

INTERNET BOUNDARIES FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING: IMPACT OF TRUST AND
SATISFACTION

by

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Abstract

The present study examined whether married individuals hold boundaries for online social networking and the relationship between these boundaries and relational trust and satisfaction. Participants included 205 married individuals who had been married for an average of 27 years. Five specific boundaries were identified and tested using group comparison (by sex) structural equation modeling. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed two latent constructs for internet boundaries: Openness (3 items: Know Friends, Share Passwords and Account Access) and Fidelity (2 items: No Flirting and No Former Partners). Findings suggest that couples in long-term committed relationships have boundaries or rules for social networking. Furthermore, trusting one's partner, but not relationship satisfaction, contributes to behaviors that reflect sharing online social networking information, and curb online flirting and relationships with former romantic partners. Trust was more strongly associated with men's than women's motivation to avoid flirtatious online interaction and communicating with former romantic partners online. These findings that indicate that the use of internet boundaries is highly related to marital trust support the development theory of trust.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

“Steven wakes alone in the dark wondering why Patrice has not come to bed yet. He lays there for some time, becoming increasingly frustrated with her. He cannot help thinking, ‘No wonder she’s tired all the time, she’s up until all hours. What could she possibly be doing on the computer that long?’ The longer he thinks about how little time Patrice has spent with him in the last several months, the more angry he becomes. He fumes, ‘She complains that I work long hours, but then she can’t even drag herself to bed. You would think that she could be online during the day. We haven’t even had sex in a month!’ Angry that his partner has not given him any attention in months, he marches into the den and yells ‘Are you going to be on the computer all night?’ Patrice jumps and closes the browser window where she had been typing. ‘I didn’t realize it had gotten so late. I’ll be right there.’ After Steven stomped back to the bedroom, she restores the window and types, ‘S is at it again—I’d better go. Talk to you tomorrow.’ She walks to the bedroom with mixed emotions; angry at Steven for never paying attention to her; resentful at having her conversation cut off; satisfied that she has found eric763, who seems to understand her; and excited about chatting with eric763 again tomorrow.” (Gonyea, 2004, p. 375-376)

Patrice has found solace through an intimate connection with a faceless, male friend on the internet. Eric763 has become an important part of Patrice’s life, a relationship that may constitute an emotional affair. If the relationship had occurred offline, it may never have happened or at least been more difficult to hide from Steven. Instead of sitting in another room seemingly working on the computer, Patrice would have been out of the house for many hours—behavior that may have alerted Steven. Here, the typical signs of a possible affair appear to be absent.

On the other hand, Patrice may never have engaged in the relationship with Eric763 had the relationship occurred face to face. Traditional relationship rules or expectancies that caution Patrice from developing an intimate relationship with an offline friend may not protect her relationship from an intimate online relationship. Online cross-sex relationships have been found to develop more easily than offline (Chan & Cheng, 2004). Additionally, Chan and Cheng (2004) found that the differences between online and offline friendships diminished over time.

Applying this outcome to intimate relationships, these findings indicate that a partner may more easily develop a cross-sex friendship online due to the differing nature of online relationships but that the depth and commitment of that relationship will more closely resemble that of offline relationships as the duration of the relationship increases. Consequently, a partner may develop an affair more easily online than offline.

The internet has become a significant part of our social world faster than any other medium of communication in the history of humankind (Cooper, Morahan-Martin, Mathy, & Maheu, 2002). The internet boasts two billion users today after only becoming public for 18 years (Internet, 2011). The exponential growth and accessibility of the internet through various mediums and its potential harm on relationships posed by this growth was probably never fully anticipated. As such, relationship rules and expectations that serve to protect relationships from online illicit affairs have yet to be developed in any formal way.

Current literature documents that relational trust and satisfaction can protect from infidelity. This is supported by several studies that reported decreased trust and relationship satisfaction increases the desire for extramarital involvement (see Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Trust in relation to internet use may be evidenced by the implicit sharing of personal accounts and passwords for social networking, such as for emails, chat rooms, Facebook, and Twitter. However, this was not the case as discussed by the podcast *Manners for the Digital Age*, by Slate Magazine, (Manjoo & Yoffe, 2011) leading us to wonder if relationships have other mechanisms in place to protect from intentional or non-intentional online infidelity.

Although not a scientific study or discussion, Farhad Manjoo and Emily Yoffe brought forth this very debate into the public eye on July 5th, 2011 when they asked the following question: “Does love mean sharing passwords?” The columnists discussed whether being in an

intimate relationship meant sharing email account passwords, much like couples share bank account information. In an online survey offered at the end of the podcast, they found mixed results, in which 60% of respondents reported that they do not (“no, never”) share their email passwords with their significant other ($n = 4,472$). Although not a representative survey, it poses an intriguing question. How are these factors related to relationship trust and satisfaction? Does trust mean not sharing passwords? If sharing passwords was a boundary, then how is the use of that boundary associated with trust and satisfaction in married couples? However, because respondents did not identify their marital status, it is uncertain if the podcast results could be applied to married individuals. Couples in marital relationships are expected to differ from dating and cohabitating couples on many levels. One perspective that distinguishes such couples that will be used to direct this study is institutional embeddedness.

Institutional Embeddedness

Marriage is the only institutional arrangement that can potentially solve the trust issues in intimate relationships as the legal ramifications from a broken marriage contract can decrease the temptation to abuse trust (van de Rijt & Buskens, 2006). In other words, “the marriage contract covers the risk that a preferable alternative partner emerges long after investments in a marriage have been made” (p.148). Thus, the institution of marriage is confirmation of mutual trustfulness while simultaneously containing indicators for distrust. Couples who dare to place trust in each other are more likely to marry. So there is more trust when there is institutional embeddedness. In turn, institutional embeddedness makes placing trust in spouses less risky. As such, it would be reasonable to expect that marriage can settle many trust issues in relationships.

The ways in which trust is demonstrated in marriages is unclear, especially as it relates to internet infidelity. Dasgupta (1988) explained that more trust is needed in the relationship if both

(a) the person who trusts loses more if trust is abused and (b) that if the person who is trusted has a higher temptation to abuse trust. As such, it could be expected that individuals who have reasons to distrust their partners and who are vulnerable to suffer when trust is broken are more likely to seek out ways to ensure that their relationship is protected from intrusions such as internet infidelity.

Although the institution of marriage may be highly motivated by trust, satisfaction with the relationship may be a more important factor in relationships that spurs marriages. van de Rijt and Buskens (2006) argue that the quality of one's relationship may be more predictive of marriage nowadays as marriages have become more emotion-based than economic-based as it had been in the past. Thus, it would be reasonable to expect that higher relationship satisfaction would lead to protective boundaries in order to help maintain relationships (Canary, Stafford, & Semic, 2002).

Purpose of this Study

Although the internet revolution has many positive and beneficial uses for couples where many find further ways to connect and strengthen their relationship through its use, clinicians are often faced with the negative effects that it can have on couple relationships. It is not unusual for couples to seek marital therapy for marital distress resulting from internet infidelity. In fact, a rise in internet infidelity has been predicted to occur and has been projected to significantly contribute to difficulties, pain, and dissolution of intimate relationships (Barak & Fisher, 2002). Therefore, clinicians and couple researchers, have the responsibility to understand this new phenomena and how it may impact families, couples, and individuals.

The current literature, while brimming with information on infidelity, is scarce on information on internet infidelity -- not to mention ways to protect relationships from such online

intrusions. It is important to understand what kind of protective factors or relational processes may serve to insulate relationships from internet infidelity in order to effectively serve couples in committed relationships. Therefore, this study seeks to start uncovering how the exponential growth of the internet as a social medium affects couples, with emphasis on boundaries as protective features of marriage. More specifically, this study seeks to understand how trust and satisfaction are related to internet boundaries and how a history of infidelity may mediate that relationship.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This chapter will present literature on relationship boundaries and its association with relationship trust and satisfaction. In addition, infidelity, its prevalence, the types of infidelity including internet infidelity and the relationship between infidelity and relationship satisfaction is discussed.

Infidelity in Romantic Relationships

Couples in romantic relationships have many relational expectancies, among which include boundaries for emotional and sexual fidelity (Whisman & Wagers, 2005). Most couples require that certain emotional and sexual needs be met exclusively by their romantic partner. When an individual seeks or obtains those needs from outside the relationship, a betrayal occurs. Social scientists have defined this intimate betrayal as “a break in the commitment and trust between two partners caused by secret romantic, emotional or sexual involvement with another person” (Duba, Kindsvatter, & Lara, 2008).

Intimate betrayal, more commonly known as an affair or infidelity, represents a direct attack on the attachment bond between partners through breaking the relational trust and intimacy (Butler, Seedall, & Harper, 2008; Butler, Harper, & Seedall, 2009; Snyder, Baucom, & Gordon, 2007). Even when the betrayal is unknown to the other partner, the offended partners may experience the impact through relational symptoms wherein they may feel detached from their partner and exhibit signs similar to avoidant attachment, such as emotional distancing and physical withdrawal (Butler et al., 2008; Butler et al., 2009; Duba et al., 2008; Fife, Weeks, & Gambescia, 2008; Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2004). The offended partners may experience anxiety, doubt, or fear in place of calm or confidence.

The impact of infidelity on romantic relationships is clear. It is the single greatest predictor of divorce and has been reported to be second only to intimate partner violence in its destructive impact on the individuals and the couple relationship (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Butler et al., 2009; Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997). The non-involved, or injured, partner can experience a wide variety of negative cognitive and behavioral effects, which can include intimate partner violence, depression, suicidal ideation, acute anxiety, and post-traumatic stress symptomatology (Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2008; Snyder et al., 2007). The individual can also experience widely diverse and often quickly vacillating emotions, including rage, shock, numbness, denial, overwhelming powerlessness, guilt, victimization, and abandonment. Relationship attachment is often shattered as the injured party loses complete trust in his or her partner and the relationship. Hope can be difficult to uncover in the aftermath of the discovery of infidelity.

In therapy, it may seem easy to ignore the impact of the infidelity on the offending partner. However, the offending partner likewise may experience many negative emotional, cognitive, and behavioral effects following the disclosure of infidelity. This partner can experience the same and sometimes even greater levels of depression, suicidality, and anxiety (Snyder et al., 2007). Clinicians thus have the difficult task of working with the negative impact on both partners.

There are many factors that contribute to infidelity and affect the functioning of the relationship. Marital happiness and marital discord both have been shown to have an influence on infidelity, and research has found that marital discord is both a consequence and a cause of infidelity (Whisman & Wagers, 2005). Some indicators of possible infidelity in a relationship are emotional or psychological distancing or withdrawal, general decrease in time of activities

together, a decrease in intimate or emotional focus during sexual intimacy, and general indifference (Butler et al., 2009). Many times these signs or changes in the relationship can enhance the offended partner's suspicions of infidelity. Some have reported that they felt something was not right or was different while others report that they had a suspicion that infidelity may be present but could not be sure.

Prevalence of Infidelity

A national sample estimated that between 1.5% and 6% of married individuals will engage in extramarital sex in any given year (Whisman & Snyder, 2007). The two-dimensional nature of infidelity (emotional and physical) has been cited as a possible contributor to the range in prevalence rates. Some researchers included only physical affairs involving sexual intercourse alone while others included physical and emotional betrayal. Across time, as many as 21% of men and 11% of women reported that they had some type of extramarital involvement, which may have been any type of emotional or sexual connection (Whisman & Wagers, 2005). In addition, lifetime prevalence rates for extramarital affairs have been found to range from as low as 20% to as high as 40% (Atkins, Marín, Lo, Klann, & Hahlweg, 2010) and could be the primary cause of as many as 40% of divorces in the United States (Snyder et al., 2007). Researchers have repeatedly concluded that infidelity is a significant threat to any relationship and represents one of the most devastating experiences for couples (Butler et al., 2008; Butler et al., 2009; Gordon et al., 2008; Kessel, Moon, & Atkins, 2007; Olson, Russell, Higgins-Kessler, & Miller, 2002).

Infidelity Typology

To better understand the dynamics and differences involved in infidelity, seven categories, or types, of infidelity have been identified: the unintentional affair, protest affair,

attention seeking affair, burned out affair, romantic escape affair, hedge fund affair, and compulsive affairs (Woolley & Gold, 2010). Unintentional affairs are said to occur inadvertently. The offending partner was not intentionally seeking emotional or sexual fulfillment outside the relationship, but rather found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time, under the influence of some drug (such as alcohol), or blurred boundaries among coworkers, friends, or online relationships. The unintentional affair is the most common type of affair, especially when boundaries with people outside of the relationship are ill-defined, such as through the internet.

The protest affair occurs out of retaliation for feeling that the attachment needs in a relationship are not met, such as when a partner is not responsive, accessible, or attentive to the needs of the other partner (Woolley & Gold, 2010). The offender in this affair acts out of spite in order to seek revenge for perceived hurts or feelings of rejection. The attention seeking affair occurs in much the same way, but instead of seeking revenge the offending partner attempts to elicit jealousy through an affair in order to seek validation of his/her place in the relationship. In these two types of affairs, the offending partner seeks to have her attachment needs met outside of the relationship in order to either retaliate against her partner or to obtain validation for her place in the relationship.

The burned out affair occurs after a partner has failed to successfully have his/her attachment needs met in the relationship (Woolley & Gold, 2010). In this type of affair, the partner has essentially given up on getting his/her needs met within the relationship and turns to the outside to experience emotional or sexual fulfillment.

The romantic escape affair and the hedge fund affair occur when a partner feels shamed, unlovable, and fears abandonment from her partner (Woolley & Gold, 2010). Through the

romantic escape affair, she seeks to avoid relational difficulties through withdrawing from the relationship into an alternative relationship. The offending partner may have an alternate family or compartmentalize her life to escape the anxiety within the relationship. In the hedge-fund affair, the partner is highly fearful of abandonment and seeks relationships outside of the partnership so that she will not be lonely or on her own when the perceived inevitable end comes.

Finally, the compulsive affair is perpetrated almost exclusively by men. In this affair, the offending partner often experiences difficulty with associating emotional and physical intimacy (Woolley & Gold, 2010). The affair occurs with numerous partners and almost exclusively for sexual intimacy with no emotional attachment. Compulsive affairs may involve the use of pornography, strip clubs, prostitutes, and one-night stands. The offending partner often views himself as unlovable or shameful and experience great difficulty managing or identifying emotions.

This seven-affair typology can help researchers and clinicians to identify treatment goals, understand the etiology behind the affair, and to conceptualize the diverse nature of infidelity. The typology illustrates that affairs can occur in a variety of environments, such as through work, friendship networks, or the internet, and that affairs are preventable. Six of the seven affairs occur when attachment needs are not being met within the relationship, and the most common type (the unintentional affair) occurs when relational boundaries are not clearly identified and maintained. In fact, all seven could be conceptualized as an inability to clearly identify relational boundaries, as the boundaries identify the attachment needs and expectancies, both physical and emotional, which are to be met exclusively within the relationship.

The proliferation of social networking has resulted in a new, silent way in which affairs can occur through the internet. Anecdotal accounts of therapists report that online infidelity is becoming commonplace in couples who present with infidelity. However, despite the possibility and seeming rise of all seven of these affair types in offline and online relationships, studies on online or internet infidelity is scarce. No studies to date have monitored the prevalence of such affairs, and the majority of studies on internet infidelity have focused on defining internet infidelity and studying how attitudes that people have inform this type of infidelity.

Internet Infidelity

Although small, the literature on internet infidelity is growing as more attention is brought to this growing phenomenon. Even so, researchers have found little to no differences in attitudes and contributors of offline infidelity and internet infidelity (Hertlein & Piercy, 2006; Whitty, 2005). However, participants' definitions of internet infidelity tend to vary from person to person. Researchers have therefore struggled to come to a communal definition for internet infidelity. Despite these difficulties, offline and internet infidelity were found to occur with sexual and emotional infidelity, both of which were deemed equally distressing. In addition, pornography was linked to only internet infidelity.

Emotional infidelity was found to be the most common source of internet affairs (Hertlein & Piercy, 2006). The internet affords quick, easy access to friendship networks in the form of Facebook, chat rooms, and email. When the internet was first being studied for its effects on friendships, theorists and researchers hypothesized that online friendships would be less emotional, trusting, and close than offline friendships (Whitty & Carr, 2006). However, researchers have since discovered that the internet has changed significantly and can offer access to close, personal, and emotionally-charged relationships. Thus, it is quite possible that many

cases of internet infidelity contain a component of strong emotional intimacy (Hertlein & Piercy, 2006).

The internet is unique in that it affords users the ability to achieve sexual intimacy without ever physically meeting together (Gonyea, 2004; Millner, 2008). Through removing oneself from reality, users can experiment, fantasize, and engage in physical affairs through the safe window of a computer screen. However, current research data on users' online sexual behaviors have been largely limited to general internet use and not within romantic relationships. Nonetheless, the internet offers the ability to achieve sexual intimacy via the cyber world. Similar to offline infidelity, men reported sexual infidelity to be more distressing than emotional infidelity while women reported the opposite (Whitty & Carr, 2006).

Researchers found participants identify viewing pornography to be a unique form of internet infidelity (e.g., Henline, Lamke, & Howard, 2007; Hertlein & Piercy, 2006; Whitty, 2003) despite its availability offline. However, studies have not explored pornography as a form of internet infidelity, thus limiting our current understanding of this type of infidelity. In other words, when internet infidelity is studied beyond exploratory attitudes, internet infidelity is categorized only with emotional and physical categories.

Although few differences were found between offline and online infidelity, internet infidelity was found to have four distinguishing features -- accessibility, affordability, anonymity, and approximation (Cooper et al., 2002; Helm, 2010; Hertlein & Piercy, 2006). These four "A's" of internet relationships permit greater emotional and sexual availability while diminishing threats to oneself.

Accessibility refers to the convenience of internet availability (Hertlein & Piercy, 2006). The user has quick, easy access to the internet through personal computers, tablets, and

multimedia phones. The more easily a person can access the internet, the greater the opportunity for infidelity. In today's world, a person can have access to social networking and the internet at all times through laptops, tablets, and cell phones. Whereas offline infidelity needs space and time to commit, a person has access to the internet at any time—even while in the same room as his/her significant other.

Affordability is the dollar value of engaging in an online affair (Hertlein & Piercy, 2006). An internet user can find access to the internet for little to no cost. For a small to no fee, a user can find access to internet sites that permit the viewing of sexually explicit material, engage in online chats, or meet multiple sexual desires. The user also has less social cost to engaging in online infidelity. A user can end or change the nature of the infidelity without the cost related to doing the same in an offline infidelity.

Anonymity is the ability and ease that users can hide their identity, (Hertlein & Piercy, 2006) and promotes user profiles with mock names, pictures, and information. Not only can users change or augment their own appearances, but they can often also change or augment themselves in real time. The internet allows users to backspace, delete, or change what is expressed across the screen. Where in offline infidelity, individuals are seen, heard, and possibly judged for whom they are, the internet allows them to be heard, seen, and even judged for who they want to be. The internet allows the users to hide or change who they are, if they so desire.

Approximation conveys the capacity to experiment in sexual behaviors that they might not engage in ordinarily (Hertlein & Piercy, 2006). It affords the user to engage in sexual fantasy behavior not possible or realized offline. Cooper and colleagues (2002) found that out of 7,037 respondents from a multi-national study, one out of every five participants engaged in online sexual activities for this purpose. The internet provides a realm of fantasies in an

electronic world where anything can be imagined or depicted. It allows users to experiment or fantasize in ways that he/she may wish, but is not possible in the offline world with his/her partner.

Relationship Boundaries

Considering the ease and subtlety of internet infidelity, one may think that behaviors that prevent internet infidelity through relationship boundaries and expectancies may hold a high priority for couple and marital researchers. However, a search in the literature for prevention mechanisms, such as boundary setting or rules proved futile. One possible reason may be that couple boundaries can vary widely across and within couple relationships. For example, some couples may consider a close opposite-sex friendship a relationship betrayal while others may not even consider sexual encounters outside the relationship acts of infidelity, as is the case in many open marriages (Snyder & Doss, 2005; Whisman & Wagers, 2005).

In addition, as these rules are likely assumed and below conscious awareness, many individuals may hold differing views and expectations than their partners. However, even in open marriages there are expectancies for both sexual and emotional fidelity. For example, a couple that establishes an open marriage may experience infidelity if casual sexual encounters with other individuals evolve into frequent sexual relationships (Whisman & Wagers, 2005). Thus, all relationships appear to have some form of expectations and rules about relational fidelity.

The relationship expectancies established by couples create boundaries which protect the couple from harm, such as from attachment injuries like infidelity through rules that dictate behaviors in their given cultural context (Thieme, 1997). The existence of these expectations is readily seen in outcome research on affairs. Many couples can intuitively recognize when an

affair is occurring from the warning signs that indicate a relational boundary has been violated (Butler et al., 2008; Butler et al., 2009; Duba et al., 2008; Fife et al., 2008; Gordon et al., 2004).

It is possible that for many couples, these expectancies create powerful mechanisms around which relational trust is built, as the violations of such boundaries can result in attachment injury.

In respect to the use of the internet for social networking, it is not known what these rules are or what influences the setting of these rules and boundaries. A number of factors, such as relationship satisfaction, trust, history of infidelity, and personal characteristics, could influence the types and formation of boundaries for social networking.

History of Infidelity

Relationship history with infidelity may affect boundary setting in that past experience with an affair may make an individual more cognizant and open with establishing explicit boundaries that serve to protect the couple from repeated negative experiences. However, no research has established how infidelity history impacts relationship expectancies, rules, or boundaries. It is therefore possible that the opposite is true as well.

Nonetheless, experience of relationship infidelity is not limited to personal experiences with infidelity but includes parental and partner's past history infidelity. The potential impact of past experiences of infidelity in current relationships is implied in many therapeutic interventions for infidelity whereby treatment includes assessing for past experiences of infidelity. The knowledge that one's partner had been unfaithful in the past is expected to create reasons for insecurity and more need to establish personal and relational rules. Furthermore, history of internet infidelity is expected to have a more direct impact on the formation of internet social networking boundaries than offline infidelity.

Trust

Many models of trust have been proposed across the past several decades, such as Holmes (1989) development model and Weber's (2005) rational-choice model of trust.

Although these models have some differences in defining trust, most agree that trust involves sharing hopes, dreams, and aspirations and an individual's deepest worries and fears (Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Rubin, 2010). It is confiding in another in an intimate way, which places secrecy in opposition to trust-building and relinquishes control over to another (Zak, Collins, Harper, & Masher, 1998).

However, not all trust is equivalent. Studies have shown that the development and role of trust is significantly different across relationship types, such as work, friend, family, and intimate relationships (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000; Holmes & Rempel, 1989). Trust in intimate relationships is therefore unique to trust in other relationships. It develops over time and impacts intimate relationships in a distinct manner (Weber, Malhotra, & Murnighan, 2005).

Holmes (1991) posited that trust in the early stages of romantic love is first manifest as hope. As couples move beyond the initial phase of infatuation, trust then transforms into an evaluative stage where it is based on predictability. In the evaluative stage couples are observing each other's behaviors with a goal of gaining insight and understanding of how their partner reacts and responds in various situations (Holmes, 1991; Zak et al., 1998). It is possible that at this stage, couples are also beginning to formulate boundaries. Holmes (1991) describes this process as reducing uncertainty in the relationship. It is in this timeframe individuals begin to learn how their partner will care for them and respond to their needs (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). It is a time of testing and observing. Working through this stage, partners begin to understand how their partner would maintain trust across time and everyday experiences.

After partners learn enough about each other's behaviors trust begins to develop into the second stage, dependability (Holmes, 1991). At this stage, partners' belief of trust is dependent on their perspective that their partner is honest, cooperative, reliable, and benevolent towards them. This stage is focused on the trustworthiness of the partner's traits rather than his or her actions. As the relationship develops, individuals begin to learn that their partners' actions and traits are trustworthy. Couples learn that their partners are dependable, reliable sources of trust.

If couples work through the dependability stage, they may develop the final stage of trust, which is based off of expectations and faith (Holmes, 1991; Zak et al., 1998). In this final stage of trust, partners place expectations of trust on not only traits and behaviors, but also on their partners' motives. As trust moves into this final stage, the relationship is seen as valuable, predictive, and dependable based on the positive expectations that couples have for each other. Trust becomes represented as confident expectations of positive traits, behaviors, and motivations by the partner.

However, trust has been shown to be predicted by self-perception where couples project trust onto their partner based on their own behaviors (Zak, Gold, Ryckman, & Lenney, 1998). According to self-perception theory (Bem, 1967), individuals examine their own beliefs and then infer them onto their partner. Partners who are trustworthy will place their own motivations, traits, and actions onto their partner. Essentially, behaving in a trustworthy manner increases felt trust in the relationship.

For these reasons, trust has been shown to be a powerful predictor of future relationship stability (Campbell et al., 2010). For example, in most long-term marriages the lowest levels of trust are most often indicated as moderate on empirically validated trust scales because relationships with low levels dissolve after a relatively short time. Stets (1995) found that levels

of control can be significantly related to trust where low levels are predictive of a greater need to control. Trust has also been shown to be a key factor leading to the stability of satisfaction across time (Campbell et al., 2010). Higher levels of trust have also been shown to be significantly associated with positive, well-integrated, and well-balanced working models of self. Trust is a strong relationship process that has been shown to directly impact relationship expectations, quality, and views of partners' motivations.

Internet boundaries may be influenced by the development of relationship trust. Lewicki and Bunker (1995) described three stages of trust development from calculus-based, to knowledge-based to identification-based trust. Calculus-based trust is most likely driven by the values and benefits of cheating. Knowledge-based trust is predicated upon deeper interpersonal familiarity that emerges with repeated interaction. Identification-based trust is achieved when the other's desires and intentions are fully internalized. At this stage, couples share strong emotional bonds and similar values that form the environment for self-disclosure.

By the time couples reach the final stage of trust development, the relationship is viewed as stable and worthwhile, and boundaries may begin to solidify. Internet boundaries may therefore be predicted by the formation of trust. As trust develops across time, expectations for their partners are formed based on traits, experience, and self-perception. However, it is unknown how trust may impact the use of boundaries. It is possible that increased trust displaces the need for such relationship processes or that boundaries are a manifestation of distrust. As trust develops and grows, the utility of such boundaries may become obsolete in the marriage. However, the opposite may be true as well. As trust develops and grows, it may be manifest more fully in boundary use. In the case of internet boundaries, couples may protect their

expectations formed in the final stage of trust through the use of boundaries. For these reasons, the current study will investigate how trust is related to the use of internet boundaries.

Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is a critical relationship process to include in the study for several reasons. To begin, it has been found to be highly correlated with trust (Campbell et al., 2010; Fleeson & Leicht, 2006; Goldberg, 1982). Although much of the literature on trust indicates that satisfaction may be an outcome of increased trust, a causal relationship is difficult to prove. Trust and satisfaction increase simultaneously across time and most studies have not studied their relationship longitudinally. Those that have did not test the relationship each way. Nevertheless, trust and satisfaction are two interconnected relationship processes.

It is unknown how boundaries may be impacted by relationship satisfaction. It is possible that higher levels of relationship satisfaction are associated with decreases in the use of such boundaries. Couples who are satisfied in their relationship will likely also hold higher trust and have no need to create boundaries that serve to protect the relationships expectations. It is also possible that relationship satisfaction increases the use of internet boundaries. If this were true, then it is possible that increased satisfaction may indicate a greater value for the relationship. The need to protect it through boundaries may thereby increase. However, as no research has been conducted for internet boundaries, the relationship between it and satisfaction is unknown.

Research Questions

This study is designed to fill the gap in the literature by identifying the features of boundaries that currently married couples set pertaining to internet use for social networking, if

any, and how trust and satisfaction contribute to these boundaries. The intention of this study is to learn from couples who have not only entered a legally binding relationship but are successfully maintaining their marriages. This is one of the many benefits that we can derive from such couples.

Given that identifying boundary setting for internet use is a new area that has not been investigated, this is an exploratory study guided by the concepts of trust development theory and institutional embeddedness that will examine the following research questions:

RQ1: What boundaries do couples have for their internet use?

RQ2: What is the relationship between boundary setting for internet use and relational trust and satisfaction?

RQ3: How does history of infidelity influence the relationship between trust and relationship satisfaction on boundary setting for internet use?

Chapter 3 - Method

Participants and Data Collection

Participants consisted of 255 parents of students from three undergraduate courses in a family studies program of a large Midwestern university. Participants who did not identify their relationship status as “currently married,” provided duplicate responses, or completed only the demographic questions were omitted.

The final analysis included 205 married individuals, with 98 male and 107 female participants. All missing data was handled using maximum likelihood method. The mean age of participants was 51.66 years ($SD = 5.56$) and the mean marital length was 27.86 years ($SD = 7.04$). Of this, 196 participants were White (95.6%), 2 were Latino (1.0%), 3 were Black (1.5%), and 1 was Asian (0.5%). Furthermore, 152 participants identified the best description of their daily activities and responsibilities as “full-time, working” (74.1%), 22 as “part-time, working” (10.7%), 4 as “unemployed or laid off” (2.0%), 17 as “keeping house or raising children full-time” (8.3%), and 10 as “retired” (4.9%). For educational level, 53 held a high school diploma or GED (25.9%), 22 an associate degree (10.7%), 87 a bachelor’s degree (42.4%), 31 a master’s degree (15.1%), 1 a doctoral (0.5%), and 3 with other professional training or credentials (1.5%).

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Kansas State University’s Institution Research Board. Potential participants were invited to voluntarily complete the survey. No compensation was provided directly to participants. However, extra credit was offered to students if their parents completed the survey and an alternative assignment for equal extra credit if their parents did not participate. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point in time. They were also informed that their student child was offered an

alternative assignment if they chose not to participate or did not fully complete the survey. To ensure anonymity, no identifiable information was gathered from any participant other than their student child's last name and student number to assign the extra credit points.

Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire (see Appendix B) consisted of four subsections: demographics, internet rules, relationship questions and history of infidelity. The first subsection gathered basic demographic information, such as education, age, and ethnicity. The second subsection, internet rules, gathered information pertaining to the couples' rules for internet use for social networking. The third subsection, relationship questions, consisted of relationship satisfaction and trust scales. The final subsection enquired about the couple's history with infidelity.

Internet Boundaries

Five boundaries were identified as dependent variables in the current study. Participants were asked to respond along a 7-point Likert-type scale, where 1 indicated "completely agree" and 7 "completely disagree", with the following statements: "You and your partner share all passwords to each other's social internet accounts (e.g. Facebook, twitter, email, online games)" (abbreviated to Share Passwords), "You and your partner know all of each other's internet friends" (abbreviated to Know Friends), "You and your partner have access to each other social networking sites" (abbreviated to Account Access), "My partner and I agree that we do not have online relationships with former romantic partners" (abbreviated to No Former Partners), and "My partner and I agree that we do not flirt with online friends" (abbreviated to No Flirting). The scores were then reverse coded for analysis so that higher scores indicated greater agreeability with the boundary. In addition, participants were given an opportunity to identify

additional boundaries that either they perceived as important in their marriage or would like to have in their marriage, whether implied, explicit, or written.

ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale

The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (ENRICH) is a 10-item standardized marital quality scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993). Respondents responded to items using a 5-point Likert scale from “1- Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly Agree”. Sample responses include: “I am very happy with how we handle role responsibilities in our marriage,” “I am not happy about our communication and feel my partner does not understand me,” “I am very happy about how we make decisions and resolve conflicts,” and “I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions.” After reverse coding negative items, all scores were summed so that higher scores indicated greater satisfaction. Internal reliability of the ENRICH was found by Fowers and Olson (1993) to be satisfactory, with Cronbach’s alpha estimates of 0.86. Test-retest reliability over a period of four weeks also indicated a reliability coefficient of 0.86. The Cronbach’s alpha for the current study was 0.84.

Trust in Close Relationships Scale

The Trust in Close Relationships Scale (TCR) is a 16-item standardized scale that consists of three dimensions of trust: faith, dependability, and predictability (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). Participants responded to items along a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 – “Completely Agree to 7 “Completely Disagree.” Sample items include: “I am never certain that my partner won’t do something that I dislike or will embarrass me” (predictability), “My partner has proven to be trustworthy and I am willing to let my partner engage in activities which other partners find too threatening” (dependability), and “I can rely on my partner to react in a positive way when I expose my weaknesses to my partner” (faith). Positive items were then reverse coded and

summed so that higher scores indicated higher marital trust. Internal reliability of the TCR was found by Holmes and Rempel (1989) to be satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha estimates of 0.81. Cronbach's alpha for the current study was strong at 0.94.

Infidelity

Participants were asked about their personal and relational history of infidelity for themselves and their partners. Participants were asked whether they, their partner, or their parents have ever experienced a relational affair. If a history of infidelity was identified participants were then asked if the affair had occurred online or offline. Few participants therefore reported a history of affair. From the 205 participants included in the final analysis 11.7 percent ($N = 24$) identified a history of infidelity. From that, 6 (2.9%) identified infidelity by the current partner in a past relationship, 11 (5.4%) an affair by their current partner in the current relationship, 6 (2.9%) an affair by a former partner while in that relationship, 7 (3.4%) an affair by the participant in the current relationship, 1 (1.5%) an affair by the participant in a former relationship, and 25 (12.2%) an affair by one of their parents. Furthermore, only 2 participants identified an internet affair of any kind. The number of participants that reported a history of affair was too few to utilize as a mediator in the analysis of data. Therefore, infidelity was eliminated as a mediator from data analysis due to insufficient power.

Chapter 4 - Results

Preliminary Analyses

The data were first scanned to determine whether participants (parents of students) were married couples. Two problems were apparent. First, not all parents were married to each other. Some were single, divorced, or cohabitating. Second, many parents reported relationship length that differed from their partners' reported relationship length. The difference made it challenging to determine if the parents shared the same relationship. Therefore, a dyadic analysis was not appropriate for the sample. Instead, male and female groups were created to conduct group comparisons.

Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess normality and multicollinearity of study variables. Skewness and kurtosis results indicated sufficient data normality. Kline (2011) suggests that for data to be considered within acceptable limits of normality, the absolute value of skewness should be less than 3 and kurtosis no more than 10. The skewness for all independent variables and scaled items indicated data normality, with skewness ranging from 1.21 for Know Friends item to 3.04 for No Flirting item (see Table 1). The kurtosis likewise indicated sufficient normality, ranging from 0.17 for Know Friends item to 8.71 for No Flirting item.

An examination of the intercorrelations of study variables indicated that the relationship between internet boundaries and marital satisfaction and trust were positively related and statistically significant, with the exception of the Satisfaction and Account Access ($r = 0.14, p = ns$) (see Table 2). Furthermore, multicollinearity was not indicated as no correlations exceeded 0.80 (Field, 2009). As data indicated sufficient normality and multicollinearity was not

identified as a problem, no data transformations were conducted. Next, the research questions were tested using *t*-tests, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modeling.

Boundaries for Internet Use

In addition to the five boundaries that were elicited in the survey, participants had the opportunity to note other boundaries (rules) to monitor the use of the internet. Only six participants identified additional boundaries. Some examples included, “no hidden friends,” “do not delete anything that is in an adjoining site without the other viewing it,” and “if opposite gender says anything to indicate flirting, tell partner.” The insufficient response made adding these items to the current study impossible.

Data further indicated that participants generally agreed with all five internet boundaries ($M > 5.50$) -- “Share Passwords,” “Know Friends,” “Account Access,” “No Former Partners,” and “No Flirting.” Further examination of the difference of use between men and women indicated one significant difference (see Table 3). Men were found to have significantly greater agreeability than women with “No Flirting” as a boundary ($t = -2.01$, $df = 203$, $p < 0.05$; $M = 6.31$, $SD = 1.57$ for men; $M = 6.69$, $SD = 1.01$ for women). These results suggest men and women in this study did not differ in the degree they shared passwords and online friends, had access to their partners’ online accounts, and had no contact with former romantic partners.

The Relationship between Boundary Setting for Internet Use and Relational Trust and Satisfaction

To examine the main research question pertaining to the relationship between boundaries for internet use and relational trust and satisfaction, two analyses were performed. The first was a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test for the presence of latent factor/s with internet

boundaries. Next, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the model presented in Figure 1. These analyses were performed using Amos 18 statistical software (Arbuckle, 2009).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA results (presented in Figure 1) for a single latent factor displayed poor model fit ($\chi^2 = 202.51$, $df = 5$, $p < 0.001$; TLI = 0.39; CFI = 0.69; RMSEA = .44, 90% CI: 0.39 to 0.49).

Model fit indices are considered acceptable when the Chi-square is non-significant, the CFI or TLI is greater than 0.90, and the RMSEA is less than 0.08 (Kline, 2011). Factor loadings indicated a possible two-factor model with “Share Passwords” ($\lambda = 0.81$), “Know Friends” ($\lambda = 0.82$), and “Account Access” ($\lambda = 0.88$) as one factor and “No Former Partners” ($\lambda = 0.55$) and “No Flirting” ($\lambda = 0.60$) as another factor. The first three boundaries reflect being open and sharing information and were consequently collapsed into a latent variable named “Openness.” The fourth and fifth boundaries describe behavioral restrictions that can help maintain faithfulness in relationships and were collapsed to reflect “Fidelity.”

CFA for a two-factor model (presented in Figure 2) produced an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 5.68$, $df = 4$, $p = ns$; TLI = 0.99; CFI = 0.99; RMSEA = .05, 90% CI: 0.00 to 0.12). The first factor was Openness (Share Passwords: $\lambda = .81$, Know Friends: $\lambda = .82$, and Account Access: $\lambda = .91$), and the second factor was Fidelity (No Former Partners: $\lambda = 0.86$ and No Flirting: $\lambda = 0.98$). Factor loadings are considered acceptable when greater than 0.60 (Kline, 2011). A Chi-square difference test of the single and two-factor models indicated that the two-factor model was significantly better than the single-factor model ($\chi^2_{diff} = 196.83$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$) (see Table 4). Internal reliability estimates were conducted for both factors and found the Cronbach’s alpha scores to be 0.88 for Openness and 0.91 for Fidelity.

Structural Equation Model

A group comparison tested the relationship between trust and satisfaction on the internet boundaries: Openness and Fidelity, for men and women. The model was tested simultaneously for both groups while allowing each pair of the corresponding paths to freely estimate. Prior to running the final model, the following two analyses were performed.

First, control variables that included relationship length, education level, race, and age were included in the model. These control variables did not significantly change any of the model parameters or overall fit, despite creating a severely underpowered model due to the large number of additional parameters placed on the model. Because of the insignificant impact of the control variables, these variables were excluded from the final model. Second, the model was tested for configural and weak invariance using MPlus 6.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2010) to determine that the model measured similar constructs for both men and women. Results indicated that the change in CFI did not exceed 0.01, meaning that the model measured the constructs – internet boundaries, trust and satisfaction – equivalently for men and women (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). These results made comparing the groups possible.

The structural equation model showed acceptable model fit ($\chi^2 = 35.11$, $df = 20$, $p < 0.05$; TLI = .96; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.06, 90% CI: 0.02 to 0.09) (see Table 5). Results indicated only one significant difference between men and women. The path from Trust to Fidelity was found to be significantly stronger for men than women ($t = -3.98$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$ for men; $\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$ for women) (see Figure 3). For both groups, the paths from Trust to Openness and Fidelity were significant and the paths from Satisfaction to the Openness and Fidelity were not significant.

For men, the paths were significant from Trust to Openness ($\beta = 0.39, p < 0.01$) and from Trust to Fidelity ($\beta = 0.67, p < 0.001$). The paths from Satisfaction to both Openness ($\beta = -0.07, p = ns$) and Fidelity ($\beta = -0.08, p = ns$) were not significant. Furthermore, the correlations between the residuals for the factors, Openness and Fidelity ($r = 0.45, p < 0.001$), and the exogenous variables, Satisfaction and Trust ($r = 0.54, p < 0.001$), were significant. The model for men accounted for 39% of the explained variance in Fidelity ($R^2 = 0.39$) and 13% of the variance in Openness ($R^2 = 0.13$).

For women, the paths were significant from Trust to Openness ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.05$) and from Trust to Fidelity ($\beta = 0.40, p < 0.001$). The paths from Satisfaction to both Openness ($\beta = 0.05, p = ns$) and Fidelity ($\beta = -0.10, p = ns$) were not significant. Furthermore, the correlations between the residuals for the factors, Openness and Fidelity ($r = 0.51, p < 0.001$), and the exogenous variables, Satisfaction and Trust ($r = 0.61, p < 0.001$), were significant. For women, the model accounted for 12% each in Openness ($R^2 = 0.12$) and Fidelity ($R^2 = 0.12$).

Results suggest that for both men and women, trust was associated with the use of internet boundaries while satisfaction was not. Trust for men was more strongly associated with the use of boundaries that reflect fidelity than it did for women.

Testing Alternative Models

Before confirming the final model, three alternative models were tested. First, the path coefficients were reversed where Openness and Fidelity were input as predictors of Satisfaction and Trust (see Figure 4). Second, Openness and Fidelity were input as mediators between trust and satisfaction (see Figure 5). Because the data were gathered at one time point and these two models were equivalent alternatives, all model fit indices were comparable to the original model. Furthermore, internet boundaries did not indicate significant effects as a mediator for trust and

satisfaction. Given these results, the original model was maintained. Neither of the alternative models indicated a significantly better fit and the original model is the one that theoretically fits the research question.

A third alternative model was tested using recommended respecifications as indicated by MPlus 6.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2010). Accordingly, a model was tested correlating the residuals for “No Former Partners” and “Know Friends” (see Figure 6). This model indicated near perfect fit ($\chi^2 = 18.17$, $df = 18$, $p = ns$; TLI = 1.00; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.01, 90% CI (0.00 - 0.06). The correlated residuals indicated that “No Former Partners” and “Know Friends” were significantly correlated ($r = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) for women and not significantly correlated for men ($r = -0.10$, $p = ns$). This model was ultimately rejected on the bases of recommended model fit procedures. Kline (2011) warned against correlating model residuals on the basis of model fit alone, stating that there must be substantive theoretical and empirical reason to add such correlations. Adding the correlation between the two residuals made no more empirical or theoretical sense than adding a correlation between any of the other residual terms from the observed factors. Therefore, despite the implications of the finding this alternative model was ultimately rejected.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Internet Boundaries

Identifying boundary setting for internet use is a new area that has not been investigated. This exploratory study examined five possible internet boundaries couples may use for social networking and how their use is associated with relational trust and satisfaction. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the five boundary items best fit into two broader latent constructs. The first, Openness, refers to couples' belief that each partner's social networking activity should be open for the partner to view through sharing passwords, knowing each other's online friends, and having access to each other's online social networking accounts, such as email, Facebook, Twitter, and online games. The second boundary, Fidelity, refers to the couples' belief that emotional fidelity extends to online activity through not flirting with others online and having no online relationships with former romantic partners.

These results suggest that there are at least two main constructs that capture the possible myriad of ways in which couples maintain their relationships online. Openness speaks of sharing and not hiding or having secret relationships. Fidelity speaks of setting limits with who one can have online contact. Both strategies appear to complement each other. In some ways, these strategies reflect the relationship maintenance strategies -- assurances and sharing social networks -- identified by Canary and Stafford (1994). For example, the act of sharing information such as passwords to social networking sites can be reassuring to one's partner and send the message that one has nothing to hide. Similar explanations apply to curbing flirtatious communication that can be construed as an act of fidelity that helps maintain the relationship.

A significant finding was uncovered for internet boundaries by the third alternative model (represented in Figure 6). According to these results, the correlation between "Know Friends"

and “No Former Partners” was strong for women but nearly nonexistent for men. This indicates that one way women may expect their partner to assure them that they have no online relationships with former romantic partners is to share their online friends. However, the same was not found to be true for men. Therefore, sharing friends may only be an indicator of online fidelity for women. Further research would be appropriate to determine the validity of this finding.

The Role of Trust

Factors that are associated with boundaries for internet use were examined. Trust but not relationship satisfaction was significantly related to the use of internet boundaries for both men and women. Furthermore, trust had stronger association with fidelity-type internet boundaries for men than for women.

Results indicate that as trust increases in marital relationships, the use of openness and fidelity internet boundaries pertaining to social networking also increases. The results are supported by Lewicki and Bunker’s (1995) stage development theory of trust that posits that at the highest level of trust, the full internalization of the other’s desires and intentions means understanding each other, agreeing on what each other wants and supporting the pursuit of common goals. Given that participants in this study were married for an average of 27 years and that the mean score of trust was high ($M = 94.32$), it would be safe to assume that this highest level of trust has been reached by a majority of participants. Trust at this stage for these participants is evidenced by behaviors that protect the relationship and demonstrate care and concern for the well-being of their partners. In addition to reflecting identification-based trust, the use of internet boundaries in marriages reflects knowledge-base and calculus-based trust. Knowledge-based trust is indicated by predictability, dependability and reliability, while

calculus-based trust is founded on the understanding that there are rewards for preserving confidence as well as punishments for violating confidence. The continued adherence to boundaries for internet use could be easily motivated by these latter two trusts.

Interestingly, results are contrary to a popular belief that trust implies increased privacy. Rather, trust leads to greater transparency for internet social networking. This finding supports the idea that internet boundaries serve to protect relationships because increased trust is associated with increased openness. As couples are less open, it is possible that secrecy could form, which has been identified as a necessary cause for infidelity (Duba et al., 2008; Woolley & Gold, 2010). Without secrecy, infidelity does not typically occur. Therefore, openness may function as a protective factor in relationships.

These results are also congruent with past research on trust in relationships where trust is highly related to expectations (Holmes, 1991). The long marital length of the sample population represents couples that would be expected to have developed the final stage of trust, where expectations and faith defines trust (Holmes, 1991; Lewicki & Bunker, 1995). It is theorized that boundaries are created from expectations and rules that protect the relationship from harm. In the current study it appears that the greater the trust, the more likely that trust is expressed through internet boundaries that represent expectations for fidelity and openness. This explanation does not support a common belief that trust implies a lack of need to prove or show fidelity. Rather, it supports that mature relational trust represents expectations based off of partner's behaviors and motivations. Therefore, the finding that higher trust is associated with increased boundary use is congruent with trust development theory.

The Role of Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction did not appear to relate to the use of internet boundaries, suggesting that the setting of boundaries for internet use has a different function than relationship maintenance behaviors (Canary & Stafford, 1994). As expected and consistent with previous findings, relationship satisfaction and trust shared a strong positive relationship (Campbell et al., 2010; Fleeson & Leicht, 2006; Goldberg, 1982). The lack of relationship between satisfaction and internet boundaries, however, indicates that trust and satisfaction have different roles in marriage. Therefore, trust and satisfaction may be expressed very differently. For one, unlike trust, marital satisfaction is not displayed in ways that are related to rules that limit behavior. As satisfaction is most often included as an outcome, or dependent variable, in studies it is not clear what the role of satisfaction may be. The current study indicates that satisfaction may not influence expectations and rules related to internet use.

Limitations

There are several limitations in this study. To begin, data were gathered at a single time point and therefore no conclusions of causality or prediction can be stated with empirical support. To better understand how Openness and Fidelity are impacted by or impacts marital trust and satisfaction, data across multiple time points would be necessary.

The sample in this data set represented a fairly homogenous group of White older parents, with an average age of 52 years, who tended to have higher education, and have children in family studies programs. Results lack generalizability to the general populous. Furthermore, internet boundaries may be different across generational cohorts, especially with the younger cohorts who have been raised in a digital society. Replication of these findings across a broader, more diverse sample is needed.

Finally, possible spurious and confounding variables were not tested. The exploratory nature of this study made a search for these variables impractical. However, the presence of a relationship indicates a necessity to replicate the findings while controlling for possible spurious associations. It is possible that the results found between trust and the internet boundaries may be a result of a hidden factor, such as age, commitment, or beliefs about social networking. The implications of these findings therefore should be taken with caution.

Implications for Future Research

Internet boundaries are a new area of couple research. These findings indicate that couples may hold boundaries for social networking in their relationship. The purpose that these boundaries serve and what other boundaries may exist are unknown. Further investigation into the nature, purpose, and effects that these boundaries have in couples relationships is needed.

Additionally, refinement is needed for the currently identified internet boundaries. As this was an exploratory study, the creation and testing of an empirically supported measure for internet boundaries was not intended. The creation of an empirically validated measure for Openness, Fidelity, and other boundaries would help future researchers investigate the nature of internet boundaries more fully. To begin, a qualitative inquiry to generate other possible boundaries may be helpful into creating such a measurement tool.

Beyond creating empirically validated scales, it would be appropriate to begin investigating more fully how internet infidelity impacts the use of internet boundaries. Data in the current study was insufficient to make such an investigation. A greater sample with a history of internet infidelity would allow for such an examination.

Conclusion

Little is understood about the impact of technology in couple relationships or how couples manage its influence. The present study contributes to the literature by identifying two internet boundaries and presenting how trust and satisfaction is related to the use of internet boundaries. First, findings suggest that couples in long-term committed relationships have boundaries or rules for social networking. Next, trusting one's partner, but not relationship satisfaction, contributes to behaviors that reflect sharing online social networking information and curb online flirting and relationships with former romantic partners. Finally, trust is especially associated with men's motivation to avoid flirtatious online interaction and communicating with former romantic partners online. These findings correspond with trust development theory where it is expected that long-term committed relationships would display trust by engaging in behaviors that promote the relationship.

Appendix A - References

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Appendix B - Questionnaire

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Please provide your child's 9 digit student ID and last name in order for your child to receive extra class credit. This information will not be used in the reporting of results. Your child was to provide the student ID to you when he/she informed you of this survey:
Student ID: _____ Last name: _____
2. In what year were you born? _____
3. What is your biological sex?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
4. What is your ethnic race? (indicate all that apply)
 - a. White or European
 - b. Non-White Hispanic or Latino
 - c. Black or African Descent
 - d. Asian
 - e. Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - f. Native American or Alaskan Native
 - g. Other
5. What is the highest level of education you earned?
 - a. High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
 - b. Associate degree (Junior college)
 - c. Bachelor's degree
 - d. Master's degree
 - e. Doctorate
 - f. Professional (MD, JD, DDS, etc.)
 - g. Other, specify: _____
 - h. None of the above
6. Which of the following best describes your main daily activities and/or responsibilities?
 - a. Working full-time
 - b. Working part-time
 - c. Unemployed or laid off
 - d. Looking for work
 - e. Keeping house or raising children full-time
 - f. Retired

7. What is your current relationship status?
- a. Single, not dating
 - b. Dating
 - c. Cohabiting, not married
 - d. Married
 - e. Separated
 - f. Divorced
 - g. Other: _____
8. If married, dating, or cohabiting, in what year and month did the relationship begin?
_____ Year _____Month

INTERNET RULES

This section pertains to rules for internet use that you may have in your marriage. ‘Rules’ refer to agreements and/or understandings that you and your spouse have. These rules may be explicit or implied/assumed, and written or verbal.

- A. Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements using the following scale:
- 1) Completely Agree
 - 2) Mostly Agree
 - 3) Slightly Somewhat Agree
 - 4) Unsure
 - 5) Slightly Disagree
 - 6) Mostly Disagree
 - 7) Completely Disagree
9. You and your partner share all passwords to each other’s social internet accounts (e.g. Facebook, twitter, email, online games).
10. You and your partner know all of each other’s internet friends.
11. You and your partner have access to each other social networking sites.
12. My partner and I agree that we do not have online relationships with former romantic partners.
13. My partner and I agree that we do not flirt with online friends.

14. If you and your partner have additional rules about internet use for social networking (email, Facebook, chat rooms, etc.), please state what these rules are. At the end of each rule that you identified, please indicate if this rule is implied/assumed, verbalized or written using the following letters:

I - implied/assumed

V - verbalized

W - written

15. If you and your partner currently DO NOT have internet rules for social networking, but you would like to have rules, what would these rules be? Please describe or list those rules:

RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

This section pertains to behaviors in your marriage and how you feel about your partner and your marriage.

B. Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements using the following scale:

- 1) Very Strongly Disagree
- 2) Strongly Disagree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Neither Disagree nor Agree
- 5) Agree
- 6) Strongly Agree
- 7) Very Strongly Agree

16. We have a good relationship.

17. My relationship with my partner is very stable

18. My relationship with my partner is strong.

19. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.

20. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.

C. Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements using the following scale:

- 1) Extremely Unhappy
- 2) Unhappy
- 3) Neutral
- 4) Happy
- 5) Perfectly Happy

21. All things considered, what degree of happiness best describes your relationship?

D. Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements using the following scale:

- a. Completely Agree
- b. Mostly Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Unsure
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Mostly Disagree
- g. Completely Disagree

22. My partner has proven to be trustworthy and I am willing to let him/her engage in activities which other partners find too threatening.

23. Even when I don't know how my partner will react, I feel comfortable telling him/her anything about myself; even those things of which I am ashamed.

24. Though times may change and the future is uncertain; I know my partner will always be ready and willing to offer me strength and support.

25. I am never certain that my partner won't do something that I dislike or will embarrass me.

26. My partner is very unpredictable. I never know how he/she is going to act from one day to the next.

27. I have found that my partner is unusually dependable, especially when it comes to things which are important to me.

28. My partner behaves in a very consistent manner.

29. Whenever we have to make an important decision in a situation we have never encountered before, I know my partner will be concerned about my welfare.

30. Even if I have no reason to expect my partner to share things with me, I still feel certain that he/she will.

31. I can rely on my partner to react in a positive way when I expose my weaknesses to him/her.
32. When I share my problems with my partner, I know he/she will respond in a loving way even before I say anything.
33. I am certain that my partner would not cheat on me, even if the opportunity arose and there was no chance that he/she would get caught.
34. I sometimes avoid my partner because he/she is unpredictable and I fear saying or doing something which might create conflict.
35. I can rely on my partner to keep the promises he/she makes to me.
36. When I am with my partner I feel secure in facing unknown new situations.
37. Even when my partner makes excuses which sound rather unlikely, I am confident that he/she is telling the truth.

E. Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements using the following scale:

- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Somewhat Agree
 - d. Unsure
 - e. Somewhat Disagree
 - f. Disagree
 - g. Strongly Disagree
38. I am not pleased with the personality characteristics and personal habits of my partner.
 39. I am very happy with how we handle role responsibilities in our marriage.
 40. I am not happy about our communication and feel my partner does not understand me.
 41. I am very happy about how we make decisions and resolve conflicts.
 42. I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions.
 43. I am very happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.
 44. I am very pleased about how we express affection and relate sexually.
 45. I am not satisfied with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents.

46. I am dissatisfied about our relationship with my parents, in-laws, and/or friends.

47. I feel very good about how we each practice our religious beliefs and values.

F. Please rate the following statements using the following scale:

Not at all	Marginally	Somewhat less	Neutral	Somewhat more	Quite a lot	Extremely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

48. How satisfied are you with your relationship?

49. How content are you with your relationship?

50. How happy are you with your relationship?

51. How committed are you to your relationship?

52. How dedicated are you to your relationship?

53. How devoted are you to your relationship?

54. How intimate is your relationship?

55. How close is your relationship?

56. How connected are you to your partner?

57. How much do you trust your partner?

58. How much can you count on your partner?

59. How dependable is your partner?

60. How passionate is your relationship?

61. How lustful is your relationship?

62. How sexually intense is your relationship?

63. How much do you love your partner?

64. How much do you adore your partner?

65. How much do you cherish your partner?

INFIDELITY

This final question relates to infidelity.

66. Have you or your current or former partner ever engaged in a relationship that would be considered a relational affair?

- a. No, neither my partner (current or former) nor I have had any relational affairs.
- b. Yes, my current partner was involved in a relational affair in his/her previous relationship/s.
Please state type of relationship: 1. Internet affair 2. Offline affair
- c. Yes, my current partner was involved in a relational affair during our relationship.
Please state type of relationship: 1. Internet affair 2. Offline affair
- d. Yes, my former partner was involved in a relational affair during our relationship.
Please state type of relationship: 1. Internet affair 2. Offline affair
- e. Yes, I was involved in a relational affair in my current relationship.
Please state type of relationship: 1. Internet affair 2. Offline affair
- f. Yes, I was involved in a relational affair in my former relationship.
Please state type of relationship: 1. Internet affair 2. Offline affair

67. Did either of your parents ever engaged in a relationship that would be considered a relational affair?

- a. No, neither my parent had any relational affairs.
- b. Yes, one or both of my parents was involved in a relational affair.

Thank you for your participation

Appendix C - Tables

Table 1

Internet Boundary Variables Satisfaction, and Trust: Descriptive Statistics (N = 205)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	α
Share Passwords	5.64	2.05	1 - 7	-1.36	0.36	-
Know Friends	5.48	1.95	1 - 7	-1.21	0.17	-
Account Access	5.70	2.00	1 - 7	-1.38	0.45	-
No Former Partners	6.32	4.47	1 - 7	-2.39	5.05	-
No Flirting	6.51	1.32	1 - 7	-3.04	8.71	-
Trust	94.32	18.85	16 – 112	-1.86	0.34	0.94
Satisfaction	40.53	7.82	10 – 50	-0.73	-0.22	0.84

Table 2

Intercorrelations for Internet Boundary Variables, Satisfaction, and Trust (N = 205)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Share Passwords	–						
2. Know Friends	0.65**	–					
3. Account Access	0.73**	0.74**	–				
4. No Former Partners	0.40**	0.42**	0.40**	–			
5. No Flirting	0.44**	0.44**	0.49**	0.85**	–		
6. Trust	0.35**	0.30**	0.25**	0.40**	0.43**	–	
7. Satisfaction	0.21**	0.18**	0.14	0.16*	0.21**	0.58**	–

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3

Intercorrelations for Internet Boundary Variables, Satisfaction, and Trust (N = 98 for Men, N = 107 for Women)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Share Passwords	–	.76**	.79**	.37**	.45**	.35**	.22*
2. Know Friends	.56**	–	.72**	.51**	.46**	.32**	.26**
3. Account Access	.68**	.76**	–	.35**	.48**	.21*	.16
4. No Former Partners	.42**	.37**	.44**	–	.76**	.28**	.11
5. No Flirting	.45**	.45**	.50**	.89**	–	.32**	.14
6. Trust	.37**	.29**	.31**	.57**	.60**	–	.61**
7. Satisfaction	.21*	.09	.12	.22*	.28**	.54**	–
Men							
<i>M</i>	5.52	5.45	5.61	6.13	6.31	95.76	41.03
<i>(SD)</i>	(2.20)	(1.99)	(2.08)	(1.70)	(1.57)	(16.92)	(7.75)
Women							
<i>M</i>	5.75	5.50	5.78	6.50	6.69	93.01	40.07
<i>(SD)</i>	(1.91)	(1.92)	(1.92)	(1.19)	(1.01)	(20.45)	(7.89)
<i>t</i> -test ^a (<i>df</i> = 203)	-0.78	-0.20	-0.59	-1.75	-2.01*	1.04	0.87

Note: Lower half of intercorrelations represent Men. Upper half of intercorrelations represent women.

^aRepresents independent sample *t*-tests by sex.

p* < 0.05 *p* < 0.01.

Table 4

Goodness-of-Fit Indicators of Latent Variables for Relationship Boundaries: Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Two-Factor Model (N = 205)

Model	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df	χ^2_{diff}	CFI	RMSEA
Single Factor	202.51***	5	121.26	-	0.69	0.44
Two Factors ^a	5.68	4	1.42	196.83***	0.99	0.05

^aTwo-factor model loaded with Share Passwords, Know Friends, and Account Access as Factor 1 and No Former Partners and No Flirting loaded as Factor 2.

*** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5

Unstandardized and Standardized Factor Loadings, Correlations, and Path Coefficients for Men and Women Group Comparisons Structural Equation Model (N =205)

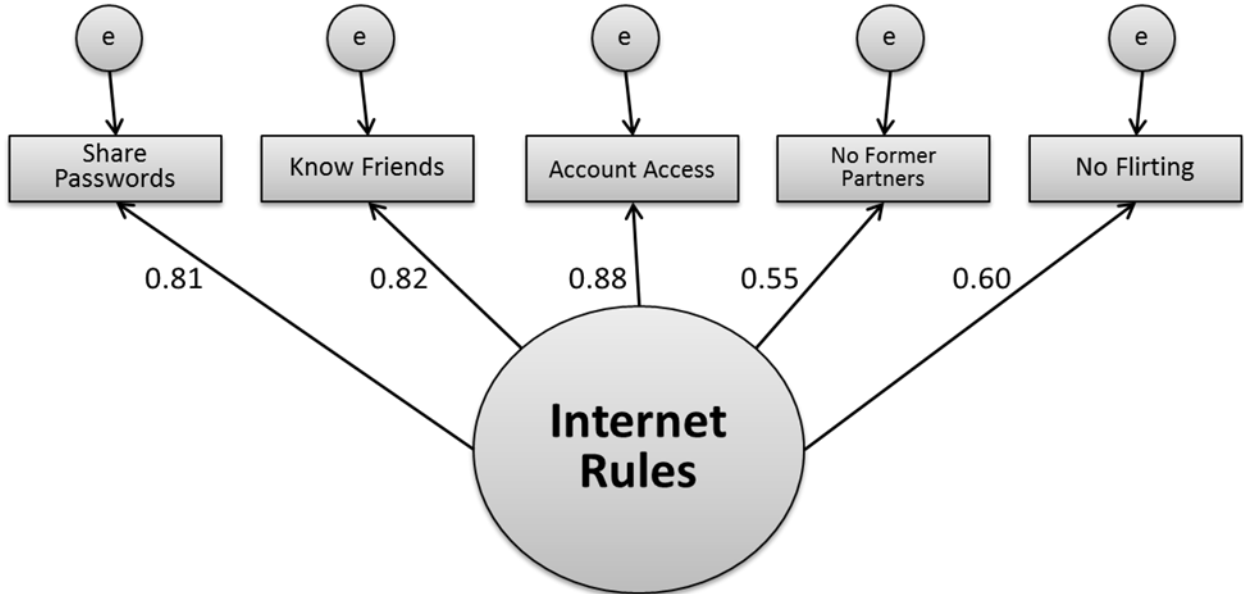
<i>Parameter Estimate</i>	<i>Unstandardized</i>	<i>(S.E.)</i>	<i>Standardized</i>
Men (N = 98)			
<i>Measurement Model</i>			
Openness → Share Passwords	1.00		0.72
Openness → Know Friends	1.01***	(.13)	0.81
Openness → Account Access	1.24***	(.15)	0.94
Fidelity → No Flirting	1.00		0.98
Fidelity → No Former Partners	1.00***	(.07)	0.91
<i>Structural Model</i>			
Satisfaction → Openness	-0.02	(.02)	-0.07
Satisfaction → Fidelity	-0.02	(.02)	-0.08
Trust → Openness	0.04**	(.01)	0.39
Trust → Fidelity	0.06***	(.01)	0.67
Openness with Fidelity	0.79***	(.23)	0.45
Satisfaction with Trust	70.56***	(15.00)	0.54
Women (N = 107)			
<i>Measurement Model</i>			
Openness → Share Passwords	1.00		0.91
Openness → Know Friends	0.93***	(.08)	0.84
Openness → Have Account Access	0.95***	(.08)	0.86
Fidelity → No Flirting	1.00		0.93
Fidelity → No Former Partners	1.04***	(.14)	0.82
<i>Structural Model</i>			
Satisfaction → Openness	0.01	(.03)	0.05
Satisfaction → Fidelity	-0.01	(.02)	-0.10
Trust → Openness	0.03*	(.01)	0.31
Trust → Fidelity	0.02***	(.01)	0.40
Openness with Fidelity	0.72***	(.17)	0.51
Satisfaction with Trust	97.52***	(18.20)	0.61

Note: $\chi^2 = 35.11$, $df = 20$, $p < 0.05$; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.06, 90% CI: 0.02 – 0.09.

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Appendix D - Figures

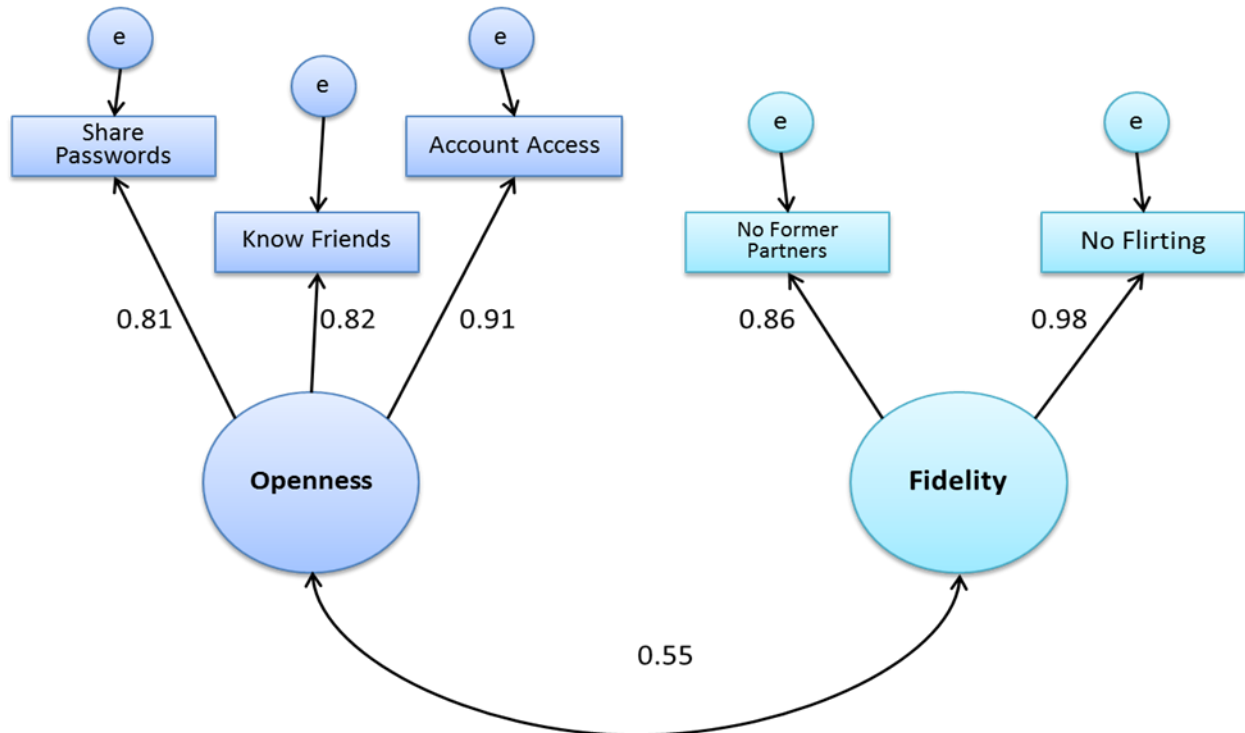
Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Single Factor of Internet Boundaries



Note: Confirmatory factor analysis of internet boundaries with one factor. Fit indices are:

$\chi^2 = 202.51$, $df = 5$, $p < 0.001$; TLI = 0.39; CFI = 0.69; RMSEA = 0.44 , 90% CI (0.39 - 0.49).

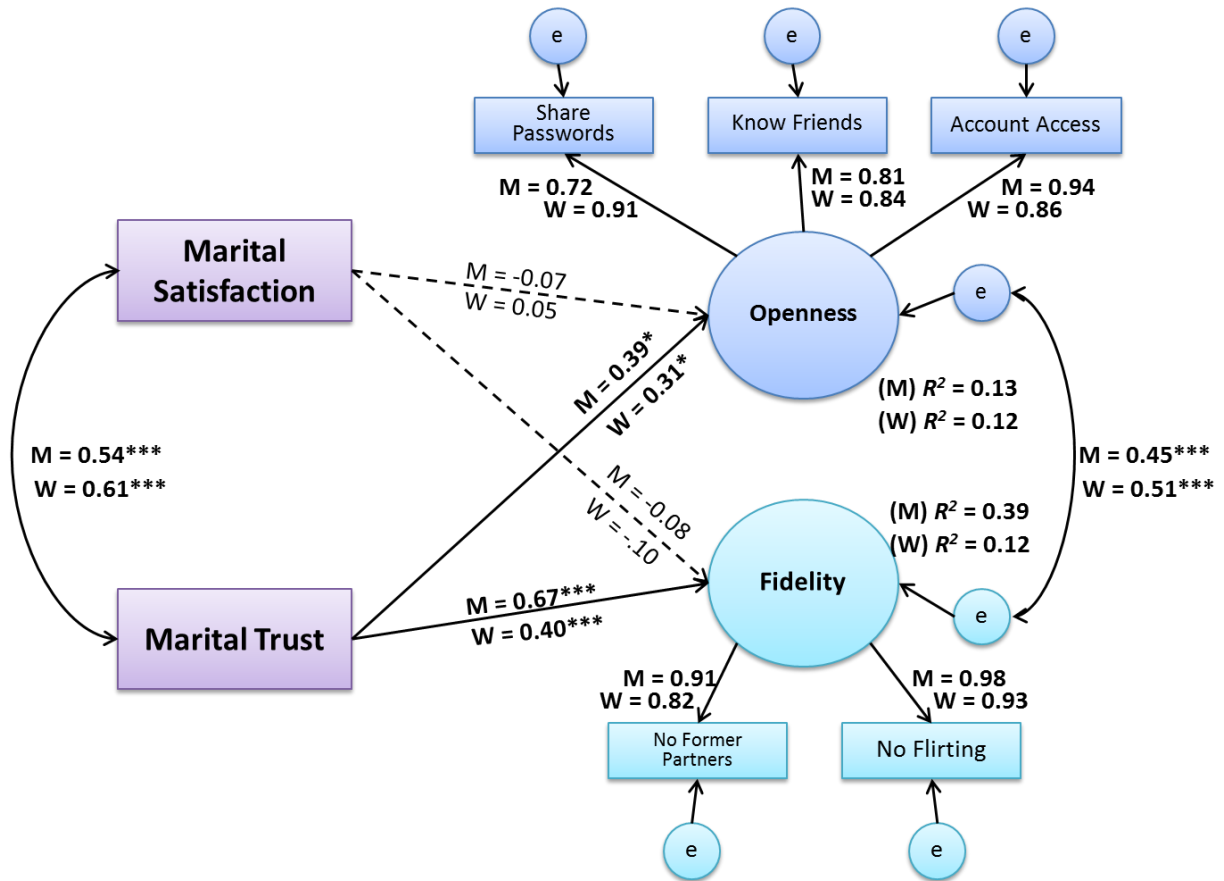
Figure 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Two-Factor Model of Internet Boundaries



Note: Confirmatory factor analysis for two-factor model of internet boundaries. Fit indices are:

$\chi^2 = 5.68, df = 4, p = ns$; TLI = 0.99; CFI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.05, 90% CI (0.00 - 0.12).

Figure 3. Structural Equation Model of Internet Boundaries with Group Comparison by Sex

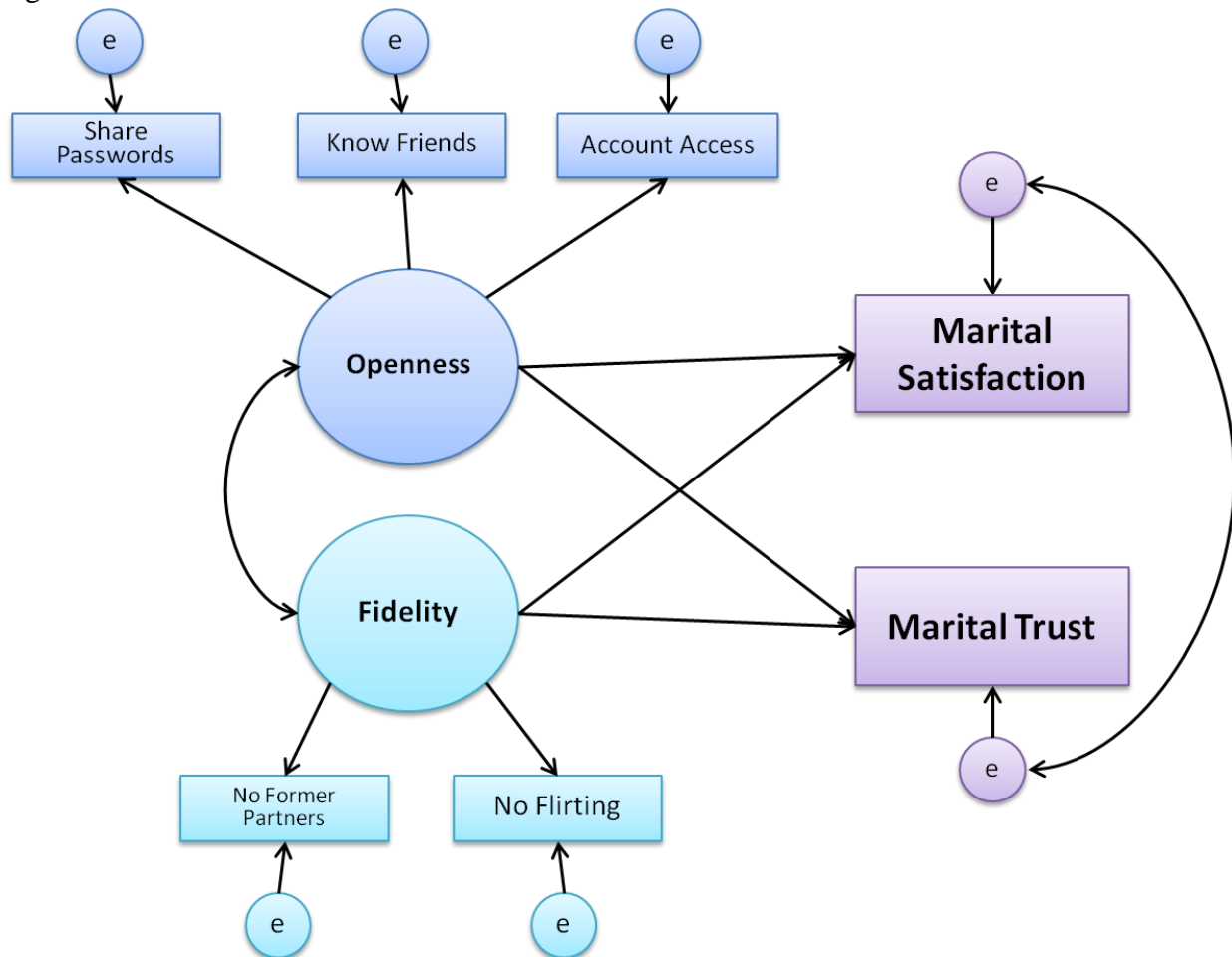


Note: Group comparisons of structural model by sex (M = Men, W = Women). Model fit indices

are: $\chi^2 = 35.11$, $df = 20$, $p < 0.05$; TLI = 0.96; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.06, 90% CI (0.02 - 0.09).

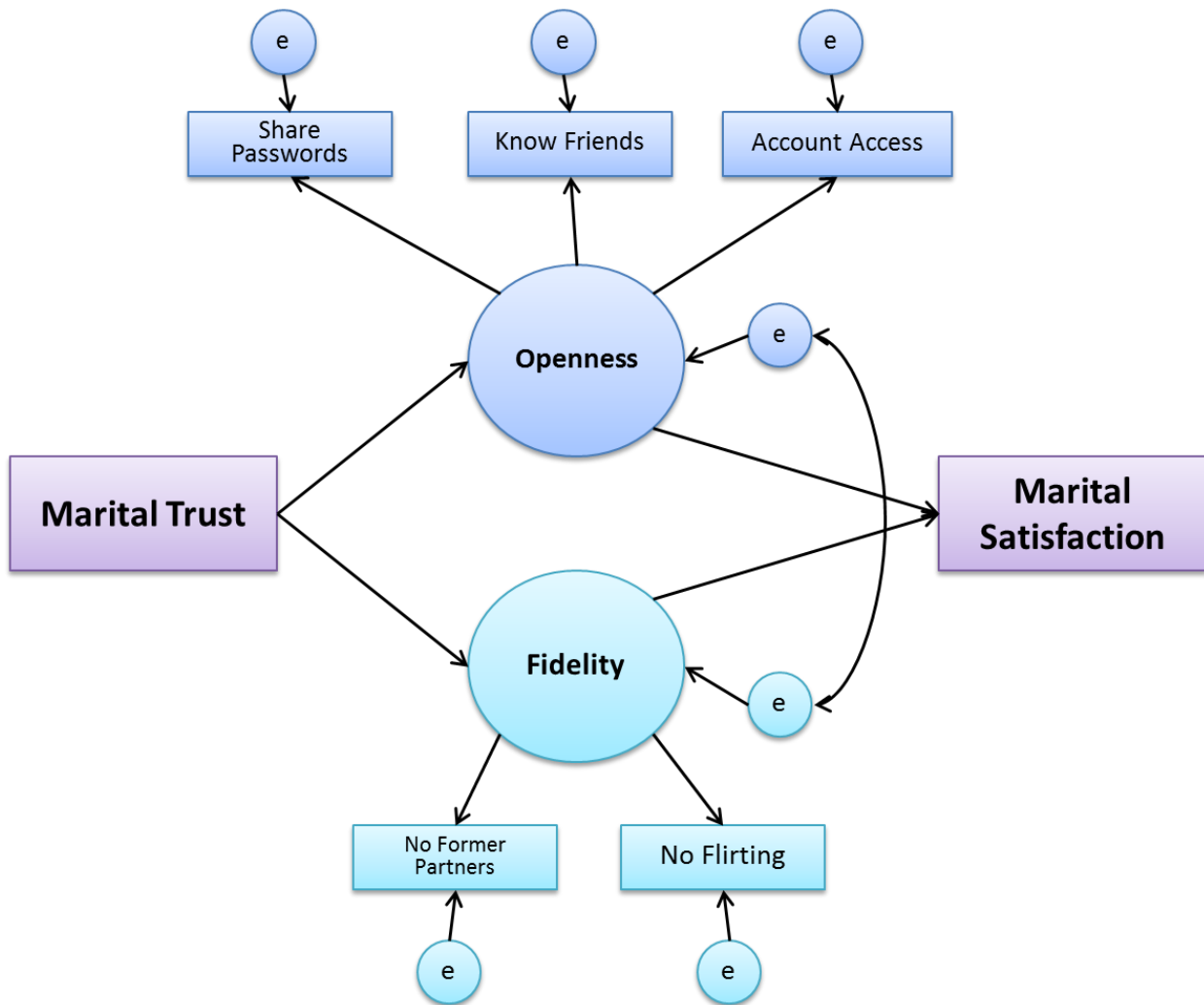
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

Figure 4. Reversed Alternative Model



Note: Alternative model with internet boundaries predicting marital satisfaction and trust. Fit indices are: $\chi^2 = 35.11$, $df = 20$, $p < 0.05$; TLI = 0.96; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.06, 90% CI (0.02 - 0.09).

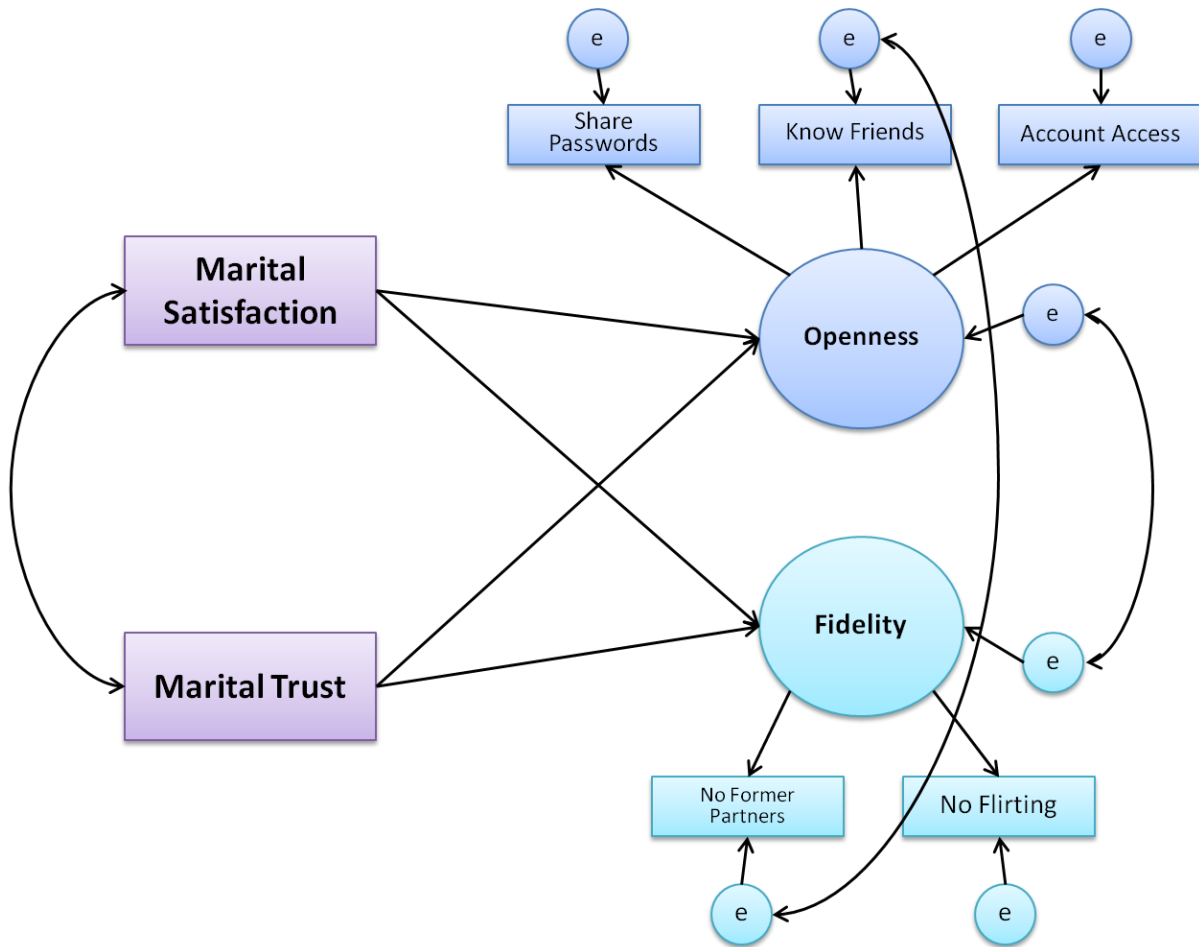
Figure 5. Mediating Alternative Model



Note: Alternative model with internet boundaries as mediators of marital trust and satisfaction.

Fit indices are: $\chi^2 = 35.11$, $df = 20$, $p < 0.05$; TLI = 0.96; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.06, 90% CI (0.02 - 0.09).

Figure 6. Residuals Correlated Alternative Model



Note: Alternative model with “No Former Partners” and “Know Friends” residuals correlated.

Fit indices are: $\chi^2 = 18.17$, $df = 18$, $p = ns$; TLI = 1.00; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.01, 90% CI (0.00 - 0.06).