Susceptibility to Infidelity in the First Year of Marriage

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Infidelity is a major cause of divorce and spousal battering. Little is known, however, about which individuals are susceptible to infidelity, or about the relationship contexts that promote infidelity. This study of 107 married couples examines three sets of possible predictors of infidelity: Personality factors such as narcissism and conscientiousness; relationship contexts, including recurrent sources of conflict and sexual satisfaction; and the relative ''mate value'' of the individuals composing a couple. We obtained self-report and spouse-report data on susceptibility to infidelity. We obtained self-report, spouse-report, and interviewer-report data on personality, relationship context, and relative mate value. Personality factors most strongly linked to susceptibility to infidelity were low Conscientiousness, high Narcissism, and high Psychoticism. Relationship contexts most strongly linked to susceptibility to infidelity include sexual dissatisfaction, and specific sources of conflict such as partner complaints about jealousy. Discussion addresses limitations of this study and directions for future research on predicting infidelity. © 1997 Academic Press

Infidelity may have no rival in disrupting a marital relationship. Extramarital sex is the most cited cause of divorce cross-culturally (Betzig, 1989). A sexual infidelity by a woman, either actual or suspected, is the leading cause of spousal battering and spousal homicide (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Anguish, psychological pain, depression, anger, and humiliation are among the emotional experiences of the partner of someone who has been unfaithful (Buunk & van Driel, 1989; Lawson, 1988). Cuckolded men are universal objects of social scorn and derision (Daly & Wilson, 1988). And although the English language does not contain a comparable word to describe a woman whose husband engages in extramarital sex, empirical evidence suggests that the suffering of women is no less than that of men, especially if the affair is accompanied by emotional involvement (Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992).

Because of the powerful disruptive sequelae of infidelity, one might think

its occurrence to be rare. Although extramarital sex may be the marital activity most often cloaked in secrecy, empirical estimates of affairs over the course of a marriage range from 30 to 60% for men and from 20 to 50% for women (Glass & Wright, 1992; Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomoroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953; Hunt, 1974; Athanasiou, Shaver, & Tavris, 1970; Levin, 1975; Petersen, 1983). Estimates of the combined probability that at least one member of a married couple will have an affair over the course of a marriage range from 40 to 76% (Thompson, 1983). Estimates of infidelity over the course of a single year of marriage, however, obviously yield lower estimates such as 5% (e.g., Greeley, 1991). A conservative interpretation of these figures suggests that although perhaps half of all married couples remain monogamous, the other half will experience an infidelity over the course of a marriage. Thus, a critical theoretical and practical issue is what predicts who has affairs and who remains maritally faithful.

Gender is the most consistent previously established predictor of infidelity. As the above statistics indicate, more men than women have affairs. Among those men and women who do have affairs, men typically have affairs with a greater number of partners than do women (Lawson, 1988). Men who have affairs are more likely to do so without emotional involvement, whereas women's affairs are more often accompanied by emotional involvement (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Glass & Wright, 1985). Gender is also linked with the sequelae of infidelity. A woman's infidelity is more likely to lead to divorce than is a man's infidelity, across a variety of cultures (Betzig, 1989). Women whose husbands have affairs report that they are more willing to forgive their partner than are men whose wives have affairs (Lawson, 1988). Finally, men are more likely than women to see their own extramarital sex as justified and experience less guilt when they engage in it (Johnson, 1970; Athanasiou *et al.*, 1970; Spanier & Margolis, 1983).

Most demographic and background characteristics are *not* good predictors of infidelity. Extramarital sex is not consistently more prevalent among any particular socioeconomic status group (Buunk & van Driel, 1989), nor is income strongly linked with the likelihood of affairs (Janus & Janus, 1993). Men's level of education is not consistently linked with infidelity, but women's level of education shows a curvilinear relationship, with the least and most educated women showing a higher incidence of affairs than the moderately educated (Janus & Janus, 1993). There is some evidence that religiosity also shows a curvilinear relationship with infidelity, with the most and least religious showing a higher incidence than the moderately religious (Greeley, 1991; Janus & Janus, 1993).

Some therapists have asserted that certain personality characteristics predict affairs. The most common assertions are that those with poor psychological health, low frustration tolerance, masculine insecurity (for men), and narcissism are more prone to affairs (Buunk & van Driel, 1989). Apparently

no empirical research, however, has been conducted to test these speculations. The possible exception is the finding that extramarital sex occurs more often for people who report feeling ''alienated from life'' (Whitehurst, 1969).

One of the most obvious candidates for predictors of infidelity is the quality of the marital relationship. Among all possible relationship variables, the most commonly examined predictor is marital satisfaction. Glass and Wright (1977) found that affairs were more common among men who were dissatisfied early in the marriage and more common among women who were dissatisfied later in the marriage. Petersen (1983) found that women's sexual dissatisfaction with the marriage was linked with infidelity likelihood, but men's infidelity likelihood was unrelated to the quality of marital sex. Glass and Wright (1977, 1992), however, provide some evidence that dissatisfaction with marital sex is associated with an increased likelihood that men will commit sexual infidelity.

The goal of this study was to examine a host of possible predictors of susceptibility to infidelity. Specifically, we sought to cast a wider net than previous studies on the personality and relationship factors linked with infidelity in a sample of recently married couples.

To assess a wide range of personality variables, we selected two of the most widely used taxonomic devices that are purported to provide a reasonably comprehensive assessment of personality. One consists of an assessment of the five-factor model of personality, which includes scales to measure Surgency, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness/Intellect (Goldberg, 1983). The second instrument was the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975), which includes scales to measure Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Psychoticism (more appropriately labeled ''psychopathy'' or ''impulsivity'').

Because of the repeated suggestion, without any existing empirical documentation, that narcissistic individuals engage in more extramarital sex, we included an act-based measure of narcissism, which is reliable and has been validated (Buss & Chiodo, 1991).

We also sought to examine a wide array of potential relationship predictors of susceptibility to infidelity. One potential predictor is what has been called ''relative mate value,'' which refers to the relative desirability of the two partners in the mating market (Symons, 1987; Buss, 1994). We expected that the partner higher in relative value would be more likely to have an affair than the partner lower in relative value. The rationale for this prediction is that the higher mate value partner would have more opportunities for extramarital affairs. Moreover, the lower mate value partner, according to this reasoning, would be less likely to inflict a divorce or a retaliatory infidelity on the higher mate value partner since he or she would have more difficulty attracting an equivalent replacement.

A second set of potential relationship predictors pertains to sources of conflict existing within the marriage. Complaints by one partner that another is sexually withholding, for example, might lead to an increased susceptibility to infidelity. Jealous conflict, to take another example, might be linked with signs that one or both partners are flirting with others or showing openness to other potential partners. Conflict about one partner sexualizing others might be linked with an accurate perception that the partner is susceptible to infidelity. To cast a wide net over these relationship conflicts, we used a broad-gauge assessment instrument called ''Sources of Irritation and Upset'' that evaluates 15 clusters of conflict (Buss, 1989, 1991).

A final set of relationship factors involves satisfaction with the marriage. In addition to overall level of marital satisfaction, we secured assessments of sexual satisfaction, satisfaction with the spouse as a source of emotional support, and the level of love and affection experienced in the marriage. These facets may be crucial because of the known links between a woman's emotional dissatisfaction and her likelihood of infidelity and a man's sexual dissatisfaction and his likelihood of infidelity (Glass & Wright, 1977, 1992).

In order to assess susceptibility to infidelity, we developed an instrument in which each partner estimated the probability that he or she would engage in the following activities: flirting with someone else, passionately kissing someone else, romantically dating someone else, having a one night stand with someone else, having a brief affair with someone else, and having a serious affair with someone else. After evaluating their own probability of engaging in these extramarital events, participants evaluated the probability that their partners would engage in each of these extramarital events. Thus, for each participant, we secured measures of six types of extramarital involvement from two data sources, self-assessments and spouse's assessments. These are clearly not assessments of actual infidelities that have occurred. Some individuals who anticipate that they will engage in extramarital sexual activities may actually refrain from doing so, and some who do not anticipate infidelity may end up performing such actions. Self-reports of anticipated infidelities may serve as a reasonable, if less than totally accurate, proxy for actual infidelities. The use of a second data source, partner's reports of probabilities, provides a backup index. To reflect that fact that we are assessing estimates or anticipations of infidelity rather than actual infidelity, we label our measure ''susceptibility to infidelity.''

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 214 individuals, 107 men and 107 women, who had been married less than 1 year. Participants were obtained from the public records of marriage licenses issued within a large mid-western county. All couples who had been married within a 6-month period were contacted by letter and invited to participate in this study. The majority of participants

were Caucasian. The mean age of the wives was 25.52 (*SD* = 4.06; range = 18 to 36). The mean age of husbands was 26.79 (*SD* = 3.75; range = 17 to 41). This was the first marriage for 96% of our sample. Four percent of couples had one child; the remaining 96% of couples had no children. Couples had been romantically involved for an average of 44 months (*SD* = 24.64; range = 1 month to about 8 years). Two-thirds of couples had cohabited before marriage for an average of 1.26 years (*SD* = 1.8 years). Thirty-two percent of our sample reported that they were Protestant, 22% Catholic, about 4% Jewish, and 11% ''Other.'' Thirty-one percent of respondents reported no religious affiliation. The annual income of husbands ranged from $0 (unemployed) to $87,000, averaging $21,000 (*SD* = $12,000). The annual income of wives ranged from $0 (unemployed) to $68,000, averaging $16,400 (*SD* = $10,500). The annual couple income ranged from $14,800 to $100,500, averaging about $39,400 (*SD* = $17,600) with a median of $34,000. These summary figures fall near the middle of the distribution of annual married couple income for the county from which the couples were sampled. Husbands had completed an average of 16.47 years of education (*SD* = 2.71; range = 11 to 23 years). Wives had completed an average of 15.99 years of education (*SD* = 2.94; range = 7 to 25 years).

Procedure

Participants participated in three separate episodes of assessment. First, they received through the mail a battery of instruments to be completed at home in their spare time. This battery contained the self-report personality instruments assessing the five factors of personality (Goldberg, 1983), the Narcissistic Act Report (not labeled as such), and the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ). Participants also completed a Confidential Biographical Questionnaire in which they reported their age, socioeconomic status of origin (SES), education, salary, religiosity, and political orientation.

Second, participants came to a laboratory testing session one week after receiving the first battery of self-report instruments. During this session, spouses were separated to preserve independence and to prevent contamination due to discussion. Participants completed the instrument in which they assessed the probabilities that they would engage in the six forms of extramarital behavior and the probabilities that their partners would engage in each of the six forms of extramarital behavior. Participants also reported on their partner's personality characteristics, completed an observer form of the Narcissistic Act Report, a marital satisfaction instrument, and the Sources of Irritation and Upset measure.

Third, couples were interviewed toward the end of the testing session by a male and a female interviewer drawn from a rotating staff of 10 interviewers to provide information about their relative mate value and estimates of the likelihood that they would terminate the relationship. Participants were asked a standard set of questions about how they met, the nature of their relationship, sources of attraction, sources of conflict, and their similarities and differences. Immediately following the interview, the interviewers completed a standard instrument in which they recorded their perceptions of the personality characteristics of each participant and the perceived mate value of each participant. Confidentiality of all responses was assured. Not even the participant's spouse could obtain responses without written permission from the relevant partner. In fact, none of the participants requested such permission.

Materials

Confidential Biographical Questionnaire

Participants answered questions about their age, typical number of hours slept per night, level of alcohol consumption, SES in which they were raised, number of years of education completed, current salary, salary expected in 10 years, religiosity of their family of origin, their own level of religiosity, and political orientation (conservative to liberal).

Personality Characteristics

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire. Participants completed the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975), which provides assessments of Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Psychoticism (more aptly labeled ''impulsivity'' or ''psychopathy''). The EPQ also contains a Lie Scale, believed to assess a facet of social naiveté. The EPQ has been extensively validated and shows excellent reliability (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975).

Self-reported five factors. Participants completed a 40-item personality instrument during the self-report phase of the study. This instrument consisted of 40 bipolar adjective scales, eight each for the following major personality dimensions (sample items in parentheses): *Surgency* (dominant–submissive, bold–timid), *Agreeableness* (selfless–selfish, warm–cold), *Conscientiousness* (reliable–undependable, hard-working–lazy), *Emotional Stability* (secure–insecure, even-tempered–temperamental), and *Openness/Intellect* (curious–uncurious, intelligent–stupid). The instructions were: ''Please read the following list of characteristics and circle the number that *best describes* you generally.'' Each bipolar scale was rated on a 7-point scale, with the high and low anchors positioned at opposite ends of the scale. Over the midpoint (4) of each scale was positioned the term ''neither.'' The five personality dimensions were scored by summing the eight relevant rating scales for each dimension. This instrument is based on the factor loadings reported by Goldberg (1983). Alpha reliabilities for each 8-item factor were as follows: Surgency, $\alpha = .77$; Agreeableness, $\alpha = .62$; Conscientiousness, $\alpha = .72$; Emotional Stability, $\alpha = .73$; Openness/Intellect, $\alpha = .63$. Factor analyses of self-ratings, spouse-ratings, and interviewer-ratings employing this measure cleanly replicate the five-factor solution for all three data sources (see Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, in press).

Spouse-reported five factors. A parallel version of the Goldberg (1983) instrument was administered in a separate testing session to the spouses of each participant. The instructions were: ''Please read the following list of characteristics and circle the number which best describes *your partner* generally.'' The five personality dimensions were scored by summing the relevant eight bipolar rating scales. Alpha reliabilities for each 8-item factor were as follows: Surgency, $\alpha = .74$; Agreeableness, $\alpha = .77$; Conscientiousness, $\alpha = .74$; Emotional Stability, $\alpha = .77$; Openness/Intellect, $\alpha = .73$.

Interviewer-reported five factors. Each couple was interviewed by a pair of trained interviewers drawn from a 10-member team. One interviewer was male, the other female. Each interview lasted approximately 40 min, during which the couple was asked a standard set of questions, including: How did you meet? What are the similarities and differences between you? What are the sources of conflict within your marriage? Were your parents for or against the marriage? How do you make joint decisions?

Following each interview, the two interviewers independently rated each participant on an observer-based version of the Goldberg (1983) instrument. As with self-reports and spouse-reports, the five personality dimensions were scored by summing the relevant eight bipolar rating scales. The two interviewer-ratings of personality manifested significant agreement along all five dimensions ($r = .55$ for Surgency, .43 for Agreeableness, .56 for Conscientiousness, .48 for Emotional Stability, and .51 for Openness/Intellect; all $ps < .001$) and were therefore standardized and summed with unit weighting to form five more reliable scores for each participant. Alpha reliabilities for each 8-item factor for the composited interviewer-reports were as follows: Surgency, $\alpha = .90$; Agreeableness, $\alpha = .88$; Conscientiousness, $\alpha = .88$; Emotional Stability, $\alpha = .83$; Openness/Intellect, $\alpha = .92$.

The five factors of personality were assessed through three separate data sources—self-report, spouse-report, and interviewer-report. Self-ratings, spouse-ratings, and aggregate interviewer-ratings were significantly positively correlated for each personality dimension and were therefore standardized and summed with unit-weighting to create a more reliable composite score for each participant along each dimension of personality. Alpha reliabilities for each 8-item factor for the total composites were as follows: Surgency, $\alpha = .90$; Agreeableness, $\alpha = .88$; Conscientiousness, $\alpha = .88$; Emotional Stability, $\alpha = .83$; Openness/Intellect, $\alpha = .92$.

Narcissistic act report.   This instrument consists of 140 acts, drawn from the seven defining dispositional features of the Narcissistic Personality Disorder in the DSM III-R, Axis II. Examples of the acts on this inventory include: *I talked about myself, but did not listen to anyone else* (self-centered); *I looked in a mirror while talking with others* (self-absorption); *I showed off my body while others were watching* (exhibitionism); *I told others that the best way to pick up women [men] was to be like me* (self-aggrandizement); *I came right out and said that I was great* (grandiosity). The observer-report form contains the same items, with the pronouns changed to reflect the appropriate sex of the participant (e.g., He talked about himself . . . ; She showed off her body . . .). Prior research documents that one large factor, labeled Narcissism, emerged in both the self-report and observer-report versions (Buss & Chiodo, 1991).

Quality of the marital relationship.   To assess general marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and other aspects of the quality of the marital relationship, we developed a short, face-valid measure of the quality of the marital relationship. Participants used 7-point rating scales, from 1 (unsatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied), to evaluate the following questions: (1) *Thinking about things all together, how would you say you feel about your marriage?* (2) *How do you feel about your sexual relationship?* (3) *How do you feel about your spouse as a source of encouragement and reassurance?* Using a 4-point rating scale, participants also rated the following item on the extent to which it was untrue (1), not very true (2), very true (3), or extremely true (4): *There is a great deal of love and affection expressed in our marriage.*

Mate value discrepancy.   Two interviewers drawn from a 10-member team (see above) provided independent assessments of the husband's and wife's overall attractiveness as a potential mate, or ''mate value.'' Mate value assessments were made on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = *extremely low*, and 7 = *extremely high.* We created a Mate Value Discrepancy variable, defined as the difference between husband's and wife's mate value. The two interviewer-assessments of mate value correlated $r = .53$ ($p < .001$) across all participants. We averaged the ratings provided by the two interviewers to create a more reliable, aggregate measure of Mate Value Discrepancy.

Probability of terminating the relationship.   The two interviewers also rated, for each spouse, the likelihood that that spouse would eventually terminate the marriage. Ratings were made on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = *unlikely to terminate the relationship* and 7 = *likely to terminate the relationship.* The two interviewer ratings of Probability of Terminating the Relationship correlated $r = .20$ ($p = .004$) across all participants and were aggregated to form a more reliable composite.

Spousal sources of upset.   During the laboratory testing session when the husband and wife were physically separated, participants completed an instrument entitled ''Sources of Irritation and Upset.'' This instrument contained the following instructions: ''Below is a list of things that spouses sometimes do that irritate, annoy, anger, or upset each other. Please place an 'X' next to those acts your husband [wife] has performed *within the past year* that have irritated, annoyed, angered, or upset you.'' Following these instructions were 147 acts or events, previously nominated by a separate panel (see Buss, 1989).

Factor analysis (Buss, 1989) revealed 15 factors, including (sample acts in parentheses): *Condescending* (He treated me like I was stupid or inferior), *Jealous/Possessive* (She was too possessive of me), *Neglecting/Rejecting* (He would not spend enough time with me), *Abusive* (She slapped me), *Inconsiderate* (She did not help to clean up), *Physically Self-Absorbed* (He fussed too much with his appearance), *Sexualizing of Others* (She talked about how good-looking another man was), *Abusive of Alcohol/Emotionally Constricted* (He drank too much alcohol; He hid all his emotions to act tough), *Sexually Withholding* (She turned down my sexual advances), and *Sexually Aggressive* (He tried to force sex acts on me).

Susceptibility to infidelity.   During the testing session in which the spouses were separated from each other, each completed an instrument entitled ''Events with Others.'' Participants first estimated the likelihood of their spouses committing each of six types of infidelity with a member of the opposite sex in the next year: flirting, passionately kissing, going on a romantic date, having a one night stand, having a brief affair, and having a serious affair. Participants

then provided parallel estimates for their own likelihood of committing the six types of infidelity. Participants provided estimates on separate 11-point scales for each type of infidelity. The low end of the scale indicated *0%*, the high end indicated *100%*, with the scale marked off in 10% increments.

RESULTS

We first report summary statistics for the estimated probabilities of extramarital activities. We then present the correlations for each sex between the predictor variables and estimates of various extramarital activities, both self-reported and as reported by the partners.

Estimates of Extramarital Activities

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the estimated probabilities of engaging in each of the six activities, both self-reported and as reported by spouse. The probabilities decreased as a function of the seriousness of the extramarital involvement. For example, husbands' estimates that they will flirt averaged 37%, engage in passionate kisses with someone else 5%, go out on a romantic date 2%, have a one night stand 2%, have a brief affair 1.51%, and have a serious affair only 0.82%. Given that studies of *actual behavioral infidelity* over the course of a single year of marriage yield higher estimates (e.g., Glass & Wright, 1992; Greeley, 1991), the measure used in this study of *anticipated infidelity* undoubtedly underestimates the acts of infidelity that are likely to occur.

To determine whether the sexes differed in their estimates of engaging in extramarital sexual activities, correlated-means *t* tests were conducted for each of the variables. No significant sex differences were found. Furthermore, *t* tests revealed that cross-data source estimates of extramarital activities were not significantly different. For example, husbands' estimates that their wives would flirt with someone else (31%) were not significantly different from wife's self-reported estimates that they would flirt with someone else (38%). Although estimates of engaging in the more serious extramarital sexual activities were generally low, as expected, each variable showed substantial variance. Thus, although the subsequent correlations between the predictors and these variables may be somewhat attenuated, there is enough variance in estimated infidelity to permit prediction.

Demographic and Background Variables

Correlations were computed between each of the demographic and background variables and estimates of future extramarital activity. No significant correlations were found for age, number of hours slept per night, or current salary. Level of alcohol consumption was positively correlated with husbands' estimates that they would flirt with others ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), and with wives' estimates that they would flirt with others ($r = .25$, $p < .05$),

TABLE 1
Self-Reported and Spouse-Reported Probability of Own and Partner's Infidelity

| | Probability of . . . | Type of infidelity | | | | |
| | Flirt | Passionate kiss | Romantic date | One night stand | Brief affair | Serious affair |
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Husband's estimate that he will . . .	37.31 (36.58)	5.32 (12.37)	1.91 (5.70)	2.12 (5.40)	1.51 (4.17)	0.82 (2.85)
Wife's estimate that her husband will . . .	34.52 (34.17)	6.14 (18.27)	2.06 (6.37)	2.78 (7.82)	2.94 (8.35)	1.99 (7.05)
Wife's estimate that she will . . .	38.08 (37.53)	7.23 (19.44)	3.64 (12.80)	2.27 (6.00)	2.72 (11.19)	0.91 (2.72)
Husband's estimate that his wife will . . .	31.10 (31.82)	5.16 (10.98)	2.50 (6.98)	2.13 (6.03)	2.15 (5.77)	1.42 (4.74)

Note. N (Men) = 106; N (Women) = 107.

but no correlations were significant between alcohol consumption and the more serious forms of infidelity.

The most consistent pattern of correlations was found with self-reported religiosity, especially for wives' estimates of own and partners' infidelity. The more religious the women reported themselves to be, the lower were their estimated probabilities that they and their partners would engage in extramarital activity. For example, the correlations between women's religiosity and their estimates of their own one night stands, brief affairs, and serious affairs were $-.22$, $-.22$, and $-.19$ (all ps $< .05$). Analogous correlations between the women's religiosity and estimates that their partners would be unfaithful were $-.24$ ($p < .01$), -24 ($p < .01$), and $-.20$ ($p < .05$). Similarly, the more religious the husband, the less likely was his wife to anticipate infidelity, either for herself or for her husband. The correlation between the husband's religiosity and the wife's estimates of his engaging in a brief affair was $-.33$ ($p < .001$). The analogous correlation between the husband's religiosity and the wife's estimate that she would engage in a brief affair was $-.21$ ($p < .01$).

Political liberalness was consistently positively, but weakly, correlated with infidelity estimates, reaching significance in only three of the 48 correlations computed. The rest of the background variables showed only occasional significant relationships with estimates of infidelity, with no consistent patterns emerging.

Mate Value Discrepancy

Tables 2 and 3 present the correlations between anticipated infidelities and interviewer assessments of Mate Value Discrepancy (MVD). Because MVD represents a signed difference, the nature of the correlations of this variable with anticipated infidelities as not evident from the correlations alone. Examination of the relevant scatterplots, however, clarifies the nature of these relationships. The scatterplots revealed that the significant correlations between the husband's estimates that he will have a one night stand or serious affair in the next year and MVD were due to a single outlier nearly 10 standard deviations above the mean estimates of infidelity likelihood. Removing this single outlier from the analysis reduced the correlations to zero. This outlying participant was removed from this and subsequent statistical analyses. The remaining significant correlations between anticipated infidelity and the interviewer assessments in Tables 2 and 3 represent stable or nonartefactual relationships.

Women married to men of higher relative mate value provide higher estimates of the likelihood that their husbands will have brief affairs and serious affairs in the next year. Additionally, women married to men of higher relative mate value report that they themselves are more likely to passionately

TABLE 2
Correlations among Estimates of Probability of Husband's Infidelity with Interviewer Ratings of Husband

Interviewer rating of husband	Husband's estimate of the probability that he will:						Wife's estimate of the probability that her husband will:					
	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair
Mate value discrepancy[a]	.03	.00	.07	−.05	.01	.13	.01	.17	.06	.05	.20*	.24**
Probability of terminating relationship	.06	.33***	.32***	.29**	.29**	.25**	.06	.28**	.28**	.19	.16	.04

Note. N (Men) = 106; N (Women) = 107.

[a] Mate value discrepancy = (husband's potential as a mate) − (wife's potential as a mate).

* p ≤ .05, ** p ≤ .01, *** p ≤ .001, two-tailed.

TABLE 3
Correlations among Estimates of Probability of Wife's Infidelity with Interviewer Ratings of Wife

Interviewer rating of wife	Wife's estimate of the probability that she will:						Husband's estimate of the probability that his wife will:					
	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair
Mate value discrepancy[a]	.10	−.24**	−.15	−.14	−.25**	−.21*	−.01	.00	.15	.04	.08	.04
Probability of terminating relationship	.03	.06	−.03	−.04	.11	−.07	.06	.29**	.29**	.20*	.17	.06

Note. N (Men) = 106; N (Women) = 107.

[a] Mate value discrepancy = (wife's potential as a mate) − (husband's potential as a mate).

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, two-tailed.

kiss another man, and to have brief affairs and serious affairs with other men.

Probability of Terminating the Relationship

Men rated by the interviewers to be more likely to terminate the marriage reported higher estimates of the likelihood that they will kiss another woman and go on a romantic date with another woman, have a one night stand with another woman, have a brief affair with another woman, and have a serious affair with another woman. The wives of these men also estimated that their husbands were more likely to kiss and date another woman within the next year.

Men married to women rated by the interviewers as likely to terminate the marriage provided higher estimates of the likelihood that their wives will kiss another man, date another man, and have a one night stand with another man.

Personality Predictors

Correlations between the personality characteristics of husbands and wives and estimates of extramarital involvement are shown in Tables 4 through 7. Two types of correlations are shown in these tables. One type consists of correlations between the personality characteristics of a person and estimates that they will engage in extramarital activities. These index the personality characteristics of those who are susceptible to infidelities. The second type consists of correlations between estimates of extramarital activities of a target person and the personality characteristics of their spouse. These index the personality characteristics of the spouses of those susceptible to infidelities.

The most striking finding is that the personality characteristics of wives, relative to husbands, were better predictors of their own and their partner's anticipated infidelity. Among the five factors of personality, *Conscientiousness* showed the most consistent relationships with estimates of infidelity. Women low on Conscientiousness estimated that they were more likely to flirt with and date other men, as well as more likely to have a one night stand, a brief affair, and a serious affair with another man. Men whose wives are low on Conscientiousness *also* anticipated that their wives were more likely to flirt with, kiss, and date other men, as well as have one night stands, brief affairs, and serious affairs with other men. These correlations were consistent and sometimes quite strong. For example, the correlations between women's Conscientiousness and estimates of their brief affairs were $-.40$ ($p < .001$) for women's self-estimates and $-.34$ ($p < .001$) for their husband's estimates.

Another consistent pattern pertains to *Emotional Stability*. Men whose wives scored low on Emotional Stability anticipated that their wives were

TABLE 4
Correlations among Estimates of Probability of Husband's Infidelity with Composite Standings on the Big Five and Narcissism Personality Dimensions

	Husband's estimate of the probability that he will:						Wife's estimate of the probability that her husband will:					
	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair
Husband												
Surgency	.12	.11	.17	.15	.17	.08	.06	−.07	.04	−.13	−.08	−.03
Agreeableness	−.12	−.12	−.08	−.03	−.08	−.08	−.08	−.14	−.08	−.16	−.17	−.19*
Conscientiousness	−.21*	−.20*	−.14	−.10	−.13	−.09	−.09	−.03	−.02	−.06	−.03	−.06
Emotional Stability	.00	.04	.05	.08	.03	−.04	.08	.00	.07	−.08	−.05	−.04
Openness/Intellect	.08	.10	.25**	.31**	.28**	.13	.15	−.01	.20*	−.02	−.01	−.05
Narcissism	.27**	.30**	.18	.12	.20*	.18	.17	.07	.11	.11	.08	.03
Wife												
Surgency	.18	.13	−.01	.09	.08	.04	.17	−.01	.08	−.06	−.09	−.13
Agreeableness	−.11	−.08	−.10	−.05	−.08	−.05	−.17	−.15	−.16	−.25**	−.24**	−.21*
Conscientiousness	−.21*	−.17	−.16	−.05	−.06	−.09	−.20	−.25**	−.15	−.28**	−.32***	−.30**
Emotional Stability	.07	.03	−.06	−.13	−.15	−.21*	−.09	.15	.09	−.02	.05	.02
Openness/Intellect	.13	.14	.07	.08	.08	.05	.13	−.08	.13	−.02	−.12	−.18
Narcissism	.13	.17	.11	.10	.15	.15	.32**	.18	.24**	.11	.08	.04

Note. N (Men) = 106; N (Women) = 107.
* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, two-tailed.

TABLE 5
Correlations among Estimates of Probability of Wife's Infidelity with Composite Standings on the
Big Five and Narcissism Personality Dimensions

	Wife's estimate of the probability that she will:						Husband's estimate of the probability that his wife will:					
	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair
Husband												
Surgency	-.04	.01	-.07	-.05	-.03	-.04	.10	.01	.08	.04	.03	-.06
Agreeableness	-.07	-.10	-.02	.02	.01	.09	-.02	-.11	-.12	-.10	-.08	-.09
Conscientiousness	-.02	.02	.08	.01	-.13	.01	-.18	-.23*	-.24*	-.25**	-.31**	-.26**
Emotional Stability	.10	.03	.12	.10	-.05	.19	.11	-.06	-.09	-.15	-.12	-.17
Openness/Intellect	.12	-.02	.08	-.04	.08	-.01	-.01	.02	.13	.13	.12	.00
Narcissism	.24**	.10	.19*	.04	.24**	-.01	.34**	.30**	.20*	.16	.22*	.12
Wife												
Surgency	.17	-.01	.12	.01	.09	.10	.30**	.09	.01	.09	.11	.02
Agreeableness	-.12	-.22*	-.04	-.13	-.13	-.18	-.10	-.10	-.17	-.13	-.10	-.10
Conscientiousness	-.21*	-.18	-.27**	-.26**	-.40***	-.22*	-.36**	-.25**	-.35***	-.30**	-.34***	-.27**
Emotional Stability	-.01	.06	-.05	.10	.10	.09	.08	-.10	-.17	-.26**	-.24**	-.34***
Openness/Intellect	.15	.05	.19	.05	.00	.17	.21	.01	.00	-.05	-.03	-.15
Narcissism	.39***	.23*	.32***	.19*	.34***	.27**	.30**	.11	.06	.07	.08	.00

Note. N (Men) = 106; N (Women) = 107.
* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, two-tailed.

TABLE 6

Correlations among Estimates of Probability of Husband's Infidelity with Self-Report on Dimensions of Eysenck Personality Questionnaire

	Husband's estimate of the probability that he will:						Wife's estimate of the probability that her husband will:					
	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair
Husband												
Extraversion	.19*	.08	.07	−.02	.07	.06	.13	−.13	−.05	−.17	−.08	−.03
Neuroticism	.10	.02	−.02	−.11	−.06	−.10	−.05	−.03	−.04	.15	.11	.06
Psychoticism	.17	.36***	.39***	.27**	.35***	.33**	.07	.10	−.02	−.04	−.06	−.08
Lie	−.18	−.23*	−.10	−.08	−.11	−.13	.08	.09	−.10	.04	.12	.15
Wife												
Extraversion	.09	.06	−.07	.03	.02	.03	.32**	−.02	.11	.03	−.04	−.08
Neuroticism	−.06	−.06	−.01	.01	−.04	−.08	.17	−.02	−.05	.10	.12	.11
Psychoticism	.11	.13	.15	.11	.10	.19	.20	.17	.11	.22*	.21*	.21*
Lie	−.10	−.17	−.16	−.20*	−.21*	−.16	−.36***	−.28**	−.25**	−.19*	−.22*	−.19*

Note. N (Men) = 106; N (Women) = 107.

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, two-tailed.

TABLE 7
Correlations among Estimates of Probability of Wife's Infidelity with Self-Report on Dimensions of Eysenck Personality Questionnaire

	Wife's estimate of the probability that she will:						Husband's estimate of the probability that his wife will:					
	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair
Husband												
Extraversion	.10	.04	−.03	−.13	−.14	−.17	.18	−.04	−.07	−.09	−.07	−.10
Neuroticism	.01	−.03	−.04	.13	.14	.05	.01	.08	.13	.02	.03	.07
Psychoticism	.07	.06	.05	.01	.37***	.05	.27*	.39***	.50***	.37***	.45***	.31***
Lie	.03	.13	.01	.12	.00	.11	−.22*	−.20*	−.09	−.08	−.13	−.02
Wife												
Extraversion	.34***	.11	.14	.11	.12	.17	.24*	.02	−.08	.00	.01	−.01
Neuroticism	.10	−.05	−.03	.05	.04	.07	−.12	.05	.11	.10	.03	.11
Psychoticism	.24***	.20*	.21*	.26**	.24*	.38***	.35**	.08	.14	.18	.14	.16
Lie	−.38***	−.20*	−.14	−.16	−.19*	−.18	−.12	−.20*	−.21*	−.27*	−.25**	−.17

Note. N (Men) = 106; N (Women) = 107.
* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, two-tailed.

more likely to engage in one night stands, brief affairs and serious affairs with others. Furthermore, women who scored low on *Agreeableness* provided higher estimates that their husbands will have one night stands, brief affairs, and serious affairs.

Narcissism was another consistent predictor of anticipated infidelity, and again women's Narcissism was a more consistent predictor than was men's Narcissism. Women who scored high on Narcissism estimated that they were more likely than their less narcissistic counterparts to engage in all forms of extramarital activity. The correlations were especially strong for flirting (.39), dating others (.32), and having a brief affair (.34). The husbands of women who scored high on Narcissism also predicted that their wives will engage in extramarital activity, although the pattern was weaker, showing significance only with flirting ($r = .30$, $p < .01$). Interestingly, men who scored high on Narcissism anticipate that their wives will flirt with, kiss, date, and have brief affairs with others.

The personality disposition of *Openness/Intellect* was predictive of infidelity estimates for men, but not for women. Specifically, men high on Openness/Intellect reported greater likelihoods of dating other women, having one night stands with other women, and having brief affairs with other women.

The Eysenck *Psychoticism* scale also showed consistent links with anticipated infidelity. Women who scored high on Psychoticism anticipated performing all six forms of extramarital behavior. This is especially strong for having serious affairs ($r = .38$, $p < .001$). Analogous correlations for men showed significance for kissing others, dating others, having one night stands, brief affairs, and serious affairs.

A final set of personality correlates pertains to the Eysenck Lie Scale. According to the EPQ Manual (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975), the Lie scale is best interpreted as a personality disposition in its own right, connoting a sort of social naiveté and ingenuousness. In this light, it is interesting that women who score higher on the Lie scale do not anticipate that their husbands will engage in extramarital activity, nor do husbands anticipate that their socially naive wives will engage in such activity.

Couple Conflict Variables

The correlations between specific sources of conflict within the marriage and estimates of future infidelity are shown in Tables 8 and 9. Husbands who complained about their partner's moodiness and sexual withholding also reported greater likelihoods of flirting with and kissing other women. Estimates of women's susceptibility to infidelity were more strongly linked with specific sources of marital conflict. Women who complained that their husbands sexualize others also indicated a higher likelihood of engaging in extramarital activity, particularly flirting with, kissing, and having one night

TABLE 8
Correlations among Estimates of Probability of Husband's Infidelity with Husband's Complaints about Wife

Husband complains that wife is . . .	Husband's estimate of the probability that he will:						Wife's estimate of the probability that her husband will:					
	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair
Condescending	.17	−.04	−.05	−.03	.00	.02	−.06	−.08	.07	.01	−.02	−.04
Jealous/Possessive	.18	.14	.04	.02	.05	.09	−.02	−.18	.05	−.02	−.06	−.13
Abusive	.24**	.05	−.02	−.06	−.04	.01	.08	−.06	.07	.00	−.02	−.05
Inconsiderate	.11	.07	.06	.03	.07	.16	.10	−.03	.12	.07	.02	−.01
Physically self-absorbed	.14	.22*	−.03	.01	−.02	.01	.14	−.10	.11	−.01	−.04	−.12
Moody	.29**	.20*	.07	.04	.08	.09	.18	−.01	.08	.12	.09	.06
Sexually withholding	.24**	.23*	.00	−.07	−.05	−.02	.16	−.02	−.10	.04	.06	.05
Sexualizing of others	.04	.05	−.04	−.10	−.05	−.02	−.01	.00	−.08	−.06	−.08	−.06
Abusive of alcohol/Emotionally constricted	.11	−.06	.00	−.03	.00	.07	.01	.14	.04	−.02	.01	.05
Sexually aggressive	.20*	.00	.06	.05	.09	.10	.04	−.02	.01	−.02	−.06	−.05

Note. N (Men) = 106; N (Women) = 107.
* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, two-tailed.

TABLE 9
Correlations among Estimates of Probability of Wife's Infidelity with Wife's Complaints about Husband

Wife complains that husband is . . .	Wife's estimate of the probability that she will:						Husband's estimate of the probability that his wife will:					
	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair
Condescending	.11	.02	.07	−.01	.17	.00	.14	.23*	.35***	.37***	.36***	.38***
Jealous/Possessive	.11	.06	.00	.02	.30**	.05	.09	.14	.34***	.41***	.43***	.53***
Abusive	.24**	.18	.07	.16	.06	.07	.15	.16	.16	.15	.12	.15
Inconsiderate	.20*	.12	−.04	−.04	.11	−.02	.20	.21*	.16	.15	.12	.22*
Physically self-absorbed	−.02	.13	.12	.17	−.03	.14	−.04	−.15	−.09	−.07	−.08	−.01
Moody	.08	.19*	.05	.14	.35***	.19	.19	.12	.20*	.15	.17	.19*
Sexually withholding	.05	.17	.06	.03	.02	.11	.14	−.01	−.02	−.04	−.02	.01
Sexualizing of others	.25**	.22*	.12	.30**	.05	.12	.25*	−.05	−.05	−.03	−.04	.00
Abusive of alcohol/Emotionally constricted	.09	−.04	−.13	−.17	.10	−.06	.00	.25**	.19	.22*	.23*	.33***
Sexually aggressive	.17	.04	.05	.03	.07	.15	.09	.00	.08	.13	.13	.27**

Note. N (Men) = 106; N (Women) = 107.
* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, two-tailed.

stands with other men. And like men, women with moody spouses anticipated kissing others, in addition to having brief affairs with others.

Another interesting pattern of relationships occurs between women's complaints that their husbands were possessive and jealous and estimates that the women will engage in extramarital activity. Women who complained that their husbands are jealous and possessive reported a higher probability that they will have brief affairs with other men. Furthermore, women who complained that their husbands are jealous and possessive indeed have husbands who predicted that their wives will date other men, have one night stands with other men, and have both brief and serious affairs with other men. Although causality cannot be inferred from these correlational data, the pattern does suggest that the husbands' displays of jealousy and possessiveness may veridically reflect a higher likelihood of their partners' infidelity, especially in the form of a brief affair.

Finally, women who complained that their husbands abuse alcohol and are emotionally constricted have husbands who were more likely to anticipate infidelity on the part of their wives. This relationship showed up especially strongly in husbands' expectations that their wives will kiss other men and have serious affairs with other men.

Marital Satisfaction

Tables 10 and 11 show the correlations between four measures of marital satisfaction and estimates of the probability of extramarital activity. Men's general marital satisfaction was fairly consistently negatively correlated with estimates of their own infidelity. All correlations were negative, significantly so for the likelihood of kissing other women, dating other women, and having serious affairs with other women.

Similar patterns emerged for men's level of sexual satisfaction. Men unhappy with marital sex reported higher probabilities of flirting with and having brief affairs with other women. Men's levels of marital unhappiness were not significantly related to wives' perceptions of husbands' infidelity likelihood. However, women who were unhappy with their marriages were more likely to anticipate that their husbands will have affairs in the form of kissing other women, and having one night stands and brief affairs with other women.

Similar, but stronger, relationships emerged between women's marital satisfaction and estimates that they will have affairs. Like men, women who were unhappy in general with their marriage anticipated that they will kiss, flirt with, and date other men, as well as have brief and serious affairs with other men. Unlike the pattern noted above for men, the husbands of women who were unhappy with their marriages also anticipated that their wives will have affairs. Stated differently, maritally unhappy women predict, and are predicted by their husbands, to be candidates for extramarital involvement.

TABLE 10
Correlations among Estimates of Probability of Husband's Infidelity with Self-Reported Marital Satisfaction

	Husband's estimate of the probability that he will:						Wife's estimate of the probability that her husband will:					
	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair
Husband												
General marital satisfaction	−.18	−.21*	−.20*	−.12	−.18	−.20*	−.05	−.07	.14	.03	.03	.02
Satisfaction with marital sex	−.24**	−.19	−.14	−.13	−.22*	−.15	−.14	−.02	.12	−.02	.01	.03
Satisfaction with spouse as source of encouragement	−.18	−.08	−.01	−.04	.00	−.07	.10	.07	.11	.04	.09	.07
Love and affection are expressed in marriage	−.14	−.14	−.16	−.12	−.22*	−.21*	−.08	−.11	.04	.00	−.05	−.05
Wife												
General marital satisfaction	−.13	−.07	−.02	.06	.01	−.02	−.17	−.26**	−.11	−.26**	−.24**	−.20*
Satisfaction with marital sex	−.13	−.03	−.03	−.02	−.06	−.08	−.25*	−.14	−.09	−.12	−.06	−.04
Satisfaction with spouse as source of encouragement	−.12	−.20*	−.05	−.02	−.06	−.10	−.18	.01	−.05	−.13	−.08	−.02
Love and affection are expressed in marriage	−.05	−.23*	.04	.11	.09	.03	−.03	−.03	−.04	−.10	−.07	−.08

Note. N (Men) = 106; N (Women) = 107.
* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, two-tailed.

TABLE 11
Correlations among Estimates of Probability of Wife's Infidelity with Self-Reported Marital Satisfaction

	Wife's estimate of the probability that she will:						Husband's estimate of the probability that his wife will:					
	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair	Flirt	Kiss	Date	One night stand	Brief affair	Serious affair
Husband												
General marital satisfaction	-.02	-.03	.07	-.04	-.12	-.04	-.20	-.14	-.13	-.08	-.08	-.11
Satisfaction with marital sex	-.23*	.01	-.06	-.16	-.22*	-.14	-.27*	-.16	-.17	-.20*	-.28**	-.25**
Satisfaction with spouse as source of encouragement	.03	-.08	-.11	-.13	-.19	-.14	-.30**	-.15	-.19*	-.18	-.23*	-.31**
Love and affection are expressed in marriage	-.12	-.10	.03	-.05	-.17	-.10	-.24*	-.09	-.14	-.12	-.15	-.15
Wife												
General marital satisfaction	-.24**	-.21*	-.21*	-.31***	-.35***	-.29**	-.33**	-.19	-.28**	-.24*	-.31**	-.38***
Satisfaction with marital sex	-.29**	-.15	-.24**	-.33***	-.24*	-.28**	-.33**	-.11	-.12	-.14	-.17	-.14
Satisfaction with spouse as source of encouragement	-.19*	-.12	-.05	-.18	-.04	-.16	-.17	-.16	-.02	.00	-.01	.01
Love and affection are expressed in marriage	-.04	.01	.03	-.16	-.29**	-.09	-.17	-.33***	-.20*	-.17	-.21*	-.26**

Note. N (Men) = 106; N (Women) = 107.
* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, two-tailed.

Also like the pattern for men, women who were unhappy with the sexual component of their married life anticipated that they will become sexually involved with other men. The correlation was especially strong for one night stands, but the correlations were significant for women's estimates of flirting with other men and having brief and serious affairs with other men.

The last row of Table 11 shows a pattern of relationships for women involving the expression of love and affection not seen with men. Women who reported that love and affection were not expressed much in their marriage were more likely to anticipate having a brief affair. And the husbands of these lovelorn women also expected them to have brief affairs, in addition to expecting them to kiss and date other men and have serious affairs with other men.

DISCUSSION

Infidelity may be the most destructive source of conflict inflicted on a marriage. Despite its destructive impact, infidelities are estimated conservatively to occur in about half of all marriages. This study sought to examine the predictors of susceptibility to infidelity. This section discusses the most important findings of the study.

Personality and Susceptibility to Infidelity

Infidelities have often been attributed to personality characteristics by therapists and laypeople alike. Affairs have been attributed to narcissism, the need to assuage a fragile male ego, the need to bolster self-esteem, and general psychological malfunctioning (Buunk & van Driel, 1989). Despite these speculations, no prior research has systematically evaluated the role of personality in infidelity.

This study found strong and consistent links between personality and susceptibility to infidelity. One of the strongest predictors is *Narcissism*. Women high on Narcissism predict that they will flirt with, kiss, and date other men, as well has have one night stands, brief affairs, and serious affairs with other men. Interestingly, the *spouses* of those who score high on Narcissism also anticipate that they will engage in extramarital activity. These results support the prior speculations by therapists that narcissistic individuals may be especially prone to marital infidelity.

Beyond Narcissism, however, two equally strong predictors of mild and serious infidelity are low *Conscientiousness* and high *Psychoticism*. These variables are correlated, and share the common component of impulsivity and inability to delay gratification. And like Narcissism, Conscientiousness and Psychoticism are stronger predictors of women's anticipated infidelities than men's anticipated infidelities.

These findings suggest that a personality style marked by impulsivity, low dependability, and low reliability in general carries over into the sexual

sphere. Perhaps impulsive individuals are more likely to act on sexual opportunities when they arise, whereas less impulsive individuals show the forbearance to resist the sexual opportunities. Alternatively, impulsive individuals may have a higher sex drive, and so seek out extramarital outlets more than less impulsive individuals. A third possibility is that impulsive individuals exude more sexuality than less impulsive individuals, and so end up eliciting more frequent sexual advances from others. Which of these possibilities, or combination of possibilities, underlies the dynamics of the impulsivity-infidelity link remains for future research.

Specific Sources of Conflict and Susceptibility to Infidelity

Sources of conflict within a marriage appear to be linked with susceptibility to infidelity. The most predictive sources of conflict are complaints that one's partner sexualizes others, exhibits high levels of jealousy and possessiveness, is condescending, sexual withholding, and abuses alcohol.

Consider first the strong linkage between women's complaints that their husbands are possessive, jealous, condescending, and abusive of alcohol and husband's expectation that their wives will have affairs. At least two possibilities may underlie this pattern of correlations. First, it may simply reflect a demon in the minds of men—men who are inordinately worried that their wives will have affairs show high levels of jealousy and possessiveness, and perhaps condescend in an effort to lower their wife's self-perceived mate value (see Buss, 1994 for a discussion of this form of manipulation). Such men may be irrationally worried about their partner's defections.

A second possibility is that the wives of men who show high levels of jealousy and possessiveness are actually more susceptible to infidelity, and so men's behavior is essentially evoked by their wives. This possibility is given some credence by the correlation of .30 ($p < .01$) between women's complaints about their husband's possessiveness and jealousy and women's self-reported likelihood of having a brief affair. Of course, both possibilities may occur, depending on the particular married couple—some men may be irrationally suspicious, and other men may veridically perceive that their spouses are susceptible to affairs. Either way, the jealousy and possessiveness that accompanies these suspicions are worthy of closer examination, given the powerful role of male sexual jealousy in spousal violence and homicide (Daly & Wilson, 1988).

Another consistent pattern is a link between one spouse's complaints about their partner's sexualizing of others (e.g., commenting about the attractiveness of others) and self-reports of susceptibility to infidelity. Men who complain that their wives sexualize others report a higher likelihood of flirting with and kissing other women. Women who complain that their husbands sexualize others report a higher likelihood of flirting with and kissing other men, as well as having one night stands with other men. This pattern may

reflect a kind of reciprocity, whereby someone who perceives that a spouse is sexually attracted to others will respond in kind by indicating an openness to infidelity. Alternatively, it could reflect a sort of projection, in which someone who is sexually open to others accuses their partner of sexualizing others. Which of these causal possibilities underlies the linkage cannot be determined by these correlational data, but both are worthy of further empirical examination.

Men, but not women, who complain that their spouses are sexually withholding indicate a higher likelihood that they will flirt with and kiss others within the next year. This may reflect the theoretical prediction from evolutionary psychology that men view sexual access as a key reproductively-relevant resource, and denial of access to that resource is known to be more upsetting to men than to women (Buss, 1989). Thus, men who perceive sexual withholding on the part of their wives may be especially prone to seek sexual access elsewhere.

Finally, complaints that one's partner is moody are linked with self-reported susceptibility to infidelity. Men who complain that their wives are moody indicate a greater likelihood of flirting with and kissing others. Women who complain that their husbands are moody indicate a greater susceptibility to kissing others and having brief affairs with others. Precisely why complaints about a partner's moodiness are linked with susceptibility to infidelity is unclear, but one possibility may be that having a moody partner is linked with general marital dissatisfaction, as indicated by the correlations of $-.35$ ($p < .001$) and $-.33$ ($p = .001$) between complaints of partner's moodiness and general unhappiness with the marriage, for men and women, respectively.

Marital Dissatisfaction and Susceptibility to Infidelity

One of the striking set of findings in this study are the consistent links between general marital dissatisfaction, dissatisfaction with marital sex, and lack of love and affection in the marriage, with anticipated infidelity. The findings are consistent for both sexes. These findings are slightly at odds with prior research, which suggests that emotional intimacy is viewed by women more than by men as a justification for having an extramarital affair (Glass & Wright, 1992). Our findings suggest that the sexes are remarkably similar in the linkage between lack of love and affection within the marriage and susceptibility to extramarital involvement. For both men and women, dissatisfaction with marital sex is a predictor of susceptibility to brief affairs.

Another interesting finding is the link between one spouse's marital unhappiness and estimates that the other spouse will be unfaithful. Women who report being relatively unhappy with their marriages in general anticipate that their husbands will kiss and have affairs with other women. And men who

report being unhappy with their marriages also anticipate these infidelities on the part of their wives. This suggests that not only do people who are unhappy with their marriages anticipate having affairs themselves, they also expect that their partners will have affairs, suggesting a kind of reciprocity.

This study contains some notable limitations. First, we did not assess actual infidelities, instead focusing on anticipations or expectations of infidelities. Not all individuals who predict that they will be unfaithful actually are, nor do all people who predict that they will remain monogamous refrain from infidelity. Several patterns of results obtained in our study, such as the linkages of anticipated infidelities with sexual and emotional dissatisfaction, have been found in prior studies of actual infidelity, suggesting that our measure is a reasonable one.

A second limitation pertains to our sample of couples, all of whom had been married within the previous year. The sample may have restricted our range by reducing the obtained variance in the anticipated susceptibility to infidelity, since the first year of marriage may be the time individuals are least likely to be anticipating future infidelities. Nonetheless, this range reduction would have operated to attenuate the relationships we discovered. Thus, the magnitudes of our results may be lower-bound estimates of the actual relationships between personality, relationship quality, sources of conflict, and anticipated infidelity.

With these limitations in mind, we conclude that susceptibility to infidelity is not necessarily a capricious and unpredictable event. Rather, personality characteristics, relationship context, and relative mate value all show predictive relationships with susceptibility to infidelity. Narcissism, low Conscientiousness, and Psychoticism are the best personality predictors of susceptibility to infidelity. Specific sources of relationship conflict, such as moodiness and sexualizing of others, are consistent predictors of anticipated infidelity.

Gender appears to play a differential role in some of these links, but not in others. In our sample, both sexes appear equally susceptible to infidelity. Furthermore, marital, sexual, and emotional dissatisfaction are linked in both sexes with susceptibility to infidelity. There are sex-specific linkages, such as the link between women's complaints that their husbands are possessive, jealous, and condescending and their husbands' perceptions that their wives are susceptible to infidelity.

In sum, the current study contributes to our knowledge about the conditions and contexts surrounding infidelity. It highlights the importance of personality variables, as well as relationship variables, in creating susceptibility to infidelity. Future research could fruitfully examine an even larger set of contextual variables to get a greater predictive handle on this most important and destructive event.

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