

View the film:  
unfaithful, starring  
richard gere and  
diane lane



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Review of Unfaithful Unfaithful, a movie directed by Adrian Lyne and starring Richard Gere (Edward Sumner), Diane Lane (Connie Sumner) and Olivier Martinez (Paul Martel), tells the story of Edward and Connie Sumner, a couple who had a happy life in the suburbs of New York City with their son Charlie, until Connie had an affair with a young and seductive Frenchman. This movie provides a deep insight into romantic relationships, and the painful conflicts provoked by infidelity.

Sternberg's triangular theory of love can be applied to the characters.

According to the psychologist Sternberg (1988), love comprises three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment. Different types of love relationships can be explained by the combination of these elements.

Infatuation or infatuated love defines Connie Sumner's relationship with her lover, characterized just by passion, without intimacy or commitment. It was "love at first sight", as demonstrated in their first encounter, when Connie and Paul collided in the street. The movie emphasizes the attraction, the seduction and the sexual interactions between them. However, there are no scenes of friendship or warmth beyond sex. The dialogs between Connie and Paul are scarce, and they lack on deepness, since they are just flirts or invitations to seduction.

On the other hand, Connie and Edward shared a companionate love, which combines intimacy and commitment. They were married for many years, and they had a comfortable but routinary life. The passion had gone out of the relationship, but the deep affection and commitment remained. This could be seen at the beginning of the movie, and also at the end, after the infidelity and the murder were discovered. Nevertheless, the lack of one element, i. e. the passion, causes the infidelity, as well as its consequences.

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Connie had an affair with Paul because she was not completely satisfied with her life, although she had “ everything” to be happy. She had the same routine day after day; she did not work nor had an activity which kept her active and motivated. Hence, she wanted to have new emotions. It is not casual that she was interested in a young man. She desired the opposite of her marriage: a passionate relationship, with a liberal Frenchman, who lived in the bohemian Soho, in opposition to the working, middle-aged, established and (apparently) calm Edward.

The lies began when Connie wanted to expend more time with Paul. She usually said that she had to go to the beauty parlor, and therefore she avoided sharing moments with her husband. Her behavior became suspicious and gave Edwards clues about her infidelity. One of the most meaningful details occurred when she forgot to pick up her son at the school. This represented that the affair had gone too far, to the point she unattended her own family. Additionally, Connie bought sexy underwear, although she did not want to have intimacy with her husband. She was excited when she proved herself that she was still beautiful, but Edward also noticed the change. The third element which caused suspicion was the disappearance of the crystal ball. It was a gift that Edward gave to Connie, and she gave it to Paul. This is a very symbolic element, because Edward had placed a romantic note for Connie inside it –and she discovers it in an ironic as well as emotional moment in the film. The same ball is used to kill the lover, and, when it is returned home, made Connie discover what her husband had done.

The ABCDE model of romantic relationships (Levinger 1976) describes five stages: attraction, building, continuation, deterioration, and ending.  
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Attraction or acquaintance occurs when two people meet and find the other appealing. Connie's affair stayed mainly in this stage. Her relationship with Paul was not built-up because there was no commitment to make the relationship advance to further stages. Paul was not trustable, and he demonstrated it when he flirted with the other woman in the bookstore. He played with love and sex, because he did not take them seriously. Although Connie was married, she was jealous about that woman, because she wanted exclusivity and commitment. However, the passion kept her in that relationship.

When the film begins, Connie and Edward are in the stage of continuation, according to ABCDE model. As a marriage, they had a stable relationship, but it had begun a downward spiral through boredom. Her affairs caused the deterioration or decay (fourth stage) of the relationship, but it was overcome despite her infidelity and the murder committed by Edward.

Unfaithful deals with an actual, realistic as well as polemic topic, which deserves reflection. Why did Connie have an affair? She had the happiness in her hands: a beautiful family, a house, and a good life style. Her seemingly unjustified affair becomes an obsession for her, and then for her husband. It demonstrates how an element lacking in a relationship could make it collapse, and also alter all the individual's life. The treatment of the infidelity as a conflict is adequately reflected in the plot and the direction of the film.

#### Work Cited

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Unfaithful. Dir. Adrian Lyne. Perf. Richard Gere, Diane Lane, and Olivier Martinez. Twentieth Century Fox, 2002.