

# [Psychology of sexual behavior](https://assignbuster.com/psychology-of-sexual-behavior/)

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Infidelity can be traced back to biblical times and has been proven to occur within most species. Even high profile members of society such as presidents, congressmen, celebrities, and civic leaders have been caught engaging in extradyadic or extramarital affairs, which are sexual involvement with someone other than your partner. Although most view infidelity as the end of a relationship, there are others who feel it gets difficult to decide what to do when it happens during a long-term relationship.

Studies have shown that twenty-three percent of men and twelve percent of women reported having had sex outside of their marriage (Knox, Zusman, Kaluzny, Sturdivant, 2000). These findings are also consistent with research by McCammon, Knox, and Schacht (1998), who find that previous research has overestimated the actually percentages of partners engaging in extradyadic affairs. Knox et al. (2000) also found that sixty-nine percent of six-hundred and twenty never married university students stated that if their partner cheated on them they would end the relationship, with forty-five percent reporting that they had done so in the past.

Attitudes and Behaviors of College Students Toward Infidelity by Knox et al. (2000) focuses on the study of infidelity and university student's behavior when faced with a cheating partner. The main goal of the research was to determine if the students would end a relationship with someone who was unfaithful and if they had actually done so in the past. The data was compiled from a study called Project Innovation (Alabama), in which six hundred and twenty never married university students were asked to fill out an anonymous confidential questionnaire. The questionnaire was intended to evaluate the student's attitudes and behavior towards infidelity.

The students studied were from East Carolina University and also enrolled in a first year sociology course. The respondents were predominantly women, sixty-three percent, with only thirty-seven percent being male. Most students were of freshman or sophomore standing, eighty percent, with the median age being nineteen. Fifty-one percent of the participants considered themselves casually dating while the other forty-eight percent were in a love relationship. Ten months was found to be the median for being involved with their current partner.

Sixty-nine percent of the participants responded that they would end the relationship if their partner cheated on them. No sign of differences between year in school, age, or sex were prevalent in this research. However, other factors seem to influence the respondents' decision to report ending the relationship in the case of infidelity. Knox et al. (2000) stated those who were physically or emotionally abused by their partner were more likely to be in favor of ending the relationship if infidelity did occur.

McCammon, Knox, and Schacht (1998) recognize extradyadic and extramarital sexual involvements in chapter fourteen of their book Sexuality Across the Lifespan. McCammon et al. (1998) also examine different forms of extradyadic involvements and motivations for engaging in these sexual encounters. Although the article by Knox et al. (2000) did not cover any specific forms or motivations of infidelity, it did however briefly touch upon some influences involved in deciding to end the relationship after an infidelity occurrence. Some of these influences were, emotional and physical abuse, involvement in casual dating compared with reciprocal love relationships, and whether the infidelity was motivated by emotional or sexual reasons. McCammon et al. (1998) also agree that emotions, as well as sexual desire, were motivations for one to be unfaithful.

This study was concurrent with the view of society, in that most people seem to view infidelity as wrong and would not stay in a relationship after their partner was unfaithful. Although, contrary to society's view, many people stay in the relationship, such as Hillary Clinton (Knox et al, 2000). According to McCammon et al (1998) a marriage can actually benefit from infidelity. It can bring about problems the couple has and help them along their way to seek help and find a resolution. Infidelity can also bring a partner's attention to the needs of the other, which makes them more motivated to satisfy their partner.

All studies do not always produce reliable representative data. Many times data is skewed or biased towards the hypothesis that the researcher wants to prove. Knox et al. (2000) states some of the study's flaws, " a small college sample, lack of clarity over the definition of " cheating/infidelity", and lack of qualitative data (interviews) to capture the level of emotional reaction to a partner's unfaithfulness". Knox et al. (2000) does however correlate the findings with others studies on the same subject with the same type of population; the results are consistent.

This research appears consistent with other research as well as my own insight on the topic. Most of the people I know have been involved in at least one extradyadic encounter, with the end result being a break up of their current relationship. But if I were to fill out the questionnaire I don't know how I would answer some questions. I do believe that cheating is wrong and that it hurts a relationship dramatically. On the other hand though, it gets difficult to decide what to do when you are in a long-term reciprocal love relationship. The reasons for the infidelity would have to be the determinant of my decision, as well as the healthiness of the relationship. Some relationships go awry for a little while but can be fixed. In those cases I believe unfaithfulness should be discussed between the partners, resulting in a decision, which is best for the relationship.

The research did not assess how many of the students that responded in favor of ending the relationship have cheated or have been previously cheated on. This is an important aspect because I consider that once someone feels the pain of infidelity they would not like to encounter it again, giving or receiving. In this case one would be in favor of ending the relationship more readily then someone who has not experienced it (Knox et al, 2000).

Knox et al. study seemed very direct and was focused on a specific subject. However, it was not extensive and I would have liked to have seen more information on the background influences of the respondents, (i. e. have they been cheated on) and also the other side of the infidelity, the cause of why someone cheats. The study was obviously specific and even Knox et al. recognizes that there are unreliable factors in the research.