

WHAT'S SEX GOTTA DO WITH IT?  
RELATIONSHIP AND RISK FACTORS INFLUENCING INFIDELITY IN YOUNG  
COUPLES

by

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## Abstract

Relationship and risk factors of infidelity within *intimate and romantic relationships* were examined using the *Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model (RRIM)*. It is based in part on Sternberg's (1998) theoretical construct known as the triangular theory of love. Relationship factors included demographics, and relationship, development, strengths, and dynamics. Risk factors included sexual compatibility, and relationship problems. Data gleaned from Wave IV of *the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)* measured a subsample of approximately 1,000 respondents ( $n = 939$ ) young adults from 24 to 32 years of age ( $M = 28.64$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ,  $Mdn = 28.61$ ) and was designed to test the accuracy of the *RRIM*. Hierarchical logistic regression was used to explicate the relationships found across the elements within the *RRIM*. The overall results revealed that the *RRIM* correctly classified that 72.2% of the men and 78.8% of women were not likely to commit infidelity.

The final results revealed that the level of commitment, the feeling of love, and the frequency of sex within the relationship were statistically significantly likely to influence infidelity between both men and women. Meanwhile, education and believing that one's relationship would be permanent were statistically significantly likely to influence infidelity for women, but not for men. Although these results are encouraging, limitations were found within the *RRIM* and problems generated from using the *Add Health* must be acknowledged as several measures were not reliable. Future investigations should focus on how role models within young adults immediate and external environment influence their participation in committing infidelity.

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I also dedicate my thesis to my brother Jervay—may he rest in peace, and to my grandparents, to my grandfather “PaPa”—may he rest in peace, and my grandmother “MaMa.” I cannot begin to express my gratitude to the both of you because words are insufficient and they do no justice to my feelings. I hope that my accomplishments, past, present, and future will make you both proud. I carry your wisdom in my mind, your peace in my heart and your vision in my soul. I thank you and I love you more than words can say! I know that you know this but it still must me said, you will always be in my heart.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

At some point in our lives many of us will become involved in an *intimate and romantic relationship*—defined here as a dynamic connection that is formed between two people who mutually share extreme closeness in their lives with one another<sup>1</sup>. As couples spend more time together and their relationship intensifies and evolves, many couples will start making plans for the future. Typically this is when couples begin deciding where they will live, work, and entertain the idea of having children. From simple to possibly complex reasons, some couples may decide that they want their relationship to become permanent. When this event occurs it usually manifests itself in the form of some bonding that unifies the couple's relationship. In most societies, such as the United States, this is marriage. Nevertheless, not all relationships are permanent. Some may end due to financial woes, physical abuse, or a host of other various reasons, yet one of the primary reasons why relationships in the United States often dissolve is due to infidelity<sup>2</sup> (Amato & Previti, 2003; Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985; Whisman, Chatav, & Gordon, 2007).

Most people believe that *intimate and romantic relationships* should be exclusive (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Greeley, 1991). Infidelity within an *intimate and romantic relationship* is perceived as one of the most damaging events (Whisman, Chatav, & Gordon, 2007). An investigation by Treas & Giesen (2000) revealed that approximately 90% of Americans reported that they believed that it was wrong to commit

<sup>1</sup>For the purpose of this thesis intimate and romantic relationships are defined as committed and exclusive romantic connections between heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual young adults (24-32 years).

<sup>2</sup>Infidelity is typically and informally defined as sexual cheating and unfaithfulness that takes place while a couple is involved in what can be thought of as a committed relationship.

infidelity or synonymously participate in an extradyadic event—a sexual and romantic liaison with someone other than their primary partner. Consequently, after infidelity had occurred within most relationships, the relationship was likely to dissolve (Amato & Previti, 2003; Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). Another series of investigations (Allen et al., 2005; Allen & Baucom, 2006; Cano & O’Leary, 2000; Knox, Zusman, Kalluzny, & Sturdivant, 2000; Previti & Amato, 2004; Whisman, & Snyder, 2007) revealed that individuals who experienced infidelity within their relationships were likely to end them. Those respondents reported that their relationship dissolved and ended because they felt betrayed, humiliated, in addition to feeling that they could no longer trust their partner.

Researchers have identified unique differences between the reported number of men and women who have committed infidelity. For example, Atkins, Baucom, and Jacobson (2001) as well as Greeley (1994) have found that sex (biological) was an important factor in predicting infidelity as they found multiple elements (hormones, socialization etc.) that distinctly moderated the variations between the men and women. Their conclusions were that men were more likely to commit infidelity.

It was believed that women committed infidelity to achieve a meaningful emotional connection while men committed infidelity for a host of reasons such as unfulfilled sexual desires (Previti & Amato, 2004); becoming bored with their partner (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995); and innately being thrill seekers (Lalasz & Weigel, 2011; Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Greeley, 1994). An investigation by Arnett (1994) revealed that thrill seeking was positively associated with infidelity, and in a related investigation by Leitenberg and Henning (1995) it was shown that sexual fantasy was

positively associated with the propensity to commit infidelity. The coalescing of these two factors is believed to be a major risk factor that leads to infidelity.

It was also believed that personality traits (Whisman, Chatav, & Gordon, 2007), as well as religion (Buunk, 1980; Choi, Catania, & Dolcini, 1994), poor marital stability (Previti & Amato, 2004), poor perception of relationship, (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Buunk, 1980; Treas & Giesen, 2000), and low frequency of sexual intercourse and sexual satisfaction (Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Previti & Amato; Prins, Buunk, & Van Yperen, 1993; Thompson, 1983; Treas & Giesen, 2000; Waite & Joyner, 2001) all contributed to a person's desire to commit infidelity.

### *Purpose*

Individuals from different areas of life such as politicians, entertainers, and religious leaders have been targeted in a moral blitz that seems to occur in societies, such as the United States where there is limited discussion on sex and sexuality. In modern times, it is believed that more people are speaking openly about their affairs; however, it is uncertain whether infidelity is more common than decades ago when infidelity was rarely spoken about in public, but it was certain to have existed.

Understanding infidelity and how it is viewed by most people may help to surface some of the issues that take place within *intimate and romantic relationships* and reduce infidelity. To that end, this study was designed to explore three primary principles involving how infidelity can occur within an *intimate and romantic relationship*. The first principle was to examine what risk factors were associated with infidelity among young couples. The second principle was to understand how a partner's personality, socialization, beliefs, and values influenced their ideas about what is infidelity, and

finally to understand what happened to the relationship after an incident of infidelity had occurred.

### *Rationale*

Social scientists have rigorously investigated the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, sexuality, and infidelity, but there are still some areas that need further investigation. Within this thesis I have examined and evaluated the parameters surrounding the relationship and risk factors, and relationship problem behaviors within *intimate and romantic* relationships among a sample of young adults in an effort to address the issues involved in couple infidelity.

### *Conceptual Theoretical Orientation*

Not without turmoil, social scientists have explored and evaluated moderate and long-term *intimate and romantic relationships* among young adults. Numerous frameworks such as social exchange theory (Ekeh, 1974; Rusbult, 1983), symbolic interaction theory (Mead, 1982), and the social ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) have been used to study the intricate components of *intimate and romantic relationship*. These frameworks have also been used to investigate and explore the factors that minimize the risks of these relationships succumbing to infidelity.

To illustrate this point, social exchange theory explicates how costs and rewards are associated with decision making. While sufficient on one level, this perspective does not specifically address what led a partner to commit infidelity. In particular, is it a cost or a reward for the participating partner? The answer to this question is contingent upon the values of the individual. On its face, infidelity could appear to be a cost for an individual who values loyalty, trust and commitment. However, if the individual values

sexual activity more than the sum of loyalty, trust and commitment, the compassion level of alternatives would likely be greater. In short, infidelity would likely be reward.

Additionally, the social ecological theory can explore how the overarching values of the macrosystem impacts the individual in the microsystem, and how this could influence the person's behavior while they are in an *intimate and romantic relationship*.

As the social exchange and social ecological theories detail some of the dynamics of intimate relationships, they do not adequately address what factors lead individuals to commit infidelity. Comparatively, symbolic interaction theory, when used alone, can explain some personal reasons but often cannot address the structural factors present in terms of why infidelity occurs. Each of these theoretical perspectives while very useful fall short of being able to provide a clear reason that explains why people commit infidelity.

### *Conceptual Model*

To help explain the dynamic and intricate elements of *intimate and romantic relationships* Roger Sternberg (1998) formed what he called the triangular theory of love. This theoretical construct incorporates some of the elements found in symbolic interaction, social exchange, and socio ecological perspectives. It features three primary constructs; *passion*, *intimacy*, and *commitment*. These constructs are symbolic of the elements that are believed to be essential to having a healthy and successful *intimate and romantic relationship*. Partners may experience *passion*<sup>3</sup> defined as intense sexual attraction and sexual desires; *intimacy* viewed as closeness, familiarity and bonding; and

<sup>3</sup>Passion encompasses lust and infatuation which is an important aspect of in regards to sexual compatibility.

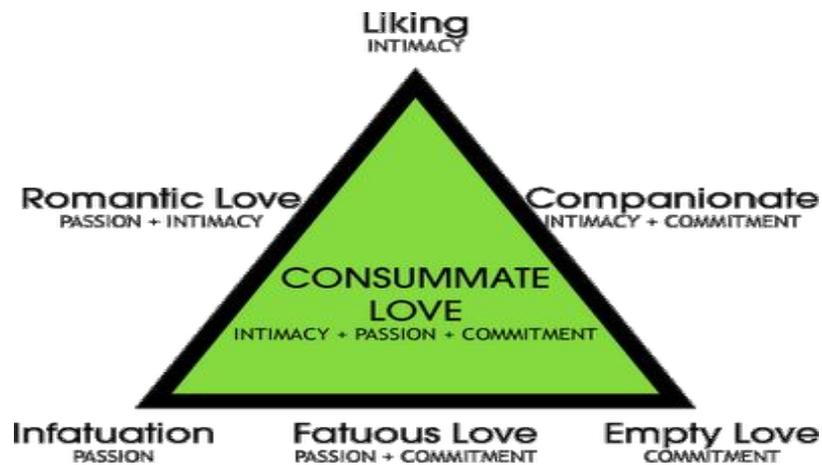
*commitment* expressed as the investment in maintaining the growth of the relationship; at different times and quantities throughout the course of the relationship.

Sternberg reports that the ways in which couples experience love is based upon the strength of the constructs *passion*, *intimacy*, and *commitment*. The elements within the triangular theory of love can exist both independently and collectively to produce a robust effect. According to this model a relationship that contained a magnitude of *passion*, *intimacy* and *commitment* would be what is referred to as consummate love or the “perfect relationship.” Sternberg contends that while some relationships can and do experience consummate love, it may not be permanent (Sternberg, 1988).

Relationships evolve throughout their existence, as they are continuously in motion due to their dynamic structure changing from time to time (Levinger, 1980). When this occurs, the magnitude of passion, intimacy and commitment may be modified and the relationship develops into a different form of love according to Sternberg’s theoretical postulates. A relationship that is shifting out of consummate love will transition into one of the other seven forms of love—such as companionate (intimacy and commitment), romantic (passion and intimacy), fatuous (passion and commitment), liking (intimacy), infatuation (passion), empty love (commitment) and non-love (complete deterioration of passion intimacy and commitment)—(a schematic representation of Sternberg’s model is displayed in Figure 1.1) however, none of those forms of love are as dynamic as consummate love.

In effect, the Sternberg model is transactive in its nature, reflecting the social ecological perspective with its constructs. Couples may experience all forms of love, some of these occurring at different levels for each member of the dyad. For example,

one member may be experiencing romantic love while the other maybe experiencing consummate love. When the disconnect between the couples is large the possibility for infidelity may exist much in the same way rewards are not granted when the costs are too high as revealed in social exchange theory.



*Figure 1.1.*  
Sternberg's Conceptualization of the Triangular Theory of Love and its Supporting Components.

Although the Sternberg model is a useful construct, it is insufficient in its ability to address the hypotheses within this study. A further refinement of ideas and an integration of theoretical constructs led to the final conceptual model used in this thesis investigation. I developed the *Relationship and Risk Factors influencing Infidelity Model*, or simply the *RRIM*. It consists of structural, attitudinal, perceptual and behavioral measures focused on relationship quality (see Figure 1.2). These components when taken together integrate the theoretical postulates of social exchange, symbolic interaction, social ecological and the triangular theory of love discussed earlier.

## Infidelity Model.

(RRIM) (*Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model*)

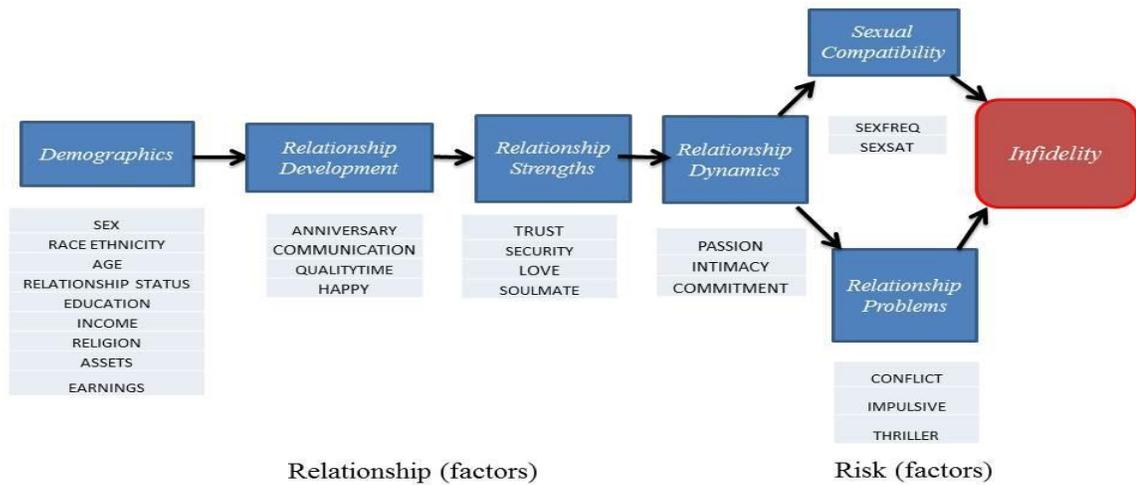


Figure 1.2.

Conceptual Version of the Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model.

### Conceptual Definitions

#### Variables in the Study

Multiple variables were created to explore and measure the traits of *intimate and romantic relationships* and its influences on infidelity. These variables were categorized into seven distinct groups (six predictor groups and one outcome group): demographics; relationship development; relationship strengths; relationship dynamics; sexual compatibility; relationship problem behaviors and the outcome measure group. These variables were also used to explain the *Relationship and Risk factors influencing*

#### Demographic Predictors

These components are descriptive characteristics of the sample of respondents who were in this study.

*Sex*—(often called gender), refers to the biological sex of the respondents (male, female).

*Race Ethnicity*—the interviewer’s grouping of the respondents by his/her observation of the respondent’s racial and ethnic background

*Age*—how old the respondent was when he/she was interviewed during the current Wave (IV) of the investigation.

*Relationship Type*—type of intimate and romantic relationship with primary the respondent was involved in with his/her primary partner when he/she was interviewed during the current juncture (Wave IV) in the investigation.

*Education*—the highest level of formal schooling that was completed.

*Income*—in respect to personal earnings this is personal income that was received before taxes, including wages or salaries, tips, bonuses, overtime pay and income from self-employment.

*Religion*—a set of beliefs and values shared with other members.

*Assets*—the respondents estimate of the total value of his/her financial assets and the assets of everyone who lives in his/her household and contributes to the household budget.

*Earnings*—the respondents personal gross earnings (before taxes). This includes interest earned on bank accounts, stocks, etc.

#### *Relationship Development*

These elements are hypothesized to be associated with the stability of the respondent’s relationship. They are used to provide support of qualities that are necessary to have a “healthy” relationship. There are many aspects involved in relationship development, they are:

*Anniversary*—the length of time (measured in years) that the respondent and his/her primary partner had been involved in an intimate and romantic relationship.

*Communication*—How well the respondents speak (encode), listen and understand (decode), respond, and interacted with their primary partner (while they were involved in an intimate and romantic relationship).

*QualityTime*— the respondent’s feeling towards doing ordinary, day-to-day things together with their primary partner (while they were involved in an intimate relationship).

*Happy*—the respondent’s pleasure of the overall quality of the relationship with their primary partner (while they were involved in an intimate relationship).

### *Relationship Strengths*

These elements are used to solidify the relationship in terms of partners being able unifying themselves. They are also used to provide support of qualities that are necessary to have a “healthy” relationship. There are many aspects involved in relationship strengths, they are:

*Trust*—the respondent’s reliance, confidence and belief in his/her primary partner to be faithful to him/her (while they were involved in an intimate relationship).

*Security*— the respondents belief (at the time he/she was interviewed during the current wave (IV) of the investigation) that his/her intimate and romantic relationship with his/her primary partner would be permanent.

*Love*—How much the respondent expressed that he/she loved his/her primary partner (while they were involved in an intimate and relationship).

*Soulmate*— the respondents belief (at the time he/she was interviewed during the current wave (IV) of the investigation) that he/she and his/her primary partner would get married.

### *Relationship Dynamics*

These relationship dynamics account for Sternberg’s conceptual model. They are used to assess the magnitude of essential elements that can found within any relationship.

They are:

*Passion*—how the respondent felt about how their primary partner expressed love and affection to them (while they were involved in an intimate relationship).

*Intimacy*—how close, connected, and attached the respondent was to his/her primary partner (while they were involved in an intimate relationship).

*Commitment*—the respondent’s level of connection to, and support of their primary partner and the relationship in itself (while they were involved in an intimate relationship).

#### *Sexual Compatibility*

An important aspect of any intimate relationship is how sexually compatible couples find themselves. In this investigation this was explored through the use of the sexual compatibility elements. They are:

*Sexual Frequency*—how often (weekly average) the respondents had sexual intercourse with his their primary partner (while they were involved in an intimate relationship).

*Sexual Satisfaction*—the respondent’s belief that his/her sexual needs and desires were fulfilled by his/her primary partner (while they were involved in an intimate relationship).

#### *Relationship Problems*

These factors make up the one of the two elements of the risk factors that are within the *Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model*. These factors take into consideration behaviors and events that can be detrimental to a relationship. They are:

*Conflict*—how well the respondent perceived and was satisfied with the way that he/she and his/her primary partner processed disagreements that occurred within their intimate and romantic relationship.

*Impulsive*—how likely the respondent was to make a decision based off of his/her gut feeling and not think about the consequences of his/her actions (while he/she was involved in an intimate and relationship with his/her primary partner).

*Thriller*—how the respondent felt about taking risks (while he/she was involved in an intimate relationship with his/her primary partner).

#### *Outcome Measure*

The outcome measure is a product of the components that take place within a relationship. For this study, infidelity is the outcome measure as is it proceeded by the

risk factors that led to it. A study of whether or not a respondent reported engaging in a sexual or romantic relationship with someone other than their primary partner was observed.

*Infidelity*—the respondent was involved in a romantic or sexual activity with someone other than his/her primary partner (during the current wave (IV) of the investigation).

Using Sternberg's conceptual approach along with the *Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model (RRIM)* will make it possible for this thesis to address the follow questions:

1. What are the risk factors associated with young adult couples who experience infidelity?
2. What are the relationships between passion, intimacy, and commitment and their influence on infidelity among young adult couples?
3. What role does gender, and relationship length and type, play in the propensity to commit acts of infidelity for young adults involved in *intimate and romantic relationships*?
  - Hypothesis 1: Young adults in committed relationships who reported poor relationship status and lower sexual frequency are more likely to commit infidelity.
  - Hypothesis 1a: Young adult men in committed relationships are more likely to commit infidelity when poor quality sexual relationships were reported.
  - Hypothesis 1b: Young adult women are more likely to commit infidelity when poor communication channels were reported.

- Hypothesis 2: Young adults in committed relationships who reported high levels of intimacy, passion, and commitment are more likely to experience greater relationship quality and are less likely to commit infidelity.

### *Importance of the Study*

This study benefits the social sciences in several ways. First, it addresses how infidelity can cause problems in unforeseen ways in couple relationships. Since relationships that are affected by infidelity are likely to end (Amato & Previti, 2003; Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985) it is important to consider how issues fostering infidelity can be addressed before they can initiate changes in the family structure.

The second, and yet important aspect of this study is it attempts to isolate the risk factors leading individuals to engage in infidelity. The proposed *Relationship and Risk factor influencing Infidelity Model* can be used to help determine relationship patterns that could likely indicate when a partner would be more likely to consider infidelity as an outcome. Once the risk factors are exposed, it might be less difficult to identify the protective measures thus leading to a reduction in risk for young adult couples.

The final advantage derived from this investigation involves exploring how theoretical frameworks can be used to interpret when relationships might be at risk for commitment issues. In addition, this study has the added advantage of enhancing an already established theoretical construct by providing empirical and concrete data to substantiate its postulates.

### Overview

In an effort to explain the issue of infidelity among young adults in romantic/dating relationships this thesis examines this issue across five chapters. Chapter

One provides the introduction to the problem. Chapter Two provides a review of the current literature along with exploring concepts of *intimate and romantic relationships* and *infidelity*. Chapter Three discusses the particular research methods used while Chapter Four contains the results and analyses. Finally, Chapter Five provides the discussion, conclusions, and implications of this thesis.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

Social scientists have been interested in the dynamics of intimate relationships for the past few decades. The literature reviewed in this thesis focused primarily on relationship dissolution. More specifically this chapter is centered on infidelity and the role it plays in relationship destruction. It also includes how couples respond to infidelity. In short, I ask the question of how do some couples respond to infidelity and what influence does it have on the status of the couple's relationship? To help breakdown the vast literature in this area I have divided the literature review into three parts. In Part I there is an examination of the risk factors associated with infidelity among young adult couples. Part II focuses on understanding those factors as they are related to the companion's personality, beliefs and values, and social scripts, and how it influences their ideology about what is infidelity. Finally, Part III accesses what happens to the relationship after an incident of infidelity has occurred within intimate relationships.

#### *Part I Factors Involved in Couple Infidelity*

##### *Sexual Satisfaction*

Over the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there have been a multitude of investigations that have explored sexual satisfaction within intimate relationships. These investigations revealed that partners who expressed being sexually satisfied were more likely to: (1) experience stronger desires for future sexual encounters (Toates, 2009); (2) behave in ways that were rewarding to their relationship (Sprecher, 1999); and (3) were less likely to participate in an extradyadic relationship

(Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Brown, 1991; Buunk, 1980; Prins, Buunk, & VanYperen, 1993; Treas & Giesen, 2000; Waite & Joyner, 2001; Vaughn, 1986).

Contrastingly, partners who valued their relationship, but who were not sexual satisfied, were more likely to participate in an extradyadic relationship (Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Prins, Buunk, & Van Yperen; Thompson, 1983; Treas & Giesen; Waite & Joyner). It is believed that infidelity often occurred as a result of a partner not being sexual satisfied within their intimate relationship (Lalasz & Weigel, 2011). Investigations by McAlister, Pachana, and Jackson (2005), as well as one by Sprecher (1998), revealed that sexual fantasy was a precursor of infidelity. Many of the respondents in these investigations reported that they would fantasize about someone other than their partner when their sexual desires were not met.

Furthermore, sexual reciprocity, where both partners gave and received pleasure in a somewhat mutual way was found to be an important factor in maintaining sexual satisfaction. In relationships where sexual reciprocity was not achieved there was a strong likelihood of low sexual satisfaction. Additionally, partners who took turns in initiating sex, and mutually refused sex, reported higher levels of sexual satisfaction (Sprecher, 1998).

### *Sexual Frequency*

As intimate relationships begin it is often believed by the partners that they have the same desire to participate in sexual activity (Baumeister, 2000; Hiller, 2005). As the relationship transitions over time those desires may change and the couple may find themselves sexually incompatible (Baumeister). An investigation conducted by Hiller (2004) revealed that in the majority of intimate heterosexual relationships it was the

woman's sexual desire that changed. More specifically, it was the change in the woman's desire to participate in sexual activity that had diminished. The more their desire decreased the less they participated in sexual activity. In some events, the woman completely withdrew from sex. The decline in the partner's sexual desire and subsequent withdrawal from sexual activity was believed to be a result of poor bonding throughout the relationship (Bancroft, Loftus, & Long, 2003); the lack of foreplay experienced while participating in sexual activity (Hiller); feeling disrespected (Kaschak & Tiefer, 2001); and anger, frustration, and fear that had built up throughout the course of the relationship (Basson, 2000; Leiblum, 2002; Peplau, 2003; Stuart, Hammond, & Pett, 1987). Other It is also believed that stress, pregnancy, and exhaustion could have moderate women's desire to participate in sexual activity. Contrastingly, women who had a positive self-image, and were emotionally secure within their relationship were more likely to have a higher level of sexual satisfaction, and a stronger desire to have sex more frequently (Ackard, Kearney-Cooke, & Peterson, 2000; Roberts & Gettman, 2004).

In numerous cases the companion of the partner who withdrew from sexual activity became aggressive causing the quality of the overall relationship to worsen (Hiller, 2004). In a related but earlier investigation, Wellings, Field, Johnson, and Wadsworth (1994) found that a diminished in sexual frequency within marriages increased the risk of a partner participating in an extradyadic relationships. It is believed that if a partner's sexual desires are not satisfied he/she may fulfill the desire through other means which necessarily involves infidelity (Previti & Amato, 2004).

Work focused on the influence of social class on relationship infidelity (Higgins (2008) yielded some compelling outcomes. A notable finding was that men who reported

being from the “poor working-class<sup>4</sup>” group expressed that if their partner refused or withdrew from sexual activity that they would pursue an extradyadic relationship to have their sexual needs fulfilled, and would result to violence (coercion) until their partner gave in to their demands. Continued investigations have shown that women from the poor working-class group reported being aware that if their partner could not have sex with them that he would have sex with someone else (Higgins, 2008). Consequently, some women reported participating in sexual activity to keep their partner from having an extradyadic relationship. It appears that infidelity within relationships may have an added dimension, one of economic class status that has yet to be fully explored in the literature.

#### *Sexual Practices and Relationship Duration*

Social scientists have investigated the area of sexual practices and relationship duration over a number of years, however there are still gaps that need to be filled. These gaps include the association(s) between relationship duration and sexual frequency, as well as the association(s) between relationship duration and commitment. Within the investigations that were conducted, several revealed that low sexual frequency was negatively associated with the duration of marriages (Call, Sprecher, & Schwartz, 1995; Wellings et al., 1994). Other issues of considerable note included the role of sexual fantasy and commitment as they contribute to possible infidelity.

#### *Sexual Fantasy*

In a more contemporary investigation, Hicks and Leitenberg (2001) found a positive association between sexual frequency and extradyadic sexual fantasies. As the

<sup>4</sup>This refers to respondents who have a low socio-economic status.

relationship length increased individuals reported having more extradyadic fantasies. It was believed that extradyadic fantasies were moderated by low sexual frequency, low sexual satisfaction, better relationship alternatives and partners becoming bored and losing interest in their companions.

Individuals who reported not being sexually satisfied were likely to fantasize about sex more often. Sexual fantasy enables individuals to express their sexual desires through imagination without fear of rejection, or embarrassment (Wilson, 1997). The individual is able to develop and explore their sexual identity one that they may not be able to express with a partner (Ellis & Symons, 1990; Gagnon & Simon, 1973), and enhance their self-esteem (Friedman, & Downey, 2000).

Hicks and Leitenberg's (2001) investigation also revealed a difference in sexual fantasy among gender. Their investigation revealed that the number of sexual partners that women had moderated extradyadic sexual fantasy. Furthermore, due to emotional attachments women's extradyadic sexual fantasies were likely to involve a previous partner (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995). Contrastingly, the number of previous sexual partners that men had did not moderate their extradyadic sexual fantasies. Additionally, men's extradyadic sexual fantasies were more likely to involve someone who they had not participated in sex with (Hicks & Leitenberg, 2001).

### *Infidelity*

Individuals within intimate relationships may become involved in an extradyadic relationship for various reasons. When a partner is dissatisfied with their relationship (McAlister, Pachana, & Jackson, 2005; Sprecher, 1998), perceives a noticeable profit in the quality of alternatives (Drigotas, Safstorm, & Gentilia, 1999) or is sexually

dissatisfied (Treas & Gisen, 2000), he/she may seek to satisfy their sexual desire(s) by participating in an extradyadic sexual liaison (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Brown, 1991; Buunk, 1980; Prins, Buunk, & VanYperen, 1993; Treas & Giesen, 2000; Waite & Joyner, 2001; Vaughn, 1986).

The benefits of an extradyadic relationship were the quality of alternatives which included little to no investment (Greiling & Buss, 2000), enhanced self-esteem and self-efficacy—through acquiring multiple partners (McAlister, Pachana, & Jackson, 2005), and fulfilling one's sexual desires (Atwood & Seifer, 1997; Glass & Wright, 1992; Sheppard, Nelson, & Andreoli-Mathie, 1995; Wiggins & Lederer, 1984).

### *Commitment*

Commitment is a normative societal value and an important aspect of intimate relationships (Treas & Giesen, 2000; Wiederman & Allgeier, 1996; Wiederman & Hurd, 1999). A number of investigations that explored the role of commitment in intimate relationships revealed that commitment was inversely related to extradyadic participation (Drigotas et al. 1999; Previti & Amato, 2004; Roscoe et al., 1988). It was believed that as a partner became more committed to their relationship he/she was more invested and would be less likely to participate in activities (i.e. extradyadic relationships) that could jeopardize the future of their relationship. A related investigation by Haselton and Buss (2001) found that women reported being more committed after being sexually intimate.

### *Part II The Role of Gender Socialization in Mitigating and Supporting Infidelity*

It is believed that an individual's sexual orientation and sexuality are biopsychosocial elements that holistically comprises biology, socialization, and personal experiences (Hiller, 2004). There is little doubt that men and women experienced sexual

development at different phases and have different sexual drives (Friedman, & Downey, 2000). Research has demonstrated that men's sex drive are distinct from women's as they are consistent and evolve much earlier (Fisher, 1998; Heaven, 2001; Wallen, 2000); generally becoming apparent with the onset of puberty (Heaven). Adolescent boys begin masturbating at an earlier age and do so more often (Heaven, 2001; Oliver & Hyde 1993), are motivated by sexual experimentation—which may lead to casual sex (Hiller, 2005), and have higher sex drives (Heaven). It is believed that these elements are associated with a high testosterone level (Hiller, 2005).

### *Gender*

Investigations that explored the association between gender and extradyadic relationships revealed a distinct difference among gender. Social scientists (Weiss, Slosneric, & Sollie, 1986; Weiss & Slosneric, 1981) examined the differences between young men and women's values towards intimate relationships. Their investigation found a positive correlation between the respondent's feelings towards extradyadic kissing and their attitude towards a holistic view of sex, love, and marriage. It was revealed that women were more likely to participate in extradyadic kissing if they had a low value of sex, love, and marriage, but not if their value was high. Contrastingly, men were likely to participate in extradyadic kissing regardless of their value (McAlister, Pachana, & Jackson, 2005). In short, individuals who had a low holistic view of sex, love, and marriage, often had a history of extradyadic relationships, and were also more likely to have a future extradyadic relationship (Weiss & Slosneric, 1981).

The investigators inference that the respondents who disassociated the feelings, symbols and emotions that were present with sex, love, and marriage may not have

perceived participating in an extradyadic kissing as wrong, and could rationalize their behavior as valid. If a couple does not have the same values and attitudes towards infidelity it is possible that one of the partners may behave in such a way that he/she would perceived it as playful and innocent while their partner would perceive it as infidelity—or cheating. This was observed in an investigation where men did not perceive romantically kissing someone other than their primary partner as infidelity (McAlister, Pachana, & Jackson, 2005). The men in this investigation saw no harm and believed that they had not committed infidelity and were not being unfaithful because no form of sexual intercourse took place (McAlister, Pachana, & Jackson, 2005).

#### *Gender and Socialization*

Social scientists have investigated the interaction between gender and socialization, often revealing that men and women are exposed to different societal morals and values (Basson, 2000; Kaschak & Tiefer, 2001; Leiblum, 2002; Peplau, 2003). On one hand, various social role models (actors displayed in the media) influence men to be aggressive (Lalasz & Weigel, 2011), sexually active (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Santelli, Brener, Lowry, Bhatt, & Zabin, 1998), and participate in casual sex (Mosher, Chandra, & Jones, 2004; Mosher et al., 2004; Santelli, Brener, 1998)<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, it is believed that women are influenced to be pure through avoiding casual sex, valuing virginity, (Carpenter, 2005; Tolman, 2002), and behaving passively (Lalasz, & Weigel, 2011). Whisman and Snyder (2007) in their investigation found that women reported preferring not to have many sex partners and would intentionally misreport their number of sex partners. In short, women believed that it was socially undesirable for

<sup>5</sup>Casual sex is expressed as sex that occurs outside of a committed relationship.

them to participate in casual sex and to have had multiple sex partners (Johnson, 1970; McAlister, Pachana, & Jackson, 2005).

Contrastingly, men were both more willing and more likely to participate in casual sex. Men wished they would have had more sex partners (Roese & Summerville, 2005), and were twice as likely to have participated in an extradyadic relationship (Greeley, 1994; Hansen, 1987; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; McAlister, Pachana, & Jackson, 2005; Treas & Giesen, 2000; Waite & Joyner, 2001; Wiederman, 1997; Wiederman & Hurd, 1999). It is believed that women would not likely be interested in casual sex because they are more concerned with romance, loyalty, and intimacy. In short, women were found to be more specific and cautious when selecting intimate partners (Oliver & Hyde, 1993).

#### *Sexual Needs*

Women who reported participating in casual sex expressed doing so in hopes of acquiring immediate resources (Jennions & Petrie, 2000; Smith, 1984; Symons, 1979), security (Shackelford, Goetz, LaMunyon, Quintas, & Weekes-Shackelford, 2004) and strong, smart, providers (Shackelford, Goetz, LaMunyon, Quintas, & Weekes-Shackelford). Their expected outcome was to get their partner to become involved in a long-term relationship (Shackelford, Goetz, LaMunyon, Quintas, & Weekes-Shackelford).

Additionally, women are said to focus on the emotion rewards (Fisher, 1999; Leiblum, 2002; Waynforth, 2000). Investigations by Fisher (1999), Hiller (2004), as well as Kaschak and Tiefer (2001) found that women highly valued sentimental/emotional rewards—such as communication and intimacy—and would be more satisfied with the

quality of their overall relationship if their partner was more romantic, displayed more affection (kissing, holding, and caressing) and worked harder on bonding with them. In contrast, men are believed to value the physical benefits of relationship. Wallen (2000) found that men were likely to be more satisfied with the quality of their overall relationship if their partner participated in sexual activity more frequently.

In a noteworthy investigation, Hughes (2011) found that men would initiate and express displays of affection to get their partner sexually aroused, but were not likely to continue to do so after completing the sexual act. Ironically after the sexual act was when women wanted more affection (kissing and cuddling). Men reported reluctantly participating in those events in hopes that they would lead to future sexual endeavors.

Interpersonal factors can affect one's level of sexual arousal as it is cognitively and emotionally regulated (Hiller, 2004). It is believed that men can quickly become sexually aroused in a simplistic way, while women need to be psychologically and physiologically aroused to desire sex (Basson, 2003). Investigations by Friedman and Downey (2000) as well as Hiller (2004) revealed that women's sexual arousal was moderated by their emotions—as they expressed that their emotions were based upon their perception of sexual intimacy, security, physical contact, and their self-esteem.

Furthermore, an investigation by Treas and Gisen (2000) found that individuals who were more sexually experienced had greater potential for acquiring new partners and participating in extradyadic events. They believed that this was due to their “learned advantage<sup>6</sup>.” The learned advantage was the ability to become involved in an extradyadic

<sup>6</sup>The learned advantage is personal skills and traits that assist individuals in attracting and acquiring potential partners.

relationship due to one's sexual history giving them exposure, knowledge and the skills necessary to acquire a partner.

### Part III *Outcome of Infidelity*

#### *Infidelity and Relationship Dissolution*

Whether individuals have been directly affected or know someone who was affected, most people are aware of the damage that infidelity can have within an intimate relationship (Drigotas, Safstorm, & Gentilia, 1999; Shackelford, LeBlanc, & Drass, 2000; Treas & Giesen, 2000; Wiederman & Hurd, 1999). Infidelity is believed to be catastrophic and is often cited as the number one reason for the dissolution and subsequent divorce where intimate relationships were involved (Amato & Previti, 2003; Amato & Rogers, 1997; Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels 1994; South & Lloyd 1995; Whisman, Chatav, & Gordon, 2007).

It is believed that sexual fidelity is built upon the exclusivity of trust, respect, and intimacy. When a partner has committed an act of infidelity he/she has violated the sexual fidelity (Glass, 2002; Previti & Amato, 2004). The companion of the partners who were in an extradyadic relationship reported feeling a mixture of negative emotions—such as shame, anger, and resentment (Allen et al., 2005; Allen & Baucom, 2006; Cano & O'Leary, 2000; Knox, Zusman, Kalluzny, & Sturdivant, 2000; Previti & Amato, 2004; Whisman, & Snyder, 2007).

In some occasions, individuals who participate in extradyadic relationships may desire for it to take the place of their primary relationship. Some may become attached to their new partner and withdraw from their primary relationship to fulfill their sexual and emotional needs, (Previti & Amato, 2004). Drigotas et al. (1999) defined and explored

the quality of alternatives as the outcome(s) one would expect to acquire through participating in an extradyadic relationship. Their investigation as well as others (McAlister, Pachana, & Jackson, 2005; Roscoe et al., 1988) revealed a significant positive correlation between the quality of relationship alternatives and extradyadic events. They also found that the quality of alternatives reported to have the greatest influence on a partner participating in an extradyadic relationship.

Related investigations found that men and women responded much differently to infidelity. Distinctively, men were more offended by the physical infidelity while women were more distressed by the emotional infidelity (Becker, Sagarin, Guadagno, Millevoi, & Nicastle, 2004; Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992; Buss, et al., 1999; Easton, Schipper, & Shackelford, 2007; Fisher, 1999; Murphy, Vallacher, Shackelford, Bjorklund, & Yunger, 2006; Miller & Manner, 2008; Pietrzak, Laird, Stevens, & Thompson, 2002; Sagarin, Becker, Guadagno, Nicastle, & Millevoi, 2003).

Contrary to men, women have consistently reported being more aware of the ramifications of their actions if they were to commit infidelity (Rubin, Peplau, & Hill, 1981). Women who have committed acts of infidelity were more likely to express remorse for being unfaithful to their partner. Higgins (2008) believes that women do not engage in extradyadic affairs as frequently as men. In his investigation he found that women generally report greater awareness that having extradyadic affairs could lead to an end in their relationship with their primary partner. The prospect of being unfaithful to their primary partner coalesced with the fear of becoming pregnant accounted for why women often remained reluctant to participate in casual sex and extradyadaic sexual intercourse (McAlister, Pachana, & Jackson, 2005).

Furthermore, men and women have different views towards infidelity (Weiss et al., 1986; Weiss & Slosneric, 1981). Young adults reported that there was a continuum of sexual expression with regards to intimacy such as flirting, being the least offensive and sexual intercourse being the worst (McAlister, Pachana, & Jackson, 2005; Roscoe et al., 1988) and the specific way their partner expressed themselves in an extradyadic relationship moderated the outcome of the relationship. This was also seen in an investigation by Maheu (2001) who found that some individuals did not believe that an extradyadic online cyber-relationship was as offensive as a “traditional<sup>7</sup>” extradyadic relationship. Extradyadic online cyber-relationships are perceived of as unfaithful mainly to women. For some men and women these cyber connections were viewed as a defiance of the values of an exclusive intimate relationship because they exhibited a similarity to “traditional relationships” (Parker & Wampler, 2003). Though some acts of online cyber relationships may not involve sexual contact, they do comprise dating, intimacy, emotional involvement, spending quality time, and sexual expression (Roscoe et al., 1988) a trait valued in defining a traditional-in person relationship.

<sup>7</sup>Traditional is used to express relationships where partners are physically tangible.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

The foundation of this thesis centers on understanding issues that can contribute to how relationships dissolve, in particular the issues of infidelity and the risk factors it imposes on young adults in committed relationships. As discussed in Chapter Two, relationships that experience infidelity are more likely to experience extreme turmoil leading to its ultimately dissolution (Amato & Previti, 2003; Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). Exploring and investigating these elements would significantly add to the knowledge base of the social sciences particularly as it relates to young adults who are not yet married.

In terms of young adults, and all adults for that matter, infidelity is listed as one of the top reasons for relationship dissolution (Amato & Previti, 2003; Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). After completing the literature review I found that men reported committing infidelity more often than women (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Greeley, 1994; Hansen, 1987; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; McAlister, Pachana, & Jackson, 2005; Wiederman, 1997; Wiederman & Hurd, 1999), and that among both men and women who reported engaging in infidelity the low level of sex in their primary relationship as well as the poor quality of the sex were significant contributors to infidelity (Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Prins, Buunk, & Van Yperen, 1993; Thompson, 1983; Treas & Giesen, 2000; Waite & Joyner, 2001). This thesis will focus on outlining some of the risk factors among young adults and attempt to highlight some potential problem areas.

## Research Questions

A search of the literature review left many issues unresolved, especially as they are related to younger adults. To address these short-comings I have proposed to address the following questions. They are:

1. What are the risk factors associated with young adult couples who experience infidelity?
2. What are the relationships between passion, intimacy, and commitment and their influence on infidelity among young adult couples?
3. What role does gender, and relationship length and type, play in the propensity to commit acts of infidelity for young adults involved in *intimate and romantic relationships*?

## Research Hypotheses

Several hypotheses were developed to measure and analyze the research questions in this thesis. The hypotheses have been based in part on the research literature, theoretical frameworks, and methods used in this study. They are as follows:

- Hypothesis 1: Young adults in committed relationships who reported poor relationship status and lower sexual frequency are more likely to commit infidelity.
- Hypothesis 1a: Young adult men in committed relationships are more likely to commit infidelity when poor quality sexual relationships were reported.
- Hypothesis 1b: Young adult women are more likely to commit infidelity when poor communication channels were reported.

- Hypothesis 2: Young adults in committed relationships who reported high levels of intimacy, passion, and commitment are more likely to experience greater relationship quality and are less likely to commit infidelity.

#### Data Source

Data for this study was collected from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The data is from a national study of adolescent sexuality funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). It also covers issues of adolescent health risk behaviors as well as providing contextual data of the respondent's environment. This study contains responses from a national sample of adolescents who at the time of the initial interview were in grades school (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>). Approximately 80 high schools from a stratified list consisting of over 26,000 schools were selected. Data were collected in a controlled manner as to maintain the respondent's confidentiality and to control for voluntary participation. Wave I (initial interviews) and Wave IV (the current interviews) were used in this study. For Wave I, in-home interviews were conducted in 1995 and collected data from more than 17,000 adolescents. The respondents were tracked and over four time periods culminating in the 2008 to produce Wave IV. The results from Wave IV show the developmental and health changes that occurred from adolescence to young adulthood. The actual data used in this study was from the public use data a subsample consisting of approximately 6,500 cases. These data were further refined and screened to select an appropriate sample that met the study's criteria of being involved in a current committed relationship. The final number of cases was slightly more than 900 cases (n = 939).

## Operationalization of Research Variables

Before the research questions and hypotheses are measured, it is necessary to operationally define the components as they will be explored and evaluated in this thesis. The proceeding definitions provide a context as to how the variables are being labeled, defined, and measured. These variables correspond to the theoretical model (see Figure 3.1) designed to help explain the factors that contribute to infidelity.

### *Outcome Measure*

Infidelity is the outcome measure that will be used in this study. It will be assessed by investigating and examining young adults in intimate relationships who reporting having an event where they experienced an extradyadic affair. This will be measure by the variable *Infidelity*.

*Infidelity*—was measured by the question, During the time you and {initials}(have had/had) a sexual relationship (have/did) you ever (had/have) any other sexual partners? The responses for this question were dichotomous (0) no and (1) yes.

### *Predictor Measures*

The variables that have been hypothesized to influence a partner to engage in infidelity or participate in an extra dyadic relationship are examined in this section. The variables will be identified within the context as they are related to the theoretical frameworks that are used in this thesis. The predictor measures that assess the likelihood of infidelity are grouped into six categories: (1) demographic; (2) relationship development; (3) relationship strengths; (4) relationship dynamics; (5) sexual compatibility; and (6) relationship problem behaviors.

### *Demographic Predictors*

The demographic predictors will be measured to analyze their association with relationship development, relationship strengths, relationship dynamics, sexual compatibility, and unique behaviors.

*Sex*—respondent's identification as (1) male or (2) female.

*Race Ethnicity*—is grouping of respondents by their racial and ethnic background. These values were recorded as (1) White/European American; (2) Black/African American; (3) Asian American; (4) Hispanic American; (5) American Indian; and (6) Other Americans.

*Age*—was established through creating a taking the respondents age from Wave I of the Add Health and calculating an approximate age based on time between first and final interview. The values ranged from 24-34 years.

*Relationship Type*—was conducted by asking the respondents Which of the following best describes your relationship with {initials} at the (present time/time you broke up)? The values were recorded as (1) Engaged; (2) Dating Exclusively; (3) Dating Frequently, but not Exclusively; (4) Dating Once in a While; and (6) Only Having Sex.

*Education*—was found by asking the respondents to report the highest level of schooling/grade that they completed. These values were recorded as (1) Less Than High School; (2) High School Graduate; (3) Some College; (4) Bachelor's Degree or Higher.

*Income*— ranged from (1) less than \$5,000 – (12) \$150,000 or more.

*Religion*—a set of beliefs and values shared with other members. This was found by asking the respondents what is your current religion and measured as (1) Non/atheist/agnostic; (2) Protestant (Such as Assembly of God, Baptist, etc.); (3) Catholic; (4) Other Christian; (5) Jewish; (6) Buddhist; (7) Hindu; (8) Muslim; and (9) Other.

*Assets*—ranged from (1) less than \$5,000 - (9) \$1,000,000 or more.

*Earnings*— actual dollar amounts reported by the respondents.

### *Relationship Development*

These independent measures analyze the magnitude of the risk factors. The risk factors are supported by scholarly literature and the theoretical frameworks that are provided in this thesis.

*Anniversary*—this variable was created as a proxy and measures the actual number of years a couple has been together.

*Communication*—these values were recorded as (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (4) Disagree, and (5) Strongly Disagree.

*QualityTime*—these values were recorded as (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (4) Disagree, and (5) Strongly Disagree.

*Happy*—In general, how happy are you in your relationship with {initials}? These values ranged from (1) very happy to (3) not to happy.

### *Relationship Strengths*

These elements are used to solidify the relationship in terms of partners being able unifying themselves. They are also used to provide support of qualities that are necessary to have a “healthy” relationship. There are many aspects involved in relationship strengths, they are:

*Trust*—was established by asking the respondent How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your relationship with {initials}? I (trust/trusted) my partner to be faithful to me. These values were recorded as (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (4) Disagree, and (5) Strongly Disagree.

*Security*—was conducted by asking the respondent how likely is it that your relationship with {initials} will be permanent? These values ranged from (1) almost certain to (5) almost no chance.

*Love*—was established by asking the respondents how much do you love {initials}? These values ranged from (1) a lot to (4) not at all.

*Soulmate*— was established by asking the respondents what is the chance that you and {initials} will get married? These values ranged from (1) almost certain to (5) almost no chance.

#### *Relationship Dynamics*

*Passion*— was established by asking the respondents my partner expresses/expressed love and affection to me. These values ranged from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree.

*Intimacy*—this is represented by respondents picking one of seven diagrams that reflects the closeness of their primary relationship.

*Commitment*— was established by asking the respondents how committed are you to your relationship with {initials}? These answers varied from (1) completely committed to (4) not at all committed?

#### *Sexual Compatibility*

*Sexual Frequency*— was established by asking the respondents on average, how often (did/do) you have sexual relations with {initials}? By ‘sexual relations’ we mean vaginal intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, or other types of sexual activity. These values ranged from (1) week(ly) to (3) year(ly).

*Sexual satisfaction*—I am/was satisfied with our sex life. These values ranged from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree.

#### *Relationship Problems*

*Conflict*—was established by asking the respondents. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your relationship with {initials}? I (am/was) satisfied with the way we handle our problems and disagreements. These values were recorded as (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (4) Disagree, and (5) Strongly Disagree.

*Impulsive*—was established by asking the respondents how much do you agree with each statement about you as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future? When making a decision, I go with my gut feeling and don't think much about the consequences of each alternative. These values were recorded as (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (4) Disagree, and (5) Strongly Disagree.

*Thriller*—was established by asking the respondents how much do you agree with each statement about you as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future? I like to take risks. These values were recorded as (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (4) Disagree, and (5) Strongly Disagree.

## Analysis Plan

### *Univariate Analysis*

To assess the variables that will be used in this study, first I will conduct a univariate analyses. This analysis will examine the variables and provide detailed descriptive statistics. Where appropriate measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode), and the measures of dispersion (variance, standard deviation, range, and interquartile range (IQR) will also be discussed. I will also observe the level of skewness and kurtosis to make sure that the variables are normally distributed which will indicate whether or not the variables are reliable and valid measures.

### *Bivariate Analysis*

After I have concluded the univariate analysis, I will conduct the bivariate analyses. These analyses will allow me to analyze two variables at once to uncover relationships, correlations, and possible causality between and among the variables.

### *Multivariate Measures*

Finally I will conduct a multivariate analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to measure the influences of multiple variables on the response of another. In this thesis multivariate analysis will be conducted to measure how relationship and risk factors influence infidelity through examining the *Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model*.

## Chapter Four

### Analysis and Results

This chapter explores the results, validates the research questions, hypotheses, theoretical constructs and the final model developed for the current investigation focused on relationship and risk factors involved in infidelity. The data for this investigation were gleaned from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (*Add Health*) which consisted of approximately 12,000 adolescents ( $n = 12,105$ ) between 10 and 18 years of age during the first wave. Data were gathered over four distinct collection periods. The data used here are from the in home interviews.

The public use dataset for Wave IV contained almost 5,100 ( $n = 5,114$ ) respondents from the follow-up sample down from the original 6,504 in the public use file for Wave I. Only those respondents who met the screening criteria and those involved in an *intimate and romantic relationship* measured by the criterion variable *Lovers*, were included in the final sample selection. The net result of this screening procedure yielded a sample size of slightly more than 900 people ( $n = 939$ ).

#### *Analytical Procedure*

The general procedure for the data analysis in this thesis will be to examine the variables in terms of their relative position to the *Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model* or in short, *the RRIM*. To that extent, the variables are arranged into clusters that correspond to the model's elements<sup>8</sup>. Because the study hypotheses suggest gender differences the subsequent analyses will proceed along those lines.

<sup>8</sup>Desirable model components include *Demographics, Relationship Development, Relationship Strength, Relationship Dynamics, Sexual Compatibility* and *Relationship Problems*

### *Basic Demographics*

Slightly more than one half (53.7%) of the sample respondents were males ( $n = 504$ ), while females accounted for the remaining 46.3% ( $n = 435$ ). Race and ethnicity of the respondents revealed that one-half 50.7% ( $n = 474$ ) are White/European American, and one-third 33.3% ( $n = 311$ ) African American (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1  
*Demographic Predictor Variables of the Sample of Respondents within the Relationship and Risk Factors influencing Infidelity Model (n=939)*

Variable	Coding Scheme	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>
Sex	Male	504	53.7
	Female	435	46.3
Race Ethnicity	White/European American	474	50.7
	Black/African American	311	33.3
	Asian American	27	2.9
	Hispanic American	98	10.5
	American Indian	8	0.9
	Other Americans	16	1.7
Relationship Type	Engaged	74	9.1
	Dating Exclusively	451	55.5
	Dating Frequently, but not Exclusively	122	15.0
	Dating Once in a While	70	8.6
	Only Having Sex	96	11.8
Education	Less Than High School	75	8.0
	High School Graduate	135	14.4
	Some college	389	41.4
	≤ Bachelor's Degree	340	36.2
Religion	Non/atheist/agnostic	209	22.3
	Protestant	271	29.0
	Catholic	155	16.6
	Other Christian	222	23.7
	Jewish	7	0.7
	Buddhist	6	0.6
	Muslim	3	0.3
	Other	63	6.7

The remainder of the sample consisted of Asian American, 2.9% ( $n = 27$ ), Hispanic American, 10.5% ( $n = 98$ ), American Indian, 0.9% ( $n = 8$ ), and Other

American where the racial and ethnic designation was either more than one or was omitted accounted for 1.7% ( $n = 16$ ).

The mean age of the respondents was approximately 29 years ( $M = 28.64$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ,  $Mdn = 28.61$ ). In terms of relationship types 9.1% are engaged, 55.5% are dating exclusively, while another 15.0% are dating frequently but not exclusively. Approximately 8.6% are dating infrequently and 11.8% are having sex exclusively without dating at all. The respondent's level of education revealed that 8.0% had less than a high school education, while an overwhelming three quarter (77.4%) had some college experience or had earned at least a baccalaureate degree. The data split between those who had some sort of faith system, measured here by religion, revealed that more than three-fourths (77.0%) were members. About one-fifth (22.3%) reported no faith system or belief in a deity.

#### *Relationship Development Descriptors*

Relationship Development factors indicated that communication was important. Those who strongly agree (46.4%) and agree (34.7%) comprised an overwhelming majority. It is clear that respondents believed that communication skills are essential (see Table 4.2). Another component involved relationship development addressed being in the presence of one's primary partner and doing ordinary tasks together. Again most responses answered in the affirmative. In contrast only 8.2% said they disagree or strongly disagree with the need to have quality time. The final variable measured how happy the respondents were with their relationship. Approximately one-half (50.8%) reported that they were very happy, 39.0% reported that they were fairly happy, and the

remaining 10.3% of the respondents reported that they were not too happy with their primary relationship.

Table 4.2  
*Relationship Development Predictor Variables of the Sample of Respondents within the Relationship and Risk Factors influencing Infidelity Model (n=939)*

Variable	Coding Scheme	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>
Communication	Strongly Agree	428	46.4
	Agree	320	34.7
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	109	11.8
	Disagree	35	3.8
	Strongly Disagree	31	3.4
QualityTime <sup>a</sup>	Strongly Agree	445	48.1
	Agree	288	31.1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	117	12.6
	Disagree	38	4.1
	Strongly Disagree	38	4.1
Happy	Very Happy	465	50.8
	Fairly Happy	357	39.0
	Not too Happy	94	10.3

<sup>a</sup>*Quality Time* measured how comfortable and how much the respondents enjoyed being in the presence of their primary partner and doing ordinary tasks together.

The third model element was *Relationship Strength*. The results reveal that respondents strongly agree (43.7%) trust in their partners was essential. An interesting contrast was that 19.8% or almost 20.0% report that they neither agree nor disagree with the statements about trust (see Table 4.3).

Related to this is almost an even distribution of answers on the security variable. Only 26.0% believed that they were almost certain that their relationship would be permanent while nearly one-third (31.3%) said there was no chance that their relationship would be permanent. This measure when contrasted with the *soulmate* indicator showed similar patterns. The order was reversed. In this case 37.5% felt there was little to no chance that they would marry their partner. Despite the belief that there is a low

likelihood of getting married to one's partner a full 38.4% report that there is a good to *almost certain* chance that they will get married.

Table 4.3  
*Relationship Strength Predictor Variables of the Sample of Respondents within the Relationship and Risk Factors influencing Infidelity Model (n=939)*

Variable	Coding Scheme	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>
Trust	Strongly Agree	403	43.7
	Agree	230	24.9
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	183	19.8
	Disagree	60	6.5
	Strongly Disagree	46	5.0
Security <sup>a</sup>	Almost Certain	239	26.0
	A Good Chance	202	22.0
	A 50-50 Chance	191	20.8
	Some Chance, but probably not	152	16.5
	Almost no Chance	136	14.8
Love	A lot	518	56.4
	Somewhat	162	17.6
	A little	127	13.8
	Not at All	112	12.2
Soulmate <sup>b</sup>	No Chance	166	19.7
	Little Chance	150	17.8
	50-50 Chance	202	24.0
	A Pretty Good Chance	163	19.4
	An Almost Certain Chance	160	19.0

<sup>a</sup>*Security* measured the respondents the belief that the intimate relationship that he/she and his/her primary partner were involved in would be permanent. <sup>b</sup>*Soulmate* measured the respondents' belief that he/she and his/her primary partner would get married.

When the respondents were asked how much they loved their partner slightly more than one-half (56.4%) reported that they loved their partner a lot. Of the remaining respondents approximately 18.0% (17.6%) reported that they somewhat loved their partner, approximately 14.0% (13.8%) reported that they loved their partner a little surprisingly more than 12.0% (12.2%) reported that they did not love their partner at all.

The next model element was *Relationship Dynamics* (see Table 4.4). The results show that slightly more than three-fourths of the respondents reported that they felt that their partner expressed love and affection toward them (measured by *passion*). The

remaining respondents reported that they were indifferent or disagreed to strongly disagree in respect to how they viewed passion within their relationship.

Table 4.4  
*Relationship Dynamics Predictor Variables of the Sample of Respondents within the Relationship and Risk Factors influencing Infidelity Model (n=939)*

Variable	Coding Scheme	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>
Passion	Strongly Agree	452	49.0
	Agree	286	31.0
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	116	12.6
	Disagree	43	4.7
	Strongly Disagree	26	2.8
Commitment	Completely Committed	362	39.4
	Very Committed	208	22.7
	Somewhat Committed	199	21.7
	Not at all Committed	149	16.2

The respondents who reported that they were completely committed represented approximately 39.0% (39.4%, *n* = 362) of the sample while slightly less than one-fourth (22.7%) of the respondents reported that they were very committed to their relationship.

The final two predictors were *sexual compatibility* and *relationship problems* were the risk factors within the *Relationship and Risk Factors influencing Infidelity Model*.

Nearly 46.0% of the respondents reported that they strongly agree that they were sexually satisfied and slightly less than one-third (32.4%) reported that they agree that they were sexually satisfied. About 4.0% (3.6%) who reported they were sexually dissatisfied.

The results for *relationship problems* (see Table 4.5) revealed that more than two-thirds (70.4%) of the respondents agreed that differences within their relationship (measured by *conflict*) are resolved appropriately. Approximately 14.0% (13.7%) of the

respondents reported that they disagree, and 15.9% neither agree nor disagree that differences within their relationship resolved appropriately.

Table 4.5  
*Sexual Compatibility and Relationship Risk and Outcome Measures Reported Among Respondents for the Relationship and Risk Factors influencing Infidelity Model (n=939)*

Variable	Coding Scheme	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>
Conflict	Strongly Agree	313	33.9
	Agree	337	36.5
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	147	15.9
	Disagree	89	9.6
	Strongly Disagree	38	4.1
Impulsive <sup>a</sup>	Strongly Agree	44	4.7
	Agree	190	20.3
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	177	18.9
	Disagree	419	44.7
	Strongly Disagree	108	11.5
Thriller <sup>b</sup>	Strongly Agree	66	7.0
	Agree	339	36.1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	266	28.4
	Disagree	229	24.4
	Strongly Disagree	38	4.1
SexSat	Strongly Agree	422	46.0
	Agree	297	32.4
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	118	12.9
	Disagree	47	5.1
	Strongly Disagree	33	3.6
Infidelity	No	615	67.4
	Yes	297	32.6

<sup>a</sup>*Impulsive* measured the likelihood of the respondent to rely on his/her gut feelings to make decisions without considering the consequences. <sup>b</sup>*Thriller* measured how the respondent felt about needing to experience new events that were dangerous and posed risks that could cause physically injury and possibly death.

When the respondents were asked about making impulsive decisions within their relationship one-fourth (25.0%) said they strongly agree or agree that they make decisions based upon their gut feelings. Nearly 19.0% (18.9%) reported that they did not agree that they neither agree nor disagree that they made decisions based upon their gut feelings.

Finally, the respondents who reported that were adventurous, daring and thrill seekers (measured by *thriller*) revealed that approximately 40.0% (43.1%,  $n = 405$ ) of the sample reported that they agreed that they were indeed adventurous, daring and thrill seekers. Less than one-third (28.5%) of the sample reported that they disagree, another 28.4% neither agree nor disagree that they were adventurous, daring and thrill seekers. In terms of the outcome variable, infidelity it was dichotomous. Approximately one-third (32.6%) of the respondents reported that they had committed infidelity and approximately two-thirds (67.4%) of the respondents reported that they had not committed infidelity.

The variables that were measured at the interval/ratio level were analyzed using measures of central tendency and dispersion (see Table 6).

Table 4.6  
*Measures of Dispersion and Central Tendency for elements of the Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model (n=939)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>n</i>
Age <sup>a</sup>	28.64	1.79	28.61	939
Anniversary <sup>b</sup>	1.85	2.85	1.00	905
Assets	3.55	2.03	3.00	825
Earnings	\$37,129.02	\$49,502.49	\$30,000.00	888
Income	7.50	2.87	8.00	847
Intimacy	4.48	2.02	5.00	928
Lovers <sup>c</sup>	1.19	0.71	1.00	939
SexFreq	3.61	2.51	3.00	890

<sup>a</sup>Age was calculated by taking the respondent's age using the YRMODA function of SPSS and basing the age on the interview date at Wave IV. This age variable approximated about a ten (10) year period for some respondents. <sup>b</sup>Anniversary measured how long the respondent was involved in an intimate relationship with their primary partner. <sup>c</sup>Lover measured how many partners the respondent had during their adult lives.

The results for *sexual compatibility* (see Table 4.5) revealed that respondents were having sexual intercourse with their primary partner three to four times per week ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 2.51$ ). Additional information suggest that intimacy is an important element in relationships ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 2.02$ ) The average length of most relationships was

about two years ( $M = 1.85$ ,  $SD = 2.85$ ) with a median length of relationship of about one year ( $Mdn = 1.00$ )

### Bivariate Analysis

This section of the results includes the bivariate analyses that were conducted. This task was performed to examine the associations of the variables with one another. Because of the gender focus in this thesis simple mean difference tests were conducted. The results of the t-test are discussed in the section that follows.

#### *Means Testing of Gender Influences*

The emphasis of gender differences espoused by this thesis mandates that differences between men and women be examined (see Table 4.7). In terms of the basic demographic variables there were differences reported for education ( $t = 4.186$ ,  $df = 939$ ,  $p < .001$ ) where women ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ) reported significantly higher rates of education than men ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ). However, male respondents had higher mean income ( $M = 7.94$ ,  $SD = 2.80$ ) than women ( $M = 6.99$ ,  $SD = 2.87$ ). The income differences were significant ( $t = 4.846$ ,  $df = 910$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similar findings were reported for assets, where female respondents ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 1.89$ ) had less overall assets than males ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 2.05$ ). These differences were significant ( $t = 6.841$ ,  $df = 823$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The elements for relationship development indicated by the anniversary measure revealed that men reported an average length of relationship ( $M = 1.67$ ,  $SD = 2.59$ ) that was different from the length reported for women ( $M = 2.06$ ,  $SD = 3.11$ ).

Table 4.7  
 Reported Mean Difference Scores for Selected Variables used in the Relationship and Risk  
 Infidelity Model

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
<i>Demographics</i>						
Age	Male	504	28.73	1.78	1.827	937
	Female	435	28.52	1.79		
Education	Male	504	2.94	0.93	4.186***	937
	Female	435	3.19	0.86		
Income	Male	456	7.94	2.80	4.846***	910
	Female	391	6.99	2.87		
Assets	Male	436	3.99	2.05	6.841***	823
	Female	389	3.05	1.89		
Earnings	Male	476	\$39,674.97	\$46,523.19	1.649	886
	Female	412	\$34,187.59	\$52,639.51		
<i>Relationship Development</i>						
Anniversary	Male	481	1.67	2.59	-2.066*	903
	Female	424	2.06	3.11		
Communication	Male	495	1.79	0.96	-1.206	921
	Female	424	1.87	1.05		
Quality Time	Male	496	1.88	1.05	0.991	924
	Female	426	1.81	1.07		
Happy	Male	496	1.57	0.65	-1.083	914
	Female	422	1.62	0.70		
<i>Relationship Strength</i>						
Trust	Male	495	2.00	1.08	-1.276	920
	Female	427	2.09	1.25		
Security	Male	494	2.83	1.40	2.641**	918
	Female	426	2.59	1.38		
Love	Male	493	1.90	1.10	2.503*	918
	Female	426	1.72	1.04		
Soulmate	Male	459	1.91	1.40	-2.028*	839
	Female	382	2.11	1.37		
<i>Relationship Dynamics</i>						
Passion	Male	496	1.76	0.93	-1.803	921
	Female	427	1.88	1.09		
Intimacy	Male	494	4.37	2.06	-1.762	918
	Female	426	4.60	1.96		
Commitment	Male	494	2.24	1.13	2.886**	916
	Female	424	2.03	1.09		
<i>Sexual Compatability</i>						
Sex Frequency	Male	475	3.72	2.54	1.457	889
	Female	416	3.48	2.49		
Sex Satisfaction	Male	493	1.89	1.03	0.484	915
	Female	424	1.86	1.07		

Table 4.7 (Continued)  
 Reported Mean Difference Scores for Selected Variables used in the Relationship and Risk Infidelity Model

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
<i>Relationship Risks</i>						
Conflict	Male	495	2.07	1.07	-1.991*	922
	Female	429	2.21	1.15		
Impulsive	Male	503	3.36	1.07	-0.697	936
	Female	435	3.41	1.08		
Thriller	Male	503	2.00	1.08	-6.702***	936
	Female	435	2.09	1.25		

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

The difference was significant at the  $p < .05$  level ( $t = -2.066$ ,  $df = 903$ ). The relationship strength measure of security ( $t = 2.641$ ,  $df = 918$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and love ( $t = 2.503$ ,  $df = 918$ ,  $p < .05$ ) were both significant. In all cases, men reported higher mean scores than women. The *soulmate* variable, one that examined the probability of whether or not one believes that there is a chance of a long-term permanent relationship revealed significantly higher scores ( $t = 4.186$ ,  $df = 939$ ,  $p < .001$ ) for women ( $M=2.11$ ,  $SD=1.37$ ) than for men ( $M=1.91$ ,  $SD=1.40$ ).

Relationship Dynamics and Relationship Risk Factors also revealed some important differences. In terms of commitment, men ( $M=2.24$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ) had scores slightly higher than women ( $M=2.03$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ). These scores suggest that women are significantly more commitment focused than men ( $t = 2.886$ ,  $df = 916$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This fundamental difference was consistent with the findings of the *soulmate* measure. Substantial differences were reported for the way men viewed conflict ( $M=2.07$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ) and incorporate thrill seeking ( $M=2.00$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ) more than women. The overall mean differences for *conflict* ( $t = -1.991$ ,  $df = 922$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and *thriller* ( $t = -6.702$ ,  $df = 936$ ,  $p < .001$ ) are consistent with the general focus that was expected in this investigation.

### Correlation Analysis

To complete this bivariate analysis task several (zero order) correlations matrices were constructed. This section follows the same order as the descriptive statistics section; however, the correlations for demographics variables were not conducted. First, I have listed the *Relationship Development* predictor group, followed by *Relationship Strength and Relationship Dynamics*, and I concluded with the *Sexual Compatibility*, and, *Relationship Problems* group. The results for the *Relationship Development* predictor group revealed that all of the variables—*Anniversary*, *Communication*, *QualityTime* and *Happy*—were statically significant with each other at  $p < .01$  for all of the correlations within this predictor group (see Table 4.8). Furthermore, all of these variables had positive correlations.

Table 4.8  
*Bivariate Correlation Coefficients for the Relationship Development Component of the Relationship factor and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model*

Relationship Development					
Variable	<i>Anniversary</i>	<i>Communication</i>	<i>QualityTime</i>	<i>Happy</i>	<i>Infidelity</i>
<i>Anniversary</i>	---				
<i>Communication</i>	.220**	---			
<i>QualityTime</i>	.147**	.622**	---		
<i>Happy</i>	.149**	.540**	.569**	---	
<i>Infidelity</i>	.187**	.212**	.217**	.247**	---

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

The next predictor group that I measured was *Relationship Strength*. The results for this this group also revealed that each of the variables—*Trust*, *Security*, *Love*, and *Soulmate*—were also statistically significant with each other at  $p < .01$  for all of the correlations within this predictor group (see Table 4.9). The variables *Security* and

*Soulmate* ( $r = -.790, p < .01$ ), and *Love* and *Soulmate* ( $r = -.664, p < .01$ ) had negative relationships while all of the other correlations among the variables were positive.

Table 4.9

*Bivariate Correlation Coefficients for the Relationship Strengths Component of the Relationship factor and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model*

Variable	Relationship Strength				
	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Security</i>	<i>Love</i>	<i>Soulmate</i>	<i>Infidelity</i>
Trust	---				
Security	.629**	---			
Love	.480**	.671**	---		
Soulmate	.581**	-.790**	-.664**	---	
Infidelity	.253**	.252**	.142**	-.273**	---

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

The third predictor group that was measured was *Relationship Dynamics*. The results for this group revealed that each of the variables—*Passion*, *Intimacy*, and *Commitment*—were statistically significant with each other at  $p < .01$  for all of the correlations within this predictor group (see Table 4.10). The variables *Intimacy* and *Passion* ( $r = -.527, p < .01$ ), *Commitment* and *Intimacy* ( $r = -.736, p < .01$ ) and *Infidelity* and *Intimacy* ( $r = -.736, p < .01$ ) all had a negative relationship while all of the other correlations among the variables were positive.

Table 4.10

*Correlation Coefficients for the Relationship Dynamics Component of the Relationship factor and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model*

Variable	Relationship Dynamics			
	<i>Passion</i>	<i>Intimacy</i>	<i>Commitment</i>	<i>Infidelity</i>
Passion	---			
Intimacy	-.527**	---		
Commitment	.535**	-.736**	---	
Infidelity	.183**	-.249**	.389**	--

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

The final two predictor groups' which were *Sexual compatibility* and *Relationship Problem behaviors* were the risk factors within the *Relationship and Risk Factors* influencing *Infidelity Model* ( $n=939$ ). The results for sexual compatibility revealed that both of the variables *Sexfreq* and *Sexsat*, were statistically significant with each other at  $p < .01$  (see Table 4.10). The variables *Sexfreq* and *Sexsat* ( $r = -.219, p < .01$ ), had a negative relationship while remaining correlations among the variables were positive.

*Table 4.11*  
*Bivariate Correlation Coefficients for the Sexual Compatibility Component of the Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model*

Sexual Compatibility			
Variable	<i>SexFreq</i>	<i>SexSat</i>	<i>Infidelity</i>
SexFreq	---		
SexSat	-.219**	---	
Infidelity	.078**	.141**	---

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

And finally, the results for *relationship problems behaviors* revealed that the relationship between the variables *Infidelity* and *Conflict* ( $r = .203, p < .01$ ), and *Thriller* and *Impulsive* ( $r = .338, p < .01$ ), were statistically significant (see Table 4.12).

Additionally, the correlation between the variables *Infidelity* and *Thriller* ( $r = .065, p < .05$ ), was statistically significant and negative.

*Table 4.12*  
*Bivariate Correlation Coefficients for the Relationship Problems Component of the Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model*

Variable	<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Impulsive</i>	<i>Thriller</i>	<i>Infidelity</i>
Conflict	---			
Impulsive	.042	---		
Thriller	-.063	.338**	---	
Infidelity	.203**	-.043	-.065*	---

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \* $p < 0.05$ .

Table 4.13

Zero Order Correlation Matrix for the Relationship and Risk Factors influencing Infidelity Model

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1																	
2	.220**																
3	.147**	.622**															
4	.149**	.540**	.569**														
5	.139**	.574**	.593**	.603**													
6	-.043	.480**	.592**	.631**	.629**												
7	-.195**	.374**	.528**	.494**	.480**	.671**											
8	.150**	-.385**	-.503**	-.574**	-.581**	-.790**	-.644**										
9	.178**	.686**	.627**	.563**	.648**	.534**	.438**	-.488**									
10	.021	-.468**	-.586**	-.609**	-.567**	-.715**	-.669**	.685	-.527								
11	.043	.474**	.622**	.664**	.643**	.775**	.712**	-.701**	.535**	-.736**							
12	.037	-.444	-.184**	-.103**	-.109**	-.114**	-.152**	-.055	-.173**	.154**	-.139**						
13	.215**	.434**	.369**	.454**	.404**	.344**	.262**	-.247**	.493**	-.389**	.380**	-.219					
14	.210**	.594**	.548**	.571**	.496**	.450**	-.270**	-.360**	.549**	-.409**	.418**	-.113**	.412**				
15	-.114**	-.055	-.097**	-.030	-.065**	-.053	.002	.067	-.044**	.012	.034**	-.065	.031	-.042			
16	.078*	-.008	.005	-.009	.002	-.086	-.105**	.112**	-.024	.067*	-.090**	-.055	-.012	.063	.338**		
17	.187**	.212**	.217**	.247**	.253**	.252**	.142**	-.273**	.183**	-.249**	.389**	.078*	.141**	.203**	-.043	-.065*	

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$  . \* $p < 0.05$ .

1 = anniversary, 2 = communication, 3 = qualitytime, 4 = happy, 5 = trust, 6 = security, 7 = love, 8 = soulmate 9 = passion, 10 = intimacy, 11 = commitment 12 = sexfreq, 13 = sexsat, 14 = conflict, 15 = impulsive, 16 = thriller, 17 = infidelity

## Multivariate Analysis

### *Hypothesis Testing*

This section focuses on the specifics of measuring and testing the research hypothesis for this investigation. In order to accomplish this purpose additional methods were required, in this case both ANalysis Of VAriance (ANOVA) and Hierarchical Logistic Regression were used. The hypotheses used in this investigation are examined and then discussed in terms of the particular method of analysis that would be appropriate for garnering an answer. The main research hypothesis will be address with the logistic regression analysis why the sub-hypothesis can be addressed by the ANOVA analysis.

The first sub-hypothesis examines the role gender and sexual relationship quality play in infidelity among young adult couples. It is stated as follows:

H<sub>1a</sub> Young adult men in committed relationships are more likely to commit infidelity when poor quality sexual relationships were reported.

The ANOVA test concluded that there were significant main effects for sexual relationship quality ( $F_{(4,897)} = 7.022, p < .001$ ) but none for gender or for the interaction between gender and sexual satisfaction. Tukey *post-hoc* testing revealed that there were significant differences between those who were dissatisfied with their sexual relationships and their propensity to engage in infidelity. These results suggest strong support for the hypothesis on one level, but not in terms of gender as was specified in the hypothesis. In other words, there is a relationship between sexual satisfaction and infidelity but gender differences were not shown to be significant. Therefore, I must reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative that there is no difference between men and women in terms of their attitude toward infidelity when there is a poor sex life (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14  
Factorial ANOVA Results for Sex, Sexual Satisfaction, and Infidelity.

Source	Sums of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Corrected Model	7.834	9	0.870	4.076***
Intercept	57.244	1	57.244	268.042***
Sex	0.136	1	0.136	0.638
Sexual Satisfaction	5.998	4	1.500	7.022***
Sex* Sexual Satisfaction	0.612	4	0.153	0.581
Error	191.567	897	0.214	
Total	296.000	907		

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Hypothesis H<sub>1b</sub> examines the role that couple communication plays in infidelity. It is stated as follows:

H<sub>1b</sub> Young adult women are more likely to commit infidelity when poor communication channels were reported.

The overall results from a factorial ANOVA revealed that there were significant main effects for the communication measure ( $F_{(4,898)} = 14.331, p < .001$ ). Also, both gender and the interaction between gender and communication were not significant (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15  
Factorial ANOVA Results for Sex, Sexual Satisfaction, and Infidelity.

Source	Sums of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Corrected Model	13.416	9	1.491	7.193***
Intercept	57.334	1	57.334	276.670***
Sex	0.519	1	0.519	2.507
Communication	11.879	4	2.970	14.331***
Sex* Communication	0.311	4	0.078	0.375
Error	186.091	898	0.207	
Total	296.000			

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

An examination of the Tukey *post-hoc* tests demonstrated that there were significant differences between those who had poor communication in their relationships and the propensity to engage in infidelity. These findings partially supported the

hypothesis, however because there were no significant effects for gender I must reject the null hypothesis. In short, these findings suggest that both men and women value communication in the same way within their intimate relationships.

#### *Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis*

Logistic regression analysis was performed to measure the *Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model (RRIM)*. Prior to running the analysis, data were tested for multicollinearity. The correlations between all of the variables were below the recommended level ( $r = .80$ ) which means that multicollinearity was not an issue (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2011).

To examine how the *RRIM* represented men and women the split file procedure was used and the data analyzed accordingly. Hierarchical Logistic Regression analysis tested the *RRIM* among both male (see Table 4.15) female (see Table 4.16) respondents.

The goodness of fit was used to assess the significance of both models. The first Hierarchical Logistic Regression analysis examined the men who were in this study. This model consisted of six blocks. Block 1 was able to explain the *RRIM* with an accuracy of 63.6%. The  $\chi^2$  (4.93) was not statistically significant in this block. The  $\chi^2$  for Block 2 however was statistically significant (29.67,  $p < .001$ ) as the overall model improved by 5.19% as it explained the *RRIM* with an accuracy of 66.9%. This block revealed that the partners who were happy ( $B = .48$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with their overall relationship were slightly less likely to commit infidelity.

Block 3 of this analysis improved by 2.99% from Block 2 as it explained the *RRIM* with an accuracy of 68.9%. The  $\chi^2$  for this block was statistically significant (43.37,  $p < .001$ ). Partners who valued trust ( $B = .32$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and security ( $B = .28$ ,  $p$

<.05), within their relationship were less likely to commit infidelity, and respondents who valued love ( $B = .36, p <.05$ ) were less likely to commit infidelity.

The  $\chi^2$  for Block 4 was statistically significant (81.82,  $p <.001$ ) and this block improved by 3.77% as it explained the *RRIM* with an accuracy of 71.5%. The respondents who valued assets ( $B = .15, p <.05$ ), love ( $B = .70, p <.001$ ), and commitment ( $B = 1.22, p <.05$ ).

The  $\chi^2$  for Block 5 was statistically significant (90.98,  $p <.001$ ) as the overall model improved by 0.98% as it explained the *RRIM* with an accuracy of 72.2%. This block revealed that the partners who valued love ( $B = .70, p <.001$ ), commitment ( $B = 1.27, p <.001$ ) and sex freq ( $B = .15, p <.01$ ), less likely to commit infidelity. Finally Block 6 of this analysis did not improve from Block 5 as it also explained the *RRIM* with an accuracy of 72.2%. The  $\chi^2$  was statistically significant (91.57,  $p <.001$ ). Also similar to Block 5, Block 6 revealed that partners who were valued love ( $B = .68, p <.001$ ), commitment ( $B = 1.29, p <.001$ ) and sex freq ( $B = .14, p <.01$ ). A further examination of the *Exp(B)* coefficients reveals the general likelihood or log odds of outcomes for the variables within the model. These results offer inconclusive evidence in support of H<sub>1</sub> or H<sub>2</sub>, where in both cases, despite presenting a break down by sex, there was no meaningful results that were revealed.

Table 4.16  
*Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis of the Relationship and Risk Factors  
influencing Infidelity Model for Male Respondents (n = 396)*

Variable	B	Wald	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)		-2LL	$\chi^2$
				Lower	Upper		
<i>BLOCK 1</i>							
Age	0.03	0.21	1.03	0.92	1.15		
Education	-0.09	0.59	0.91	0.72	1.15		
Income	-0.07	2.49	0.93	0.85	1.02		
Assets	1.00	2.40	1.10	0.98	1.25		
Constant	-0.87	0.24	0.42			515.75	4.50
<i>BLOCK 2</i>							
Age	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.89	1.13		
Education	-0.11	0.79	0.90	0.70	1.14		
Income	-0.09	3.45	0.92	0.83	1.01		
Assets	0.13	3.79	1.14	1.00	1.29		
Communication	0.15	1.02	1.16	0.87	1.54		
QualityTime	0.18	1.80	1.20	0.92	1.56		
Happy	0.48	5.26	1.62*	1.07	2.44		
Constant	-1.51	0.66	0.22			490.576	29.67***
<i>BLOCK 3</i>							
Age	0.01	.001	1.01	0.89	1.14		
Education	-1.00	0.60	0.91	0.71	1.16		
Income	-0.08	2.45	0.93	0.84	1.02		
Assets	0.12	3.27	1.13	0.99	1.28		
Communication	0.04	0.07	1.04	0.77	1.40		
QualityTime	0.07	0.23	1.08	0.81	1.45		
Happy	0.35	2.32	1.42	0.90	2.23		
Trust	0.32	4.89	1.38*	1.04	1.84		
Security	0.28	4.94	1.32*	1.03	1.68		
Love	0.36	5.71	1.44*	1.07	1.94		
Constant	-3.61	3.13	0.03			476.887	43.37***
<i>BLOCK 4</i>							
Age	0.01	0.01	1.01	0.88	1.15		
Education	-0.14	1.04	0.87	0.67	1.14		
Income	-0.08	2.50	0.92	0.83	1.02		
Assets	0.15	4.37	1.16*	1.01	1.33		
Communication	0.24	1.80	1.27	0.90	1.80		
QualityTime	-0.05	0.11	0.95	0.69	1.31		
Happy	0.02	0.01	1.02	0.63	1.66		
Trust	0.22	1.75	1.24	0.90	1.71		
Security	0.04	0.06	1.04	0.78	1.39		
Love	0.70	14.48	2.02***	1.41	2.90		
Passion	0.27	1.72	1.31	0.88	1.95		
Intimacy	0.15	0.56	1.16	0.79	1.72		
Commitment	1.22	31.780	3.40***	2.22	5.20		
Constant	-7.53	8.57	0.00**			438.43	81.82***

Table 4.16 (cont'd)  
*Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis of the Relationship and Risk Factors  
influencing Infidelity Model for Male Respondents (n = 396)*

Variable	B	Wald	Exp(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B)		-2LL	$\chi^2$
				Lower	Upper		
<i>BLOCK 5</i>							
Age	0.01	0.02	1.01	0.88	1.15		
Education	-0.15	1.24	0.86	0.66	1.12		
Income	-0.08	2.28	0.92	0.83	1.02		
Assets	0.14	3.88	1.15*	1.00	1.33		
Communication	0.26	1.93	1.29	0.90	1.85		
QualityTime	-0.00	0.00	1.00	0.72	1.39		
Happy	0.04	0.03	1.04	0.63	1.73		
Trust	0.19	1.32	1.21	0.87	1.68		
Security	0.01	0.00	1.01	0.75	1.35		
Love	0.70	13.81	2.01***	1.39	2.90		
Passion	0.21	1.03	1.24	0.82	1.88		
Intimacy	0.16	0.63	1.17	0.79	1.75		
Commitment	1.27	32.65	3.58***	2.31	5.53		
SexFreq	0.15	8.53	1.16**	1.05	1.28		
SexSat	-0.03	0.05	0.97	0.72	1.29		
Constant	-8.01	9.43	0.00**			429.27	90.98***
<i>BLOCK 6</i>							
Age	0.01	0.01	1.01	0.88	1.15		
Education	-0.14	1.01	0.87	0.66	1.15		
Income	-0.08	2.25	0.92	0.83	1.02		
Assets	0.14	3.74	1.15	1.00	1.33		
Communication	0.23	1.57	1.26	0.88	1.82		
QualityTime	-0.02	0.02	0.98	0.70	1.37		
Happy	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.59	1.68		
Trust	0.19	1.22	1.20	0.87	1.67		
Security	-0.01	0.01	0.99	0.73	1.34		
Love	0.68	12.72	1.97***	1.36	2.86		
Passion	0.23	1.19	1.26	0.83	1.92		
Intimacy	0.15	0.56	1.17	0.78	1.74		
Commitment	1.29	32.95	3.64***	2.34	5.66		
SexFreq	0.14	8.19	1.16**	1.05	1.28		
SexSat	-0.04	0.09	0.96	0.71	1.28		
Conflict	0.10	0.46	1.11	0.83	1.48		
Impulsive	-0.05	0.13	0.96	0.75	1.22		
Thriller	-0.01	0.01	0.99	0.76	1.30		
Constant	-7.80	8.15	0.00**			428.68	91.57***

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \* $p < 0.05$ . C.I. = confidence interval.

The second Hierarchical Logistic Regression analysis examined the data for women in the sample. This model also consisted of six blocks. Block 1 was able to explain the *RRIM* with an accuracy of 70.3%, though the  $\chi^2$  (4.93) was not statistically significant in this block. The  $\chi^2$  for Block 2 however was statistically significant (29.67,  $p < .001$ ) as the overall model improved by 1.28% as it explained the *RRIM* with an accuracy of 71.2%. This block revealed that the partners who were happy ( $B = 1.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with their overall relationship were slightly more than  $Exp(B)$  2.43 times less likely to commit infidelity.

Block 3 of this analysis decreased (1.26%) from Block 2 as it explained the *RRIM* with an accuracy of 70.3%. The  $\chi^2$  for this block was statistically significant (47.57,  $p < .001$ ). Again, partners who were happy ( $B = .89$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with their overall relationship were approximately two and one-half times less likely to commit infidelity. The  $\chi^2$  for Block 4 was statistically significant (96.32,  $p < .001$ ) and this block improved by 10.53% as it explained the *RRIM* with an accuracy of 77.7%. The respondents who valued security ( $B = -.42$ ,  $p < .05$ ), love ( $B = .52$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and commitment ( $B = 1.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ), within their relationships.

The  $\chi^2$  for Block 5 was statistically significant (101.148,  $p < .001$ ) as the overall model improved by 1.80% as it explained the *RRIM* with an accuracy of 79.1%. This block revealed that the partners who valued security ( $B = -.41$ ,  $p < .05$ ), love ( $B = .47$ ,  $p < .05$ ), commitment ( $B = 1.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and sexfreq ( $B = .13$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Table 4.17  
*Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis of the Relationship and Risk Factors influencing Infidelity Model for Female Respondents (n = 354)*

Variable	B	Wald	Exp(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B)		-2LL	$\chi^2$
				Lower	Upper		
<i>BLOCK 1</i>							
Age	1.00	2.19	1.10	0.97	1.26		
Education	-0.19	1.54	0.83	0.61	1.12		
Income	0.07	1.63	1.07	0.97	1.18		
Assets	-0.03	0.12	0.97	0.84	1.13		
Constant	-3.44	2.96	0.03			425.51	4.93
<i>BLOCK 2</i>							
Age	0.05	0.40	1.05	0.91	1.21		
Education	-0.21	1.62	0.81	0.59	1.12		
Income	0.10	3.32	1.11	0.99	1.24		
Assets	0.02	0.09	1.02	0.88	1.20		
Communication	0.10	0.41	1.11	0.81	1.51		
QualityTime	0.04	0.05	1.036	0.76	1.411		
Happy	1.03	20.63	2.810***	1.80	4.388		
Constant	-4.34	4.06	0.01			383.975	29.67***
<i>BLOCK 3</i>							
Age	0.05	0.47	1.05	0.91	1.21		
Education	-0.22	1.66	0.81	0.58	1.12		
Income	1.00	3.05	1.10	1.00	1.23		
Assets	0.02	0.08	1.02	0.88	1.20		
Communication	0.07	0.19	1.07	0.78	1.47		
QualityTime	-0.00	0.00	1.00	0.72	1.39		
Happy	0.89	11.26	2.44**	1.45	4.10		
Trust	0.09	0.39	1.09	0.83	1.43		
Security	0.08	0.31	1.09	0.81	1.46		
Love	0.01	0.01	1.01	0.75	1.36		
Constant	-4.49	3.75	0.01			382.87	47.57***
<i>BLOCK 4</i>							
Age	0.03	0.10	1.03	0.88	1.20		
Education	-0.40	4.71	0.67*	0.49	0.96		
Income	0.11	3.41	1.12	0.99	1.26		
Assets	-0.03	0.11	0.97	0.82	1.15		
Communication	0.13	0.44	1.13	0.78	1.64		
QualityTime	-0.09	0.20	0.92	0.64	1.33		
Happy	0.29	0.93	1.34	0.74	2.43		
Trust	-0.20	1.53	0.82	0.59	1.13		
Security	-0.42	4.91	0.66*	0.45	0.95		
Love	0.52	7.81	1.70**	1.17	2.45		
Passion	-0.12	0.37	0.90	0.61	1.30		
Intimacy	-0.17	0.65	0.84	0.55	1.28		
Commitment	1.70	33.39	5.24***	2.996	9.18		
Constant	-4.54	2.60	0.01			334.12	96.32***

Table 4.17 (cont'd)  
*Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis of the Relationship and Risk Factors  
influencing Infidelity Model for Female Respondents(n = 354)*

Variable	B	Wald	Exp(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B)		-2LL	$\chi^2$
				Lower	Upper		
<i>BLOCK 5</i>							
Age	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.86	1.17		
Education	-0.41	4.95	0.66*	0.46	0.95		
Income	0.10	2.49	1.10	0.98	1.24		
Assets	-0.02	0.04	0.98	0.83	1.17		
Communication	0.16	0.66	1.17	0.80	1.71		
QualityTime	-0.08	0.17	0.92	0.64	1.34		
Happy	0.24	0.53	1.27	0.67	2.38		
Trust	-0.22	1.73	0.81	0.58	1.11		
Security	-0.41	4.54	0.66*	0.45	0.97		
Love	0.47	6.07	1.60*	1.10	2.32		
Passion	-0.11	0.29	0.90	0.61	1.33		
Intimacy	-0.17	0.59	0.85	0.56	1.30		
Commitment	1.72	33.81	5.57***	3.12	9.93		
SexFreq	0.13	4.73	1.14*	1.01	1.28		
SexSat	0.03	0.05	1.03	0.78	1.37		
Constant	-4.27	2.27	0.01			329.23	101.14***
<i>BLOCK 6</i>							
Age	0.01	0.02	1.01	0.87	1.18		
Education	-0.43	4.98	0.65*	0.45	0.95		
Income	0.10	2.78	1.11	0.98	1.25		
Assets	-0.02	0.06	0.98	0.82	1.16		
Communication	0.11	0.32	1.12	0.76	1.65		
QualityTime	-0.11	0.29	0.90	0.61	1.32		
Happy	0.16	0.22	1.17	0.60	2.28		
Trust	-0.22	1.72	0.80	0.58	1.11		
Security	-0.44	5.01	0.64*	0.44	0.95		
Love	0.47	5.83	1.59*	1.09	2.33		
Passion	-0.09	0.20	0.91	0.62	1.36		
Intimacy	-0.15	0.46	0.86	0.57	1.32		
Commitment	1.76	34.07	5.83***	3.23	10.54		
SexFreq	0.13	4.85	1.14*	1.02	1.29		
SexSat	0.03	0.05	1.03	0.78	1.37		
Conflict	0.15	0.85	1.17	0.84	1.62		
Impulsive	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.75	1.34		
Thriller	0.18	1.37	1.19	0.89	1.60		
Constant	-5.30	3.07	0.01			327.15	103.29***

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \* $p < 0.05$ . C.I. = confidence interval

The final Block 6 of this analysis decreased (0.38%) from Block 5 as it explained the *RRIM* with slightly less accuracy of 78.8%. Despite this fact, the  $\chi^2$  remained statistically significant (103.29,  $p < .001$ ). This block revealed that partners who were valued security ( $B = -.44, p < .05$ ), love ( $B = .47, p < .05$ ), commitment ( $B = 1.76, p < .001$ ) and sex freq ( $B = .13, p < .05$ ) were less likely to commit infidelity. The  $Exp(B)$  or logit coefficients, revealed that for these measures the odds of an event occurring was meaningful.

Table 4.18  
*Summary Results for Hypotheses for Relationship and Risk Factors influencing Infidelity Model.*

Hypothesis	Text of Hypothesis	Results	Action
H <sub>1</sub>	Young adults in committed relationships who reported poor relationship status and lower sexual frequency are more likely to commit infidelity	Inconclusive	Reject
H <sub>1a</sub>	Young adult men in committed relationships are more likely to commit infidelity when poor quality sexual relationships were reported.	Inconclusive	Reject
H <sub>1b</sub>	Young adult women are more likely to commit infidelity when poor communication channels were reported	Inconclusive	Reject
H <sub>2</sub>	Young adults in committed relationships who reported high levels of intimacy, passion, and commitment are more likely to experience greater relationship quality and are less likely to commit infidelity	Inconclusive	Reject

The first hypothesis which examined poor relationship and sexual frequency was inconclusive, thus it was rejected. In subsequent tests controlling for gender as revealed in Tables 4.16 and 4.17, there were no real differences noted, therefore the hypothesis could not be supported. The second hypothesis focused on the elements found within the Sternberg model presented no meaningful differences, thus bringing into question the overall findings. In short, all of the study hypotheses were rejected. Moreover, even when specific gender overlays were provided there were no substantial differences.



## Chapter Five

### Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to acquire a deeper understanding of infidelity and how it was viewed by couples involved in romantic relationships. I first examined the current extant literature in this area. It was clear to me that numerous investigations had examined issues surrounding infidelity, yet I did not find any that explored infidelity and its relationship to the triangular theory of love nor among young couples exclusively. My interests led me to develop what I called the *Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model (RRIM)*. The *RRIM* was designed to highlight and explain some issues within *intimate and romantic relationships* that can lead to infidelity. The advantage of the *RRIM* is that it can be used with all couples, no matter what their sexual orientation.

This chapter will integrate some of the current literature from Chapter Two with some of the findings from this study. I will address this thesis' three principles, the research questions, the findings and how they related to the hypotheses, and the overall relevance and value these findings have to the *RRIM*. The next section will discuss the limitations of this study, suggestions for future research, and finish by examining the implications and conclusions that can be drawn from this investigation.

#### *Study Principles*

The first principle of this study was to examine the risk factors associated with infidelity among young adult couples. The literature suggested that low levels of feeling loved, weak commitment, and low sexual frequency were infidelity risk factors for both men and women. The findings for this thesis, revealed by the hierarchical logistic regression analyses did not refute but could not be seen as supporting the literature either.

Several investigations (Drigotas et al., 1999; Previti & Amato, 2004) that had previously explored the role of commitment within *intimate and romantic relationships* found that it was inversely related to infidelity. In concurrence with the literature review the results from this study indicated that the greater the individual's commitment to their relationship the less likely they were to commit infidelity.

Meanwhile, since low levels of love and sexual frequency were risk factors of infidelity it appears that the more men and women love their partners and the more they are committed to them the less likely they were to commit infidelity. As found in the literature (Drigotas et al., 1999; Previti & Amato, 2004; Wellings, Field, Johnson, & Wadsworth, 1994) this study also demonstrated that as sexual frequency between couples increased they became less likely to commit infidelity. Furthermore, it was also revealed that women who were more secure within their relationship were less likely to commit infidelity. Similar results were found in other investigations, such as those by Friedman and Downey (2000), and Hiller (2004) who showed that women's sexual arousal was influenced by how secure they were within their relationship.

The second principle of this study was to understand how a partner's personality, early socialization about relationships, beliefs, and values about relationships influenced their ideas about what is infidelity was found to be inconclusive. The data did not show that respondents who were thrill seekers and those who made decisions based upon their gut feelings to be anymore more likely to commit infidelity. However, women who believed that their relationship would be permanent were less likely to commit infidelity. As this study found, there was a strong association between security and commitment, and it supports an earlier notion that women are more concerned with loyalty (Blackwell,

1997). These findings may be indicative of why security was a risk factor for women, but not for men. Finally, the third principle of this study which was to evaluate what happened to the relationship after an incident of infidelity had occurred was thwarted by the lack of data. There were no questions in the *Add Health* data set that could be used to substantiate this claim, and as a result, it was not evaluated.

### *Research Questions and Hypotheses*

The basic principles of this investigation highlighted some pertinent issues within *intimate and romantic relationships*. Based on these issues research questions and hypotheses were developed. The first research question examined multiple combinations of factors that led to love, commitment, and sexual frequency being identified as risk factors for both men and women. In addition, security was also viewed as a risk factor for women. The second research question which evaluated Sternberg's constructed model also led to commitment level being identified as a risk factor. Finally, the third research question was asked as a precursor to explore the characteristics that led respondents to engage in relationship risks factors. The hypotheses were formed to answer the research questions. The data analysis procedures throughout the theses critically examined, tested, and evaluated each hypothesis. As a result of this process none of the hypotheses were supported, yet despite this short-coming the value of the *RRIM* was sustained.

### *Utility of the Model*

The *Relationship and Risk factors influencing Infidelity Model (RRIM)* was designed to illustrate how and why some romantic partners chose to commit infidelity and others do not. It measured the respondent's relationship and risk factors that could

influence them to commit infidelity. In short, the *RRIM* was a useful tool for explaining what influenced both men and women to commit infidelity. The model correctly classified that 72.8% of the men and 78.8% of the women were not likely to commit infidelity. The *Relationship Dynamics* element of the *RRIM* measured Sternberg's (1998) triangular theory of love. Within this study *commitment* was the only construct within his model that was identified to be a significant risk factor for predicting infidelity.

Another element within the *RRIM* was *Sexual Compatibility*. It measured how similar a couple's sexual needs were. I was not surprised to find that couples who had reported having sex less often were significantly more likely to commit infidelity. What I found the most surprising was that sexual satisfaction was not a risk factor. Of the remaining elements within the *RRIM*, *Relationship Strengths* which measured security, and *Demographics*, of which one of the measures was education, found that women who were secure within their relationship believed it would be permanent. In addition, the general findings showed that women who were more educated were less likely to commit infidelity.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

While producing this thesis I encountered several issues. Attempting to measure certain questions in this study in addition to measuring constructs within the *RRIM* were problematic because the data that I had were limited. The data set that I used had some of the information that I wanted to measure, but in some cases it was not provided. Several questions that I wanted to evaluate were how many times the respondent committed infidelity; whether or not the relationship subsequently ended after the couple experienced infidelity; and how strongly the respondent felt that societal norms

influenced him/her to commit infidelity. These issues remained unanswered because the data set simply did not contain these variables. There was also a host of questions that were ambiguous, not effectively coded, and in some cases just imprecise.

For instance, it could be argued that the element of *passion* within Sternberg's constructed model indirectly accounts for sexual frequency; but in this study they are not one in the same. The dataset had a question that ambiguously measured how often the respondents had sex. It also had another question that measured how the respondents felt about their partner expressing love and affection to them. The latter was used to measure *passion* and the former was used to measure sexual frequency. While sexual frequency and passion do have some parallels, expressing sexual intimacy is a way of expressing love but it is not the only way. This is why I chose to construct those variables as I did.

On the one hand this made it difficult for me to interpret some of the questions and responses which added further complications as it became more problematic to construct some of my variables. On the other hand, since miscommunication is impossible to avoid, I questioned whether or not the respondent fully understood what he/she was being asked and the effectiveness of the interviewer who was asking the questions. Indeed, within the codebook for the *Add Health* study, the researchers indicated that respondents misunderstood some key questions on relationships because they were so poorly worded.

#### *Suggestions for Future Research*

This thesis has attempted to explore the idea of infidelity and provide new ways to examine *intimate and romantic relationships*. There are still many areas within these relationships that can be studied, evaluated and refined. I would like to further explore

the components of the *RRIM* model and make appropriate changes so that it will be more effective. In particular, reconstructing the elements within the model and changing their order. Also further exploring and refining the research questions could lead to better results. As stated in the limitations, this study had several restrictions as it could only measure and evaluate the data that were provided within the dataset. To that end, it could be of some value to measure the effects that social norms, role models, and media sources have on influencing infidelity in young adult's relationships. Furthermore, analyzing what programs young adults view, the content portrayed within them and the subsequent effects on their behavior could be of some value. Again, how often young adults are exposed to media sources with sexually explicit content and the subsequent effects on their dating scripts might be important. It would also be important to examine the effects of being a victim of infidelity and the role it has upon future relationships.

In addition to researching sex and the media, it could be advantageous to study sex in the media, or simply pornography. Exploring how pornography affects individual's relationships, their decision to commit infidelity, and even explore how it shapes the way that an individual expresses himself/herself to his/her partner. For example, one could examine how receptive one's partner is to sexual exploration is another area to consider. These are just a few critical and important issues that could and should be explored in relation to infidelity, *intimate and romantic relationships*, as well as the association between the two.

### *Implications*

This study has uncovered, identified, and created some tools that can be used professionally when addressing the issue of infidelity within a couple's relationship.

There are many practical areas where the *RRIM* might find utility. For example, in a clinical setting, in a premarital inventory for young couples, or in a personal setting where couples desire to minimize the chances of infidelity occurring within their relationship. To that end, this thesis suggests that commitment is the cornerstone for predicting whether or not partners will be likely to commit infidelity. This was determined by measuring the magnitude of the partner's commitment to their relationship. In short, the greater the magnitude of the partner's commitment the less likely they were to commit infidelity. Love and sexual frequency also had the same affects as they were inversely related as well. Additionally, women who were more secure within their relationship were less likely to commit infidelity. Clearly if a partner is able to identify what it is that his/her partner needs within the relationship and is able to fulfill that that need his/her partner will be less likely to commit infidelity and as previous investigations have discovered such as one by Previti and Amato (2004), relationships that experiences infidelity subsequently are likely to end.

### *Conclusions*

Infidelity is arguably becoming more prevalent. Individuals from virtually every domain are all susceptible to infidelity if they chose to become involved in an *intimate and romantic relationship*. If partners can find ways to strengthen their love and commitment, and frequently express their love and commitment to one another through sexual intimacy, a multitude of benefits may be received—in particular, reducing the chances of their relationship succumbing to infidelity.

Also it is important to provide a context for understanding the role infidelity can play in relationships. The current literature shows us that not everyone shares that same

view of what infidelity is or how it should be responded to within a relationship. Indeed, it does appear to be somewhat relative, at least from what was revealed in this investigation. The data also revealed that there were important differences between men and women in terms of their likelihood to commit infidelity. Sadly it shows that men were more likely to commit infidelity. Through collecting more data focused on infidelity it might be possible to clearly identify some bench marks that could show a more definitive causal link. It is my hope that the *RRIM* be further developed and refined as one tool that can be used in this regard. As it exists right now, the *RIMM* does hold out some hope for couples who act early on problem areas in their relationships. Only through further study can the value of the *RRIM* be fully realized.

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