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AWARENESS OF PARENTAL INFIDELITY IN CHILDHOOD:
ATTITUDES TOWARD INFIDELITY AS ADULTS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Nicole Marie Paredes

June 2010


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Approved by:



Dr. Pa Der Vang, Faculty Supervisor
Social Work

6/10/10
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Dr. Janet C. Chang,
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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to explore if childhood awareness of parental infidelity (PI) would affect one's attitudes toward infidelity and the prospect of engaging in unfaithful behaviors as adults. The control group consisted of adults who were unaware of parental infidelity occurring in their families. The sample size was 164, the majority of participants were females born and raised in the United States and of European American ethnicity. A mixed methods online survey used the *Reiss Extradysadic Sexual Permissiveness Scale* and *Fricker's Extradysadic Behaviors and Unfaithful Beliefs List* to measure attitudes toward infidelity. The results indicate that participants whose parents engaged in extradysadic affairs were more likely to have engaged in extradysadic behaviors themselves ($p = .007$). Conversely, awareness of PI did not affect one's attitudes toward infidelity as measured by the *Unfaithful Beliefs List*.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One introduces parental infidelity and children as the topic of this study. This chapter also describes the rationale for studying this topic as well as recognizes the potential implications that research in this area can offer the fields of mental health and social work. This chapter is divided into three sections: the problem statement, purpose of study, and the significance of the project for social work.

Problem Statement

Treas and Giesen (2000) estimate that around half of the states in the U.S. retain anti-adultery laws that if enforced would deny non-monogamous married people the right to vote, serve alcohol, practice law, adopt children, or raise their own children. Currently, those who commit adultery are more likely to suffer consequences on a micro societal level instead of receiving outmoded legal ramifications (Treas & Grieson, 2000). For example, a person guilty of infidelity may experience the following: loss of significant others' trust, family disruption, impaired parent-child

relationships, gossip/ridicule from neighbors, loss of friends, disapproval from community, financial issues, divorce/separation from significant other, and/or relocation from shared residence with significant other and children (Lusterman, 2005).

Just as children are prone to suffer distress from the experience of parental conflict and divorce, the related phenomenon of parental infidelity in recent years has been negatively associated with the well-being of children (Kioski, 2001). Infidelity is a complex social problem within American society that tends to increase family conflict and can contribute to the dissolution of committed relationships and in married couples, can lead to divorce. The prevalence of infidelity may be affected by several variables including: media, societal messages about marriage and monogamy, intermarital conflict, gender inequality, sex industry, financial mobility, and biological drives (Campbell, 2008). Marriage and religion as social institutions handle the issue of infidelity by promoting monogamy, procreation, and condemning adultery. Conversely, American society is bombarded with temptation and fantasy in the form of strip clubs, erotic massage parlors, prostitution, escort services, sex hotlines,

extramarital dating websites, cybersex chat rooms, and pornography galore. Infidelity and extramarital affairs are often featured in television shows, commercials, movies, and magazines. The Parents Television Counsel (PTC) (2008) conducted an analysis of primetime broadcast television and found that adulterous sexual relationships were referenced twice as much as marital sex was and were portrayed in a positive or neutral way whereas marital intimacy was often depicted in a negative manner.

Platt, Nalbone, Casanova, and Wetchler (2008) observed that extramarital sex is the most common cited cause of marital dissolution. Despite the high prevalence of infidelity minimal research has conducted on the impact of parental infidelity on adult children. Very few studies exist on the assessment of romantic ideology and intimate experiences of adults who have experienced parental infidelity as children. Instead the majority of research on infidelity has focused on the adulterers and their partners while disregarding the impact on children within the family unit. Research on infidelity is biased in that it tends to examine infidelity within the context of heterosexual marital unions and disregards the prevalence of infidelity in relation to nonmarried

heterosexual unions, and is least likely to consider committed homosexual relationships (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Just as the affects of divorce on children have been documented, there is a need to examine the impact of parental infidelity on the family system, which may or may not include married parents.

This study attempts to explore how awareness of parental infidelity impacts children as adults in the following areas: personal adjustment to parental infidelity, parent-child relationship dynamics pre/post discovery of parental infidelity, and personal attitudes toward infidelity, love, marriage, and divorce.

Purpose of the Study

As Greene (2006) so aptly stated, "extramarital affairs are a widespread challenge for marriage and family therapists because they produce a ripple effect that reaches the entire family system" (p. 2). In light of the paucity of existing research, it appears that the impact of parental infidelity on children is a recent topic of study. Instead of studying infidelity in terms of adulterers and their betrayed partners, this study explores the impact experienced by children caught in the

middle. Participants were pooled for an online survey through California State University San Bernardino's Social Work Student Association's (SWSA) Facebook page and via online psychological research databases.

Participants varied in age, ethnicity, and gender.

This study explores the attitudes of adults who became aware of their parents infidelity as children in comparison to the attitudes of adults who are unaware of the presence of infidelity within their parents' relationship. It is hypothesized that a difference will be found between groups in pertaining to the following research questions. Research Question 1: Does awareness of parental infidelity influence one's level of acceptance of infidelity? Research Question 2: Are children aware of parental infidelity more likely to engage in infidelity as adults? Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between the gender of the unfaithful parent and the impact on the child's acceptance level of infidelity as an adult?

An anonymous online questionnaire was created on SurveyMonkey.com to explore the parental relationship history, personal relationship experiences, and attitudes regarding love and infidelity of young adults. Three

scales were included in the online questionnaire to measure participants' sociosexual orientation, extradyadic permissiveness, and extradyadic beliefs, behaviors, and predicted future behaviors. Face-to-face interview was considered but ultimately rejected in favor of an anonymous online survey method, which was hoped to promote the level of response honesty and comfort among participants. Participants were given the opportunity to complete the online survey at their convenience and had the option of working on the survey in multiple sessions as data could be saved and accessed later.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

This study has potential to raise awareness on the topic of parental infidelity and children within the social work community and inspire further in depth study on the subject. Since this study is exploratory in nature it could be ascribed to the assessment phase of the generalist intervention process in that information has been gathered to explore the phenomenon of parental infidelity by assessing the implicated children who are now adults on their perspectives toward infidelity, marriage, divorce, predicted behavior with future mating

partners, and encounters with significant others. Online questionnaire results are then compared between groups of those who have and have not experienced parental infidelity. The questionnaire also covers participants' memory of the discovery, circumstances, family reactions, and outcomes of parental infidelity. This study aims to accurately reflect the various ways individuals can be influenced by the awareness of parental infidelity as children and later as adults.

Studies on parental infidelity and children can provide supportive data that can be integrated into the development of new therapeutic approaches and treatment interventions designed for individuals affected by parental infidelity. As research on this topic evolves, experts in the field of mental health will have enough background data to create evidenced-based practice techniques to treat affected individuals. Therapists would then be able to teach parents specific interventions to help their children adjust to parental infidelity and respective implications. Finally, public awareness on the potential impact of parental infidelity on children could act as a preventative measure to offset the allure of infidelity.

The hypothesis of this study states that there is a difference between attitudes toward infidelity in respect to those who *have* and those who have *not* been exposed to parental infidelity as children. The researcher was also interested to see if gender would affect participant's attitudes toward infidelity.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter Two presents a summary of literature that is relevant to the topic of parental infidelity and children. The theoretical perspectives used in past research as well as the specific theories that have guided this study will be provided. Definitions of common terminology used in this study are presented.

Infidelity in the Popular Press

Infidelity is a topic that fascinates the public especially when it occurs in celebrity relationships. A recent example is the media's obsession with Tiger Woods's reported affairs with various women. The media and public have centered on the reaction of Woods's wife: Elin Nordegren, the state of their marriage, the affair exploits and reactions of Woods's multiple affair partners, and Tiger's sex addiction and rehabilitation. This study attempts to describe what the media coverage on Tiger Woods and Elin Nordegren has failed to specifically explore: how parental infidelity affects the children in the family. An article featured in the *New*

York Times, suggested that infidelity is on the rise for older men and young couples (Parker-Pope, 2008).

Mainstream theories about the apparent increase in infidelity include newer drugs and treatments making it easier to be sexual or unfaithful. Easy access to pornography via the Internet has been shown to affect individuals' sexual attitudes and perceptions of what constitutes "normal" behavior and has been a speculated contributor of the increasing infidelity rates (Parker-Pope, 2008).

Infidelity Terminology

The following definitions have been borrowed from Greene (2006) in order to clarify the terminology used in this study.

An affair is defined as the perceived emotional and/or sexual involvement with someone other than one's spouse and is usually kept hidden from the spouse. The terms affair and infidelity are used interchangeably throughout this study.

- Infidelity is defined as unfaithfulness, disloyalty, adultery, and a breach of trust.

- Parental Infidelity refers to the child's perceived awareness of a meaningful emotional and/or sexual relationship of a parent with a third party.
- Extradyadic is used to refer to affairs that take place outside of the married or unmarried committed relationship.

To maintain neutrality on the subject of parental infidelity, the terms "affair participant" and "partner of affair participant" will be used to describe the infidelity role of participants in the affair. The term affair participant is used to identify the person who has "cheated" on their partner, and the term partner of affair participant is used to identify the person in the committed relationship who has been "cheated on". In relationships where both partners have engaged in affairs, each partner will be considered an affair participant (Greene, 2006).

Prevalence of Infidelity

Although sexual and romantic exclusivity within committed relationships is seen as normative in American society, extramarital or extradyadic infidelity is an

incessant phenomenon in the United States. The statistics on infidelity are confusing at best. Several studies have shown that the majority of Americans disapprove of sexual infidelity and indicate that most couples practice monogamy (Treas & Giesen, 2000). After conducting an extensive review of the literature on infidelity, Blow and Hartnett (2005) concluded that over the course of married, heterosexual relationships in the United States, extramarital sex occurs in less than 25% of committed relationships. Similarly an ABC News national survey found that less than one-fourth of committed relationships are affected by infidelity. However, the rate of infidelity was estimated to be higher in cohabitating versus married relationships (Dupree, White, Olsen, & Lafleur, 2007). Data from the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago indicates that the lifetime prevalence of affairs is approximately 40% for men and 20% for women (Lauman, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994, as cited in Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2004). Forty percent of divorced women and 44% of divorced men report more than one extramarital sexual contact during the course of their marriages (Janus & Janus, 1993, as cited in Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2004).

The accuracy of infidelity rates will always be subject to over and underreporting. Providing the most comprehensive prevalence of infidelity, Campbell (2008) claims, "Approximately 90% of Americans believe infidelity is unacceptable, yet estimates indicate that 10-60% of spouses engage in extramarital sex" (p. 14). It is important to note that infidelity rates vary on a study-by-study basis due to researchers' use of individualized definitions of infidelity and differing populations of interest. To improve this issue, Blow and Hartnett (2005) propose that future surveys collect data from large samples of people involved in dating, cohabiting, and marriage relationships, as well as from divorced individuals whose marriages may have dissolved due to infidelity. Blow and Hartnett (2005) argue research that limits the definition of infidelity to sexual intercourse minimizes the devastating effects that other types of sexual involvement and emotional connections can have on relationships.

Predictors of Infidelity

According to Smith (2003), the rates of extramarital relations were found to be approximately twice as high

among husbands as among wives and are more common among younger adults. Smith (2003) theorizes that younger newlyweds may experience a difficult transition from the premarital pattern of multiple sexual partners to a monogamous partnership.

Many researchers have questioned whether having children together is correlated with either higher or lower levels of partner infidelity when compared to childless couples. Belsky (1990) and Liu (2000) (as cited in Blow & Hartnett, 2005) contend that the presence of children acts as a deterrent against infidelity. In contrast, many studies report that children decrease the relational and sexual satisfaction of some couples due to increased demands, stress, and commitments (Gottman & Notarius, 2000, as cited in Blow & Harnett, 2005). Unfortunately, there is a lack of research on this subject and most studies do not report the number of children in such relationships, let alone distinguish between couples with and without children (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Blow and Hartnett (2005) suggest future infidelity studies should not only indicate the ages of the children (teenager vs. toddler vs. infant), but also differentiate between stepchildren, adopted children in comparison to

biological children, and to assess for the presence of children with disabilities or medical conditions.

Smith (2003) discovered that extramarital relations are more common among African Americans, people with lower socioeconomic status, irregular churchgoers, separated or divorced individuals (including those who have remarried), and those who are unhappy with their marriage. Smith (2003) also notes that extramarital affairs may be more prevalent among residents of large cities, however, the relationship between overall community-type and frequency of extramarital affairs is weak. Treas and Giesen (2000) report that education level is positively correlated with permissive sexual values and sexual infidelity. However, Smith (2003) found the data on the relationship between level of education and frequency of extramarital affairs was inconclusive.

Glass (2002) convincingly argued that people in good marriages are vulnerable to emotional and sexual infidelity. It appears in some cases that opportunity for extradyadic infidelity can override the positive aspects of an exclusive relationship, and even strong relationships can experience infidelity if the ideal opportunity presents itself. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983)

(as cited in Blow & Hartnett, 2005) agree that all couples are vulnerable to infidelity.

Treating Infidelity

According to the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT) as represented by Glass (2002), the disclosure of infidelity is associated with intense emotions and recurrent crises. Glass (2002) contends that extramarital involvement (EMI) is the catalyst that drives approximately 50 percent of the couples to seek treatment. The AAMFT (Glass, 2002) warns that a new crisis of infidelity is emerging in which platonic friendships are leading to romantic relationships, particularly in the workplace and on the Internet. Glass (2002) distinguishes emotional affairs from platonic friendships by noting that emotional affairs imply: 1) greater *emotional intimacy* than in the committed relationship, 2) *secrecy and deception* from the partner, and 3) *sexual chemistry*. Glass (2002) argues that Internet affairs are the perfect example of emotional affairs because they cause marital distress but lack the element of physical contact.

Glass (2002) warns that combined-type affairs where individuals engage in extramarital sex while maintaining a deep emotional connection with their affair partners usually have the most disruptive impact on the partner of the affair participant. Regardless of the duration of the romantic union, the undermining of hope, trust, and devotion frequently leads to depression in the partner of the affair participant (Amodeo, 1994, as cited in, Greene, 2006). The societal emphasis on the victimizing nature of infidelity encourages the partner of the affair participant to view divorce as an assertive measure (Brown, 2001 as cited in Greene, 2006).

The treatment focus for couples affected by infidelity differ depending on the needs of the couple and may include: rebuilding the relationship, resolving ambivalence about whether to stay in a committed relationship, or separating in a constructive way (Glass, 2002). The AAMFT consumer update on infidelity lists the following signs of healing within the relationship:

- 1) the relationship is stronger and is couple-centered rather than child-centered,
- 2) The vulnerabilities for infidelity are understood and addressed as they occur,
- 3) The couple has developed trust, commitment, mutual

empathy, and shared responsibility for change (Glass, 2002).

The AAMFT consumer update on infidelity by Glass (2002) fails to offer any recommendations for treating children affected by their parents' infidelity. Greene (2006) argues that these children are often left with feelings of abandonment and lack of affection with little to no supervision. Even if parents are physically present during a family disruption caused by parental infidelity, they are likely to be emotionally unresponsive to the children (Greene, 2006).

Infidelity and Parental Conflict

The parental behaviors most likely to predict problematic marriages among offspring include: jealousy, being domineering, getting angry easily, being critical, being moody, and not talking to the spouse (Amato & Booth, 2001). Results from Johnston and Thomas-McCombs (1996) (as cited in Kioski, 2001) study suggest that children from divorced families share various attributes, which appear to delay initiation of intimate relationships, namely fear of being rejected and lack of trust.

Reibstien and Richards (1992) conducted one of the few empirically based studies on the impact of affairs on children (as cited in Greene, 2006). They found children's reactions to parental infidelity (e.g. anger, blaming one parent for the conflict, and conflicts of loyalty to parents) mirrored common children's reactions to parental divorce. To adolescents, their parents' behaviors seem to cast doubt on their belief in the possibility of stable partnerships (as cited in Greene, 2006).

Spousal infidelity is often associated with high-conflict divorce. Spillane-Grieco (2000) explains that children of high-conflict divorce are at-risk because a major part of their social environment, their divorced parents, are in constant conflict and therefore not providing the care and support the children need to grow in an environment that promotes healthy self-esteem. These children tend to suffer from depression, have difficulty with friendships and other intimate relationships, display acting out behaviors, develop substance abuse problems, and potentially develop personality disorders (Spillane-Grieco, 2000). Often in high-conflict divorces, issues are left unresolved and the battle continues when

parents interact to arrange visitation times for the children.

Impact of Infidelity on Children

Despite parents' best attempts at secrecy, children may still learn about affairs indirectly, when their parents exhibit changes in behavior such as becoming preoccupied or depressed. A qualitative study on the impact of divorce on children gathered information from the participants on the impact of parental affairs (Reibstein & Richards, 1992, as cited in Greene, 2006). Reactions to parental divorce found some young adults still struggling, years later to come to terms with their feelings about the parental affairs that lay at the heart of their parents' divorce (Duncombe & Marsden, 2003, as cited in Greene, 2006). Young adults perceived themselves as searching for "the truth" about their parents divorce. These children felt as though the parents were trying to keep secrets from them through evasive talk, refusing to talk, or telling, "lies."

Thorson (2009) conducted a study on adult children's experiences with their married parent's infidelity which examined the use of communicative protection and access

rules pertaining to their parent's infidelity. Results indicated that participants created protection rules including internal (within the family) maintenance and cultural rules and an external rule that referred to protecting the family from outside scrutiny.

Infidelities within committed relationships tend to cause violations of trust that involve lying, denial, and secrecy. The discovery of the affair can be very traumatic for children and they may react in different ways depending on their age, developmental stage, gender, and culture. Children may feel threatened and powerless by discovery of parental infidelity and fear family separation and or relocation. Lusterman (2005) adds that when children discover the affair before the other parent that they are often burdened by the information and may be subject to guilt associated with secrecy and family boundaries. Issues of loyalty toward one parent may be particularly stressful to a child who is told not to tell the other parent about the affair (Snyder & Doss, 2005).

Compared to the change of marital status and the child's separation from one parent, interparental conflict has been determined a better predictor of the children's functioning post-divorce (Platt et al., 2008).

Platt and colleagues (2008) defined infidelity as a sexual or emotional interaction that occurs outside of the romantic relationship, which puts emotional intimacy at jeopardy and found that adult children with knowledge of their father's infidelity were more likely to engage in infidelity than adult children without such knowledge.

Infidelity and Divorce

Since divorce is often a consequence of parental infidelity and that divorce and parental infidelity are often associated with parental conflict, it is plausible that the affects of divorce on children might be similar to the affects of parental infidelity. Even if parents do not separate or divorce it is likely that infidelity will cause conflict within the parental dyad. Weiss (1979) found the functioning of a single parent is more important to the development of children than being exposed to parental conflict. Boys have been reported to deal with distress by externalizing problems and girls deal with distress by internalizing problems (McDonough & Bartha, 1999). McDonough and Bartha (1999) found that children usually do not see divorce as a way to improve their lives. This is because children rely on their

biological parents for survival and therefore, instinctively fear losing them (McDonough & Bartha, 1999).

Children experience heightened level of vulnerability when the family unit disintegrates. Children have been reported to suffer from reduced parental care within the first two years after separation. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) found that adolescence is an especially difficult time for children of divorced parents. Girls were more likely to have sex earlier and become more sexually promiscuous than the control group. In order to influence and support children in the adolescent stage, parents must have set the foundation of engagement with their children beforehand. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) (2002) found that the negative impact of divorce often persists into adulthood leading to a greater chance of mental health and education accomplishment problems. NIMH (2002) concluded that active prevention in children of divorced parents decreases the rates of mental disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, and sexual promiscuity.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization Intergenerational Theory

Previous studies have suggested that there is an intergenerational pattern of infidelity and furthermore that children who perceived extramarital affairs and overt anger as the cause of parents divorce may be more likely to have an insecure attachment style as adults (Platt et al., 2008). In regards to interparental conflict, exposed children tended to have less social support from their parents, lower self-esteem, and were more likely to have insecure attachment styles. Platt and colleagues (2008) found that adult children who were aware of their father's infidelity were more likely to engage in infidelity than those who were unaware of father's infidelity. They also found that children who were exposed to and/or felt threatened by interparental conflict reported more negative views of themselves and others. The research findings implicate that parental infidelity and conflict influence individuals when they are children and continue to impact them as adults.

Greene (2006) suggests that a family history of infidelity may set the stage for future infidelities if new thinking patterns are not introduced. As cited in

Greene (2006), Amodeo (1994) relates the predisposition of infidelity to object-relations theory, stating that the first three years of life play the most crucial role in the ability to form satisfying, sustainable relationships as adults. The impact of growing up in a household amid secrets, deceits, and constant threats to family stability can normalize these types of behavior to children which may play out in adulthood (Pittman, 1989, as cited in Greene, 2006).

Stress and Coping Theory

Glass (2002) suggests that the disclosure of parental infidelity had the potential to create a crisis within the family system. The reactions of the partner of the affair participant resemble the post-traumatic stress symptoms of the victims of catastrophic events including shattered beliefs, physiological hyperarousal, flashbacks, and intrusive images (Glass, 2002; Snyder & Doss, 2005). Glass (2002) predicted that individuals with high levels of trust for their partners are likely to be the most traumatized by their partners' disclosure of infidelity. However, Glass (2002) does not address how the children

within the affected families react to their traumatized parents.

Stress and Coping Theory is applicable to understanding the presumable impact of parental infidelity on children. Family stress and coping theory provides a general framework to study any stressful family event and depends on three factors: (a) accumulation of stressors, (b) resources for coping with stress, and (c) definitions of the stressor event (Wang & Amato, 2000, as cited in Greene, 2006). Applying this theory to parental infidelity, the first stage can represent the discovery of a parents' affair. The knowledge of a parental infidelity can create uncertainty in children and they may worry about whether or not their parents will get a divorce, how the infidelity will impact the family, what love will be like for them as grown-ups, and whether it is safe to trust anyone. Experiencing several sequential negative events can overwhelm children's coping skills thus impacting the psychological well-being (Wang & Amato, 2000, as cited in Greene, 2006). The next stage, resources for coping with stress, could include family support, financial independence, education, employment, and

problem-solving skills. The third factor relates to the personal meaning the child attaches to the event.

Social Learning Theory

The concept of observational learning implies children can learn a behavior by merely observing parents perform the behavior (Amato & Booth, 2001). Using this theory, Kioski (2001) suggested that children might form attitudes and orientations toward love and relationships based on their parents modeling.

Greene (2006) applied observational learning to parental infidelity by using the following example:

For example, if a father's extramarital affairs are ignored and mother never says anything, a little girl may come to believe that type of behavior is expected in a relationship. The act of a child discovering a parental affair can teach a child that relationships may not be safe. (p. 10)

Kioski (2001) explained that via parental modeling, children might vicariously experience the painful emotions of divorce and consequently become less enthusiastic and more apprehensive about marriage. Experiencing parental conjugal relationships as impermanent, children might be

less committed in their own relationships as adults (Kioski, 2001). Research from Greene (2006) suggests that in response to experiences with parental infidelity, children might develop dysfunctional or irrational beliefs. Gender dynamics may exacerbate the impact of parental infidelity for instance; a child may grow to be distrustful of the gender shared by the unfaithful parent (Greene, 2006). Conversely Kioski (2001) suggests that the child may identify with the affair participant or may integrate the avoidance behaviors modeled by their parents into their future intimate relationships. In conjunction with Kioski (2001), Greene (2006) endorses the possibility that children's exposure to parental infidelity may impair their self-efficacy and may cause them to become less trusting in a romantic relationship based on their assumption that most men/women "cheat." The impact that parental infidelity has on children is subject to individual and external factors, one being the level of disruption that infidelity causes the family (Greene, 2006). On a positive note, Duncombe & Marsden (2004) (as cited in Greene, 2006) observe that experiences of chaos within the family system can offer individuals opportunities to grow.

Summary

As demonstrated by the literature, there is a notable gap in the research on the topic of parental infidelity and children. Research suggests that the impact of parental infidelity on children is similar to the ways children are affected by divorce. There is a need to examine the impact of infidelity beyond the context of couple's therapy and into individual and family therapy to assess and treat the impact of parental infidelity on children. Studies on children exposed to parental infidelity may be challenging to conduct but the potential contribution to the wellbeing of children and families as a whole is well worth the effort.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter will describe the research study design and the reasoning behind using an online questionnaire to measure attitudes toward infidelity. The limitations of this study as well as the independent and dependent variables related to the research questions will be delineated. An overview of participant pooling and selection criteria will be provided. The types of data collected and descriptions of the study instruments are included. Issues of confidentiality, informed consent, debriefing, and instrument validity and reliability will be addressed. This chapter will conclude with the research procedures section and finally the data analysis section.

Study Design

The main purpose of this study is to explore the attitudes of adults who became aware of their parents infidelity as children in comparison with adults who are unaware of the presence of infidelity within their parents' relationship. Because of the taboo and intimate

nature of infidelity the researcher created an anonymous online questionnaire to explore infidelity attitudes and behaviors. The questionnaire was created on SurveyMonkey.com and includes 53 questions. This study uses a mixed methods approach to describe and analyze the sample population. Closed and open-ended questions are incorporated throughout the questionnaire to provide qualitative and quantitative data. Three scales were included to measure sociosexual orientation, extradyadic permissiveness, and extradyadic beliefs, behaviors, and predicted future behaviors.

This study intended to answer the following research questions.

- o Research Question 1: Does awareness of parental infidelity influence one's level of acceptance of infidelity?
- o Research Question 2: Are children aware of parental infidelity more likely to engage in infidelity as adults?
- o Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between the gender of the unfaithful parent and the impact on the child's acceptance level of infidelity as an adult?

The hypothesis of this study was nondirectional and stated that there would be a difference between participant attitudes toward infidelity if they had experienced parental infidelity compared to those who had not. Demographic dependent variables were also analyzed to see if they influenced the outcome of the research questions.

The dependent variable in this study was "attitude toward infidelity" and the independent variable was "awareness of parental infidelity in childhood". General demographic data including was also examined including: level of education completed, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, inclination to liberal or conservative views, family upbringing, etc. "Attitudes toward infidelity" is a broad concept that consists of many factors including an individuals: acceptance of infidelity within committed relationships, willingness to engage in infidelity, personal history of engaging in infidelity, and an assessment of intimate acts an individual deems as "unfaithful behaviors". Three measurements (as presented in the *Data Collection and Instruments* section) will ultimately determine one's overall "attitude toward infidelity".

The limitations of this study include issues regarding the social undesirability of disclosing personal or even parental infidelities. Even though the researcher took precautions (e.g. using neutral terms throughout survey, setting a non-judgmental tone, and ensuring anonymity) to avoid social undesirability, there is still a chance that some participants have under or over-reported accounts of infidelity. There are several limitations of using an online questionnaire including: technical glitches, issues related to privacy and confidentiality, potential for low response rate, and the fact that the researcher is not present to clarify any questions posed by participants (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008). The validity of this study relied on participant memory, which can be inaccurate at times but the researcher placed importance on the *impact* of events perceived by participants rather than an exact portrayal of childhood experiences.

Despite the limitations, the benefits of using a web-based survey outweighed the cons for this particular study. Web-based surveys have many of the same strengths as traditional surveys (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008). The researcher predicted that the online survey method would

be more conducive to participant self-disclosure than face-to-face interviewing. Since this online questionnaire was anonymously administered to participants, they might have felt more comfortable answering sensitive questions than they would in face-to-face interviews or traditional surveys.

Sampling

This study used a convenience sample of students from the California State University San Bernardino main campus located in San Bernardino, California. Using a college campus was ideal for this research study because it offered economical access to a large participant pool. Since infidelity is relatively common in American society, it was hoped that a significant amount of participants would qualify to answer the parental infidelity experience section in the online questionnaire. The goal was to obtain completed questionnaire data from 120 or more participants. It was expected that the majority of participants would be students from California State University San Bernardino. In order to pool more participants the researcher posted a study invitation to *Facebook* and psychological survey

websites. The only sampling provision was that participants had to be 18 years old or older to qualify for the study. Participants were expected to differ in gender, race, ethnicity, and age but the researcher anticipated that the majority of participants would be young adults.

Data Collection and Instruments

The independent variable in this study is knowledge of parental infidelity and the dependent variables are participant attitudes toward infidelity and participant history of infidelity. An online questionnaire was created on SurveyMonkey.com to explore whether or not a relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables. The questionnaire began with a demographic section that covered: age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, number of children, number of siblings, and birth order. The section on relationships was adapted from Greene's (2006) survey questions, which assessed participants on their total number of intimate relationships, age at first sexual relationship, parents' divorce/separation history and status.

The section on parental infidelity history explored the nature of the affair and consequences, participant level of discomfort at time of discovery of parental infidelity, and the impact of parental infidelity on the family of origin. Infidelity history was assessed in the following three areas: history of committing infidelity, history of partner(s) committing infidelity, and history of sexual or intimate third party involvement with a married/committed person. The above section contained questions adapted from Campbell (2008) and Greene's (2006) questionnaires. The following measures were used in the survey: The *Reiss Extradyadic Sexual Permissiveness Scale*, *Extradyadic Behaviors List/Unfaithful Beliefs List*, and (3 items) from the *Sociosexual Orientation Inventory* (SOI) (Campbell, 2008; Fricker, 2006; Reiss, 2010).

Since the study was open to participants with various relationship statuses, the researcher used an alternative version of the *Reiss Extramarital Sexual Permissiveness Scale*, known as the *Reiss Extradyadic Sexual Permissiveness Scale*, which measured extradyadic sexual permissiveness rather than strictly measuring extramarital sexual permissiveness. This measure contains

(4 items) that participants are asked to rate twice, first under the pretence that they are in a "happy committed relationship" and then under the pretence that they are in an "unhappy committed relationship". Each condition is scored separately and high scores are indicative of a higher level of sexual permissiveness.

Reiss (2010) noted that the scales meet the general Guttman criteria concerning the coefficient of reproducibility and the coefficient of scalability. Reiss (2010) and her colleagues analyzed four nationally representative samples from four different years to test for the best predictors of extramarital permissiveness. Construct validity was established by finding the expected differences between men and women as well as religiously devout and non-devout groups of people (Reiss, 2010).

The purpose of using the *Extradyadic Behaviours/Unfaithful Beliefs List* was to learn which types of behaviors were considered unfaithful by the participants and whether or not individuals had engaged in any of the items from a list of potentially unfaithful behaviors. Fricker (2006) adapted the items of this measure from a pilot study conducted by Yarab and

colleagues (1998). The list begins with behaviors that might not be considered intimate at all and builds from low to high-level intimate acts. Based on their own beliefs, respondents were instructed to confirm or negate whether each item on the list was an "unfaithful behavior".

Fricker (2006) assessed the reliability of the *Extradyadic Behaviors/Unfaithful Beliefs* measure using Cronbach alphas, which were .94 for the Extradyadic Behaviors and .88 for the Unfaithful Beliefs. Scores for each item on the scales were added to form a total score. High scores indicated a belief that more of the behaviors in the list constitute infidelity and low scores indicated that fewer behaviors in the list constitute infidelity (Fricker 2006).

The *Sociosexual Orientation Inventory* (SOI) was used to assess the degree of comfort participants felt toward uncommitted sexual interactions. The scale consists of 7 items to measure: the participant's past sexual behavior (2 items), their expected future behavior (1 item), and their general attitudes about whether an emotional commitment is a necessary prerequisite for having sex (4 items) (Campbell, 2008). For the purpose of this study only

(3 out of the 4 items) were used from the general attitudes about whether emotional commitment is prerequisite for having sex. The scores for the three statements were then analyzed individually. Participants with lower scores were determined to have a restricted orientation whereas those with higher scores have an unrestricted orientation.

As reported by Campbell (2008), the SOI has been used extensively in social science research since 1991. Campbell (2008) recounted the following based on the findings by Simpson and Gangestad (1991): SOI's internal consistency was acceptable with an overall alpha coefficient of .73 and test-retest reliability was .94. Campbell (2008) concluded that the SOI has demonstrated good internal and external validity.

Since questionnaires were completed by self-report, the data may be inaccurate due to poor memory, pressure to produce socially acceptable responses, over-reporting, and or under-reporting.

Procedures

Data collection was solicited and collected from February 2010 to April 2010. The researcher gained

permission to post questionnaire links at the following websites: The Social Work Student Association (SWSA) of California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) Facebook page, the researchers personal Facebook page, The Social Psychology Network website (<http://www.socialpsychology.org/addstudy.htm>), and the Psychological Research on the Net website (<http://psych.hanover.edu/research/exponnet.html>).

The investigator attempted to get permission from the Psychology Department at California State University San Bernardino to use the SONA research study system but did not receive an answer. The SONA system allows student researchers to invite psychology students to participate in their studies and in turn offers them course extra credit.

Participants were directed to the online questionnaire at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/> either by Facebook flyer or online link that directed them to an informed consent page which prompted them to either a) agree to the terms of the study and continue on to the survey questions or b) to disagree and were sent to the "exit survey page". The survey ends with a debriefing page that includes the option to enter a drawing to win

one of three \$50 gift cards. If participants opt out of the drawing then they would click the "Done" button to submit their data and exit the survey.

If participants entered the drawing, they had the chance to specify how they wanted to be notified (by phone or email) if they won the drawing. They were also given the option of providing an address for the gift card to be sent with or without notification. The participants' questionnaire data was not linked to their contact information.

If participants entered the drawing their questionnaire data was saved and they were redirected to another survey on SurveyMonkey, titled "Gift Card Drawing" and were requested to enter the contact information at their own disclosure. After they submitted their information and clicked the "Done" button the "Gift Card Drawing" survey was complete and participant data was submitted. Gift card recipients were selected in an ethical manner by assigning random numbers with Research Randomizer 4.0 (<http://www.randomizer.org>) to each recipient and then generate three random numbers from the numerical range of the sum of recipients.

Protection of Human Subjects

To ensure confidentiality and privacy of the study participants, identifying information was not linked to their questionnaire responses. Participants were not required to provide identifying information unless they enter the drawing for to win one of three \$50 gift cards, in which case they were able to control the amount of information they shared. All of the data provided by human subjects was collected via SurveyMonkey and could only be accessible through a password-protected account maintained by the researcher. Human subject data stored at the researcher's account at SurveyMonkey was viewed using a password-protected computer. Please see the Informed Consent and Debriefing Statement provided as appendices (Appendices B & C).

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS Statistics descriptive analysis including frequency distributions, measures of central tendency (e.g., mean), and standard deviations. The answers of the qualitative open-ended questions will be interpreted and coded by the researcher.

The researcher utilized a linear regression analyses to investigate the relationship between the dependent variable (attitude toward infidelity and engagement in infidelity) and the independent variables (exposure to parental infidelity, parental divorce/separation, relationship history, and demographic information).

Summary

This chapter has provided an outline of the study design (mixed methods), defined the independent (awareness of parental infidelity) and dependent variables (attitudes toward infidelity), and has justified the use of an online questionnaire to measure attitudes toward infidelity. Quantitative analysis and qualitative themes will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter begins with a demographic description of the participant pool, which will be supplemented with frequency tables. SPSS Statistics 18 was used to analyze data from the *Reiss Extradysadic Sexual Permissiveness Scale*, the *Extradysadic Behaviors/Unfaithful Beliefs*, and a section of the *Sociosexual Orientation Inventory*. Quantitative and qualitative results will be presented in relation to the independent and dependent variables. Charts will be provided for data clarification purposes.

Presentation of the Findings

The questionnaire closed on April 1, 2010 with 305 partially completed surveys. Of the 305 respondents, 166 completed the 53 questions and two participant data sets were cut due to failing the age requirement of 18 years old. Therefore 164 participant response sets qualified for data analysis.

The majority of the participants were female (134) followed by 29 males and one participant identified as androgynous. Regarding sexual orientation, 86% of the

participants were heterosexuals, 7.9% were bisexual, and 6.1% were homosexual. Participants in this study were fairly young. With age ranging from 18 to 63 years 70.1 % of participants fit into the 18 to 30 years age bracket. The majority of respondents (72%) were born and raised in the United States, 1.2 % had lived in the United States for most of their lives, 5.5% were foreign born but raised in the United States, 8.5 had lived in the United States from one or less years to ten or more years, and 12.2% of the respondents had never lived in the United States (most of whom were from Canada and the United Kingdom).

The top three participant ethnicities were European American/White (104 participants), Mexican/Hispanic (19 participants), and African American/Black (15 participants). There was a tie between the fourth most common ethnicity, Native American (4 participants) and Asian (4 participants). Two participants identified as Middle Eastern and the following 16 individuals identified with multiple ethnicities. One participant declined to answer the question.

The following information pertains to the amount of children participants had. 69.5 % of the participants did

not have children, 10.4 % had two children, 8.5 % had one child, 6.1 had three children, and the following 5.5 % had between four and six children.

The most common political party affiliations found in the study was respectively: Democrat (42.7 %), Independent (22.6 %), Republican (14.6 %), and "None" (11%). Political ideology can be seen in the following table, showing that this sample is fairly liberal in their in their outlook. Please refer to Table 1 on the following page to see how participants rated themselves on a liberal-conservative likert scale.

Table 1. Degree of Conservative or Liberal Ideology

Political Ideology	n	Percent
extremely liberal	13	7.9
very liberal	40	24.4
somewhat liberal	37	22.6
neutral	45	27.4
somewhat conservative	16	9.8
very conservative	10	6.1
extremely conservative	3	1.8
Total	164	100.0

As presented in the table, 82.3 % respondents fell between the "neutral" and the "extremely liberal" categories. Referring to Table 2, one will find that most common level of education completed was at the undergraduate level with 69 respondents. Fifty-four participants indicated that they had their Bachelor's Degree or higher levels of education completed.

Table 2. Highest Level of Education Completed

Highest Level of Education	n	Percent
GED	18	11.0
Trade School Certificate	7	4.3
Associate's Degree	16	9.8
Undergraduate Student	69	42.1
Bachelor's Degree	22	13.4
Postgraduate Degree	13	7.9
Master's Degree	12	7.3
Doctorate's Degree	7	4.3
Total	164	100.0

The most common religion among respondents was Christianity, which was reported by 42 % of the sample and the second highest was the "None" category with 29.3%, followed by 17.7 % of respondents who identified as "Spiritual" (do not subscribe to a particular

religion). Participants rated their "level of religiousness" on a likert scale, their scores can be found in Table 3. The majority of respondents (64%) fell between the "not religious at all" to "somewhat religious" categories.

Table 3. Level of Religiousness

Level of Religiousness	n	Percent
not religious at all	65	39.6
somewhat religious	40	24.4
moderately religious	31	18.9
very religious	21	12.8
extremely religious	7	4.3
Total	164	100.0

Participants were asked to select their "current relationship status" at the time they took the online survey (please see Table 4). The majority of the participant pool (72.3%) were in committed relationships for example most participants fell into the following categories: exclusive dating, living together, engaged to be married, or married. Of the 123 respondents who confirmed that they were in a committed relationship, 31 reported their relationship duration was one year or

less, 33 had been in their relationship for 1 to 3 years, 16 participants reported 3 to 5 years, 9 individuals had been in their relationship from 5 to 7 years, and 34 of the respondents reported a relationship duration of 7 or more years.

Pertaining to the total amount of relationships participants had throughout their lifetime, 67.7% had been in 3 or more relationships. Regarding the longest relationship in the respondents' relationship history, 30.2% of respondents reported a relationship lasting 7 or more years, 8.1 % reported a relationship lasting between 5 and 7 years, 21.6% of respondents longest relationship was between 3 to 5 years, 32.2 % reported a duration between 1 and 3 years, and 9.9 % reported their longest relationship duration as 1 year or less.

Table 4. Current Relationship Status

Current Relationship Status	n	Percent
Single	24	14.6
Casual Dating	11	6.7
Exclusive Dating	45	27.4
Living Together	20	12.2
Engaged and not living together	1	.6
Engaged and living together	7	4.3
Married	47	28.7
Separated	1	.6
Divorced	8	4.9
Total	164	100.0

One survey question had respondents select a statement that best describes their feelings about marriage and 72.6 % chose the statement, "Marriage should be based on love between two individuals. The majority of participants (73.8%) ranked family as having the most influence in shaping their views regarding marriage. When asked under the pretence that they were married, which factors that would justify the decision to divorce, 65.2% of the sample chose the condition, "If my partner had an affair" as part as their selection criterion.

Research Questions

Linear regression was used to analyze the following research questions.

Research Question 1: Does awareness of parental infidelity influence one's level of acceptance of infidelity?

Quantitative data including the results of the dependent variable *Extradyadic Behaviors/Unfaithful Beliefs List* which was restructured into three variable sets. The variable sets were based on the question types included in the list, "Do you think this is an unfaithful behavior?" "Would you do this?" and "Have you ever done this?". The same 25 items were listed in each question type condition. Tests were run to discern if the independent variable (IV): awareness of parental infidelity would have a significant impact on the scores of participants.

In the *Unfaithful Belief: Do you think this is an unfaithful behavior?* condition the researcher did not find a significant relationship between awareness of parental infidelity and participant scores. In addition, the *Reiss Extradyadic Permissiveness Scale* (Reiss EPS) was measured against the awareness of parental infidelity

(IV). The Reiss EPS measures participant's opinions regarding whether or not they would engage in extradyadic relationships if they were in a "happy committed relationship" or an "unhappy committed relationship". The Reiss EPS presents the participant with four kinds of extradyadic relationships that are based on love or pleasure and the likelihood of engaging in such behaviors under the condition that one's partner would accept or reject participant having either type of extradyadic relationship (pleasure or love based) (Reiss 2010).

It was discovered that awareness of parental infidelity had a significant influence on *whether or not participants who imagined they were in happy committed relationships would engage in extradyadic relationships* ($p = .01$), however the slope in this relationship is miniscule. Similarly the *age at which participants became aware of parental infidelity* was found to significantly impact *whether or not participants who imagined happy relationships would engage in extradyadic relationships* ($p = .008$), with a slightly higher slope.

Awareness of parental infidelity did not have a significant influence on participant scores on the Reiss Type 2: Unhappy relationship. Age at awareness of the

parental infidelity also did not significantly impact the way participants scored on Reiss Type 2: Unhappy relationship. In conclusion awareness of parental infidelity did not influence whether or not participants who imagined they were in unhappy committed relationships would engage in extradyadic relationships.

Research Question 2: Are those aware of parental infidelity during childhood more likely to engage in infidelity as adults?

Results from the linear regression test indicate that there is a significant relationship between awareness of parental infidelity and engaging in *Extradyadic Behaviors* ($p = .007$). Participants whose parents engaged in extradyadic affairs were more likely to have engaged in extradyadic behaviors themselves.

The next condition of the scale involved predicting *Extradyadic Behaviors List* (Would you engage in extradyadic behaviors?) A significant relationship was found between this question and participant awareness of parental infidelity ($p = .019$). In summary those who were aware of parental infidelity were more likely to report that they would engage in extradyadic behaviors.

Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between the gender of the unfaithful parent and the impact on the child's acceptance level of infidelity as an adult?

The study confirms that there is a significant relationship between awareness of maternal infidelity (IV) and engagement in *Extradyadic Behaviors* ($p = .044$). Participants who were aware of maternal infidelity engaged in more extradyadic behaviors than those were unaware of maternal infidelity. Awareness of maternal infidelity was also linked to participants attitudes toward marriage with participants more likely to have a positive attitude about marriage if their mother was unfaithful ($p = .005$). This may be due to participants' desire for an intact family in reaction to the disruption in their parents' marriage.

Similar to awareness of parental infidelity, participants aware of maternal infidelity were more likely to engage in extradyadic relationships in Reiss Type 1: Happy committed relationship ($p = .05$). Awareness to maternal infidelity did not have a significant relationship with Reiss Type 2: Unhappy relationship. Although there were no significant p values for awareness of paternal infidelity (IV), the researcher found it

noteworthy that *Reiss Type 1: Happy* shared a $p = .70$ with the results from *Reiss Type 2: Unhappy*. An explanation for this finding could be that paternal infidelity is not a good predictor for scores on the Reiss EPS.

Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI) was scored on a likert scale one item at a time. The only significant finding in the SOI was the negative relationship between awareness of parental infidelity and age one first engaged in sexual intercourse ($p = .037$). In summary awareness of parental infidelity is associated with engaging in sex at a slightly younger age.

Open Ended Survey Questions

Common themes in the qualitative question regarding participant attitudes toward infidelity varied from strong negative reactions (no tolerance) to acceptance through biological justification of infidelity as "human nature". In general the majority of qualitative responses were anti-infidelity. Response samples to the question: How do you feel about infidelity? Include statements like, "It should not happen", "I am absolutely against it", "It's wrong", "Should not be tolerated", "Once a cheater always a cheater", "Worse than murder", and "It's a deal breaker". There were also neutral and balanced

responses such as, "I think every situation is different", "It happens", and "It's not a great thing, but I do believe people shouldn't be so uptight about it". More accepting responses consisted of some of the following excerpts; "Being with one person for the rest of your life is too much to ask for and is unnatural", "I don't mind open relationships", and "It's likely to happen at least once. Everyone deserves a second chance. It's nobody's business".

Participants also had the opportunity to share their personal reactions to the initial discovery of parental affairs. Responses ranged from disgust, ambivalence, sadness, anger, rage, distrust, hurt, hatred, rebellion, confusion, disappointment, fear of divorce, betrayal, shock, embarrassment, and suppression. Many reported losing respect for the parent who engaged in the affair, others did not remember their reaction to the affair, and some became closer to the parent who did not engage in the affair. In addition other participants learned that they did not want to be like their parent (affair participant) and some reported becoming deterred from choosing mates like the parent (affair participant).

Summary

This chapter introduced the reader to the sample population. Demographic characteristics, relationship history, parental information, and important data findings were examined. Linear regression testing was utilized to locate significant variable relationships. Qualitative data was provided to supplement the PASW Statistics results. Interpretation and discussion is presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion and interpretation of the study results and presents possible explanations for the results. Limitations of the study are acknowledged and this chapter concludes with recommendations for future social work research and practice.

Discussion

- o Research Question 1: Does awareness of parental infidelity influence one's level of acceptance of infidelity?

The findings from *Reiss Extradynamic Sexual Permissiveness Scale* indicate that participants with an awareness of parental infidelity were more likely to score higher on the *Type 1: Happy Relationship* condition than they did on the *Type 2: Unhappy Relationship* condition. The awareness of parental infidelity had a significant influence on participant scores on *Reiss Type 1* ($p = .01$). However, using the same criterion for *Reiss Type 2* did not produce a significant result. To restate

the finding, individuals who are aware of parental infidelity are more likely to be more sexually permissive in "happy committed relationships". One way to explain this discrepancy could be with the concept of insecure attachment styles (Platt et al., 2008). These individuals might have lower self-esteem and could be distrustful of others; therefore they experience difficulty being in a "happy committed relationship" and are more likely to seek validation from an extradyadic relationship (Platt et al., 2008).

- o Research Question 2: Are children aware of parental infidelity more likely to engage in infidelity as adults?

Results indicate that there is a relationship between awareness of parental infidelity and engaging in *Extradyadic Behaviors* "Have you done this?" condition at $p = .007$. This finding is supported by the (predictive) *Extradyadic Behaviors* "Would you do this", which found a significant relationship ($p = .019$) between awareness of parental infidelity and this condition. This means that participants who are aware of parental infidelity are more likely to engage in extradyadic behaviors and would be more willing to engage in future extradyadic

behaviors. A possible explanation for this finding can be answered by social learning theory in which parental modeling can normalize extradyadic behaviors to children and may later emerge in adulthood (Greene, 2006). Previous research offers another explanation; children who experience parental conjugal relationships as impermanent may become less committed in their relationships as adults (Kioski, 2001). Greene (2006) adds that children can develop dysfunctional or irrational beliefs in response to their experiences with parental infidelity.

- o Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between the gender of the unfaithful parent and the impact on the child's acceptance level of infidelity as an adult?

The findings suggest that there is a significant relationship between awareness of maternal infidelity (IV) and engagement in *Extradyadic Behavior* "Have you done this" condition ($p = .044$). In other words, participants who were aware of maternal infidelity were more likely to engage in extradyadic behaviors. In this case the respondents may have identified with their mothers as evidenced by their scores from the *Extradyadic Behavior* "Have you done this" condition. It appears that

awareness of maternal infidelity is also related to one's attitudes toward marriage ($p = .005$).

Reiss Type 1: Happy Relationship as measured by awareness of maternal infidelity was significant at $p = .05$ but *Reiss Type 2: Unhappy Relationship* was not. This is similar to the findings of awareness of parental infidelity and the *Reiss Extradyadic Sexual Permissiveness Scale* (refer to research question 1).

Although there were no significant p values for awareness of paternal infidelity (IV), it was discovered that the significance of the results from *Reiss Type 1* was congruent ($p = .70$) with the results from *Reiss Type 2*. Unlike Platt and colleagues (2008), this study did not find any relationship between awareness of paternal infidelity and engagement in extradyadic behaviors. This could be due the fact that this study had an insufficient male sample size.

Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI)

It appears that those who have had experienced parental infidelity were more likely to have sex at a younger age than those who did not. This finding is consistent with Hetherington and Kelly (2002) finding that female children of divorced parents were more likely

to have sex earlier and become more sexually promiscuous than the control group. The results from this study suggest that age when one became aware of parental infidelity was associated with a more relaxed attitude toward sex.

The qualitative data confirmed that the majority of respondents had negative views regarding infidelity and were more idealistic in their attitudes toward marriage, which supports Campbell's (2008) study on newlyweds and infidelity. The responses to "Reactions to parent's affair" provided invaluable information that the measures were unable to capture. Some respondents reported that they had cheated before in relationships and hoped that they would not cheat again. None of the participants reported an association between their own extradyadic behaviors with similar actions of their parent (affair participant). This is interesting because it does not support the quantitative results, which suggest a significantly relevant relationship between maternal infidelity and extradyadic behaviors. Stress and coping theory might explain this as not so much of a conscious decision but instead a defense mechanism in reaction to

the traumatic experience of parental infidelity and family conflict (Glass 2002; Snyder & Doss, 2005).

Limitations

In retrospect many limitations were found in this study. In regards to study design, some of the questions did not provide respondents with comprehensive selection choices, which may have resulted in inaccurate respondent information. Incompatibility issues between SurveyMonkey and SPSS Statistics impeded the data analysis process in that SurveyMonkey data had to be exported to Microsoft Excel before it could be transferred to SPSS Statistics. When data was finally transferred to SPSS Statistics it was not in numeric form and required extensive reorganization and coding.

Another limitation was due to the fact that questionnaire was online and required typing, therefore many typos were found in the open-ended or "fill in" question types. Since respondents socioeconomic status (SES) was not assessed it is unknown whether SES had an impact on data scores. An apparent flaw in the data analysis is that the male to female ratio was unbalanced as the majority of respondents were females. Had there

been more male participants, a relationship between paternal infidelity and gender may have been found.

The researcher did not anticipate that this study would have nationwide and international parameters so a state and/or country selection list was not included in the survey. Due to this indiscretion, the survey has a biased item that prompts participants to check off, "How long they have lived in the United States". Fortunately there was an "other, please specify" option and participants from other countries were able to note that they had never lived in the United States and some provided their country of origin/residence.

Demographically, it would have been informative to know the percentage of participants who lived in California in relation to those from other states.

An important tool to view the study limitations from the participants' perspective was the optional "comment page" at the end of the survey. After reviewing the comments the researcher learned that some participants were confused by some of the items on the *Extradyadic/Unfaithful Beliefs List* in particular some were uncertain how to differentiate "kiss" from "passionately kiss", to clarify this one might use

"close-mouthed kiss or peck" and "open mouthed or French kiss".

Recommendations for Social Work
Practice, Policy and Research

Extradyadic infidelity is a widespread challenge for clinical social workers because it produces a ripple effect that reaches the entire family system (Greene, 2006). For this reason parental infidelity is a topic that warrants micro and macro attention.

Future research should be conducted with a statistically significant sample size in order to produce generalizable findings. Longitudinal as well as cross sectional studies should be conducted to provide an accurate synopsis of the far reaching affects of infidelity within families. This topic can be expanded upon with an investigation on the societal factors involved with the prevalence of infidelity in the United States. New areas of infidelity research could examine non-heterosexual relationships and parental infidelity within other minority populations (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). The institutions of marriage and family in American society require immediate reexamination.

Parental infidelity often co-occurs with parental conflict and subsequent divorce or family dissolution. So far a handful of researchers have found that parental infidelity is negatively associated with the well-being of children (Kioski, 2001). Treatment models for infidelity within families are not implemented on a large scale in counseling clinics. Clinical therapists need to know how to address parental infidelity with children in a developmentally appropriate manner. It is vital that social workers work with individuals and families within the theoretical framework of person in the environment in order to counteract fundamental attribution error.

Conclusions

This study was designed to increase awareness on the special topic of parental infidelity and children. Many improvements to the survey design and participant pooling strategies could be made to create an updated replication of this study. The construction of reliable and applicable measures would greatly benefit the accuracy of data analysis. Despite limitations this study yielded several statistically significant findings but research questions could be sharpened to produce more meaningful

and topic specific results. It is hoped that this study will inspire others to explore and expand upon research on the impact of parental infidelity.

APPENDIX A

ATTITUDES TOWARD INFIDELITY: QUESTIONNAIRE

Informed Consent

The online study you are being asked to participate is on infidelity in committed relationships and is being conducted by Nicole Paredes under the supervision of Dr. Pa Der Vang, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study was approved on February 16, 2010 by the Social Work Human Subjects Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino by: Dr. Janet Chang, IRB Member/IRB Chair of Social Work IRB Committee. Dr. Chang can be contacted via email at jchang@csusb.edu.

DESCRIPTION: The online survey contains questions about past relationships and family history. You will be asked to share your perspectives on topics like infidelity, marriage, and divorce. You will also be asked background questions (i.e. age, gender, ethnicity, etc.)

PARTICIPATION: Participation is completely voluntary. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

DURATION: This study will be available until April 1, 2010 at 12:00 am. The questionnaire may take anywhere from 30-60 minutes to complete and you will be able to save your data and return to the survey as needed. Upon completion, you can enter a drawing for a 1 of 3 \$50 gift cards. Contact information for the drawing will NOT be linked to your questionnaire responses.

RISKS: You might experience emotional distress due to the personal nature of some of the questions. In case you do, a list of agencies and contact information will be provided in the debriefing statement.

BENEFITS: This questionnaire might offer you insight pertaining to your relationships and family upbringing. Results may affect the way therapists approach infidelity in families.

REQUIREMENTS: You must be 18 and older to participate in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Although, Internet communications can be insecure, your data will be encrypted through SurveyMonkey. All records from this study will be kept in a password-protected computer. As an alternative you can print out a copy of the survey and mail it at the address given below with no return address on the envelope.

RESULTS: The results of this study will be available in the Pfau Library, California State University, San Bernardino after September 2010.

CONTACT: If you have questions please contact Dr. Pa Der Vang, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407, (909) 537-3775, email: pvang@csusb.edu. You can also email me at: paren300@csusb.edu

1. Clicking on the "I agree" option below to indicates that you have read this form and understand the information above. By clicking on the "I agree" option, you are providing an online signature for your consent to participate in the study.

I agree

I decline

Exit Survey

Thank-you for considering participating in this survey. Please exit the browser and have a nice day!

Exit Survey B

Thank-you for considering participating in this survey. Please exit the browser and have a nice day!

Demographic Information

2. How did you hear about this study? (i.e.: flyer, Facebook, etc.) If source was a psychological research website please specify which one.

3. Which gender do you identify yourself as?

Male

Female

Other (please specify)

4. How old are you?

5. How many children do you have? (Use numbers only) (no children=0).

6. What is your ethnic/racial background? (Please check all that apply)

African American/ Black

European American/White

Middle Eastern

Asian

Mexican/Hispanic

Native American

Other (please specify)

7. How many years have you resided in the United States?

All of my life

I was born in another country but raised in the U.S.

5 years or less

1 year or less

Other (please specify)

8. Which political party do you associate yourself with?

- Republican
- Democrat
- Green Party
- Libertarian Party
- Independent
- Other (please specify)

9. In general, how liberal or conservative would you say you are?

- extremely liberal
- very liberal
- somewhat liberal
- neutral
- somewhat conservative
- very conservative
- extremely conservative

10. Which religious affiliations do you belong to? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christianity | <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catholicism | <input type="checkbox"/> Scientology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Islam | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual (do not prescribe to a particular religion) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Judaism | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

Other (please specify)

11. On a scale of 1-5 how religious do you consider yourself?

- 1: not religious at all
- 2: somewhat religious
- 3: moderately religious
- 4: very religious
- 5: extremely religious

12. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- GED Bachelor's Degree
 Trade School Certificate Postgraduate Student
 Associate's Degree Master's Degree
 Undergraduate Student Doctorate's Degree

Other (please specify)

13. What is your sexual orientation? (Please select one)

- Heterosexual
 Homosexual
 Bisexual
 Asexual (People who do not experience sexual attraction)

14. What is your present relationship status? (Select one response)

- Single Casual dating Exclusive dating Living together Engaged not living together Engaged and living together Married Divorced

15. If married or in an committed relationship, how long have you been with your current partner? (Select one response)

Attitudes

16. Please select the statement that most relates to your attitude regarding the sexes.

- I feel more comfortable in the company of males.
 I feel more comfortable in the company of females.
 I feel equally comfortable in the company of males and females.

17. Please choose the statement that best describes your stance.

- In general, men are more intelligent than women.
 In general, women are more intelligent than men.
 In general, men and women have equal capacities for intelligence.

18. How many romantic relationships have you been involved in? (Select one response)

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> None | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 6 |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 7 or more |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 5 | |

19. What is the length of your longest romantic relationship? (Select one response)

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than 6 months | <input type="radio"/> 2 to 3 years | <input type="radio"/> 5 to 6 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 6 months to 1 year | <input type="radio"/> 3 to 4 years | <input type="radio"/> 6 to 7 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 to 2 years | <input type="radio"/> 4 to 5 years | <input type="radio"/> More than 7 years |

Family views

20. How do you feel about having children?

- Excited and can't wait to have children
- I want children someday but not anytime soon
- Mixed feelings/unsure
- No interest in having children
- Other (please specify)

21. Please choose the statement that most closely relates to how you feel about marriage.

- Marriage is a legal contract between two people and is based on mutual interest and security.
- Marriage is an institution that is in decay and is not ideal for most people.
- Marriage should be based on love between two individuals.
- The purpose of the marital union is to rear children.

22. Rank each category in terms of level of influence shaping your views on marriage. Assign the number 1 to your primary influence and the number 5 to the least important influence.

	Family	The Media (i.e. television, movies, Internet, magazines, etc.)	Religious/spiritual beliefs	Friends	Coworkers
1 Primary influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5 Least important influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. (If not married imagine that you are) Under what conditions might you consider divorce? (Select all that apply)

- If I was extremely unhappy with my marriage for a long period of time
- If my partner was physically or mentally abusive toward me
- If my partner had an affair
- If my partner and I grew apart
- If I no longer loved my spouse
- If my partner and I argued constantly
- I would never consider divorce under any circumstances
- Other (please specify)

24. Rank each category in terms of level of influence shaping your views on divorce. Assign the number 1 to your primary influence and the number 5 to the least important influence.

	Family	The Media (i.e. television, movies, Internet, magazines, etc.)	Religious/spiritual beliefs	Friends	Coworkers
1 Primary influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5 Least important influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Infidelity

Please answer the following questions with as thoroughly or succinctly as you like.

The deadline to complete this survey is April 1, 2010 at 12 am

25. How do you feel about infidelity?

26. Can you identify any factors that shaped your thoughts about infidelity?

Knowledge of Parents' relationship

To the best of your recollection, please answer the following questions pertaining to your parents' relationship and your family upbringing.

27. Which parent did you share a stronger bond with?

- My mother
- My father
- My bond with my mother was just as strong as my bond with my father
- I did not share a close bond with either of my parents
- Not applicable

28. Did your parents marry one another?

- Yes, before I was born
- Yes, after I was born
- No, they never married but they lived together
- No, they never married and never lived together

Parental relationship happiness

29. If they married/cohabited, how happy do you think your parents' marriage/relationship was overall?

- 1
Completely
happy
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
Completely
unhappy

Divorced/Separated Parents

30. Did your parents ever divorce/permanently separate (from) one another?

- Yes
 No

Impact of Divorce

31. How old were you when your parents divorced/permanently separated? (Please enter a 1 or 2 digit number)

32. How much stigma did you feel as a result of your parents divorce/permanent separation?

- None
 Minimal
 Moderate
 A large amount

Impact of Divorce cont.

33. How many biological older and younger siblings do you have? (Use numbers only)

Older
Younger

34. Did either parent remarry?

- Yes, my mother did
 Yes, my father did
 Yes, both of my parents did
 No

35. How many step-siblings (with whom you share one parent by marriage) and how many half-siblings (with whom you share one biological parent) do you have?

step-siblings
half-siblings

Family Types

36. For how many years while you were growing up (to age 18) did you live in each of the following types of families (answer each category using 0-18)?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| One-parent because of divorce | <input type="text"/> |
| One-parent because a parent had died | <input type="text"/> |
| One-parent for another reason | <input type="text"/> |
| Both biological parents | <input type="text"/> |
| An adoptive family | <input type="text"/> |
| Relatives | <input type="text"/> |

Parental Infidelity

*Note: An affair is defined as having an emotional and/or sexual relationship with someone other than your partner.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. They relate to your parents relationship in terms of when your parents were married and or living together. If your parents were never "together" then choose the option that states your mother/father was not involved in an affair.

37. Regarding your parents relationship:

- My mother was not involved in an affair
- I suspect my mother was involved in an affair but am not certain
- I am confident that my mother was involved in an affair

38. Regarding your parents relationship:

- My father was not involved in an affair
- I suspect my father was involved in an affair but am not certain
- I am confident my father was involved in an affair

39. If applicable, how old were you when first suspected an affair in your parents' relationship?

40. To the best of your knowledge:

- I believe my mother has had one affair
- I believe my father has had one affair
- I believe my mother has had multiple affairs
- I believe my father has had multiple affairs
- Not applicable

Parental Infidelity II

41. If applicable, what was your reaction to the affair?

42. If applicable, did your feelings toward your parents change as a result of your discovery of the affair? Please explain.

43. If either/both of your parents engaged in an affair during their marriage/relationship, what was the eventual outcome?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My parents have not had an affair, to the best of my knowledge. | <input type="checkbox"/> My parents separated and it had nothing to do with the affair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My parents divorced and it was probably due to the affair | <input type="checkbox"/> My parents stayed together and worked things out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My parents separated and it was probably due to the affair | <input type="checkbox"/> My parents stayed together and ignored the affair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My parents divorced and it had nothing to do with the affair | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |

Sociosexual Orientation Inventory

Please answer all of the following questions honestly.

Deadline to complete survey is April 1, 2010 at 12 am

44. Rate the following statements according to how much you agree with statement using a scale 1-9. 1=indicates that you strongly disagree and 9=indicates you strongly agree.

Sex without love is OK.

I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying "casual" sex with different partners.

I would have to be closely attached to someone (both emotionally and physically) before I could feel fully comfortable having sex with them.

45. How old were you when you first had sexual intercourse?

I have not yet had sexual intercourse

Age

Sociosexual Orientation Inventory cont.

46. Have you ever knowingly engaged in a "non-platonic" relationship with someone who was already involved in a "committed relationship"?

No

Yes

Other (please explain)

47. Have you ever entered a romantic relationship only to find out that your partner was already involved in a "committed relationship" with another person?

No

Yes

Other (please explain)

48. Have you ever been involved in a relationship with someone who was "unfaithful" to you?

- I have not been involved in a serious relationship yet.
- Not that I know of.
- I suspected it before with one partner.
- I suspected it before with more than one partner.
- Yes, I experienced that with one partner.
- Yes, more than one partner has been unfaithful to me.
- Other (please specify)

Extradyadic Sexual Permissiveness Scale Part A.

Answer in terms of your personal values concerning what you would accept in a "happy committed relationship" under the conditions stated. If you are not currently in a committed relationship answer in terms of a possible future committed relationship.

"Extradyadic" is a term that refers to an intimate relationship that occurs OUTSIDE of a committed relationship.

49. Please be honest as you answer the following questions. Imagine that you are in a "happy committed relationship".

Would you accept
extradyadic sexual
intercourse in which
Physical Pleasure is
your focus if your
mate would accept
your having this type
of relationship?

Would you accept
extradyadic sexual
intercourse in which
Love is emphasized
even though your
mate would NOT
accept your having
such a relationship?

Would you accept
extradyadic sexual
intercourse in which
Love is emphasized if
your mate would
accept your having
this type of
relationship?

Extradyadic Sexual Permissiveness Scale Part B.

Answer in terms of your personal values concerning what you would accept in an "unhappy committed relationship" under the conditions stated. If you are not currently in a committed relationship answer in terms of a possible future committed relationship.

Remember: "Extradyadic" is a term that refers to an intimate relationship that occurs OUTSIDE of a committed relationship.

50. Please be honest when answering the below questions. Imagine that you are in an "unhappy committed relationship".

Would you accept
extradyadic sexual
intercourse in which
Physical Pleasure is
your focus if your
mate would accept
your having this type
of relationship?

Would you accept
extradyadic sexual
intercourse in which
Love is emphasized
even though your
mate would NOT
accept your having
such a relationship?

Would you accept
extradyadic sexual
intercourse in which
Love is emphasized if
your mate would
accept your having
this type of
relationship?

51. If currently involved in an committed relationship, do you feel that it's closer to a "happy" relationship or an "unhappy" relationship?

- I am not currently involved in a committed relationship.
- Closer to "happy"
- Closer to "unhappy"

Extradyadic Behaviours List/Unfaithful Beliefs List

This list is about some behaviors associated with relationships outside your main relationship. If you are not currently involved in an committed relationship then imagine that you are or you can base your responses using a previous committed relationship.

The researcher would like to know: (a) Have you ever engaged in the following behaviors with someone other than your current primary partner? (b) Would you ever engage in the following behaviors with someone other than your primary partner?

Deadline to complete survey is April 1, 2010 at 12 am

52. What will you base your responses on for the following measurement?

- Current relationship
- Past relationship
- I will be imagining that I am in a committed relationship.

53. Please be honest as you check off which behaviors you have engaged in and those that you would engage in with someone outside of a committed relationship. Also specify which behaviors you consider to be "unfaithful" or "not unfaithful".

	Have you ever done this?	Would you ever do this?	Do you think this is an unfaithful behavior?
1. Slow dance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Fast dance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Casually flirt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Ask someone out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Go on a date	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Hold hands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Go to lunch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Go to dinner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Go to a movie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Have mild romantic feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Fall in love	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Develop a deep romantic attachment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Fantasize about falling in love	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Become sexually attracted to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Fantasize about engaging in sexual play	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Fantasize about having sexual intercourse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Fantasize about receiving oral sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Fantasize about giving oral sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Kiss	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Passionately kiss	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. Engage in sexual play	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
22. Give oral sex	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
23. Receive oral sex	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
24. Engage In sexual intercourse	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
25. Have a long term sexual relationship	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Comment Page

54. You have completed all of the survey questions! Please take a moment to reflect on the questionnaire in its entirety. Is there anything you would like to share, add, or comment on at this moment? (If not, you may skip this segment and move on to the debriefing page).

Thank-you for participating!

Debriefing Statement:

The study you have just completed was created to explore any differences in attitudes toward infidelity between individuals who became aware of parental infidelity as children and those who did not. The researcher was interested in whether or not there will be a significant difference in attitudes between these two groups, in particular to determine if the parental infidelity group will be more accepting or condemning of infidelity. The researcher will also examine independent variables such as participant: gender, level of religiosity, political party, ethnicity, and age in relation to attitudes toward infidelity. It is hoped that these findings will help social workers, clinicians, and psychotherapists understand the potential impact that parental infidelity can have on children. If nothing else, the researcher hopes that this study will raise awareness of this commonly overlooked social phenomenon.

Thank-you so much for participating! Your input has helped to make this study possible. Please do not discuss the content of this questionnaire with prospective participants. If you feel uncomfortable or distressed as a result of participating in this study please contact a mental health provider or counseling services agency. The Psychological Counseling Center (PCC) serves Cal State San Bernardino students and can be contacted at (909) 537-5040. If you have questions about this study please contact Professor Pa Der Vang at (909) 537-3775, email: pvang@csusb.edu. The results of this study are expected to be available by Fall 2010 in the Pfau Library at California State University San Bernardino 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407.

If you would like to add your contact information to enter a drawing to win one of three \$50 gift cards, please click on the link and you will be directed to another page. Your contact information will not be connected to your online questionnaire data. If you do not wish to enter the drawing you can submit your questionnaire responses by clicking the "Done" button located at the end of this page. [Click Here to take survey](#)

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The online study you are being asked to participate is on infidelity in committed relationships and is being conducted by Nicole Paredes under the supervision of Dr. Pa Der Vang, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Social Work Human Subjects Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

DESCRIPTION: The online survey contains questions about past relationships and family history. You will be asked to share your perspectives on topics like infidelity, marriage, and divorce. You will also be asked background questions (i.e. age, gender, ethnicity, etc.)

PARTICIPATION: Participation is completely voluntary. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

DURATION: The questionnaire may take anywhere from 30-60 minutes to complete and you will be able to save your data and return to the survey as needed. Upon completion, you can enter a drawing for a 1 of 3 \$50 gift cards. Contact information for the drawing will NOT be linked to your questionnaire responses.

RISKS: You might experience emotional distress due to the personal nature of some of the questions. In case you do, a list of agencies and contact information will be provided in the debriefing statement.

BENEFITS: This questionnaire might offer you insight pertaining to your relationships and family upbringing. Results may affect the way therapists approach infidelity in families.

REQUIREMENTS: You must be 18 and older to participate in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Although, Internet communications can be insecure, your data will be encrypted through SurveyMonkey. All records from this study will be kept in a password-protected computer. As an alternative you can print out a copy of the survey and mail it at the address given below with no return address on the envelope.

RESULTS: The results of this study will be available in the Pfau Library, California State University, San Bernardino after September 2010.

CONTACT: If you have questions please contact Dr. Pa Der Vang, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407, (909) 537-3775, email: pvang@csusb.edu. You can also email me at: paren300@csusb.edu

Please check one box to note whether you agree to the terms of this study:

I agree I decline

APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

The study you have just completed was created to explore any differences in attitudes toward infidelity between individuals who became aware of parental infidelity as children and those who did not. The researcher was interested in whether or not there will be a significant difference in attitudes between these two groups, in particular to determine if the parental infidelity group will be more accepting or condemning of infidelity. The researcher will also examine independent variables such as participant: gender, level of religiousness, political party, ethnicity, and age in relation to attitudes toward infidelity. It is hoped that these findings will help social workers, clinicians, and psychotherapists understand the potential impact that parental infidelity can have on children. If nothing else, the researcher hopes that this study will raise awareness of this commonly overlooked social phenomenon.

Thank-you so much for participating! Your input has helped to make this study possible. Please do not discuss the content of this questionnaire with prospective participants. If you feel uncomfortable or distressed as a result of participating in this study please contact a mental health provider or counseling services agency. The Psychological Counseling Center (PCC) serves Cal State San Bernardino students and can be contacted at (909) 537-5040. If you have questions about this study please contact Professor Pa Der Vang at (909) 537-3775, email: pvang@csusb.edu. The results of this study are expected to be available by Fall 2010 in the Pfau Library at California State University San Bernardino 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407.

APPENDIX D
STUDY FLYER

Online Survey Announcement

Participants Needed!!!

Individuals 18 years and older are needed for participation in an online survey on infidelity.

It is estimated that the survey may take anywhere between 30-60 minutes to complete depending on how much you share.

At the end of the survey, you will be given the option to enter a drawing to win one of three \$50 gift cards.

If you are interested, please go to the link below to learn more and access the survey. Study will be available online until April 1, 2010.

[Click here to take survey](#)

You can also contact me at paren300@csusb.edu

Thank-You for your time,

Nicole Paredes
MSW Student
School of Social Work
California State University San Bernardino

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