

ARE MEN AND WOMEN REALLY DIFFERENT? SOCIAL INSTITUTIONAL
APPROACHES TO INFIDELITY

by

DIXSHA SHIVANI NAIR

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Family Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

December 2009

© DIXSHA SHIVANI NAIR, 2009

ABSTRACT

Infidelity is often cited as the leading cause of marital dissolution. Moreover, previous research has focused on gender differences, relationship variables and other variables, such as religion and employment without establishing a comprehensive theoretical framework. To the extent that theories are established, they focus on the inherent differences between men and women. It is theorized that women and men approach infidelity differently due to different mating strategies. Men are more likely to commit adultery than women because they engage in short-term mating with multiple partners. Women, on the other hand, engage in long term mating and when they do have affairs, they are emotionally involved. However, current estimates of infidelity range from one to six percent and indicate that the vast majority of individuals do not approve of nor engage in extramarital sex. I argue that social institutions such as marriage, religion, and work inform both behaviour and attitudes regarding infidelity. These institutions establish norms and conventions, which also influence aspects of sex including infidelity. As such, the current study examines whether attitudes and behaviours regarding infidelity can be explained as the result of inherent differences between men and women or whether social institutions also play a role.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	iv
Introduction.....	1
Method.....	16
Sample.....	16
Data.....	17
Analyses.....	21
Results	23
Discussion	33
Limitations	37
References.....	41

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Description of Measures.....	21
Table 2	Predictors of Infidelity Attitudes.....	24
Table 3	Predictors of Infidelity Attitudes for Males.....	26
Table 4	Predictors of Infidelity Attitudes for Females.....	26
Table 5	Predictors of Infidelity Behaviour.....	29
Table 6	Predictors of Infidelity Behaviour for Males.....	30
Table 7	Predictors of Infidelity Behaviour for Females.....	30

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an institution that is undergoing phenomenal changes. Many scholars agree that marriage is changing and that intimate relationships are taking on a new form (Le Bourdais & Lapierre-Adamcyk, 2004; Cherlin, 2004; Gillis, 2004). Individuals now have numerous choices in their personal lives as to the types of intimate relationships they can form and maintain (Gillis, 2004). Cohabitation is becoming increasingly popular and acceptable (Gillis, 2004). Although marriage is changing, the expected norm for intimate relationships continues to be monogamy (Treas & Giesen, 2000). It is a cultural ideal. Given the normative nature of monogamy, infidelity is cited as one of the leading causes of divorce throughout the world (Betzig, 1989; Atkins, Baucom & Jacobson, 2001). However, according to the most often reported statistic, approximately only 1.5 to 3.6 percent of married individuals in the United States have engaged in extramarital sex in the past year (Treas & Giesen, 2000). Moreover, estimates of prevalence rates of infidelity vary. In one study, only 1.5 percent of married Americans had more than one sexual partner (Smith, 1991); whereas another found that 2.2 percent of respondents had had extramarital sex (Choi, Catania, & Dolcini, 1994). In a study of men ages 20-39, 4 percent of currently married men reported having more than one partner in the past year (Billy, Tanfer, Grady, & Klepinger, 1993). Similarly, in a national survey of women ages 20-37, Forste and Tanfer (1996) found that 4 percent of currently married women reported having had extramarital sex at some point. Leigh, Temple, and Trocki (1993) reported prevalence rates based on a national sample of adults surveyed with regard to the number of sexual partners during the past 30 days, 12 months and 5 years. Among those respondents who were married, 1.2 percent reported more than one intercourse partner during the past 30 days, 3.6 percent reported more than one partner in the past 12 months, and 6.4 percent in the past 5 years

(Leigh, Temple, Trocki, 1993). Although these estimates of infidelity vary, they are still relatively low, ranging from 1 to 6 percent. Even though infidelity is seen as a considerable problem, very few people actually seem to engage in it. Consequently, the focus of the present paper is to explain why some individuals engage in extramarital sex while others do not by examining biological sex differences and social institutions. Specifically, this paper analyzes whether there are, in fact, inherent sex differences or whether social institutions such as marriage, religion and the workplace account for the variation in attitudes and rates of infidelity.

Currently, research on infidelity focuses on gender differences, relationship variables and other variables, such as religion and employment. It is theorized that men and women are inherently different and, therefore, they have distinct approaches to infidelity. With the exception of sex differences, the majority of the research on infidelity lacks a comprehensive theoretical foundation. These studies only examine the correlations between various variables and infidelity without establishing a theoretical framework. However, one can argue that religion, the workforce and even marriage are distinct social institutions. A social institution has general social norms and conventions (White & Klein, 2002). That is, rules are established for proper conduct and behaviour. Such social institutions may also influence an individual's attitudes and behaviour regarding infidelity. As such, the present paper will examine whether attitudes and behaviours regarding infidelity can be explained as the result of inherent differences between men and women or whether social institutions also play a role.

Numerous studies have found a significant gender difference in propensity to engage in extramarital sex, as well as rates of actual infidelity (Atkins, et al., 2001; Treas & Giesen, 2000; Brand, Markey, Mills, & Hodges, 2007; Buss, 2006; Winking, Kaplan, Gurven, & Rucas, 2007; Buss & Shackelford, 1997). One of the most common findings in the literature on infidelity is

that males engage in more acts of infidelity than females (Brand et al., 2007; Buss & Shackelford, 1997). In one study, being male increased the odds of having engaged in extramarital sex by 79 percent (Treas & Giesen, 2000). These sex differences apply to the prevalence and incidence of infidelity (Brand et al., 2007). That is, more men than women have affairs and among the men and women who do have affairs, men typically have a greater number of partners (Buss & Shackelford, 1997). Moreover, women's affairs are often emotionally involved, long-term relationships (Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Brand et al., 2007). Men, on the other hand, are more likely to have affairs without emotional involvement, that is, they are more likely to have one-night stands (Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Brand et al., 2007). It is thought that these sex differences are a result of differential investment in offspring and because of these different levels of minimal investment, women's and men's mating behaviours will be different (Brand et al., 2007; Buss, 2006). However, these studies are measuring gender not sex (Hyde, DeLamater, & Byers, 2004). That is, respondents are asked to self-identify as male or female so, in effect, their gender identity is assessed rather than their biological sex (Hyde et al., 2004). The present study is an attempt to assess the claims of previous studies regarding biological sex differences (Brand et al., 2007; Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Treas & Giesen, 2000; Buss, 2006) and, as such, also uses this measure of gender.

Parental Investment Theory (Trivers, 1972) focuses on the fact that men and women have different levels of obligatory investment in their offspring (Brand et al., 2007; Wade & Shuster; 2002; Bjorkland & Shackelford, 1999; Parker & Simmons, 1996; Kenrick, Sadalla, Groth, & Trost, 1990; Bailey, Kirk, Zhu, Dunne, & Martin, 2000). Historically, women have had to devote a year or more to pregnancy and lactation for the child to survive, whereas men need not invest more than the act of sex (Buss, 2006; Brand et al., 2007; Bjorkland & Shackelford, 1999;

Kenrick et al., 1990; Wade & Shuster, 2002; Bailey et al., 2000). As such, males are more likely to engage in short-term mating with multiple partners, while women, because they must invest more, are less likely to do so (Brand et al., 2007; Buss, 2006; Wade & Shuster, 2002; Bjorkland & Shackelford, 1999; Kenrick et al., 1990; Bailey et al., 2000). However, women do report infidelity and, therefore, must derive benefits different than those for men (Brand et al., 2007). Women may pursue infidelity in order to accrue additional resources from another male (Buss, 2006). Women may also use an affair to mate-switch (Buss, 2006; Brand et al., 2007). This allows the female to find a replacement partner without giving up the security and protection provided by the current mate (Brand et al., 2007). In other words, women are less likely to have extramarital sex, and when they do, it is for reasons other than those cited by men. It is hypothesized that there is an inherent biological difference in attitudes and behaviour regarding extramarital affairs. However, in keeping in line with this theory, it would be expected that the numbers of individuals who engage in extramarital sex would be much higher. Such sex differences alone cannot explain why some individuals have affairs while others do not. Other factors must also be at work, that is, social institutions must also influence individuals.

Moreover, Parental Investment Theory (Trivers, 1972) also claims that due to differential investment in offspring, a partner's infidelity will have different reproductive costs for men and women and, therefore, they have different reactions and attitudes toward extramarital sex (Cann, Mangum, & Wells, 2001; Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992; Buunk, Angleitner, Oubaid, & Buss, 1996; Shackelford, Buss, & Bennett, 2002; Cramer, Abraham, Johnson, & Manning-Ryan, 2001). For males, the potential cost of sexual infidelity may jeopardise certainty in paternity (Shackelford et al., 2002). This runs the attendant risk of investing resources in another man's child (Shackelford et al., 2002; Buunk et al., 1996), as well as the loss of mating

effort expended, time, energy, nuptial gifts, and mating opportunity costs lost through foregone chances to mate with other women (Buss et al., 1992; Buunk et al., 1996). Females, on the other hand, are certain of their genetic legacy, but risk losing a mate's energy, time, commitment, protection, and emotional investments due to a partner's potential infidelity (Buunk, et al., 1996; Shackelford, et al., 2002; Buss et al., 1992). Several studies have found that women and men have different reactions to extramarital sex (Cann et al, 2001; Buss et al., 1992; Buunk et al., 1996; Shackelford et al., 2002; Cramer et al., 2001). That is, males are likely to express distress over situations that reflect a partner's sexual infidelity; which jeopardizes paternity, while women are concerned with their mate's emotional involvement with another; which jeopardizes resources (Cramer et al., 2001; Can et al., 2001; Buunk et al., 1996; Buss et al, 1992; Shackelford et al., 2002). Moreover, these results have been replicated in several countries including China, Germany, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States (Buunk et al., 1996; Cramer et al., 2001). However, men and women alike are terribly upset about a partner's infidelity, whether that infidelity is primarily sexual or primarily emotional (Shackelford et al., 2002). This may be due in part to men and women inferring that one form of infidelity implies the other (Cramer et al., 2001). That is, men may think that sexual infidelity also involves an emotional aspect, whereas, women may believe that a partner's emotional infidelity also implies a sexual aspect (Cramer et al., 2001). These beliefs are reflective of what females and males have learned regarding sex, relationships and fidelity. While evolutionary pressures may result in gender differences in responses to infidelity, individuals' socialization may also determine their views of relationships and their expectations (Cann et al., 2001). In other words, social factors, or institutions, can and do, in fact, shape the expression of beliefs regarding extramarital sex (Cann et al., 2001).

A social institution can be understood as a set of widely shared expectations that are both practical and normative, and which support particular forms of behaviour and sanction others (Charles & Harris, 2007). In other words, a social institution has general social norms and conventions (White & Klein, 2002). As such, an institution since it is comprised by cultural or normative expectations guide individuals' attitudes and behaviours (Elder-Vass, 2008). That is, they encourage particular practices, such as monogamy, as normative structures (Elder-Vass, 2008). Moreover, social institutions, by the very nature of being cultural or normative patterns, define the expectations that individuals hold about each other's behaviour (Elder-Vass, 2008). They are collective representations or systems of shared norms, values, and ideas that shape social behaviour (Elder-Vass, 2008). That is, they are complexes of normative rules and principles which, either through law or other less formal mechanisms of social control, serve to regulate social actions (Elder-Vass, 2008; White & Klein, 2002). Examples of social institutions include marriage, religion, and work (Elder-Vass, 2008). These institutions represent an established order that is comprised of rule-bound and standardized behaviour patterns (Elder-Vass, 2008). In other words, they are arrangements of norms and rules that inspire behaviour (Elder-Vass, 2008). Social institutions define what are considered, in the given society, proper, legitimate or expected modes of action or of social relationships (Elder-Vass, 2008). Thus, individuals enact particular practices because of the particular normative beliefs they hold and that the standardization of these behaviours arises, at least in part, from the fact that the corresponding normative beliefs or attitudes are shared (Elder-Vass, 2008). The commonality of social practices can only be explained by the commonality of the norms and values across the community, and hence it is the collective norm or value that produces standardized behaviour (Elder-Vass, 2008).

Marriage is such a social institution. Although it is no longer the exclusive setting for childbearing and rearing, and cohabitation is becoming more and more accepted and institutionalized (Cherlin, 2004), marriage continues to be an important institution. That is, most people—nearly 90 percent (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001)—will eventually marry. The conjugal still continues to bestow status and identity (Gillis, 2004). The expectations that people place upon marriage have escalated, making it a relationship that involves very high expectations, especially regarding fidelity and monogamy (Gillis, 2004).

These expectations also comprise commitment in marriage. The institution of marriage also includes barriers to leaving the relationship, which, in turn, influences one's tendency to engage in extramarital sex. In this regard, barriers inform commitment, which entails a tendency to remain faithful in a marriage (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). That is, the relationship involves an investment of resources that function as barriers to relationship dissolution, and so one can conjecture that these barriers influence attitudes towards and the tendency to have extramarital affairs (Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999; Kapinus & Johnson, 2002; Treas & Giesen, 2000). Such investments or barriers include resources such as the time and energy invested in the maintenance of the relationship, as well as children (Treas & Giesen, 2000; Kapinus & Johnson, 2002). If these investments were made in the anticipation of long-term payoffs of the relationship, then damaging the relationship may be perceived to involve an unacceptable loss (Kapinus & Johnson, 2002). Individuals get locked into unions by investments that they cannot recoup outside of the relationship, as such these individuals are less likely to leave or jeopardize their relationships through infidelity (Treas & Giesen, 2000). That is, those who are married are more likely to have children and so face higher barriers or costs to extramarital sex (Treas & Giesen, 2000; Kapinus & Johnson, 2002). In other words, individuals who have high

investments, such as children, in their relationships are less likely to have extramarital sex because such an action could result in the loss of irretrievable investments.

Hypothesis 1a: Individuals who have children are less likely to approve of and engage in infidelity.

Furthermore, researchers claim that the quality of the marital relationship itself accounts for extramarital affairs (Allen, Atkins, Baucom, Snyder, Gordon, & Glass, 2005). Some argue that dissatisfaction with the marital relationship is associated with extramarital sex (Treas & Giesen, 2000; Whisman et al., 2007; Atkins et al., 2001; Allen et al., 2005). Specifically, marital quality mediates costs (Treas & Giesen, 2000). In other words, if a marriage is judged to be unsatisfactory, one has less to lose and so is more likely to engage in or approve of infidelity (Treas & Giesen, 2000). That is, satisfaction with the marital relationship influences commitment such that individuals want to continue the relationship (Johnson et al., 1999; Kapinus & Johnson, 2002) and, therefore, will not engage in behaviour, such as infidelity, which may be detrimental to the relationship. Those who report engaging in infidelity are less likely to report happy marriages (Treas & Giesen, 2000). In fact, Atkins and colleagues (2001) found that those who reported their relationships to be “pretty happy” and “not too happy” were two to four times more likely, respectively, to have reported having extramarital sex than those who reported they were “very happy” with their relationships.

Hypothesis 1b: Individuals who have high marital satisfaction are less likely to engage in and approve of infidelity.

The institution of religion also affects infidelity. Furthermore, religion reinforces pro-marriage or anti-divorce beliefs (Marks, 2005; Kapinus & Pellerin, 2008). Sullivan (2001) found that husbands' and wives' religiosity was significantly correlated with their own and their

spouses' divorce attitudes. In the same study, religiosity was also correlated with commitment to marriage both within and between spouses (Sullivan, 2001). That is, religious involvement fortifies marital commitment to fidelity (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007). Religious beliefs about the lasting nature of marriage also contribute to commitment in marriage (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007). Religious condemnation of extramarital sex is an often cited reason that individuals remain faithful in their relationships (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007). In other words, religiosity leads to pro-marriage and anti-divorce attitudes which lead to a lower likelihood of extramarital sex. Religious emphasis on the importance of marriage may be the reason church-attending couples experience greater commitment to their marriage and are less likely to have affairs (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008). That is, religiosity fosters commitment not only to an individual, but also to the institution of marriage (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008; Kapinus & Pellerin, 2008). Religion is interconnected with the institution of marriage (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008). Fidelity in marriage is emphasized in many religions because of the value that society places on committed relationships (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008). Thus, perhaps religious involvement increases an individual's commitment to both a religious institution, which forbids and strongly discourages infidelity, and to the institution of marriage (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008).

Virtually, all religious groups and traditions condemn infidelity; however, they differ in the strength of these norms (Burdette, Ellison, Sherkat, & Gore, 2007). Monogamy is emphasized in many religions because of the value that society places on committed relationships (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008). That is, sexual fidelity is a core belief of all mainstream religious organizations, including Christianity (Burdette et al., 2007). However, religious denominations vary in their emphasis on adherence to religious prescriptions and proscriptions regarding sexual behaviour (Burdette et al., 2007). Even among groups that have

adopted more liberal views towards other issues regarding sexuality such as marrying gay and lesbian couples, sexual exclusiveness within the bonds of marriage continues to be upheld (Burdette et al., 2007). That is, religious individuals are less likely to have had affairs compared to the less religious (Atkins & Kessel, 2008). Burdette and colleagues (2007) found that the odds of infidelity for individuals who attend religious services several times a week are approximately 66 percent lower than the odds for persons who never attend services. An individual who belongs to and attends church is regularly exposed to norms that proscribe extramarital sex (Liu, 2000). Theological teachings underscore the importance of marriage and fidelity and the prohibition of infidelity (Atkins & Kessel, 2008). Thus, the individual is more likely to internalize such norms and adhere to them, and in this way, infidelity incurs internal sanctions (Liu, 2000). Dollahite and Lambert (2007) found that religion strengthened people's moral values which, in turn, promoted fidelity in marriage. Regular religious participation is a marker of individual commitment to religiosity, and such a commitment fosters adherence to religious doctrine and a social institution which condemns infidelity (Burdette et al., 2007).

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who regularly attend religious services are less likely to engage in and approve of infidelity than those who do not.

Moreover, religious communities provide contexts that explicitly or implicitly underscore the prohibition of infidelity (Atkins & Kessel, 2008). Church attendance reinforces the social disapproval and possible loss of relationship and community that may occur as a result of engaging in an extramarital affair (Atkins & Kessel, 2008). This is because those who regularly attend church services form a closure of social networks (Liu, 2000). This closure is featured by frequent communication between members and is indispensable for sanctioning a target actor who violates accepted norms (Liu, 2000). In other words, religious participation is a potential

source of control over sexuality because connections to family and friends forged through regular interactions in religious settings may lower opportunities for extramarital sex and raise the likelihood of detection (Burdette et al., 2007). That is, leaving a marriage or having an affair within a religious community may be more difficult because of the constraints and disapproval of such behaviour (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008). One must go to greater lengths to keep infidelity secret (Treas & Giesen, 2000). Church attendance signifies embeddedness within congregational social networks, which facilitates behavioural monitoring, detection of counternormative or prohibited behaviour, and possible social or religious sanctions (Burdette et al., 2007). Religion also discourages behaviour that often leads to extramarital sex (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007). Behavioural monitoring within religious communities may also limit the exposure of members to social environments that are conducive to infidelity, such as bars and adult entertainment establishments (Burdette et al., 2007; Marks, 2005).

The workplace is another social environment, or social institution, that may influence the tendency to engage in extramarital sex. Unlike marriage and religiosity, however, employment seems to be conducive to infidelity. The culture of a workplace, that is, the taken-for-granted assumptions and normative expectations are likely to affect its employees (Mennino, Rubin, & Brayfield, 2005). Beyond employment practices, the culture of the workplace includes the informal rules about how relationships should be structured (Fligstein, 2001). The shared set of beliefs about the values, norms and goals of an organization comprise its workplace culture and its informal structure (Gherardi, 1994). As such, the assumptions about the relationship of family to the workplace are an integral component of workplace culture (Mennino et al., 2005). Both formal policies and informal norms of organizations may influence an individual's propensity to approve of or engage in extramarital sex (Mennino et al., 2005). One such

informal norm is that of commitment to the job (Mennino et al., 2005). Specific features of corporate involvement influence workers' commitments and priorities to the point where they are driven to commit more and more to the corporation than to any other extra-occupational social tie (Terrien, 2005), including their intimate relationships. This greater commitment to work negatively affects the availability of time and emotional commitment to the family (Terrien, 2005). According to the corporate culture, commitment to work is exemplified in hours worked; such that the more time spent at work the more committed the employee appears (Hochschild, 1997). Generally, more employees in diverse occupations are working longer hours than ever before (Rones, Ilg, & Gardner, 1997). However, it appears that these long hours are not always due to increased job demands, but rather emerge out of time-demanding organizational cultures that valorize long hours and reward those individuals who are willing to sustain them (Mennino et al., 2005). With this increase in time-demanding organizations one can conjecture that the family is not valued and, thus marital relationships are not considered important. This lack of commitment to and value of intimate relationships may result in approval of infidelity and a higher likelihood to engage in such behaviour.

Moreover, the workplace is a gendered institution. Both the public and private spheres of work are gendered in that they are ideologically separate and unequal regardless of the gender of incumbents (Mennino et al., 2005). That is, gender is implicated in the fundamental and ongoing process of creating and conceptualizing social structures (Acker, 1990), including the workplace. Organizational structure is not gender neutral; rather assumptions regarding gender underlie the construction of organizations (Acker, 1990). Gender is obviously a basic constitutive element in family and kinship, but less obviously, it also frames the underlying relations of complex organizations such as corporations (Acker, 1990). Market work is masculinized and

masculinity holds great value such that those who achieve success are those who practice masculinity by engaging in practices and behaviours culturally associated with masculinity (Martin, 2003; Foster, 1999; Mennino et al., 2005). As such, the correlation between infidelity and employment may be the result of a gendered institution that upholds masculinity. In other words, extramarital affairs may be approved of as a component of masculine ideals that encourage a greater time commitment to work than to the family.

Hypothesis 3: Those who work long hours will have more positive attitudes towards infidelity and will be more likely to engage in it.

Furthermore, to the extent that gender is important to infidelity attitudes and behaviour it may be as a moderator. That is, gender may moderate the relationship between work, religion, and marriage and extramarital sex. These social institutions represent a set of widely shared expectations, or social norms, that support particular forms of behaviour while sanctioning others (Charles & Harris, 2007; White & Klein, 2002). In other words, social institutions delineate proper, legitimate, and expected modes of action and social relationships (Elder-Vass, 2008). As such, marriage, religion and work, as they consist of cultural or normative expectations, guide individuals' attitudes and behaviours (Elder-Vass, 2008). That is, they may encourage particular practices, such as monogamy, as normative structures (Elder-Vass, 2008). Moreover, the effect of these social forces may be different for men and for women due to the different messages that men and women receive regarding sex and relationships. In other words, gender differences may be a result of socialization.

Specifically, marriage is an institution that includes barriers to leaving the relationship, such as children. However, because it has been found that having children is a high-risk time for extramarital sexual activity especially for men (Whisman et al., 2007; Allen et al., 2005), it is

hypothesized that there will be significant differences between males and females with regards to the effect of having children on infidelity. Furthermore, previous studies have found that there are differences between men and women in terms of satisfaction with the marriage and extramarital sex (Allen et al., 2005; Atkins et al., 2001). Specifically, women who were not satisfied with their marital relationships were more likely to commit adultery (Atkins et al., 2001; Allen et al., 2005). Consequently, I hypothesize that gender will moderate the relationship between marital satisfaction and infidelity.

Hypothesis 4a: Gender will moderate the effect of marriage on infidelity.

As such, gender will moderate the relationship between having children and extramarital sex, such that more men with children will engage in and approve of infidelity than women. Finally, the association between marital satisfaction and infidelity will be moderated by gender such that women who are less satisfied in their marriages will be more likely to approve of and have extramarital sex.

The association between religiosity and infidelity will also be moderated by gender. Fidelity in marriage is emphasized in many religions (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008), which leads to a lower likelihood of extramarital sex because it reinforces pro-monogamy ideals. Religious involvement increases an individual's commitment to a religious institution, which forbids and strongly discourages infidelity (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008). However, previous research has found that church attendance has a negative effect on extramarital sex for men but not for women (Liu, 2000). In other words, religious men were less likely to engage in infidelity than religious women.

Hypothesis 4b: Gender will moderate the relationship between religiosity and infidelity such that religious males will be less likely to approve of or engage in infidelity than religious females.

Gender will moderate the association between the social institution of work and extramarital sexual activity because it is an institution that idealizes the masculine, specifically greater time commitment to work than to other relationships (Mennino et al., 2005).

Furthermore, researchers have found that employment has a positive impact on extramarital sex for men more so than women (Liu, 2000; Atkins et al., 2001). As such, there will be differences between males and females in the approval of and rates of infidelity.

Hypothesis 4c: Gender will moderate the relationship between work and infidelity such that men who are employed and work long hours will be more likely to approve of and engage in infidelity than women.

Although I hypothesize that social institutions will influence attitudes toward and the tendency to engage in infidelity, previous research indicates there are other variables that have demonstrated a correlation with extramarital sex. Some of these variables include age, race, education and income (Atkins et al., 2001; Treas & Giesen, 2000), as such, these variables will be included in the analyses. Because these demographic variables have demonstrated relationships with infidelity they will be controlled for in the present study. However, I argue that even while controlling for these variables, the hypotheses outlined earlier will be of significance. That is, even after controlling for age, race, education, and income, the social institutions of marriage, religion and work will continue to be significant predictors of infidelity.

METHOD

Sample

The participants for this study were drawn from the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago (Davis, Smith, & Marsden, 2007). The original GSS was conducted in 1972 and since then data has been collected every other year. The surveys are structured face-to-face interviews, which assess questions regarding marriage, infidelity, religion and work. It involves a nationally representative sample of noninstitutionalized, English-speaking individuals between the ages of 18 and 89 in the continental United States (Davis et al., 2007).

The sampling unit is the household. Each household has an equal probability of inclusion in the sample (Ph), however, only one person is interviewed per household. In those households that are selected, selection procedures within the household give each eligible individual equal probability of being interviewed such that in a household with n eligible respondents, each person has a $1/n$ probability of being interviewed. As a result, generalizations can only be made to the household. The original sample for the year 2000 consisted of 4, 833 respondents, but due to issues such as unavailability, language, and refusal to participate, the final sample consisted of 2, 817 survey respondents. However, only 1, 278 of individuals were currently married at the time and the present study focuses on married individuals because not all items were asked of those who were not married. The sample is further reduced to $N=593$, due to the fact that not all questions regarding marriage and infidelity were asked of all participants.

Data

Dependent Variables.

Attitudes. Values are basic determinants of attitudes and behaviour because they define what is desirable and acceptable to an individual or a society (Dion, 1996). Values serve as decision criteria, shape an individual's perceptions and interpretations, limit available choices by excluding what is unthinkable and they define the positive sanctions as well as the negative sanctions that are applied to actions (Dion, 1996). The present study aims to examine how values regarding infidelity influence attitudes and behaviours. Previous research has looked at attitudes regarding extramarital sex (Widmer, Treas, & Newcomb, 1998; Liu, 2000). In the current study participants' attitude towards infidelity were assessed via the question "What is your opinion about a married person having sexual relations with someone other than their marriage partner?" They were given the following response categories: *always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all.* Other responses, such as *don't know* or *no answer* were coded as missing. The data is skewed with 82.8 percent of respondents saying that they believe infidelity is always wrong. This problem was solved by dichotomizing the variable to compare those who believe that infidelity is always wrong to everyone else. In this manner, the variable will examine the difference between individuals who reported that infidelity is always wrong and those individuals who think that it is less wrong. This variable has a minimum value of 0=always wrong. The maximum value is 1=almost always wrong, sometimes wrong and not wrong at all.

Behaviour. Although one can expect that people who think that extramarital sex is wrong will not engage in it (Liu, 2000), it is possible that attitudes may not be in line with behaviour. That

is, individuals may disapprove of infidelity while still engaging in it; therefore, a more robust measure of extramarital sex may be actual behaviour. Several studies have examined whether or not an individual has had extramarital sex (Atkins & Kessel, 2008; Whisman, Gordon, & Chatav, 2007; Whisman & Snyder, 2007; Treas & Giesen, 2000). Actual rates of infidelity, that is, behaviour was assessed by asking respondents “Have you ever had sex with someone other than your husband or wife while you were married?” Respondents were required to answer *yes*=1 or *no*=0. The majority of participants (86.7 percent) reported that they have not engaged in extramarital sex (See Table 1).

Independent variables

Respondent Gender. In order to examine gender differences, respondents’ self-reported gender was coded as either male or female, where 1 equals male and 0 equals female. The sample consisted of 315 females (53.1 percent) and 278 males (46.9 percent).

Marriage

Marital Investments. Marital investments that serve as barriers to infidelity were assessed via a proxy measure. Respondents were asked “How many children have you ever had?” and were given the following response categories: *none, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, or eight or more.* The variable was dichotomized so that those with one or more children were grouped together. That is, 0=no children and 1=one or more children. This was done so as to compare attitudes toward infidelity and the tendency to engage in extramarital sex between those who have irretrievable investments, children, and those who do not. All other responses were coded as missing values. 82.5 percent of participants had at least one child (See Table 1).

Marital Satisfaction. Marital satisfaction was measured by asking respondents “Taking all things together, how would you describe your marriage? Would you say that your marriage is very

happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?” and were given the following response categories *very happy*, *pretty happy*, and *not too happy*. The responses were skewed with 62.4 percent of participants reporting that their marriages were very happy. In order to compensate for this, the variable was dichotomized with 1=very happy, while those who were pretty happy and not too happy were coded 0. All other response categories, such as *don't know* or *no answer*, were treated as missing values.

Religion

Religiosity. Religiosity was measured according to church attendance. That is, participants were asked, “How often do you attend religious services?” and were given the following response categories: *never*, *less than once a year*, *about once or twice a year*, *several times a year*, *about once a month*, *2-3 times a month*, *nearly every week*, *every week*, and *several times a week*. The response category *never* was coded 0, *less than once a year* was 1, *about once or twice a year* was coded as 2, *several times a year* was 3, *about once a month* was 4, *2-3 times a month* was 5, *nearly every week* was 6, *every week* was coded as 7, and *several times a week* was coded as 8. Other responses, such as *don't know* or *no answer* were treated as missing values. The average score was 3.80 (SD=2.76), suggesting that the majority of participants attended religious services about once a month.

Work.

Time Commitment. Those who were employed were asked, “How many hours did you work last week, at all jobs?” in order to assess the extent to which their jobs may be demanding a commitment that negatively affects the availability of time and emotional commitment to their families. Moreover, in order to minimize the affect of missing variables, those who were currently unemployed were included and coded as working 0 hours. Number of hours worked

has a minimum of 0 hours and a maximum of 89 hours. Respondents worked an average of 29.50 hours (standard deviation=22.22).

Control Variables

Respondent's Age. Participants were asked to report their age in years. All other responses such as *no answer* or *don't know* were treated as missing values. The minimum was 19 years of age while the maximum age was 89 years or older. Participants were an average of 46 years old (SD= 14.7).

Respondent's Race. Race was assessed by asking respondent's "What race do you consider yourself?" Responses were coded as white=1 and Visible Minority=0. The current sample consisted of mostly white participants (86 percent white; 14 percent Other).

Education. Participant's level of education was measured according to the highest degree completed. That is, respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of educational attainment based on the following response categories: *less than high school*, *high school*, *associate/junior college*, *bachelor's*, and *graduate*. The response category *less than high school* was coded 1, while *high school* was coded 2, and *associate/junior college* was coded 3.

Bachelor's degree was coded 4, and *graduate* was coded 5. All other response categories such as *don't know* or *no response* were coded as missing values. The majority of respondents indicated that they had completed high school (55.8 percent), while 17.5 percent completed a Bachelor's degree.

Income. Income was assessed by asking participants to indicate in which category their family earnings (before taxes and other deductions) for the last year fall. The categories include and were coded the following: those who earn under \$10, 000 were coded 1; those who earn between \$10, 000 and 19, 999 were coded 2; those who earn between \$20, 000 and 29, 999 were coded 3;

those who earn between \$30, 000 and 39, 999 were coded 4; those who earn between \$40, 000 and 49, 999 were coded 5; \$50, 000 to 59, 999 were coded 6; those who earn between \$60, 000 and 74, 999 were coded 7; those who earn between \$75, 000 and 89, 999 were coded 8; those who earn between \$90, 000 and 109, 999 were coded 9; and those who earn \$110, 000 and over were coded 10. All other response categories such as *refused*, *don't know*, or *no answer* were coded as missing data. Average income was \$50, 000.

Table 1. Description of Measures

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean/Proportion</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
<i>Dependent variables</i>			
Infidelity Attitudes	0.828	---	0-1
Infidelity Behaviour	0.867	---	0-1
<i>Independent variables</i>			
Gender	0.531	---	0-1
<i>Marriage</i>			
Number of Children	0.825	---	0-1
Marital Satisfaction	0.624	---	0-1
<i>Religiosity</i>			
Church Attendance	3.80	2.76	0-8
<i>Employment</i>			
Hours Worked	29.5	22.2	0-89
<i>Control variables</i>			
Age	46.3	14.7	19-89
Race	0.860	---	0-1
Level of Education	0.558	---	1-5
Income	5.7	2.5	1-10

Analyses

The data was evaluated using regression analyses. Specifically, binary logistic regression was used to assess the effect of the dependent variable attitudes towards infidelity. First, respondent's sex was regressed on to attitudes towards infidelity in order to assess the relationship between biological sex and infidelity. Second, the variables associated with the institution of marriage, namely, investments in the relationship were added to the model in order

to test hypotheses 1a and 1b. This was done so as to examine how much of the variance in approval of infidelity, the dependent variable, is accounted for by biological sex and how much is accounted for by the social institution of marriage. Third, hypothesis 2 was tested by adding religiosity to the model. Fourth, the respondent's hours of work were added to the model in order to examine hypothesis 3, whether the institution of work is conducive to extramarital sexual activity due to the fact that it is time and commitment demanding institution. In order to examine the differences between men and women and to assess hypotheses 4a, 4b and 4c, separate regressions were run for men and women and the significance of any differences found was then tested with interaction terms.

Behaviour, that is, actual rates of infidelity was assessed using logistic regression because it is a binary response variable. First, respondent's sex and the measures of marriage were analysed in order to assess hypotheses 1a and 1b in terms of extramarital sexual behaviour. Second, religiosity was added so as to examine hypothesis 2, those who regularly attend religious services will be less likely to engage in extramarital affairs. Third, hypothesis 3 was assessed by adding the measures of work to the analyses. Fourth, regression analyses were run separately for men and women and the significance of differences were evaluated using interaction terms.

RESULTS

The regression analyses found gender was not a significant predictor of attitudes towards infidelity with 81.7 percent of men and 83.8 percent of women agreeing that having sexual relations with someone other than one's spouse is always wrong. When first introduced to the model, the coefficient for gender was 0.15, and it increased to 0.20 with the addition of number of children and marital satisfaction variables. However, the coefficient did decrease with the addition of measures of religiosity and work.

Social institutional approaches seem better suited to explain individuals' attitudes towards infidelity. Specifically, there was no significant association between having children and attitudes regarding extramarital sex contrary to hypothesis 1a (See Table 2). However, the coefficient increased with the addition of religiosity, work and control variables (age, race, level of education, and income), but never reached significance. Marital satisfaction was a significant predictor when first entered into the model such that the odds of approving of extramarital sex decreased by 46 percent for those who were very happy.

Table 2. Predictors of Infidelity Attitudes.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>
<i>Independent variables</i>					
Gender	0.15	0.20	0.14	-0.05	-0.08
<i>Marriage</i>					
Number of Children		-0.04	0.12	0.22	0.35
Marital Satisfaction		-0.62*	-0.51*	-0.54*	-0.77*
<i>Religiosity</i>					
Church Attendance			-0.20**	-0.20**	-0.25**
<i>Employment</i>					
Hours Worked				0.01*	0.01*
<i>Control variables</i>					
Age					0.01
Race					0.29
Level of Education					0.47**
Income					0.05
Nagelkerke R Square	0.001	0.022	0.083	0.101	0.184

GSS 2000; N=593

*p<0.05

**p≤0.001

The relationship between religiosity and infidelity attitudes was found to be significant. That is, there was a strong association between the two variables (Wald=20.60; p≤0.001) and the approval of infidelity decreased 18 percent as church attendance increased, while controlling for gender and the measures of marriage, namely, number of children and marital satisfaction. In other words, as church attendance increased the approval of infidelity decreased. Even with the addition of work and control variables, the association between church attendance and infidelity attitudes continued to be strong (Wald=26.09; p≤0.001). Religion is an institution that espouses pro-commitment and pro-monogamy values.

There was also a significant relationship between work as assessed by hours worked and attitudes towards infidelity. In fact, the relationship was in the same direction as hypothesized. That is, as the number of hours worked increased so did the approval of infidelity. Specifically, the odds of approving of infidelity increased by 1 percent for each hour increase in the number of

hours worked. Even with the addition of control variables the association between hours worked and attitudes toward extramarital sex continued to be significant (Wald=4.77, $p \leq 0.05$). In other words, work is a time-demanding institution that values commitment to the organization rather than the family, and so reinforces the approval of infidelity.

Separate analyses were run for women and men (See Tables 3 & 4). Having children was not a significant predictor of infidelity attitudes for either women or men. However, the relationship was in opposite directions such that for men having children decreased the approval of infidelity, whereas, for women having children actually increased the approval of infidelity. Marital satisfaction was not found to be a significant predictor of infidelity attitudes for men; however, the relationship was in the direction predicted such that as marital satisfaction increased the approval of extramarital sex decreased. For women, however, the association between marital satisfaction and infidelity attitudes was significant. When first introduced to the model, the odds of approving of infidelity decreased 61 percent for women who were very happy. The association between marital satisfaction and infidelity attitudes continued to be significant even with the addition of religion, work, and control variables.

Table 3. Predictors of Infidelity Attitudes for Males

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
<i>Independent variables</i>				
<i>Marriage</i>				
Number of Children	-0.07	-0.01	0.03	0.11
Marital Satisfaction	-0.27	-0.17	-0.20	-0.55
<i>Religiosity</i>				
Church Attendance		-0.20*	-0.19*	-0.26**
<i>Employment</i>				
Hours Worked			0.02*	0.02*
<i>Control variables</i>				
Age				0.01
Race				0.20
Level of Education				0.50**
Income				0.06
Nagelkerke R Square	0.004	0.066	0.099	0.205

GSS 2000; N=278

*p<0.05

**p≤0.001

Table 4. Predictors of Infidelity Attitudes for Females

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
<i>Independent variables</i>				
<i>Marriage</i>				
Number of Children	0.04	0.24	0.34	0.48
Marital Satisfaction	-0.94*	-0.81*	-0.84*	-0.96*
<i>Religiosity</i>				
Church Attendance		-0.21**	-0.20**	-0.24**
<i>Employment</i>				
Hours Worked			0.01	0.01
<i>Control variables</i>				
Age				0.01
Race				0.43
Level of Education				0.43*
Income				0.04
Nagelkerke R Square	0.049	0.107	0.116	0.178

GSS 2000; N=315

*p<0.05

**p≤0.001

Church attendance was significant for both women and men. Religion, as an institution, promotes fidelity in marriage regardless of gender. For both women and men, as church attendance increased the odds of approving of extramarital sex decreased by 18 percent.

The institution of work, as assessed by number of hours worked, was found to be significant for men but not for women. The institution of work idealizes the masculine, specifically a greater time commitment to work than to the family as such the odds of approving of infidelity increased 2 percent for each hour increase in the number of hours worked for men, while controlling for having children, marital satisfaction, and church attendance. When control variables were added to the model, the coefficient remained the same for both men and women.

Moreover, interaction terms were added to the model in order to assess whether the differences found between men and women were significant. When added to the model having childrenXgender was not significant suggesting that there were no significant differences between men and women who have children with regards to the approval of infidelity ($B=-0.44$, $p=0.47$). Although there was difference between men and women with regards to marital satisfaction, namely, marital satisfaction was significant for women, but not men, this difference was not significant as the interaction between marital satisfaction and gender was not significant ($B=0.48$, $p=0.32$). In other words, gender did not moderate the relationship between marriage and infidelity attitudes. Hours workedXgender was also not significant suggesting that the differences observed between men and women were not significant ($B=0.01$, $p=0.23$). Gender was not a moderator between work and infidelity attitudes.

Unlike attitudes towards infidelity, gender was a significant predictor in regards to actual behaviour (See Table 5). Only 8.9 percent of women have ever had sex with someone other than their spouse, while 18.3 percent of men reported having had extramarital sex. In fact, the odds of having engaged in extramarital sex increased 2.30 times or 130 percent for males. Moreover, the association continued to be significant and the coefficient increased, even while controlling for marital factors. The coefficient remained significant with the addition of church attendance and

hours worked (Wald=10.29, $p \leq 0.001$). Moreover, the odds of having engaged in infidelity increased 135 percent for males.

Having children was significantly related to engaging in extramarital sex, however, the relationship was not in the direction that was hypothesized. Surprisingly, having one or more children actually increased the likelihood of engaging in extramarital sex. The odds of having engaged in infidelity increased by 135 percent for those with children compared to those without, even while controlling for marital satisfaction and gender. Furthermore, the size of the coefficient increased with the addition of church attendance. Marital satisfaction was not found to be a significant predictor of infidelity. That is, satisfaction with the marital relationship was not related to the likelihood of having taken part in extramarital sex.

Religiosity, as measured by church attendance, was not found to be a significant predictor of infidelity behaviour. In other words, while controlling for gender, having children and marital satisfaction, and hours worked there was no significant relationship between church attendance and infidelity. There was no association between having engaged in extramarital sex and religiosity.

Table 5. Predictors of Infidelity Behaviour.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>
<i>Independent variables</i>						
Gender	0.83**	0.88**	0.86**	0.85**	0.78*	0.81*
<i>Marriage</i>						
Number of Children		0.86*	0.88*	0.89*	0.81	0.78
Marital Satisfaction		-0.49	-0.47	-0.47	-0.52	-0.44
<i>Religiosity</i>						
Church Attendance			-0.04	-0.04	-0.05	-0.03
<i>Employment</i>						
Hours Worked				0.00	0.00	-0.00
<i>Control variables</i>						
Age					0.01	0.01
Race					-0.60	-0.63
Level of Education					-0.07	-0.13
Income					0.11	0.10
Infidelity attitudes						0.76*
Nagelkerke R Square	0.035	0.063	0.065	0.065	0.086	0.102

GSS 2000; N=593

*p<0.05

**p≤0.001

There was also no significant relationship between hours worked and extramarital sex.

In fact, the relationship was really weak and nonsignificant (Wald=0.01, p≤0.05). The social institution of work was not related to infidelity behaviour.

As with infidelity attitudes, separate regression analyses were conducted for women and men (See Tables 6 & 7). Having children was not found to be a significant predictor of extramarital sex for either men or women. Marital satisfaction also was not significant.

There was no significant relationship between religion and infidelity for both men and women. However, the relationship was in opposite directions such that for women church attendance decreased the likelihood of having had extramarital sex. However, for men, church attendance increased the tendency to engage in infidelity.

Number of hours worked was not significant. There was no association between number of hours worked and infidelity for either men or women. In other words, work was not a significant predictor of the likelihood of having had extramarital sex for either women or men.

Table 6. Predictors of Infidelity Behaviour for Males

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>
<i>Independent variables</i>					
<i>Marriage</i>					
Number of Children	1.00	0.99	0.98	0.87	0.86
Marital Satisfaction	-0.46	-0.48	-0.47	-0.53	-0.46
<i>Religiosity</i>					
Church Attendance		0.02	0.02	0.00	0.04
<i>Employment</i>					
Hours Worked			-0.00	0.00	-0.00
<i>Control variables</i>					
Age				0.02	0.02
Race				-0.66	-0.70
Level of Education				-0.06	-0.16
Income				0.11	0.11
Infidelity attitudes					1.08*
Nagelkerke R Square	0.036	0.037	0.038	0.074	0.112

GSS 2000; N=278

*p<0.05

**p≤0.001

Table 7. Predictors of Infidelity Behaviour for Females

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>
<i>Independent variables</i>					
<i>Marriage</i>					
Number of Children	0.64	0.81	0.89	0.85	0.83
Marital Satisfaction	-0.54	-0.43	-0.44	-0.51	-0.45
<i>Religiosity</i>					
Church Attendance		-0.14	-0.14	-0.15	-0.14
<i>Employment</i>					
Hours Worked			0.01	0.00	0.00
<i>Control variables</i>					
Age				-0.01	-0.01
Race				-0.45	-0.45
Level of Education				-0.18	-0.21
Income				0.12	0.11
Infidelity attitudes					0.36
Nagelkerke R Square	0.022	0.046	0.050	0.064	0.067

GSS 2000; N=315

*p<0.05

**p≤0.001

Furthermore, in order to examine the role gender may have played as a moderator between social institutional explanatory variables and the likelihood of engaging in extramarital sex, interaction terms were included in the model. Specifically, the differences between women and men with regard to religiosity was not found to be significant as the interaction term church attendanceXgender was also significant ($B=0.17$, $p=0.08$). Gender was not a moderator in the relationship between religion and infidelity.

Moreover, in order to further examine the relationship between gender and infidelity behaviour, that is, the likelihood of actually engaging in extramarital sex, infidelity attitudes was added to the model (See Model 6 of Table 5). Attitudes toward infidelity was found to be significant. In other words, there was a statistically significant association between attitudes towards extramarital sex and actual behaviour. The odds of engaging in infidelity increased 2.13 times or 113 percent for those who approve of extramarital sex compared to those who think it is always wrong. Furthermore, the Nagelkerke R Square increased to 0.102 with the addition of attitudes toward infidelity suggesting that with the inclusion of infidelity attitudes the model explains much more of the variance in rates of actual infidelity (See Table 5).

In order to further examine this effect, infidelity attitudes was added to the separate analyses for men and women (See Model 5 of Tables 6 & 7). Curiously, attitudes was not significant for women, but was for men, indicating that attitudes regarding extramarital sex was a significant predictor of behaviour for men, but not for women. In other words, attitudes toward infidelity is important to the understanding of extramarital sex, especially for men. Additionally, this difference was further examined using an interaction term and was found to be

nonsignificant ($B=0.44$, $p=0.47$). That is, the difference between men and women with regards to infidelity attitudes was not significant.

DISCUSSION

Infidelity may be unmatched as a source of marital dissolution (Shackelford, Buss, & Bennett, 2002; Betzig, 1989). As such, it is necessary to examine its many facets. Current research focuses on gender differences. Specifically, it is theorized that men and women are different and, therefore, they have distinct approaches to infidelity. To the extent that other explanations are examined, research tends to focus on relationship variables and other variables, such as religiosity and employment. These studies only examine the correlations between various variables and extramarital sex without establishing a comprehensive theoretical framework. The present paper attempted to examine infidelity in relation to the impact of gender within the framework of social institutions.

Simple gendered explanations are not sufficient examinations of infidelity, especially with regards to attitudes towards extramarital sex. Rather, as the present study has found, social institutional approaches seem better suited to explain the nuances of attitudes regarding infidelity. A social institution encompasses the values of a given society. In other words, a social institution embodies the general social norms and conventions of society (White & Klein, 2002), and, as such, an institution because it is comprised by cultural or normative expectations shape individuals' attitudes (Elder-Vass, 2008). Moreover, social institutions define the expectations that individuals hold about each other's behaviour because they are cultural or normative patterns (Elder-Vass, 2008). They characterize what are considered proper, legitimate or expected modes of action and social relationships within a society. Thus, individuals enact particular practices because of the particular normative beliefs they hold. The standardization of these behaviours arises, in part, from the fact that the corresponding normative beliefs or attitudes are shared (Elder-Vass, 2008). Arguably, the approval of infidelity is one such

normative belief and, therefore, individuals can be expected to be influenced by such social institutions more so than any biological effects such as sex. The present study found that marriage, religion and work were all significant predictors of infidelity attitudes. That is, the institutions of marriage, religion and work influence infidelity attitudes more so than self-reported measures of sex.

Specifically, within the institution of marriage, the present study found that satisfaction with the marital relationship is an important facet with regards to approval of extramarital sex. Those who are very happy with their marriage are less likely to approve of infidelity than those who are less happy. This is because satisfaction with the marital relationship influences commitment in such a manner that individuals who are happy actually want to continue the relationship (Johnson et al., 1999; Kapinus & Johnson, 2002), whereas, if a relationship is deemed to be unsatisfactory, one has less to lose and is more likely to approve of infidelity (Treas & Giesen, 2000). Similarly, the current analyses revealed that religiosity is related to infidelity attitudes in such a manner that as church attendance increased, the approval of extramarital sex decreased. This may be due to the fact that religion reinforces pro-marriage and pro-monogamy beliefs (Marks, 2005; Kapinus & Pellerin, 2008). Religious involvement fortifies marital commitment to fidelity and, furthermore, religious condemnation of extramarital sex is an often cited reason that individuals remain faithful in their relationships (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007). Unlike marriage and religion, the institution of work is conducive to positive attitudes regarding infidelity. That is, the present study found that as the number of hours worked increased so did the approval of infidelity. Work is comprised of time-demanding organizational cultures which valorize long hours and reward those individuals who are willing to sustain them (Mennino et al., 2005) because specific features of corporate involvement

influence employees' commitments and priorities to the point where they are compelled to commit more and more time to the corporation than to any other extra-occupational social tie (Terrien, 2005), including their intimate relationships. This greater commitment to work, which is exemplified by long hours, negatively affects the availability of time and emotional commitment to the family (Hochschild, 1997; Terrien, 2005). As such, the marital relationship is devalued and this lack of commitment to and value of intimate relationships results in increased approval of infidelity.

Behaviour, however, does not seem to be affected by the normative expectations of social institutions. The current analyses revealed a significant gender difference that persisted even while controlling for all other variables including the social institutions of marriage, religion and work. However, a facet of marriage, having children, was also found to be significant with regard to actual rates of infidelity. Some would argue that these results suggest that evolutionary models are true. However, as the present study has demonstrated, infidelity is a complex phenomenon. It is much too simple to claim that behaviour is the singular result of biological forces, such as sex. If the explanations offered by Parental Investment Theory (Trivers, 1972) were the only valid explanations of infidelity, it begs the question as to why more men are not engaging in extramarital sex. In fact, in the current sample only 18.3 percent of men reported ever having had extramarital sex. Moreover, attitudes regarding infidelity influence behaviour, especially for men as the current study found. Of those who believe having sex with someone other than one's spouse is always wrong, 11.4 percent still engage in the behaviour. Conversely, 77.5 percent of those who approve of infidelity still do not engage in it. The overwhelming majority of individuals do not have extramarital sex. This suggests that some other factor constrains behaviour. Some other socialization factor is at work. It seems likely that one's

beliefs about sexual activity and intimacy will have an effect on their behaviour (Cann et al., 2001). Specifically, meanings of sex or sexual values that are not captured in the present study may influence the likelihood of engaging in extramarital sex. Previous research has found that sexual values are associated with the likelihood of infidelity (Treas & Giesen, 2000). Furthermore, these sexual scripts may be gendered (Treas & Giesen, 2000; Hyde et al., 2004). In other words, the observed gender differences may be a result of learned sexual scripts that delineate acceptable behaviour for men and women. They encompass the messages individuals receive about sex and relationships and what it means to be a woman or a man within these relationships. That is, social messages regarding acceptable sexual behaviour and conduct for men and women, which were not examined in this study, may, in fact, influence the likelihood of engaging in infidelity. This is because an individual's beliefs mediate the effect of social institution on individual behaviour (Elder-Vass, 2008). Arguably, social scripts regarding gender, sex and relationships shape individual beliefs, which in turn inform behaviour (Elder-Vass, 2008).

Moreover, having children did not serve as a protective factor against extramarital sex. Rather than acting as a barrier to relationship dissolution, which informs commitment and entails a tendency to remain faithful in a marriage (Amato & DeBoer, 2001), having children was conducive to infidelity. Having children is a high-risk time for infidelity (Allen et al., 2005). This may be due to the fact that childrearing requires an intense and continuing contribution of time and effort from both parents (Liu, 2000). In fact, there is a documented drop in marital satisfaction once children are born and this may result in individuals being more likely to engage in extramarital sexual activity (Whisman et al., 2007). However, the current study did not find marital satisfaction to be a significant predictor of engaging in infidelity. Rather, I would argue

that having children is stressful as it requires a large amount of time and effort and infidelity can serve as an escape to this stressful situation even while an individual is satisfied with their relationship.

Interestingly, social institutional variables were only significant predictors of attitudes towards infidelity and not behaviour. Moreover, gender was a significant predictor of the likelihood of engaging in infidelity, but not attitudes. In other words, the social institutions of marriage, religion, and work influence infidelity attitudes, however, behaviour seems unaffected by the general social norms and conventions that govern society. Although it seems as though the present study supports the explanations put forth by Parental Investment Theory (Trivers, 1972), I would argue that this is not the case. Given the relatively small number of individuals engaging in extramarital sex (13.3 percent of the current sample) it seems unlikely that there is an inherent drive to have extramarital sex. That is, there is no drive to engage in infidelity. This may be due to the malleable nature of attitudes and the inflexible nature of behaviour. Attitudes encompass normative beliefs. They are defined by social institutions, which comprise cultural or normative expectations and so they are influenced by the values of these institutions. Behaviour, on the other hand, may be much more fixed once it is learned. That is to say, once social scripts regarding proper conduct and behaviour are internalized they are much less likely to change. As such, there may be no desire to have extramarital sex.

Limitations

Although the current study examines social institutional influences on infidelity, there are a few limitations. First, this study evaluates biological sex using a measure of self-reported gender identity (Hyde et al., 2004). In other words, it examines an individual's internal sense of maleness or femaleness (Hyde et al., 2004). However, previous research has utilized this

measure to assess biological sex differences and extramarital sex (Brand et al., 2007; Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Treas & Giesen, 2000; Buss, 2006) and, as such, the current study also uses this measure of gender.

Second, this study does not assess those who are living together as married or cohabiting or have ever been married. By only examining those who are currently married, important facets of infidelity may be missed. That is, research has shown that those who cohabit are not as sexually exclusive than those who are married (Forste & Tanfer, 2000), so the present study, in examining the attitudes and behaviours of only those who are married, may overlook important aspects of extramarital sex. However, the aim of this study was to examine the influence of social institutions such as marriage, religion and work on infidelity, and since cohabitators have less conventional values (Treas & Giesen, 2000), they do not adhere to the values and norms of social institutions, and, therefore, are beyond the scope of this paper.

Third, the current study relied on one measure of religiosity, namely attendance of religious services. Some argue that this can be problematic as relying on church attendance as the only measure of religion can mask the complex relationship between religiosity and family factors, such as marital fidelity (Burdette et al., 2007). Specifically, individual factors such as faith, and relational factors such as shared beliefs may not be wholly captured by attendance (Atkins & Kessel, 2008). However, I am interested in a general measure of religiosity and so the variable seems sufficient. Moreover, the aim of this paper is to examine religion as a social institution, which provides a community that may sanction individuals who have extramarital affairs. It can be conjectured that those who attend church are a part of such a community. Researchers have also used church attendance as an indicator in other studies (Atkins et al., 2001). Furthermore, research has shown that attendance, but not other factors such as nearness

to God, faith, prayer, and other religious attributes, is, in fact, related to infidelity (Atkins & Kessel, 2008). That is, church attendance was found to be the only significant predictor of infidelity (Atkins & Kessel, 2008).

Fourth, the present study is limited in that it did not examine socialized gender differences. Although the present study attempted to account for socialized gender differences by including gender role attitudes, which examine the distinct roles of men and women within marriage, it was ultimately unable to do so due to missing data. That is, social messages regarding norms, or culturally defined expectations that delineate how people of one gender ought to behave (Hyde et al., 2004), which were not examined in this study, may, in fact, influence the likelihood of engaging in infidelity. Generally, men and women are seen as having different roles (Hyde et al., 2004). Women are expected to be the caregivers, while men are expected to be the breadwinners and the heads of families (Hyde et al., 2004). In other words, husbands and wives have distinct responsibilities. Such traditional attitudes about gender roles can also influence attitudes regarding infidelity.

Fifth, the present study focused on sex as a measure of infidelity. Although it extends beyond previous research in examining both attitudes toward and rates of infidelity, it still focuses on sexual intercourse. This is problematic because previous studies have shown that gender differences are attenuated when infidelity is defined as encompassing a variety of behaviours rather than just intercourse (Drigotas, Safstrom, & Gentilia, 1999). Future research will benefit from examining other behaviours that may be inclusive of infidelity as this will provide a more nuanced picture of the phenomenon.

Although the current study has a few limitations, it is still important in that it examines social institutions as potential explanations of infidelity. It goes beyond simple gendered

explanations and attempts to build a theoretical framework that looks at more than the correlational relationships between extramarital sex and various variables. That is, it examined the collective representations, which are systems of shared norms, values, and ideas, or social institutions that shape social behaviour (Elder-Vass, 2008). It attempted to examine how infidelity may be the result of these institutions, which represent an established order that is comprised of rule-bound and standardized behaviour patterns (Elder-Vass, 2008). In other words, the present study makes a valuable contribution to the examination of infidelity because it attempts to theorize about extramarital sex as a social phenomenon.

References

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender and Society, 4*, 139-158.
- Allen, E. S., Atkins, D. C., Baucom, D. H., Snyder, D. K., Gordon, K. C., & Glass, S. P. (2005). Intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual factors in engaging and responding to extramarital involvement. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 12*, 101-130.
- Amato, P. R., DeBoer, D. D. (2001). The transmission of marital instability across generations: Relationship skills or commitment to marriage? *Journal of Marriage and Family, 63*, 1038-1051.
- Amato, P. R., & Rogers, S. J. (1999). Do attitudes towards divorce affect marital quality. *Journal of Family Issues, 20*, 69-86.
- Atkins, D. C., Baucom, D. H., & Jacobson, N. S. (2001). Understanding infidelity: Correlates in a national random sample. *Journal of Family Psychology, 15* (4), 735-749.
- Atkins, D. C., & Kessel, D. E. (2008). Religiousness and infidelity: Attendance, but not faith and prayer, predict marital fidelity. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 70*, 407-418.
- Bailey, J. M., Kirk, K. M., Zhu, G., Dunne, M. P., Martin, N. G., (2000). Do individual differences in sociosexuality represent genetic or environmentally contingent strategies? Evidence from Australian twin registry. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*, 37-545.
- Betzig, L. (1989). Causes of conjugal dissolution: A cross-cultural study. *Current Anthropology, 30*, 654-676.
- Billy, J. O. G., Tanfer, K., Grady, W. R., & Klepinger, D. H. (1993). The sexual behaviour of men in the United States. *Family Planning Perspectives, 25*, 52-60.
- Bjorkland, D. F., Shackelford, T. K. (1999). Differences in parental investment contribute to important differences between men and women. *Current Directions in Psychology Science, 8*, 86-89.
- Brand, R. J., Markey, C. M., Mills, A., & Hodges, S. D. (2007). Sex differences in self-reported infidelity and its correlates. *Sex Roles, 57*, 101-109.
- Burdette, A. M., Ellison, C. G., Sherkat, D. E., & Gore, K. A. (2007). Are there religious variations in marital infidelity? *Journal of Family Issues, 28*, 1553-1581.
- Buss, D. M. (2006). Strategies of Human Mating. *Psychological Topics, 2*, 239-260.

- Buss, D.M., Larsen, R. J., Westen, D., Semmelroth, J. (1992). Sex difference in jealousy: Evolution, physiology, and psychology. *Psychological Science*, 3, 251-255.
- Buss, D. M., & Shackelford, T. K. (1997). Susceptibility to infidelity in the first year of marriage. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31, 193-221.
- Buunk, B. P., Angleitner, A., Oubaid, V., Buss, D. M. (1996). Sex differences in jealousy in Evolutionary and cultural perspective: Tests from the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States. *Psychological Science*, 7, 359-363.
- Cann, A., Mangum, J. L., & Wells, M. (2001). Distress in response to relationship infidelity: The roles of gender and attitudes about relationships. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 38, 185-190.
- Charles, N., & Harris, C. (2007). Continuity and change in work-life balance choices. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 58, 276-297.
- Cherlin, A. J. (2004). The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 848-861.
- Choi, K. H., Catania, J. A., & Dolcini, M. M. (1994). Extramarital sex and HIV risk behaviour among U. S. adults: Results from the national AIDS behavioural survey. *American Journal of Public Health*, 84, 2003-2007.
- Cramer, R. E., Abraham, W. T., Johnson, L. M., & Manning-Ryan, B. (2001). Gender differences in subjective distress to emotional and sexual infidelity: Evolutionary or logical inference explanation? *Current Psychology*, 20, 327-336.
- Dion, M. (1996). Organizational culture as matrix of corporate ethics. *The International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 4, 329-351.
- Dollahite, D. C., Lambert, N. M. (2007). Forsaking all others: How religious involvement promotes marital fidelity in Christina, Jewish, and Muslim couples. *Review of Religious Research*, 48, 290-307.
- Drigotas, S., Safstrom, A., & Gentilia, T. (1999). An investment model of prediction of dating infidelity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77, 509-524.
- Elder-Vass, D. (2008). Integrating institutional, relational and embodied structure: An emergentist perspective. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 59, 281-300.
- Fligstein, N. (2001). Social skill and the theory of fields. *Sociological Theory*, 19, 105-125.
- Forste, R., & Tanfer, K. (1996). Sexual exclusivity among dating, cohabiting, and married women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58, 33-47.

- Foster, J. (1999). An invitation to dialogue: Clarifying the position of feminist gender theory in relation to sexual difference theory. *Gender and Society, 13*, 431-456.
- Gherardi, S. (1994). The gender we think, the gender we do in our everyday organizational lives. *Human Relations, 47*, 591-610.
- Gillis, J. R. (2004). Marriages of the Mind. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*, 988-991.
- Goldstein, J. R., & Kenny, C. T. (2001). Marriage delayed or marriage foregone? New cohort forecasts of first marriage for U. S. women. *American Journal of Sociological Review, 66*, 506-551.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1997). *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Hyde, J. S., DeLamater, J. D., & Byers, E. S. (2004). *Understanding Human Sexuality* (2nd ed.). Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- Johnson, M. P., Caughlin, J. P., & Huston, T. L. (1999). The tripartite nature of marital commitment: Personal, moral, and structural reasons to stay married. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 61*, 160-177.
- Kapinus, C. A. & Johnson, M. P. (2002). Personal, moral, and structural commitment to marriage: Gender and the effects of family life cycle stage. *Sociological Focus, 35*, 189-205.
- Kapinus, C. A., & Pellerin, L. A. (2008). The influence of parents' religious practices on young adults' divorce attitudes. *Social Science Research, 37*, 801-814.
- Kenrick, D. T., Sadalla, E. K., Groth, G., & Trost, M. R. (1990). Evolution, traits, and the stages of human courtship: Qualifying the parental investment model. *Journal of Personality, 58*, 97-116.
- Lambert, N. M., & Dollahite, D. C. (2008). The threefold cord: Marital commitment in religious couples. *Journal of Family Issues, 29*, 592-614.
- Le Bourdais, C., & Lapierre-Adamcyk, E. (2004). Changes in Conjugal Life in Canada: Is Cohabitation Progressively Replacing Marriage? *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*, 929-942.
- Leigh, B. C., Temple, M. T., & Trocki, K. F. (1993). The sexual behaviour of U.S. adults: Results from a national survey. *American Journal of Public Health, 83*, 1400-1408.

- Liu, C. (2000). A theory of marital sexual life. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62, 363-374.
- Marks, L. (2005). How does religion influence marriage? Christian, Jewish, Mormon and Muslim perspectives. *Marriage and Family Review*, 38, 85-111.
- Martin, P. Y. (2003). 'Said and done' versus 'Saying and doing': Gendering practices, practicing gender at work. *Gender and Society*, 17, 342-366.
- Mennino, S. F., Rubin, B. A., & Brayfield, A. (2005). Home-to-job and job-to-home spillover: The impact of company policies and workplace culture. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 46, 107-135.
- Parker, G. A., Simmons, L. W. (1996). Parental investment and the control of sexual selection: Predicting the direction of sexual competition. *Biological Sciences*, 263, 315-321.
- Rones, P. L., Ilg, R. E., & Gardner, J. M. (1997). Trends in hours of work since the mid-1970s. *Monthly Labor Review*, 120, 3-14.
- Shackelford, T. K., Buss, D. M., & Bennett, K. (2002). Forgiveness or breakup: Sex differences in responses to a partner's infidelity. *Cognition and Emotion*, 16, 299-307.
- Smith, T. W. (1991). Adult sexual behaviour in 1989: Number of partners, frequency of intercourse and risk of AIDS. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 23, 102-107.
- Sullivan, K. T. (2001). Understanding the relationship between religiosity and marriage: An investigation of the immediate and longitudinal effects of religiosity on newlywed couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15, 610-626.
- Terrien, E. J. (2005, August). *The corporate cult: How corporations gain commitment at the expense of American families*. Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Philadelphia, PA.
- Treas, J., & Giesen, D. (2000). Sexual infidelity among married and cohabiting Americans. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62, 48-60.
- Trivers, R. (1972). Parental investment and sexual selection. As cited in Brand, R. J., Markey, C. M., Mills, A., & Hodges, S. D. (2007). Sex differences in self-reported infidelity and its correlates. *Sex Roles*, 57, 101-109.
- Wade, M. J., & Shuster, S. M. (2002). The evolution of parental care in the context of sexual selection: A critical reassessment of Parental Investment Theory. *The American Naturalist*, 160, 285-292.

- Whisman, M. A., Gordon, K. C., & Chatav, Y. (2007). Predicting sexual infidelity in a population-based sample of married individuals. *Journal of Family Psychology, 21*, 320-324.
- Whisman, M. A., & Snyder, D. K. (2007). Sexual infidelity in a national survey of American women: Differences in prevalence and correlates as a function of method of assessment. *Journal of Family Psychology, 21*, 147-154.
- White, J. M., & Klein, D. M. (2002). *Family Theories* (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications.
- Widmer, E. D., Treas, J., & Newcomb, R. (1998). Attitudes toward nonmarital sex in 24 countries. *The Journal of Sex Research, 35*, 349-358.
- Winking, J., Kaplan, H., Gurven, M., & Rucas, S. (2007). Why do men marry and why do they stray? *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Britain, 274*, 1643-1649.