiles while in a committed relationship	2.84	0.895
15	Snapchatting someone who is not your partner	2.10	0.763
16	Your partner Snapchatting a picture to someone other than you	2.09	0.753
17	Video messaging (using a webcam) someone who is not your partner	1.98	0.713
18	Your partner video messaging someone who is not you	1.97	0.713
19	Your partner sends a private on a social networking site to someone other than you, example: Facebook	1.93	0.697
20	Sending a private message on a social networking site to someone who is not your partner, example: Facebook	1.90	0.647
21	Your partner viewing pornography	1.89	1.137
22	You viewing pornography	1.89	1.141
23	Chatting (live communication with someone online by typing) with someone other than your partner	1.86	0.664
24	Your partner chatting someone who is not you	1.84	0.685
25	Your partner texting someone who is not you	1.76	0.649
26	Texting someone who is not your partner	1.70	0.579
27	E-mailing someone that is not your partner	1.65	0.577
28	Your partner e-mailing someone who is not you	1.65	0.564
29	Chatting while gaming with someone who is not your partner	1.55	0.645
30	Your partner chatting while gaming with someone who is not you	1.55	0.691
31	Your partner acknowledging a social networking site who is not you (such as "liking a Facebook post")	1.50	0.613
32	Acknowledging an element of someone's social networking site who is not your partner (such as "liking a Facebook post")	1.46	0.606
33	Online gaming with someone who is not your partner	1.41	0.589
34	Your partner online gaming with someone who is not you	1.41	0.583

The infidelity scale questions in the survey were designed to assess for a double standard. Participants answered various questions about behaviors that could be unfaithful about themselves and then the same question was asked about their partner. The data was broken up into six composite categories: physical self, physical partner, emotional self, emotional partner, and cyber self and cyber partner. After reviewing the mean values for each composite group it was determined that there were no significant differences between how people perceived unfaithful behaviors for themselves and their partners. The findings are provided in the following table (see Table 25).

Table 25  
*Self and Partner Means Comparison*

Type of Infidelity	Mean Self	Mean Partner	Sample Size (N)
Physical Infidelity	60.2847	58.5614	288
Emotional Infidelity	26.3993	24.3056	288
Cyber Infidelity	41.3368	41.5278	288

Multiple regression analysis was used to test if the independent variables could significantly predict perceptions of physical, emotional, and cyber infidelity, based on the Likert-scale rated behaviors. The following results are statistically different from 0 at the 0.05 alpha level. The quantitative significant results are displayed in order of the following grouped hypotheses:

**Group one: Demographic variables will impact how participants see infidelity.**

The proposed hypotheses regarding demographic variables predicted that age, sexual orientation, gender, religion, and the frequency of attendance at religious services or congregations would influence perceptions of physical, emotional, and cyber

infidelity. Age and religious affiliation alone were not significant predictors for physical, emotional, or cyber infidelity. The results of the regression for physical infidelity indicated that the fifteen predictors explained 28.5% of the variance ( $R^2=.285$ ,  $F(15,272)= 7.21$ ,  $p<.01$ ). It was found that gender ( $\beta=.164$ ,  $t(272)=3.112$ ,  $p=.002$ ), sexual orientation ( $\beta= -.253$ ,  $t(272)=-4.783$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and how frequently participants attend religious services or congregations ( $\beta=.352$ ,  $t(272)=5.008$ ,  $p<.001$ ) are the most significant predictors for physical infidelity. The results of the regression for emotional infidelity indicated that the fifteen predictors explained 14% of the variance ( $R^2=.375$ ,  $F(15,272)= 2.964$ ,  $p<.01$ ). It was found that gender ( $\beta=.188$ ,  $t(272)=3.259$ ,  $p=.001$ ) and sexual orientation ( $\beta=-.182$ ,  $t(272)=-3.129$ ,  $p=.002$ ) are the most significant predictors for emotional infidelity. The results of the regression for cyber infidelity indicated that fifteen predictors explained 16.4% of the variance ( $R^2=.405$ ,  $F(15,272)= 3.568$ ,  $p<.01$ ). It was found that gender ( $\beta=.190$ ,  $t(272)=3.340$ , and  $p=.001$ ), sexual orientation ( $\beta= -.186$ ,  $t(272)=-3.246$ ,  $p=.001$ ), and how often participants attend religious services ( $\beta=.194$ ,  $t(272)=2.552$ ,  $p=.011$ ) were the most significant variables when predicting perceptions of cyber infidelity. Although it was not mentioned in the hypotheses, a moderately significant variable when assessing perceptions of emotional infidelity was level of education ( $\beta= -.111$ ,  $t(272)=-1.865$ ,  $p=.063$ ). (See Table 26 for results).

**Group two: Relationship status will impact how participants perceive infidelity:**

The proposed hypotheses indicated that relationship status would impact perceptions of infidelity and that those who were single would perceive infidelity differently than those who were in a relationship. This hypothesis was not supported

based on the results from the multiple regressions. The results were not statistically different from 0 at the 0.05 alpha level. (See Table 26 for results).

**Group three: Family of origin history of infidelity will impact how participants perceive infidelity:**

The proposed hypotheses indicated that family or origin history of infidelity would impact participants' perceptions of physical, emotional, and cyber infidelity. The results of the regression for physical infidelity indicated that the fifteen predictors explained 28.5% of the variance ( $R^2=.285$ ,  $F(15,272)= 7.21$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and indicated that knowledge of an affair within the parents' or primary care-givers' relationship ( $\beta= .139$ ,  $t(272)=2.138$ ,  $p=.033$ ) was a significant factor when predicting perceptions of physical infidelity. Family of origin history of infidelity was not a significant predictor for emotional and cyber infidelity. (See Table 26 for results).

**Group four: Individual experience with infidelity:**

The proposed hypotheses indicated that personal experience with infidelity, as the betrayed partner or the partner committing the infidelity, would predict how participants perceived infidelity. The results of the regression for cyber infidelity indicated that fifteen predictors explained 16.4% of the variance ( $R^2=.405$ ,  $F(15,272)= 3.568$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and that being cheated on by a partner ( $\beta=-.136$ ,  $t(272)=-2.222$ ,  $p=.027$ ) was the most significant variable when predicting perceptions of cyber infidelity. A moderately significant variable when predicting perceptions of cyber infidelity was whether the individual has ever cheated on a partner before ( $\beta=.130$ ,  $t(272)=1.804$ ,  $p=.072$ ) Individual experience with infidelity did not impact how the participants perceived physical and emotional infidelity. (See Table 26 for results).



**Table 26**

*Physical, Emotional, and Cyber Multiple Regression Analysis*

Variables	Physical				Emotional				Cyber			
	$\beta$	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	Sig.	$\beta$	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	Sig.	$\beta$	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Age	-0.045	0.082	-0.785	0.433	-0.028	0.081	-0.447	0.655	-0.025	0.093	-0.397	0.692
Gender	0.164	1.758	3.112	0.002	0.188	1.729	3.259	0.001	0.190	1.998	3.340	0.001
Ethnicity/Race	0.026	0.597	0.497	0.620	-0.007	0.587	-0.119	0.905	-0.022	0.679	-0.389	0.698
Education Level	0.010	0.461	0.186	0.853	-0.111	0.453	-1.865	0.063	-0.030	0.524	-0.512	0.609
Sexual Orientation	-0.253	2.991	-4.783	0.000	-0.182	2.942	-3.129	0.002	-0.186	3.401	-3.246	0.001
Relationship Status	-0.022	0.556	-0.374	0.709	-0.010	0.547	-0.161	0.872	-0.054	0.632	-0.867	0.387
Length of Current Relationship	-0.008	0.551	-0.131	0.896	-0.057	0.542	-0.899	0.369	-0.006	0.627	-0.098	0.922
Religious Affiliation	-0.027	2.168	-0.384	0.701	-0.057	2.132	-0.754	0.451	-0.051	2.465	-0.689	0.492
Religious Frequency	0.352	0.677	5.008	0.000	0.123	0.666	1.595	0.112	0.194	0.770	2.552	0.011
Parents' or Primary Caregivers' Relationship Status	0.019	0.544	0.344	0.731	-0.023	0.535	-0.386	0.700	0.036	0.619	0.622	0.534
Knowledge of Infidelity in Parents' or Primary Caregivers' Relationship	0.139	0.773	2.138	0.033	0.076	0.760	1.060	0.290	0.058	0.878	0.819	0.413
Divorce/ Separation by Parents' or Primary Caregivers' due to Infidelity	-0.090	1.238	-1.393	0.165	-0.053	1.217	-0.751	0.453	-0.019	1.407	-0.277	0.782
Personally Experienced Infidelity?	-0.083	1.665	-1.489	0.138	-0.136	1.638	-2.222	0.027	-0.077	1.893	-1.273	0.204
Personally Committed Infidelity (in own opinion)?	0.092	2.005	1.384	0.168	0.088	1.971	1.200	0.231	0.130	2.279	1.804	0.072
Personally Committed Infidelity (in partner's opinion)?	-0.058	2.181	-0.885	0.377	-0.065	2.145	-0.909	0.364	-0.067	2.479	-0.947	0.344



Next, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the predictor variables on physical, emotional, and cyber behaviors to see if there was a statistically significant difference between conditions. There was a significant effect between gender responses about physical [ $F(2, 285) = 12.676, p < .01$ ], emotional [ $F(2, 285) = 6.525, p = .002$ ], and cyber infidelity [ $F(2, 285) = 7.836, p < .01$ ] categories at the  $p < .05$  level. There was a significant effect between sexual orientation responses on physical [ $F(1/287) = 19.131, p < .01$ ], emotional [ $F(1/287) = 9.934, p < .01$ ], and cyber [ $F(1/287) = 11.274, p = .001$ ] infidelity categories at the  $p < .05$  level. This study found a significant difference between religious affiliation and responses on physical [ $F(5/282) = 17.797, p < .01$ ], emotional [ $F(5/282) = 5.576, p < .01$ ], and cyber [ $F(5/282) = 8.900, p < .01$ ] categories at the  $p < .05$  level. In addition, there was also a significant statistical difference between those who attend religious services frequently and those who do not in the physical [ $F(5/282) = 17.797, p < .01$ ], emotional [ $F(5/282) = 5.576, p < .01$ ], and cyber [ $F(5/282) = 8.900, p < .01$ ] categories at the  $p < .05$  level. Relationship status was only statistically significant between responses in the physical infidelity category [ $F(6/281) = 2.368, p = .030$ ] at the  $p < .05$  level. Researchers found statistical significance between those who cheated on a partner and those who did not in physical [ $F(1/286) = 4.350, p = .038$ ] and cyber [ $F(1/286) = 4.201, p = .041$ ] infidelity categories at the  $p < .05$  level. There was also statistical significance between participants' answers based on their family of origin history of infidelity. Suspected infidelity or knew of infidelity between their parents' or primary care-givers' relationships showed statistical significance in their responses for physical [ $F(3/284) = 5.287, p = .001$ ] and cyber [ $F(3/284) = 2.793, p = .041$ ] infidelity categories.

The final quantitative component of the survey consisted of a Likert-type scale question asking participants whether their definition of infidelity changed at all based on the content of the survey. 178 participants said their definition of infidelity did not change at all (61.8%), 79 said it slightly changed (27.4%), 20 said it changed somewhat (6.9%), 8 said it moderately changed (2.8%), and 3 said it changed a lot (1.0%).

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Current research provides definitions of infidelity consistent with the rules developed within each individual relationship, suggesting that infidelity is mostly subjective, or based on the assumed or communicated contract between two people in a primary relationship (Fife et al., 2008). The common themes identified in the open-ended question that participants responded to show that, although there are some outliers, the majority of the participants share similar views on infidelity. The most prominent themes identified describe infidelity as a breach of trust between two partners in a relationship; types of infidelity encompassing physical, emotional, and cyber behaviors; and how the intentional behaviors may elicit hurt or harm in another partner.

Infidelity was commonly defined to be a breach of trust between two partners in a relationship. Trust is a belief that one human develops for another and holds the expectation that they will be honest, reliable, and meet their expectations. When an individual feels deceived or as if that trust is broken the relationship is damaged. Clinicians work with couples often to aid them in rebuilding trust within a relationship. The rebuilding of trust after extradyadic involvement occurs is a process that can be challenging and painful for both partners in the relationship (Bird, Butler, & Fife, 2007). Many participants mentioned some element of trust or honesty in their definitions of infidelity, while also including an element of breaking said trust or being deceitful.

Consensual behavior or the willingness to engage in an extradyadic relationship was another theme frequently mentioned by the participants. The knowledge that a partner in a committed relationship could consent to various behaviors with the understanding that their partner would become hurt was also a common theme. If

unfaithful behaviors were void of consequences it would not be classified as sexually wrongful behavior, despite its prevalence.

## **Quantitative Analysis Discussion**

### **Gender**

The majority of those who participated in this study identified as female (74.7%). A common theme identified in the qualitative analysis was emotional infidelity. Based on an evolutionary perspective, women are typically more hurt by an emotional affair than a physical affair (Buss et al., 1999). The findings regarding emotional infidelity are consistent with what former research says about females and their perception of infidelity (Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1997; Sharpe, Walters, & Goren, 2013; Henline et al., 2007; Thornton & Nagurney, 2011). Women participants on the study were more likely to perceive behaviors (physical, emotional, and cyber) as unfaithful compared to male participants. Although women are more hurt by emotional infidelity and men by physical infidelity, women are more likely to engage in emotional infidelity and men are more likely to engage in physical infidelity (Hansen, 1987; Weiderman & Hurd, 1999).

### **Age**

The most convenient source of participants when conducting research at a University level is undergraduate students. However, because social media was a fundamental tool for recruitment in this study, researchers were able to recruit participants ranging in age from 18 to 69. The average age of participants was 29 (mean=29.7) which is still higher than previous studies done on perceptions of infidelity where the mean reported ages were lower. For example, a recent study done by Sharpe et al. (2013) recruited participants with a mean age of 18.68 (p. 647). Although the

hypothesis was not supported because age was not a significant predictor on perceptions of infidelity, the large age range and the higher overall mean age provided researchers with more diversity in their overall study.

### **Relationship Status**

Contrary to the research's hypothesis, relationship status was not a significant predictor on perceptions of infidelity as a whole. However, relationship status was a significant predictor for how participants rated physically unfaithful behaviors. Those who were divorced or separated scored higher on the infidelity scale than those who were single, married, or in a committed relationship. It may be that participants who have experienced a failed relationship may be more sensitive to behaviors that threaten the stability of a relationship. Those who were not exclusively dating scored lower on the infidelity scale, in which provides partial support of the hypothesis regarding relationship status. The assumption was that those who were not currently a committed relationship would perceive unfaithful behaviors differently or more permissive than someone who is in a committed relationship. The length of the current relationship was also not a significant predictor in when assessing perceptions of infidelity.

### **Education Level**

The average education level amongst the participants of this study had a mean of 6.16, meaning that the majority of the participants only completed some college or received an associate's degree. Although education was not a statistically significant predictor, it was closest to being a significant predictor of emotional infidelity ( $p=.06$ ).

## **Sexual Orientation**

Because non-heterosexual individuals do not represent the majority of the population, it is often challenging to recruit sufficient numbers of research participants. This study recruited 21 non-heterosexual individuals (7.3% of participants) and in when assessing for perceptions of infidelity, sexual orientation was a significant predictor in physical, emotional, and cyber categories. Although the numbers of non-heterosexual participants was small compared to heterosexual participants, the results indicated that sexual orientation was a significant predictor of participants' responses, with non-heterosexual participants scoring lower on the infidelity scale. Researchers attempted to construct this survey in a way that would be sensitive to sexual orientation diversity. The results supported the proposed hypothesis regarding sexual orientation. The participants who were non-heterosexual perceived behaviors to be less unfaithful than heterosexual participants.

## **Ethnicity or Race**

The majority of the participants who completed the survey identified as white or Caucasian (76.4%). Although, ethnicity and race was not a statistically significant predictor when assessing for perceptions of infidelity in this particular study, other research shows that when comparing ethnicities, frequency and attitudes of infidelity differ. For example, Choi, Cantania, and Dolcini (1994) found that there was a higher infidelity rate amongst the African-American and Hispanic married population than Caucasians. The high number of Caucasian participants in this study could have accounted for the low statistical significance when assessing whether ethnicity or race impacts perceptions of infidelity. There was not a high enough number of participants

from various ethnic or racial groups in order to provide results that are representative of the general population.

## **Religion**

The participants of this study were fairly diverse in terms of religious beliefs and how frequently they participated in religious congregations or services. The diverse nature of the participants' religious beliefs, or lack thereof, provided the researchers with a more accurate representation of the general population. Although religious affiliation was not a significant predictor when assessing for perceptions of infidelity, how frequently participants attended religious had a strong positive correlation with how they perceived unfaithful physical, emotional, and cyber. These findings are consistent with research conducted on religion and infidelity. Atkins and Kessel (2008) similarly found that how frequently individuals or couples, attended religious practices or services increased relational fidelity. This study was consistent with previous findings in that participants who attend religious services either monthly or weekly scored higher on the perception of infidelity scale than participants who do not claim a religious affiliation or do not attend religious services. A commitment to attending frequent religious services means that individuals may be regularly reminded of their values, beliefs, and religious commitments, including those that relate to infidelity. For many religions, partners are expected to be monogamous, and remaining faithful to one's partner is part of a commitment to an individual's religious belief. The level of commitment to a religious practice could also show an ability to commit more to one's partner, thus reducing the likelihood of infidelity. Also, some behaviors that were a part of the survey (e.g.

masturbation, oral sex, same sex behaviors, and pornography use) are not condoned by certain religious faiths

During the qualitative analysis of the data a common theme that the qualitative analysis team identified was the religious elements participants incorporated into how they perceived infidelity. Researchers can assume based on the statistical significance of religious service attendance and the frequency in which religious terms came up in the qualitative analysis that religion is a motivating variable for individuals to not engage in extradyadic relationships. The strong positive correlation in the quantitative data suggests that those who attend frequent religious services perceive more behaviors as unfaithful in physical, emotional, and cyber categories of infidelity.

### **History of Infidelity**

Previous research suggests that the incidence of infidelity is not changing. There seems to be more ways to engage in unfaithful behaviors now more than ever. Based on the participants who completed the survey, 37.8% stated that they either knew that their parents or primary caregivers were unfaithful to one another or they suspected infidelity. A history of infidelity within the parental or primary care-giver dyad had a statistically significant correlation with physical infidelity. Over half the participants (59%) stated that they have been cheated on or suspected it in their current or past relationships. Based on past research, the findings of this study are consistent with the high incidence of infidelity amongst relationships (Allen, Atkins, Baucom, Snyder, Gordon, & Glass, 2005; Hansen, 1987; Hertlein et al., 2005).

Furthermore, the results of the study indicated that there was a significant difference in perceptions of infidelity based on personal history with infidelity.



Responses of the participants who have been unfaithful in the past support the hypothesis for physical, emotional, and cyber infidelity by perceiving behaviors as less unfaithful than those who have not cheated. Statistical significance was also apparent with how participants responded based on knowledge of infidelity within their parents' or primary caregivers' relationship. Those who knew of unfaithful behavior in their family of origin rated behaviors higher on the infidelity scale. The aforementioned results show that an individual can be deeply impacted by the actions of their parents or primary care-givers and that past experiences can influence an individual's perceptions. Participants who had knowledge of an affair in the household held more strict views of what behaviors were unfaithful than those who had no knowledge of an extradyadic affair.

Also, those who were unfaithful to a partner in the past have more permissive views about what behaviors are unfaithful than someone who has been cheated on in previous relationships. Indicating that a betrayed partner will hold more strict beliefs regarding what behaviors are unfaithful or not in their current or future relationships. This rigidity could be due to a violation of trust. If trust is violated in former relationships the ability to trust new partners, based on these negative experiences, could be challenging.

### **Infidelity Scale Questions**

Tables 2-4 provide a list of all physical, emotional, and cyber behaviors in descending order from most unfaithful to the least unfaithful. The majority of the highest ranked behaviors with a mean of less than 3.5 were found in the physical infidelity section. Contrary to research done by Wiederman and Hurd (1999) who found that unfaithful behaviors only included sexual intercourse, excluding kissing and oral sex. When participants rated physical behaviors on the infidelity scale,, both kissing, with a

mean of 3.78, and oral sex with a mean of 3.9 were rated at nearly a four on the infidelity scale. These findings suggest that the participants found behaviors other than sexual intercourse to be usually or always infidelity.

The second highest section ranked behaviors fell in the cyber infidelity category. The lowest ranking section of behaviors was emotional infidelity and the highest mean was 2.63. An interesting observation made was that the most unfaithful emotional infidelity behavior identified by the participants was: your partner having intimate or private meetings with a with a mean of 2.63 and the behavior rated the least likely to be infidelity was developing relationships with classmates or coworkers, with a mean of 1.59. Based on the qualitative analysis, participants discussed the intentions behind the behaviors. The language “intimate or private” could imply secrecy from one’s partner, making it a behavior that is close to usually infidelity, based on the scale used for this study. Developing a relationship with a classmate or a colleague does not imply intimate intent but could escalate into cognitive infidelity, or thinking of or fantasizing about someone who is not your partner, which were two attributes identified in the qualitative analysis by participants. Former research has concluded that women are more hurt by an emotional affair than men are (Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1997; Henline, et al., 2007; Sharpe, Walters, & Goren, 2013; Thornton & Nagurney, 2011) however, the majority of the participants in this study identified as female, yet the emotional behaviors had the lowest means out of the three scales.

### **Double Standard**

This study attempted to test for a double-standard across relationships. Participants were asked to assess their perceptions of infidelity by answering questions

about themselves and their partners. The data collected showed that there was no significant difference between what the participants put for their actions and the actions of their partners. Research on gender double-standards and infidelity by Haavio-Manilla and Kontula (2003) found that the majority of participants (47% male and 26% female) had cheated and believed that different beliefs for the self and the partner were acceptable. An individual in a committed relationship believes that certain behaviors are acceptable for them to engage in but not for their partner based on the element of trust. An individual may feel more comfortable engaging in certain behaviors because they hold certain values and know of their intentions. When in a committed relationship, one's partner may engage in various behaviors and it requires the trust of the other partner to believe that there is not intimate intent paired with the behaviors. When a betrayed partner has been hurt in the past, trusting another's intentions in a relationship may be challenging. If infidelity has occurred within the primary relationship, the option of leaving the relationship is often a viable option for the injured partner and they are less likely to trust the acts of their partner (Weeks, Gambescia, & Jenkins, 2003).

### **Qualitative Analysis Discussion**

A postmodern worldview holds that there is not one truth or one reality, and each individual has a unique understanding of their experiences. Because there are vastly diverse views and opinions regarding what constitutes infidelity (Hertlein, 2005) researchers and clinicians have found it difficult to find a universal definition of infidelity. As part of this research project, participants were asked to, in their own words, define infidelity. There was no word limit placed upon the participants so they were able

to write as much or as little as they wanted. Each member of the research team coded the definitions provided by the participants, and several common themes were identified.

An important aspect of the qualitative analysis was the recurring theme of the subjective nature of infidelity. Many participants identified that infidelity is different for everyone, however, based on the majority of the quantitative data and the qualitative responses most of the participants indicated that certain behaviors, depending on the context, can be infidelity. Some were adamant about their beliefs that infidelity is only a physical or intimate encounter with someone who is not your partner, but this was the minority. Previous research shows that when male and female college students were asked if they had ever cheated on a partner, they only considered cheating as have sexual intercourse with someone who was not their partner (Hansen, 1987). Many failed to report extradyadic kissing, emotional behaviors, or oral sex (Wiederman & Hurd, 1999). The element of intention behind the behavior is an integral component, but most would agree that certain behaviors can elicit harm to their partners. Although there was some mentioning of the element of secrecy within the definitions, it was not as prominent as anticipated. Past research frequently highlights secrecy when discussing infidelity (Butler, Rodriguez, Roper, & Feinauer, 2010; Glass, 2002). If individuals were more transparent about their behaviors with their partners then the behaviors may not be viewed as unfaithful.

Based on the qualitative analysis, when initially presented with the idea to define infidelity, many exclusively mentioned an element of physical or sexual contact, but neglected to incorporate an emotional or cyber component. The concluding question on the survey showed that people do not often think about emotional or cyber aspects as

infidelity but recognize that it could be infidelity because of the amount of hurt it can elicit.

Behaviors that could be potentially damaging to a relationship are increasing more each day, and at times, such behaviors could be defined as infidelity. Fife et al. (2008) discuss many motivating factor for unfaithful behaviors, one of these factors include expectations that are not being met or communicated about within a relationship. Because there are so many new technological mediums of communication, partners need to consider having frequent discussions regarding expectations and boundaries within their unique relationship. Hertlein (2012) stated, “Those couples who do not revisit interpersonal rules (e.g., what is infidelity?) as they integrate technology into their household may perceive their partner as functioning in detrimental ways, potentially creating tension between the partners and interfering with daily functioning” (p. 378).

Several participants wrote about their personal experiences or what behaviors have hurt them in the past. This shows that personal experience with infidelity can shape the way that people perceive what behaviors are unfaithful. If an individual has never experienced the hurt that infidelity can cause then they may not understand others’ perceptions or definitions of infidelity.

The quantitative data reflected that a majority of participants had no change in how they would define infidelity; however, the qualitative analysis did show a change in definition. Although participants said that their definition did not change, the majority of the participants added comments about a change in definition or added elements to their opinions regarding infidelity.

## **Limitations**

There were several limitations in the present research. Some confusion was noted by a few participants regarding the nature of the interactions described in the scale, specifically whether the behaviors were meant to be consensual. In the future, when assessing different behaviors, it would have been important to note in the instructions section (see Appendix A) that the behaviors were all intended to be consensual from both involved parties. In the future, an independent question on non-consensual sex would be a valuable addition.

Because infidelity is a topic that is associated with a lot of hurt and shame, people may be less likely to participate in a study when they are asked direct questions about their history with infidelity, even though the survey was anonymous (Blow and Hartnett, 2005). It is unclear why the people who started did not finish. Although the sample size was larger than anticipated, the lack of completed surveys may limit generalizability to the general population. Additionally, another limitation researchers discovered was that although the intention of the survey was to assess for a double standard, the questions may have seemed repetitive in nature which may have been frustrating for the participants taking the survey. If participants did not read the questions carefully they would appear to be redundant. This may have contributed to the high volume of incomplete surveys. Surveys may have also been left incomplete due to the amount of questions. A survey of this length takes time to complete, and participants may have experienced fatigue, thus not completing the entire survey. In the future, in order to achieve a higher number of participants, researchers may try to shorten the survey.

Furthermore, researchers discovered that it may have been valuable to include a question in the survey about general feelings while taking the survey. Because infidelity is a difficult topic to discuss for people whose life it has impacted, researchers wondered what emotions were elicited when participants were taking the survey. Because there were so many participants who wrote about their personal experiences with infidelity, it is apparent that people experienced some painful memories when taking the survey. Something to consider when doing future research on this topic would be to add an open-ended question allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences and how it has shaped their perceptions.

A limitation with the qualitative portion was that the researchers did not have the opportunity to ask follow up questions or for the participants to expand upon their responses. If researchers were able to ask the questions in person they would be able to ask additional questions in order to gain a better idea of the meaning of participants' responses. Because the survey was online, the researchers only collected the data based upon what the participants provided in the open-ended portion of the survey. Some participants wrote short, vague statements; whereas other participants utilized the section to write lengthy thoughtful answers.

Because this survey was only available online, the participants had to have access to a smart phone or computer to participate. Individuals who have lower education levels or are in a lower socioeconomic bracket may not have had the means to participate in this study. It is unclear whether individuals who do not have access to a computer or the internet would perceive infidelity differently.

## **Implications**

In the future, this research may be valuable to clinicians who are working with couples experiencing infidelity. Because each individual's experiences differ so greatly it is helpful to know what factors or experiences (e.g. family of origin history of infidelity) may shape clients' perceptions. Some models of couple and family therapy emphasize the transmission of relationship patterns within families (Nichols, 2012). For example, Bowenian Family Therapy suggests that there is an intergenerational transmission process in which emotional and behavioral patterns are passed from one generation to the next. It may be that clients whose parents experienced infidelity perceive infidelity differently in light of their knowledge of their parents' experience. The results of this study indicated that knowledge of an affair within the parents' or primary care-givers' relationship had a significant effect on participants' perception on infidelity. Perhaps having a parent who was unfaithful increases one's sensitivity to potentially unfaithful behaviors. Future research may look at whether parent's infidelity is correlated with a higher likelihood of infidelity in subsequent generations.

The differing views of what constitutes as infidelity can lead to disagreements within a relationship (Hertelin et al., 2005). One aspect of treatment for infidelity is to address clients' individual definitions of infidelity, including what are the boundaries or rules regarding the nature of interactions with others outside the relationship (Fife et al., 2008). If a clinician has a better understanding of how the general population sees unfaithful behaviors and what factors alter perceptions of infidelity, the clinician can provide their clients with this education and facilitate a renegotiation of boundaries and expectations (Fife et al., 2008). Also, the aforementioned definition of infidelity based on



the qualitative research may allow other researchers and clinicians have more information on what components make up infidelity.

### **Conclusion**

Research on perceptions of infidelity is valuable because typically, the more permissive an individual perceives unfaithful behaviors the more likely they are to engage in an extradyadic relationship (Treas and Giesen, 2004). In this study, we have concluded that although infidelity is subjective, there are certain variables that impact how an individual perceives infidelity, such as gender, sexual orientation, how frequently they attend religious services, and personal and family of origin history of infidelity. Some behaviors, including physical, cyber, and emotional, all have a variety of behaviors within each category that the population would generally consider to be always infidelity or never infidelity. As a clinician, it would be valuable to have more knowledge on perceptions of infidelity in order to facilitate better communication regarding the subject with couples who do not share similar views.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Survey

Open-ended Question	<b>In your own words, please define infidelity:</b>
Demographics	
What state do you currently live in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drop down of all 50</li> </ul>
What is your age?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drop down of all ages</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
What is your gender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Other_____</li> </ul>
What is your ethnicity or race?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hispanic/Latino</li> <li>• Black or African American</li> <li>• Native American or American Indian</li> <li>• Asian/Pacific Islander</li> <li>• Caucasian or White</li> <li>• Other_____</li> </ul>
What is your sexual orientation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heterosexual</li> <li>• Gay</li> <li>• Lesbian</li> <li>• Bisexual</li> <li>• Other_____</li> </ul>
What is your relationship status?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single</li> <li>• Married or domestic partnership</li> <li>• Cohabitation</li> <li>• In a committed relationship</li> <li>• Dating, but not exclusively</li> <li>• I am dating multiple people</li> <li>• Widowed</li> <li>• Divorced</li> <li>• Separated</li> </ul>
How long have you been in your current relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0-6 months</li> <li>• 6 months to 1 year</li> <li>• 1-2 years</li> <li>• 2-4 years</li> <li>• 5 or more years</li> </ul>

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<p>What is your religious affiliation, if any?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am not in a relationship</li> <li>• Protestant Christian</li> <li>• Roman Catholic</li> <li>• Evangelical Christian</li> <li>• Jewish</li> <li>• Muslim</li> <li>• Hindu</li> <li>• Buddhist</li> <li>• Agnostic</li> <li>• Atheist</li> <li>• LDS</li> <li>• Other_____</li> </ul>	
<p>How often do you attend religious congregations or services?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I do not participate in religious congregations or services</li> <li>• Daily</li> <li>• Weekly</li> <li>• Monthly</li> <li>• Yearly</li> <li>• I am not religious</li> </ul>	
<p>What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No schooling completed</li> <li>• Some high school, no diploma</li> <li>• High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent training (for example: GED)</li> <li>• Some college credit, no degree</li> <li>• Trade/technical/vocational training</li> <li>• Associate degree</li> <li>• Bachelor's degree</li> <li>• Master's degree</li> <li>• Professional degree</li> <li>• Doctorate degree</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<p>Family of Origin</p>	<p>What is your parent's or primary caregiver's marital status?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never married</li> <li>• Divorced</li> <li>• Separated</li> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Remarried</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widow or widower</li> </ul>
	Do you have any knowledge of a history of infidelity in your parents' or primary caregivers' relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• Not to the extent of my knowledge</li> <li>• I suspect infidelity</li> <li>• Definitely Not</li> </ul>
	If your parents or primary caregivers are divorced or separated, was it a result of infidelity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• This question does not apply</li> </ul>
Personal History of Infidelity	Have you ever been cheated on by a partner while in a committed relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• I suspect or suspected it</li> </ul>
	If yes, was the infidelity emotional, physical, cyber, or a combination?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical</li> <li>• Emotional</li> <li>• Cyber</li> <li>• Combination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What type of combination?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• This question does not apply to me.</li> </ul>
	In your opinion, have you ever cheated on a partner while in a committed relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
	If yes, would you have considered the infidelity to be:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional</li> <li>• Physical</li> <li>• Cyber</li> <li>• A combination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What type of combination?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• This question does not apply to me.</li> </ul>
	In your current or former partner's opinion, have you ever cheated in a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>

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committed relationship?

If yes, would your partner have considered the infidelity to be:

- Emotional
- Physical
- Cyber
- A combination
  - What type of combination?
- This question does not apply to me

Please carefully read the following instructions for the next section:

1. Please rate the following behaviors on the scale of infidelity provided for each question.
2. When answering the following questions, please assume each question is referring to your sexual orientation unless otherwise indicated.
3. Please assume that each question is referring to you or your partner engaging in certain behaviors with someone other than you. For example, if you are a heterosexual male, assume your female partner is engaging in the presented behaviors with a man other than you.
3. If you are not currently in a relationship please answer the following questions considering your standards while in past and/or future relationships.

Note: The following questions will not be presented in this order, they will be randomly reorganized.

Likert Scale Questions

**To what extent are the following behaviors infidelity:**

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**Physical**

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Holding hands with someone that is not your partner

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

If your partner holds hands with someone that is not you

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Hugging someone who is not your partner

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner hugging someone who is not you

- Never infidelity
  - Sometimes infidelity
  - Usually infidelity
  - Always infidelity
-

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Intimately kissing with someone other than your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner intimately kissing someone other than you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Touching someone who is not your partner with intimate intent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner touching someone who is not you with intimate intent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Dancing with someone who is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner dancing with someone other than you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner dancing with someone who is NOT of their preferred gender. (For example, a heterosexual woman dancing with another woman).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Grinding (a type of dancing that involves above clothing rubbing of genitals while dancing) on someone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>

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<p>who is not your partner Your partner grinding (a type of dancing that involves above clothing rubbing of genitals while dancing) on someone who is not you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<p>Oral sex performed on you by someone who is not your partner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<p>Your partner receives oral sex from someone who is not you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<p>Your partner performs oral sex on someone who is not you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<p>You perform oral sex on someone who is not your partner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<p>Vaginal intercourse with someone who is not your partner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<p>Anal intercourse with someone who is not your partner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<p>Vaginal or penile manual stimulation to someone who is not your partner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<p>Your partner receives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> </ul>

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vaginal or penile manual stimulation from someone other than you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Above clothing genital contact with someone who is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner receiving above clothing genital contact with someone other than you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Receiving a lap dance from a stripper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner receives a lap dance from a stripper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Watching a strip show performed by someone who is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner watching a strip show performed by someone other than you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Paying for sexual favors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner paying for sexual favors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>

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Your partner masturbating alone without your knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
You masturbating alone without your partner's knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Mutual masturbation with someone who is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner engaging in mutual masturbation with someone who is not you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Participating in same sex sexual behavior if you are in a heterosexual relationship OR participating in heterosexual behavior if you are in a same sex relationship. For example, in a heterosexual relationship, two girls intimately kissing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
If you engage in sexual behavior with someone other than your partner while under the influence of illicit drugs or alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner engages in sexual behaviors with someone other than you while under the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> </ul>

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	influence of illicit drugs or alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional</b>		
	<p>You keeping a secret from your partner. For example, if you are a heterosexual man and you keep a secret from your wife with or about another woman.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
	<p>Your partner keeping a secret from you. For example, if your spouse is a heterosexual man and he keeps a secret from you with or about another woman.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
	<p>Sharing personal information with someone who is not your partner. For example, assume you are a heterosexual man and you share something personal with a woman who is not your partner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
	<p>Your partner sharing personal information with someone other than you. For example, assume your partner is a heterosexual female and she shares personal information with another man.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
	<p>Seeking emotional support from someone other than your partner. For example, assume you are a heterosexual, married man and you seek emotional support from a woman other than</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>

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your wife.

Your partner seeking emotional support from someone other than you. For example, assume your partner is a heterosexual, married female and she seeks emotional support other than you

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Private conversations with someone who is not your partner

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner having private conversations with someone who is not you

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Having intimate or private meetings with a coworker

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner having intimate or private meetings with a coworker

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

One-on-one lunch or dinner with a coworker

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner having one-on-one lunch with a coworker

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Prioritizing time for someone other than your

- Never infidelity
  - Sometimes infidelity
-

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partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner prioritizing time for someone other than you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Sharing a meal with someone who is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner sharing a meal with someone who is not you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Giving gifts to someone who is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner giving gifts to someone who is not you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Receiving gifts from someone who is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner receiving gifts from someone who is not you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Developing relationships with classmates or coworkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner developing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> </ul>

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relationships with classmates or coworkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<p>Contacting a former partner through a technological medium  ** For example via Facebook (a social networking site that allows users to send private messages, upload pictures and videos, and keep in touch with other users)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<p>Your partner contacts a former partner through a technological medium  ** For example via Facebook (a social networking site that allows users to send private messages, upload pictures and videos, and keep in touch with other users)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Meeting with a former partner face-to-face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner meeting with a former partner face-to-face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<hr/> <b>Cyber</b> <hr/>	
Texting someone who is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>

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Your partner texting someone who is not you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Sexting (text messaging explicit messages that may create arousal) someone who is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner sexting (text messaging explicit messages that may create arousal) someone who is not you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Emailing someone that is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner emailing someone who is not you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Chatting (live communication with someone online by typing) with someone other than your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Your partner chatting (live communication with someone online by typing) with someone who is not you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
Sending a private message on a social networking site to someone who is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>

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\*\* For example:  
Facebook (a social networking site that allows users to send private messages, upload pictures and videos, and keep in touch with other users)

Your partner sends a private on a social networking site to someone other than you  
For example: Facebook.  
Facebook. \*\* Facebook (a social networking site that allows users to send private messages, upload pictures and videos, and keep in touch with other users)

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Acknowledging an element of someone's social networking site who is not your partner (such as "liking" a Facebook post)  
Facebook: a social networking site that allows users to send private messages, upload pictures and videos, and keep in touch with other users

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner acknowledging an element of someone's social networking site who is not you (such as "liking" a Facebook post)  
Facebook: a social networking site that

- Never infidelity
  - Sometimes infidelity
  - Usually infidelity
  - Always infidelity
-



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allows users to send private messages, upload pictures and videos, and keep in touch with other users

Video messaging (using a webcam to chat live) someone who is not your partner

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner video messaging (using a webcam to chat live) someone who is not you

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner viewing pornography

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

You viewing pornography

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Creating an online dating profile while in a committed relationship

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner creating an online dating profile

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Viewing online dating profiles while in a committed relationship

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner viewing online dating profiles

- Never infidelity
  - Sometimes infidelity
  - Usually infidelity
-

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Using a website intended to facilitate affairs while in a committed relationship (for example, ashleymadison.com)

- Always infidelity
- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner using a website intended to facilitate affairs while in a committed relationship (for example, ashleymadison.com)

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Snap chatting someone who is not your partner  
Snap chat: a smart phone application which allows users to take pictures of themselves or other things and send them to another user for a limited time before the picture is deleted

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner snap chatting a picture to someone other than you  
Snap chat: a smart phone application which allows users to take pictures of themselves or other things and send them to another user for a limited time before the picture is deleted

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Posting sexually provocative photos of yourself while in a committed relationship (for example, on a social networking site such as

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

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Instagram)

Your partner posting sexually provocative photos of themselves while in a committed relationship (for example, on a social networking site such as Instagram)

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Joining online groups with the intention of making an intimate/sexual connection

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner joining online groups with the intention of making an intimate/sexual connection

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Online gaming with someone who is not your partner

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner online gaming with someone who is not you

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Chatting while gaming with someone who is not your partner

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Your partner chatting while gaming with someone who is not you

- Never infidelity
- Sometimes infidelity
- Usually infidelity
- Always infidelity

Sending explicit photos

- Never infidelity
-

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	to someone who is not your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
	Your partner sending explicit photos to someone who is not you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never infidelity</li> <li>• Sometimes infidelity</li> <li>• Usually infidelity</li> <li>• Always infidelity</li> </ul>
<b>Concluding Questions:</b>	Based on the content of the survey, did your definition of infidelity change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not at all</li> <li>• Slightly changed</li> <li>• Somewhat changed</li> <li>• Moderately changed</li> <li>• Changed a lot</li> <li>• Changed significantly</li> </ul>
<b>Open-ended Question:</b>	If so, how?	

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## **Appendix B: Facebook Script**

Researchers, Dr. Stephen Fife and Sarah Schonian, in the Marriage and Family Therapy Department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas are asking for your help on a research project “Perceptions of Infidelity” they are currently conducting.

The survey will:

- take approximately 20 minutes of your time;
- ask about personal information, such as, your age, your relationship status, experience with and perceptions of infidelity;
- help to enhance understanding of participants’ definition of infidelity

You must be 18 years or older to participate.

**Your participation is voluntary. This means you may discontinue or withdraw at any time.**

**The study results are anonymous (your name is not used) and confidential (your responses are not revealed to anyone including the investigators on the study). All information gathered will be used as grouped data; no one person’s responses to the survey will be singled out.**

**To participate in this study please click on the following link:**

**In order to provide results representative of the general population and that are statistically significant, we ask that upon completion of the survey that you repost this onto your Facebook wall.**

**Thank you for your participation.**

## **Appendix C: Electronic Mail Script**

Researchers, Dr. Stephen Fife and Sarah Schonian, in the Marriage and Family Therapy Department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas are asking for your help on a research project “Perceptions of Infidelity” they are currently conducting.

The survey will:

- take approximately 20 minutes of your time;
- ask about personal information, such as, your age, your relationship status, experience with and perceptions of infidelity;
- help to enhance understanding of participants’ definition of infidelity

You must be 18 years or older to participate.

**Your participation is voluntary. This means you may discontinue or withdraw at any time.**

**The study results are anonymous (your name is not used) and confidential (your responses are not revealed to anyone including the investigators on the study). All information gathered will be used as grouped data; no one person’s responses to the survey will be singled out.**

**To participate in this study please click on the following link:**

**Thank you for your participation.**

## **Appendix D: Classroom Script**

Researchers, Dr. Stephen Fife and Sarah Schonian, in the Marriage and Family Therapy Department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas are asking for your help on a research project “Perceptions of Infidelity” they are currently conducting.

The survey will:

- take approximately 20 minutes of your time;
- ask about personal information, such as, your age, your relationship status, experience with and perceptions of infidelity;
- help to enhance understanding of participants’ definition of infidelity

You must be 18 years or older to participate.

**Your participation is voluntary. This means you may discontinue or withdraw at any time.**

**The study results are anonymous (your name is not used) and confidential (your responses are not revealed to anyone including the investigators on the study). All information gathered will be used as grouped data; no one person’s responses to the survey will be singled out.**

**To participate in this study, please visit the following link:**

**Thank you for your participation.**

## Appendix E: Informed Consent

### DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH

**TITLE:** Perceptions and Definition of Infidelity: A Multimethod Study

**PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:** You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to assess perceptions of infidelity. Our aim is to use the data to increase awareness of everyday behaviors and whether or not they are viewed as unfaithful by the general population, depending on certain demographic variables.

**YOUR PARTICIPATION:** You are being asked to participate in the study because you have indicated that you are over the age of 18.

**PROCEDURES:** If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an electronic survey that may take up to 20 minutes.

**BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:** There may be a direct benefit to you. The survey may promote insight and understanding of the topic of infidelity.

**RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:** There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. This study presents the risk of some emotional discomfort while answering the questions on the survey. The researchers will make every effort to minimize these risks. If at any point in the survey you become uncomfortable or distressed, you may stop taking the survey.

**COST/COMPENSATION:** There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take 20 minutes of your time.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Stephen Fife (University of Nevada, Las Vegas) at [stephen.fife@unlv.edu](mailto:stephen.fife@unlv.edu) or Sarah Schonian (University of Nevada, Las Vegas) at [schonian@unlv.nevada.edu](mailto:schonian@unlv.nevada.edu). For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which this study is being conducted you may contact the UNLV Office of Research Integrity-Human Subjects at (877)-895-2794.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or at any time during the research study.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 3 years after the completion of the study. After the storage time, the information gathered will be destroyed.



**PARTICIPANT CONSENT:** I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age.

**By proceeding with this survey I am giving my consent for participation.**

## **Appendix F: Survey Completion and Resource Page**

You have completed the “Perceptions of Infidelity” survey. You can print this page for your record or proof that you have completed the survey.

If you feel that you would like to seek counseling services you can utilize the following resources at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas:

[http://urbanaffairs.unlv.edu/client\\_services/](http://urbanaffairs.unlv.edu/client_services/)

<http://education.unlv.edu/practice/>

If you have difficulty locating a therapist or you are not currently in the state of Nevada, you can contact the primary investigator, or visit Therapist Locator online at:

<http://www.therapistlocator.net/>.

Thank you for your participation.

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evaluation and treatment. *The Journal of Treatment and Prevention*, 7(1-2), 59-74.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Las Vegas, NV 89113  
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**EDUCATION:**

- M.S. Marriage and Family Therapy  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2013  
COAMFTE Accredited MFT Program  
Thesis: *Perceptions and Definition of Infidelity: A Multimethod Study* (Chair: Stephen Fife, Ph.D.)
- B.A. Psychology (Minors: biology and sociology)  
Columbia College, 2010

**EMPLOYMENT:**

- 2012-2013 Graduate Assistant- International Student Advisor  
Office of International Students and Scholars  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Assist incoming and current International students and their families make smooth transitions into UNLV. Advise students on necessary regulations in order for them to maintain status as an international student in the US. Assist the assistant director in work with scholars.
- 2010-2011 Sales, Marketing, and Wedding Coordination Manager  
The Padua Hills Theater  
Claremont, CA
- Customer service, scheduling, event coordination, payroll, bill pay to accounts payable, communicating with current and potential clients, sales and marketing to generate a new clientele
- 2009-2011 Front Desk Coordinator  
Salon Adair and Spa  
Columbia, MO
- Coordination of scheduling for over fifteen employees, payroll processing, inventory management, organization of donations and fundraising, mediating issues between employees and clients.

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

Thesis Research: Marriage and Family Therapy Program, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, June

2012- December 2013. Title: *Perceptions and Definition of Infidelity: A Multimethod Study*.

- Mixed methods study and development of infidelity scale to measure how a variety of variables affect perceptions of infidelity. Chair: Dr. Stephen Fife.

Hertlein, K. M. & Blumer, M. L. (2014). *The couple and family technology framework: Intimate*

*relationships in a digital age*. New York: Routledge.

- Reviewed chapters, checked references for errors

Family Research Services (FRS) Lab: The Optimum Performance Program in Sports (TOPPS).

- Research Assistant and Public Relations Coordinator.
- Lab developed with support from the National Institute of Health in order to assist elite athletes (NCAA, Intramural, and club) in optimum performance in various aspects of their lives, with the inclusion of a significant other. (P.I. Dr. Donohue, Clinical Psychology)

## PUBLICATIONS

Olsen, C., Russo-Mitma, G. Ancheta, K. Clark, M.C., & Schonian, S. A. (In press). *Silver Linings Playbook* (Movie Review). *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*.

Schonian, S.A. & Fife, S. (In preparation). *Perceptions and Definition of Infidelity: A Multimethod Study*.

Schonian, S. A. & Hunt, Q. (In preparation). *Alcoholics anonymous and couple's therapy*.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Clinical Experience:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 2012-2013 | Student Intern<br>Kayenta Legacy<br>-Worked with a diverse clientele including individuals, couples, families, children, and adolescents all with a wide range of presenting problems in a private practice setting. |
| 2011-2012 | Student Therapist<br>Center for Individual, Couple, and Family Counseling  |

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

-Worked with multiple problem families, individuals, couples, children, and adolescents. All clients had a wide range of presenting problems (e.g. lower SES, relational issues, trauma, etc.)

Professional Affiliations:

- American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), Student member
- American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (AASECT), Student member
- Nevada Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, NAMFT, Student Member
- National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), Student member
  - o Nominated for Student/New Professional representative in the Family Therapy Section

Professional Meetings Attended:

- American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) National Conferences, 2012 and 2013.
- National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) Conference, 2012
- Nevada Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (NAMFT) Professional Development Day, 2012

Trainings:

- Suicide Assessment Workshop, Facilitator: Coreen Haym, October 2013
- National Center for Responsible Gaming (NCRG), “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Problem Gambling”, September 2012
- Parts Psychology Workshop and Training, Facilitator: Jay Norricks, July 2012
- Self-Hypnosis Certification, Facilitator: Janie & David Alexander, December 2010

Honors:

- Delta Kappa, Zeta Chapter: Marriage and Family Therapy Honor Society
  - o Chapter President 2012-2013
- International Marriage and Family Therapy Honor Society's Council of Presidents
- Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society

Volunteer Service:

- Nevada Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (NAMFT) Professional Development Day, 2012

- Assisted in directing patrons at the event, helped in the preparation of CEUs
- Salon Adair and Spa's Breast Cancer Awareness Day: Cuts for Cancer (October 17, 2010)
  - Organized a fundraiser for the salon that incorporated both philanthropy and an effective way to advertise. We opened the salon on a non-business day and the employees all donated their time and talents to provide members of the community with a variety of services in return for their charitable contribution to the our fundraiser. One hundred percent of the proceeds were given to the Susan G. Komen for the cure fund.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters Program (March 2009- March 2010)
  - Mentored a young girl in the community. Did a variety of activities on a weekly basis, such as, visiting the zoo, making arts and crafts, bonding, studying, teaching, listening, etc.
- Renown Regional Medical Center: Reno, NV (August 2008-January 2009)
  - An opportunity to be involved in the medical field and work with patients and hospital staff, for example: talking to patients, delivering mail/flowers, reading stories to children, aiding with directions in the hospital.
- Autistic Youth Program: Gardnerville, NV (August 2005-December 2005)
  - A select group of students were chosen to participate in an autistic youth program in the Carson Valley Area (Northern Nevada). In this program we assisted children who happen to have Autism Spectrum Disorder in coping with scenarios they may experience at school and on the playground.

Additional Relevant Coursework:

- CED 646 Combat Trauma: Overview of trauma experienced by those involved in combat situations. Identification of signs and symptoms of such involvement will be explored, in addition to the impact on the families and communities, Summer 2013