

# What's Love Got to Do With It?

*A Study of the Effects of Infidelity on Contemporary Couples*

by

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Lisa Touesnard

## **Abstract**

Research on infidelity has been criticized for its lack of theoretical approach and emphasis on the negative impacts on marriage. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals who had an affair, or experienced the affair of a spouse. Combined with a critical sociological approach to the existing literature on infidelity, this study explores the usefulness of theoretical concepts and perspectives adopted by other researchers. This study offers suggestions for future areas of inquiry and stresses the importance of studying extramarital relationships from a sociological perspective.

## Acknowledgements

“We must put ourselves in the position of the subject who tries to find his way in this world, and we must remember, first of all, that the environment by which he is influenced and to which he adapts himself is his world, not the objective world of science.”

- W.I. Thomas & F. Znaniecki

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I would first and foremost like to thank the participants in this study who graciously shared their personal stories with me. This could not have been possible without you. I wish every one of you all the best in the future.

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I was lucky enough to have three.

~Thank you for everything~

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family. Their unwavering support during my return to academics was unfathomable. I am deeply grateful for all of their support and faith in me. It will never be forgotten.

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# **Chapter I. Introduction**

Most North Americans will marry at some point in their lives and the vast majority of these couples expect their partner to remain sexually faithful during their marriage (Treas & Giesen, 2000). Widespread societal disapproval of extramarital affairs suggests that a breach of this contract may lead to its dissolution, but research has shown that this is not always the case. In fact, the majority of couples who experience infidelity in their relationships will stay married, even when the affair is disclosed to their spouse. Although infidelity is the most common reason for divorce (Amato & Previti, 2003; South & Lloyd in Liu, 2000) only a minority of affairs, disclosed or otherwise, have a tendency to lead to divorce. Edwards and Booth (1994) found that only five percent of American couples reported that extramarital sex caused a problem in their marriage, similar to Blumstein and Schwartz's (1983) findings, which revealed only some tendency for extramarital sex to lead to divorce. Another study found only 11% of men and 22% of women identified extramarital sex as a cause for divorce (Janus & Janus, 1993 in Cottone, Mannis & Lewis, 1996). This suggests that the majority of couples who experience an affair will stay together, thus reinforcing the importance for researchers to explore infidelity within the context of marriage.

Infidelity, affair, extramarital sex, adultery, and cheating are all terms used interchangeably to refer to extramarital relationships that are usually sexual in nature. (These meanings are explored further in Chapter III.G(iv)). In the United States, researchers estimate that approximately 15% of women and 25% of men will have an extramarital affair at some point in their marriage (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994, Blow & Hartnett, 2005; Wiederman, 1997).

Many assume that the disclosure of infidelity will automatically lead to the demise of a marriage, though this is not always the case. Research suggests that major difficulties only

occurred in approximately 40% of the cases, even when the spouse knew about their partner's infidelity (Kinsey, 1998). Furthermore, marital unhappiness and dissatisfaction have not always correlated with infidelity. In fact, some studies have shown that couples who report marital satisfaction may still engage in extramarital affairs (Treas & Giesen, 2000; Glass & Wright, 1977). Some studies have further suggested latent functions of extramarital relationships, such as increased self esteem and companionship (Glass and Wright, 1992). This evidence suggests the need to explore infidelity within the context of marriage and investigate the possibility that it may have unintended, positive effects on the marriage.

## **A. Previous Research**

The vast majority of couples agree that an ideal marriage today should consist of sexual exclusivity, intimacy, and commitment. Treas and Giesen (2000) found that 90% of the general public considered extramarital sex to be 'always' or 'almost always' wrong. Despite this widespread disapproval, a significant minority of men and women in marital relationships engage in extramarital sex. American data suggest that 15% of women and 25% of men will have an extramarital affair at some point during their marriage and many researchers suggest that the gender gap is closing (Laumann et al., 1994). It is possible that this rate of infidelity, over a lifetime of marriage, may be even higher due to high non-response rates and possible response bias (Sprecher, Regan & McKinney, 1998). Early research done by the Kinsey Institute (1953) found that as many as 50-60% of married couples reported infidelity at some point in their marriage.

Men tend to be more permissive in their attitudes toward extramarital sex, which may help explain higher prevalence rates among males (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). For men, lifetime rates of infidelity appear to increase with age, while the greatest lifetime incidence for women

occurs between 30 and 50 years of age (Wiederman, 1997). These rates double for men and women who have experienced a divorce or separation (Wiederman, 1997). Recent involvement in extramarital sex (those who experienced infidelity *within the past year*) declined steadily for women as they aged, while men's rates remained consistent across all age groups (Wiederman, 1997). Liu (2000) found that women's extramarital sex decreases with marital duration, but for men it is highest at the beginning and end of the marriage. Wiederman (1997) noted that Black males in the United States were somewhat more likely to engage in infidelity than White male respondents.

#### **(i). Risk Factors**

Researchers have noted that younger couples are more likely to experience infidelity in their relationships (Amato & Rogers, 1997 in Blow & Hartnett, 2005) while Atkins, Beaucom and Jacobson (2001) found that couples who were married at a younger age experienced higher rates of infidelity. Liu (2000) found that extramarital sex peaked in the seventh year of marriage for women and in the eighth year for men. This parallels the divorce rate which is highest for couples in their eighth year of marriage (Ambert, 2005).

Income and infidelity have also been shown to have a strong, positive relationship (Wiederman, 1997). Individuals who earned more than \$30,000 (US) per year were more likely to engage in extramarital sex than those with lower incomes (Atkins et al., 2001). Those who are highly educated (with graduate degrees) were found to be 1.75 times more likely to engage in infidelity than those with less than a high school diploma (Atkins et al., 2001).

The literature on infidelity reveals almost invariably that sexual opportunities arise first and foremost in the workplace, especially for those whose job requires travel out-of-town (Schneider, 1984; Treas & Giesen, 2000). One study found that over half of all infidelities in the

sample involved affairs with coworkers (Wiggins & Lederer, 1984 in Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Williams et al., (2006) noted that from 1991 to 2000, the number of men's work-related affairs increased from 38% to 50%. Sixty-two percent of them found their partner at work. Atkins et al., (2001) noted that couples who had one spouse working and one who did not experienced more infidelity in their relationships than those with two income earners. Oliver & Hyde (1993) suggested that the gender gap between male and female infidelity rates may be closing due to more women working in the labour force (in Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Wiederman (1997) also found that those residing in urban areas demonstrated higher rates of extramarital sex. Treas & Giesen (2000) noted that this might be due to the larger pool of potential partners, increased opportunity, and greater anonymity associated with living in an urban area.

Glass and Wright (1992) explored the intrinsic motivations for infidelity, including sexual fulfillment, companionship, and the ego-bolstering aspects of self esteem. Low quality, or infrequency of, sexual activity in marriage and overall inequity in marriage have also been linked to greater incidences of extramarital sex, suggesting that perhaps individuals enter into affairs as a means of restoring balance (Treas & Giesen, 2000; Prins et al., 1993).

## **(ii). Marital & Sexual Satisfaction**

Marital satisfaction, as a contributor and predictor of marital happiness, has been well documented. While conventional wisdom suggests that those who are unsatisfied in their marriage will be more likely to engage in affairs, this may not always be the case. Researchers have failed to establish a relationship between extramarital sex and marital satisfaction (Previti & Amato, 2004; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Atkins et al., 2001). Some studies have shown that couples who report marital happiness may still engage in extramarital affairs (Treas & Giesen, 2000; Glass & Wright, 1977). Prins et al., (1993) also found that extramarital involvement had

*very little* to do with dissatisfaction in one's marriage, although this was not always the case for women (Prins et al., 1993; Glass & Wright, 1985). Hunt (1969) found one-half of men and one-third of women who engaged in infidelity reported being in happy marriages. Conversely, other studies have shown that those who report marital dissatisfaction are *more* likely to recall recent (within the past year) infidelity, regardless of gender (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Treas and Giesen, 2000; Glass & Wright, 1985). Therefore, the role of marital dissatisfaction in motivation to engage in infidelity remains unclear.

The role of sexual satisfaction and sexual frequency in marriage has also been a topic of thorough investigation, especially for marital therapists. Spanier and Margolis (1983) found that infidelity was unrelated to sexual dissatisfaction in marriage. Glass and Wright (1977) found that after couples had been married ten years, the rates of extramarital sex were the same, whether or not the couples reported satisfaction with their marriage. Conversely, Liu (2000) concluded that sexual infrequency was equated with higher incidence of infidelity. This uncertainty suggests that marital and sexual dissatisfaction may only play a minor role, if any, in extramarital involvement.

### **(iii). Effects of Infidelity on the Marital Relationship**

Divorce is rarely a consequence of infidelity, even when the affair is disclosed to the spouse. Edwards and Booth (1994) found that only five percent of American couples reported that infidelity caused a problem in their marriage. Other studies have revealed *only some* tendency for extramarital sex to lead to divorce (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Kinsey's (1953) studies revealed that almost half of the women who had affairs said their husbands were aware of them. Difficulties occurred in approximately 40% of the cases. Schneider et al. (1999) found

that less than one quarter of couples actually separated as a result of the disclosure of an affair (in Blow & Hartnett, 2005).

Christopher and Sprecher (2000) suggest that men's and women's reaction to their spouse's affair will differ by gender. They assert that men are more upset about the sexual aspect of their wives' affair, while women are more upset about the emotional aspect of their husband's affair. Therefore, wives will be less upset with their spouse for having an affair that is 'just sex', rather than an affair that has an emotional component. This suggests there are gender differences with regards to how individuals manage infidelity in their relationships.

Spanier and Margolis (1983) found that when an individual had an affair, they were less likely to report to researchers that *their affair* caused marital problems than when it was *their spouse's* affair. This implies that individuals only perceive their spouse's infidelity (not their own) to be problematic in their marriage. In summary, these findings indicate that the impact of infidelity on marriage is complex and differs for males and females.

#### **(iv). Limitations in Previous Research**

The lack of theoretical perspective within sex research has long been a criticism of academics who study infidelity (Wiederman & Whitley, 2002). There is a limited amount of sociological research on infidelity which helps to explain, at least in part, the lack of theoretical analysis. Furthermore, researchers have thoroughly explored the negative effects of infidelity on marriage, including divorce and psychological impact, but have not considered the ways in which infidelity may positively affect marriage.

Infidelity is a cultural construct whose meaning and social significance has varied according to different cultural, social, and religious contexts (Wiederman & Whitley, 2002). One of the criticisms of the literature is that researchers continue to take a very conservative,

traditionalist view of what constitutes a *proper* marriage, even though the context of marriage has changed enormously over the course of the twentieth century (Coontz, 2005).

There is very limited sociological Canadian data on infidelity. Psychologists and biologists have been the greatest contributors to the literature on infidelity, offering biological and developmental models to account for interpersonal decision-making with regards to relationships and sexuality (Sprecher, et al.,1998; Greene & Faulkner, 2005). Few models account for, or explore, social and cultural influences (Laumann et al., 1994). Most research on infidelity has focused on identifying risk factors (Olson, Russell, Higgins-Kessler & Miller, 2002) or offered data without theoretical analysis (Laumann et al., 1994; Wiederman & Whitley, 2002). A methodological review done by Blow and Hartnett (2005) revealed that “future studies should also explore what makes individuals and relationships more vulnerable to infidelity” (p.193). They also noted the lack of qualitative studies done in the field of infidelity, and suggested that studies which address the complexities of marital issues would be beneficial.

Johnson (1970) noted that few researchers have studied the impact of infidelity on marital relationships and relatively little is known about how it affects marital stability. In the literature, infidelity is most often portrayed as having a negative, disruptive, or harmful effect on marriage and family life, despite that infidelity has sometimes been associated with having an unintended positive impact on the primary marital relationship. Although this notion is generally under-explored, Olson et al. (2002) found that infidelity had positively impacted marriage by way of closer marital relationships, taking better care of one’s self, and placing a higher value on one’s family. These unintended benefits were noted under the research findings, but were not the sole focus, or purpose, of Olson et al.’s (2002) study.



Other limitations include the lack of recognition paid to gender differences in behaviour. In Blow's (2005) literature review of infidelity, he suggests that gender differences with regards to extramarital relationships are evasive, at best, stating that beyond the physical components of sexuality, "the body of infidelity literature offers no more clear answers than "it depends""(p. 220). This suggests the need to examine more closely the gender differences in extramarital relationships.

Thompson (1983) noted that the methodological problems in infidelity research are due to the inability of the researcher to properly define the term *infidelity*. The ambiguity of the term is considered problematic, as it may or may not include acts that are other than sexual in nature. Therefore, a precise definition of the term is necessary in future studies to enable a more accurate interpretation of the data.

In light of these limitations, and the recommendations of other researchers, this study offers a unique, critical sociological approach to the existing literature in other disciplines. My approach offers the promise of investigating infidelity through a social and cultural lens. While other approaches have been atheoretical and inadequate at explaining extramarital affairs, my research offers ways of understanding extramarital affairs by evaluating the role of gender, ethnicity, and social context. These variables are missing from the current literature, limiting its usefulness. This study will examine and evaluate various theories that have dominated the literature on infidelity using a qualitative, grounded theory approach guided by the following research questions.

## **B. Research Questions**

This qualitative research project addresses the following questions: How do individuals define or describe marital satisfaction? How does this differ by gender? How does infidelity

impact the primary marital relationship? How does the spouse negotiate or comprehend their infidelity? How does the quality of the extramarital relationship affect their marriage? What positive or negative effects does the extramarital relationship have on the marriage?

# **Chapter II. Theoretical Literature Review**

This chapter will explore two broad research traditions on marriage and extramarital relationships: interpersonal and socio-cultural theories. Interpersonal theories offer a micro-level approach to examining how individuals negotiate infidelity on a personal level. In particular, these theories examine the decision-making processes involved and offer a predictive model for an individual's stay-leave behaviour; that is, the likelihood they would remain in their marriage following the affair. In contrast, socio-cultural theories consider the larger social and cultural factors that influence infidelity. These theories broadly take into account factors that are external to the individual, such as culturally-endorsed messages of romantic love. These theories assume that individuals enter into affairs within a larger social context.

### **A. Interpersonal Theories**

Interpersonal theories are micro-level theories that emphasize the role of the individual in decision-making processes. These theories stem from a rational choice perspective which asserts that "...rationally, self-interested agents...seek to maximize the degree to which they can successfully pursue their particular ends and satisfy their particular preferences..." (Zey, 1992, p. 10). Because they are situated within a rational choice perspective, social exchange, equity, and investment theories all emphasize individual autonomy with regards to decision-making processes, based on a cost-factor analysis. These theories assume that individuals make rational decisions, weigh the rewards against the costs, and take into consideration the perceived alternatives (Zey, 1992). Although these theories are particularly useful for predicting a spouse's stay-leave behaviour, they do not fully take into account the macro-social influences that impact personal decision-making.

### **(i). Social Exchange & Equity Theory**

According to Sprecher, a social exchange framework “refers to any conceptual model or theoretical approach that focuses on the exchange of resources (material or symbolic) between or among people...” (1998, p. 32). Major contributors of this theory are Homans (1958), Blau (1964) and Thibault and Kelly (1959) (Sprecher, 1998). This theory assumes that individuals seek to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs so that the “rewards minus the costs equal the outcome...” (Sprecher, 1998, p. 33). Specific to extramarital relationships, this theory assumes an individual balances the rewards (ie: financial security) against the costs (ie: sexual dissatisfaction) to guide his/her actions (ie: engaging in infidelity). People are considered rational actors who are motivated by self-interest (White & Klein, 2002)<sup>1</sup>.

Equity theory, which has emerged from the social exchange approach, has also been applied to extramarital relationships. This theory assumes that extramarital involvement is a result of individuals trying to restore equity in their relationships. Equity is based upon comparisons made with his/her partner regarding the *fairness* of the exchange. That is, something can be unequal, yet still be perceived as fair. For instance, on a first date, a woman might agree to drive if the man pays for dinner. This exchange, although not financially equal, may prove to be equitable. Prins et al. (1993) explored whether or not inequity in marital relationships encouraged infidelity, or increased one’s desire to engage in infidelity. This was shown to be true for women in almost *double* the cases. Inequity was not statistically significant for men. This implies that women place more importance on equity in relationships than men, perhaps due to the unequal division of labour and power within the home. Because these results

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<sup>1</sup> In Fuchs Ebaugh’s (1988) book *Becoming an Ex*, “seeking alternatives” is noted as the second stage in the process of role exit (pp. 87-121). Exchange theory is central to her argument. Individuals seek out alternatives—weighing the costs and benefits of staying versus leaving a particular role. This is particularly useful in terms of marital relationships, as spouses will weigh alternatives to their marriage (such as an extramarital relationship) when they are unfulfilled and/or disenchanted by their role as husband, or wife.

were independent of marital satisfaction, it was theorized that equity and dissatisfaction in marriage will lead a woman to infidelity, whereas a man's feelings about his marriage is independent of his willingness to engage in extramarital sex (Prins et al., 1993).

Equity theory also seeks to explain why those who are "over-benefited" (perceive themselves as having fewer desirable qualities than their spouse), as well as "under-benefited" (those who see themselves as having more desirable qualities than their spouse) will engage in infidelity (Prins et al., 1993). For example, if one feels they are less attractive (or over-benefited) than their spouse, they may engage in extramarital sex to increase self-confidence. This signifies the importance that individuals place on their personal roles/statuses in relationships. Although it was noted that under-benefited spouses are more likely to engage in infidelity than those who are over-benefited, results are difficult to generalize because of the subjective nature in defining "under" or "over" benefited (Prins et al., 1993).

Atwood and Seifer (1997 in Olson et al., 2002) suggest that couples undergo a rational decision making process when they enter into infidelity:

"Generally speaking, people do not usually set out to have extramarital sex. The extramarital sex behavior is the result of an unfolding definitional process whereby a rationale for the activity is created over a period of time" (in Allen, et al., 2005, p. 114).

Equity theory is particularly useful in that it explains how a relationship can be unequal, yet still be perceived as fair in the eyes of the individual. Exchange and equity theories are useful for exploring the interpersonal dimensions of relationships, since they emphasize the importance that individuals place on particular dimensions of their relationships, and then take gender differences into account.

This theory is also particularly beneficial for explaining the gender differences in the importance individuals put on certain aspects of the marriage. Although no study has directly addressed the issue, social exchange theory may also explain gender differences upon disclosure.

For example, husbands tend to get more upset about the sexual aspects of a wife's affair (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000), so it may help to explain why women are more likely to be divorced from their husbands (than vice versa) after the affair is disclosed.

Exchange and equity theory however, does have its limitations. White and Klein (2002) noted that exchange theory does not explain how social norms influence individual decision making. The theory falsely assumes that people make decisions irrespective of these broader social forces and assumes that actions occur out of self-interest. It does not consider how social institutions, such as religion, play a role in determining one's behaviour. While this theory is useful for explaining why couples use extramarital sex as a way to restore equity in relationships, it does not take into account the broader social forces that may contribute to this inequity, such as women's inferior and unequal status in the labour market. Social exchange theory also does not sufficiently explain why couples, upon disclosure of an affair, remain together (Schneider et al., 1999 in Blow & Hartnett, 2005). For instance, one might assume that the losses incurred by the affair (ie: dishonesty, distrust, or the risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease) would outweigh the benefits.

Although exchange theory is useful for explaining how couples negotiate certain aspects of their relationships, it is difficult to measure the degree to which a person gives emphasis/importance to particular dimensions of their relationship. Therefore, the subjective nature of the theory itself is problematic (Zey, 1992).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A generic problem with the rational choice perspective is that it assumes people act judiciously, itemizing the pros versus the cons. This becomes problematic because a person's emotional and psychological states at the time decisions are made are not taken into consideration. Therefore, this perspective does not take into account decisions that are made in an irrational and/or emotional state (Zey, 1992). One might suggest that emotions often play a large role in a person's decision-making processes, especially when feelings of love are involved. In addition, some may choose to leave a poor marital situation (such as abuse), even if the costs of leaving are high (such as living in poverty).

Exchange and equity theories assert that something must be wrong or missing in one's marriage. Rather than viewing marriage as a complex institution, it sees problems or voids in marriage as areas that need to be fixed in order for the marriage to function properly as a whole. They also assume that actors make rational decisions based on a cost-factor analysis, but it does not adequately account for external influences, such as social norms or religious affiliations. In addition, not all decisions are based on self-interest (Zey, 1992). Future studies on gender discrepancies in extramarital behaviour would be beneficial to our understanding of how couples negotiate infidelity in their relationships. In addition, since exchange and equity theories have been used extensively in the context of partner selection and uncoupling, it would be beneficial for future studies to take into consideration the negotiation that occurs within the context of *ongoing, stable* relationships.

## **(ii). Investment theory**

Investment theory emerges from interdependence theory which aims to understand "...how and why some relationships survive difficult times whereas other promising relationships end" (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993, p. 175). Investment theory is a predictive model about how likely people are to stay in or leave relationships based on the reflexive nature of the partner. Investment theory asserts that the more one is invested in their relationship, the less likely one is to exit it (Rusbult, 1983). The theory is based on two interacting dimensions of a relationship: satisfaction and commitment. Satisfaction includes the ability of the partner to positively or negatively fulfill the emotional needs of the other, while commitment refers to the desire of a spouse to remain in a relationship and the level of dependence on it (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). This theory is an extension of exchange theory in that the interpersonal exchange between couples yields a rewards-cost balance. It assumes that the more rewards there are in a



relationship, the more one should be satisfied and remain within it, thus increasing one's level of involvement and commitment. Another assessment of commitment to one's relationship is the degree to which one has "intrinsic" (ie: time and energy) and "extrinsic" (ie: attachments to friends and family) investments (Rusbult, 1983, p. 102). Investment theory also asserts that individuals who perceive poorer or fewer alternatives to their current relationship will be less likely to leave it (Rusbult, 1983). Therefore, someone who is fairly content in his/her relationship, and who does not perceive there are better alternatives, is more likely to commit to it and thus, is less likely to be lured away by another partner, or leave the relationship voluntarily.

Investment theory is useful for predicting the likelihood that one will leave their marriage for their extramarital partner. There is evidence to support the notion that individuals who are heavily invested in their marriage will be less likely to leave it.<sup>3</sup> In fact, only a minority of affairs have a tendency to lead to divorce, despite whether or not the affair is disclosed to the spouse (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). This suggests that the investment in the marital relationship is perceived as greater than that of the extramarital alternative. If this theory holds true, one might hypothesize that a spouse would be more likely to leave his/her marriage in its early years when there is the least amount of investment in the relationship (ie: prior to the

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<sup>3</sup> Autonomy theory similarly asserts that differences in one's degree of autonomy can explain or predict behaviour (Reiss, 2006). For instance, we can predict one's behaviour by looking at the amount of freedom the person has from institutions such as religion, family, and politics to make their own choices (Reiss, 2006). Reiss originally tested this theory to explain how attitudes correlate with behaviour regarding pre-marital sexual permissiveness. Reiss demonstrated that closer attachments to one's family and/or religious institutions coincided with less permissiveness. The more freedom youth had in their courtship, the more permissive they would be as a whole. Reiss' theory has never been directly applied to extramarital relationships, although he argues more research should be done in this area (Reiss, Anderson, & Sponaugle, 1980). If tested, this theory could tell us a great deal about the relationship between the level of autonomy in one's marriage and the likelihood of engaging in infidelity. As with permissiveness, one might hypothesize a strong, positive relationship between high levels of autonomy and high rates of infidelity.

arrival of children and lack of relationship maturation). Unfortunately, there is no data, to my knowledge, that tests this theory.

Research does confirm, however, that very few extramarital relationships progress to marriage (Richardson, 1988), which leads us to believe that the extramarital affair is not perceived as a viable alternative to the primary marital relationship. Investment theory would assume that the individual who has the affair has a greater investment in his/her marriage. Perhaps this is reinforced by the social stigma that is attached to extramarital relationships, combined with the social status and prestige that is associated with being married (Richardson, 1988).

Investment theory explains the need for couples to keep their extramarital relationship secret. Since most spouses consider their extramarital relationship to be temporary, keeping the extramarital relationship secret is essential to keeping his/her marital investment intact (Richardson, 1988).

This theory may also explain why infidelity rates over a lifetime of marriage for men follow a u-curve, being at highest risk for infidelity at the beginning and end of marriage (Liu, 2000). Rates may be high for men at the beginning of marriage because they are less committed, and subsequently begin to drop once they become more committed when children enter the equation and/or increased career demands. Infidelity rates may then begin to increase for men as they age due to having fewer commitments at home (children have left), work demands have subsided, and the available pool of alternative partners has increased with age. Rates for women decline steadily as they age (Liu, 2000). For women, not only does the pool of eligible partners decrease, but their investment in their marital relationships and family intensifies over time, thus increasing the level of commitment, and decreasing the likelihood they

will risk the safety and security of their marital relationships. Moreover, most individuals who have affairs remain married. Therefore, we have a situation in which an individual may be less than satisfied, but nonetheless committed. They may have an affair because of some shortcoming (ie: loneliness, or a response to personal self-esteem issues) in the marriage, yet still express high levels of commitment to his/her marriage partner. While this explanation is plausible, there has not been any systematic examination of the connection between gender, satisfaction and commitment. Therefore, the dual processes of satisfaction and commitment that are central to investment theory must be unpacked and examined in the context of individuals who have affairs *and* stay married.

To date, the investment model has not been tested on extramarital relationships. The model has been limited to dating and married couples, friendships and abused women (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). In addition, this theory does not explain why those who are in happy, committed relationships may also seek extramarital relationships. Many spouses who have affairs with co-workers report marital satisfaction (and these relationships are also likely to be perceived as a viable alternative to their spouse due to their egalitarian nature). That is, this theory does not say anything about the *process* by which these extramarital relationships are formed which affect personal choices, nor does it take into account extramarital relationship formation, or infidelity as a result of opportunity (Allen et al., 2005).<sup>4</sup> Although this theory is useful for predicting individuals' stay-leave behaviours, it does not explain how other factors, such as love or happiness, can affect a person's stay-leave behavior. It also does not give consideration to one of the most important variables in predicting marital stability upon

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<sup>4</sup> Opportunity has been noted as an important factor which contributes to extramarital relationships. Opportunity refers to the "availability and willingness of alternative [non-marital] partners" to engage in sex (Allen et al., 2005, p. 112). It has been noted that men are more likely than women to report perceived opportunity (Saunders & Edwards, 1984 in Allen et al., 2005).

disclosure of an affair: the reaction of one's spouse. In addition, investment theory does not explain how macro level structures, such as religion, can influence a person's stay-leave behaviour.

### **(iii). The Process of Role Exit**

Fuchs Ebaugh's sociological study on role exit explores the dynamic processes of abandoning roles that were once considered central to their lives (also known as master statuses) such as ex-nuns, divorcées, ex-teachers, ex-physicians, and transsexuals (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988). The process that Fuchs Ebaugh calls *role exit* is the "...disengagement from a role that is central to one's self-identity and the re-establishment of an identity in a new role that takes into account one's ex-role..." (p. 1). The process of role exit entails four stages: "first doubts", "seeking alternatives", "turning points" and "creating the ex-role" (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988, pp. 34-35). The author explores the subjective meanings of individuals as they disengage from their various roles in society. This is useful in terms of applying a theoretical understanding to the context of extramarital relationships, especially with regards to how infidelity may result as a consequence of one's disillusionment with their role as a spouse (or perhaps as a father or mother).

Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) notes that "first doubts" is the initial stage in the process of role exit (pp. 41). This is particularly useful in the context of extramarital relationships in that it provides a concept for explaining the interpersonal processes of individuals who engage in infidelity. Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) proposes that disillusionment and disenchantment with one's role will cause a person to doubt it. For instance, physicians will enter into medical school, and subsequently their profession, with a set of expectations of what it will be like to perform that role (ie: the humanitarian aspects and the desire to help people). Over time, however, the role may fail to meet individual expectations. This is the case with some physicians, whose role

causes stress to the point of burnout (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988). The risk of malpractice suits and the pressure of patients' demands result in physicians contemplating their ability to remain in the profession. Similarly, individuals enter into marriage with pre-conceived notions of a blissful, lifelong, romance-filled marriage that often does not measure up in reality. Many have the expectation that their spouse should fulfill *all* of their emotional and sexual needs (Reibstein & Richards, 1993). There almost certainly comes a time in one's marriage when a spouse realizes that the 'marriage-is-for-everything' model of relationships is an unreal expectation (Reibstein & Richards, 1993).<sup>5</sup>

"Seeking alternatives" was noted by Fuchs Ebaugh as the second stage in the process of role exit (1988, pp. 87). Central to her argument is the concept of exchange theory, developed by Thibault and Kelley (1959) wherein individuals weigh the rewards (advantages or benefits) against the costs (negatives) to decide the most advantageous outcome (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988). This theory asserts that an individual's perceived alternatives will greatly affect whether or not one remains in a given role. This is particularly useful in terms of marital relationships, as spouses will weigh alternatives to their marriage (such as an extramarital relationship) when they are unfulfilled and/or disenchanted by their role as husband or wife. This theory is beneficial in terms of predicting a person's stay-leave behaviour; that is, the likelihood a person will remain in a relationship, rather than leave it for a perceived better alternative. For instance, spouses may balance the benefits (such as financial security) against the costs (such as sexual dissatisfaction) while factoring in foreseeable alternatives (such as a sexual relationship outside of marriage). If one believes the rewards of leaving outweigh the costs of staying, then that person is more likely to exit the role. Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) claims that two-thirds of her sample engaged in a rational

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<sup>5</sup> Reibstein and Richards (1993) believe that one reason individuals engage in infidelity is due to the unreal expectations that they place on their marriage to fulfill their every individual need. This 'marriage-is-for-everything' model is highly susceptible to infidelity. This is explored further in Chapter II B (ii).

process of itemizing and calculating a rewards-cost balance. Although this theory has not been applied directly to extramarital relationships, her conclusion confirms Atwood and Seifer's (1997) findings that an individual's extramarital behaviour usually occurs following rational thought processes.

A second important concept in the "seeking alternatives" phase is the notion that "positive social support...frequently accelerates the process of evaluating alternatives and ultimately of exiting itself" (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988, p. 100). This confirms findings that extramarital affairs are considered more acceptable if friends and/or family approve of the behaviour, as well as if infidelity is prevalent among the group of friends or family (Atwater, 1979 in Thompson, 1984). This emphasizes the importance of social networks with regards to how extramarital relationships are legitimized. It also explains why so many extramarital relationships are not disclosed to friends or family (despite whether or not the spouse knows), in order to avoid ridicule or social stigma.

"[A]s part of the process of weighing alternatives, they [individuals] begin to engage in anticipatory socialization" (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988, p. 111). At this time, individuals anticipate taking on the new role, and even sometimes engage in behaviour that is characteristic of the new role as a means of "role rehearsal" (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988, p. 112). Therefore, extramarital relationships may be viewed as a role rehearsal, wherein the individual tries on the new role for size. The individual engages in the role to see if it 'fits', and to become comfortable with his/her new identity. If this is found to be true, it provides further reinforcement for the individual to shed his/her old identity for a new one. Perhaps this explains why so many extramarital affairs do not develop into a lasting relationship, as they may only be used as a means to an end.

In the “turning points” stage, the individual makes the decision to exit his/her role. Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) explains that,

“After a period of weighing alternatives, identifying with new reference groups, calculating the costs and rewards of leaving a current role, and rehearsing new roles, there comes a point in the role-exiting process at which the individual makes a firm and definitive decision to exit.” (p. 123)

Fuchs Ebaugh insists that an individual will gradually come to this conclusion. It may be a result of an event (such as getting caught with the extramarital partner), or symbolic of the marital problem, resulting in the individual’s decision to exit. This will invariably lead to the demise of the relationship, which is the final stage of role exit.

In the last stage of the process of role exit,

“the ex-role constitutes a unique sociological phenomenon in that the expectations, norms, and identity associated with it do not so much consist in what one is currently doing but rather stem from expectations, social obligations, and norms related to one’s previous role” (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988, p. 149).

Fuchs Ebaugh explains that there are two types of ex-roles. Those that are “socially desirable”, and those that are not (p. 156). In this stage, the *presentation of self* is important in order for the individual to shed the former role, as the actions and reactions of others will determine how successfully they have shed the former identity.<sup>6</sup> Roles that are not as socially endorsed as others may be more difficult to exit. Again, this emphasizes the importance of social networks with regards to how extramarital relationships are legitimized.

Although Fuchs Ebaugh’s explanatory account of the role exit process offers a unique sociological approach to explaining the interpersonal thought processes involved in deciding whether (or not) to engage in an affair, it does not take into account extramarital relationships that occur as a result of opportunity. Opportunity refers to the “availability and willingness of alternative [non-marital] partners” to engage in sex and has been noted as an important factor

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<sup>6</sup> “The dramaturgical model, which views social life as actors on a stage, is emphasized and accentuated by Goffman’s analysis of role behavior as the way we present ourselves to one another” (Goffman, 1959a in Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988, p. 151).

that contributes to extramarital relationships (Allen et al., 2005, p. 112). It has been noted that men are more likely than women to report perceived opportunity (Saunders & Edwards, 1984 in Allen et al., 2005).

## **B. Socio-Cultural Theories**

Whereas exchange, equity, investment, and role exit theories are all micro-level theories that assume a high degree of autonomy with regards to decision-making processes, socio-cultural theories assume that individuals make decisions within a broader social and cultural context. Socio-cultural theories assert that culturally endorsed messages play a role in defining what constitutes love, and an ideal marriage. In turn, these scripts play a role in how extramarital relationships are formed, as well as influence an individual's decision to disclose the affair. Social scripting theory, in particular, is beneficial for exploring how these macro-level structures, such as culturally endorsed messages on love and sexuality, influence individuals on a micro-level.

### **(i). Social Scripting Theory**

Sexual scripting theory “allows for the examination of how socio-cultural contexts influence what people think and do” (Gagnon, 1990 in Greene & Faulkner, 2005, p.239). Sexual scripts are social constructions about sexuality that individuals identify with, and to which they associate, a particular meaning. Language, for example, is a symbolic form that people use to create meaning. Phrases such as ‘one-night stand’ and ‘the other woman’ have significant meanings for individuals, although they vary over time and in different social contexts (Greene & Faulkner, 2005). These scripts, in turn, influence individual actions and guide personal behaviour according to the meanings that individuals associate with them. “Scripts are formed as



people try to make sense out of the world by cognitively assimilating and organizing personal experiences” (Wiederman & Whitley, 2002, p. 19). This becomes problematic when individuals develop unrealistic expectations (ie: the message that a high level of sexual activity is required in order to have a good marriage). Infidelity is also becoming more prominent in the media, thus naturalizing or neutralizing its effect on individuals.

To explore this idea further, one can see how the increased prevalence of sex and sexuality in the media contradict the norms of monogamy and sexual exclusivity. Research on sexual relationships within marriage suggests there has been a steady decline in sexual frequency over time (Liu, 2000). Media messages however, suggest that a high level of sexual activity is synonymous with a good marriage. As Liu (2000) noted, this presents a potential threat to marriage, making it increasingly open to infidelity, as one may resort to having an affair as a way to spice up one’s love life. Treas (2002) found that individuals who place a high value on sexual activity are more likely to engage in extramarital sex. Perhaps this is because they have internalized these media messages and are less apt to accept sexual infrequency in marriage during times of impotency or following the birth of a child, for example.

Messages regarding love and marriage are also pervasive in our culture. Ingraham’s (1999) book *White Weddings* explores how our cultural landscape provides images and messages about how society should not only think about, but internalize, heterosexual romantic love.<sup>7</sup> Ingraham (1999) suggests that *monogamy* is what defines and separates marriage from all other love relationships. “This ideal depends upon a belief in monogamous coupling as the preferred

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<sup>7</sup> Ingraham (1999) described how weddings are so culturally-endorsed and pervasive that individuals become oblivious to the hegemonic, underlying messages. Ingraham (1999) noted that weddings are a form of “ideological control” in that they work to maintain the views and ideas of the dominant class, reinforcing norms of heterosexuality, patriarchy, and marriage (p. 18).

manifestation of love relationships, making all other possibilities unimaginable or unacceptable” (Ingraham, 1999, p. 83).

Sexual scripts can also influence sexual interactions and reinforce patriarchal structures and the gendered double standard. These gender differences in sexual behaviour are shaped by patterns of reinforcement and punishment. For instance, women are positively reinforced for staying in monogamous, long-term relationships, while men often receive tacit support for seeking sexual relationships of almost any nature (Sprecher et al., 1998; Greene & Faulkner, 2005), with the exception of high status males who often face societal opprobrium upon disclosure of an affair. There is also more societal acceptance for men having a high number of sexual partners than women (Sprecher, 1989 in Greene & Faulkner, 2005). This may serve to explain why men have more permissive attitudes regarding extramarital sex, are more likely to engage in affairs, and more likely to have multiple affairs (Blow & Hartnett, 2005).

Sexual scripts are social constructions and therefore change within different historical, cultural and religious contexts. Sexual scripts, and the meanings individuals attach to them, are gender-specific. “[T]he traditional heterosexual script emphasizes different expectations for women’s and men’s behaviour...” (Greene & Faulkner, 2005, p. 239). In the mid-twentieth century, it was widely argued that *any* extramarital sexual activity was morally wrong for both men and women (Laumann et al., 1994).

Today, however, there is evidence of more societal tolerance of affairs-- but there are notable gender differences. Sprecher et al., (1998) found that extramarital activity was deemed justifiable *for women* if they were perceived to be ‘in love’ with the extramarital partner, or if the affair was leading to a new, committed relationship. In addition, they were more accepting of a man’s affair if it remained purely sexual (not emotional) in nature. These findings contradict

prior research that viewed women in extramarital relationships as promiscuous, whatever the degree of their level of commitment (Reiss, Anderson & Sponaugle, 1980). This demonstrates the contextual, changing nature of sexual scripts (Reiss, 2006). One might hypothesize that if women are no longer viewed negatively (ie: as promiscuous) for engaging in extramarital sex, then they may be more likely to engage in such behaviour. This also demonstrates and reinforces the gender double standard since the sex-love relationship is still generally associated with women. That is, for women, sex must have a love element attached to it in order for it to be socially accepted. In addition, this reinforces the notion that falling in love is a valid reason for entering and staying in a romantic relationship, consistent with Ingraham's (1999) *White Weddings*.

Relevance for scripting theory lies in the belief that these cultural images and scripts are internalized and influence people's actions (Gagnon, 1990 in Greene & Faulkner, 2005). If messages are internalized, they may become self-fulfilling in nature. For example, if a woman receives the message that affairs are endorsed by others, so long as there is a love dimension involved, then more women may be likely to engage in extramarital affairs. Thompson (1984) found that extramarital affairs are considered more acceptable if friends and/or family were to approve of the behaviour, as well as if infidelity was prevalent among friends or family. Engagement in extramarital sex is also higher for those who have a family history of infidelity (Brown, 1991 and Pittman, 1989 in Allen et al., 2005).

Although scripting theory can aid in our understanding of what is deemed acceptable regarding extramarital affairs, the degree to which one internalizes these messages and believes them to be true is still in debate. Furthermore, it is difficult to know if one receives the messages and then acts upon them (receives the message that affairs are more acceptable so therefore one

engages in one), or if one uses these messages as an excuse to justify their actions. While social scripts may be useful for exploring how messages about what is sexually appropriate for individuals have changed over time and how individuals internalize these messages, it is not safe to assume that individuals are mere recipients of these culturally endorsed messages. Even if there is evidence that normative scripts surrounding extramarital sex are weakening, it is difficult to demonstrate a causal link. This conflict perspective asserts that media messages and cultural images of white weddings reproduce these taken-for-granted beliefs about marriage and monogamy, which are rooted in capitalist motives and patriarchy. While exchange and investment theory assume a high degree of agency, this perspective is problematic in that it assumes individuals to be passive recipients of these messages. This theory also fails to take into account the interpersonal dimensions of relationships and does not explain the reflexive nature of spousal relationships. That is, it does not take into account the actions and reactions of one's partner.

While exchange and investment theories describe and explain the interpersonal dimensions of relationships (such as why people choose each other as partners and their stay-leave behaviours), social scripting theory is useful for examining how the larger social and cultural context can affect individuals, allowing analysis of the macro-micro connection. The following models by Reibstein and Richards (1993) provide some insight into the reasons why some marriages are more prone to infidelity than others.

#### **(ii). 'Segmented' Model vs. 'Marriage-Is-For-Everything' Model**

Reibstein and Richards (1993, pp. 75-79) offer three different models of marriage to account for the types of relationships that are prone to affairs: the *segmented* model, *open marriage* model, and *marriage-is-for-everything* model.

The *segmented* model emphasizes personal autonomy and growth of the individual within the marriage, which is what ultimately makes it so vulnerable and prone to affairs. A certain level of autonomy can be good for a marriage, so long as it does not compromise the emotional intimacy of the couple. If this occurs, then the theory predicts that problems will arise and couples may seek intimacy outside the relationship by way of an extramarital affair. In the segmented model, the affair may have little to do with the actual marriage, as individuals are able to separate or ‘segment’ their marriage. Reibstein and Richards (1993) identify four separate marital dimensions: “public” (life as a couple in the public sphere), “practical” (duties requiring a couple’s division of labour, ie: cooking, cleaning, and childcare), “emotional” (friendship, emotional and intellectual connectedness) and “sexual” (sexual frequency and satisfaction). Discontent in any one of these areas may be motivation for engaging in an affair, but does not necessarily mean it will lead to infidelity. Couples can be satisfied in one area, but not another. Conversely, one could be satisfied in all areas of the relationship, yet still have an affair. The purpose of the affair then tends to be more about self-awareness or self-discovery, than it is to fulfill a marital dysfunction, as couples only expect certain things from their spouse, not *everything* (Reibstein & Richards, 1993). Taylor (1982) similarly argued the needs of the extramarital relationship often have very little to do with sex. For instance, one might engage in extramarital activity for affection, attention, recognition, friendship, or to relieve loneliness. All of these are characteristics affecting personal fulfillment.

The *open marriage* model does not warrant an in-depth discussion for the purposes of this study, as this model is explanatory of those in open marriages. In the open model, couples communicate their desire to have sexual relations outside their marriage before engaging in any

extramarital activity (Reibstein & Richards, 1993, p. 76). It is assumed that by having open discussion before sexual relations with others occur, it will not harm the marriage.

The *marriage-is-for-everything* model suggests that marriage should fulfill *all* important functions, including emotional, physical and sexual intimacy (Reibstein & Richards, 1993, p.75). Partners are expected to be best friends and passionate lovers for life. However, one partner will eventually be let down by the other because the expectations for a spouse to fulfill all of the other's needs are unrealistic and set marriage up for failure (Reibstein & Richards, 1993). Consequently, individuals may seek an affair as a way to fulfill needs that are missing altogether in the marriage. As a result, this type of motivation for an affair is what makes it so damaging to the marriage (Reibstein & Richards, 2003). Different from the segmented model, (wherein individuals can cognitively separate their affair from their marriage) this model assumes that motivation for the affair is due to a deficit in the marriage and the affair is likely to represent the part of the marriage that is not working properly.

Reibstein and Richards (1993, p. 79) noted that marriage typically begins in the marriage-is-for-everything stage and moves toward the segmented model when couples face major obstacles, such as increased employment demands, or re-location to a new area (which can increase the time spent away from each other and decrease intimacy). This may be useful for explaining why couples with only one spouse working outside the home experience higher rates of infidelity (Atkins, Baucom & Jacobson, 2001). If one spouse works while the other does not, the working spouse may find companionship, solace, and increased intimacy with a co-worker who can understand and relate to him/her. This, in combination with reduced intimacy in one's marriage (due to increased separation between home and work spheres), may account for the high number of work-related affairs. Studies have further found that over half of all infidelities

involved affairs with co-workers (Wiggins & Lederer, 1984 in Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Williams et al., (2006) noted that from 1991 to 2000, the number of work-related affairs increased from 38% to 50% among men, and 62% found their extramarital partner at work. This provides evidence to support the segmented model if one supposes that increased time at work may decrease intimacy with one's spouse, while increasing the emotional intensity with a co-worker. This phenomenon also helps to explain the gender differences associated with the frequency of office-related affairs, since it has been found that men are more likely to find their extramarital partner in the work place.

The segmented model suggests that an individual's autonomy in marriage or their path to self-discovery is expressed through sexuality (Reibstein & Richards, 1993). This may help to explain why younger cohorts are more likely than any other age group to engage in extramarital relationships (Amato & Rogers, 1997 in Blow & Hartnett, 2005), if one assumes that their sense of self-awareness is less developed than that of older adults. Atkins, et al. (2001) found that couples who were married at a younger age experienced higher levels of infidelity. If this is true, then one might also assume that the rising age at first marriage would decrease the incidence of affairs, as couples would come into their relationships with greater self-awareness and maturity. The data on infidelity suggests, however, that newlywed couples, of any age, are at increased risk of infidelity in their relationships, especially within the first eight years (Liu, 2001).

The segmented model also seeks to explain why individuals report that they can 'separate' their affairs from their marriage (Reibstein & Richards, 1993). They are able to compartmentalize their life and cognitively divide their marriage from the extramarital relationship. Many feel as though it does not affect their marriage at all. Therefore, secrecy is fundamental to the extramarital relationship, as many have no intention of ever leaving their

spouse (Reibstein & Richards, 1993). Other academics who have examined acts of sexually 'deviant' behaviour (e.g., sex with strangers in public places) also revealed a tendency for individuals to separate their marital and extramarital life. Many individuals reported keeping the two relationships separate, suggesting that the one had nothing to do with the other (Humphreys, 1970).

Overall, the marriage-is-for-everything and segmented models of marriage are useful for identifying the types of marriages that are prone to infidelity. Both models take into account how marriage can change over time and how external factors, such as children and changes in employment, can sometimes have a negative impact on marriage.

One might argue that the marriage-for-everything model is more useful than the segmented model for explaining why some types of marriage are more prone to infidelity than others. "While our society may not have a clear definition of what an affair means, we do have a well-defined view of the ideal marriage" (Reibstein & Richards, 1993, p. 73). Similar to social scripting theory, the authors assert that individuals have clear expectations about love and marriage that are internalized and are anticipated to be realized in one's marriage.

Unfortunately, when this ideal fails to meet our expectations, it makes marriage susceptible to infidelity. Marriage has become the vehicle through which one demands emotional and sexual intimacy and partners are expected to be best friends and lovers over a lifetime of marriage.

Coontz (2005) argues that it is this very type of ideal that makes marriage vulnerable, as it is fundamentally incompatible with society today.<sup>8</sup> She states it is "...the very features that promised to make marriage such a unique and treasured personal relationship that opened the way for it to become an optional and fragile one" (Coontz, 2005, p. 5). Therefore, when an

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<sup>8</sup> Coontz (2005) provides evidence to support the notion that what has been seen historically as the culturally ideal nuclear family is a myth. She further notes that society is structured in such a way that makes the 'marriage-is-for-everything' model incompatible with everyday life.



individual relies on his/her spouse to fulfill all of these intimate dimensions, it may result in an affair when their needs are not met. Glass and Wright (1992) explored these intrinsic motivations for infidelity and found that the benefits of extramarital relationships included sexual fulfillment, companionship, and ego-bolstering.

The marriage-is-for-everything model suggests that those who are in unhappy or unfulfilled marriages are more likely to engage in affairs. Perhaps surprisingly however, this is not always the case, and even the happiest of marriages can be prone to extramarital sex. Prins, Buunk and VanYperen (1993) found that extramarital involvement had *very little* to do with dissatisfaction in one's marriage. Men's involvement in extramarital sex was often independent of the way they felt about their marriages, although this was not always the case for women (Prins et al., 1993; Glass & Wright, 1985). Similarly, Hunt's (1969) study found that one-half of men and one-third of women who engaged in infidelity reported being in happy marriages (in Glass & Wright, 1985). Nevertheless, studies have shown that those who report unhappy marriages (regardless of one's gender) are more likely to report an occurrence of infidelity in the past year (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Treas & Giesen, 2000; Glass & Wright, 1985).

While the marriage-is-for-everything model may explain why most infidelity occurs in unhappy marriages, it fails to explain why individuals in satisfying marriages engage in infidelity. Similarly, the segmented model does not offer a convincing explanation as to why satisfied individuals will have an affair, other than the simplistic view that one can cognitively separate components of their life. One might also argue that the four dimensions of marriage are much more interrelated and unified than suggested and an affair cannot easily be separated from one's marriage.

Despite the usefulness of the segmented model of marriage, it has its limitations. First, the segmented model assumes that autonomy in marriage is fostered solely through sexuality, when there are clearly many other avenues for one to cultivate self-discovery besides having an affair. Even if self-discovery and self-awareness *was* thoroughly explored through sexuality, younger cohorts are coming into marriage with much more sexual experience. This would suggest that they would be *less* likely to discover themselves through an extramarital affair, while older cohorts (who came into marriage with fewer partners and less sexual experience) would be *more* likely to seek an affair as a path to self-discovery. Empirical evidence however, does not support this notion.

### **(iii). Secrecy & Extramarital Relationships**

Affairs are often viewed as nothing more than sexual endeavors that are destructive to marriage. Therefore, due to the risk and repercussions of disclosure, affairs are often kept secret. Secrecy is the reason that some academics believe that the number of affairs are actually higher than the reported rates (Sprecher, Regan & McKinney, 1998). Although the duration of an extramarital relationship can vary from a couple of hours to fifteen years (with the average lasting six months) its duration depends in large part upon keeping the affair secret (Allen, 2001 in Allen et al., 2005). Without secrecy, many extramarital relationships would not endure. Secrecy then becomes essential in both *creating* (Pittman, 1989 in Allen et al., 2005) and *maintaining* the extramarital affair (Glass & Wright, 1988).

As noted in *Tearoom Trade*, silence was used to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the homoerotic activity the men were involved in.<sup>9</sup> Many of these men were simultaneously

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<sup>9</sup> Humphreys' (1970) book *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*, is a sociological study that was conducted on men who had anonymous sex in public restrooms (or 'tearooms'). No words were ever exchanged between the participants during sexual encounters, so this silence was referred to as the "smothering of identity"

engaged in heterosexual relationships. The majority (54%) had wives and/or children and participated in these sexual escapades without their knowledge. As with heterosexual extramarital relationships, secrecy is essential for the continuation and preservation of the affair (Richardson, 1988). Because these acts are seen as sexually deviant in society, they are othered and forced to conceal their activity in fear of condemnation. Secrecy then, isolates the deviant from the normal (Humphreys, 1970). Secrecy also aids in intensifying the relationship between the two knowing parties and the outsiders, Simmel asserted that:

“[T]he intention of hiding...takes on a much greater intensity when it clashes with the intention of revealing....the secret offers, so to speak, the possibility of a second world alongside the manifest world; and the latter is decisively influenced by the former” (Simmel in Wolff, 1950, p.330).

In the manifest world, the primary, most discernible relationship is the marital relationship, while the ‘extra’ marital relationship is othered. Secrecy then gives strength and cohesiveness to the extramarital relationship, bonding it together with an ‘us versus the world’ mentality.

What every extramarital relationship has in common is that it begins as a secret (Richardson, 1988). This secret, in turn, generates intimacy between the two parties that helps sustain the relationship (Richardson, 1988; Reibstein & Richards, 1993). Because the relationship remains secret, it does not have added social pressures, nor is it open to criticism or judgment from others (Richardson, 1988). Therefore the couple is able to fulfill a fantasy of sorts, alongside the ‘real world’ (Wolff, 1950).

Vaughan (1986) argued that couples will only reveal secrecy in their relationships when the benefits of leaving outweigh the costs of staying upon disclosure<sup>10</sup>. The secret then, is the individuals’ disappointment in the relationship itself. Instead of disclosing his/her true feelings,

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(p.90). Secrecy not only served to protect the identities of the participants, but also intensified these sexual encounters, making them more exciting.

<sup>10</sup> In Vaughan’s book *Uncoupling* (1986), secrecy is the first stage in the uncoupling process. Couples use secrecy to not only avoid confrontation, but to avoid exploiting the true status of their relationships, which would reveal the downward slope of the relationship before the individual has completely come to terms with the revelation that the relationship is being terminated.

individuals who are unhappy in their marital relationships will sometimes initiate ways to strengthen it or make it more bearable, (for example, having a baby) or negotiate ways the partner, or themselves, can change (Vaughan, 1986). When this is unsuccessful, the individual finds ways to separate themselves, forming a separate identity and life outside their marriage.

When extramarital relationships are revealed, perceived beliefs from family or friends about the level of commitment and amount of love in the relationship will often have a self-fulfilling impact on it (Sprecher et al., 1998). For instance, if friends and family are accepting of the relationship and acknowledge the couple as being in a legitimate relationship, then the couple is more likely to stay together after disclosure (Sprecher & Feilmlee, 1992 in Sprecher et al., 1998). Richardson (1988, p.210) believes women have more to lose upon the revelation of the affair, especially if the extramarital relationship consists of a married man and a single woman, "...as whoever has the lesser interest in maintaining a relationship has the greater power within it."

Thus far, two broad research traditions on extramarital sex have been discussed: interpersonal theories and socio-cultural theories. Interpersonal theories offer a micro-level analysis for examining how individuals negotiate infidelity on an interpersonal level. These decision-making processes involve a high degree of autonomy and rationality and are useful for predicting an individual's stay-leave behaviour. In contrast, socio-cultural theories offer a macro-level analysis for exploring extramarital relationships in the context of broader social and cultural forces, such as sexual scripts and culturally-endorsed media messages.

# **Chapter III. Methodology**

## A. Qualitative Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach which is beneficial for exploring the in-depth meanings that individuals attach to their relationships.

“The qualitative paradigm aims to understand the social world from the viewpoint of respondents, through detailed descriptions of their cognitive and symbolic actions, and through the richness of meaning associated with observable behavior” (Wildemuth, 1993).

Qualitative methods offer the best techniques with which to study my research questions, because the purpose of this research is to explore the *how's* and *why's* of extramarital relationships. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to “...develop a level of detail about the individual or place and to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants” (Creswell, 2003, p. 181). This level of detail is critical when exploring the topic of marriage and infidelity.

Although qualitative methods offer an array of strategies for inquiry (such as case studies and ethnographies) I decided to employ the grounded theory approach using semi-structured interviews. Because the purpose of the study was to obtain a thorough and in-depth understanding of extramarital relationships, semi-structured interviews were conducted. This allowed me to explore how individuals negotiate extramarital relationships and investigate how the affair impacts the primary marital relationship. This approach was most suitable to get to the heart of private and volatile matters.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with heterosexual individuals who had a sexual relationship with someone other than their spouse at some point during their marriage. Interviews were also conducted with spouses of individuals who engaged in an affair. Semi-structured interviews allowed some latitude and freedom for the participant to speak about the issues that were important to them (Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2006). The advantage to this approach was that the interview flowed more naturally, like a conversation, thus allowing the participant to

take the interview in new and perhaps unexpected directions. My role as the researcher was to guide, rather than dominate, the interviews which allowed for a more informal approach. This provided a more comfortable atmosphere with which to discuss sexuality, which can be a very sensitive and personal topic.

## **B. Grounded Theory**

There are many different approaches to qualitative research, including ethnography, field research, and phenomenology. This project adopts the grounded theory approach. Glaser and Strauss (1967) define it as a process by “...which the researcher attempts to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of the participants in a study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 14). This theory requires ongoing involvement of the participants throughout the various stages of the study. Therefore, when data were obtained they were continually reflected upon and the research questions were periodically changed and reviewed, based on the findings of previous interviews. For instance, when new patterns began to emerge, new questions were added to the interview to probe the issue. This was particularly evident when a relationship began to emerge between a person who has an affair, and the likelihood of one’s parents also engaging in similar behaviour. (This is explored further in Chapter IV F (iv)). This approach aided in a more reflexive and emergent process, wherein the participants’ interviews guided and shaped the research process. This inductive approach allowed me to use specific observations to create broader generalizations. Therefore, grounded theory was useful for allowing generalizations to emerge from the data itself, rather than enter into the data collection phase with a pre-conceived theoretical framework. One will see however, that the effectiveness of this approach was limited due to the small sample size.

## C. Recruitment Methods

Participants for this study were recruited via referral sampling, as well as newspaper and online advertisements. When respondents initiated contact, those who met the criteria of the study were invited to participate in confidential interviews. The study mandated that the individual themselves, or their spouse, must have engaged in a sexual relationship while married. If the respondent met these requirements, they were then given the opportunity to partake in the interview at a mutually-agreed upon public place, over the phone, or on-line. Interviews were arranged as soon as possible after the participant made initial contact. After an interview was arranged, the participant was sent a copy of the information letter (see Appendix A), consent form (see Appendix B), and list of professional resources (see Appendix C).

In total, there were 41 responses to the advertisements. Twenty individuals responded via e-mail, 11 opted to phone the study line, and 10 responded through the email option of the on-line advertisement. Only 3 of 10 (30%) individuals who responded through the online ad advanced to the interview and one interview was through personal referral. Of the 20 people who inquired about the study via e-mail, 8 individuals (40%) agreed to be interviewed, while 8 of 11 respondents (73%) who called the study line proceeded to the interview stage. This suggests that when recruiting a volunteer sample of this kind, it is important to make personal contact (ie: by phone) in order to secure the interview. Twenty interviews were conducted in total with 16 interviews done by phone, one on-line (via e-mail) and three performed in-person. This suggests that individuals are more comfortable sharing this type of information when they can remain anonymous to the interviewer.



## D. Data Collection Procedures

The research proposal was approved by the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo on April 16, 2008. At this time, I added two study lines to my home telephone: one for the Kitchener-Waterloo region and one for the Hamilton-Burlington local calling area. The purpose of adding the phone lines was two-fold. They allowed an opportunity for participants to respond to the ad without incurring long-distance charges, and they provided me the opportunity to discontinue the phone lines once the study was concluded. These calls were identified by a special ring tone, which provided me the opportunity to recognize the caller as a respondent in advance of the call. In addition to this, an email address under the name of [EMRstudy@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:EMRstudy@uwaterloo.ca) was created. This provided an additional method of responding to the advertisement, as well as serving to legitimate the study by using the university name as a host address. Given that such a large number of individuals chose to respond to the advertisement via email, it certainly proved to be beneficial.

The population covered in this project consisted of heterosexual individuals who had engaged in, or whose spouse had engaged in, a sexual relationship while married. The purpose of the research was to gain a more thorough understanding of what happens in a marriage when infidelity occurs. Although the initial goal of the study was to question only those individuals who had engaged in the extramarital relationship, the study was quickly broadened to include *the spouses* of those who engaged in infidelity due to the small number of participants.

Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted over the course of three months, commencing on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008, and concluding on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008. A pre-test interview was not conducted, as there were not enough participants. However, at the end of every interview, participants were asked to share their thoughts on the interview process and were given an

opportunity to comment on subjects that might have been missed or omitted. No monetary or other incentives were offered for research participation, though they were all provided with a summary of the results.

### **(i). Newspaper Advertisements**

Newspaper advertisements were, by far, the most effective method of recruitment. A single one-time 3 ½” x 2” (standard business-card) advertisement was placed in *The Record* (Kitchener-Waterloo), *The Hamilton Spectator*, and *Burlington Post* (see Appendix D) on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The advertisement was inserted on a Saturday, which is the day with the highest circulation. The advertisement appeared in the ‘A’ section, or the first section of the newspaper that covers local, national, and international news stories. This advertisement invited individuals who had experienced an infidelity in their marriage to participate in a confidential study on EMR. These particular cities were chosen because research has shown that urban couples tend to experience more infidelity in their relationships than rural couples (Wiederman, 1997). In addition, by placing an advertisement in an urban newspaper, there was a greater possibility for a higher response rate due to increased circulation. These cities were also in close proximity to the interviewer, which made arranging interviews convenient.

A phone number and e-mail address were provided so the respondent could contact the researcher anonymously. These ads yielded little response upon initial insertion. The ratio of inquiries to interviews was 4:1. The same ad was placed in *The Hamilton Spectator* every other Saturday for the month of May before it was revised. At this time, the revised advertisement included the phrasing “*Social Scientist needs volunteers for interviews*”. (see Appendix E). In addition, the word ‘infidelity’ was changed to ‘affair’. (This is explored further under *Limitations to the Study*). The changes appear to have been successful, as the ratio of inquiries to

interviews increased from a rate of 4:1 to 2:1. The advertisement was then published an additional 5 times—running each consecutive Saturday, with the final ad appearing on July 12<sup>th</sup>. In total, 15 interviews emerged from the newspaper advertisements, which was 75% of the total number of interviews.

### **(ii). Online Advertisements**

In conjunction with newspaper advertisements, free online advertisements were placed on kijiji.ca in the following major cities in southern Ontario: Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Toronto, Norfolk, Windsor, St. Catharines, Mississauga, Oakville, Brantford and Guelph. The online advertisements contained more information than the newspaper ad, including the optional interview methods, as well as a more detailed outline of the study (see Appendix F). Online advertisements were significantly less effective than the newspaper advertisements. In total, there were 10 responses to the online advertisements with only three interviews resulting. Given however, that these ads were free, I would recommend this method of recruitment for future researchers, as online ads will undoubtedly become more common and popular in the future.

### **(iii). Referral Sampling**

In addition to newspaper and on-line advertisements, referral sampling was also used to recruit respondents. Although there is no way to determine how many people were made aware of the study via personal referral, only one interview emerged from this method. Some participants volunteered to recruit others they knew, but no interviews materialized.

## **E. The Interview Process**

Following an informal introduction, the interviews began with a review of the introduction letter, consent form, and the goals/purpose of the study. Participants were reminded that the interviews were confidential, that they could refuse to answer any questions, and they could withdraw from the study at any time. Consent for audio recording was requested at this time. Participants were also asked if they wished to receive transcripts of the interview. If requested, these notes were sent to the participants electronically in a Microsoft Word document within two weeks of the interview. To increase security measures, participants provided the researcher with a password with which to open the document. They were encouraged to review the transcript and make additional comments or clarification. Out of 20 participants, eight exercised their right to have the transcripts sent to them for review. Participants were also asked at this time if they wished to receive a copy of the final report upon conclusion of the study. All participants exercised this option and specific procedures on how to send this report was noted by the researcher for future reference. If there were no further questions from the participants, the interview commenced. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 2 ½ hours.

General background and demographic information was gathered at the beginning of the interview. After this, semi-structured interview questions were performed. There were two separate sets of interview questions: one for respondents who had engaged in an extramarital relationship and one for respondents whose spouse had the affair. Copies of the interview questions are attached as Appendix G and H.

Interviews ran smoothly, with participants providing a clear perspective on events and experiences. I originally anticipated that interviews would be disturbing for some participants, especially for those who experienced their partner's infidelity. This was not the case. For the

most part, participants appeared far enough removed from the situation that they were able to speak of their experiences without becoming emotionally distraught. This is not to say however, that participants did not speak without feeling or emotion. Participants clearly had strong feelings resulting in laughter, or long pauses in reflection, with only a single participant experiencing periodic bouts of weeping during the interview. Perhaps this is because the vast majority of the interviewees had already undergone some type of professional counseling or therapy. Therefore, they were able to communicate their experiences without high degrees of emotion. This suggests that the communication process is paramount to one's ability to both reflect on his/her experiences, as well as share those experiences with others.

Participant feedback yielded a very encouraging response. Participants were asked informally upon conclusion of the interview how they felt about the process. Furthermore, participants were invited to share any additional thoughts by phone or email that might transpire following the interview. Participants said that the interviews gave them a chance to reflect on their experiences and it was therapeutic in nature. Many respondents expressed their desire to help other couples by sharing their own personal experiences.

### **(i). Role of the Researcher**

The most common question that I am asked is: *Why did you choose to study infidelity?* This research topic was conducted out of sheer interest in wanting to know more about marriage and extramarital relationships. Further to the readings of Stephanie Coontz, author of *The Way We Never Were* (1992) and *Marriage: A History* (2005), I became interested in the incompatibilities between marriage and modern-day society. Following admittance into graduate school, my wish was to undertake a research project wherein I would be able to conduct original

research and make a small, albeit significant, contribution to the scarcity of Canadian sociological data on infidelity.

As a qualitative researcher, it is essential to the validity of the study to explore and reveal any potential biases. While it is nearly impossible for any researcher to conduct a study without any pre-conceived notions, it is important to reveal the personal context with which this study was conducted. I wish to acknowledge that I have approached this research as a single, white female. I firmly believe that my research has been conducted without any pre-conceived notions about marriage and/or extramarital affairs, given I have experienced neither. I trust that I have generated the findings accordingly.

As a researcher, it is essential to build a rapport with participants and I believe that my previous research experience conducting interviews adequately prepared me for this. Rapport and credibility were obtained through informal conversation at the onset of the interview. Interviews began with an exchange of pleasantries and an offer to answer any questions regarding the interview and/or research. Following informal conversation, the participants answered brief demographic questions and slowly transitioned into more detailed questions about their experiences with infidelity. When the interview concluded, many participants engaged in informal conversation, reaffirming the relationship connection between interviewer and participant.

It was also important for my participants to understand that the information they provided was confidential. With having over seven years experience as a medical office assistant, I was well-equipped to deal with issues of confidentiality and to discuss intimate details of their personal lives, both over the phone and in-person. I trust that my ease with the subject matter aided in reassuring the participants that I am non-judgmental in nature and further solidified and

reinforced my commitment to the study. These interviews were performed in three ways: online, in-person, and by phone.

### **(ii). Online Interviews**

Online interviews offered a unique methodological approach for participants who wished to remain anonymous. Online interviews allow the respondent an opportunity to participate in the study while retaining their anonymity. Only one participant chose this method. The interview conducted on-line consisted of emailing the interviewee the research questions. The respondent then answered the questions and returned the answers in a Microsoft Word document. The interviewee was told to email again if there were any questions that arose during the process, or if she needed clarification on any points.

The benefit to online interviews is that they are both time and cost efficient and provide instantaneous transcripts. Nguyen and Alexander (1996) suggested that there may be a tendency for participants to be more open with the interviewer, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as sexuality. This allows participants to better control the ‘presentation of self’, permitting them to be more sociable, friendly, and open. Although only one participant chose this method, I did not find that the interview data was any more revealing or candid than face-to-face, or phone interviews.

### **(iii). Face-to-Face Interviews**

Three interviews were conducted in-person. All face-to-face interviews were conducted in a coffee shop in a location that was mutually agreed upon by the researcher and the participant. The advantage to face-to-face interviews is the ability to review the individual’s

non-verbal communication and to achieve a level of rapport that one can only achieve through face-to-face interactions.

#### **(iv). Phone Interviews**

A total of 16 interviews were performed by phone. All telephone interviews were conducted in the privacy of the researcher's home office. Phone interviews were, by far, the most popular choice. Perhaps this was because participants felt they were able to speak freely and feel more comfortable disclosing personal information since their identity was not revealed. Wiederman and Whitley (2002) proposed that participants are more likely to admit to non-conforming behaviours when they are asked anonymously, rather than in face-to-face interviews. I think that this was true in my case and aided in a more accurate analysis of the findings.

#### **F. Data Analysis**

The data analysis and interpretation process consisted of four stages. This included data preparation, exploration, specification/reduction, and interpretation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The first phase entailed the transcription of interviews and field notes. The exploration and reduction phase involved reading, thinking about the data, and making memos (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). This also included the coding process, which aimed to organize the data into themes or categories. A list of common topics and themes was compiled and grouped into segments that relate to one another and given a label (Creswell, 2003). Once the data were coded, the information was interpreted (although interpretation was informally an ongoing process from the beginning) for the purposes of creating a narrative. Microsoft Excel and Word 2007 software were used for coding. Tests of reliability and validity were performed during all stages of the research process. To address issues of validity, two main criteria were used for this



qualitative research project and a number of strategies employed. The criterion includes validity as “quality of craftsmanship” and validity as “communication” (Kvale, 2006 in Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2006).

In order to maintain craftsmanship validity, I was vigilant throughout the research process. The data were continually checked and re-checked. It was necessary for me to remain objective during the analysis in order to capture the essence of the findings (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Every effort was made to ask questions from different perspectives in order to capture all angles of inquiry. All procedures were routinely reviewed and checked with the committee members throughout the duration of the study to ensure internal consistency. Audio tape recordings were taken with the permission of the participant to ensure that transcripts were accurately recorded. To aid with this, transcripts were returned to interviewees who wished to have them sent to them to check for accuracy and clarity. This was beneficial for protecting the interests of both the researcher and the participant.

Every effort was also made to minimize researcher bias. This was done by remaining impartial and reserving judgment until there was sufficient evidence to draw a conclusion. In addition, every attempt was made for the final report to reflect and reproduce the ideas and circumstances of the participants as objectively, and accurately, as possible.

#### **(i). Procedures for Ensuring Anonymity & Confidentiality**

Protection of privacy and issues of informed consent were made explicit upon commencement of the interview. In addition, precise measures were taken throughout the project to ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality by removing all names, places, and any other identifiable information. Prior to publication, participant names were substituted with an alias identity to ensure anonymity. Online interviews present additional issues of concern with

respect to confidentiality, such as how to securely store information (O'Conner, 2006). When interview transcripts were emailed back to participants, the document was password protected, with a code that the participant provided the researcher.

Creswell (2003) suggested that interview and project data be retained for a minimum of five years. Therefore, during the next five years, all information will be kept in storage at the researcher's home office, wherein nobody except the researcher will have access to the materials. After this time, all documents, including interview transcription and field notes, will be shredded, and electronic data deleted.

## **G. Limitations to the Research**

### **(i). Recruitment**

As predicted, there was a moderate amount of difficulty recruiting for this study. With over forty inquiries about the study, only half of them materialized into a formal interview. I theorize that the reason for this is that people are unwilling to speak about the private details of their (or their partner's) affair. Many affairs occur in secrecy, so it may be difficult to recruit participants if they fear disclosure. Furthermore, since infidelity is still strongly viewed as taboo in North America, participants who engage in the affair may fear ridicule. Perhaps this is why more spouses (of those who engaged in infidelity) participated in the study than those who actually had the affair themselves. Even in the event that the spouse knows about the affair, they may choose not to participate in the study for fear that it may cause them undue psychological or emotional harm. In addition, as a result of the difficulty in recruitment, advertisement costs were substantially higher than expected.

As previously noted, the number of persons who inquired about the study far exceeded the number of persons who agreed to be interviewed. These challenges may have occurred for

two reasons. First, there were problems with word selection for the newspaper and online advertisements which failed to recruit an adequate number of participants. Second, the inappropriate timing of the introductory letter hindered the chances that respondents would agree to be interviewed.

## **(ii). Sample Size**

One of the limitations to the study is its generalizability due to its small sample size. Although the interview data was rich in context, it was not sufficient to generate a single sociological theory. There were considerably more female participants than male. Participants also differed by age and ethnicity, and varied by marital status and duration of time lapse since the extramarital encounter occurred. Furthermore, the findings are only a descriptive analysis from one of the partners in the marriage and there are more reports from spouses who were ‘offended’ by their partner’s infidelity than there were by those who engaged in extramarital activity themselves. This had serious implications for the effectiveness of the grounded theory approach, as there was not enough evidence to generate any ‘grand’ theoretical assumptions. This approach did, however, aid in a reflexive process which allowed me to explore many different aspects of marriage and infidelity which was beneficial for acquiring knowledge outside the realm of initial inquiry. Furthermore, it allowed me to evaluate the relevance of existing theories, concepts, and terms.

## **(iii). Context**

One of the limitations that occurred with this study is the context in which infidelity occurs in a marriage. One interview consisted of an individual who described herself as being in an ‘open’ marriage. This clearly has implications for the study, as the other nineteen participants

experienced infidelity in the context of secrecy and non-communication. Because an open marriage means that one has verbally communicated one's intentions to engage in sex before the act has occurred, it differs greatly from the experiences of those who did not have any prior knowledge of their spouse's affair. Therefore, the data collected from the open marriage interview was excluded.

#### **(iv). Language & Meaning**

Definitions of terms have been noted as a limitation of sex research studies, as researchers and participants will vary with their meanings and understandings of certain concepts. Furthermore, researchers do not want to hinder the reputability of their study by using terms that will bias, or perhaps even, offend the participant. For this reason, I was vigilant in ensuring that the language used in the questionnaire was neutral and non-offensive. Despite my best efforts, the terms *infidelity*, *affair*, and *extramarital relationship* proved to be problematic in two different ways.

During the research proposal defense, there was significant discourse surrounding which term should be used to define the actions of those who engage in sexual activity outside their marriage. The committee concluded that *extramarital relationship* was the best term to describe this action, as it did not contain any moral or religious undertones. The very first respondent; however, voiced his reservations with the term *extramarital relationship*. Robert wanted to express that having sex with another person should not directly imply that there is a *relationship* of any kind.

“In my definition I never had a "relationship", but rather "casual sex", never exceeding 4 to 5 times with the same person. At no time ever did I allow myself to become emotionally involved. My extramarital escapades were purely sexual...”

Robert's concerns exemplify the importance of meaning that people attach to specific words and why researchers need to take this into serious consideration when conducting research.

Furthermore, it is a reminder that not all sexual encounters necessarily entail an emotional component, which is reviewed in further detail in Chapter IV, C (iii).

The second limitation that derived from meanings and understanding of definitions happened during the recruitment process. The initial advertisement had significantly fewer responses compared to that of the revised version. Consequently, subtle changes were made to the advertisement in hopes of generating a better response. Although the terms infidelity and affair are often used interchangeably, there is reason to believe that these terms have significantly different meanings to individuals, which consequently had an affect on the response rate to the advertisement. (The initial advertisement is presented as Appendix D and the revised as Appendix E).

As previously noted, one of the most influential changes to the advertisement was the revision of the word *infidelity* to *affair*. After this change was made, the ratio of inquiries to interviews increased from a rate of 4:1 to 2:1. This presents an interesting sociological finding, as the wording largely determined the success of the advertisement. Once *infidelity* was replaced with *affair*, the ad generated a substantially greater response, not only in the number of general inquiries, but also in the number of interviews which resulted from them. In addition, 'social scientist' was added to the headline, which I believe aided in further legitimating the study, as the word *science* is often equated or associated with research studies. This suggests the meanings that people associate with terms (such as infidelity, affair, or extramarital relationship) play a significant role in how they are perceived by others and their willingness to participate in such a study. I initiated the change of wording because I thought that perhaps more individuals

could relate to the word affair today, as it has become more commonplace in the media and pop culture. Furthermore, it is possible that some may not even be familiar with the term *infidelity*. Regardless, the word *affair* proved to be the most effective term to recruit participants, which demonstrates the relevance of language and meaning. This finding shows support for social scripting theory, because the meanings that people associate with certain terms will influence and guide their actions. Because these scripts are social constructions, they will change within different historical, cultural and religious contexts. This finding prompted the need to further explore the meanings that individuals associate with these terms. I decided to investigate these differences by unpacking the meanings of ‘adultery’ and ‘infidelity’, using the online encyclopedia Wikipedia.

Wikipedia was selected for two reasons: it is collaborative in its editorial processes (created by consensus), and is fast becoming one of the most accepted and sought-out sources of information in today’s pop culture. These are definitions of *affair* and *infidelity*, as they appeared on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008:

**Infidelity**: “**Infidelity** can be defined as any violation of the mutually agreed-upon rules or boundaries of a relationship, and is a breach of faith in an inter-personal relationship. Sexual infidelity in marriage is sometimes called adultery, philandery or an affair and in other inter-personal relationships it is sometimes called cheating. *See also: Adultery*” (page last modified Oct 20, 2008) (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infidelity>)

**Affair**: “An **affair** may refer to a form of nonmonogamy, to infidelity or to adultery. Where an affair lacks both overt and covert sexual behaviour and yet exhibits intense or enduring emotional intimacy it is called an emotional affair. 'Affair' may be used as a euphemism and in some cases to add glamour to an illicit liaison or it may be used to slander. *See also Love Affair or Scandal*” (page last modified Oct 15, 2008) (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affair>)

Upon closer investigation, we see that infidelity implies a violation or breach of relationship, suggesting very negative or harmful consequences. The term infidelity is cross-referenced with ‘adultery’, which carries negative moral and religious judgement. On the contrary, the term ‘affair’ is used as euphemism, or a less offensive term for infidelity, appearing

more glamorous than infidelity. This is more consistent with the media's depiction of extramarital relationships. Furthermore, affair is coupled with an emotional component, whereas infidelity is not. This suggests that affairs contain expressive components, whereas infidelity is 'just sex' that is destructive to existing relationships. There is no evidence in Wikipedia's interpretation of affair to suggest that it is harmful to one's existing relationship. Furthermore, if readers want more information on affairs, they are cross referenced to the term 'love affair' or 'scandal'. Infidelity did not have any association with ideas of love or emotional connections; only destruction and violation of relationships.

These Wikipedia definitions suggest that the terms *infidelity* and *affair* have substantially different meanings, although the words are often used interchangeably. This is an interesting methodological finding, since the term infidelity clearly has more negative meanings associated with it than the word affair. This implies that affairs are viewed more positively and glamorously, which serves to explain why more people were drawn to this term. This further clarifies why the word choice was so critical to the success of the advertisement, and thus the overall level of participation in the study. Therefore, we see that a sociological exploration of language and meaning is critical to study. If we come to understand the meanings that people associate with specific terms, then we are better able to identify and understand our participants without causing alienation, bias, or misunderstanding. This also saves researchers considerable amounts of time and money when it comes to recruitment methods.

#### **(v). Timing of Introductory Letter**

Once contact was made by the participant, the timing with which the introductory letter was presented was important. At the beginning of the study, the respondents were sent the introduction letter following initial contact. This served the purpose of presenting the initiatives

of the study, as well as ensuring that participants qualified for it. Individuals were asked to review the letter and either email or phone back to book an interview time; however few respondents did, and given the nature of the study, it was not appropriate to follow up with these participants. I then decided to present the introductory letter *following* a secured interview. Once the interview date and time was decided upon, the information letter and consent form were sent for review.

#### **(vi). Online & Telephone Interviews**

There were some challenges that resulted from online and telephone interviews that should be noted. The inability to probe an online interviewee potentially resulted in a less thorough interview. Although there is no way of knowing this for sure, there is a chance that more data could have been collected if the researcher was able to probe the respondent, as was the case in phone and in-person interviews.

Another disadvantage to performing online and telephone interviews included the inability to witness participant's non-verbal communication, which could have provided valuable insight about the person's age, gender, and ethnicity. Without verbal and/or body cues, language could be misinterpreted and could present validity issues. In addition, although these methods ensure the participant's anonymity, there is no way for the researcher to verify the identity of the individual. Although it is my strong sense that this was not a factor in this study, it perhaps might have been if more interviews were conducted in this manner. Therefore, I caution future researchers with regards to these issues when performing interviews by these methods.



**(vii). Recall**

There is one additional limitation to the study, which is that of memory recall. Because some participants had their affair (or experienced their spouse's affair) many years ago, some had some minor difficulties with memory recall, although this was minimal and only applied to people who tried to recollect highly specific details of past conversations. Memory recall was not an issue in the majority of cases.

# **Chapter IV. Findings**

## **A. Demographic Profile of the Participants**

Twenty people in total participated in this study; 4 males and 16 females. Of these participants, eight (40%) had engaged in an extramarital relationship: two males and six females. The remaining 13 participants (65%) had spouses who engaged in an extramarital relationship. One participant had an extramarital affair, as did her spouse. Of these participants, eight were married, six were divorced, four were separated, and two widowed. The age of participants ranged from 22 to 77, with an average age of 49.

The vast majority of individuals who engaged in the extramarital relationship had completed college and/or university and are employed in professional or semi-professional careers (ie: bank advisors, political leaders, doctors, and professors). The length of time that couples were married ranged from two to 53 years, with the average being 19 years. Ninety percent of the participants had children. Most participants identified their nationality or ethnic background as being Canadian (or Caucasian). A few self-identified as Filipino, Dutch, and German.

The length of affairs ranged from one day to 10 years. I caution that these numbers are approximate, as there is no way to ensure that the spouse was fully aware of how many affair(s) there were in total, as well as the duration of the affair(s). In my study, the affairs began as early as the first year of marriage, up to 53 years. The average affair began in year 10 of marriage, with 58% of extramarital relationships happening within the first six years. (The 53 year marriage was an anomaly so it was omitted when this average was calculated). One hundred percent of participants under the age of 39 (at the time of the study) experienced an affair within the first five years of marriage, indicating that extramarital relationships are happening earlier in marriage for younger cohorts. (see Appendix L). In 26% of the cases, the individual who had

the affair went on to marry, or form a long-term committed relationship, with the extramarital partner. Older age groups were more likely to report the affair resulted in a new, committed relationship. For example, 100% of individuals over 40 years old reported that either they, or their spouse, formed a long-term relationship with an extramarital partner (see Appendix K). This suggests that younger cohorts are not having affairs for the purpose of building a new, long-term relationship. Rather, it is the older cohorts who are exiting their marriage for a new, committed relationship.

This study revealed that 53% of affairs occurred with a friend, or common acquaintance. In the other 47% of the cases, the affair was work-related. This includes affairs with coworkers, managers, administrative staff, or those which occurred in the context of work-related activities, such as out-of-town business trips. Extramarital relationships that occurred with strangers or sex workers were rarer than those with friends, acquaintances, and coworkers. In 32% of the cases, there was more than one affair that occurred during the marriage. One must remain skeptical of this figure, as most testimonials came from the individual who endured their spouse's affair, so there is no way to know, with any certainty, that these numbers are accurate. The affairs described in this study are uniquely different by motivation, duration, and emotional attachment (if any). All of the extramarital relationships described in this study contain a sexual component.

Amongst the participants, there was only one case where the infidelity was not disclosed to their spouse. Therefore, this research was conducted not only in the context of marriages that experienced infidelity, but those in which the affair was disclosed. This was essential, since the primary task of the research was to explore the effects of infidelity on the marriage. In 85% of the cases, the affair was disclosed involuntarily. This means that in the majority of cases, the individuals found out about their spouse's affair before their partner decided to tell them. In

many cases, the affair was denied until there was absolute proof. For instance, the individual would reject accusations of extramarital activity until the spouse had sufficient evidence to prove that the affair had taken place, such as copies of letters, emails, or cell phone statements.

## **B. Marital Satisfaction**

### **(i). Defining Marital Satisfaction**

One of the aims of the study was to explore how individuals define marital satisfaction. Although a few themes emerge, men and women only differ moderately in the ways they come to define marital satisfaction. According to this study, happiness/ joy, and partnership/ companionship, is what defines marital satisfaction for both males and females (see Appendix J). Happiness/joy was cited by 50% of the participants, while themes of partnership and companionship were stated 34% of the time. Themes of partnerships include: common interests, common goals, doing things together, shared commitments, compatibility, and companionship. Participants also defined marital satisfaction by emotional/intellectual fulfillment (26%), a sexual/physical relationship (26%), followed by contentment (21%), security (21%) and love (21%).

“Marital satisfaction to me means feeling better about my life with my husband in it, than with him not in it. A satisfying marriage would make me feel loved, secure and supported, being on the same team, working together through all of life’s problems and joys. Marital satisfaction means waking up in the morning and being happy to see your spouse, and feeling good seeing them at the end of the day, too. Marital satisfaction means having a good intimate relationship, physically and also emotionally.” – Victoria

There are some noted gender differences in the ways in which men and women define or describe marital satisfaction. Security and love were only cited by women. Furthermore, only women cited *trust* and *morals* in their definition of marital satisfaction. Although only 21% of respondents mentioned the word *love* when they described or defined marital satisfaction, when asked what a ‘good’ marriage consists of, the word *love* was reported more frequently. This is

not to suggest that those who are in satisfied marriages are not in love, but perhaps this implies that one can be in a satisfied relationship without having strong feelings of love present, or in the forefront of their minds. For instance, once love matures into a lasting relationship, the heart-fluttering, romantic love subsides and becomes less significant. None of the men cited love in either their definition of a satisfied, or good marriage. This suggests that perhaps, for women, a good and satisfied marriage will encompass a love element and that women still equate the idyllic marriage with love, whereas men do not.

Forty-two percent of participants cite that trust is indicative of a *good* marriage. Those who had the affair were least likely to report trust as a component of a good or satisfied marriage.

#### **(ii). Marital Satisfaction: Is There a Correlation With Infidelity?**

Although marital satisfaction has long been studied as a predictor for infidelity, researchers have failed to clearly establish a relationship between extramarital sex and marital satisfaction (Previti & Amato, 2004; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Atkins et al., 2001). My study demonstrates that although individuals convey strong moral convictions against extramarital sex, they will re-negotiate this when they are not satisfied in their marriage. I found that women who engaged in extramarital activity were much more likely than men to report marital dissatisfaction. In fact, all six female participants who had an affair reported marital dissatisfaction, while both male participants stated that they were satisfied in their marriage at the time of the affair. This remains consistent with Glass and Wright's (1985) study, which concluded that women tend to be less satisfied in their marriage than men when they have an affair. This may suggest that the status of the relationship is a more salient issue for women, and thus becomes a predictor for extramarital involvement.

A noted fault of Reibstein and Richard's segmented and marriage-if-for-everything models is that they do not account for gender differences in behaviour. I suggest that the marriage-for-everything model is more suitable for explaining female motivations, while the segmented model is best for reflecting male motivations for engaging in affairs. This is supported by the revelation that men will engage in affairs regardless of marital satisfaction, while women are more likely to have an affair when they are experiencing dissatisfaction. If we consider that women's affairs are often due to a deficit in the marriage, then it supports the marriage-is-for-everything model (which proposes that the affair will reflect the aspect of the marriage that is missing). Since it was found that men engage in affairs irrespective of their levels of satisfaction, then one might conclude that they are able to cognitively separate their marriage from the affair, thus showing support for the segmented model of marriage.

### **(iii). Sexual Satisfaction**

Some researchers have suggested that a decrease in frequency and quality of sexual relations in the marriage may lead to infidelity (Liu, 2000). During my research, I did not find any studies that linked decreased sexual activity in marriage with decreased marital satisfaction and it is problematic in many ways to assume that decreased marital satisfaction automatically equates with sexual dissatisfaction. The participants in this study were not queried regarding their sexual activity, satisfaction or frequency in marriage, though some participants volunteered this information. While some participants did not experience any changes to their sex life, others noted an increase or decrease in sexual frequency with their marital partner at the time of the affair.

### **C. Infidelity & the Marriage**

Seventy-nine percent of respondents agreed with the statement: “*Most people consider extramarital sex to be ‘wrong’ or ‘almost always wrong.’*” Two participants disagreed with this statement and two were undecided. Unfortunately, few researchers have studied the impact of infidelity on marital relationships and relatively little is known about how it affects marital stability (Johnson, 1970). Research has shown that the majority of marriages that experience an affair will stay together, despite disclosure. In this study, 42% of the participants remained married to their spouse at the time of the interview. It was also found that, of the 10 participants who separated or divorced, eight of them remained together for a substantial period of time following the disclosure of the affair. Therefore, even when the affair was disclosed, there was a significant period of time when these couples remained together, despite future outcomes. For two participants, the divorce/separation was a result of disclosure of a second affair. This implies that when a subsequent affair is revealed, it may have more of a negative impact on the status of the marriage, than perhaps a single ‘one time’ affair. This suggests the need to explore both the negative and positive effects of the affair on marital relationships, as the majority of couples who experience an affair *will* indeed remain in their marriage, at least temporarily, if not indefinitely.

Infidelity has sometimes been associated with having an unintended positive impact on the primary marital relationship, although this notion is generally under-explored. Latent functions entail the actions that are “objective consequences” for behaviours that were neither intended, nor conscious (Merton, 1957, p. 60). Therefore, infidelity can have inadvertent results which are unintended, and often, unexpected. Although it is assumed that infidelity, especially



once disclosed, will have a negative impact on the marriage, I will present evidence to suggest that in some cases, infidelity can have a positive, latent function.

### **(i). Positive Effects on the Marriage**

One of the purposes of this study was to explore the possibility that infidelity may have unintended, positive consequences for the marital relationship. Olson et al.'s (2002) study on emotional processes following the disclosure of extramarital relationships found that infidelity had positively impacted marriage by way of closer marital relationships, taking better care of one's self, and placing a higher value on one's family. Olson et al. (2002) did not differentiate which spouse (the one who engaged in the affair or the one who endured it) reported these positive changes.

My study suggests that infidelity does, in fact, have some unintended positive impacts on the marriage. However, the rewards differ from Olson et al.'s (2002) study. Positive changes were reported by nearly half of all participants, including both the spouse who had the affair, and the one who endured their spouse's affair. The positive changes that were noted by individuals *who had an affair* included: improved communication, increased sexual activity, and a new-found awareness or focus on issues that had previously compromised the marriage.

“At the very start, yes –it [the affair] probably brought us closer. At the very start when there was excitement. At that point, it brought us closer—and enhanced our sex life. But that was probably only for about 3 or 4 months.” - Anne

“It was because of the lessons learned through the affair and the cancer process that we are where we are today. So we're much stronger in our marriage...in our faith. We feel more like a team than two different entities trying to exist and survive. Now we just feel grounded and where we need to be. We're more focused.” – Kim

“We talked more. We were more open with each other. He stopped going out all the time which was a stress on me. More trust and more communication. We both knew what we were capable of doing...and we learned to appreciate each other more I think. Yeah we appreciated each other more.” – Brittany

Six participants reported positive changes in their marriage due to *their spouse's* infidelity. These individuals similarly reported increased communication and improvements to their marriage and/or sex life. This demonstrates that the perceived advantages of the affair were similar for both the spouse who had the affair, as well as for those whose spouse had the affair.

“Our sex life improved. We had more sex. I was more conscious of not rejecting him if he wanted to have sex. That’s one thing that the counselor worked on with us.” - Nancy

“... Actually the counselor keeps saying [to us] that your marriage will be better. Well, I don’t know if it’s better. He doesn’t drink as much. He’s much more thoughtful around the house and doing things...he buys me flowers now and then...holds my hand in public more...more affectionate in public...tells me he loves me more. So yes, those things are better.” - Brenda

“I think if there hadn’t been the affair, our marriage would have been over in the first year. Not because of the affair, but because things just weren’t right. So in some ways I guess you could say that the affair saved our marriage.” – Jill

## **(ii). Negative Effects on the Marriage**

Despite the positive effects on the marriage, there were also some negative changes that resulted from the disclosure of the affair. Negative effects of the affair on marriage were far more likely to be noted than positive effects, especially if the affair was disclosed. Negative effects were noted from all but one participant, regardless of gender or marital status. The most common negative effects were increased emotional distance, decreased communication, and diminished trust.

One of the negative effects that result is increased emotional distance and animosity between spouses.

“I didn’t look to my husband for support. I looked elsewhere for support. I looked elsewhere for companionship. Basically, my life at home was almost on hold. I was on hold when I was in my life at home-- just waiting for a chance to be with the other person. And [I] didn’t talk to my husband about life, or my feelings, or my thoughts. We dramatically drew apart...more than we had already been.” - Anne

“He was really hurt. It was the only time I saw him cry in 15 years. He packed his stuff. And then he didn’t talk to me for a week. He stayed in the basement. I thought for sure he was gonna go, but he didn’t. There was a lot of animosity between us for a long time, and he got angry he would throw it in my face...but I haven’t heard anything from it in a long, long time now.” – Brittany

My research further concludes that *the spouse* of individuals who had the affair is more likely to report negative impacts on the marriage, such as decreased communication.

“[The marriage] totally changed because somehow it’s like you’re stepping on broken glass. We were both like that. It was hard to open up one word without having another meaning. The open communication was not there anymore. We had to be very choosy with the words we used. Both of us, I know, were like that. ...Our conversation has gotten to the point where I think I had more respect for an animal than him. It had gotten that low.” - Leanne

Given that extramarital affairs are so often shrouded in secrecy, issues of trust are salient for individuals who are confronted by their spouse’s affair. In this study, trust was a recurring theme, especially since there was a disproportionate number of participants who were affected by their spouse’s infidelity. Issues of trust are paramount, as it is viewed as a fundamental building block of a relationship. When it is broken, the solid foundation of the relationship is gone, or at best, diminishes. When a partner engages in behaviour that is believed to compromise the relationship (such as having an extramarital relationship), the task of trying to restore trust in the relationship is tiresome, complex, and for some, never-ending. Ninety-two percent of individuals report that diminished trust had a negative impact on their marriage and it was considered one of their most difficult challenges following disclosure.

“The trust. It’s regaining the trust. Because for those first two or three years, every little thing was under a microscope. If he came home late, if he didn’t call, if he didn’t answer his phone, if he was gone on business trips...” – Nancy

“The lack of trust...that I don’t trust him anymore. It’s just *gone*. And how could he demean me that way? I mean some of these people...I was in their company... and constantly! I find that very demeaning, that’s all.” – Lyn

“We were in different bedrooms. There’s no trust. Like, I’m always checking his emails and his cell phone for numbers I don’t know or recognize.” – Ashley

“I trusted him soooo much...I just absolutely trusted him. It never occurred to me it was a ruse to see her. I worked with him everyday...you go off and do something by yourself—that’s fine. Whereas now, I don’t have that kind of trust *at all*. I mean, I check phones...I did for a long time...that kind of thing.”—Brenda

“It kind of makes me feel like you have this damaged marriage...that you’re never going to have what seems like a very basic thing...to have this marriage where you don’t have a history of mistrust and dishonesty, even though its been very important for us to be very transparent with things. This feeling of doubt sometimes still comes over me.” – Jill

Testimonies from participants reveal that some women inextricably link sex with trust and/or an emotional attachment. They further indicate that trust is why sexual exclusivity is so important to a marriage.

“Again, I think it’s a trust issue. I can’t say that it’s the epitome of a relationship, but it sort of is the epitome of the relationship. It’s the greatest intimacy that someone can have emotionally so when anyone else is brought into the equation, it can’t be the same. There can’t be three people in a pinnacle.” – Carol

“Trust is based on sexual exclusivity, even though sex is only one part of a marriage whole. You need trust to build a strong marriage. Lack of trust creates all sorts of problems, and not being sexually exclusive shows a lack of respect for your partner. It is selfish, and in general, doesn’t support a strong marriage.” – Victoria

“This is my own personal opinion, but not having sexual exclusivity means not having emotional exclusivity. And I think that’s the more important side of it.” - Anne

This demonstrates how women often integrate sex with emotion. Therefore, if their husbands engage in extramarital sex, they conclude that the emotional bond is broken and the trust is destroyed, irrespective of the level of involvement their spouse may have had with the extramarital partner.

“Because I think that sexually is the way that we make ourselves most vulnerable in a marriage...and there’s that trust that stays within the marriage—you’re able to really let your guard down and feel that you’re safe in this marriage. And I think—I almost see it as a privilege—that I’m letting him in-- not just sexually-- but letting him so much into my life, and to think that he’s having a relationship with me and then walking out the door and having it with someone else-- it ruins the specialness of something that is really integral to a marriage.” – Meagan

“I think it’s really important. ..because I think that *is* marriage...” – Shandra

“...*Not* having sexual exclusivity means not having emotional exclusivity. And I think that’s the more important side of it.” - Anne

“Yes. Because it shows emotional exclusivity. It all goes together. Which is why I couldn’t have an affair with this woman’s husband—if there’s no emotional attachment here I’m not jumping into bed with you” - Brenda

### **(iii). No Effects on the Marriage**

Men were more likely than women to not report any changes to their marriage as a result of their infidelity. Both men in the study who had an extramarital affair reported that there were

no changes to their marriage following the affair. This might also be attributed to the fact that, in both cases, the infidelity was not disclosed. Further, even though the individual may not perceive there to be any problems, it is possible that their spouse may have experienced changes within the relationship, although it was never communicated.

“I come home from the trip and as I said, she was happy I was back. We went back to bed ...I shouldn't say as if nothing happened....well, maybe I specifically made sure that I said 'I miss you'.” - Robert

So, what's love got to do with it? Some argue nothing at all. Consistent with previous research, I provide evidence to support the notion that men who engage in extramarital sex are able to distance themselves from their extramarital partners by not forming an emotional attachment (Turner, 2000 in Eaves & Robertson-Smith, 2007). By doing so, men are able to keep the physical component separate from the emotional component, which aids to keep the affair at bay, thus relieving the primary marital relationship of any impact.

“I think the answer is that sex is a physical act. It can be performed totally without emotional connection. (Tina Turner: What's Love got to do with it?) I told you, I never allowed myself to get emotionally involved....I think the answer lies in the fact that society, or moral standards place a disproportionably high value on the sex act than it either deserves or constitutes. Maybe, just maybe, the majority of couples realize that marriage is much more than sex, and it requires much more to go wrong than an act, or several, acts of sex. Marriage is all of the following and much more: contentment, stability, trust in and caring for the partner and caring for the children, providing and supporting each other in good times and bad, and much, much more. Infidelity, without intent to violate any of the basic rules and demands and remaining true in heart and spirit to the partner, will not destroy a marriage. I think that most couples do know this and will easily forgive a one night stand, or a number of sex acts, especially if it involves a sex worker.” – Robert

This cognitive divide by which one separates their marriage from the affair supports the segmented model of marriage. This model explains how spouses can report their affairs as being separate from their marriage, as they are able to compartmentalize their life and cognitively distance their marriage from the extramarital relationship (Reibstein & Richards, 1993).

“For the first year, it just happened...it was soooo spur of the moment...and sooo caught up in the moment that on the way home I was thinking about her yeah—really caught up with her—I was really infatuated maybe—but as soon as I was home *that was it*. Done. Shut right off. I just got home, and again, what happened 250kms away from home completely just didn't exist. I went back the other way, and I never gave [her] another thought...” – Bill

“When the trip was over I was finished with my escapade. I came home and I was happy to be home again, and my wife was happy I was back. And again, I think because of my attitude--no emotional attachments. No emotional attachments.” – Robert

This model of marriage also provides an explanation as to why so many individuals remain in marriage, despite their extramarital activity. Those who can segment these aspects of their life may only be looking for a supplement to their marriage, rather than a means to exit. Anne suggests that there may be times of weakness in the marriage wherein an affair may be more likely to happen, though the intent may not be to leave.

“I guess because despite overall happiness, there’s areas of vulnerability where you’re not feeling connected as a couple. I know a lot of situations--especially as you’re having kids and all of those major changes—one of them may feel like they are not as invested in the relationship and go outside the marriage to feel that validation...even though they are overall happy with the marriage—things kind of shake the foundation of the marriage. The issues that you go through in the marriage—not that you’re unhappy with the marriage-- but they create situations where you may be more vulnerable.” – Jill

Therefore, the segmented model is sufficient for explaining how individuals can report their affairs as being separate from their marriage, and provides support for why those in seemingly happy marriages engage in infidelity.

Men were not the only ones to claim that their affair was purely sexual in nature. One woman considered her affair a purely sexual act, void of any emotion. Although this was an isolated case (given this study only had six female participants who had an affair), this is not to say that this may not also be true of a larger sample size. This does, however, suggest the changing nature of sexual scripts, which once prohibited women from admitting to engaging in acts that were purely sexual in nature, as they would be labeled promiscuous. I predict that as younger cohorts move into marriage with more liberal sexual attitudes and more sexual experience prior to marriage, they too, will increasingly have more purely physical sexual encounters outside their marriage. A longitudinal study that examines sexual behaviours over the life course would be beneficial for explaining this phenomenon.

#### **(iv). How the Quality of the Extramarital Relationship Affects the Marriage**

One might hypothesize that the quality of the extramarital relationship may have an impact on whether or not one chooses to remain in his/her marriage; however this relationship is complex. There is no research, to date, to support that a person who experiences an affair with a strong love and/or emotional component will eventually leave their marriage for this new, committed relationship.

The investment model suggests that one will remain in marriage if the commitment in the marital relationship is perceived as greater than that of the extramarital alternative. A criticism with this model, however, is that it does not readily take into account the actions of one's partner (both marital and extramarital). It assumes that a person's satisfaction and commitment level to their marriage are the only variables that will determine the outcome of their marriage. Clearly, the reflexive nature of the marital and extramarital partner should be considered. My research suggests that the spouse has a profound impact on the marriage, and quite often the person who has the affair is not always given the opportunity to decide whether or not they will remain in the relationship. Therefore, the partner's reaction to their spouse's infidelity is of the utmost importance to the stability of the marital relationship. Bill engaged in infidelity and believed that his spouse would forgive him and they would be able to move past it:

"I didn't understand what a relationship was and I didn't understand what trust was—and all the rest of the necessary ingredients. Like when I told her about my affair--I honestly kind of expected it just to blow over...not understanding the trust and what it did to her. I really didn't know. I had no clue. I expected marriage to withstand those kinds of things...not realizing that underneath the word marriage is the word relationship...and without that –there is no marriage." – Bill

Bill expected the marriage to withstand his infidelity. Although he expressed feelings toward his extramarital partner, in his mind he had no intentions of letting his affair interfere, or interrupt his marriage. Unfortunately for him, this was not the case and they subsequently underwent a divorce.

## **D. Infidelity & the Individual - Part A: Effects on the Individual**

### **(i). Negative Effects**

Infidelity has been shown to have both positive and negative effects on one's marriage. This also holds true for individuals on an interpersonal level. Although some participants report positive changes, an affair undoubtedly has a tumultuous impact on their emotional and physical well-being. All of the individuals in the study whose affair was disclosed reported that an affair is not something that they would wish to experience ever again, despite whether or not they were the one involved in the extramarital relationship.

#### **(a) Negative Effects on the Individual who had the Extramarital Relationship**

Although many studies document extensively how self-esteem *increases* for the person who has the affair, one may wonder how an affair could negatively impact the person's self-esteem--after all, don't two people want them? On the contrary, extramarital activity can have a negative effect for the individual who engages in it, despite one's gender. Themes of guilt were salient amongst two of those who engaged in the extramarital relationship(s). Guilt stems from a range of sources from lying to his/her spouse, to the uncertainty in the marriage that resulted from their actions.

"I think the hardest part about having the affair for me was lying. I didn't think our marriage could go on without telling him. I didn't think our marriage could end without telling him, so he just needed to be told I guess." – Anne

For Anne, the affair had damaging effects on the individual's spouse, and consequently, the marriage, once it was disclosed. The guilt stems from how the affair affected the spouse on an interpersonal level and the destruction that it caused them as an individual. Anne experienced guilt for the pain she caused her spouse:



“I guess I got really depressed during the affair...that I was hurting people and that I wasn’t really comfortable with what I was doing. I felt bad that potentially my marriage was ending—that I wasn’t happy in my day-to-day life—that I wanted more. So I was very unhappy with my life and where it stood and what I was getting out of it—and I wanted more with this other person I guess. I felt torn and guilty—extremely guilty.” – Anne

Bill expressed similar bouts of guilt as a result of his affair, which prompted him to tell his wife:

“It really hurt her more than I realized. When I told her, 45 minutes prior to that, I had seen one of the other guys who was involved and I was just overwhelmed with guilt. And I remember being in a store and I couldn’t even think about why I was there or what I was buying—I was in a state of guilt.” – Bill

However, for Bill, the guilt did not subside following disclosure of the affair. When he witnessed the pain and suffering it caused his wife, the guilt remained.

“In hind sight, I can see how—when I told her-- it affected her. Oh yah, I have a hard time living with that. There’s nothing good at all. There’s nothing good at all. I have never forgiven myself. I have never allowed myself. That’s why I am still single--because I just can’t let go of the fact of what I did. My self-esteem went down –everything-- my own self-concept--everything went right off the scale.” - Bill

One woman explained how her husband was so guilt-ridden and torn from his affair that he worried that she might level the playing field. His self-esteem eroded and due to his insecurities, he began to distrust her and feared that she would have an extramarital affair in retaliation.

“The biggest change was in him because he became guilt ridden and totally insecure, so it affected our marriage in that *he* began not to trust *me* because he was sure that I would then go out and have an affair.” – Nancy

#### (b) Negative Effects on the Individual’s Spouse

An affair can have strong, negative emotional effects on a person’s spouse. In my study, themes of decreased self-esteem and confidence emerged. Whether stated explicitly or not, the participants whose spouse engaged in the affair reported how the disclosure of the infidelity was devastating, life altering, and had negative implications on their emotional well-being, self-worth, or self-esteem. Men did not overtly report diminished self-esteem, though one cannot assume that just because there was no testimony alluding to this, it did not occur. When a spouse

engages in an affair, the partner is left to feel as though they do not measure up. Their feelings of self-worth are shattered, causing hurt and anxiety.

“[The affair] totally took away my self-esteem. And I remember writing that and being angry and saying that’s what was so wrong about the affair. Because his self-esteem got built up—because two people wanted him—and mine got smashed to smithereens. And I’m actually normally a very confident person in myself. So that definitely got destroyed.” – Brenda

Irrespective of age, or the duration of marriage, nearly every participant was affected on an interpersonal level when it came to how the affair took away their confidence and self-esteem.

“...I basically felt like a useless, unattractive person, I took the affair personally, blamed myself and thought maybe I was crazy and just making it up, as he said. Combined with some other aspects of our relationship, this made me feel very insecure and like a hollow shell of a person...” – Victoria

Those who divorced or separated following the affair revealed how their confidence may never be restored, hindering them from moving on to positive, stable relationships. They often struggle with the self-belief that they themselves are not ‘enough’ for someone.

“My confidence...it has deflated me so much. I’m not sure if I can hold a relationship together. As much as I want to tell myself I am confident-- that I’m the whole package for a guy--there’s a thing in me that says ‘*Are you sure?*’” –Leanne

Almost half of all spouses who endured their partner’s infidelity suffered negative physical effects in addition to, or as a result of, the emotional hardship. For some, these physical effects were temporary, but for most, the effects were long term and greatly impacted the status of their health. Forty-six percent of participants reported harmful, physical effects that they attribute to their spouse’s affair.

“It was very devastating....I wasn’t sleeping much....The doctor put me on antidepressants and sleeping pills just so I could get some sleep. So it was a huge thing for me.” – Ashley

“After the affair, for about 2 years I would say...I really suffered from what seemed like post traumatic stress disorder....I was having constant nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety attacks...” – Jill

“The [affair] made me feel very bad about myself. I felt it was my own fault, I felt unattractive, and lost a lot of my self-esteem. I doubted my instincts, my thoughts and my own feelings. I felt unworthy of love and respect. I became depressed, and then suffered from anxiety. I lost sleep or slept too much. I did not feel optimistic about my future. I lost faith in marriage and in men in general. I became very angry and negative. I became very irritable in general. I felt very bad about my body image, believed sex could not be pleasurable for me or with me. I felt like an inferior person. I felt helpless and not in control of my own life.” - Victoria

## **(ii). Positive Effects**

### **(a) Positive Effects for the Individual who had the Extramarital Relationship**

Extramarital relationships are known to have positive effects on the individual (who has the affair), such as ego-bolstering and increased self-esteem (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). In my study, I found this to be true for both genders, although women reported uniquely different impacts, such as self-discovery and personal growth. Both men and women reported sex as a positive aspect of the affair.

One theme that emerged from this study, particularly from women, was the theme of self-discovery and personal growth. This entails processes of individual growth, wherein persons come to understand themselves better as individuals, and begin to recognize more easily their wants and needs. These themes are particularly evident for women. Perhaps this is because the study included more women than men who engaged in affairs. Women also tend to discuss more freely their emotional processes. I further suggest that the reason for this is because men are less likely to report an emotional connection with their extramarital sex partners, while women are more likely to link sex with emotion. Therefore, those who form a relationship with physical *and* emotional components are more likely to report undergoing processes of emotional changes during and/or after the affair.

Brittany describes the emotional changes that she underwent while having the affair. The affair helped her find answered questions that she had never asked regarding her own sexuality, since she married her husband at a young age.

“I think it makes you grow up. It answered questions for me...like curiosity...I saw what was out there...I thought it was better on the other side of the fence, which wasn't the case. I wasn't promiscuous when I was young. Most of my friends slept with a lot of men. For the most part, they were out every weekend with someone and I wasn't...and I thought I missed out. But I didn't. Other than that, I didn't gain anything from it...” – Brittany

Other positive aspects of the affair included feelings of love. Women were more likely to report being in love and acquiring an emotional connection with their extramarital partner. This was an extremely positive aspect of these relationships.

“He made me feel intelligent, successful and supported...made me feel safe and made me feel love and loved.” - Anne

There is clear evidence that a positive consequence of infidelity for both men and women who engage in extramarital sex is the ego-bolstering aspects of their self-esteem. The affair gives the individual confidence and self-assurance, and this holds true for both men and women.

“I think it’s just an ego thing for the guys—I can’t speak for women of course. And I don’t want to generalize by any means. For me-- it was put another feather in my cap. A way of maybe proving I’m still a man...I still have what it takes. Sure I’m married and got the kids-- but you know what? I’ve still got it in me.” – Bill.

“[The affair] liberated me. Emotionally and partly physically. He boosted my ego.” – Donna

Anne combines both themes. For her, the affair was both ego bolstering and a source of personal growth and self discovery.

“I grew a lot—I learned a lot about myself and I learned a lot about my life that I didn’t like. I grew. I gained a lot of confidence. I felt good about myself. I felt happy. My life was a bit of a dichotomy—I was either happy or unhappy, depending where and when. All of those things.” – Anne

Both men and women reported sex as a positive aspect of having an affair. Robert found the companionship of a partner was a benefit to him while he conducted business out-of-town.

“The benefit was sex. I’ll tell you one thing, sleeping with a beautiful woman beside me is a major benefit to me, you know. Call it an act. I mean...look, you go away on a business trip for two, three weeks, or four whatever—hey—in a sense you get lonely. And that’s a major benefit. That was the only benefit.” - Robert

#### (b) Positive Effects for the Individual’s Spouse

The individual who had the affair is not the only one to report themes of self-discovery and personal growth. A salient theme for individuals *whose spouses* engaged in the affair is the emotional growth that occurred and the transformation they underwent as an individual during

following the disclosure of the affair. Although, for the most part, the effect of their spouse's infidelity was negative and detrimental in nature, themes of personal growth were evident.

"That five years, I went from being a person who didn't trust myself—or my intuition—to a person who is much, much stronger. There is no question in my mind, when I made the decision that was it. I take a while to get there, but once I get there—I know. That's it. Intuitively if I feel that it's right....then....I'm right." – Carol

"Ultimately his affairs made me a stronger person emotionally. I ended up becoming more assertive in our relationship, and getting the courage to leave him. His affairs seemed to make him happier and more confident in himself, in general..." Victoria

Despite whether the impact of the infidelity on the individual was positive or negative, there is evidence that supports the notion that the individual, and marital life, will never be the same following an affair. This especially holds true for the individual who experienced their partner's infidelity.

"In some ways, I think that was the most traumatic thing that has ever happened to me before. I can't even explain the significance that it had—before the affair and after the affair-- and even though he cheated before—for some reason I think because (going back to my expectations of marriage) I really thought everything was going to be happy once we got married and that kind of got blown out of the water...so that was kind of life shattering. – Jill

"At the time, it was devastating. It was on par with death... It's something that has great magnitude, especially after how long I was married. As an individual, I think I've become a different person." – Audrey

### **(iii). Low Self-esteem: A Cause & Consequence of Infidelity**

Using the segmented model of marriage, Reibstein and Richards (1993) argue that discontent in any one of the four "public", "practical", "emotional", and "sexual" dimensions of marriage may be motivation for engaging in an affair. They further suggest that because the individual need not be unhappy in every/all of these areas to have an affair, infidelity tends to be more about self-awareness or self-discovery than it is to fulfill a marital dysfunction. There is remarkable evidence in my study to suggest that this is true, and not all affairs are a result of all four components being absent, or deficient, in a marriage. In my study, however, I found strong

evidence for the notion that when the *emotional* aspects of the marriage are missing for women, they are more likely to engage in an affair, and if the *practical* components of the marriage are missing for men, they are more prone to infidelity.

There is reason to believe that some men engage in infidelity as a way to boost their self-esteem. Eaves and Robertson-Smith's (2007) study found that men with low self-esteem are *more* likely to engage in extramarital affairs than men with high levels of self-esteem. This may defy the view that men who have higher levels of self-esteem are more confident, and thus more likely to 'put themselves out there' and attract an alternate partner. However, Eaves and Robertson-Smith (2007) claim that what really underlies the reasons why men have affairs, is feelings of low self-worth. This was not found to be true for women. This study did not, however, address what *causes* feelings of low self-worth within one's marriage.

My study provides evidence that men today still subscribe to traditional role scripts such as father and husband. Therefore, when they fail to meet these expectations, such as an inability to provide and contribute to their families' well-being, it results in low self-worth and low self-esteem. This, in turn, contributes to the demise of the relationship. They feel disconnected and unable to relate to their spouse and therefore may resort to an extramarital affair to bolster their self-esteem. Although Reibstein and Richards (1993) report that any one aspect of the four dimensions may be motivation for an affair, there is evidence for the notion that when the practical components of the marriage are missing for men they are more prone to infidelity.

"...He wasn't working and really wasn't contributing much to the marriage—I'm sure he felt like I was always dissatisfied with him—which was founded—but still-- it must suck to feel like you're letting people down. And I think he was kind of floundering. Now, I think he feels like he has purpose. Before, financially, we really didn't need him to work. I was able to support us quite comfortably and now, we need him to work. So I think he feels like he has a role here...that he's not just the do-well husband...and that there's a purpose for him--we can get out of the 'naughty son- angry mom' role which it seems like our relationship always was." – Jill (married to husband who had EMR)

This theory is limited in its application due to the small sample size. A future study that contains a higher number of male participants would be beneficial for exploring this theory.

Although men and women today are entering into marital relationships that are more egalitarian in nature (wherein women are contributing to financial income and men are doing more domestic duties), there are still strong social scripts that suggest that a man should be able to care and provide for his family. Therefore, his inability to provide financially for his family can negatively impact his self-esteem and marriage.

I suggest that this relationship between low self-esteem and infidelity also explains why some individuals report marital satisfaction, yet still engage in infidelity. Being satisfied in marriage does not necessarily mean you are satisfied *with yourself*. As previously stated, most individuals who have affairs remain married, and therefore we have a situation in which an individual may be less than satisfied, but nonetheless committed. Therefore, he/she may have an affair because of personal self-esteem issues, yet still express high levels of commitment to his/her marriage. This aids in explaining the phenomenon of why people in happy, satisfied marriages have affairs.

My findings somewhat challenge Prins et al.'s study (1993) which explored whether or not inequity and marital satisfaction in marital relationships result in infidelity. They found inequity was *not* found to be statistically significant for men, though it was for women. Therefore, men did not seek out extramarital relationships to restore equity; therefore, leaving us with the assumption that their motivations were something other than restoring equity. Prins et al., (1993) noted that "women who expect direct reciprocity in their relationships are, in general, more inclined to become involved in sexual relationships outside their marriage" (p. 51). Therefore, infidelity becomes a way for women to restore equity in their relationships. Because

the potential loss of marriage (as a consequence of extramarital sex) presents such a great risk to women, this may seek to explain the positive correlation between income and infidelity rates (Wiederman, 1997). The rates of infidelity may be more prevalent among those with higher incomes and education levels because equity *can* be a more salient issue, as they have the financial means to exit a marriage if it does not meet their satisfaction.

## **E. Infidelity & the Individual - Part B: Negotiating Infidelity**

Affairs can be one of the most anguishing experiences that a married couple could ever encounter. Because many couples will stay together following disclosure, it is necessary to explore how couples come to negotiate infidelity. This task is not only difficult for the individual who engages in the extramarital relationship, but also for their spouse. Some may wonder: *How do they deal with it? How do they cope with its challenges? And how does the individual who has the affair come to terms with their actions?* I found that one of the ways that we can come to understand how women and men negotiate infidelity is by acknowledging their social context. This can be done by examining culture, by the socio-historical aspects of marriage, and by recognizing gender differences in behaviours.

### **(i). Culture**

One of the ways that individuals come to understand their own infidelity is by their cultural upbringing, or background. Infidelity is a social construction that changes over time and space. Different cultures place distinct emphasis on specific codes of behaviour, such as infidelity. North American culture places different meanings and associations with infidelity than other cultures. For instance, most individuals in this study reported strong moral convictions against extramarital sex, while in other cultures it may not only be common, but



even accepted. Therefore, one's cultural upbringing can have a significant role in determining how an individual comprehends their own infidelity, as well as how his/her spouse will react to the affair upon disclosure.

One of the revelations of the study is how men and women of different cultural backgrounds come to negotiate their own, or their partner's, infidelity. While only three participants were self-identified as having a cultural background other than Canadian, the data and experiences of these individuals-- albeit limited--are rich in context. Furthermore, they demonstrate the importance of culture in their personal experiences. Although we must be careful when generalizing these findings, they certainly warrant discussion.

Upon closer investigation into the experiences of individuals, we can come to see how one's cultural background is used to validate infidelity, even though they now live in North America. Furthermore, the study reveals how new generations of immigrants are struggling to deal with the merging of old and new sexual scripts regarding infidelity. While many cultures believe it is a fundamental right for men to have multiple sex partners, even while married they are often societies in which men enjoy higher social prestige than women (Jankowiak, Nell & Buckmaster, 2002). "Collins (1975) argues that men are the beneficiaries of a patriarchal ideology and a set of social practices that ensure and validate men's perception of women as their sexual property" (Jankowiak et al., 2002, p. 86).

Three participants with European backgrounds described a culture wherein the husband's infidelity is normalized and accepted. It is common for men to have multiple sex partners while married, while their wives remain indifferent. They were expected to turn a blind-eye to their husband's infidelity.

"You also have to see where we come from--We come from a Dutch background you know-- very strict, conservative family. He said, '*In the bible they had two women.*' and... '*Why can't you do that now?*' He thought he was doing nothing wrong, he really didn't." – Shandra

One male participant who engaged in multiple affairs throughout his married life insisted that while extramarital sex is taboo in North American culture, it is commonplace and accepted in his culture.

“Married life and sex with a prostitute per se, is not a big deal back home....Going back to Europe, with a slightly more liberal code of ethics...When I was fifteen I had my first sexual encounter and it was in Germany with a prostitute. What was I supposed to do? Here is your money--bang bang and that's it. That was again, without emotions or anything...” – Robert

Robert believes that sex outside marriage is nothing abnormal and will not harm a marriage if there is no emotional attachment. Robert never disclosed his infidelity to his wife and he posits that it never had an effect on his marriage. Therefore, how infidelity is negotiated can only be explored in the context of one's cultural beliefs and the norms of the society in which one lives. This man's infidelity is negotiated and dealt with in—what seems to Western society—a very cavalier manner. However, when we consider the social context, (de)regulations, and expectations of sexual behaviour in a particular society, we can come to understand how a person negotiates their infidelity.

For all but one participant in the study, the affair was disclosed (see Appendix N). Therefore, the spouses were also faced with the task of negotiating their partner's infidelity. Looking at culture as a way to understand how infidelity is negotiated is equally as important for the spouse who endures their partner's infidelity. This study demonstrates how there is sometimes confusion and disillusionment when there is a merging of Western culture (which condemns extramarital sex), with cultures that hold more permissive views when it comes to extramarital sex. While in some cultures, it is the norm for men to have multiple sex partners while married, in others it is not. While in some societies it is the wife's duty to turn a blind eye to her husband's extramarital behaviour, in others, the woman is ridiculed for being weak and

naive. In some societies, a divorce that is initiated by the wife is more frowned upon than her husband's infidelity.

There may be reason to believe that Western views of marriage that emphasize romantic love, equality and self-fulfillment are creating pressures on immigrants who have migrated to Canada with a much different cultural background. For those who came from the Phillipines, for example, Western cultural influences have made keeping a marriage together increasingly difficult. Ties to more traditional, patriarchal family forms are being broken for new, more egalitarian relationships, which are more commonly seen in Western societies. This however, creates animosity between old and new generations, as they do not always agree with how infidelity should be negotiated or managed within a relationship.

One young Philippine woman discussed her husband's infidelity during her first year of marriage when she went to another country to work. She expected her husband to be faithful, despite the fact that in their culture, it is the norm for men to have extramarital affairs, especially if they are in a long distance relationship, such as this one.

“Yeah. It's kind of the norm if the guy would cheat--especially if the wife is not home—if she's abroad or something like that. It's sort of usual. It's much more frowned upon if the woman would leave the husband because of that...” – Leanne

We see that one's cultural beliefs (wherein a woman is expected to close her eyes to her husband's infidelity) are not withstanding the new generations of individuals who are raised with more egalitarian and individualistic views. This is not to say that in the past, women did not care, or were indifferent to their husband's infidelity, but this study demonstrates that at least for the younger generation, this is causing some turmoil between old and new beliefs, thus making it challenging for modern couples to find a compromise between the two.

“In the Phillipines it's kind of the norm and what I did was not the norm for us there. What I did—most of the people there weren't very happy with me...” - Leanne

Although Leanne stated that she and her husband were clear about expectations of fidelity when they were first married, they still struggled with it during their marriage. It was clear that even her family did not want to her find out, as they hid the infidelity from her while she was abroad. She was shunned by some of her family members for not staying in the marriage after the affair was disclosed. She expressed how in her Filipino culture, women who leave their husbands for this type of activity are frowned upon. Therefore, when she separated, she was ostracized by some of her family members.

Although I did not explore the literature surrounding the cultural aspects of infidelity outside of North America, it is evident that with the increased diversity in the population of Canada, a more in-depth look at this literature would be beneficial. Future researchers could explore, for example, how immigrants, or second generation immigrants, struggle to retain their heritage and how cultural expectations of sexuality are affected by the Western industrialized nation they live in. The testimonies of the few individuals that I encountered during my studies reveal an interesting, and not to mention, unexplored area to be studied that merges infidelity, culture, and marriage.

## **(ii). The Social Context of Marriage**

“Like it’s not as though extramarital affairs are few and far between, or are a thing of the new generation. It’s been going on forever...and probably always will. There was a tale that went through my family about my grandfather who left his wife on the farm with a bunch of kids and took off . Can you imagine this? In a horse and buggy with this girlfriend!...and [he] went somewhere to be with her and live with her. It was my dad who was the one who had to go down there and say, “Look! We’re starving on the farm. We’re starving--you have to come home!” So then he came back. So it’s been going on forever. It probably always will.” – Lyn

In order to understand how one negotiates infidelity, we must understand the social context with which that marriage takes place. One must also recognize how marriage has transformed over the twentieth century in order to understand present-day infidelity.

Marriage has evolved greatly since the beginning of the twentieth century, when motives for entering were initially economic and family-based. Women were expected to enter into marriage with no (or indeed little) sexual experience, while men entered into marriage with more sexual experience, usually from prostitutes or those of a lower class (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1988). Marriage today has evolved to an institution wherein individuals are entering into marriage with more sexual experience than ever before, for both men and women. Furthermore, more marriages today demand equality. This has implications for the results of this study, as participants differ by age and duration of marriage (among other variables). Therefore, we must take this into account and acknowledge that the experiences of the participants will differ drastically according to their age and social context (time). While some entered into more patriarchal-style marriages in the mid- to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century, others were married just a few short years ago. Although I acknowledge that each marriage is uniquely different, one can find general themes that emerge when the data was examined as a snapshot by age (see Appendix L).

My study reveals that individuals over 40 years of age were married a significant amount of time before they encountered their first extramarital affair. In fact, 62% of people over the age of 40 were married over 10 years before the extramarital affair occurred. On the contrary, everyone below the age of 39 experienced an affair within the first five years of marriage, with 66% (4 out of 6) occurring within the first year of marriage. This suggests that the structure and expectations of marriage are fundamentally different for younger cohorts than they are for older ones. Indeed, one might assume that individuals who were married 20 or 30 years (or more) ago, entered in with, and had different expectations of marriage, than those married in recent years. Back then, the social expectation was to enter into marriage, and remain monogamous, for a lifetime. Although the expectation today is still to be monogamous within marriage, the sexual

context has changed and the divorce laws have eased. If we consider how the norms surrounding pre-marital sex have lessened in recent years, then it may explain the promiscuous sexual behaviour post-marriage. Never before in history have couples entered into marriage with such high levels of sexual experience, yet they are expected to curb these urges once they marry. As Reibstein and Richards (2005) note, “Close loving relationships between the unmarried are now often sexual. Close loving relationships can easily become sexual after marriage as well” (p. 64). This study shows that these expectations are incredibly difficult for young couples to adhere to, as they engage in extramarital activity so early in marriage. This study reveals an interesting trend. Young couples who marry are having affairs early on in the marriage, yet they are staying together. Older couples are experiencing affairs later on in their marriage, yet they are more likely to divorce or separate following disclosure. I would argue that young couples feel the social pressure to remain together in order to avoid the stigma of divorce, especially in their early years of marriage. Furthermore, couples have a 26% chance of divorcing in year four, which may be due to the complexities and challenges of raising young children, balancing work-family life, and the financial instability of being a young couple. Conversely, older cohorts were married at a time when marriage was *for better or for worse*, not *for better or I’m out of here*. Therefore, when they are experiencing difficulties in their relationship, they may exit the relationship, but are more likely to replace it with a new one. Men, especially, are not abandoning the institution of marriage. They are finding new partners.

Some marriages, as described by the participants in the study, could be interpreted as patriarchal in nature, wherein the wives are subordinate to the husbands and are expected to tolerate their indiscretions. This was particularly true of those who were married over twenty years (or more) ago, or those with European backgrounds. Lyn felt trapped in her marriage, as

she was expected to stay home to raise the children. A new baby meant that she was trapped in her marriage, even after she had resolved to her husband who had multiple affairs during the course of their marriage.

“Now, I’m not sure if you know this or not—but back then you stayed home and raised your kids. You didn’t go back to work right away. When I got pregnant with my third child I had just got a job when I found out I was pregnant. So I couldn’t do that job because I was pregnant --so now I’m stuck for another five years. So yeah, I was married 18 years. So then I had the affair because someone came along and started paying me some attention....you’re this and you’re that. It just happened. And my family was devastated. Like *he* could have affairs all his life, but my God, *how could I?*” – Lyn

Testimony from some of the women revealed that they could not approach their husband when they were experiencing troublesome times in their marriage. It was not to be spoken of. This consequently resulted in her having an affair.

“It was toward the end of the first marriage—around year 6 or 7. My job changed and I started working at a job where there were lots of other women around. They’re not the cause, but people talk and I realized that there was something wrong with my marriage. I tried to bring my concerns to my husband but that was a big no-no. Someone at work pursued me, and he was also married. He ended up dumping me about 6 months after I left my husband.” – Donna

“I think he took me for granted in lots of ways—the fact that I always ran the household and he never cooked a meal in his own life. I think, overall, he sort of lost some of the romance of his youth and that quality in our relationship kind of deteriorated. But I still loved him—even with those things--he wasn’t so oppressive where I thought the relationship was worth being expendable or anything.” – Audrey

Future studies may reveal that younger cohorts may be more likely to have affairs with friends and co-workers (rather than strangers, or one-night-stands), if we consider the lack of boundaries surrounding these intimate relationships, coupled with the fear of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease from a stranger. A cross-sectional, longitudinal study of marriage over the life course would be beneficial for identifying the patterns and changes in relationships that make people vulnerable to infidelity at different stages in the life course.

### **(iii). Gender**

Although this study had more female participants than male, there are distinct gender differences in how men and women come to comprehend or negotiate their affairs. I found that men will typically explain their behaviour in terms of opportunity, or sexual gratification, while women will often attribute their behaviour to a deficit in their marriage.

Although men seem to engage in affairs for reasons such as perceived opportunity, it is clear that there is one underlying theme for women: there is a problem in their marriage and the affair provides a means to reconcile these emotional deficits. My research shows that the ‘marriage-is-for-everything model’ best explains why women have affairs, while the segmented model is suitable for explaining men’s behavior.

The marriage-is-for-everything model by Reibstein and Richards (1993) provides an accurate account of how women place expectations on marriage to fulfill *all* of the important functions, including emotional, physical and sexual intimacy. This theory is applicable because the affair tends to serve an emotional purpose for women. This is contrary to the segmented model, wherein *the purpose* of the affair does not usually have a direct relationship with the marriage (Reibstein & Richards, 1993). For women, we see that self-growth and personal discovery is a *result* of having an affair, rather than the *purpose* for seeking it out. On the contrary, I found that for men, the affair has little to do with the actual marriage. This is consistent with the segmented model, wherein individuals can compartmentalize their lives, keeping the marriage and affair cognitively separate. The segmented model further suggests that the affair is more about self-fulfillment and discovery than filling a deficit in the marriage. This seeks to explain why men are more likely than women to report having one-night stands and sex



with prostitutes, as their motives for having the affair usually have little to do with their marriage. Men's affairs tend to be more sexual, rather than emotional, in nature.

If a woman looks to her husband to fulfill *all* her emotional and physical needs, then she is more likely to pursue a new mate when these expectations are not met. It was clear that their husbands did not fulfill all of their expectations in terms of emotional support. When their needs are not met, they look to others for support.

“My daughter was 3 or 3 ½ years old and my husband was staying home with her full time—so he didn't have any interests outside the home--his life was fairly small and my life—I was succeeding at work in a job that I loved and I was being supported by this person at work. I guess I lost touch with my husband...and I didn't really love my home life—raising a child was difficult—coming home at the end of the day and having expectations of involvement of raising a child and it just got to be—to some extent-- where I wanted to be at work more than I wanted to be at home. I wanted someone that was truly more of a partner...” – Anne

“It happened over a four -month period...and I was going through a lot because my mom had just died then --and my mom and I were like best friends. We worked together and we lived close together. I was really messed up for a while-- for about --I'd say the first year of her death. I was up and down with moods and crying a lot. And Devin wasn't supportive of me then. Instead of trying to understand, he'd call me baby and I was really resentful of that and hurt and when I needed him he wasn't there. So I got kind of tired of that. So I was working a lot and threw myself into that. And an opportunity came up with Kyle at work and something just happened and I wish it hadn't.” – Brittany

“My job changed and I started working at a job where there were lots of other women around. They're not the cause, but people talk [at work] and I realized that there was something wrong with my marriage. I tried to bring my concerns to my husband, but that was a big no-no. Someone at work pursued me, and he was also married...” – Donna

#### **(iv). Testing the Theory of Role Exit**

Fuchs Ebaugh's sociological study on role exit explores the dynamic processes of abandoning roles that were once paramount in the lives of individuals. The author looks at how individuals come to disengage from various roles they acquired in their lifetime. Paramount to this discussion is how Fuchs Ebaugh explores the stages that individuals go through when they are engaged in the process of role exit. Of particular relevance is how the 'seeking alternatives' stage is useful for exploring how a spouse negotiates infidelity.

### (a) Anticipatory Socialization

Fuchs Ebaugh's (1998) concept of "anticipatory socialization" in the seeking alternatives stage is relevant when we explore how individuals come to take on, or engage in, new roles (p. 111). At this stage, individuals anticipate taking on the new role, and even sometimes engage in the behaviour of the new role as a means of "role rehearsal" (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988, p. 112). I suggest that extramarital relationships may be considered as a *role rehearsal*, wherein the individual engages in the new role as a means of forming a new identity. In some cases however, the individual is not comfortable in the new role and returns to the old one. The new activity provides either positive or negative reinforcement for shedding the old identity with a new one. This helps explain why many extramarital affairs do not develop into lasting relationships, as the individual's new role may not be a comfortable fit, or promising enough to end their marriage.

Fuchs Ebaugh's process of role exit supports the notion that when an individual is disillusioned with their role of spouse, they may engage in behaviours that will test out their new role, independent of their role as husband/wife, for instance. They may experiment in the new role to see if they are comfortable. This does not mean that they wish to forfeit their former role completely, however, by engaging in new behaviours, they are anticipating what it would be like to be in the anticipated role.

"I think it may be very similar to what I did...that it was simply an experiment. Maybe it's -- *I wonder what the apple tastes like?* You know, Adam and Eve --and the apple drops from the tree. I wonder if it's maybe...*I wonder what life is like outside our relationship?* So I suspect it may just be experimentation." – Robert

When, and if, the new role does not 'fit' or meet their expectations, they will not continue with the process of exiting that role, thus choosing to remain in the marriage. This phenomenon aids in explaining why not all extramarital relationships go on to be permanent, lasting

relationships. They may realize their reasons for partaking infidelity have not been addressed and may still present....*so why exit the primary relationship?* Eighteen participants were asked to hypothesize why the couples in extramarital affairs rarely go on to marry. Fourteen (78%) of them felt it was because once the excitement of the affair wears off, they are left with ‘just’ another relationship that contains all the same trials and tribulations as the primary marital relationship and the fear of taking the leap into a new relationship may not be worth the risk.

“Once the light of day is shone on it—you realize that it’s the same thing with your spouse, except it’s a different person. There’s still all of the issues, the complications, the complexities. It’s not all just going out for nice dinners and mind-blowing sex afterward. Eventually, more has to enter into the relationship. You may be just as well suited to them as you are your spouse, but once you actually have to form a real relationship with them—meaning moving in or marrying them—that things become much more complicated and all of those other things that made you vulnerable to an affair are still there, but you’re just with someone else now.” – Jill

“I think, perhaps, it’s kind of like-- some books you wanna keep and some you just read...you don’t want to own them. There are very few books that I feel the desire to possess and to go back to and enjoy that I feel enrich my life. There are novels and books that I read and temporarily they fill a gap and they’re interesting—it’s like summer reading. I think an affair is like summer reading. Like, I like chunky peanut butter and occasionally I buy smooth because I don’t want to have chunky all the time. So that’s the way it is...it’s the opportunity to experience something exciting and provocative and stimulating and it’s brilliant in it’s excitement. There’s nothing like an affair or new relationship to make you riveted...but your day to day life you find out you still have the same bills to pay and the same commute to work and the same bills to pay...” - Audrey

This greatly supports the notion that the ‘anticipatory stage’ is important when individuals are negotiating their marital and extramarital relationships.

One might see how Fuchs Ebaugh implements exchange theory into her analysis at this stage, as one will contemplate the rewards (of leaving) against the costs (of staying). One of the most salient themes experienced by couples who experienced infidelity in their relationships was that the disclosure of the affair brought about uncertainty. This stage of contemplation is similar to Fuchs Ebaugh’s “seeking alternatives” stage, which includes experimentation and deliberation.

“For the most part, he wants me to just come back and I’m really hesitant to do. Honestly, I don’t want this to ever happen again and I’m not willing to go back until I figure out what it was and why it was, and if it means that my marriage was wrong, or it doesn’t mean that. So I guess I’m really distant—we don’t really talk for the most part. I’ve probably tried to set up a whole bunch of support systems for myself outside my marriage because I’m not sure if we’ll be together or if we won’t.” – Anne

“The next two or three months he didn’t know if he wanted to stay or go. And he was honest about that. We went to counseling, but we were living in the same house and he was making up his mind whether he wanted to stay in the marriage or not. He said he still loved me, but he didn’t know if he wanted to stay in the marriage. It wasn’t to be with her. This was his own thing.” - Nancy

Although some of Fuchs Ebaugh’s (1988) concepts and stages are useful for exploring how individuals conceptualize their extramarital experiences, others have not been beneficial for the purposes of this study. For example, the ‘creating an ex-role’ stage provides an interesting sociological framework for exploring how individuals transition out of their former role. However, the focus of this study is to contextually explore extramarital behaviour *within* marriage. Although these processes are beneficial for explaining thought process involved in engaging in extramarital behaviour, a study that includes the ‘before’, ‘during’ and ‘after’ effects of infidelity will provide a better reference as to how this theory may be better applied to extramarital relationships.

#### (b) Power & Secrecy

“It was all about the boys club and keeping the secret...oh yah--by all means. It was just a given though...we never said to each other ‘now this has to stay quiet’. It was like--well of course it had to. We never had to say anything. It’s not as though we talked about it prior to that. It was just crazy. It went nuts in the sense that it was a wild weekend, but afterwards, it was a given that nobody would say anything.” – Bill

If Fuchs Ebaughs concept of ‘anticipatory socialization’ is applied to extramarital relationships, we can see that secrecy is fundamental to this stage. Secrecy is imperative, as it creates a buffer whereby the individual can remain in the anticipatory state, allowing them to test out their new status without forfeiting or compromising the old one. The threat of disclosure could potentially ruin a person’s chances of returning to his/her role as spouse, not to mention

other roles that could be compromised as well, such as a work-related role. Therefore, secrecy is paramount. Brittany describes how important secrecy was in allowing her extramarital relationship to continue, when both of their jobs could have been compromised.

“It was very important. Cause it was our jobs at stake, right? He could lose his job probably....and I didn’t want my marriage to end at that point either...” – Brittany

The threat of disclosure could also potentially destroy the power differential in the relationship, since secrecy provides the opportunity to have an extramarital relationship alongside the primary marital relationship, giving the individual the freedom to decide what their future actions will be. Perhaps this is why so many individuals deny their affairs. In 50% of the cases, either the participant, or their spouse, denied having the affair. Some even received accusations that they were crazy, were seeing things that weren’t really there, and were reading too much into things--even when, in fact, there was an affair.

“I was pretty sure that I knew, but up until that point I wasn’t really sure. At that point, I hadn’t done things like drive by her house during my lunch hour and seen his car there—then I knew for sure. But up until that point, I kept doubting myself. He kept saying—*why can’t someone have a friend?* I wasn’t placing enough value on me.” - Carol

This may be why, in many situations, the individual who has the affair does not leave the marriage. Many people who have affairs do not wish to exit their marriage, and secrecy allows them to continue both the marital and extramarital relationship. However, this creates inequality, which is counter to the ideology of many new marriages today. Unlike in the past where patriarchal relationships were the norm, today young couples are entering into more egalitarian relationships. Audrey states that this is what made the extramarital affair so upsetting to her:

“That he didn’t give me an equal playing ground. That he didn’t come to me and say ‘*Look-- I’m kind of unhappy--I’m dissatisfied in life and I think maybe we need a trial separation*’ or something. I think if you want to sleep with someone else, then that’s what you should do. I know that sounds idealistic, but he didn’t give me a chance to do what he did. He didn’t level the playing ground. He fucked around. If he just would have said, ‘*I’m not happy with this*’—yes, it would have been devastating--but it wouldn’t have been so emotionally undermining. I just think he should have been more honest about it....”

Richardson's (1988) study on secrecy and status explores the power differentials between individuals in extramarital relationships, as she claims they commonly occur between "status unequals" (Richardson, 1988, p. 210). This study was performed on married men who had affairs with single women. She asserts that men hold greater power in extramarital relationships than women because marriage infers greater social status than non-marital relationships, which gives the married person in the extramarital relationship more power. For instance, should the extramarital affair be disclosed, the single woman is often to blame for being a home wrecker.<sup>11</sup> The married individual chooses the location and decides the duration of the unions, exercising power and control over the secret liaison (Richardson, 1988). In addition, due to the "principle of least interest", those who have a greater stake in the relationship hold less power (Richardson, 1988, p.210). Since women often place a higher degree of investment in maintaining these relationships, they forfeit their power.

Although Richardson studied extramarital relationships between married men and single women, she noted that the power differential *may* reverse in the case of married women and single men. Richardson (1988) argues however, that "...it is unlikely that a single man would act submissively, put his life on hold, or do the heavy emotional work necessary to sustain the relationship" (p. 218). Therefore, women will only infer greater power in extramarital relationships if status trumps gender.

Edwards and Booth (1976) explored issues of power within relationships and noted that men and women who perceive themselves in positions of power (within their marital relationships) are more likely to engage in extramarital sex (Saunders & Edwards, 1984).

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<sup>11</sup> Richardson (1988) noted that most single women in the study did not wish to reveal the affair because they perceived themselves as having too much to lose, thus demonstrating the power differential. Richardson also asserted that men hold more power than women in all types of extramarital relationships.

Conversely, if women earn more money than their husbands (and thus exercise more economic power within the relationship), then one might assume that with women's increasing presence in the workforce, the prevalence rates for extramarital sex will rise in the future since they will be in better bargaining positions in terms of exchange.

Because the extramarital relationship remains secret, it does not have added social pressures, nor is it open to criticism or judgment from others (Richardson, 1988). A more in-depth look at how power and secrecy is structured in relationships would allow greater understanding of how power inequality affects individuals in both the marital and extramarital relationship.

## **F. Infidelity & Social Networks**

### **(i). Not Just Friends**

The importance of social networks cannot be underplayed when examining extramarital relationships. Eighty-nine percent of individuals in this study knew of someone in their immediate social circle who experienced an affair in their marriage. Not only does this network serve to support, legitimize, or endorse extramarital activity, it may also shame, criticize and humiliate the same behaviour. Social networks further provide individuals a source of, and opportunity to form, intimate connections and relations with other people. In my study, over 50% of individuals reported that affairs occurred with close friends, or acquaintances. In addition, 47% of affairs were work-related. So not only will social networks aid in endorsing or shaming extramarital behaviour, it will also provide a market of opportunity.

## **(ii). Work-related Affairs**

Consistent with the literature, 47% of affairs in my study had a work-related connection. This includes affairs with co-workers superiors, administrative staff, or those which occurred in the context of work-related activities, such as out-of-town business trips. The prevalence of work-related affairs suggests that the workplace environment provides a prime opportunity for couples to get to know and explore each other in a safe, secretive atmosphere, hidden away from families and spouses. Because most relationships tend to be homogamous in nature, it is no surprise that the workplace provides an opportunity for individuals with similar interests and experiences to cultivate romance. Knowing the intensity that derives from forming new relationships, it can only be expected that these workplace romances endure extreme pressure to remain secret, not only from other co-workers, but also from the spouse's of the person engaging in the extramarital affair. One can only predict that this would have an effect on a person's job performance. Therefore, the sheer prevalence of work-related affairs suggests the need to explore the intimate dimensions of these relationships. Future studies might wish to address the relationship between work-related affairs and on-the-job performance standards, as we know that these relationships can have devastating effects on individuals at the interpersonal level, thus affecting their on-the-job performance. In addition, the power imbalances that may occur within these work-related relationships may be reproducing gender inequality on the job, especially if these relationships occur between women and men in subordinate positions.

## **(iii). Affairs: Stigma or Status?**

Although most people consider extramarital sex to be wrong, it has been found that individuals who engage in extramarital sex may be positively reinforced for their behaviour, especially if close friends and/or family are also engaging in, or are approving of these



behaviours (Thompson, 1984). For instance, if a group of men are engaged in extramarital behaviour, there is evidence to suggest that there is acceptance, and even, status involved within these social networks. This stresses the importance of social networks with regards to making this type of behaviour more socially acceptable in a North American society. Nancy explains,

“Two or three of the other men that he worked with who were younger were also fooling around on their wives too. It was like this little gang of salesmen...and the other guy who I blame a lot of this on actually-- he was actually having an affair with one of the other secretaries at the same company. So there is the two of them --banging the secretaries...”

To reiterate, eighty-nine percent of individuals in this study knew someone in their close social network (ie: friend, family member, or co-worker) who either personally had an affair, or was married to someone who did. Studies have shown that when people in the same social networks are involved in similar activities (such as engaging in extramarital sex), it serves to legitimize the behaviour, or make it acceptable within that group. Outside of these social networks, however, the behaviour may not be tolerated, viewed as less acceptable. The lack of participants in this study who had an affair compromised the ability to draw any specific conclusions with regards to this.

Infidelity is often associated with shame and stigma. But one might ask, to which party is the stigma associated? The individual who has the affair, or the individual who endures their spouse's? Although it may be one's first reaction to associate social stigma with the person who engaged in infidelity, this study reveals that it is also *the spouse* of these individuals who will feel stigma and shame as well. Three (female) participants in the study, whose spouse had the affair, reported feelings of shame. This was identified by use of the words *ashamed*, *embarrassed*, *humiliated*, etc.

“I guess if I wanted to admit it...I was brought up...I was too ashamed to tell anyone that he was like that. That he did that. I just didn't want anybody to know. I just thought it would be something against me --as if I did it, you know what I mean? That there was something wrong with me --is why he was doing. I think that's because my mom used to say “Well, do you nag him? Do you have supper ready?” *You know*

*mom...well, I make supper and it sits in the oven and it's still sitting there in the morning in the fridge--not touched. He didn't come home. I do all those things, but nothing works." - Lyn*

One particular respondent expressed shame for remaining in the marriage after her husband's affair was disclosed. Although society accepts it as natural or normal for the spouse to be angry and express frustration, madness and outrage, if the spouse chooses to stay in the relationship after the affair is disclosed, then it is perceived much differently. Brenda experienced shame and stigma for staying in a relationship with someone who has engaged in infidelity. She explains,

"I couldn't just grieve out loud for what had gone on...for what I didn't have anymore. There were two or three friends that I could grieve with, but other than that I couldn't. Whereas if he died, I could grieve. Nobody would care that I cried all the time. I was bursting out crying everywhere...you can't watch any tv shows because they have affairs in them. You can't watch anything—you can't read books without crying! If he died—you can cry—nobody would care. It would be acceptable. So I found that really hard. Nobody seems to address that kind of thing."

Brenda felt that she was not entitled to grieve for her loss. Because she chose to stay, she felt that she was not permitted to cry or express her pain, except with her closest friends. However, there is not only shame in remaining in the relationship, but also there is shame associated with personal insecurities that result from the affair. After all, *what could you have done in your marriage to make your husband want to have an affair?* As a result, the spouse may blame themselves for their partner's infidelity and look for deficits within themselves to justify their partner's actions.

For those who are no longer in the marriage, the infidelity serves as a means to justify the separation and divorce to *avoid* social stigma. In two cases, the women used the affair as a means to justify their divorce. The perception here is that people view infidelity as a socially acceptable reason for divorce.

"I think I tell people when I feel defensive about being divorced. So, when I am dating someone new or something, and my marital status comes up. I think I use the cheating as a quick and efficient way to explain my divorce. I am Catholic, so it's a big deal to get divorced, you don't just do it because you feel like it, you have to have a reason. I think I am defensive and am more likely to make others understand it was not my fault. It was his. This perhaps shows that I still need to work on my residual emotions about it.

In general I would tell only people who are close to me, or who are becoming close to me, not any casual acquaintance.” - Victoria

#### **(iv). Infidelity as a Learned Behaviour**

The results of my study indicate that infidelity may be a learned behavior that is passed down from one generation to the next. Six participants (32%) revealed that the individual who had the affair also had parent(s) who engaged in similar behaviour. Other research has shown that engagement in extramarital sex has been found to be higher for those that have a family history of infidelity (Pittman, 1989 in Allen et al., 2005). This potential risk factor for infidelity remains unexplored in this study. When this phenomenon began to emerge, a good number of interviews had already taken place, so many of the participants were not probed regarding their family histories of infidelity. Its relative frequency late in the study suggests that sociologists would benefit from future studies that focus on this relationship.

#### **G. Infidelity & Social Inequality**

It has been well documented that affairs can have devastating effects, both emotionally and financially, on individuals and their marriage. My study reveals that financial instability was a predictor for staying amongst all age groups, despite gender, or length of marriage. This suggests that a couple's financial situation will largely determine a person's stay-leave behaviour. For instance, it was found that approximately 37% of individuals reported staying with their spouse (at some point) due to financial instability or reported that finances were problematic and affected their stay-leave behaviours after the affair.

Although researchers readily document the emotional effects of infidelity (as most academic literature is done by psychologists in this area) it is clear that the lack of sociological research contributes to the scarcity of literature on the social effects of infidelity. Therefore, the

social inequality that persists as a result of infidelity in marriage has been largely left unexamined. Although financial ruin (as a consequence of lone-parent families) is not foreign to scholars, the struggle that individuals endure when faced with the reality of their spouse's infidelity often leaves them with no other choice than to sacrifice their own self-esteem and self-worth for financial stability for themselves and/or their children. It is clear that the lack of government-funded daycare, shortage of financial assistance for single-parent families and the pay inequity in employment, all contribute to the lack of suitable alternatives that spouses have when their marriage breaks down. What is left is a growing number of spouses confined to unhappy marriages because there are inadequate social services in place in Canada to support them if they leave.

One might argue that the capitalist, patriarchal structure of today's society is fundamentally incompatible with marriage. Coontz (2005) argued that because people are living longer and having fewer children, it is placing a greater amount of stress on marriages by increasing the amount of (often unmet) expectations that couples place on their marriage to fulfill their own personal happiness. To provide an example, let us examine the incompatibilities between employment and marriage. Double-income households have become an economic necessity for families in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, two full-time working parents can experience many stressors. For instance, many couples work opposite shifts in order to accommodate for the lack of social support for childcare (both in funding, and available daycare spaces), which puts undue time restraints and stress on parents. In addition, a disproportionate number of women are in part-time, temporary work, which makes it difficult to juggle family and work time effectively (Coontz, 2005). Having children also puts strain on the marriage, as it has been found that having children decreases marital satisfaction, but increases marital stability

(Williams et al., 2006). As a consequence, couples do not have the time to devote to their personal relationships, since marital relations often take a backseat to finances, children and employment demands. It is no wonder that most extramarital relationships occur at work, given the amount of time one spends at paid employment outside the home! Furthermore, it has been noted that a decrease in sexual activity over time in marriage increases the likelihood of extramarital sex (Liu, 2000). Some couples may attribute this decrease in frequency of marital sex to fatigue and lack of energy due to full-time employment, especially if both the husband and the wife are working. This phenomenon is referred to as the “double income no sex” (DINS) dilemma (Liu, 2000). Therefore, one might argue that, in this respect, these social institutions are fundamentally incompatible with marriage today, which makes marriages highly vulnerable to extramarital sex.

The notion that people need to be personally devoted to their careers, along with the increased importance of higher education has also contributed to the individualistic culture that is present in North America today. Western culture emphasizes the need for material items, such as driving fancy cars and having large houses. This increases the importance and need of higher education for most individuals. Unfortunately, the demands for this type of lifestyle are at odds with relationships, as it requires long hours of work and few hours spent at home. It then becomes difficult for couples to strike a balance between the two. Kitson (1992) noted that divorced couples of high socio-economic status reported expressive and relationship-centered reasons for separation (in Amato & Previti, 2003). Perhaps this provides an explanation for why those of higher socio-economic status experience higher levels of extramarital sex, as personal and emotional fulfillment may be lacking in these marriages.

These repercussions are not only an effect of infidelity, but perhaps a cause of it as well. As previously noted, men are equally affected, such as when an unstable (or absent) work environment affects the ability of a man to fulfill his duties as husband and father. This results in diminished self-esteem, and as a result, he engages in an affair to bolster his self esteem. By no means am I suggesting that having an affair is just-cause for unstable working conditions or a way to bolster self-esteem. However, one can come to understand how larger social structures, such as employment, can have trickle down effects on the individual and subsequently his or her marriage.

Exchange theory assumes an individual balances the rewards against the costs. For instance, one might weight financial instability (poor standard of living) against a poor marriage quality (the spouse is having an affair) and decide that the negative repercussions of an unhappy marriage are a better alternative than leaving the marriage and suffering from financial instability. At least four women fell into this category. A theme that emerged during the interviews was the recurring story of women who knew their husband's were having an affair, but felt compelled to remain in their marriage due to the financial instability.

“Well I had wanted to leave, but I’m a student so I got stuck with a big tuition bill and he was basically the main supporter...So I didn’t have any cash flow. I had a lot of bills coming out with my tuition and all that...and I didn’t have really any money at the time. I had an inheritance a couple of months before I found out about the whole affair, but my husband spent that. So I didn’t really have time to do anything.” – Ashley

There were a few women, however, who decided to leave, despite the fact that their standard and quality of living would deteriorate considerably.

“To step out. That was big. I mean, you don’t just step out of a marriage when it’s your only bread and butter...I had no education...I always worked on the farm. I had \$88 in my account. I had to ask him for money to leave him. So those are big challenges....One day, I just said ‘*enough is enough*’...And if I have to live on the street...I have lots of friends...I have lots of family...you know...I’ll be OK. Lots of prayers...but hey—it was a big step. He had gone to Holland again to see her and while he was gone I got an apartment, packed my stuff...and I had to pay the bills for the house and I found out he put a stop to the cheques before he left...and I thought, *that’s it*. I worked hard all my life and I ended up with \$88.” - Shandra

A couple of women prepared for the road ahead by taking financial precautions, knowing that it would be a struggle for them when, and if, they decided to leave their marriage.

“A couple months before I found out about the second affair I opened a secret bank account to save money. I never thought about why, I just did it. I also started using my maiden name for things like nail salon, tanning salon, hair salon whenever I went somewhere new. I never thought about why I was doing this. I think my subconscious knew he was cheating.” – Victoria

“Once I knew for sure, which was two or three years before we actually separated, then I made a point of putting away \$20 a pay, because I knew when the time came that he would be very angry. I’d have problems financially and I wasn’t earning near as much as he was, and I would look after the children and I would not allow him to have full custody of the children. So I would start the plan...” – Carol

However, other women felt that after a lifetime of marriage they were not about to let all they have worked for slip away and they decided to stay in the marriage. Consistent with investment theory, after women have made an emotional and financial investment into the marriage, they want to realize what they have worked for during their years of marriage.

“For whatever reason you choose [to stay]...and there’s so many reasons...there’s family and there’s money...you hate to say I’m staying for the money –but there were days that’s why I was staying! Because the reality I know from seeing friends who split up what happens. So, if we get along—why would I walk out *now* at this time of my life? And I work for my husband—so if I walk out now I don’t even have a job! Then everything would fall apart. That’s a lot to give up. I have a lifestyle now, and friends that I like. Like I said, we’re just coming into the time of our life finally to have some money to do something –go travelling--and I’d be walking away from what I’ve saved up for 30 years. So if I can make it work then it’s worth it. Like I said, we just got back from Europe....we had a lovely time—it was great. I’ve gained those things so I get to do them.” - Brenda

Women are not the only ones however, who are affected by financial ruin when marriages dissolve. This problem was not confined to just women. Men too, are equally burdened by the persistent gender discrimination—however for them, it’s in the courts. Because women are still predominantly the ones who are given custody of the children, (or even in the event of shared custody) men quite often have to pay their wives spousal, or child support, upon the dissolution of the marriage. This is because men remain predominantly the ones who make more money in relationships. One man explains how the financial burden of custody and spousal support payments affects his ability to be a good father:

“I can afford to take my kids 50% of the time because she’s not raping me financially. I own my own house (well the bank does) and the kids each have their own room and a rec room. I want to make sure my kids still want to come see dad because he’s not living in a one-bedroom squalor apartment. I know enough divorced guys who have been taken to the cleaners and they don’t bother seeing their kids because they’re embarrassed because they have no money. They love their kids to death and see them on their birthdays—they buy them a small present and all that...but I’ve heard that quite a bit. And I want my kids here 50% of the time.” – Kevin (wife had EMR)

One can see how persisting gender inequalities in society do not benefit either sex, and its repercussions can have negative effects for both women *and* men.



# **Chapter V. Conclusion**

## **A. Summary of Findings**

Previous research on infidelity has been atheoretical and few sociological studies have been conducted. In light of this, the purpose of the study was to bring a critical sociological approach to the existing literature. Although this study undertook the grounded theory approach, I was unsuccessful in formulating an adequate sociological theory due to the limited sample size that was heterogeneous in nature. Although the interview data are rich in context, they are limited to nineteen participants who differ by age, gender, race/ethnicity, duration of marriage, and motive and outcome of the affair. Furthermore, there was testimony from both those who had an affair, and those who endured their spouse's. Therefore, a larger, more homogenous sample size is needed in order to make safe assumptions about some of the trends that were revealed in this study.

The contribution that this study made was its critical sociological approach to examining the existing literature. This methodological approach has been absent from current studies. The existing theories were divided into two broad categories: interpersonal and socio-cultural. The positive and negative aspects of each were explored and some of its concepts and theories were tested for relevance in this study. My research looked at the literature and data in terms of gender, culture, and social class and offered ways of understanding marriage and extramarital affairs. It was found that although no single theoretical approach is sufficient for explaining extramarital relationships in their entirety, some theories had useful concepts and terms that could be applied to future studies.

It was found that investment theory is beneficial for exploring an individual's stay-leave behaviour, but it assumes that a person's satisfaction and commitment levels to the marriage are the only variables that will determine the outcome of his/her marriage. The reflexive nature of

the marital and extramarital partner is not taken into account and this research demonstrates the importance of the reflexivity of the spouse and extramarital partner when determining the outcome of the marriage.

Reibstein and Richards provided three models of marriage that are prone to infidelity, although only two of them apply. Although the segmented and marriage-is-for-everything models are useful, neither of them is sufficient for explaining extramarital behaviour. Results of this study indicate support for both of the models, in some respects. For instance, it was shown that the marriage-is-for-everything model may be explanatory for modeling women's extramarital behaviour, while men's behaviour may be best explained by the segmented model. Furthermore, this study has shown that the emotional aspects of the marriage (as well as the extramarital relationship) are important, while men are more likely to report that affairs are conducted irrespective of their levels of marital satisfaction.

Fuchs Ebaugh brings a much needed sociological approach to studying marriage and infidelity. Although some of her concepts and stages are particularly useful, the process of role exit, in its entirety, cannot be fully supported by this study. Fuchs Ebaugh's theory on role exit is useful for explaining the intrinsic motivations for infidelity and stay-leave behaviours. The first two stages (first doubts and seeking alternatives) are particularly useful, as they provide an account for the thought process involved in anticipating and (perhaps) engaging in extramarital activity. The last two stages (turning points and creating an exit-role) may not be realized for some individuals, as not everyone who has affairs is looking to exit their marriage. This is likely to be the case for those whose affair is never disclosed. Furthermore, it is not necessary to discuss the last two stages, as the purpose of the study was to investigate infidelity within the scope of marriage itself, rather than the experiences of those who exited their marriage. The

relevance of this theory, specifically in relation to extramarital relationships, would be best tried on a larger sample size.

Relevance for scripting theory was demonstrated in the recruitment process of this study. Here it was demonstrated that how one comes to understand language and meaning is important, as social scripts are internalized and become self-fulfilling in nature. Results of the study indicate that individuals define affair and infidelity differently, and this will have an effect on their actions. This further demonstrates the importance of a sociological perspective, as language and meaning are relevant considerations, both methodologically and empirically.

## **B. Recommendations**

There was much to be learned from this study and lots to be recommended for future studies. In conclusion, some of the theoretical concepts and terms in the previous literature are useful, but not sufficient. Because there is such limited sociological data, it is important for future studies to derive an adequate sociological theory to explain modern day affairs. Sociologists can offer ways of understanding phenomena in terms of gender, race, social class and social networks. Furthermore, sociologists offer insight into the role of language and meaning and how these things change over time and social context. In light of this, I would recommend that future sociologists adopt a symbolic interactionist approach to studying this phenomenon. The benefit to this approach is that it takes into account how meanings are socially constructed and change over time, which affects how people come to see themselves, and thus has an impact on their behaviours.

### **(i). An Argument for a Symbolic Interactionist Perspective**

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level perspective that takes into account how individuals negotiate relationships within a broader social structure. This perspective accounts for the dynamic and reflective nature of relationships, and is therefore ideal for studying extramarital relationships. A symbolic interactionist approach to studying extramarital relationships is beneficial for exploring the meanings, feelings, and experiences of individuals who have engaged in extramarital relationships.

Symbolic interaction contains two major assumptions. The first is that “the explanation of human behaviour is impossible without knowing the meaning such behaviour holds for the actor...” (White & Klein, 2002, p. 83). In order to understand a phenomenon, we must first understand the meaning it holds for the individual at the interpersonal level. Meaning itself is created through the use of shared symbols, such as language. Secondly, how we define our own situations determines our course of action (White & Klein, 2002). If we define the context of a situation in a particular way, then the outcome follows our interpretation of it.

As we have seen in this study, language and meaning are of great significance. Symbolic interaction posits that meaning is created through human interaction and shared understanding. As symbolic interactionists, “...we are assuming that actors think about and act according to the meanings they attribute to their actions and context” (White & Klein, 2002, p. 62). This theory provides a framework for exploring why some spouses consider their affairs separate from their marriage and engage in affairs irrespective of their level of marital satisfaction. If spouses do not perceive their infidelity as having a negative impact on their marriage, then they may believe their actions are justified. Therefore, symbolic interactionism provides a useful framework for exploring dimensions of marital and extramarital relationships including how one defines marital

satisfaction, and how individuals negotiate infidelity within the context of their marriage. “Its concern with meanings, process, interaction and a grounded familiarity with everyday life make it a prime tool for approaching all aspects of social life as they emerge and transform” (Plummer, 2003).

Symbolic interaction provides a foundation for exploring why spouses in seemingly happy, satisfying marriages engage in infidelity. It is useful for exploring the interpersonal process, such as the spouses’ understanding of how his/her infidelity impacts the primary marital relationship. This particular theory is also helpful for exploring how individuals are influenced and shaped by cultural norms and social scripts. Symbolic interaction is used to study the processes through which these social forces are internalized. Symbolic interaction explains why couples in a marriage view marital satisfaction differently. It also explains how and why those who have engaged in similar circumstances have perceived different experiences. For example, two different men may have both experienced infidelity by their wives, but their experiences and outcomes will vary greatly. It seeks to explain why one of these men may divorce as a result of disclosure, while another may continue to work on the existing marriage. Because they perceive the situation differently (ie: one sees his wife as having ‘just’ sex, while another may speculate emotional involvement) they will have different outcomes based on their interpersonal experiences and the reflexive nature of their relationships. Symbolic interaction will therefore explore, on a micro level of analysis, the ways that individuals use language and symbols to form and create meanings which will in turn have an impact on their course of action.

Although symbolic interactionism is beneficial for exploring the micro level processes that occur within marital and extramarital relationships, there are a few criticisms of this paradigm. Firstly, symbolic interaction has been criticized for concentrating too narrowly on the

specifics, and not adequately dealing with macro social processes such as power and inequality (Giddens, 1997). Furthermore, Plummer (2003) suggests that what is largely missing from symbolic interactionist work on sexuality is,

“...there is little humping and pumping, sweatiness or sexiness in much sociological work. Instead we have discourses, identities, cultures, patriarchies...Until recently, the body and emotions are largely absent” (Plummer, 2003, p.525).

In light of these criticisms, there is considerable evidence that a symbolic interactionist perspective is essential for future studies when we take into account the importance of language and meaning in the both the recruitment and validity of this study.

## **(ii). Recommendations for Future Studies**

Although this study confirmed what many other studies have also shown regarding the demographic profile of participants, or the motivations and experiences of extramarital affairs, this study offered some unique revelations that could be explored in further detail in future studies. One of which is the ‘under 40’ age group, who represents a particularly interesting cohort. These couples are staying together despite high levels of infidelity in the early years of marriage—for some-- in the very first year (see appendix L). Future researchers may wish to target this age group to explore the dynamics of these marital and extramarital relationships to help understand why they are occurring so early on in marriage and how they differ from older cohorts.

Women’s increased participation in the workforce has undoubtedly contributed to the increase in number of work-related affairs. Therefore, future studies may wish to address the dynamics of the relationships between co-workers and explore the power structure and gender differences associated with each.

The testimonies of the few individuals that I encountered during my studies reveal an interesting, and not to mention, unexplored area to be studied that merges infidelity, culture, and marriage. Future studies could explore, for example, how immigrants (or second generation immigrants) struggle to retain their marital beliefs and how cultural expectations of sexuality are affected by the Western industrialized nation they live in. As we have seen, culture plays a key role in how individuals come to negotiate infidelity, and a cross-cultural study would also be useful for exploring these cultural and ethnic differences.

Many aspects of marriage and infidelity remain underexplored. Although many researchers have made significant contributions to the literature, the ever-changing nature of these relationships constitute the need for scholars to remain vigilant in the attempts to theorize and rationalize these relationships. Marriage, though diverse and dynamic, will undoubtedly remain a stable part of our culture, and as long as marriage continues to exist as an institution, infidelity will likely be present. No matter the area of inquiry, future sociological studies that offer a strong, theoretical and methodological approach will greatly benefit the field of marriage and infidelity, and thus society as a whole.

### **(iii). Conclusion**

Marital relationships are complex and unique. Although couples enter into marriage with high expectations of what marriage and their partner will provide for them, they are sometimes met with challenges or unexpected events that will test the strength of their relationship.

Extramarital affairs are undoubtedly one of those times. More often than not, couples will remain together following the disclosure of the affair, even if only for a short time. There is no handbook for extramarital affairs and the outcomes are diverse. The couple will likely undergo changes to their marriage, as well as on an interpersonal level. These changes may be positive,



or negative, short-term or long-term, or perhaps even have no effect at all. How these couples come to understand and negotiate infidelity is even more complex and will largely depend on their cultural traditions, gender and social context. Support systems, such as friends and family, will also play a role in this process. All of this exemplifies how extramarital relationships can often have complicated effects on the marriage, making marital and individual outcomes uncertain. So when people ask me, *What's love got to do with it?* There is no easy response.



## Appendix A: Invitation/Introduction Letter:

May 1, 2008

Dear Participant:

This letter is an invitation to participate in a study that I am conducting for the University of Waterloo. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part. The participants in this study must meet the following criteria:

- 1) You must have had a sexual relationship with someone other your spouse while married **OR**
- 2) Your spouse must have engaged in a sexual relationship with someone other than yourself while married
- 3) The marriage must consist of a relationship between a man and a woman

This study will focus on marital relationships that have experienced infidelity. My goal is to gain a more thorough understanding of how infidelity affects an individual within the context of his/her marriage. With your valued participation, I will be able to seek a better understanding of how an individual manages infidelity while they remain married, and how it positively and/or negatively affects one's marriage.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately one hour in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location, by phone, or on-line. Questions will include: How do you define marital satisfaction? What affect did the extramarital relationship have on your existing marriage? What impact did the extramarital relationship have on you as an individual?

You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, phone and in-person interviews will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. With your permission, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. In addition, a copy of the final report and any subsequent publications will be made available for all participants, should you wish to receive them.

All information you provide will be considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Only the researcher and supervisor associated with this project will have access to the information.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at (905) 538-0651 (Ham/Burl local phone) or (519) 340-0120 (K/W local phone) or by email at [EMRstudy@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:EMRstudy@uwaterloo.ca). I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes at the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 Ext. 36005. I hope that the results of my study will be of benefit to you and others who have an interest in a better understanding of infidelity and marital relationships. I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Lisa

## Appendix B: Consent Form

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Lisa at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded (except for online interviews) to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

I am aware that online interviews are less secure by nature than other methods of interviewing, such as how information is securely stored and whether or not chat rooms are secure/private. I understand that every precaution will be taken by the interviewer to retain and store data as securely as possible.

I am aware that by participating in this study, I heighten the risks of possible disclosure. I understand that precautions should be taken and safeguards used to prevent this from occurring. Although the likelihood is minimal, if I am to encounter any upset related to involvement in this study, I am advised to contact a professional counselor which will be provided by the researcher upon request.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES  NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

YES  NO  NOT APPLICABLE (for on-line interviews)

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES  NO

I wish to have the interview transcripts emailed, mailed or faxed so that I can review them for accuracy.

YES  NO

I wish to have the results of the study sent to me upon the conclusion of the project.

YES  NO

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Hamilton/Burlington & surrounding area:

Karyl Pope & Associates  
581 Plains Rd. E  
Burlington, Ontario  
Canada L7T 2E6  
Karyl 905-627-1094  
Office 905-639-4529  
E-mail: [karylpoppe@cogeco.ca](mailto:karylpoppe@cogeco.ca)  
Specializing in: marriage/relationships/family counseling

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Dr. Marnee Maroes

1685 Main Street West  
Suite 300A  
Hamilton, Ontario L8S 1G5  
Telephone: 905-527-5991  
Fax: 905-527-9601

<http://www.marneemaro.es.ca/>

Specializing in: child and family psychology – family/individual and couples therapy

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Alan Kaine, Clinical Sexual Therapist

255 Main Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario  
L8P 1J5  
Phone: 905-578-4127  
Toll Free: 1-866-818-6034  
E-Mail: [alankaine@aksextherapy.com](mailto:alankaine@aksextherapy.com)

<http://www.aksextherapy.com/index.html>

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Meadow-Smith Counseling & Mediation  
Address: 86 Homewood Avenue Hamilton  
Phone: (905) 304-4733  
Specializing in: Relationship and sexual issues

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Bayridge Family Centre  
<http://www.bayridgefamilycenter.com/>

1295 North Service Road, Burlington, ON L7R 4M2  
\* Located in the Crossroads Centre Building

Telephone: 905-319-1488  
Fax: 905-319-3670  
Email: [bayridge@bayridgefamilycenter.com](mailto:bayridge@bayridgefamilycenter.com)  
Specializing in: Couples & individual/children family counseling

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Progressive Counseling  
Address: 144 St. Clair Avenue Hamilton  
Phone: (905) 777-8066

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Michele James & Associates  
Phone: (905) 520-2705  
Specializing in: Relationships & marital conflict therapy

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Kitchener/Waterloo:

Family Counseling Centre of Cambridge & North Dumfries  
18 Walnut St.  
Cambridge, ON N1R 2E7

Phone: (519) 621-5090

Email: [fccnd@golden.net](mailto:fccnd@golden.net)

Specializing in: family, couple, individual and group counseling

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Cardinal Consulting, Counseling & Mediation

Phone: (519) 746-9062

Unit 102  
678 Belmont Avenue West  
Kitchener, ON N2M 1N6

E-mail: [cardinal@golden.net](mailto:cardinal@golden.net)

<http://www.cardinalcounselling.com/>

Specializing in: Individual & marital counseling

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Greater Toronto Area:

Canadian Counseling & Training Centre

883 16th Ave., Suite # 2B,  
Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4B3E5,  
Tel: (905) 707-1665

Email: [ali@cctc-psy.com](mailto:ali@cctc-psy.com)

Specializing in: Psychotherapy/sex therapy/counseling  
English, Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu languages

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Christian Marriage Counseling

1454 Dundas Street East, Suite 125, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, L4X 1L4.

Local phone: (416) 234-1850

Long Distance: 1-877- 854-3990

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Beth Mares Counseling

416-699-5515

<http://www3.sympatico.ca/beth/>

Specializing in: for infidelity/sexual addictions & behaviours/loss of attraction  
Telephone & online couples counseling available

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Yonge Lawrence Centre for Counseling & Consulting

3080 Yonge Street

Toronto, ON M4N 3N1

(416) 709-8117

<http://www.talktherapy.ca/>

Specializing in: self-esteem, infidelity, communication, relationship struggles, life balance, and family conflict.

All areas:

Dr. Dan Dalton & Associates

<http://www.drdandalton.com/index.html>

Toll free: 1-888-245-5516

\*numerous locations (Hamilton, Brantford, Burlington, Kitchener, Toronto, Stoney Creek)

Specializing in: couples and marriage counseling

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Ontario Society of Psychotherapy:

<http://psychotherapyontario.org/site/index.cfm>

\*this website provides a list of psychotherapists by city/region in Ontario\*

Specializing in: marriage or relationship problems & family problems



# HOW DOES INFIDELITY AFFECT YOUR MARRIAGE?

## PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

for study on extramarital relationships.

All information provided is completely confidential.

To volunteer/receive information, please call Lisa at  
519-340-0120 or e-mail: [emrstudy@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:emrstudy@uwaterloo.ca)

R001147238



# HOW DID THE AFFAIR AFFECT YOUR MARRIAGE?

## *PARTICIPANTS NEEDED*

for research study on extramarital relationships  
Social scientist needs volunteers for interviews

***All information provided is completely confidential***

To volunteer/receive information  
please call Lisa at:

**(905) 538-0651**

or e-mail:

**[EMRstudy@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:EMRstudy@uwaterloo.ca)**

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Waterloo**



R001164770

## Appendix F: Online Advertisement



Volunteers who have engaged in a heterosexual extramarital relationship are needed to take part in a study on  
**MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS.**

Participants will take part in an interview of approximately one hour which will take place at their convenience by telephone, online, or in-person.  
All information provided is completely confidential.

To volunteer and receive more information about this study please call Lisa at:

K/W area: (519) 340-0120

Ham/Burl area: (905) 538-0651

or

e-mail: [EMRstudy@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:EMRstudy@uwaterloo.ca)

**This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics, University of Waterloo.**

**Appendix G: Interview Questions for Individual Who Had Extramarital Relationship**  
*(page 1 of 5)*

**Interview Questions:**

**Section 1: (Demographics)**

*“For the purposes of the study, it is important to have some demographic information so that we can have a more thorough understanding of the background of our participants and their experiences. Just as a reminder, all information you provide will be considered completely confidential. You may decline to answer any of the questions if you so wish and you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time...”*

1. Sex/gender:

Male \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your year of birth?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your nationality/ethnic background? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your spouse’s nationality/ethnic background? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your last *completed* level of education?

Grade school \_\_\_\_\_

High school \_\_\_\_\_

College \_\_\_\_\_

University \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate school \_\_\_\_\_

5. Can you give a general description of your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse’s occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Current marital status: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you previously been married?    yes \_\_\_\_\_    no \_\_\_\_\_

*If so*, how many times?    1        2        3        4        5+

How long have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_ yrs.

7. Which of the following best describes where you live?

sub-urban        \_\_\_\_\_

urban             \_\_\_\_\_

town              \_\_\_\_\_

country          \_\_\_\_\_

8. Where did you hear about this study? \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 2: (General views on marriage)

1. Can you please describe in your own words what *marital satisfaction* means to you? How would you define a 'good' marriage? How would you define a 'bad' marriage? (Prompt: What does it look like? What types of qualities does it have?)
2. "Now we're going to talk a little bit about your marriage..."  
In general, what do you like about marriage? What do you dislike?  
What does your partner do that makes you happy? What do they do that upsets or angers you? What were your initial expectations of marriage? ...were they fulfilled? (what did you think marriage was going to be like?) In what ways was it fulfilled and in what ways was it not? Looking back, do you think that your expectations were realistic? *Why or why not?* Did you discuss expectations of fidelity when you got married?

## Section 3a: (The EMR)

"You have identified yourself as having sexual relations with someone other than your spouse while you were married..."

1. Can you tell me about these encounters...? Were there multiple encounters? If so, how many? How long did they last?  
Can you paint a picture of your marriage at the time this began?
2. How long were you married before you had your first extramarital relationship? Did he/she know that you were married? Was he or she also married?
3. Can you please explain *how* and *why* you became involved in (this/these) relationship(s)?  
Was this something you were 'looking for' or something that 'just happened'? How did you meet? (ie: work; party; friends) How did the relationship begin? What drew you to this person? Did you contemplate having the affair before it began? (ie: was there a period of deliberation when you considered whether or not you should pursue this other person?)
4. Please tell me about, or describe what (that/these) encounter(s) entailed?  
What did these encounters consist of? (ie: dating; dinner) How frequently did you see/meet this person? Did you have frequent contact with this person—phone calls, emails?  
  
How would you describe the quality of the relationship(s)? How did (this/these) person(s) make you feel? How long did the relationship(s) last?  
  
Please describe your level of commitment to (this/these) person(s).

Did you develop an emotional connection at any time? **IF NOT** → why was there no emotional connection? (ie: lack of chemistry?) Did you actively prevent this from happening? Is so → how?

Section 3 b. (EMR & the Marriage)

1. What effect, if any, did (this/these) relationship(s) have on your existing marriage?  
In what ways, if any, did your marriage change as a result of this/these relationships? In what ways, if any, did it stay the same?
2. Were there any advantages/benefits *to your marriage* that resulted from these encounters? (ie: what did you gain from these encounters, or what benefits were there to having EMS?) As an individual?
3. What costs/negatives are associated with EMS?
4. Were you satisfied in your marriage at the time you engaged in a relationship with someone else? (in the same way you defined marital satisfaction at the beginning)
5. Are you still currently in this extramarital relationship?  
**If no** → Can you please describe how (and why) these encounters ended. Did the disruption of this relationship have an impact on you?...or your marriage? If so, in what ways?
6. Did your spouse know you were having an extramarital relationship at the time it was going on?  
**If yes** → How did your spouse find out?  
What was his/her reaction?  
How did that affect your relationship?  
**If no** → How did you keep the relationship concealed?
7. How important was *secrecy* in allowing these encounters to continue?

Section 4: (EMS & the Individual)

1. Can you please describe the impact that these extramarital relationship(s) had on you as an individual.
2. What are/were the biggest challenges that you face(d) while having these encounters?
3. What is it, when you think about the affair, that you liked the most?

4. At any point did you ever contemplate leaving your spouse for the other partner?
  - If yes** → At what point in the relationship was this considered? Why did you want to leave your spouse/family? What made you reconsider staying? or why do you think you never followed through on this action?
  - If no** → Why do you think that is?
5. Hypothetically speaking, if your spouse came home one day and told you that (s)he had an affair, how would do you think you would react? What would you do or say?
6. Do you believe that sexual exclusivity is important in a marriage? Why or why not?
7. If the opportunity presented itself in the future, would you pursue other sexual encounters outside your marriage? *Why or why not?*
8. When these encounters were over, how did you feel? Or how did you react? (ie: happy, fulfilled, guilty, 'rush')

#### Section 5: (Connection to Social Networks)

*“Now we are going to talk a little bit about your friends and family...”*

1. Do you know of any friends, family, or co-workers who (*they themselves*) have also had a sexual relationship with someone other than their spouse while married?
  - If yes** → How did you find out about this relationship? Did they discuss the relationship with you personally? What was your initial reaction when you found out? (How did you feel when you found out?) Did the (married) couple stay together? How do you feel about it now?
  - If no** → (move to next question)
2. Is your friends/family aware that you have had sexual encounters outside your marriage?
  - If yes** → How did she/he find out? (was it voluntary or involuntary? → If so, why did you choose to tell this person?) What did he/she do?--what was their reaction? Were they accepting of the relationship?-- why or why not? Did they treat you differently knowing this information? What did they do knowing this information? (ie: did they tell your spouse?) Did they react the way you thought they would?

**If no** → Did you ever fear friends/family/co-workers will find out? How did you keep it from them? How do you think they would react if they found out? Do you think they would be accepting of the relationship? Why have you chosen not to share this information with anyone?

Section 6: (General views)

1. Research has shown that the majority of marriages that experience infidelity do not end in divorce (even if the affair is disclosed). Why do you think that is?
2. Research shows that extramarital relationships occurs even when that person reports being 'satisfied', or 'happy' in their marriage. Why do you think that is?
3. Research also shows that when polled, most people consider extramarital sex to be 'always' or 'almost always' wrong. Do you agree with this statement? Do you think there are times/circumstances that extramarital sex can be justified? If so, can you describe a situation wherein extramarital sex should be justified, or considered OK within the context of a marriage?
9. The terminology used by researchers to define these relations is often harsh or derogatory (ie: adultery, affair, infidelity). If you could define your actions in your own words, how would you describe/define your encounters?
10. Very few extramarital relationships go on to marry. Why do you think that is? If they do marry, their divorce rates are very high. Why do you think that is?

What advice would you give to others that wish to have an extramarital affair?

**Is there anything you would like to add or comment on before we conclude?**

*Thank you. (Make sure you have address/email to send reports if they wish)*

**Interview Questions:**

Section 1: (Demographics)

*“For the purposes of the study, it is important to have some demographic information so that we can have a more thorough understanding of the background of our participants and their experiences. Just as a reminder, all information you provide will be considered completely confidential. You may decline to answer any of the questions if you so wish and you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time...”*

1. Sex/gender:

Male \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your year of birth?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. What is your nationality/ethnic background? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the nationality/ethnic background of your spouse? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is your last *completed* level of education?

Grade school \_\_\_\_\_

High school \_\_\_\_\_

College \_\_\_\_\_

University \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate school \_\_\_\_\_

10. Can you give a general description of your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse’s occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Current marital status: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you previously been married?    yes \_\_\_\_\_    no \_\_\_\_\_

*If so*, how many times?    1        2        3        4        5+

How long have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_ yrs.

12. Which of the following best describes where you live?

sub-urban        \_\_\_\_\_

urban             \_\_\_\_\_

town              \_\_\_\_\_

country           \_\_\_\_\_

8. Where did you hear about this study? \_\_\_\_\_



## Section 2: (General views on marriage)

1. Can you please describe in your own words what *marital satisfaction* means to you? How would you define a 'good' marriage? How would you define a 'bad' marriage? (Prompt: What does it look like? What types of qualities does it have?)
2. "Now we're going to talk a little bit about your marriage..."  
In general, what do you like about marriage? What do you dislike?  
What does your partner do that makes you happy? What do they do that upsets or angers you? What were your initial expectations of marriage? ....were they fulfilled? (what did you think marriage was going to be like?) In what ways was it fulfilled and in what ways was it not? Looking back, do you think that your expectations were realistic?  
*Why or why not?* Did you talk about expectations of fidelity?

## Section 3a: (The EMR)

"You have responded to the study because you have identified that *your spouse* has been involved in an extramarital relationship..."

1. Can you tell me about what you know about these encounters...? Ie: When did they begin? What did they consist of? How long has it been going on? How long were you married before your spouse had an EMR? How long was it before you found out about the extramarital relationship? How did you find out? (voluntary/involuntary)  
What was your reaction when you found out?
2. Does your spouse know that you are aware about the extramarital relationship?  
**If no** → How do you keep it concealed?
3. How did your spouse try to conceal this/these encounters from you? What were the signs?

## Section 3 b. (EMR & the Marriage)

1. What effect, if any, did (this/these) relationship(s) have on your existing marriage? (Ie: did you ever seek counseling?)  
In what ways, if any, did your marriage change as a result of this/these relationships? In what ways, if any, did it stay the same?
2. Were there any advantages/benefits *to your marriage* that resulted from these encounters? (ie: were there any positives as a result??) As an individual?
3. What costs/negatives are associated with EMS to the marriage?

4. Do you think your spouse was satisfied your marriage at the time he/she engaged in a relationship with someone else? Were you satisfied in your marriage at this time?
  
5. Is he/she still currently engaging in this type of activity? *Why or why not?*  
**If no** → Can you please describe how (and why) these encounters ended.  
 Did the disruption of this relationship have an impact on you?...or your marriage? **If so**→ in what ways?  
**If yes** → How do you deal with that? How does it make you feel?

#### Section 4: (EMS & the Individual)

1. Can you please describe the impact that these extramarital relationship(s) had on you as an individual.
  
2. What are/were the biggest challenges that you face(d) while being in a relationship with a partner who has engaged in this type of activity?
  
3. What is it about your spouse's affair that upsets you the most?
  
4. At any point did you ever contemplate leaving your spouse?  
  
**If yes** → When? At what point in the relationship was this considered? Why did you want to leave your spouse/family? What made you re-consider staying? Why do you think you never followed through on this action?  
**If no** → Why do you think that is?
  
5. Hypothetically speaking, if you came home one day and told your spouse that you had an extramarital affair, how would do you think he/she would react? What would they do or say?
  
6. Do you believe that sexual exclusivity is important in a marriage? Why or why not?
  
7. If the opportunity presented itself in the future, would you pursue a sexual encounter outside your marriage? *Why or why not?*

Section 5: (Connection to Social Networks)

“Now we are going to talk a little bit about your friends and family...”

1. Do you know of any other friends, family, or co-workers who (*they themselves*) have had a sexual relationship with someone other than their spouse while married?  
  
**If yes** → How did you find out about this relationship? Did they discuss the relationship with you personally? What was your initial reaction when you found out? (How did you feel when you found out?) Did the (married) couple stay together?  
  
**If no** → (move to next question)
  
2. Do you know of any friends, family, or co-workers *whose partners* have had a sexual relationship outside of their marriage?  
  
**If yes** → How did you find out about this relationship? Did they discuss the relationship with you personally? What was your initial reaction when you found out? (How did you feel when you found out?) Did the (married) couple stay together?  
  
**If no** → (move to next question)
  
3. Is your friends/family aware that your spouse has had sexual encounters outside your marriage?  
  
**If yes** → How does this make you feel? How did she/he find out? (was it voluntary or involuntary? → If so, why did you choose to tell this person?) What did he/she do?--what was their reaction? Did they react the way you thought they would? Were they accepting of the relationship? -- why or why not? Did they treat you differently knowing this information?  
**If no** → Do you ever fear friends/family/co-workers will find out? How do you think they would react if they found out? Why have you chosen to not share this information with anyone?

Section 6: (General views on Research)

1. Research has shown that the majority of marriages that experience infidelity do not end in divorce (even if the affair is disclosed). Why do you think that is?
2. Research shows that extramarital relationships occurs even when that person reports being 'satisfied', or 'happy' in their marriage. Why do you think that is?
3. Research also shows that when polled, most people consider extramarital sex to be 'always' or 'almost always' wrong. Do you agree with this statement? Do you think there are times/circumstances that extramarital sex can be justified? If so, can you describe a situation wherein extramarital sex should be justified, or considered OK within the context of a marriage?
4. The terminology used by researchers to define these relations is often harsh or derogatory (ie: adultery, affair, infidelity). If you could define your spouses' actions in your own words, how would you describe/define these encounters?
5. Very few extramarital relationships go on to marry. Why do you think that is? If they do marry, their divorce rates are very high. Why do you think that is?

What advice would you give to others that find themselves in a similar situation as yours?

**Is there anything you would like to add or comment on before we conclude?**

***Thank you. (make sure you have address/email to send reports if they wish to receive them)***

## Appendix I: Participant Demographic Information

Alias Name	Male/ Female	Age Range	Self-identified ethnicity	Marital status in relation to EMR discussed	Who had the EMR?
Robert	M	60-69	German	widowed	Participant
Brittany	F	30-39	Canadian	married	Participant
Leanne	F	30-39	Filipino	separated	Spouse
Jill	F	20-29	Canadian	married	Spouse
Eva	F	70+	Canadian	separated	Spouse
Brenda	F	50-59	Canadian	married	Spouse
Tom	M	40-49	Canadian	divorced	Spouse
Bill	M	40-49	Canadian	divorced	Participant
Kevin	M	40-49	Canadian	separated	Spouse
Anne	F	30-49	Canadian	married	Participant
Carol	F	50-59	Canadian	divorced	Spouse
Lyn	F	60-69	Canadian	married	Participant & Spouse
Shandra	F	60-69	Dutch	divorced	Spouse
Nancy	F	40-49	Canadian	separated	Spouse
Audrey	F	60-69	Canadian	divorced	Spouse
Ashley	F	20-29	Canadian	married	Spouse
Victoria	F	30-39	Canadian	divorced	Spouse
Kim	F	40-49	Canadian	married	Participant
Suzie	F	60-69	Canadian	widowed	Participant
Donna	F	60-69	Canadian	married	Participant

\*Interview data not included

EMR: extramarital relationship

## Appendix J: Coding for Marital Satisfaction (page 1 of 2)

*How do individuals define or describe marital satisfaction? How does this differ by gender?*

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### **Males:**

“I think it means easy going, harmonious, **content**, no stress, relationship; that’s about it. I think perfection doesn’t exist and I think this is my interpretation of why many things go wrong with other marriages; possibly it is the dreaming of what the ideal partner situation should be like – that’s not reality.”

“I would say having your soul mate...healthy, **happy** relationship in all aspects—intellectually, emotionally, **sexually**—all those things; common interests and a comfort zone with a person.”

“Two people in a partnership wherein the **two people are independent**, and yet at the same time together/joined...**committed to the marriage, committed to the relationship**. I can’t add anymore really.”

“Being **happy** with yourself and wanting to give more to the marriage.”

### **Females:**

“Marital satisfaction means comfort; **trust**; humour; being able to sit with the person and be quiet and just enjoy their company; it means--although it’s not everything—it means a degree of **financial security**--it means that both parties work; it means **joy** and sometimes disappointment—but times of brilliant **happiness**--just...comfort.”

“I guess I see it as two people are feeling satisfied, where they have and the picture is: two complete circles, where those circles are intertwined, and **each person remains who they are** but they also have these things in common. That’s what works.”

“Two people that are partners in a relationship that have common goals and obviously are compatible and believe in the same **commitment** that the marriage entails.”

“A partnership in life.”

“That means to have a husband who is **loving**, kind, supportive, **high morals, sexual**.”

“**Happiness; content; secure; sexually satisfied; strong family bond**.”

“Just to feel completed by your spouse; that you’re on the same page; that you don’t need to go looking elsewhere for what you’re missing; basically that **you’re on the same page for morals, values, and thought processes**. Just to be **happy** with the one you’re with....”

“It means having a friend; a companion; someone you can rely on; **trust** and if you can **love** that person that’s the epitome of it-- it all sort of goes together”

“**Contentment**; **security**; fun”

“I guess being **content** in the relationship –feeling that you’re getting something out of it as well as being able to contribute something to the marriage...”

“Well the first thing is **love and affection** and honesty. Then when children come—*loving children*... looking after your home and being satisfied with your husband and your home...”

“Marital satisfaction to me means feeling better about my life with my husband in it, than with him not in it. A satisfying marriage would make me feel **loved**, **secure** and supported, being on the same team, working together through all of life’s problems and **joys**. Marital satisfaction means waking up in the morning and **being happy** to see your spouse, and feeling good seeing them at the end of the day, too. Marital satisfaction means **having a good intimate relationship, physically** and also emotionally.”

“Is when you have you have full **trust** in the relationship. You have **respect** for each other.”

“The two parties are **happy** with the situation that they’re in. Just two couples that are joined that are **happy**.”

“Compatibility in the sense of doing lots of things together—enjoy spending time together...**physical** and mental things together—mental is big. Mental compatibility—talking. Doing things together physically too—whether it’s **sexually**, or **physical**--chores, or gardening or whatever. And *raising children* together.”

### **CODING: References to common themes:**

Partnership/companionship	10
<b>Happiness/ joy</b>	7
<u>emotional/intellectual component</u>	5
<b>sexual/physical component</b>	5
<b>contentment</b>	4
<b>security</b>	4
<b>love</b>	4
trust	3
morals/respect/values	3
<b>commitment</b>	2
<i>children</i>	2
<b>independence</b>	2

## Appendix K: The Extramarital Relationship(s)

This chart represents whether or not the extramarital relationship(s) went on to form a long-term relationship. A long-term relationship is defined by a relationship that lasts longer than 6 months, or evolves into cohabitation, or marriage.

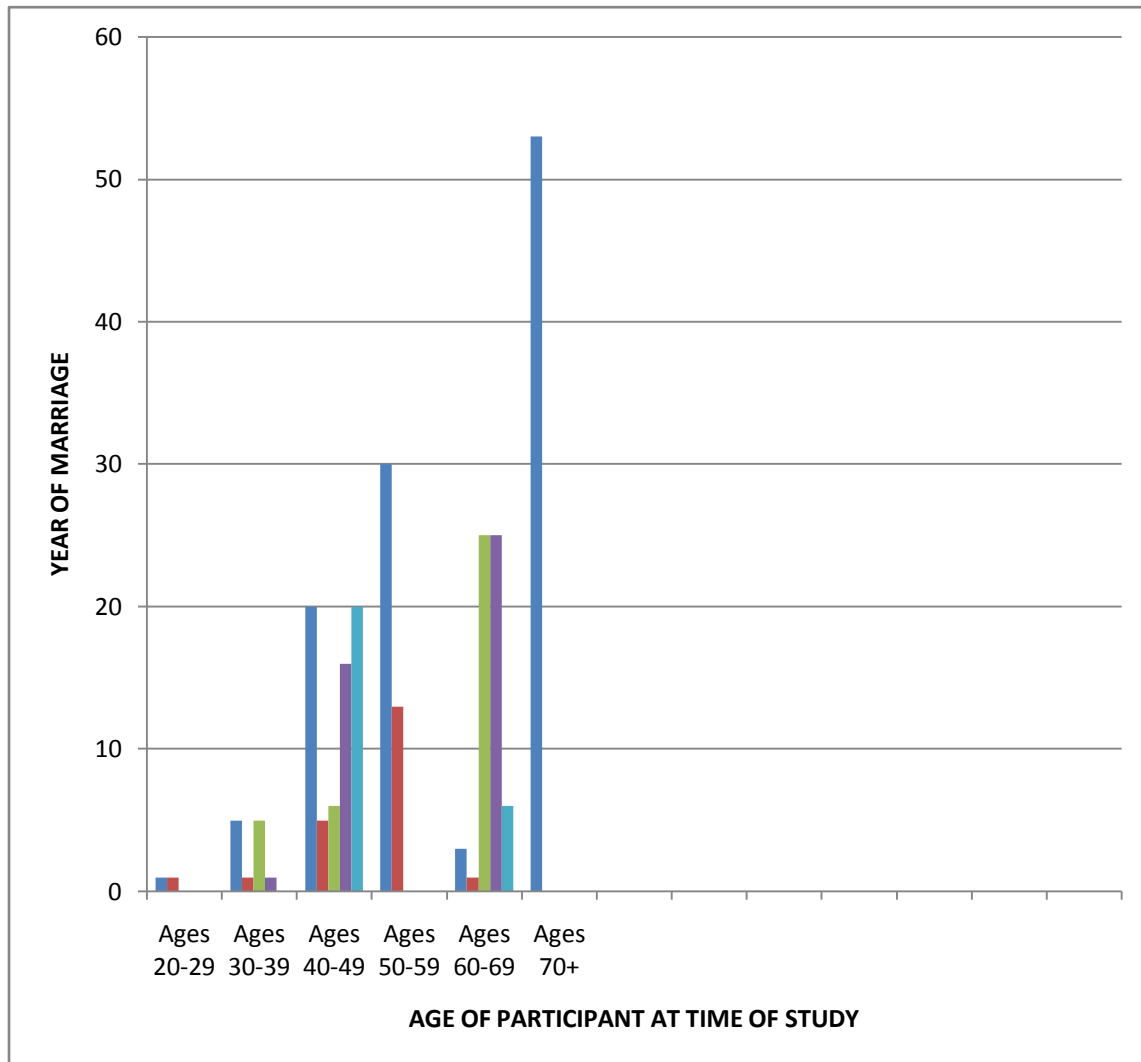
<b>*Age Group</b>	<b>Number of participants in age category</b>	<b>Did the extramarital relationship go on to form a long-term relationship?</b>
20-29	2	Yes – 0 No – 2
30-39	4	Yes - 0 No – 4
40-49	5	Yes – 2 No – 3
50-59	2	Yes – 1 No – 1
60-69	5	Yes – 1 No – 4
70 & over	1	Yes – 1 No - 0

\* Participant's age at the time of the study

Results show that 5/19 people report that either their, or their spouse's, extramarital relationship(s) went on to form a long term relationship. No long term relationships were formed by individuals under the age of 39. *Please note that the age of one's spouse was not disclosed.*



**Appendix L: Year of Marriage That the First Extramarital Relationship Occurred by participant's age at the time of study (a snapshot)**



## Appendix M: Participant Information

Alias Name:	How many extramarital relationships?	Duration of affair(s)	Was affair disclosed voluntarily or involuntarily?	Marital status	Who was the EMR with?
Robert	Multiple	Brief encounters	Never disclosed	Stayed/married	work-related
Carol	2	4 mos. and 1x	involuntary	Stayed/married	stranger & work-related
Leanne	1 maybe more	Months?	involuntary	Stayed for a few yrs/separated	friend
Jill	1	2 mos.	involuntary	Stayed/married	friend
Eva	1	1 yr +	involuntary	Divorced immediately	friend
Brenda	1	2 ½ - 3yrs	involuntary	Stayed /married	friend
Tom	1	?	?	Stayed/divorced	co-worker
Bill	1	1x per year for 3 yrs	voluntary	Stayed until disclosed, then separated immediately	stranger
Kevin	1	Less than 1 yr	involuntary	Stayed for 6 mos. then she wanted the separation	co-worker
Anne	1	1 ½ yrs	voluntarily	Married/ husband wants to stay together – she is unsure	co-worker
Carol	1	4-5 yrs?	involuntary	Lived with it 4-5 yrs then divorced	friend
Lyn	Husb: Multiple Participant: 1	brief	involuntary	Part & spouse had EMR – They are pres married	friend/family
Shandra		~ 10 yrs	involuntary	Divorced after living with it for 5-10 yrs	friend
Nancy	2	~ 6 mos.	involuntary	Stayed after 1 <sup>st</sup> EMR for 3 yrs, then separated after 2 <sup>nd</sup> EMR	co-worker (both times)
Audrey	1+	~ 6 mos.	voluntary	Stayed 10 yrs before divorcing him	co-worker
Ashley	1	Less than 1 yr	involuntary	Stayed	friend & co-worker
Victoria	2	A few months	involuntary	Stayed together after 1 <sup>st</sup> EMR, then divorced after 2 <sup>nd</sup> EMR	friend
Kim	1	7 mos.	involuntary	Split initially but stayed together	friend
Donna	1?	2 yrs	?		co-worker

EMR: extramarital relationship

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