

**Affairs of the Heart: Gender, Personality,
Religiosity and Parental Relationship History as
Predictors of Infidelity**

Suzanne Hughes

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Supervisor: Dr. John Hyland

Head of Department: Dr. Sinead Eccles

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Department of Psychology

DBS School of Arts

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1. Abstract

Using a correlational design, the study aimed to identify predictors of infidelity and whether religiosity could inhibit infidelity. A convenience sample of 110 part-time DBS students (57 male, 53 female) with a mean age of 30.86 years ($SD = 5.99$) completed questionnaires measuring infidelity (Infidelity Scale), attitudes to sexual versus emotional infidelity, narcissism (NPI-16), conscientiousness (Big Five), religiosity (FSAC) and parental relationship history. Statistical analysis (SPSS) found no gender differences in rates of infidelity and attitudes to sexual versus emotional infidelity. Infidelity was associated with narcissism but not conscientiousness or religiosity. An association between infidelity and knowledge of parental cheating and unhappy parental relationship was found in males, but not females. In conclusion, some of the hypotheses were supported but religiosity was not identified as a buffer to infidelity. Interestingly, males are possibly more vulnerable to the effects of parental relationships than females, when it comes to engaging in infidelity.

2. Introduction

Infidelity is defined as a betrayal of the couple's agreement about sexual involvement and romantic entanglement outside their relationship (Pittman & Wagers, 2005). Infidelity undermines honesty and trust which is integral to any successful relationship. Estimates of the rates of infidelity vary. Laumann, Gagnon, Michael & Michaels (1994) found 24.5% of males and 15% of females reported ever having experienced extramarital sex. However, Wiederman (1997) found slightly lower respective percentages of 22.7% and 11.6%. There is significant evidence to show infidelity can have devastating effects such as increased risk of depression and suicide in either one or both partners (Snyder, Balderrama-Durbin, & Fissette, 2012). Many therapists view infidelity as being one of the most difficult problems to treat in couples counselling (Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997) and some couple therapists estimate that up to 50-56% of couples are in therapy in the first place as a result of infidelity (Glass & Wright, 1988). Infidelity is also the most common cause of divorce (Betzig, 1989; Amato & Previti, 2003).

Research suggests different responses to partner infidelity, men have greater feelings of anger which can result in violence, particularly toward the male third party, whereas women are more likely to feel shock and blame themselves (Miller & Maner, 2008). Additionally, the link between male's sexual proprietary can be a precipitating factor in wife killings (Wilson & Daly, 1996). Weir (1992) conducted a study in Ireland which found gender differences in the perceived justification for murder due to infidelity. Females were more punitive than males in assigning prison sentences, and married participants and those with families considered the act of killing in the face of infidelity to be more justified than their single or childless counterparts. In summary, infidelity can have serious consequences such as risk of depression, suicide, violence, divorce and the

damaging effects of divorce on children. In recent years Ireland has seen an increase in depression, suicide (particularly in young males), divorce and one in four women will experience domestic violence at some stage in their lives. While infidelity is not the sole cause for these events and numerous factors should be taken into consideration, previous research has indicated these events can be a consequence of infidelity. Due to the prospective wide-reaching negative effects of infidelity, psychological research is beneficial not just to individuals and families but to society as a whole. Therefore, this research will carry out a correlational survey in a sample population of Ireland, using psychological measures to identify possible predictors of infidelity.

2.1 *Gender differences*

Previous research has found that there are a number of factors that may influence infidelity. Gender is arguably one of the most studied variables in infidelity. Due to societal double-standards cheating behaviour in men is seen as more acceptable than in women and men have more permissive attitudes towards cheating (Yeniçeri & Kökdemir, 2006; Hunyady Josephs, & Jost 2008; Wilson, Mattingly, Clark, Weidler, & Bequette, 2011). The majority of previous research has found that men engage in infidelity much more than women (Seal Agostinelli, & Hannett, 1994; Greeley, 1994; Allen & Baucom, 2004; Lewandowski Jr., & Ackerman, 2006; Boğda & Şendil, 2012). Furthermore, men report a larger number of infidelities (Lawson & Samson, 1988) and are more interested in infidelity in general (Buunk & Bakker, 1995). However, some evidence suggests there is a narrowing gap in infidelity rates between the sexes as evidenced in younger samples (Wiederman, 1997; Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Brand, Markey, Mills, & Hodges, 2007). This is perhaps due to changes in attitudes in modern society and the influence of media. It is important to identify if gender is a variable in infidelity, as this may have implications for individual's perceptions

of infidelity. As this study will be carried out in Ireland, which could arguably be seen as a traditional country in terms of attitudes to sex, it therefore expects to replicate the findings of the majority of previous research that males are more likely to engage in infidelity than females. Previous research also suggests that gender plays an important role in how different types of infidelity are perceived.

2.2 *Gender attitudes to sexual versus emotional infidelity*

The majority of previous research reports that males are more likely than females to engage in sexual infidelity, while females are more likely to engage in emotional infidelity (Glass & Wright, 1985; Spanier & Margolis, 1983). Much evidence exists to suggest that there are gender differences in reactions to sexual versus emotional infidelity. Previous research in Northern Ireland by Whitty & Quigley (2008) found that males, when forced to decide, were more upset by sexual infidelity and females by emotional infidelity. This research supports the findings of the original study by Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth (1992) which found that a majority of males (60%) were more distressed by sexual infidelity whereas a majority of females (83%) were more distressed by emotional infidelity using a forced-choice question. Using a framework of parental investment theory (Trivers, 1972) evolutionary theorists (Buss et al., 1992; Kenrick & Keefe, 1992) accounted for these sex differences as males face more risk than females when a partner commits sexual infidelity because it predicts an increased risk of paternal uncertainty. However, females face more risk if their partner commits emotional infidelity as they may redirect their resources towards someone else, which would result in the female and/or her offspring losing out on financial and emotional support. The research by Brand et al., (2007) claimed that when using a broad definition of cheating, females reported being as unfaithful, or more unfaithful, than males. Females are more likely to end their relationships following cheating in a type of “trading up”

scenario if they feel that the person they are cheating with is a better prospect than their current partner. This suggests support for the evolutionary type theory with regards to reasons for cheating. Other studies have used Likert scales to rate reactions to both types of infidelity and again gender differences were found. Sex differences in physiological reactions to the two types of infidelity found in the original Buss et al., (1992) were replicated by Pietrzak, Laird, Stevens, & Thompson (2002).

Sex differences are also evident in feelings of guilt following infidelity, with males feeling guiltier over imagined sexual infidelity and females feeling guiltier over imagined emotional infidelity (Fisher, Voracek, Rekkas, & Cox, 2008). These findings suggest that the type of infidelity each sex feels guiltier about depends on a type of faulty logic of what they themselves perceive as being the more distressful type of infidelity (i.e. sexual for males and emotional for females). The study also reported that both sexes believe their partners would have a more difficult time forgiving sexual, rather than emotional infidelity. The study suggests that females, more than males, report that their sexual infidelity would be more likely to lead to a break-up as they are aware of the importance that men put on sexual loyalty. Whereas males are aware that sexual infidelity may not necessarily lead to a break-up compared to emotional infidelity, which suggests that they are aware of the importance females place on emotional loyalty. This view is supported in that females are less likely to finish a relationship over a husband's infidelity (Betzig, 1989) but males are more likely than females to perceive sexual infidelity as reason for divorce (Shackelford, 1998).

Treger & Sprecher (2011) indicates an alternative to the evolutionary theory and proposes the double-shot hypothesis, which argues differences in how males and females perceive infidelity are due to differences in socialisation. These differences in socialisation

are explained as females may think males can have sex without being emotionally involved, so females become more distressed by emotional infidelity as sexual infidelity only implies casual sex. Whereas males may think females only have sex if they are also in love, therefore males become more distressed by sexual infidelity (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996; Whitty & Quigley, 2008).

Harris & Christenfeld (1996) criticise Buss et al., (1996) for ignoring the power of rational thought in gender differences in jealousy and argue that the majority of both genders are more disturbed by emotional infidelity. Another criticism of the evolutionary theory is the use of forced-format questions. Harris (2003) argues this method means that when participants, are faced with two equally distressing options, but forced to choose only one, they will answer in a random and haphazard manner. A study by DeSteno, Bartlett, Braverman, & Salovey (2002) found that sex differences only arise when using forced format measures, and that when other measures are used no sex differences were found; both men and women reported greater jealousy in response to sexual infidelity. A second study revealed that sex differences on the forced-choice measure disappeared under conditions of cognitive constraint.

When Green & Sabini (2006) tested the evolutionary hypothesis that males would be more bothered by sexual infidelity and females by emotional infidelity, they found that forced-choice items provided support for their alternative view; both genders showed more anger and blame over sexual infidelity but more hurt feelings over emotional infidelity. Continuous measures indicated more emotional response to sexual than emotional infidelity among both genders. Recent evidence provided by Lishner, Nguyen, Stocks, & Zillmer (2008) who expanded the forced choice allowing participants a third option, found that a

majority of both males and females chose that both types of infidelity are equally distressing (70% of males and (62%) of females, however, those who didn't select the third option, supported the evolutionary theory in that more males (15%) than females (5%) selected sexual infidelity as more distressing but more females (33%) than males (15%) selected emotional infidelity as more distressing.

There is a large body of support for the evolutionary view that males are more distressed by sexual infidelity and females are more distressed by emotional infidelity. However, alternative viewpoints in the literature have found this finding to be inconsistent, particularly when using non-forced question method. Therefore, in order to address the inconsistencies between traditional and alternative methods, this study will use a third choice option, similar to Lishner et al., (2008) which allows participants to select that they find both types of infidelity equally distressing. This study expects to replicate the findings of Lishner et al., (2008) that both males and females will find both types of infidelity equally distressing. Additionally, regardless of gender, the role personality plays in infidelity should be explored to identify if certain personality traits can be linked to unfaithful behaviour.

2.3 *Personality traits narcissism and conscientiousness*

Research indicates there are certain personality traits that are associated with infidelity. In a study of newly married couples Buss & Shackelford (1997) found that relatively high susceptibility to infidelity was correlated with high narcissism. Traditionally, narcissists tend to be more permissive towards sexual infidelity in general, evidence shows that narcissism is positively associated with the likelihood of having affairs, the number of partners cheated on, and (for women but not men) the likelihood of being cheated on (Hunyady, Josephs, & Jost, 2008). Narcissists are more likely to be focused on themselves

and their own needs and desires and therefore more likely to be involved in an affair (Atkins, Yi, Baucom, & Christensen, 2005). As a personality characteristic narcissism involves an egocentric lack of empathy for others and romantic attraction is, in part, the result of a strategy for enhancing self-esteem (Campbell, 1999). Research by Buss & Shackelford (1997) also showed that one of the personality factors most strongly linked to susceptibility to infidelity was low conscientiousness. Schmitt (2004) indicates that low conscientiousness can result in sexual risk-taking and was associated with higher levels of relationship infidelity across all cultures for both males and females. Orzeck & Lung (2005) found that when measuring the Big-Five personality traits it found that non-cheaters had higher mean rating scores on conscientiousness. The evidence is probably not surprising that a person who is low in conscientiousness might be incapable of consistently contributing to the demands of a romantic relationship. They may be liable to take the “easy way out” and not be too concerned about the effects their behaviour would have on the relationship.

As there is not a large body of research to support that narcissism and conscientiousness plays a role in infidelity, further research is warranted. In the study by Buss & Shackelford (1997) the participants were newly married couples, whereas this study aims to have participants with a wide range of relationship statuses. This study aims to contribute to the existing research and expects to find that those who score high on the personality traits narcissism and low on conscientiousness are more likely to engage in infidelity. In terms of personality, one of the earliest theories was the psychodynamic theory, which focused on unconscious internal conflicts, specifically the repression of sexual instincts.

2.4 *Psychoanalytic perspective*

There may be reluctance to address infidelity from a psychoanalytic point of view as it is difficult to provide scientific research to support psychoanalytic theories. However, due to the potential unconscious motivations for engaging in infidelity, it is reasonable to refer to psychoanalysis when referring to interpersonal behaviour. Previously, Whitty & Carr (2005) have drawn on Klein's object-relations theory in addressing the effects of cyber-cheating on couples. Furthermore, Westen (1998) argues that an enormous body of research in cognitive, social, developmental, and personality psychology now supports many psychoanalytic propositions. Many experiments support psychoanalytical concepts such as unconscious motivations (Eagle, Wolitzky, & Klein, 1966; Erdelyi, 1984; Silverman, 1976, 1982; Weinberger, 1992; Patton, 1992; Gerard, Kupper, & Nguyen, 1993; Bargh, 1997, as cited in Cervone & Pervin, 2008). However, there have also been criticisms of the methodology of some experiments and the effects have been difficult to replicate (Balay & Shevrin, 1998, 1989; Holender, 1986, as cited in Cervone & Pervin, 2008).

One of the central concepts in psychoanalysis, the oedipal complex was referred to by Freud as the "nucleus of the neuroses". Due to the oedipal complex, the first incidence of infidelity is experienced when the child views its mother/father's behaviour with the same sex parent as being unfaithful to them. Lachmann (2010) argues that after considering clinical and historical evidence, the concept of the universal unconscious fantasy of the oedipal complex is not substantiated. However, research by Bhugra & Bhui (2002) found that some components of the oedipal crisis exist in some cultures more than others. By using a voice therapy session, Firestone (2004) illustrated that a young man was identifying with his aggressor, namely his father's resentful feelings towards his son. Firestone says these unresolved oedipal issues in a family can affect young people at risk for suicide. As

previously mentioned, the issue of suicide (particularly in young males) has been a difficult problem in Irish society in recent years. Therefore, further research is necessary to investigate if oedipal issues contribute to relationship difficulties which may or may not include the behaviour of infidelity. Additionally, experiments using subliminal stimuli to activate oedipal conflicts and an alternative study by researchers from differing theoretical backgrounds concluded that oedipal behaviours do coincide with the psychoanalytic view of oedipal behaviour (as Silverman et al., 1978; Watson & Getz, 1990, as cited in Cervone & Pervin, 2008).

In adulthood, those that have been unfaithful may transfer their oedipal feelings onto the cuckolded spouse and unjustly perceive them as the hostile and controlling interferer who gets in the way of their desires being satisfied. Therefore, psychoanalytically speaking, infidelity may be linked to a revenge fantasy that originated from the oedipal complex. Evidence for the betrayal trauma associated with the primal scene (the child's real or imagined perception of the parent's sexual relationship) was found in an experiment that revealed a priming technique reactivated unconscious memories of the oedipal situation (Hunyady et al, 2008). Individuals, especially males and narcissistic personality types were more likely to become prohibitive towards sexual infidelity after priming had occurred which allowed them to identify and empathise with the victim of betrayal (Hunyady et al., 2008). Hunyady et al., (2008) also found that the occurrence of parental cheating behaviour is positively associated with the likelihood of the person cheating themselves, and among daughters (but not sons) a history of parental cheating is associated with increased narcissism and the likelihood of being cheated on. A possible explanation is knowledge of parental cheating leads the daughter to consciously or unconsciously expect infidelity to occur in their own romantic relationships, which could lead them to engage in self-fulfilling prophecy

behaviour. Ultimately, whether the child identifies with the perpetrator of the infidelity or the victim depends on the gender of the child, how the issue was handled and what the consequences were in the family (Vangelisti & Gerstenberger, 2004). An individual who is also high in narcissism may find it more difficult to deal with the “narcissistic scar” that results from the betrayal in the oedipal situation, and as a consequence they may unconsciously identify with the “cheating parent” and in order to compensate for their “narcissistic scar” they act in revenge, betraying others, as they themselves felt betrayed (Hunyady et al., 2008).

Research shows that individuals who reported their parents as conflictual had a more negative view of self and others and additionally adult children who had knowledge of their father’s infidelity were more likely to engage in infidelity than adult children without such knowledge (Platt, Nalbone, Casanova, & Wetchler, 2008). Due to the reticence of some researchers to include psychoanalytic features in their studies, it is important that this study contribute to previous research. As previously mentioned, the consequences of infidelity are frequently dealt with in couple’s therapy and infidelity is the most common reason for couples being in therapy in the first place. Therefore, as individuals seek psychoanalytic help after the occurrence of infidelity, arguably it would be beneficial if the psychoanalytic perspective was engaged prior to this. Hence, this study aims to include a measure which expects to find that those who perceived their own parents relationship as unhappy or were aware of parental cheating will be more likely to have engaged in infidelity themselves. Therefore, parental relationships may influence individual’s behaviour in their own relationships later in life. Therefore, it would be beneficial to identify factors that could enhance parental relationships and provide a buffer to infidelity. Previous research suggests that religiosity is a factor in happy marriages and should be taken into account in attitudes

and behaviour relating to infidelity. Therefore, due to the damaging consequences of infidelity, it is important that psychological research is carried out to see if factors such as religiosity inhibit infidelity.

2.5 *Religiosity*

Research by Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson (2001) found that participants who reported being “very happy” in their marriages showed a strong effect of religious behaviour. Some studies show that religiosity was significantly and negatively correlated with infidelity, therefore it could act as a restraint (Whisman, Gordon, & Chatav, 2007; Lambert & Dollahite, 2006; Plack, Kröger, Allen, Baucom, & Hahlweg, 2010). Allen, Rhoades, Stanley, Markman, Williams, Melton & Clements (2008) carried out a longitudinal study of married couples and found that couples where males engaged in infidelity were also characterised by lower male and female religiosity. In a paper titled “Religion and Obsessional Neurosis” Gallagher (1996) highlights the similarity between obsessional neurosis and religion by referring to Freud’s case study of the Rat Man which illustrates the conflictual nature of repressed wishes and desires struggling against morality and piety. Therefore, it’s possible that religion can be used as a defence against unconscious desires, in other words infidelity.

Research by Atkins & Kessel (2008) demonstrated that attendance, but not faith, nearness to God, prayer, and other religious attributes, are related to infidelity. The research also found that individuals with high religious importance but low attendance were more likely to have had an affair. Hong (1983) found that regular and occasional church-goers in Australia had less permissive attitudes to premarital and extramarital relations than non-attenders. It’s possible that attendance is more beneficial because it signifies that the married couple attend church service together so are therefore spending time together and have shared

religious beliefs (Atkins & Kessel, 2008). The couple may be concerned that if they did engage in infidelity there is a risk of shame and becoming ostracised from their faith community, which in turn would act as a deterrent to infidelity (Atkins & Kessel, 2008). If a couple bring their children to church, it may encourage additional family bonding such as Sunday lunch together or a family activity after the service. Therefore, pro-family behaviour may decrease the likelihood of either parent having an extra-marital involvement. Regardless of the conscious or unconscious motivations of individuals high in religiosity it is beneficial to identify possible buffers to infidelity. Therefore, despite the current turbulent attitude towards the Catholic Church in Ireland at present, as this study will be using a sample of mature students, it expects to find that those who score high on religiosity will be less likely to engage in infidelity.

2.6 *Aims and rationale of the current study*

According to Pittman & Wagers (2005) there are many reasons why people engage in infidelity, some are due to societal or cultural myths such as thinking that infidelity is normal or that “what the other person doesn’t know won’t hurt them”, or thinking that they are justified in their affair because their own marriage is unhappy, or they may feel that they have fallen in love with this another person. The reasons for engaging in infidelity are not always straightforward, as philosopher Blaise Pascal said “the heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing” could be seen as an eloquent explanation. However, due to the negative consequences of infidelity, it is more beneficial for psychological investigation to uncover the reasons for infidelity. If research can identify factors involved in infidelity, individuals and society would be better equipped to deal with the problem, and it could lead to better approaches for treating infidelity. Currently, the bulk of previous research on infidelity has been carried out in the USA. It appears the only correlational research regarding infidelity

carried out in Ireland, has been the aforementioned research by Whitty & Quigley (2008) and Weir (1992). The findings of both these studies have been outlined in the relevant sections of this introduction. Therefore, the rationale of this study is to carry out correlational research to identify predictors and possible buffers of infidelity in contemporary Ireland. A particularly interesting aim in the rationale of this study is to investigate if the findings of previous research in the USA, that religiosity acts as a buffer to infidelity, can be replicated. Traditionally Ireland has been seen as a very catholic and religious country, however, in view of recent sex abuse scandals in the Catholic Church and the on-going controversy regarding the continuing involvement of the church in matters such as abortion legislation, women in the church, contraception, gay marriage and gay adoption, it is evident there is a conflict between church and society. Therefore, considering the current misgivings Irish society is experiencing towards the church, it is an interesting component in the rationale of the present study.

Another interesting aim in the rationale of this study is to include a psychoanalytic perspective by measuring participant's likelihood to engage in infidelity if they were aware of parental cheating/unhappiness. Considering Irish conservativeness in sexual matters and that divorce was only introduced in Ireland by law in 1996, it will be interesting to investigate perceptions of sexual/love relationships in Irish families in a mature sample. In summary, the aims of this study are to investigate if the findings of previous research carried out on infidelity in the USA can be replicated in contemporary Ireland and also to improve on the methodology of the previous research in relation to participants and measures.

2.7 *Addressing the limitations of previous research*

This study anticipates improving the sample by using part-time undergraduates who will be more mature and have more life experience. Much of the previous research in the USA relied on full-time undergraduates, therefore predominantly samples of young American college students. Unlike some of the previous research, this study aims to have a very gender balanced sample, which will be beneficial in determining whether gender has a role in infidelity and whether there are gender differences in attitudes to sexual versus emotional infidelity. Another limitation of previous research was that individuals estimated whether they would engage in infidelity, whereas this study will measure actual infidelity that has occurred in a current or past relationship. Therefore, a more realistic measure of infidelity and a continuous measures model rather than forced-choice model will be used. The Infidelity scale (Drigotas, Safstrom, & Gentilia, 1999) measures emotional as well as sexual infidelity, which is very important as individuals have different opinions on what constitutes infidelity. Some previous research has only focused on sexual infidelity, specifically sexual intercourse, therefore, the present study aims to provide a robust measure of infidelity.

With regards previous research on gender attitudes to infidelity, there have been inconsistencies between the findings of the traditional forced-choice format and expanded-choice models. As a large majority of previous research has used the traditional forced-choice format, this study aims to replicate the findings of the expanded-choice measure, therefore providing additional support to the alternative measures research. Furthermore, the aim of this study is not to influence participants in one direction or another. For the choice regarding sexual infidelity the wording used in the original Buss et al., (1992) study was “Discovering that your partner is enjoying passionate sex with the other person”. Treger & Sprecher (2011) added the word “daily” in their modified measure “Discovering that your

partner is enjoying daily passionate sex with the other person”. However, this study hopes to improve on the expanded-choice measure by removing the extraneous words “daily and passionate” from the sexual infidelity choice in the measure of attitudes to sexual versus emotional infidelity. With regards measuring religiosity, previous research has either used forced choice methods to assess religiosity or provided participants with limited statements to assess religiosity. This study aims to improve upon this method by using the Francis Scale of Christianity (Francis & Stubbs, 1987) which assesses not just church attendance but other religious attributes such as prayer and closeness to Jesus/God, and therefore will be a more robust measure of religiosity.

2.8 Hypotheses

In conclusion, the variables of the current study are gender, personality traits narcissism and conscientiousness, religiosity, knowledge of parental cheating and unhappy parental relationship history. The hypotheses of the study are 1) by expanding on the forced-choice format and giving a third option, both males and females will find both sexual and emotional infidelity equally distressing. Participants who engage in infidelity are 2) more likely to be male than female, 3) will score higher in relation to those who do not on the personality trait “narcissism”, 4) will score lower in relation to those who do not on the personality trait “conscientiousness”, 5) will score lower in relation to those who do not on religiosity, 6) will have knowledge of parental cheating and 7) will have knowledge of an unhappy parental relationship.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

Participants were a non-probability, convenience sample of 110 part-time undergraduate students, (57 males, 53 females), from Dublin Business School (DBS). They were recruited by obtaining permission from two DBS lecturers to hand out questionnaires in their classes. Participants were invited to complete a battery of questionnaires regarding infidelity and attitudes to infidelity. Ages ranged from 21 years to 52 years (Mean = 30.86 years, SD = 5.99). Of all participants 29% were single, 45% were in a relationship, 25% were married and 2% identified themselves as “other” for example “engaged”. The majority 72% identified themselves as “Christian”, 25% as “no religion” and 4% as “other”.

3.2 Design

The study was a quantitative, correlational, survey design. Predictor variables were gender, personality traits narcissism and conscientiousness, religiosity and knowledge of parental cheating and unhappy parental relationship history. The criterion variables were the scores of the infidelity scale and emotional responses to sexual versus emotional infidelity. All variables were between-subjects.

3.3 Materials/Apparatus

Each participant completed a battery of questionnaires which assessed infidelity. More specifically, engaging in infidelity, attitudes to sexual and emotional infidelity, conscientiousness, narcissism, religiosity and knowledge of parental cheating and unhappy parental relationship were measured. Participants were also asked demographic questions such as age, gender, religion, and relationship status. A laptop and the statistical package SPSS (version 18) was used to analyse all data.

3.3.1 *Infidelity Scale.*

The Infidelity Scale (Drigotas, Safstrom & Gentilia, 1999) was used to assess infidelity. Participants were asked 11 questions to evaluate levels of attraction to another person, other than their partner, in either a current or past relationship and to circle the relevant response. Of the 11 questions, there were nine questions on a nine point scale from zero to eight. The questions assessed both emotional and physical intimacy. An example item which assessed emotional infidelity was “How tempted were you to be emotionally intimate (e.g. shared feelings, emotions) with this person”? An example item assessing sexual infidelity was “How tempted were you to be physically intimate (e.g. kissing, sexual activity) with this person”? In addition to using the emotional infidelity and physical infidelity scores, previous research by Drigotas et al., (1999) performed factor analyses, which revealed that nine of the 11 items loaded highest on a single factor that they labelled "Composite Infidelity." The two items that did not seem to relate to this factor were Questions two and six, which measured the speculation of how much the other person, was attracted to the participant and initiation of the mutual attraction. However, because the other nine items loaded so strongly on Composite Infidelity (factor loadings ranging from .61 to .85) the nine items were averaged to form a Composite Infidelity score, with the maximum score being eight. Participants who scored higher on the composite score were more emotionally, cognitively, and physically intimate with their extra-dyadic attraction partner. A Cronbach's alpha revealed high internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$).

3.3.2 *Gender attitudes to sexual and emotional infidelity.*

In order to measure gender differences in reactions to emotional and sexual infidelity a modified measure modelled after the original Buss et al., (1992) item was used. A similar

modified measure has been used in other studies, Lishner et al., (2008) and Treger & Sprecher (2011). Participants were asked to read the following scenario:

Think of a committed, romantic relationship that you have now, or that you had in the past. Now imagine that your spouse, or significant other, becomes interested in someone else. Which of the following would distress you the **most**? (**please tick only one**).

Participants were then provided with three options from which to choose:

1. Discovering that he or she has formed a deep emotional attachment to the other, confiding in that person, and seeking comfort there rather than from you.
2. Discovering that your partner is enjoying sex with the other person?
3. Both of the above options would upset me equally.

Each choice above was coded into SPSS as one, two, three respectively and statistical analyses were used to compute the count/percentages of the responses. As it is a stand-alone measure, a Cronbach's alpha could not be run for internal consistency. However, much previous research has used similar measures that have been tested and retested which indicates reliability and validity of the measure.

3.3.3 *Narcissism.*

Narcissism was measured using the NPI-16 which is a shorter scale derived from the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Ames et al., (2006) carried out five studies to show that the NPI-16 had face, internal, discriminant, and predictive validity and that it can serve as an alternative measure of narcissism when situations do not allow the use of longer inventories. A Cronbach's alpha revealed high internal consistency ($\alpha = .78$). Participants were given 16 pairs of statements to read and asked to place an "X" by the statement that came closest to describing their feeling

and beliefs about themselves. Of each statement chosen, only one response was consistent with narcissism. A sample pair of statements was “I really like to be the centre of attention” and “It makes me uncomfortable to be the centre of attention”. The answer consistent with narcissism in this example would be “I really like to be the centre of attention”. The responses consistent with narcissism were then totalled, with the maximum score being 16. Participants who scored higher indicated a higher level of narcissism.

3.3.4 Conscientiousness.

Participants were given nine statements of characteristics and asked to put a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement. The statements measured conscientiousness which formed a subset of the Big Five inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991; John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). The Big Five inventory is a significantly reliable measure of personality traits. A Cronbach’s alpha revealed high internal consistency of the subset ($\alpha = .81$). A sample statement was “Does a thorough job”. Statements were on a five point scale from “Disagree strongly” (1), “Disagree a little” (2), “Neither agree nor disagree” (3), “Agree a little” (4) to “Agree Strongly” (5). There were four negatively worded statements which were recoded so that (5) became (1), (4) became (2), (3) remained (3), (2) became (4) and (1) became (5). A total score was created by averaging each of the nine statements, with the maximum score being five. Participants who scored higher indicated a higher level of conscientiousness.

3.3.5 Religiosity.

Religiosity was assessed by using the Francis Scale of Christianity (Francis & Stubbs, 1987). The Francis Scale of Christianity has 24 statements which assesses attitudes to the Bible, prayer, church, God, and Jesus, a sample statement being ‘I know that Jesus helps me’

(Item two). Participants were asked to read each statement and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement. Statements were on a five point scale from “Disagree strongly” (1), “Disagree” (2), “Not certain” (3), “Agree” (4) to “Agree Strongly” (5). There were eight negatively worded statements and these statements were recoded so that (5) became (1), (4) became (2), (3) remained (3), (2) became (4) and (1) became (5). A total score was then created, with the maximum score being 120. Participants who scored higher indicated a higher level of religiosity. Previous studies have supported the internal consistency reliability, re-test reliability and construct validity of this measure (Mc Guckin, Cruise, & Lewis, 2006; Francis, Ispas, Robbins, Ilie, & Iliescu, 2009). A Cronbach’s alpha revealed very high internal consistency ($\alpha = .98$).

3.3.6 Knowledge of parental cheating and relationship history.

In order to measure participant’s knowledge of parental cheating or an unhappy parental relationship history, a simple forced-choice measure was used. Participants were asked two questions. Question number one was “To the best of your knowledge, did either one of your partners cheat on the other”? Question number two was “To the best of your knowledge, would you say your parent’s relationship was a happy one”? Participants were forced to choose only a “yes” or “no” response to each question. Similar measures regarding participant’s knowledge of parental infidelity was used in a study by Platt et al., (2008) and Hunyady et al., (2008). In this study, “yes” responses were coded as one and “no” responses were coded as two. Statistical analyses in SPSS recorded the count/percentage of responses. As it is a stand-alone measure, a Cronbach’s alpha could not be run for internal consistency.

3.4 Procedure

On approval from DBS Ethics Committee, the researcher requested the assistance of the DBS Business Programme Co-ordinator, to identify classes in which to hand out the questionnaires. Business programme lecturers were approached, in order to obtain access to classes with a good gender balance. When details of the lecturers were provided, the researcher contacted them to arrange a suitable time/date to hand out questionnaires in their classes. On arrival, the lecturer of each class introduced the researcher and explained that she was a final year psychology student who would be handing out questionnaires to the class. An introduction sheet (see Appendix 1) explained to the participants that the questionnaires regarded infidelity and attitudes to infidelity. The introduction sheet provided participants with information on all ethical considerations. They were told that the information provided would be submitted as a thesis and that it was not open to anybody 18 years or under. They were also informed that due to the sensitive nature of infidelity, if they were uncomfortable with the subject, they did not have to commence the study. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and told they had the right to withdraw at any stage during completion of the questionnaires. Participants were thanked for their involvement, and provided with contact details of support available if they were distressed by infidelity. Contact details of the researcher were also provided, should they wish to obtain a copy of the completed research (see Appendix 9). The completion of questionnaires took approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Once all questionnaires had been collected, a dataset was created in SPSS and histograms were ran to check if variables had normal distribution. Inferential statistics tests such as Independent T-Tests, Pearson's correlation, and Chi-square were ran in order to examine the differences and relationships between variables. Descriptive statistics with means and standard deviations were carried out for predictor and criterion variables and demographic variables such as gender, age, religion and relationship status.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Firstly, descriptive statistics of demographics such as relationship and religious status were obtained from SPSS. Of all participants, 45% were in a relationship, 25% married, 29% single and 2% were other (see Figure 1 below).

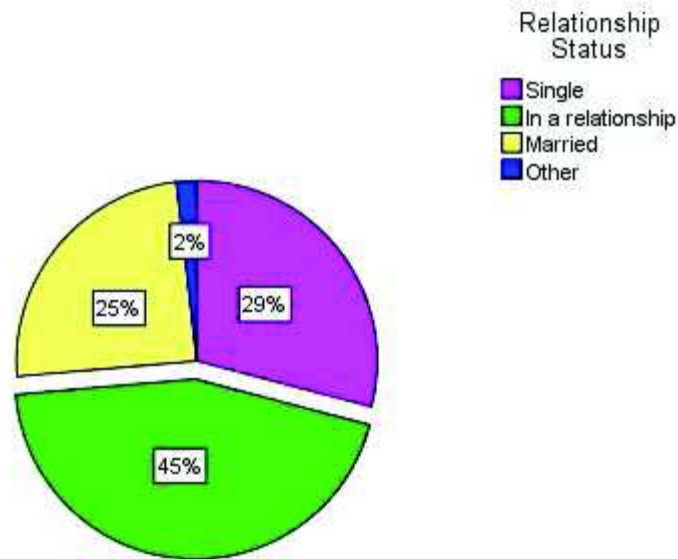


Figure 1 - Breakdown of Relationship Status of Participants

Of all participants, 72% were Christian, 25% had no religion and 4% were other (see Figure 2 below).

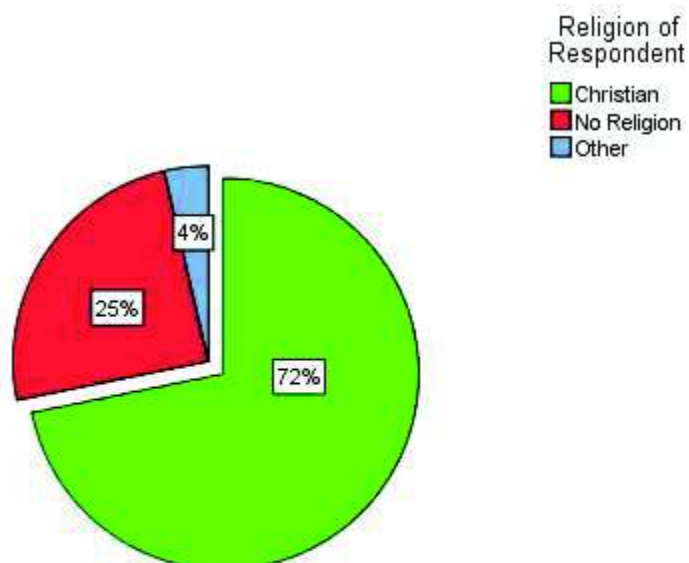


Figure 2 - Breakdown of Religious Status of Participants

Descriptive statistics were obtained for each of the predictor and criterion variables. The mean score for predictor variable gender was 1.48 (SD = .502), narcissism 4.84 (SD = 3.49), conscientiousness 3.91 (SD = .661) religiosity 66.15 (SD = 29.37), knowledge of parental cheating 4.62 (SD = 2.28), knowledge of unhappy parental relationship 4.75 (SD = 2.05), (see Table 1). The mean score for the criterion variables infidelity and sexual versus emotional infidelity was 4.13 (SD = 2.16) and 2.54 (SD = .729) respectively (see Table 2).

Table 1 *Descriptive Statistics of Predictor Variables*

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation | Range | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|-------------|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| Gender | 1.48 | .502 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Narcissism | 4.84 | 3.49 | 14 | 0 | 14 |
| Conscientiousness | 3.91 | .661 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Religiosity | 66.15 | 29.37 | 96 | 24 | 120 |
| Knowledge of Parental Cheating | 1.71 | .454 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Knowledge of Parental Relationship history | 1.42 | .495 | 1 | 1 | 2 |

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics of Criterion Variables*

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation | Range | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|-------------|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| Infidelity | 4.13 | 2.16 | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| Sexual versus Emotional Infidelity | 2.54 | .729 | 2 | 1 | 3 |

4.2 Inferential Statistics

The first hypothesis was that by expanding on the forced-choice format and giving a third option, both males and females would find sexual and emotional infidelity equally distressing. A chi-square test for association was ran to explore the relationship between the variables gender and emotional versus sexual infidelity. It was found that there was a moderate positive significant relationship between these two variables ($X^2(2) = 14.38, p = .001$). Therefore, the hypothesis was supported so the null hypothesis was rejected. As predicted, when expanding on the forced choice and allowing participants a third option, it was found that the majority (68%) chose that both types of infidelity are equally distressing, (30%) of males and (38%) of females. However, of those who did not choose the third option, the evolutionary theory was supported, in that more males (17%) than females (2%) selected sexual infidelity as more distressing, but more females (8%) than males (6%) selected emotional infidelity as more distressing. These findings are illustrated below in Figure 3.

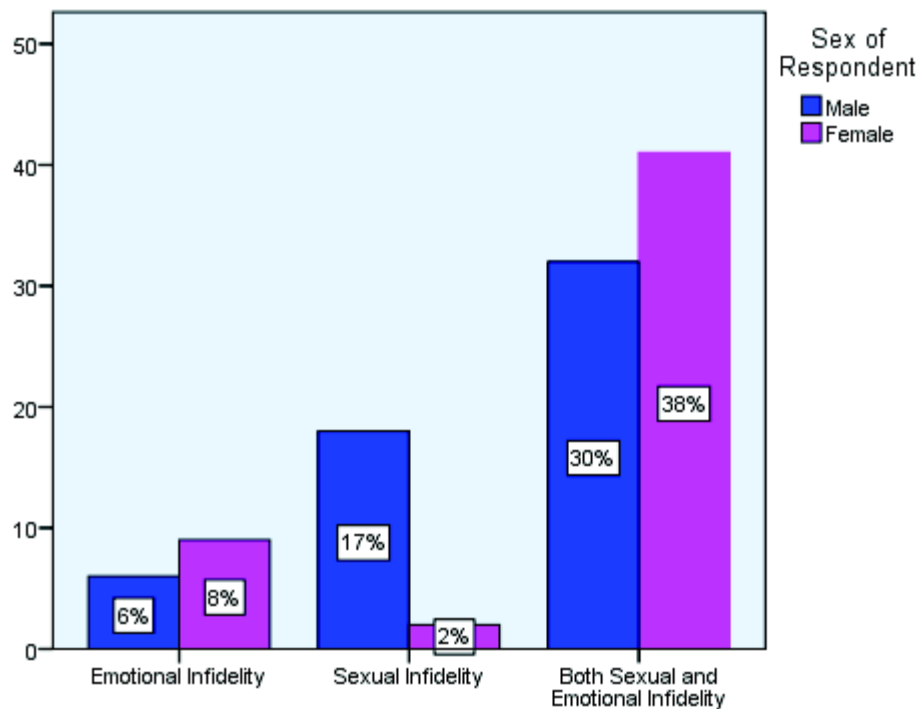


Figure 3 - Gender Attitudes to which types of infidelity are more distressing?

The second hypothesis was that participants who engage in infidelity are more likely to be male than female. An independent samples t-test found there was no significant difference between infidelity scores of males and females ($t(106) = -.083, p = .934, 2\text{-tailed}$), (see Table 3 below). Contrary to the hypothesis females (mean = 4.14, SD = 2.30) were found to have slightly higher scores of infidelity than males (mean = 4.11, SD = 2.04). The hypothesis was not supported so the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

The third hypothesis was that participants who engage in infidelity would score higher in relation to those who do not on the personality trait “narcissism”. The mean score for infidelity was 4.13 (SD = 2.16) and for narcissism 4.84 (SD = 3.49). A Pearson correlation coefficient found that there was a weak positive significant relationship between infidelity and the personality trait narcissism ($r(100) = .228, p = .029, 2\text{-tailed}$). Therefore, as predicted, those who scored higher in the personality trait narcissism had a higher likelihood of engaging in infidelity. The hypothesis was supported so the null hypothesis was rejected. The relationship between infidelity and narcissism is depicted in Figure 4 below.

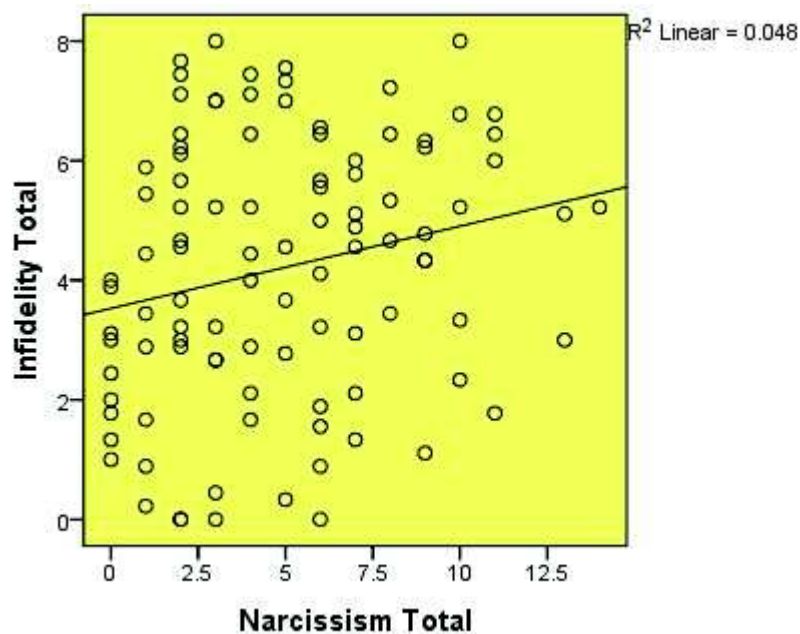


Figure 4 – Scatterplot displaying relationship between infidelity and narcissism scores

The fourth hypothesis was that participants who engage in infidelity will score lower in relation to those who do not on the personality trait “conscientiousness”. A Pearson correlation coefficient found that there was no significant association between infidelity and the personality trait conscientiousness ($r(106) = -.087$, $p = .375$, 2-tailed). The negative relationship found suggests that those lower in the personality trait conscientiousness would have a higher the likelihood of engaging in infidelity. However, as the result was non-significant the hypothesis was not supported so the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

The fifth hypothesis was that participants in who engage in infidelity will score lower in relation to those who do not on religiosity. A Spearman’s rho correlation found that there was no significant association between infidelity and religiosity ($\rho(101) = .160$, $p = .109$, 2-tailed). As the result was non-significant the hypothesis was not supported so the null hypothesis could not be rejected. Surprising, contrary to the hypothesis, the finding of a positive relationship suggested that the higher the religiosity, the higher the likelihood of engaging in infidelity.

The sixth hypothesis was that participants who engage in infidelity will have knowledge of parental cheating. Participants who had knowledge of parental cheating (mean = 4.62, SD = 2.28) were found to have slightly higher scores of infidelity than those who reported no knowledge of parental cheating (mean = 4.00, SD = 2.13). An independent samples t-test found there was no significant difference between infidelity and knowledge of parental cheating ($t(102) = 1.32$, $p = .188$, 2-tailed). However, there were gender differences in knowledge of parental cheating and infidelity. Males with knowledge of parental cheating (mean = 5.16, SD = 1.92) were found to have higher scores of infidelity than females who had knowledge of parental cheating (mean = 4.30, SD = 2.47). An independent samples t-test

found there was statistically significant difference between infidelity and knowledge of parental cheating in males ($t(52) = 1.82, p = .074, 2\text{-tailed}$). Whereas, an independent samples t-test found there was no significant difference between infidelity and knowledge of parental cheating in females ($t(48) = .279, p = .781, 2\text{-tailed}$).

Interestingly, despite these findings, males reported being less aware of parental cheating (20%) compared to females (37%). The findings are illustrated in Figure 5 below. In conclusion, the original hypothesis was not supported so the null hypothesis could not be rejected. However, due to gender differences, there was partial support for the hypothesis.

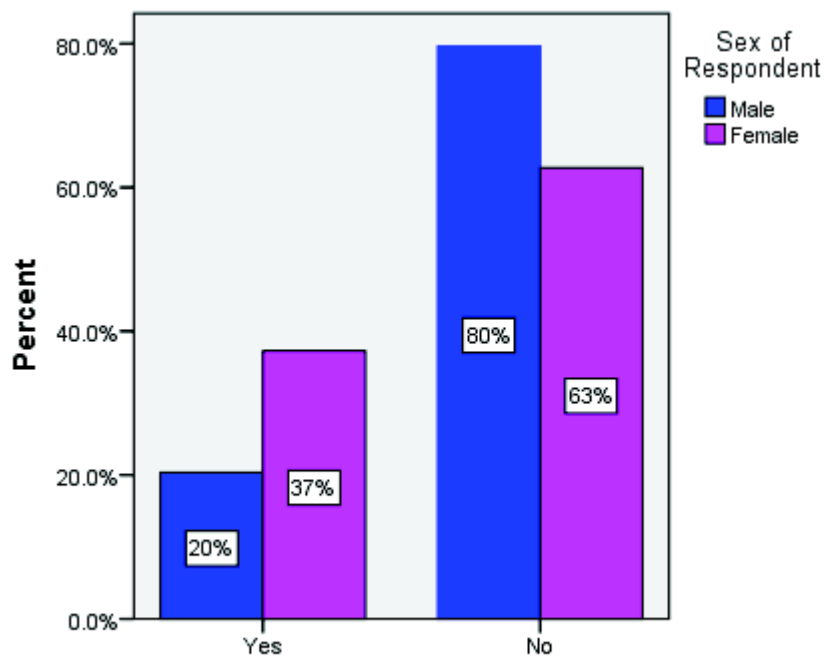


Figure 5 - Gender differences in participant's knowledge of parental cheating

The seventh hypothesis was that participants who engage in infidelity will have knowledge of an unhappy parental relationship history. Participants who reported knowledge of an unhappy parental relationship history (mean = 4.75, SD = 2.05) were found to have higher scores of infidelity than those who reported knowledge of happy parental relationship

history (mean = 3.73, SD = 2.18). An independent samples t-test found there was a significant difference between infidelity and knowledge of parental relationship history ($t(103) = -2.42, p = .017, 2\text{-tailed}$). Therefore, the hypothesis was supported and the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – *An Independent Samples T-test table displaying the differences between Infidelity and Knowledge of Happy and Unhappy Parental Relationship.*

| Variable | Groups | Mean | SD | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------|--|------|------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Infidelity | Knowledge of unhappy parental relationship | 4.75 | 2.05 | -2.42 | 103 | 0.17* |
| | Knowledge of happy parental relationship | 3.73 | 2.18 | | | |

Note: p significant at .05 level.

It is worth mentioning that on further analysis, gender differences were also found in relation to infidelity and knowledge of unhappy parental relationships. Males with knowledge of unhappy parental relationship (mean = 5.06, SD = 1.82) were found to have higher scores of infidelity than females who had knowledge of unhappy parental relationships (mean = 4.49, SD = 2.22). An independent samples t-test found there was statistically significant difference between infidelity and knowledge of unhappy parental relationship in males ($t(52) = -2.54, p = .014, 2\text{-tailed}$). Whereas, an independent samples t-test found there was no significant difference between infidelity and knowledge of unhappy parental relationship in females ($t(49) = -1.02, p = .314, 2\text{-tailed}$).

Interestingly, similar to the findings in hypothesis six, males also reported being less aware of an unhappy parental relationship (37%) compared to females (46%). This finding is illustrated in Figure 6 below.

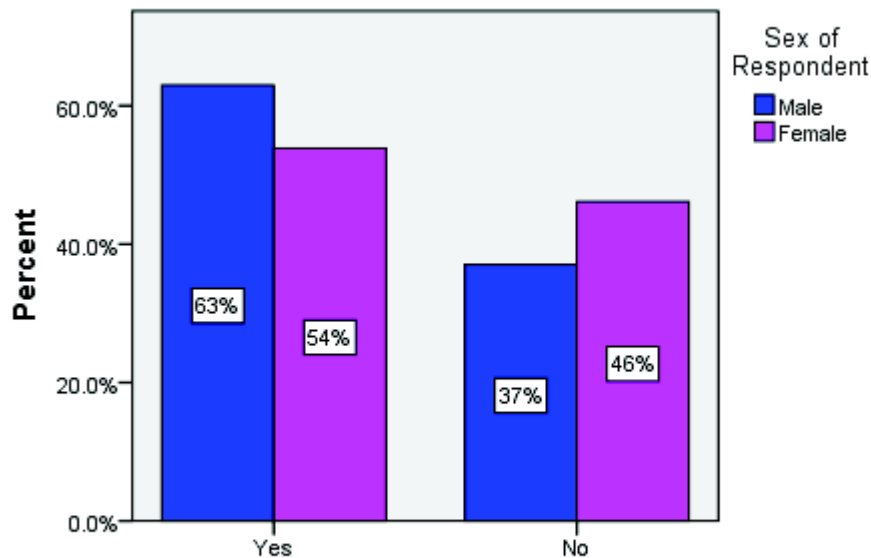


Figure 6 - Gender differences in whether they perceived their parents relationship as happy

4.3 *Post-hoc hypotheses*

An independent samples t-test found there was no significant difference between gender and religiosity ($t(100) = -1.27, p = .207, 2\text{-tailed}$), however, females did have a higher mean score of religiosity (mean = 70.13, SD = 29.89) compared to males (mean = 62.75, SD = 28.75). A Spearman's rho correlation found there was no significant association between infidelity and church attendance ($\rho(105) = .134, p = .173, 2\text{-tailed}$). Males had a higher mean score of narcissism (mean = 5.49, SD = 3.74) compared to females (mean = 4.07, SD = 3.03). An independent samples t-test found there was significant difference between gender and narcissism ($t(99) = 2.12, p = .037, 2\text{-tailed}$).

5. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate possible predictors of infidelity and whether religiosity could be used as a buffer to infidelity. More specifically, gender and gender attitudes to sexual and emotional infidelity, personality traits conscientiousness and narcissism, religiosity and history of parental relationship were measured in relation to infidelity. Briefly, the findings of the study are that males do not engage in infidelity more than females and both males and females find sexual and emotional infidelity equally distressing. There is a relationship between infidelity and the personality trait narcissism. There is no relationship between infidelity and the personality trait conscientiousness, or religiosity. Knowledge of parental cheating and an unhappy parental relationship increases the likelihood of infidelity in males, but not females.

The majority of both males (30%) and females (38%) found sexual and emotional infidelity equally distressing. Therefore, the first hypothesis was supported and the results were in line with previous research of Lishner et al., (2008) which suggested that sex differences in attitudes to different types of infidelity disappear when participants are not forced to choose between sexual and emotional infidelity. However, there were notable sex differences between the males and females who did not choose that both types of infidelity are equally distressing. Despite having the third option available to them, more males (17%) choose sexual infidelity than females (2%). And more females (8%) choose emotional infidelity than males (6%). This is in line with the original research of Buss et al., (1992) study which suggested evolutionary reasons for why males and females find different types of infidelity distressing them. Treger & Sprecher (2011) argued that gender differences in perceptions of infidelity are not for evolutionary reasons but due to differences in socialisation. Therefore, it could be that the males and females who specifically choose

sexual or emotional infidelity were conforming to socialised stereotypes. Secondly, Fisher et al., (2008) found sex differences are evident in feelings of guilt following infidelity, with men feeling guiltier over imagined sexual infidelity and women feeling guiltier over imagined emotional infidelity. Therefore, it's possible that the participants who choose sexual or emotional infidelity had recently engaged in infidelity themselves and choose in accordance with guilty feelings.

There were no significant difference between males and females engaging in infidelity. Females (mean = 4.14, SD = 2.30) were found to have slightly higher scores of infidelity than males (mean = 4.11, SD = 2.04). Therefore, the second hypothesis was not supported and was contrary to the majority of the previous research. It's worth mentioning however, that the mean ages of samples in majority of previous research were under 25 years of age. Additionally, as previously mentioned some research does suggest there is a narrowing gap in infidelity rates between the sexes in samples under 40 years of age (Wiederman, 1997). The mean age of the sample in the current study was higher (mean age = 30.86) than majority of previous research, therefore this may explain the result. The results found could also be due to socialisation. Similar opportunities are available for females now as well as males in contemporary society. Changes in society and media influence could also be responsible for females engaging in infidelity as much as, or more than males.

A significant relationship was found between infidelity and narcissism. Therefore the third hypothesis was supported and in line with previous research (Hunyady et al., 2008; Atkins et al., 2005; Buss & Shackelford, 1997). The finding is not surprising as narcissists are self-centred, so it's less likely they would take the feelings of others into consideration. Additionally, narcissists crave attention and compliments. Therefore, they may be more

easily swayed by the temptation of infidelity. There was no significant relationship found between infidelity and conscientiousness, therefore the fourth hypothesis was not supported. This was contrary to previous research (Orzeck & Lung 2005; Schmitt, 2004). The mean score for conscientiousness in this study was quite high (mean = 3.91, SD = .661). It's possible this was due to the sample consisting of mature students, who had returned to third level education. Whereas the sample in the research by Orzeck & Lung (2005) had a mean age of 20.52, therefore, it's plausible that a young sample may score higher on infidelity but lower on the personality trait conscientiousness. Additionally, the study by Schmitt (2004) involved over 16,000 participants across ten world regions. Sampling and response biases were indicated as limitations of the study. Additionally, due to cultural differences it may not be possible to generalise the findings of the Schmitt (2004) study to the current study.

Results found there was no relationship between infidelity and religiosity. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis was not supported and findings were contrary to previous research that suggested those higher in religiosity are less likely to engage in infidelity (Plack et al., 2010; Whisman et al., 2007). Contrary to the previous research, the finding of a positive relationship suggests that the higher the religiosity, the higher the likelihood of engaging in infidelity. However, Atkins & Kessel (2008) found that individuals with high religious importance but low attendance were more likely to have had an affair. Therefore, some research had indicated attendance, but not other religious attributes prohibit infidelity (Atkins & Kessel, 2008; Hong, 1983). However, a post-hoc hypothesis found no significant association between infidelity and church attendance in this study. Further analysis revealed that the most common response was "Agree Strongly" to "I think going to church is a waste of my time". Therefore, the majority of the sample weren't church-goers. A post-hoc analysis also revealed females had slightly higher mean score of religiosity (mean = 70.13,

SD = 29.89) than males (mean = 62.75, SD = 28.75). A possible explanation for the finding is that the previous research was conducted outside of Ireland, so perhaps religiosity is a more important variable in prohibiting infidelity in other countries than it is in Ireland.

Alternatively, perhaps there were confounding variables that were responsible for religiosity inhibiting infidelity in previous studies.

There was no support for the sixth hypothesis that those with knowledge of parental cheating would be likely to engage in infidelity themselves. Therefore, the results were contrary to previous research (Hunyady et al., 2008; Platt et al., 2008). However, when gender differences were looked at there was a significant relationship between infidelity and knowledge of parental cheating in males, but not females. This finding was despite the fact males (20%) reported significantly less knowledge of parental cheating than females (37%). Therefore, the hypothesis was partially supported. It is common knowledge that sometimes individuals, particularly males, replicate the abusive patterns of their family environments e.g. alcohol abuse, violence etc. Hunyady et al., (2008) found daughters are more likely to identify with the “victim” when parental cheating occurs. Similarly sometimes females replicate the abusive patterns of their family environments by becoming involved with abusive partners later in life. Therefore, this knowledge can be applied to parental cheating, in that the males are more likely to identify with the “perpetrator”, whereas females are more likely to identify with the “victim”. Additionally, post-hoc analysis showed males had a higher mean score of narcissism (mean = 5.49, SD = 3.73) than females (mean = 4.07, SD = 3.03). As previously indicated those higher in narcissism may find it more difficult to deal with the “narcissistic scar” that results from the betrayal in the oedipal situation, therefore in order to compensate for their “narcissistic scar” they themselves betray others, as they once felt betrayed themselves (Hunyady et al., 2008). Therefore, the gender differences in

narcissism may also explain why males, but not females, with knowledge of parental cheating were more likely to cheat themselves.

Results showed a relationship between infidelity and unhappy parental relationship history. Therefore the seventh hypothesis was supported. However, further analyses revealed when gender was looked at, males with knowledge of unhappy parental relationship (mean = 5.06, SD = 1.82) were found to have higher scores of infidelity than females who had knowledge of unhappy parental relationship (mean = 4.49, SD = 2.22). Again, there was a statistically significant difference between infidelity and knowledge of unhappy parental relationship in males, but not in females. We don't know what specific factors led participants to perceiving their parental relationship as "unhappy" although it may have been due to infidelity. Females are known to use emotion-focused coping, therefore it's likely that females spoke to friends or other family members if they were upset by their parent's unhappy relationship. Whereas males may be less inclined to open up to others about family difficulties and generally seek emotional support less often than females. Therefore a possible explanation for the finding is that males may be more inclined than females to use mal-adaptive ways of coping with their relationship difficulties, which could result in them engaging in infidelity.

5.1 *Limitations of the current study*

The current research was carried out in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts degree, therefore, time constraints were imposed on the study. A simple forced-choice format was used for assessing an unhappy parental relationship. It would have been preferable if the study assessed knowledge of an unhappy parental relationship by modifying the measure "Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict" (CPIC; Grych, Seid

& Fincham, 1992) which contains conflict, coping efficacy and self-blame. However, as the measure is a 49-item measure including nine subscales, the researcher considered it unfair/unethical to expect participants to complete an additional lengthy questionnaire. The findings of the current study were self-reported, and one significant concern is that as infidelity is a sensitive subject and socially undesirable, participants may not have been completely honest and underestimated their behaviour on some of their responses. However, self-reporting is regularly used in psychological research and as complete anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed, it hopefully eliminated need for concern. The sample comprised of part-time DBS students which perhaps cannot be generalised to the whole population of Ireland. Additionally, part-time students are likely to be full-time workers and may also have childcare requirements to be taken into consideration. Therefore, by the time they arrive at lectures late in the evening, they may be tired and not in the optimum mood for completing questionnaires.

5.2 *Strengths of the current study*

The current study used a mature sample (mean age = 30.86 years), compared to the majority of previous studies in the USA whose samples were young full-time college students. The maturity and life experience of the sample in the current study was beneficial as they would have more experience of the type of issues that arise in relationships, such as infidelity. Significant efforts were made to identify specific classes in DBS to ensure there would be a well-balanced gender sample (57 males, 53 females). This ensured there was no gender bias influencing the predictor variables of gender and gender attitudes to infidelity. Unlike previous research, this study measured actual infidelity which had taken place either in a current or past relationship. Therefore, it removed the limitations of previous research that only measured participant's estimates of whether or not they would engage in infidelity.

Additionally, the infidelity scale measured sexual and emotional infidelity, rather than just focusing on sexual infidelity. Similarly, a robust measure of religiosity was used and unlike some previous research measured not just if the participant considered themselves religious and whether or not they attended church, but measured other attributes of religious behaviour. Cronbach's alpha scores revealed that the majority of measures used in the study had high internal consistency, therefore limiting issues of reliability. Lastly the study used a correlation survey design which was beneficial for measuring infidelity. An experimental design would not be possible for ethical considerations and a qualitative interview design could have limited participant's responses and/or honesty. The study made slight changes to the measure of sexual versus emotional infidelity, by omitting extraneous words. Therefore a very clear distinction was made between sex and emotions.

5.3 Implications of the current study and future research

The implications of the first hypothesis are important as it would seem logical for males and females to choose that both types of infidelity are equally upsetting. Future research could expand upon the measure by asking the participants to provide a reason for their choice. Additional measures of other personality traits, jealousy reactions and attachment styles could be included to determine if they play a role in participants choosing sexual or emotional infidelity as more distressing. The evolutionary explanation by Buss et al., (1992) could be examined further by future research carrying out an experiment to determine if males with high testosterone levels are likely to choose sexual infidelity as more distressing. From an evolutionary point of view, these males may feel more inclined to guard against parental uncertainty or because a sexually unfaithful partner would be a bigger blow to the ego of a stereotypical alpha male.

The current study supports previous research that there may be a narrowing gap in infidelity rates between the sexes (Wiederman, 1997). If this is the case, it could have implications for society. An increase in infidelity rates, regardless of the sex involved is not a favourable situation. Media influence, particularly the popularity of reality T.V. which shows young males and females competing over sexual conquests, could have a negative impact on society. Developmental psychology, particularly the socio-cognitive theories of Bandura indicate people model behaviour based on observations of role models. Unfortunately, there may be a lack of good role models for young females in popular media and culture. Additionally, if females engage in infidelity as much as males it could have an increased negative impact on children, if both, rather than one parent engages in infidelity. Also, if both parents are engaging in infidelity, there would probably be an increased likelihood of divorce. Furthermore, previous research shows males are more likely to consider sexual infidelity as grounds for divorce than females (Shackelford, 1998). Finally, infidelity can have violent consequences (Wilson & Daly, 1996), therefore, females could be putting their physical safety at risk if their partner uncovers the infidelity. Ideally, better role models should be available for both males and females, more psychological research informing couples of the negative consequences of infidelity could be highlighted in the media, and the appropriate support made available.

Personality theorists such as Freud suggest that personality is fixed. However, the phenomenological personality theorists such as Rogers would suggest that experience and change over the lifespan can alter personality. Therefore, if an individual realises that their narcissism could cost them an important relationship they may be more likely to attempt to modify this aspect of their personality. It may be useful for future research to investigate if there are other factors that could moderate narcissistic traits which could be improved by

therapy interventions. For example, research suggests that grandiose narcissism is linked to high self-esteem whereas vulnerable narcissism is linked to low self-esteem, and high vulnerable narcissism implies higher attachment anxiety (Rohmann, Neumann, Herner, & Bierhoff, 2012). Future research could investigate if these types of narcissism have a relationship with infidelity due to the self-esteem aspect and attachment issues. If that was the case, psychological intervention could be taken to address self-esteem and/or attachment issues.

An interesting aim in the rationale of the study was to investigate if religiosity could be a possible buffer to infidelity. However, no relationship was found between infidelity and religiosity and additional analyses found no relationship between infidelity and church attendance. Despite the majority of participants (78%) identifying themselves as Christian i.e. catholic or protestant, further analysis revealed that the most common response was “Agree Strongly” to “I think going to church is a waste of my time”. Additionally, out of a maximum score of 120 the mean score of religiosity was quite low (mean = 66.16, SD = 29.37). Therefore, there is an implication that church attendance and religiosity may have been significantly affected by the scandals in the Catholic Church in recent years. One of the possible advantages of religion is it provides children with additional learning about good and bad behaviour and compassion for others. Furthermore, possible benefits of having a strong faith relate to happiness, health and coping with bereavement. Therefore, the implications of the study are if religiosity is lowered, despite some of the negative aspects of religion, individuals and future generations in Ireland may not benefit from the positive aspects of religiosity. Future research should determine what are the specific components of religiosity that inhibited infidelity identified in previous research.

A relationship between infidelity and knowledge of parental cheating and unhappy parental relationship were found in males, but not females. However, males reported having less knowledge of parental cheating and an unhappy parental relationship. The implications of this are that males may be more unconsciously influenced by their parent's relationship history than females. Previous research has indicated that knowledge of parental cheating increased the likelihood of females (but not males) being cheated on (Hunyady et al., 2008). Future research could investigate the effects of parental cheating on females to identify if relationship difficulties such as trust and attachment issues exist due to knowledge of parental cheating and an unhappy parental relationship. It would also be useful to investigate the manner in which participants became aware that their parent had cheated and whether it was the father or mother who had been unfaithful, or both. The implications of these additional factors and findings could be applied within individual or couple's therapy.

A significant number of participants reported knowledge of parental cheating (27.3%) and an even more significant number (40%) were aware of an unhappy parental relationship. As the mean age of participants was 30.86 years, the majority grew up in an important socio-historical time in Ireland. The first referendum on divorce in the 1980's was defeated but approved in a second referendum in the 1990's. Therefore, an important implication is whether or not divorce had any influence on infidelity and/or unhappy parental relationship history. It would be interesting if a longitudinal study was carried out in the future. The study could compare perceptions of parental relationships, particularly of adult children of unmarried parents in today's contemporary society to the perceptions of earlier generations, similar to the sample in this study.

5.4 Conclusion

This study found that males do not engage in infidelity more than females, additionally there were no gender differences in attitudes to different types of infidelity. The majority of both males and males found sexual and emotional infidelity equally distressing. The study found there was a relationship between infidelity and the personality trait narcissism, but not conscientiousness. Additionally, no relationship was found between infidelity and religiosity. There was a relationship between infidelity and knowledge of parental cheating in males, but not females. A relationship was found between infidelity and knowledge of an unhappy parental relationship. However, further analyses revealed the finding only applied to males, not females. In conclusion, the study succeeded in the aim of replicating some of the findings of research on infidelity in contemporary Ireland. An interesting aim in the rationale was to identify if religiosity could be used as potential buffer to infidelity in Ireland. However, no relationship was found between infidelity and religiosity. Therefore, it is important for future research to continue to investigate potential buffers to infidelity. Additionally, this study included a psychoanalytic perspective and the findings may support the oedipal complex theory. It was indicated that males may be unconsciously more vulnerable to the effects of parental relationships. It would be beneficial if additional empirical research continued to contribute to psychoanalytic theories such as the oedipal complex, and effects of parental relationships on adult children's relationships.

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Appendix 1 – Introduction

Dear Participant,

I would like to invite you to participate in a survey regarding infidelity and attitudes to infidelity.

The information provided will be submitted as a thesis, and presented in an examination process. For ethical considerations the survey is excluded from anybody 18 years or under.

Due to the sensitive nature of infidelity, if you are not comfortable with the subject-matter you do not have to commence the survey. *And, you also have the right to withdraw at any stage during the completion of this survey. However, once the questionnaires have been submitted you cannot withdraw your data.*

There are no right or wrong answers and complete anonymity is guaranteed. Your questionnaire answers will be merged with those from other people and no-one will not be able to trace your answers back to you, and I am not asking you to give your name or any identification details.

All you have to do is complete the questionnaires, which will take approximately 10 minutes and just work through the questions, in each case indicating to the extent to which you feel about each of the statements.

Thank you for your time and interest, it is very much appreciated.

Appendix 2 – Demographical information

Please answer the following demographical questions:

Age _____

Sex (Please tick one)

Male

Female

Religion (please tick only one)

Christian (e.g. Catholic, Protestant)

No religion

Other (please specify) _____

Relationship Status (Please tick only one)

Single In a relationship Married Other (please specify) _____

7) How often did you and this person do "couple" things together (e.g., spend time together, talk on phone etc.)?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Never Very Often

8) How tempted were you to be emotionally intimate (e.g., shared feelings, emotions) with this person?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not At All Extremely Tempted
Tempted

9) How emotionally intimate were you with this person?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not At All Extremely Emotionally
Emotionally Intimate Intimate

10) How tempted were you to be physically intimate (e.g., kissing, sexual activity) with this person?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not At All Extremely Tempted
Tempted

11) How physically intimate were you with this person?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not At All Extremely Physically
Physically Intimate Intimate

Appendix 4 - Attitudes to sexual versus emotional infidelity

Think of a committed, romantic relationship that you have now, or that you had in the past. Now imagine that your spouse, or significant other, becomes interested in someone else.

Which of the following would distress you the **most**? (please tick only one)

1. Discovering that he or she has formed a deep emotional attachment to the other, confiding in that person, and seeking comfort there rather than from you.
2. Discovering that your partner is enjoying sex with the other person.
3. Both of the above options would upset me equally.

Appendix 5 – Conscientiousness

How I am in general

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who *likes to spend time with others*? Please **write a number next to each statement** to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Disagree Strongly | Disagree a little | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree a little | Agree strongly |

I am someone who...

1. ___ Does a thorough job
2. ___ Can be somewhat careless
3. ___ Is a reliable worker
4. ___ Tends to be disorganized
5. ___ Tends to be lazy
6. ___ Perseveres until the task is finished
7. ___ Does things efficiently
8. ___ Makes plans and follows through with them
9. ___ Is easily distracted

Appendix 6 – Narcissism

Read each pair of statements below and **place an “X”** by the one that comes closest to describing your feelings and beliefs about yourself. You may feel that neither statement describes you well, but pick the one that comes closest. **Please complete all pairs.**

1. ___ I really like to be the centre of attention
 ___ It makes me uncomfortable to be the centre of attention
2. ___ I am no better or no worse than most people
 ___ I think I am a special person
3. ___ Everybody likes to hear my stories
 ___ Sometimes I tell good stories
4. ___ I usually get the respect that I deserve
 ___ I insist upon getting the respect that is due me
5. ___ I don't mind following orders
 ___ I like having authority over people
6. ___ I am going to be a great person
 ___ I hope I am going to be successful
7. ___ People sometimes believe what I tell them
 ___ I can make anybody believe anything I want them to
8. ___ I expect a great deal from other people
 ___ I like to do things for other people
9. ___ I like to be the centre of attention
 ___ I prefer to blend in with the crowd
10. ___ I am much like everybody else
 ___ I am an extraordinary person
11. ___ I always know what I am doing
 ___ Sometimes I am not sure of what I am doing
12. ___ I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people
 ___ I find it easy to manipulate people
13. ___ Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me
 ___ People always seem to recognize my authority
14. ___ I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so
 ___ When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed

15. ___ I try not to be a show off
 ___ I am apt to show off if I get the chance
16. ___ I am more capable than other people
 ___ There is a lot that I can learn from other people

Appendix 7 – Religiosity

Instructions: Read the following sentences carefully and think, "Do I agree with it?" and **circle as appropriate**:

| | AS | | | | |
|---|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| If you <u>Agree Strongly</u> put a ring round | AS | | | | |
| If you <u>Agree</u> put a ring round | | A | | | |
| If you are <u>Not Certain</u> put a ring round | | | NC | | |
| If you <u>Disagree</u> put a ring round | | | | D | |
| If you <u>Disagree Strongly</u> put a ring round | | | | | DS |
| 1 I find it boring to listen to the Bible | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 2 I know that Jesus helps me | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 3 Saying my prayers helps me a lot | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 4 The Church is very important to me | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 5 I think going to Church is a waste of my time | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 6 I want to love Jesus | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 7 I think Church services are boring | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 8 I think people who pray are stupid | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 9 God helps me to lead a better life | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 10 I like to learn about God very much | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 11 God means a lot to me | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 12 I believe that God helps people | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 13 Prayer helps me a lot | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 14 I know Jesus is very close to me | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 15 I think praying is a good thing | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 16 I think the Bible is out of date | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 17 I believe that God listens to prayers | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 18 Jesus doesn't mean anything to me | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 19 God is very real to me | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 20 I think saying prayers does no good | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 21 The idea of God means much to me | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 22 I believe that Jesus still helps people | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 23 I know that God helps me | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| 24 I find it hard to believe in God | AS | A | NC | D | DS |

Appendix 8 - Parental Relationship

To the best of your knowledge, did either one of your parents cheat on the other? **(please tick only one)**

1. Yes

2. No

To the best of your knowledge, would you say your parent's relationship was a happy one? **please tick only one)**

1. Yes

2. No

Appendix 9 – Contact Information

Thank you for your participation in correlational research!

Please feel free to tear off the information below.

If you wish to receive a copy of the research study when it is complete, please contact the researcher Suzanne Hughes at suzannehughesdbs@gmail.com

Should the subject of infidelity cause you any distress, there is support available as follows:

Relationships Ireland Lo-Call: 1890 380 380 www.relationshipsireland.com

Accord 01 5053112 www.accord.ie