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Abstract

This study explores the association between sociosexuality (behavior, attitudes and desire) and commitment to understand sexual infidelity in the current relationship. We also explore how these variables are associated with attitudes towards infidelity. Participants were romantically involved heterosexuals ($N = 252$; 51 women, 201 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 41.13$, $SD = 9.82$) registered on a dating website directed at romantically involved individuals. Results showed that sociosexuality, alongside commitment, were associated with sexual infidelity. Individuals who have (vs. have not) previously engaged in infidelity reported more unrestricted sociosexuality, while reporting less commitment. For individuals reporting prior sexual infidelity, unrestricted sociosexual desire and lesser commitment were associated with more permissive perceptions of infidelity. For individuals reporting absence of prior sexual infidelity, greater commitment was always associated with more strict perceptions of infidelity. No gender differences emerged in the analyses. Also, no differences were found according to individual motivations (know other people vs. casual sex) or relational motivations (individual registration vs. registration as a couple) underlying individuals' registration on the website. These results are an important addition to the literature on infidelity by analyzing a specific sample motivated to engage in infidelity. Implications for future research are discussed.

Sociosexuality, commitment, sexual infidelity and perceptions of infidelity: Data from the Second Love website

Infidelity has been associated with breakups across multiple cultures and societies (Amato & Previti, 2003; Amato & Rogers, 1997; Betzig, 1989; Hall & Fincham, 2006; Lampard, 2014). Research on infidelity traditionally focus on its correlates and predictors, reactions to infidelity and consequences for the relationship (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007; Shaw, Rhoades, Allen, Stanley, & Markman, 2013). More recently, research started to focus on which behaviors are perceived as infidelity (Mattingly, Wilson, Clark, Bequette, & Weidler, 2010; Wilson, Mattingly, Clark, Weidler, & Bequette, 2011). Although individuals in relationships generally disapprove infidelity, acts of infidelity are somewhat prevalent (Hall & Fincham, 2009; Jackman, 2015). In this study, we focus on sexual infidelity (be it sexual or emotional infidelity)¹, defined as any type of sexual behavior outside the current relationship that violates the explicit or implicit sexual monogamy norm, is perceived as sexual transgression, and is associated with feelings of betrayal (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Buunk & Dijkstra, 2004; Hall & Fincham, 2006). This includes behaviors such as online sexual activities, oral sex, coitus or anal sex (Braithwaite, Lambert, Fincham, & Pasley, 2010). Importantly, past findings have shown that sociosexuality plays a role as a facilitator of these infidelity behaviors (Shaw et al., 2013).

Research shows that sociosexuality, a personal disposition to engage in uncommitted casual sex (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), is associated with sexual behavior, such that more unrestricted individuals are more willing to engage in uncommitted sexual encounters or infidelity (Simpson, Wilson, & Winterheld, 2004). Recent theories of mating strategies, however, suggest that individuals also accommodate their predispositions and needs in order

¹ Sexual infidelity is distinct from emotional infidelity, in which individuals redirect romantic love, investments and emotional resources to another person outside of the relationship (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007; Shackelford & Buss, 1997). Note that both types of infidelity are not mutually exclusive (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996) and individuals tend to perceive them as equally upsetting (Lishner, Nguyen, Stocks, & Zillmer, 2008).

to attain relational goals (Strategic Pluralism Theory; Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). Indeed, empirical evidence shows that individuals tend to restrict their sociosexuality when in a relationship (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). Following theories of commitment (Investment Model; Rusbult, Agnew, & Arriaga, 2012), the motivation to remain in the relationship (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001) is one of the crucial factors that help protect the relationship (Drigotas, Safstrom, & Gentilia, 1999). In this sense, more committed individuals are less likely to engage in infidelity, regardless of their sociosexuality (Mattingly et al., 2011).

In the present study we analyze the relationships between sociosexuality, commitment, and sexual infidelity, departing from the typical sample of college students or adult mainstream couples. We extend the literature by examining a sample of older individuals that are currently involved in a romantic relationship, but at the same time have paid for their registration on a website that promotes interactions with other romantically involved individuals – Second Love. This sample offers a unique context for studying relationship processes because individuals are more predisposed to engage in infidelity behaviors. Researchers have previously argued for the importance of understanding how interactions over the Internet influence romantic relationships (Whitty, 2003), especially because online infidelity is perceived as severe as face-to-face infidelity (Merkle & Richardson, 2000). Recent studies extended these findings to online extradyadic involvements over social networking website such as Facebook (e.g., Martins et al., 2015). Nevertheless, research on infidelity behaviors in more specific websites such as Second Love is much scarcer in the literature. Hence, it is important to further examine whether sociosexuality and commitment are associated with sexual infidelity in this specific sample and whether these variables are associated with perceptions of infidelity.

Sociosexuality in Human Sexual Behaviors

Sociosexuality is argued to comprise three distinct components: (a) behavior, referring to behavioral tendencies and personal histories of uncommitted sex; (b) attitudes, referring to the evaluative disposition towards uncommitted sex, influenced by socialization; and (c) desire, referring to the interest in uncommitted sex often associated with sexual arousal and sexual fantasies (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008).

Research shows that men are less sociosexually restricted than women (Fisher, 2009; Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007; Schmitt, 2003, 2005; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991; Sprecher, Treger, & Sakaluk, 2013). Men report higher frequency of masturbation (Petersen & Hyde, 2011), sexual fantasies (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995) and access to pornography (Petersen & Hyde, 2010). They are also more likely to engage in extramarital sexual activity (Fisher, Moore, & Pittenger, 2012) and to value variety in sexual partners (Schmitt, 2003).

Regardless of inter-gender differences in sociosexuality, empirical evidence shows greater intra-gender differences (Simpson et al., 2004). More sociosexually unrestricted individuals tend to pursue short-term mating strategies (e.g., greater number of sexual partners), whereas more restricted individuals adopt long-term mating strategies (Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999; Ostovich & Sabini, 2004; Petersen & Hyde, 2010; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991, 1992). Importantly, sociosexuality reliably predicts flirting (Asendorpf & Penke, 2005) and future sexual infidelity (Shaw et al., 2013) in both genders.

However, individuals' sexuality is influenced by relational and contextual variables such as social and sex roles in society (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Schaller & Murray, 2008; Schmitt, 2005). Hence, a broader understanding of sexuality must integrate biological, psychological and sociocultural factors, both at individual and relational levels (DeLamater & Hyde, 2004). For instance, although individual attitudes towards sex help understand dyadic sexual behavior and sexual satisfaction (DeLamater & Sill, 2005), attitudes towards extradyadic uncommitted casual sex are not necessarily associated with sociosexual behavior

(Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). For instance, an individual with more unrestricted sociosexual attitudes may be more likely to experience greater desire for a variety of potential sexual partners, but at the same time may be not be able to act upon such predisposition (e.g., lack of opportunity) or may be constrained by cultural factors (e.g., preserve the social image). This converges with evidence showing that attitudes are not always a reliable direct predictor of behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). In sum, these findings show intra-gender differences in sociosexuality and how they relate with sexuality. For our present purposes, we will now focus on the role of sociosexuality in the course of romantic relationships.

Sociosexuality and Romantic Relationships

For romantically involved individuals, differences in sociosexuality seem to be reflected in relationship quality, such that more unrestricted (vs. restricted) individuals tend to develop shorter and less committed relationships (Jones, 1998; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991; Simpson et al., 2004). They are also more likely to engage in infidelity (Seal, Agostinelli, & Hannett, 1994) and to perceive infidelity as more acceptable, albeit only under certain circumstances (e.g., in the context of a bad relationship; Feldman & Cauffman, 1999). Regardless, research also shows that sociosexually unrestricted individuals are motivated to develop stable romantic relationships (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991; Simpson et al., 2004) and are sexually invested in their relationships (Tempelhof & Allen, 2008). Therefore, an unrestricted sociosexual orientation is not a sufficient condition to engage in sexual infidelity.

Research indicates that infidelity is associated with aspects pertaining to the relationship (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007; Shackelford & Buss, 1997). Emotional infidelity tend to arise out of feelings of dissatisfaction and neglect, whereas sexual infidelity arise out of feelings of sexual attraction, need for sexual variety and wanting more frequent sex (Allen & Rhoades, 2007; Allen et al., 2008; Barta & Kiene, 2005; Feldman & Cauffman, 1999). This clearly

illustrates the importance of relational factors and their interplay with dispositional factors to predict infidelity. An individual may have more unrestricted sociosexual attitudes and/or desires, but decide not to engage in casual sexual behavior due to a lack of motivations to do so. This converges with a pluralistic view of mating strategies, according to which individuals accommodate personal motivations and needs to broad contextual conditions and strategically shift their mating strategies to attain specific goals (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000).

In this line of reasoning, commitment, defined as long-term motivation to maintain the relationship (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001), sheds a light in understanding the sociosexuality infidelity link. On the one hand, sexual infidelity is usually associated with negative consequences for the long-term maintenance of relationship, such as break-up or divorce (Sharpe, Walters, & Goren, 2013; Vangelisti & Gerstenberger, 2004). On the other hand, commitment, reliably predicts happiness, sexual adjustment, intimacy, couple well-being (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998), fidelity (Drigotas et al., 1999) and relationship persistence (Le & Agnew, 2003). As such, commitment may act upon sociosexuality to promote relationship maintenance. Supporting this argument, research shows that individuals restrict their sociosexuality when initiating a new relationship and become more unrestricted when ending it (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). Presumably, romantically involved individuals consider both personal and relational consequences of engaging in infidelity and compare them to possible short-term benefits (Drigotas & Barta, 2001). More (vs. less) committed are more likely to transform individualistic needs for casual sex into common motivational goals and needs (Drigotas et al., 1999) and activate derogation of alternatives (Lydon, Fitzsimons, & Naidoo, 2003).

Relatively little research has examined the interplay between sociosexuality and commitment. The existing research suggests that commitment does indeed play a crucial role in accommodating individuals' sociosexual orientation when in a highly committed

relationship. For example, Mattingly and colleagues (2011) showed that unrestricted individuals were less likely to engage in infidelity when more (vs. less) committed. However, participants in the aforementioned study were relatively young ($M_{age} = 19.2$ years) and in a relationship for a mean length of 17 months. The present study departs from this sample and examines an older sample of individuals, romantically involved in longer relationships, with more diverse characteristics (e.g., cohabitation, children), and registered on a website directed at romantically involved individuals.

Sociosexuality and Perceptions of Infidelity

Perceptions of infidelity are important to understand infidelity in romantic relationships. Individuals have distinct definitions of infidelity and of which behaviors are indicative of it. More often than not, definitions of infidelity are not explicitly discussed within the couple and rely on implicit agreements of what is, and what is not, acceptable (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007). For instance, individuals for whom certain behaviors are not indicative of infidelity (e.g., talking over the Internet) may be more likely to engage in those behaviors because they will not perceive them as being harmful for the relationship. Research supports this reasoning. Individuals with (vs. without) past history of sexual infidelity are more approving of infidelity (Tsapelas, Fisher, & Aron, 2010) and are more accepting of another person's infidelity (Sharpe et al., 2013).

Broadly, behaviors associated with infidelity can range from flirting to sexual intercourse (Roscoe, Cavanaugh, & Kennedy, 1988) and can be categorized into three categories: (a) ambiguous behaviors, such as talking on the Internet or hugging another person; (b) explicit behaviors, such as sexual intercourse or oral sex; and (c) deceptive behaviors, such as lying to, or withholding information from, the partner (Mattingly et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2011). Ambiguous behaviors are perceived as the least indicative of

infidelity, deceptive behaviors as moderately indicative of infidelity and explicit behaviors as the most indicative of infidelity (Feldman & Cauffman, 1999; Wilson et al., 2011).

Research shows that dispositional and relational factors play a vital role in these perceptions of infidelity. More restricted sociosexuality and greater satisfaction in the relationship are associated with more restrictive perceptions of what behaviors constitute infidelity (Mattingly et al., 2010). Greater commitment is associated with the perception of extradyadic sexual behaviors as more indicative of infidelity and as provoking greater jealousy (Yarab, Allgeier, & Sensibaugh, 1999). Still, only few studies focused on how these perceptions differ according to sexual infidelity in sexually monogamous relationships, and to the best of our knowledge none has examined whether these differences are associated with sociosexuality and commitment.

Overview of the Study

In the present article we aimed at analyzing the role of sociosexuality and commitment to understand sexual infidelity and perceptions of infidelity. This study used a sample of sexually monogamous men and women, who were also registered on Second Love, a dating website directed at promoting interactions with other individuals in romantic relationships. According to their 2015 brand profile, Second Love was created to provide a dating platform for like-minded people to explore the possibilities outside of their current relationships, in a safe and discrete way. Users can register and create an active profile for free, with an option to upgrade to a premium registration. This acts as a protocol to protect the anonymity and privacy of members. All profiles are individually screened for acceptance into the database to ensure that the participating members are not there to abuse or compromise others.

We decided to use this specific sample because it provides insights regarding infidelity with individuals already motivated to engage in some form of infidelity. Although these

individuals have not necessarily engaged in sexual infidelity, they have already engaged in infidelity by paying for their registration. Very little research examined relational dynamics within such samples. Interactions over the Internet are increasingly popular and researchers need to understand how these interactions influence the initiations and maintenance of romantic relationships (Whitty, 2003). Online infidelity has more recently become a focus of interest for researchers (e.g., Martins et al., 2015). Not only individuals perceive online infidelity to be as intimate and real as face-to-face infidelity, both types of infidelity are likely to have similar consequences for the relationship (Merkle & Richardson, 2000). Therefore, this type of evidence has a high demand and these samples are highly informative for a broader grasp of infidelity. To promote reliable sexuality and infidelity reports, this was an anonymous online study. Previous research has shown that individuals are less likely to be influenced by social desirability in these situations (Alexander & Fisher, 2003).

Objectives and Hypothesis

The first aim of this study was to examine sociosexuality and commitment according to *actual* sexual infidelity. Most research conducted in infidelity analyzed responses to hypothetical imagined scenarios and not actual infidelity experiences (Sharpe et al., 2013). In our research we decided to divide the sample according to prior sexual infidelity based on the notions that: (a) all participants reported being sexually monogamous in their relationship, (b) extra-dyadic behaviors should be perceived as infidelity according to a monogamous norm, and (c) all participants were actively engaged in some type of infidelity by being registered on Second Love.

The second aim of the present study was to explore differences in perceptions of what constitutes infidelity. Little research has focused on such perceptions and examined sexual infidelity as an influential factor (Mattingly et al., 2010). Past research suggests that men tend

to engage in more infidelity than women (Blow & Hartnett, 2005b), although these gender differences are becoming less pronounced (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Brand, Markey, Mills, & Hodges, 2007). Nevertheless, relational factors must be taken into account. Empirical evidence shows that more committed individuals tend to accommodate their sociosexuality (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008) and focus on relational motivations to preserve their relational well-being (Drigotas et al., 1999). Given our specific sample, we expect no differences between men and women in regards to sexual infidelity. Instead, we expect sociosexuality and commitment to be associated with sexual infidelity. Also, participants with sexual infidelity should report more unrestricted sociosexuality (behavior, attitudes and desire) and lesser commitment than participants without sexual infidelity.

Based on the few studies that focus on infidelity perceptions (Mattingly et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2011), explicit behaviors should be more indicative of infidelity, followed by deceptive behaviors. Ambiguous behaviors should be the least indicative of infidelity. Individuals with (vs. without) sexual infidelity should hold more permissive perceptions of what constitutes infidelity (Sharpe et al., 2013; Tsapelas et al., 2010). For these individuals, their unrestricted sociosexuality should be associated with more permissive perceptions of ambiguous, explicit and deceptive infidelity behaviors. For individuals without sexual infidelity, on the other hand, greater commitment should be associated with perceptions of greater infidelity (Mattingly et al., 2011; Yarab et al., 1999).

Also given the specificity of our sample, we will also explore differences in sociosexuality, commitment and perceptions of infidelity according to the motivations of participants for being registered on Second Love – individual (know other people vs. casual sex) and relational (individual registration vs. registration as a couple).

Method

Participants and Design

The sample comprised 252 Portuguese self-identified heterosexuals (51 women, 201 men) with ages ranging from 18 to 71 ($M = 41.13$, $SD = 9.82$). Half the sample had a BSc or Masters (59.5%) and lived in urban areas (48.8%). Most participants indicated being Catholic (61.5%; 12.3% regularly attend religious services), were married (56.7%), cohabit with the partner (81.7%) and had two or more children (41.3%).

All participants were romantically involved in what they identified as a sexually monogamous romantic relationship and were not looking for a new relationship. All participants paid for their registration on the Second Love website. Most participants reported sexual infidelity during the current relationship (68.3%) and indicated that they registered on the website individually without the partner being aware of it (86.5%). Men were more likely to indicate they were looking for casual dyadic sexual encounters, whereas women were more likely to indicate they were looking to meet other people. No other significant differences across gender were found (Table 1).

-- Table 1 --

Procedure

This study involved human data collection from healthy adult volunteers, in agreement with the Ethics Guidelines issued by the Scientific Commission of the hosting institution. There was no physical, financial, social, legal, or other risks connected with the study. The study was noninvasive, no false information or deception was employed, and results were analyzed anonymously. Participants were given a full description of their rights and duties at the beginning of the web survey.

Participants were recruited through a web survey hosted on the Second Love website and available to all registered users. When users logged in to their personal area on the website, a popup window appeared informing them of a web survey on interpersonal relationships. Should they consider taking part in the survey, a link was included so that participants could be redirected to the study itself. This popup window was only visible to individuals who indicated being heterosexual in their initial registration on Second Love. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality and anonymity of responses were explicit in the introductory page. All individuals were informed: (a) of the general purpose of the study and the nature of the task involved; (b) that neither their name nor any identifying information were attached to their data; (c) that their participation was voluntary; and (d) that they could withdraw from the study at any time without their responses being considered for analysis. After providing informed consent by clicking on the “*I agree*” option, participants were directed to the first part of the survey that included demographic, relationship and registration information. The second part included our main study variables.

This was a non-forced response web survey. When applicable, a warning reminded individuals of missing responses but they were allowed to continue their participation (missing responses: 0.42%). At the end, participants were debriefed about the purpose of the study and were provided with contact information. The average time to complete the survey was 11 minutes. Participants were not paid or given other incentives to participate in the study. Internet protocol (IP) addresses were checked and no IP corresponded to more than one questionnaire.

Measures

Demographic, relationship and registration information. The first part of the web survey started with standard sociodemographic information (gender, age, sexual orientation,

education, area of residence, religion). This was followed by relationship factors (relationship status, cohabitation, relationship length, children). Some of these variables were identified in the literature as associated with sexual infidelity (Jackman, 2015; Mark, Janssen, & Milhausen, 2011; Martins et al., 2015; Shaw et al., 2013; Tsapelas et al., 2010) and with perceptions of infidelity (Mattingly et al., 2010). Sexual infidelity was assessed by the question “Were you involved sexually with other people during your current romantic relationship?” (*Yes/No*) (see also Shaw et al., 2013). If “yes”, participants were also asked: “Does your partner know of this sexual involvement?” (*Yes/No*). All participants were additionally asked: “What type of relationship do you have with your partner?” (*Sexually monogamous/Individual casual sexual encounters are consented/Open relationship*) and “Are you currently looking for a new romantic relationship?” (*Yes/No*). Finally, participants were asked to provide information related to their registration (type of registration, partner awareness of registration and what they were looking for).

Revised Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI-R). The SOI-R (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008) comprises nine items that assess the willingness to engage in uncommitted sexual encounters. Items are divided in three components: behavior (3 items; $\alpha = .85$; e.g., “With how many different partners have you had sex within the past 12 months?”), attitudes (3 items; $\alpha = .87$; e.g., “Sex without love is OK”) and desire (3 items; $\alpha = .86$; e.g., “How often do you have fantasies about having sex with someone with whom you do *not* have a committed romantic relationship?”). Responses are given on 7-point scales (scale anchors depend on the item). Higher mean scores on each component signify more unrestricted behaviors, attitudes and/or desires. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed a good fit of this measure in our sample: $\chi^2(25) = 43.93$, $p = .011$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .97, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .95, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SMSR) = .07 and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .06.

Commitment Scale. This scale was retrieved from the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult et al., 1998) and comprises seven items ($\alpha = .89$; e.g., “I want our relationship to last for a very long time”). Responses are given on 7-point scales (1 = *Do not agree at all*, 7 = *Agree completely*). Higher scores represent greater commitment. A CFA showed a good fit of this measure in our sample: $\chi^2(14) = 33.79$, $p = .002$, CFI = .96, TLI = .94, SMSR = .05 and RMSEA = .08 (see also Rodrigues & Lopes, 2013).

Perceptions of Dating Infidelity Scale (PDIS). The PDIS (Wilson et al., 2011) comprises 12 items that assess the extent to which individuals perceive behaviors as indicative of infidelity. Items are divided in three types of behaviors: ambiguous (6 items; $\alpha = .90$, e.g., “talking on the phone or Internet”), explicit (4 items, $\alpha = .93$; e.g., “sexual intercourse”) and deceptive (2 items; $\alpha = .75$, e.g., “lying to one’s partner”). Apart from the deceptive items, all other items are worded to indicate activities with an individual other than the current partner. Responses are given on 7-point scales (1 = *Extremely low level of infidelity*, 7 = *Extremely high level of infidelity*). Higher mean scores signify that behaviors are more indicative of infidelity. In the present sample, the CFA indicated a good fit of this measure: $\chi^2(49) = 115.94$, $p < .001$, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, SMSR = .05 and RMSEA = .07.

Results

Predictors of Sexual Infidelity

As shown in Table 1, no significant differences were found between women and men in sexual infidelity: 66.7% of women and 68.7% of men reported that they have engaged in infidelity, $\chi^2(1) = 0.01$, Cramer’s $V = .02$.

To examine if sociosexuality and commitment were associated with increased odds of infidelity we conducted a logistic regression analysis in which sexual infidelity (coded: 0 =

no, 1 = yes) was the dependent variable. In separate blocks we regressed gender and the variable “looking for” (the only that showed differences between women and men, Table 1), followed by each SOI-R component and commitment. As expected, results from Step 2 (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .32$) show that sexual infidelity was significantly associated with sociosexual behavior ($p < .001$), sociosexual desire ($p = .046$) and commitment ($p < .001$) (Table 2). Gender was not associated with sexual infidelity, neither in Step 1 ($p = .553$) nor in Step 2 ($p = .382$)².

-- Table 2 --

Sexual Infidelity, Sociosexuality and Commitment

The descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of all dependent variables are shown in Table 3. To examine if sexual infidelity was associated with differences in sociosexuality and commitment we conducted a 2 Sexual infidelity (no, yes) MANCOVA. Multivariate results show a main effect of infidelity, Wilk's $\Lambda = .80$, $F(4, 236) = 14.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .20$. Participants with (vs. without) sexual infidelity reported more unrestricted sociosexual behavior, $F(1, 239) = 37.14$, $MSE = 59.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .13$, attitudes, $F(1, 239) = 6.25$, $MSE = 10.79$, $p = .013$, $\eta^2_p = .03$, and desire, $F(1, 239) = 8.75$, $MSE = 17.85$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2_p = .04$, while also reporting lesser commitment, $F(1, 235) = 10.43$, $MSE = 21.32$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2_p = .04$.

-- Table 3 --

² We further tested for gender moderation for all of the predictors in Step 2 by adding four interaction terms (Gender x Dependent Variables). Results show no significant moderation by gender (all $p > .156$).

Sexual Infidelity and Perceptions of Infidelity

To examine if sexual infidelity was associated with differences in perceptions of infidelity we then conducted a 2 Sexual infidelity (no, yes) MANCOVA. Multivariate results show a main effect of infidelity, Wilk's $\Lambda = .96$, $F(3, 247) = 3.17$, $p = .025$, $\eta^2_p = .04$. Participants with (vs. without) sexual infidelity perceive ambiguous, $F(1, 249) = 4.90$, $MSE = 4.91$, $p = .028$, $\eta^2_p = .02$, and explicit behaviors, $F(1, 249) = 3.91$, $MSE = 9.68$, $p = .049$, $\eta^2_p = .02$, as less indicative of infidelity. No differences emerged in the perception of deceptive behaviors, $F(1, 249) = 0.04$, $MSE = 0.11$, $p = .853$ (Table 3).

Pairwise t tests further indicate that individuals perceive explicit behaviors to be significantly more indicative of infidelity ($M = 5.81$) than deceptive behaviors ($M = 5.04$), $t(251) = 7.20$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.91$. Ambiguous behaviors are perceived significantly less representative of infidelity ($M = 1.91$) than deceptive behaviors, $t(251) = 29.45$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 3.72$.

To further understand whether sociosexuality and commitment are associated with perceptions of infidelity, we conducted a set of hierarchical multiple regression analyses separated by sexual infidelity. In separate blocks we regressed the “looking for” variable (Step 1), followed by sociosexuality (behavior, attitudes and desire) and commitment measures (Step 2). Each component of the PDIS defined separately the dependent variables. Results are presented in Table 4.

-- Table 4 --

For individuals with sexual infidelity, unrestricted desire and lesser commitment were associated with the perception of ambiguous ($p = .011$ and $p = .005$, respectively) and deceptive behaviors ($p = .008$ and $p = .005$, respectively) as less indicative of infidelity. For

these individuals, perceptions of explicit behaviors as less indicative of infidelity were only associated with unrestricted desire ($p = .001$). For individuals without sexual infidelity, only greater commitment was associated with perceptions of ambiguous ($p = .019$), explicit ($p = .001$) and deceptive behaviors ($p = .001$) as more indicative of infidelity. No other results reached significance.

Differences According to Motivations for Registration

Given the nature of this study sample, we also examined differences in sociosexuality, commitment and infidelity perceptions according to motivations underlying individuals' registration on the website. We first analyzed individual motivations. A multivariate 2 Sexual infidelity (no, yes) x 2 Looking for (know other people vs. casual sex) MANCOVA showed a non-significant interaction between the sociosexuality factors and commitment, Wilk's $\Lambda = .98$, $F(4, 235) = 1.26$, $p = .285$, and for perceptions of infidelity, Wilk's $\Lambda = .99$, $F(3, 246) = 0.81$, $p = .488$.

Regarding relational motivations, a 2 Sexual infidelity (no, yes) x 2 Registration type (individual vs. couple) multivariate MANCOVA also showed a non-significant interaction between the sociosexuality factors and commitment, Wilk's $\Lambda = .99$, $F(4, 235) = 0.90$, $p = .462$, or for perceptions of infidelity, Wilk's $\Lambda = .99$, $F(3, 246) = 0.96$, $p = .413$. Taken together, these results indicate that both "looking for" and "registration type" variables do not qualify our main findings.

Discussion

In this study, we examined whether dispositional – sociosexuality – and relational variables – commitment – are associated with sexual infidelity. We additionally examined the

role of these variables in perceptions of infidelity. We compared individuals with and without sexual infidelity. As the sample comprised only self-identified sexually monogamous individuals, extradyadic sexual behaviors are perceived as sexual infidelity. The study presented in this article is relevant for three main reasons. First, this was a sample of individuals who, albeit romantically involved, have also paid for their registration on a dating website for other romantically involved individuals. Accordingly, all participants have behaviorally engaged in online infidelity. Second, unlike the bulk of research in which there is a focus on younger participants, our sample had a mean age of 40 years. This is an interesting and novel aspect for the literature. For instance, the inexistence of gender differences typically observed in younger cohorts was here extended to this specific sample of individuals. Third, this was an anonymous web survey. According to the literature, this acts against possible bias in reports of actual behavior, such as overestimation in men and underestimation in women (Blow & Hartnett, 2005a; Fisher, 2009; Whisman & Snyder, 2007). Hence, it is possible that these individuals (vs. non-registered individuals) have more positive attitudes towards sexuality and are less inhibited sexually, which are associated with casual sex in both men (Bancroft et al., 2004) and women (Carpenter, Janssen, Graham, Vorst, & Wicherts, 2008). Supporting this argument is the evidence showing that all individuals had highly favorable sociosexual attitudes. Even individuals who have not engaged in *sexual* infidelity were motivated enough to pay for their registration on the Second Love website, and to engage in (at least) online infidelity. This would probably be less likely if they had negative attitudes towards casual sex.

Results reported in this article show that sexual infidelity was associated with unrestricted sociosexual behaviors and desire, along with lesser commitment. Results also indicate that sexual infidelity also originates differences in which behaviors are indicative of infidelity. For individuals with sexual infidelity, unrestricted sociosexual desire and lesser

commitment are associated with more permissive perceptions of infidelity. For individuals who have not engaged in sexual infidelity, greater commitment is associated with more restrictive perceptions of infidelity. Furthermore, results show that individuals who registered as a couple (vs. individually) are not necessarily more motivated to engage in sexual infidelity due to unrestricted sociosexuality or lack of commitment. Likewise, individuals who are looking for casual sex (vs. knowing other people) are not necessarily more motivated to engage in sexual infidelity and less committed to their relationship. In both cases, there were also no differences in perceptions of infidelity.

Also, in our sample men were mainly looking for casual dyadic sex with others and women were mainly looking to know other people. This converges with research showing that men are more likely to engage in sexual infidelity, whereas for women infidelity is more often associated with an emotional connection (Martins et al., 2015). Research shows that both types of infidelity are perceived as equally harmful to the relationship (Lishner et al., 2008). The fact that most women indicated they were looking to meet other people does not necessarily imply they disregard casual sex. Converging with this, we did not find significant gender differences in regards to incidence of sexual infidelity. This is in line with recent research indicating that gender differences in extradyadic involvement are becoming less pronounced (Brand et al., 2007; Martins et al., 2015; Shaw et al., 2013), including in extradyadic sexual encounters (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007).

Furthermore, and as expected, sexual infidelity was significantly associated with sociosexuality (behaviors and desire) and commitment. Past research shows that infidelity is predicted by relationship quality variables, such as lower commitment (Shaw et al., 2013) or lower satisfaction (Martins et al., 2015). Infidelity is also predicted by dispositional variables related to sexuality, such as lower sexual inhibition, greater sexual excitation (Mark et al., 2011) and greater number of past sex partners (Shaw et al., 2013). These variables directly

relate to the definition of sociosexuality (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991).

Likewise, individuals who have engaged in infidelity were more sociosexually unrestricted in their behaviors, attitudes and desire, while also less committed. The fact that sociosexual behavior had a lower score than the remaining SOI-R components may be explained, in part, by the fact that it refers to sexual behaviors within the last 12 months and the number of sexual partners within this time frame. Albeit being registered on Second Love, our sample was also romantically involved. This may contribute for a less diversified sexual behavior due to fewer opportunities, or at least less casual sex with different casual partners. This is an important evidence suggesting that sociosexually unrestricted individuals do not necessarily engage in casual sex indiscriminately (Tsapelas et al., 2010). Moreover, if this was simply a matter of lack of opportunity, no differences in sociosexuality (and especially on the desire component of sociosexuality) and commitment should have emerged according to sexual infidelity. In fact, these differences emerged, suggesting that prior infidelity is more related to personal or relational factors, rather than situational factors (Shaw et al., 2013).

Bridging these results with perceptions of infidelity, individuals with (vs. without) sexual infidelity perceive ambiguous and explicit behaviors as less indicative of infidelity. Those without sexual infidelity may hold more strict views on which ambiguous behaviors are indicative of infidelity, and may perceive certain actions as unacceptable in certain situations when in a sexually monogamous relationship (Feldman & Cauffman, 1999; Mattingly et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2011). For instance, talking with another person over the Internet may not be considered infidelity if it takes place on Facebook. But the same situation may be indicative of infidelity if it takes place on a dating website. If the individual has engaged in sexual infidelity and considers that talking with others on a dating website is an

acceptable behavior (regardless of what the partner thinks of it), then there is a greater likelihood of repetition without considering it to be an unacceptable behavior.

Our results further show that, regardless of sexual infidelity, participants perceived explicit behaviors (e.g., oral sex; dating) as highly indicative of infidelity (Mattingly et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2011). This was even more so among individuals without prior sexual infidelity. Those with prior sexual infidelity may develop a more malleable view of infidelity in an attempt to deal with their behavior, legitimize it and face the potential consequences (Mattingly et al., 2010). The fact that no differences emerged for deceptive behaviors may be grounded in the specificity of our sample. Indeed, most of our participants were withholding information and lying to the partner by having registered on Second Love without the partner being aware of it. Further attesting this, participants perceived deceptive behaviors as moderately indicative of infidelity, possibly acknowledging their behavior as a form of online infidelity.

From the total sample, 13.5% indicated to have registered as a couple. This might seem incongruent with our definition of sexual infidelity. However, in this study, all participants indicated being in a sexually monogamous relationship and having registered as a couple was not necessarily associated with sexual infidelity. From the 34 individuals that indicated couple registration, 16 indicated no prior accounts of sexual infidelity and 18 indicated accounts of infidelity. In accordance with our definition, these results suggest that, at least for individuals on Second Love, sexual infidelity refers to either individual sexual behaviors without the partner awareness, or sexual behaviors without the presence of the partner. In this sense, individuals registered as couple may not perceive extradyadic sexual behavior as infidelity as long as such behavior is engaged as a couple. When engaged individually, this behavior may be perceived as infidelity.

There were also differences in the role of sociosexuality and commitment for perceptions of infidelity. More permissive perceptions of explicit infidelity among individuals with sexual infidelity were associated with their unrestricted sociosexual desire. More permissive perceptions of ambiguous and deceptive infidelity for these individuals were associated with their unrestricted sociosexual desire and also with their lower commitment. These latter results were not initially expected, but complement our hypotheses. Unlike explicit behaviors that are consensually perceived as infidelity, perceptions of ambiguous and deceptive behaviors may not be so clear. By being less committed to their relationships, individuals with prior sexual infidelity may view ambiguous (e.g., talking on phone/internet; go someplace) and deceptive behaviors (e.g., lying; withholding information) as not indicative of infidelity, simply because they engage in them. Otherwise, they would probably not hold such perceptions.

Consistent with this later argument are results for individuals without prior sexual infidelity. These individuals report being more committed to their relationships, which is associated with more restrict perceptions of what constitutes infidelity. They perceive that explicit behaviors are highly indicative of infidelity and these perceptions extend to deceptive and ambiguous behaviors. This extends previous research and further shows how dispositional and relational factors interplay with perceptions of what constitutes infidelity (Wilson et al., 2011).

Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

This research has three major strengths. First, we conducted an anonymous web survey, thus reducing the likelihood of bias associated with social desirability (Martins et al., 2015; Whisman & Snyder, 2007). Second, we conducted this study on a dating website directed at romantically involved individuals. These were highly motivated individuals that voluntarily

took part in a study made available on the website platform and were not deceived. This study not only has ecological validity, it also examined infidelity in an underrepresented sample in research. Third, our sample departed from the typical college student samples widely used in the literature and was diverse in terms of demographic and relational characteristics including age, geographic location, relationship length and relationship characteristics.

This research, however, is not without limitations. First, because of the cross-sectional design, causal associations cannot be inferred in regards to perceptions of infidelity. To overcome this limitation researchers could employ a longitudinal design, for instance examining how incidences of infidelity in the current change perceptions of what constitutes infidelity, how these attitudes are predicted by fluctuations in sociosexuality and commitment. Second, our sample was restricted to heterosexual monogamous relationships and we did not directly assess the motivations underlying the registration on Second Love. This should be addressed to a greater extent in future research.

Also, future research should seek to extend these evidences to a broader sample of individuals, namely in their sexual orientation (e.g., lesbian, gays). Research shows that lesbian and gay individuals differ from heterosexuals in their attitudes and behaviors towards sexuality (Whitton, Weitbrecht, & Kuryluk, 2015). Future research should also consider extending this sample to include other types of romantic relationships (e.g., polyamorous relationships), given the scarcity of available evidence (McCoy, Stinson, Ross, & Hjelmstad, 2015).

Moreover, research should seek to disentangle whether registering to websites such as Second Love eventually leads to sexual infidelity. Just as we did not measure the underlying motivations of sexual infidelity, we did not measure for how long individuals without accounts of sexual infidelity were registered on the website, nor if they were motivated to pursue sexual encounters.

Third, given the specificity of this study, no information about the behavior or about the perceptions of infidelity from the partner was collected. Indeed, most participants indicated they registered without the partner knowing it and their perceptions of infidelity are possibly quite different from the perceptions held by the partner. Future studies should seek to examine how a complementary or distinct view of what is infidelity influences the likelihood of engaging in infidelity. Whereas similar views may lead to reduced infidelity or to behaviors that are not considered as infidelity, distinct views are more likely to have negative consequences for relational well-being (Mattingly et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2011).

Future venues of research should also examine how infidelity is associated with mate poaching, that is, an intentional pursuit of a person currently in a romantic relationship (McAnulty & Brineman, 2007). Research shows that individuals who were poached by their current partners are more attentive and less committed to their relationships, also engaging in infidelity behaviors (Foster et al., 2014). Hence, future research should analyze the incidence of single individuals on websites directed at romantically-involved individuals, and analyze how single individuals make their approaches, the dynamics that are established between individuals and whether mate poaching is more likely to occur or not given dispositional (e.g., sociosexuality) and relational (e.g., commitment) factors.

Implications and Conclusion

Our results converge with those of self-regulation research (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998; Ciarocco, Echevarria, & Lewandowski, 2012). Individuals with greater self-control, similarly to those with greater commitment, can counteract and overcome their desires, feelings, needs and typical patterns of behavior (i.e., unrestricted sociosexual orientation) and prevent infidelity. Indeed, research shows that individuals depleted (vs. non-depleted) of self-control are likely to be more attentive to attractive others and to report more

attraction (Ritter, Karremans, & van Schie, 2010), to accept a date with a confederate (Ciarocco et al., 2012) and to report greater intent to incur in sexual infidelity (Gailliot & Baumeister, 2007). This could be especially true for individuals for whom commitment is made more salient. For instance, asking individuals to think about their partner makes them more likely to activate pro-relationship mechanisms such as forgiveness (Etcheverry & Le, 2005; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002). This can potentially constitute a way for clinicians to delineate intervention programs aimed at developing greater self-control and greater focus on commitment. Furthermore, this would help promote greater dedication and work on behalf of the resolution of negative conflicts that can arise after infidelity has occurred. Clinicians can also intervene so that definitions of infidelity are explicit for both members of the couple, thus preventing future conflicts and increasing relationship quality.

In conclusion, this is the first study examining sexual infidelity in a sample of romantically involved individuals who have registered on a dating website for romantically involved individuals. Based on our data, engaging in *actual* sexual infidelity in these specific situations may be a matter of commitment. Although it does not prevent individuals from pursue some type of infidelity, commitment may help individuals from refraining to engage in actual sexual infidelity and promote more strict views of what constitutes infidelity. These results have important implications for academics to better understand the infidelity phenomenon among individuals who are already engaged in online infidelity, as well as clinicians to delineate intervention programs to strengthen commitment and prevent future infidelity or to solve conflicts after infidelity has occurred.

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Table 1
Sample Characteristics (Demographics, Relationship and Registration Variables) and Difference Tests

	Women (<i>n</i> = 51)		Men (<i>n</i> = 201)		χ^2	Cramer's <i>V</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Education					1.52	0.09
≤ 12 years	25	49	77	38.3		
> 12 years	26	51	124	49.2		
Residence					0.19	0.04
Urban	23	45.1	100	49.8		
Suburbs	28	54.9	101	50.2		
Religion					0.58	0.06
None	15	29.4	73	36.3		
Catholic	36	70.6	128	63.7		
Relationship type					0.67	0.05
Single	10	19.6	48	23.9		
<i>De facto</i> union	12	23.5	39	19.4		
Married	29	56.9	114	56.7		
Cohabitation					0.11	0.03
No	8	15.7	38	18.9		
Yes	43	84.3	163	81.1		
Children					0.98	0.06
0	17	33.3	58	28.9		
1	12	23.5	61	30.3		
≥ 2	22	43.1	82	40.8		
Sexual Infidelity					0.01	0.02
No	17	33.3	63	31.3		
Yes	34	66.7	138	68.7		
Registration					0.03	0.03
Individual	45	88.2	173	86.1		
Couple	6	11.8	28	13.9		
Looking for					20.87***	0.29
Know other people	30	58.8	51	25.4		
Casual sexual encounters	21	41.2	150	74.6		
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)		<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)		<i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Age (years)	39.57 (9.31)		41.53 (9.92)		-1.28	0.16
Relationship length (months)	150.74 (105.16)		149.51 (110.34)		0.07	0.01

*** $p \leq .001$.

Table 2

Results of Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis for Sexual Infidelity

	Step 1				Step 2			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	OR [95%CI]	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	OR [95%CI]
Gender	-0.22	.369	0.35	0.80 [0.39; 1.66]	-0.41	.463	0.76	0.67 [0.27; 1.65]
Looking for	0.71**	.307	5.27	2.02 [1.11; 3.69]	0.30	.372	0.66	1.35 [0.65; 2.80]
SOI-R behavior					0.81***	.157	26.67	2.25 [1.65; 3.06]
SOI-R attitudes					-0.03	.140	0.04	0.97 [0.74; 1.28]
SOI-R desire					0.25*	.124	3.97	1.28 [1.00; 1.63]
Commitment					-0.43***	.122	12.44	0.65 [0.51; 0.83]

Notes. Gender [0 = female, 1 = male] and looking for [0 = knowing people, 1 = casual sex]. *SE*: standard error. Degrees of freedom for Wald test = 1. OR: odd ration. CI: confidence interval Variables were standardized prior to analysis.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations and Zero-Order Correlations Between the Variables According to Sexual Infidelity

	Sexual Infidelity				Correlations						
	No		Yes								
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. SOI-R behavior	2.30	1.14	3.45	1.33	-	.31 ^{***}	.17 [*]	.13	.02	-.03	-.03
2. SOI-R attitudes	5.08	1.58	5.69	1.30	.27 ^{**}	-	.39 ^{***}	.08	-.07	.011	-.08
3. SOI-R desire	4.29	1.57	5.01	1.45	.17	.43 ^{***}	-	-.19 [*]	-.17 [*]	-.22 ^{**}	-.18 [*]
4. Commitment	4.90	1.25	4.28	1.50	.18	-.15	-.34 ^{**}	-	.18 [*]	.04	.17 [*]
5. PDIS ambiguous	2.11	1.27	1.81	0.84	-.01	.01	-.07	.28 [*]	-	.44 ^{***}	.42 ^{***}
6. PDIS explicit	6.11	1.27	5.67	1.69	-.11	-.05	-.10	.36 ^{**}	.31 ^{**}	-	.54 ^{***}
7. PDIS deceptive	5.01	1.75	5.04	1.77	.12	-.08	-.09	.42 ^{***}	.29 [*]	.35 ^{**}	-

Notes. Controlling for “looking for” variable. Correlations for individuals without accounts of sexual infidelity ($n = 80$) appear below the diagonal. Correlations for individuals with accounts of sexual infidelity ($n = 172$) appear above the diagonal.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 4

Standardized (β) Regression Coefficients for Perceptions of Ambiguous, Explicit and Deceptive Infidelity Behaviors According to Sexual Infidelity

	PDIS Ambiguous				PDIS Explicit				PDIS Deceptive			
	No sexual infidelity		Sexual infidelity		No sexual infidelity		Sexual infidelity		No Sexual infidelity		Sexual infidelity	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Looking for	-.07	-.14	.10	.15	-.01	-.07	-.03	.02	-.08	-.12	-.01	.05
SOI-R behavior		-.08		.03		-.21		-.03		.05		-.03
SOI-R attitudes		.07		-.02		.05		.12		-.07		-.01
SOI-R desire		.03		-.22*		.07		-.28***		.07		-.23**
Commitment		.31*		.22**		.43***		.09		.43***		.22**
R^2	.01	.10	.01	.09	.01	.16	.01	.07	.01	.19	.01	.08
(R^2 adjusted)	(-.01)	(.02)	(.01)	(.06)	(-.01)	(.10)	(-.01)	(.04)	(-.01)	(.13)	(-.01)	(.05)
ΔR^2		.08		.08**		.16**		.06*		.18**		.08**

Notes. All variables were standardized prior to analyses. ΔR^2 : change in R^2 between Step 1 and Step 2.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.