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# Relationship Repair After Infidelity: Looking at Other Perspectives

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**Relationship Repair after Infidelity: Looking at Other Perspectives**

by

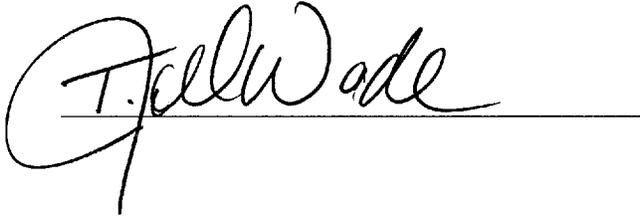
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A Thesis Submitted to the Honors Council for Honors in Psychology

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "T. Joel Wade". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

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### **Abstract**

Prior research examining relationship repair after infidelity scenarios tends to focus primarily on heterosexual relationships, and often does not take into consideration the nuance between emotional and sexual infidelity, which, according to evolutionary psychology theories, tends to be salient to individuals based on their reproductive challenges. This research intended to rectify that dearth, hypothesizing that non-heterosexual participants would be more likely to repair a relationship where a partner has committed sexual infidelity than they would be to repair a relationship where a partner has committed an emotional infidelity. As well, based on prior research, there were expectations for sex differences in the likelihood of repairing a relationship after infidelity by a partner for participants in committed relationships, with female participants likely to repair emotional infidelity and male participants likely to repair sexual infidelity. In a survey of volunteers online, likelihood of repair for relationships after sexual or emotional infidelity was related to the sexual orientation of participants. Homosexual/other individuals were equally likely to repair their relationship after an emotional or sexual infidelity was committed by a partner and were more likely to repair a relationship after a partner committed a sexual infidelity than heterosexual individuals were. A qualitative question component obtained more information about the participants' logic behind their reconciliation choices, and these results along with the quantitative results are discussed and interpreted using themes from earlier research.

### **Introduction**

Relationships can be wonderful experiences. However, even the most idyllic relationship requires work to maintain. One peril that threatens relationships is infidelity. Some research

shows that the prevalence of infidelity reported by some is small, largely due to the definition of infidelity utilized and the terms of relationships which were examined. Early research concentrated on sexual infidelity, and disregarded emotional infidelity. However, both are distinct types of infidelity. Emotional infidelity could take the form of a significant other sharing intimate secrets and experiences with someone outside the committed relationship that was previously shared with a partner. Sexual infidelity, on the other hand, includes sexual intercourse or other physical interaction with sexual intent, along the spectrum of sex acts. Although it is difficult to delineate the boundaries between each type of infidelity, since they may not be mutually exclusive, a relationship can include more of one type than another, which allows one to classify the infidelity as either primarily sexual or emotional.

In their research examining the prevalence of infidelity, Whisman and Snyder (2007) gathered data over the course of a year in personal interviews and computer-assisted self-interviews from married American women, using limited definitions of infidelity that emphasized sexual infidelity. They report that about 6% of their participants had experience with infidelity. Whisman and Snyder's (2007) data on the prevalence of married American women's infidelity is somewhat comparable to that of Zhang, Parish, Huang and Pan's (2012) research examining the prevalence of infidelity within a Chinese population. They expanded the relationship statuses in which they explored infidelity, examining men and women in both married, dating, and cohabitating relationships. Excluding commercial sex, they found that for Chinese women, the prevalence of infidelity within the space of a year was 4.5%, and for Chinese men, there was an 11% prevalence. Both these studies defined infidelity primarily as physical intercourse. Older research shows a different pattern when a broader definition of infidelity is utilized.

Wager's (2003) collection of multiple studies over several decades in the United States shows that much higher numbers of participants reported infidelity when the description of cheating was expanded from purely sexual to encompass emotional infidelity as well. According to Glass and Wright (1992) whom Wager cites, with the expanded definition, 44% of married American men, and 25% of married American women engaged in infidelity. Glass and Wright also estimated that about 30% of couples experience infidelity, based on how prevalent it is with couples seeking therapy and counseling.

These distinctions between sexual and emotional infidelity have been found to be particularly salient to men and women, respectively, for reasons that may be rooted in human evolutionary psychology. In heterosexual relationships, men are likely to be more distressed by sexual infidelity committed by their partner, due to the evolutionary importance of genetic exclusivity. However, women are more likely to be distressed by a partner's commission of an emotional infidelity because it may cost resources necessary for them and their offspring's survival (Sheets & Wolfe, 2001). Wade and Mathis (2013) have examined the likelihood of reconciliation after an infidelity is committed by a partner among men and women and report that women are more likely to seek reconciliation when their partner has committed sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity, while men and women are equally likely to attempt to reconcile when a partner commits an emotional infidelity.

When an infidelity is discovered, individuals have the option of ending the relationship or seeking reconciliation with their partner. Better understanding of what causes people to repair their relationship is important. Forgiveness and reconciliation, particularly after infidelity, have been shown to have positive physical and psychological impacts on humans (Van Oyen Witvliet,

Ludwig, Vander Laan, 2001), and promotes welfare of the individual as well as preservation of a relationship.

However, infidelity occurrences and relationship repair are not exclusive to heterosexual relationships. Limited data exists on the prevalence of infidelity in homosexual relationships. To date, no one has examined how evolutionary adaptations that influence reconciliation decisions operate across other sexual orientations. Would an individual whose gender identity does not align with their biological identity or someone who has a same-sex partner with whom biological reproduction is currently not an option make the same relationship reconciliation choices as a heterosexual individual who was concerned with continuing their genetic line?

Dijkstra, Groothof, Poel, Laverman, Schrier, and Buunk, (2001) show that when looking at which infidelity events are more distressing, homosexual couples' choices are markedly different from those of heterosexual couples. Research from Dijkstra, et al, (2001) demonstrate that when not in a committed relationship, homosexual participants in their study on jealousy scenarios did not differ by sex in what type of infidelity was most distressing. The researchers also hypothesized that participants were confused by perceived co-occurrences of the infidelity types, despite scenarios that were designed to be mutually exclusive, which possibly affected the sex differences in outcomes. As a result, both gay men and lesbian women reacted with similar levels of distress with no significant sex difference.

Dijkstra et al, (2001) also find that responses to the jealousy scenario from lesbian women in committed relationships align with the responses of heterosexual men in prioritizing sexual fidelity, while the responses of gay men in committed relationships reflect those of heterosexual women, demonstrating more distress at emotional infidelity. Possible reasons for

the responses to the infidelity scenarios posited by Dijkstra, et al., (2001) are that male homosexual participants were not jealous of sexual infidelity because they did not feel that it threatened their relationship (Harris, 2002). Homosexual male partners possibly might find emotional infidelity more disturbing than sexual infidelity (Dijkstra, 2001) because, according to Peplau and Cochran's pre-AIDs research (1990), less emphasis was placed on sexual exclusivity, particularly for gay men.

Considering possible reasons for differences in lesbian women's responses from responses of heterosexual women include suggestions that female homosexual participants were slightly older than the female heterosexual participants, and had presumably come to terms with their personal attitudes, making their responses more honest than those of younger lesbian women. Dijkstra, Barelds and Groothof's (2013) also engaged in research into jealousy among lesbian participants caused by unfaithfulness of their partners through online infidelity versus offline infidelity, in which online emotional infidelity included secret sharing and intimate conversations, and offline sexual infidelity included physical sexual intercourse with an individual outside the relationship. Their research demonstrated that the lesbian women felt less threatened in their relationships when their partner was engaging in offline, physical infidelity than when their partner was engaged in emotional, online infidelity behaviors. Dijkstra, et al (2013) also noted that both male and female homosexual participants exhibited less jealousy in scenarios where their partners engaged in sexual infidelity than scenarios where their partner engaged in emotional infidelity.

Differences from heterosexuals in power-sharing among homosexual couples may play a role in responses to a partner's commission of sexual or emotional infidelity. Peplau and Cochran (1990) report that individuals in homosexual relationships rate egalitarian relationships

highly and specify preferences for increased power sharing in relationships. This could indicate reduced interest in the traditional gender roles of men providing and women bearing children. This might possibly affect the dynamics of a relationship enough to alter perspectives toward emotional and sexual infidelity. Also, Sheets and Wolfe (2001) hypothesize that because gay and lesbian individuals may have experienced rejection from friends and family, the emotional bond with a partner is more significant than a sexual one for both lesbians and gay men, which would contribute to explaining increased distress exhibited by homosexual individuals in the event of emotional infidelity.

Additionally, since a homosexual relationship cannot currently produce genetic offspring, would this eliminate or reduce the role of genetic exclusivity in making sexual infidelity the most distressing? Sagarin, Becker, Guadagno, Nicastle, and Millevoi, (2003) suggest that it would be evolutionarily disadvantageous to feel intense jealousy (and, consequently, dissolve a relationship) if a partner was engaging in infidelity behavior that did not jeopardize reproduction opportunities, such as a same-sex infidelity. Based on the aforementioned research one might expect homosexuals and others with sexual orientations that differ from heterosexual to make reconciliation choices that differ from the reconciliation choices made by heterosexuals. However, due to the lack of research, specificity cannot be forecasted.

Romantic beliefs and sexual attitudes can also play a role in individuals' perceptions of their relationships and in individuals' reactions to infidelity. Sprecher and Metts (1989) developed a Romantic Beliefs Scale and report that romantic beliefs correlate with gender role orientation providing a more important indicator of relational beliefs and behaviors than biological gender provides. Hendricks and Hendricks, (1987), Hendricks, Hendricks, and Reich, (2006) developed a Sexual Attitudes Scale that includes subscales that provide closer looks at

specific aspects of sexual beliefs, such as sexual Permissiveness, Responsibility in sexual practices, Communion, or the feeling of emotional intimacy and closeness during sex, and Instrumentality, or agency in using sex as a means to procure personal pleasure. Using this scale in their research, Cann, Magnus, and Wells (2001) in their study on heterosexual distress reactions to sexual infidelity report that among women, low scores on the sexual attitude subscales of Instrumentality correlated with increased distress at emotional infidelity, while among men, high scores on the subscale of Communion predicted increased distress at sexual infidelity by a partner. At present it is not known how non-heterosexual individual's reactions to emotional and sexual infidelity would be predicted by sexual attitudes. Since there is a dearth of research examining sexual orientations other than heterosexual, it would be beneficial to also examine the romantic beliefs and sexual attitudes of individuals with non-heterosexual orientations. Also, prior research has not included an open ended question where participants can explain their answers. Inclusion of such a question could provide additional useful information that would allow for furthering our understanding of how heterosexual and homosexual individuals respond to a partner's commission of infidelity.

Utilizing an evolutionary theory perspective, the present research seeks to determine if homosexuals and other non-heterosexuals differ from heterosexuals in relationship reconciliation. Given the number of individuals who have sexual orientations other than heterosexual it is important to examine this. Additionally, the present research seeks to determine whether romantic beliefs and sexual attitudes predict non-heterosexual individuals' relationship reconciliation decisions after a partner has committed an infidelity, and how individuals qualitatively explain their reconciliation choices.

### **Hypothesis**

Based on the research cited above, one would expect that non-heterosexual individuals would be more likely to repair a relationship where a partner has committed sexual infidelity than they would be to repair a relationship where a partner has committed an emotional infidelity. This is because sexual infidelity, while very distressing, would be less distressing than emotional infidelity, and participants would be more likely to repair relationships in which the infidelity type caused less distress. Furthermore, since prior research reports that sex differences in reactions to infidelity occur for individuals in committed relationships, sex differences in the likelihood of repairing a relationship after infidelity by a partner are expected for participants in committed relationships with men more likely to repair sexual infidelity and women more likely to repair emotional infidelity. The responses of heterosexual participants are expected to be comparable to those collected by Wade and Mathis (2013), who found that women and men were equally likely to repair a relationship after an emotional infidelity, with female participants being significantly more likely than males to repair a relationship after sexual infidelity.

The expectations for the qualitative responses are exploratory as there is no prior research examining qualitative explanations of reconciliation choices. For the qualitative responses it is expected that the responses themes for homosexual participants would align with general trends correlating with themes from previous research on jealousy about sexual exclusivity, prioritizing emotional connection and increased egalitarian relationships.

## **Methods**

### *Participants:*

Participants were 251 individuals; 80 men, 168 women, and 3 individuals who self-identified as transgender or other. Individuals ranged in age from 18 to 66,  $M = 23.22$ ,  $SD =$

8.724. Eighty percent of the participants were white, 5% were black, 6% were Asian, 5% were Hispanic and 4% identified as other.

Some participants were drawn from Introductory Psychology classes from a private university in the Northeastern US. These participants received course credit for taking part in the research. Additional participants were recruited from diverse online social networking sources. Specifically, anonymous participants were sought from Facebook LGBT groups, and requests were sent out on listservs specific to LGBT research and communities.

Individuals were requested to self-describe their sexual orientation. Twenty-eight self-identified as homosexuals, 12 of whom identified as men, and 16 of whom identified as women, 197 heterosexuals, 66 of whom identified as men, and 131 of whom identified as women, or and 26 other, 2 of whom identified as men, 21 of whom identified as women, with 2 identifying as transgender and 1 as other. Approximately 56% of the participants reported that they preferred men, 33% reported a preference for women, and 11% choose not to report their sexual preference. Approximately 79% of participants reported that they had previously been in a sexual relationship. Approximately, 38% reported being currently in a relationship, and 6% reported that they were unsure of their relationship status.

*Procedure:*

Participants were presented with a link to an online survey. Upon clicking the link to the survey, participants were presented with an informed consent form (see Appendix A). Next, participants were instructed to indicate whether or not they were 18 years or older. Participants were then lead to a series of questions requesting demographic information about race, age,

sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual preference, relationship experience and current relationship status (see Appendix B).

Next participants were instructed to “Imagine a committed relationship in which they have been, currently are, or would like to be in.” Participants were then randomly presented with the 2 relationship scenarios (see Appendix C). One scenario described a partner’s commission of an emotional infidelity and one scenario described a partner’s commission of a sexual infidelity. Participants were instructed to rate on a Likert Scale, 1= very unlikely to 7 = very likely, how likely they would be to attempt reconciliation with their partner after each type of infidelity had been committed. After rating the scenarios, participants were presented with an open-ended question where they could explain their likelihood ratings for the two scenarios (see Appendix D).

Participants were then presented with the 43 question Sexual Attitudes Scale, the validity and reliability of which was vetted by Hendricks, Hendricks, and Reich (2006), and the 15 question Romantic Beliefs Scale, which Sprecher and Metts (1989), found to be highly valid and reliable in measuring romance in participants. Participants were directed to respond to each question as true or false, to better understand how participants’ beliefs about sex and romance can influence their decisions regarding reconciliation with a partner after infidelity has occurred. This method of response deviated from those used previously, since it used true or false responses rather than the Likert scale. The Sexual Attitudes Scale was reliable in the current research, Guttman Split-half Coefficient = .82. The Romantic Beliefs scale was not reliable in the present research, Guttman Split-half Coefficient = .19. To control for possible socially desirable responding biases, a short form of the Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972), was also included (see Appendixes E and F).

Lastly, participants were presented with the debriefing statement, which also explained the hypothesis and thanked them for their participation (See Appendix G).

## Results

### *Quantitative Data Analysis*

Participants were asked to self-select into categories of homosexual, heterosexual and other. However, the results for the “other” category were combined with the results for the “homosexual” category. Descriptive statistics for the Sexual Attitudes scale, the Sexual Attitudes subscales, the Romantic Beliefs Scale, and the Social Desirability measure are included in Table 1. A 2(sexual orientation) x 2 (sex) x 2(infidelity scenario) Mixed Model Repeated Measures ANOVA with the Social Desirability Score included as a covariate was computed. Results indicated a significant effect for scenario,  $F(1, 217) = 13.46, p < .0001$ , with participants being more likely to repair a relationship after an emotional infidelity ( $M=5.36$ ) than after a sexual infidelity ( $M=4.50$ ). This effect was qualified by an interaction effect for infidelity scenario and sexual orientation,  $F(1, 217) = 6.81, p < .01$ , see Figure 1. Figure 1 shows that heterosexual individuals were less likely to repair their relationship after a partner committed sexual infidelity, ( $M=3.61$ ) than after an emotional infidelity ( $M=5.41$ ) was committed by a partner ( $t(188) = -3.74, p < .0001$ ). Homosexual individuals were equally likely to repair their relationship after an emotional or sexual infidelity was committed by a partner. Additionally, homosexual/other individuals were more likely to repair a relationship after a partner committed a sexual infidelity than heterosexual individuals were ( $t(188) = -3.74, p < .0002$ ) with no sex. Additional Mixed Method Model Repeated Measures ANOVAs computed across age, relationship status and sexual relationship experience revealed no significant effects.

To determine whether or not the Romantic Beliefs and Sexual Attitudes predict participants' relationship reconciliation choices, a sum score was created for each scale. A median split was then performed to create low and high categories for each sum score ( $Md = 22.00$  for Sexual Attitudes,  $Md = 7.00$  for Romantic Beliefs). A 2(Sexual Attitudes) x 2(Romantic Beliefs) x 2(Sexual Orientation) x 2(Infidelity Scenarios) Mixed Model ANOVA was computed. Sum scores for Romantic Beliefs and Sexual Attitudes had no significant effects on how likely participants were to repair either infidelity scenario regardless of participants' sexual orientations.

Next, to determine if the subscales for the Sexual Attitudes and the Romantic Beliefs Scale predicted responses to the infidelity scenarios, Pearson correlations were computed between the infidelity repair scenarios and the Romantic Beliefs Scale, the Sexual Attitudes subscales: Permissiveness, Instrumentality, Responsibility, and Communion for the heterosexual participants and then for the homosexual/other participants. With corrections based on the number of tests computed, a  $p$  of .003 was required for significant correlations. With this alpha correction, no significant correlations occurred for any of the sexual attitudes subscales and relationship repair scenario decisions. This may have occurred for the Romantic Beliefs scale and relationship repair scenarios possibly because the split half reliability for this scale was inadequate (Guttman Split-half coefficient = .19).

### *Qualitative Data Analysis*

From the pool of participants who chose to offer more information in the qualitative section, 28 self-described as homosexual or other, while 110 self-described as heterosexual. Table 2 indicates the themes from the qualitative component of the research question, showing

how often the themes arose in the questions for each sexual orientation group. In most cases, each response had multiple themes in it, so were analyzed for each theme represented.

About 80% of the participants responded to the qualitative question asking them to elaborate on their likelihood of reconciliation decisions. These responses were coded based on apparent themes of forgiveness, love, broken trust, a desire to work things out and give second chances, and relationship expectations. These themes described general trends or attitudes, which were broken down into a list of six major categories (see Table 2) and were isolated based on phrases using key words that indicated that the theme was prototypically present in the qualitative response, comparable to the coding for less strictly demarcated qualitative data by Buss (1989). Initial coding was done by the author, who was blind to both orientation and scenario repair preference for the participants. An initial read through the qualitative responses created the six themes, after which the initial coder went back through and marked each response for if the themes were present or absent. A second coder was also asked to code some of the responses, although no reliability test was run.

To determine whether or not the percentages and frequencies for the themes observed in the open ended responses differed for each sexual orientation, a series of 6 individual 2(sexual orientation) x 1(theme) chi-squares were computed. Separate chi-squares were computed because the observation in the theme categories was not independent. Additionally, the critical  $p$  value for significance was reduced from .05 to .008 to control for the possibility of Type 1 errors. Of these six chi-squares computed, two were significant. Significant differences occurred for the themes of “Trust gone/shattered intimacy/expectations violated,”  $X^2(67) = 34.39, p < .0001$ , and “Disrespect to partner and wounded pride,”  $X^2(16) = 14.06, p < .0002$ , see Table 2.

Heterosexuals responses included these themes more often than homosexuals responses did.

## Discussion

The initial hypothesis that this research set out to explore was that homosexual/other participants would be more likely to seek to repair a relationship scenario in which their partner had committed a sexual infidelity than one in which their partner committed emotional infidelity. As well, sex differences were hypothesized for individuals who were in committed relationships based on the differences in jealousy for homosexual participants noted by Dijkstra, et al (2001). The initial hypothesis was not supported. However homosexual/other participants were more likely to repair a relationship scenario in which their partner had been sexually unfaithful than were heterosexuals, demonstrating differences in relationship repair scenario likelihood across the sexual orientation groups, rather than within the homosexual group. Being in committed relationships had no effect on the type of infidelity scenario participants were most likely to repair also, thus the second hypothesis was not supported. The findings for homosexual/other participants greater likelihood of repairing relationships where sexual infidelity occurred than heterosexuals were is consistent with research showing increased jealousy for emotional infidelity for homosexuals, (Dijkstra, et al, 2013). This could be due to the increased importance placed on emotional fidelity in a relationship and decreased emphasis on sexual exclusivity as hypothesized by Dijkstra et al (2001). The responses from heterosexual participants generally aligned with those found by Wade and Mathis (2013), showing that heterosexual participants were, overall, more likely to repair emotional infidelity scenarios than they were to repair sexual infidelity scenarios.

The results from the chi-square test show that a greater frequency of heterosexual individuals cited 2 themes in their qualitative responses than homosexuals. The themes of broken

trust and violated expectations, and disrespect and wounded pride were reflected more often as reasons for their relationship repair decisions by heterosexuals than by homosexuals.

Sexual Attitudes and Romantic Beliefs as sum scores did not affect scenario repair choices. There is a possibility that no effect was shown for these scales because the scales don't measure pertinent beliefs about repair choices. Similarly, the Sexual Attitudes subscales of Permissiveness, Responsibility, Communion and Instrumentality also had no significant relationship with participants' relationship repair decisions.

The hypothesis for responses to the qualitative question was that the responses for homosexual participants would align with general trends correlating with themes from previous research about jealousy. For instance, less emphasis on sexual exclusivity was a trend suggested by Harris (2002) and Peplau and Cochran (1990) due to reduced threat to the relationship from sexual infidelity. Peplau and Cochran (1990) also noted that egalitarian attitudes toward gender roles and responsibilities in homosexual relationships might account for differences in relationship repair. This could take the form of more realistic relationship expectations for partners. Sheets and Wolfe (2001) speculated that possible rejection from family or society's censure would increase the importance of emotional connections. The hypothesis for the qualitative responses was not supported in the present research.

### **Limitations**

Some may feel that this type of research is fundamentally limited by the fact that the data reflects reported behavior, rather than actual behavior, where participants are exposed to sexual and emotional infidelity in their own lives. However, one cannot ethically provoke actual infidelity behavior in participants relationships as that would create psychological discomfort.

Additionally, it might prove to be extremely difficult to find sufficient numbers of individuals who have experienced sexual and emotional infidelity in their relationships. This limitation is countered somewhat by the instructions presented to participants where they were encouraged to use their own experiences for a genuine reaction to each scenario. Additionally, since many had engaged in relationships, it is possible to consider the answers provided to the infidelity scenario repair as fairly valid.

Another limitation that one might feel is applicable to this research is the participants' understanding of the emotional and sexual infidelity scenarios, since they are not isolated or mutually exclusive. However, prior research on reactions to infidelity has used these two specific designations because even if one type of infidelity includes components of the other or vice versa, the primary infidelity within the scenario will be more salient to someone taking part in the survey, which would make the response to the situation quicker because it required less consideration. But, some participants did have difficulty with respect to viewing emotional and sexual infidelity as discrete categories. Several participants voiced beliefs that infidelity occurred on a spectrum, with emotional infidelity being the first step toward sexual infidelity and that cheating would progress through each type in the course of the infidelity.

It could have been useful to have participants indicate if they had experienced infidelity in a relationship. Their responses could have been compared with the responses of other participants who had not experienced infidelity to find out if they differed in reconciliation choices to the hypothetical scenario. If they were the same regardless of experience, this would increase the reliability of the responses, and if they did not, this could provide an important point to be aware of for future research. As well, the author's method of coding is certainly a limitation to the reliability of the analysis for the qualitative question, since although the coder was blind to

the participant's orientation and scenario repair choices, no comprehensive coding was done by an independent coder, nor were there tests of validity for the coding.

There were also some issues with misunderstanding the emotional infidelity scenario, as some participants responded that they thought that "just talking to someone else" was a silly reason to break up. They perceived emotional infidelity to be nothing more than a strong friendship, and said that they expected their significant other to have strong friendships like this. Individuals who responded like this were mostly heterosexual males, and expressed directly or indirectly that they did not perceive emotional infidelity to be at all comparable to sexual infidelity. This is interesting because it aligns both with the idea that heterosexual males are more affronted by sexual infidelity and Shackelford and Buss's (1997) hypothesis that men have a much higher awareness threshold for infidelity and tend to not pick up on infidelity cues that would point to emotional infidelity by their partner.

This study also had the limitation of a small number of participants in the targeted homosexual/other demographic. This could result from several reasons. First, comparatively there are more heterosexual people within the general population. Second, homosexual/other individuals have been mistreated by this society, and are wary of working with psychologists who have not, historically, represented the information that the homosexual individuals have shared in the most accurate light. Finally, there were inadvertent issues with the wording utilized in the questionnaire which may have alienated homosexual/other participants. Several participants responded and pointed out that the language was not adequately inclusive or tuned to appeal to non-heterosexual participants.

For example, one respondent objected to the word choice, explaining “that “homosexual” is almost never used in research with the LGBTQ population, as most [of them] read it as an indicator of an anti-LGBTQ viewpoint.” Other respondents corroborated this objection, explained that they “found the term cold, medical, and a bit offensive,” and explaining that it was not commonly used in research. These participants suggested that instead of homosexual, better terms would be same sex relationships, Gay/Lesbian relationships, or Non-Heterosexual Relationships. A respondent also explained that the sexual orientation question was alienating to bisexual individuals and presumed monosexism, denying the options of the spectrum of orientations, while the question asking participants to whom they were attracted limited people of transgender experience. Instead, the participant suggested providing open ended identifiers where participants could write in their preferred term of their orientation or their preferred object of attraction. The term homosexual was used in the study because it has been used by comparative researchers in the field, and was also the most general term available for non-heterosexual orientations while keeping category limits. Another limitation is the fact that the Sexual Attitudes Scale and Romantics Belief Scale were not specifically calibrated for homosexual/other participants. Lastly, frequencies of participants mentioning the themes in the qualitative responses possibly does not provide the most accurate picture of the responses because of the huge differences in sample size for the two sexual orientations.

### **Future Research**

From themes discovered in the qualitative responses, future research should focus on how other factors are involved in general relationship repair for infidelity scenarios, particularly in how the length of time the relationship has been established for, whether levels of commitment such as marriage or children factor into overall repair likelihood, or what role acknowledging the

mistake and apologizing would have in likelihood of relationship repair. Multiple participants also mentioned that although they believed in giving second chances, if their partner cheated again, they would be very unlikely to seek reconciliation. Thus, it could be interesting to look at repeated cheaters and their relationship repair likelihood, and to look at whether repeat sexual infidelity and repeat emotional infidelity had greater or less likelihood of relationship repair.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the Sexual Attitudes sub-scales, Romantic Beliefs scale and Social Desirability score.

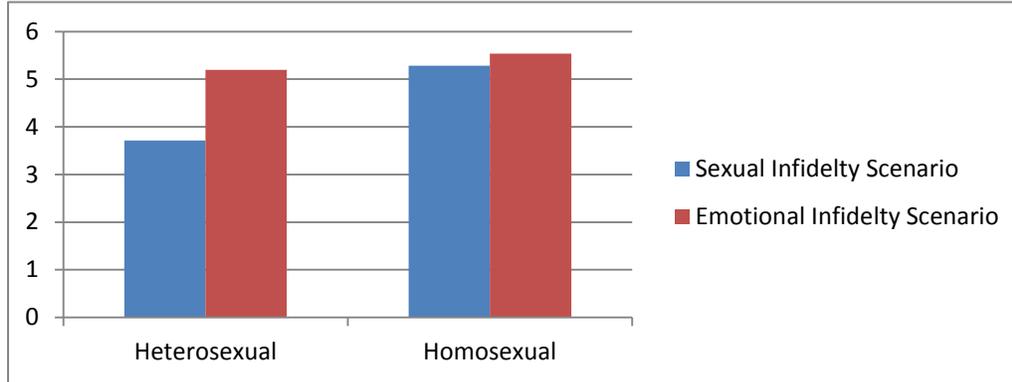
Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social desirability Score	210	.00	9.00	4.5143	2.04
Sexual Attitudes	212	7.00	36.00	21.2264	5.74
Romantic Beliefs	211	1.00	15.00	6.9905	3.29
Permissiveness-Sex. Att.	216	.00	17.00	7.5880	4.50
Responsibility-Sex. Att.	213	4.00	8.00	7.3709	.975
Communion-Sex. Att	214	.00	6.00	3.2523	1.63
Instrumentality-Sex. Att.	214	.00	8.00	3.0234	1.75

Note: Higher numbers mean higher scores in each category mean more of the attribute for each scale.

Table 2. Themes from the Qualitative Question, broken up by how many from each orientation mentioned the theme in their response, and what percentage of all the responses for their orientation that entailed.

Themes	Homosexual/Other	% of whole	Heterosexual	% of whole
Love/forgiveness will prevail	9	32%	21	19%
Willing to work things out/Communicate more	10	36%	16	15%
Trust gone/shattered intimacy/expectations violated	9	32%	58	53%
People make mistakes, learn and go on/second chances/surrounding circumstances partly to blame	12	43%	24	22%
Monogamy is an unreasonable expectation	6	21%	0	0%
Disrespectful to partner/wounded pride	0	0%	16	15%

Figure 1. Comparison of Scenario Repair Likelihood for Heterosexual and Homosexual/Other.



## Appendix A

### **Informed Consent Form Bucknell University**

Project Name: “Relationship Repair after Infidelity: Looking at Other Perspectives”

Purpose of the research: I understand that I will be given questionnaires and a series of relationship scenarios. I will be asked to respond to the questionnaires truthfully and give my opinions regarding my reactions to the relationship scenarios. I understand that my responses will be used to better understand people’s decisions about their problems in their relationships, and why they make the choices about the relationship repair that they engage in. Previous research has considered relationship repair among heterosexual couples, and this research intends to complement the existing research and offer other perspectives on dealing with infidelity in relationships.

General plan of the research: I understand that I will be responding to several questionnaires and to a series of scenarios. I also understand that I will be asked to answer general questions regarding my demographic information (sex, race, age, etc.), my current relationship status, and my sexual orientation.

Estimated duration of the research: I understand that my participation in this study will take no more than 30 minutes.

Estimated total number of participants: I understand that the research wishes to include at least 80 participants in this study.

Questions or concerns: I understand that if I have any questions or concerns related to this study, I may contact the Principle Investigator, Cherra Mathis, via email at [cmm051@bucknell.edu](mailto:cmm051@bucknell.edu). I may also contact Professor T. Joel Wade, Chair, Department of Psychology at Bucknell University, at (570)577-1693 or by email at [jwade@bucknell.edu](mailto:jwade@bucknell.edu). For general questions regarding human subject research or questions regarding ethical treatment and rights of human subjects, I may contact Matthew Slater, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at Bucknell University, at (570)577-2767 or by email at [matthew.slater@bucknell.edu](mailto:matthew.slater@bucknell.edu). Minimal risk or discomfort is anticipated for this study, but it is not possible to anticipate everything that may occur. All possible measures will be taken by the Principle Investigator to reduce and prevent discomfort.

Subject participation is voluntary: I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary. I understand that if I agree to participate I may change my mind at any time. I also understand that I reserve the right to refuse to answer any question(s) and may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

No compensation: I understand that my contribution to the current research is voluntary and I will not be compensated for my participation.

Possible risks or discomforts: I understand that minimal risks are associated with participation in this study and that no more than mild psychological discomfort is anticipated. I also understand that information I disclose for the purposes of this study will be secured and kept confidential to protect my privacy.

Possible benefits: I understand that my participation in this study will contribute to the existing knowledge concerning relationship repair.

Confidentiality: I understand that data acquired through this study will be kept confidential. I also understand that all scalar data collected will be secured and only made available to those persons conducting the study, unless I provide written permission to do otherwise. I understand that my written portion may be used, but any details that could possibly link me to the study will be eliminated. All data I provide for the purpose of this study will be retained on computer disk in broad data records, but the actual questionnaires will be discarded.

I have read the above description of the research. Anything I did not understand was explained to me by the Principle Investigator and I had all of my questions answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I will be debriefed upon completion of this study. I agree to participate in this research, and I acknowledge that I have received a personal copy of this signed consent form.

Appendix B. **Demographic Questions**

Please answer the following questions.

Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Race: White\_\_\_\_ Black\_\_\_\_ Asian\_\_\_\_ Hispanic\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_

Sexual orientation: Heterosexual \_\_\_\_\_ Homosexual \_\_\_\_\_

Do you identify as (choose any that apply) Man \_\_\_\_\_ Woman \_\_\_\_\_ Transgender \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual preference: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been in a sexual relationship? yes\_\_\_\_\_ no\_\_\_\_\_

Current relationship status: single \_\_\_\_\_ in a relationship \_\_\_\_\_ unsure \_\_\_\_\_



Appendix D. **Qualitative Question:**

**To acknowledge the highly complicated nature of relationships and the choices that we make in them, this is an opportunity for you to explain your decision about your partner's hypothetical infidelity. Please feel free to explain why you chose to repair the relationship after the sexual or emotional infidelity scenario if you feel that rating it on a scale does not adequately explain your decision or beliefs about relationships and infidelity. You have 400 characters.**

## Appendix E. Sexual Attitudes Scale & Romantic Beliefs Scale

### Sex Attitude Scale

#### Permissiveness:

1. I do not need to be committed to a person to have sex with him or her.
2. Casual sex is acceptable.
3. I would like to have sex with many partners.
4. One night stands are sometimes very enjoyable.
5. It is okay to have ongoing sexual relationships with more than one person at a time.
6. It is okay to manipulate someone into having sex as long as no future promises are made.
7. Sex as a simple exchange of favors is okay if both people agree to it.
8. The best sex is with no strings attached.
9. Life would have fewer problems if people could have sex more freely.
10. It is possible to enjoy sex with a person and not like that person very much.
11. Sex is more fun with someone you don't love.
12. It is alright to pressure someone into having sex.
13. Unlimited premarital sexual experience is fine. (Extensive premarital sexual experience is fine).
14. Extramarital affairs are all right as long as one's partner doesn't know about them.
15. Sex for its own sake is perfectly alright.
16. I would feel comfortable having intercourse with my partner in the presence of other people.
17. Prostitution should be accepted by society. (Prostitution is acceptable).
18. Sex is best when people approach it as good physical release. (It is okay for sex to be just good physical release).
19. Sex without love is meaningless.
20. People should at least be friends before they have sex together.
21. In order for sex to be good, it should also be meaningful.

#### Sexual Practices:

22. Birth control is part of responsible sexuality.
23. A woman should share responsibility for birth control.
24. A man should share responsibility for birth control.
25. Sex education for young people is of little value. (Sex education is important for young people).
26. Using "sex toys" during love-making is abnormal. (Using "sex toys" during love-making is acceptable).
27. Masturbation is alright.
28. Masturbating one's partner during intercourse can increase the pleasure of sex.

Communion:

29. Sexual techniques get better as a relationship progresses. (Sex gets better as a relationship progresses).
30. Sex is the closest form of communication between two people.
31. A sexual encounter between two people deeply in love is the ultimate human interaction.
32. Orgasm is the greatest experience in the world.
33. At its best, sex seems to be the merging of two souls.
34. Life without sex would be very dull. (Sex is a very important part of life).
35. Sex is usually an intensive, almost overwhelming experience.
36. During sexual intercourse, intense awareness of the partner is the best frame of mind.
37. Sex is fundamentally good.

Instrumentality:

38. Sex is best when you let yourself go and focus on your own pleasure.
39. Sex is primarily the taking of pleasure from another person.
40. The main purpose of sex is to enjoy oneself.
41. Sex is primarily physical.
42. Sex is primarily a bodily function, like eating.
43. Sex is mostly a game between males and females. (Change males and females to “two people.”)

**Romantic Beliefs Scale**

1. I need to know someone for a period of time before I fall in love with him or her.
2. If I were in love with someone, I would commit myself to him or her even if my parents and friends disapproved of the relationship.
3. Once I experience “true love,” I could never experience it again, to the same degree, with a different person.
4. I believe that to be truly in love is to be in love forever.
5. If I love someone, I know I can make the relationship work, despite any obstacles.
6. When I find my “true love,” I will probably know it soon after we meet.
7. I’m sure that every new thing I learn about the person I chose for a long-term commitment will please me.
8. The relationship I will have with my “true love” will be nearly perfect.
9. If I love someone, I will find a way for us to be together, regardless of the opposition to the relationship, physical distance between us, or any other barrier.
10. There will be only one real love for me.
11. If a relationship I have was meant to be, any obstacle, (e.g. lack of money, physical distance, career conflicts) can be overcome.

12. I am likely to fall in love almost immediately if I meet the right person.
13. I expect that in my relationship, romantic love will really last; it won't fade with time.
14. The person I love will make a perfect romantic partner; for example, he/she will be completely accepting, loving and understanding.
15. I believe that if another person and I love each other, we can overcome any differences and problems that may arise.

Appendix F.

**Social Desirability Scale**

**Directions: The following questions contain a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide whether the statement is true or false as it pertains to you personally. If it does not pertain to you, answer F.**

- (1) I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble. \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) I have never intensely disliked anyone. \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others. \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrong doings. \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way. \_\_\_\_\_
- (6) There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right. \_\_\_\_\_
- (7) I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable. \_\_\_\_\_
- (8) When I don't know something I don't at all mind admitting it. \_\_\_\_\_
- (9) I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something. \_\_\_\_\_
- (10) I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me. \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G

### Debriefing Statement

The experiment you just took part in dealt with the relationship between sex and reconciliation, and how the likelihood of seeking reconciliation after an infidelity is affected by the sex of the injured party and the type of infidelity committed. You were asked to read and rate two scenarios on how likely you would be to repair your relationship after experiencing each scenario, and briefly explain your relationship repair choice. A brief measure of socially desirable responding was also included to allow us to guard against social desirability in your responses to the questions and scenarios. Only minimal deception where we did not divulge our hypothesis was employed in this study, to allow us to get genuine reactions. Our hypothesis is that homosexual individuals will be more likely to repair a relationship after sexual infidelity than after emotional infidelity, with possible sex differences between men and women for participants in committed relationships. The only individuals who will see the responses are myself, the experimenter, and my supervisor, Professor T. Joel Wade.

Now that you know what this research is about, if you would like me to exclude your response, please select the appropriate choice below. If you choose to let me use your response, please be aware that any reports will be based on aggregated data, and in the event that I use individual quotes, no identifying information will be divulged. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have either at this time or in the future. I may be contacted via email [atcmm051@bucknell.edu](mailto:atcmm051@bucknell.edu). Thank you for your participation.