

**I'm Bored, What Else is Out There? Testing How Relational Boredom Leads to
Willingness to Commit Infidelity**

by

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Abstract

The current study examined investment, commitment, satisfaction, quality of alternatives and self-forgiveness of past infidelity as potential mediators of the relationship between relational boredom and willingness to commit future infidelity. A successful salience manipulation of relational boredom was conducted on sample of 90 American adults (53% female; $M = 33.20$ years) who had previously committed infidelity against their current partner. Participants in the relational boredom condition reported significantly less investment and less satisfaction with their romantic relationship and perceived higher quality of alternatives compared to the control condition. There was no direct effect of the manipulation on self-forgiveness for past infidelity, commitment, or willingness to cheat. All potential mediators predicted willingness to cheat. Results revealed that quality of alternatives was a significant mediator of the indirect relationship between relational boredom and willingness to cheat controlling for satisfaction and investment. Future directions and implications of relational boredom are discussed.

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I'm Bored, What else is out there? Testing how Relational Boredom leads to Willingness
to Commit Infidelity

Negative events frequently occur in the best of romantic relationships. Indeed, at some point, one partner will inevitably behave in a destructive manner within the context of their romantic relationship, resulting in possible hurt feelings, upset and anger towards their mate. Destructive acts might range from yelling to keeping secrets and lying, or – at an extreme – infidelity. These negative relationship behaviours, or transgressions, violate a romantic partner's expectations of how people should behave in a relationship (Millar & Tesser, 1988). In the face of these negative behaviours, relationship repair (making amends, apologizing, seeking forgiveness; Exline, Root, Yadavalli, Martin, & Fisher, 2011) does not always occur (Baxter, 1984) and instead, negative behaviours might continue.

Research on romantic relationships and transgressions has focused mainly on the factors influencing, as well as the outcomes of, relationship repair (Aune, Metts, & Hubbard, 1998; Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Exline et al., 2011). However, factors that might hinder relationship repair and perpetuate harmful relationship behaviours have been neglected in the literature. The current research aims to fill this gap by examining one potential relationship challenge, relational boredom, which may facilitate continuation of destructive behaviour in a romantic relationship. Specifically, among people who have already committed infidelity, I will examine whether relationship boredom predicts willingness to continue committing infidelity. Moreover, I will examine perceived investment in the romantic relationship (measured via quality of alternatives,

commitment, satisfaction, investment) as well as self-forgiveness for past infidelity as the possible mechanisms through which relational boredom leads to willingness to cheat on one's romantic partner.

Relational Boredom

People's levels of stimulation tend to ebb and flow in life. When stimulation in life is low and feelings of dissatisfaction arise, people are said to be experiencing boredom (Mikulas & Vodanovich, 1993). Importantly, boredom can take many shapes. In the current research, I focus on relational boredom, a construct that is composed of a constellation of perceived characteristics about one's romantic relationship including, but not limited to, the relationship being "no longer exciting", it "feels like a chore" and "feels like you want a change" and there is "no spark in the relationship" (Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2012).

According to Aron and Aron's (1986) self-expansion model, people are motivated to expand the self through growth and progress. To grow and progress, people engage in novel and challenging activities, which allow them to expand the self. One example of an experience that allows for new and exciting opportunities to grow is entering into a romantic relationship. Indeed, a new romantic relationship often entails a merger of the self and the partner, and with this merger generally comes, among other things, novel experiences and the birth of new interests. Thus, romantic relationships afford numerous opportunities for self-expansion (Aron & Aron 1986).

As relationships progress, people typically begin to adopt their partner's interests, groups of friends and worldviews, which may decrease the potential for novel and exciting opportunities for self-expansion. When the potential for self-expansion becomes

too low, people may begin to perceive their relationship to be boring because being in a romantic relationship will no longer allow them to expand the self (Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2010). Thus, the self-expansion model provides an initial understanding of why people might feel relational boredom – they feel the self has stopped expanding within the confines of the relationship. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of research that has examined the antecedents and consequences of relational boredom. In the following sections, I present detailed analysis of the existing literature on relational boredom. This analysis relies heavily on research by Harasymchuk and Fehr (2010; 2012) who aimed to define relational boredom via lay understandings of the construct. I will then discuss how experiences of relational boredom following past transgressions may influence people to feel more willing to engage in future transgressions.

Understanding Relational Boredom

Recently, Harasymchuk and Fehr (2010) provided insight into the meaning of relational boredom through an examination of laypeople's conceptions of the causes, feelings and coping strategies associated with relational boredom. They used a script approach to analyze participant narratives for common features and examined people's expectations about relational boredom based on experiences of dating and married couples. These scripts were obtained by guiding participants' responses with specific open-ended questions about relational boredom. Based on these scripts they found that participants conceptualized relational boredom as being caused by a lack of novelty and stimulation and that relational boredom was often not attributed to the partner or the self but instead to the dynamics of the relationship. Moreover, the feelings participants

associated with relational boredom were commonly negative, low arousal emotions such as sadness, depression and fatigue.

Importantly, Harasymchuk and Fehr (2010) identified seven ways that people reported they might cope with relational boredom: active relationship-focused, active self-focused, social contact, positive framing, distancing, destructive self-focused and destructive relationship-focused. These coping categories are ways in which people may try to alleviate experiences of relational boredom. The categories reveal that people may try to alleviate relational boredom through either pro-relationship strategies or anti-relationship strategies. Pro-relationship strategies, such as spending more time together, trying new things, planning a trip together or finding common interests, were reported in the highest frequency. Only a minority of people reported that they might cope with relational boredom using anti-relationship strategies. Within this research, I argue that this minority of participants who reported possible engagement in destructive coping strategies are at the greatest risk for relationship dissolution. More specifically, I argue, like Træen (2010), that men and women who are bored in their relationship might engage in actions that might end the relationship (i.e., infidelity). Indeed, Harasymchuk and Fehr's (2010) study provides initial evidence that relational boredom is an important challenge that any romantic relationship can face and it can lead to some potentially negative outcomes.

To date, factors that influence why relational boredom leads to anti-relationship strategies is still unknown. Several empirical studies have linked general feelings of boredom with negative outcomes. Empirical research on boredom prone individuals has shown that boredom proneness is associated with greater willingness to seek variety and

increased risk-taking or thrill seeking (Fishback, Ratner, & Zhang, 2011; Greene et al., 2000). Fishback and colleagues (2011), for example, found general consumer-based boredom is associated with a greater willingness to seek variety and novel products. In one condition, participants were primed with boredom by being asked to complete the survey using a hardcover book that contained the word “bored” in the title. In the other conditions, participants either completed the survey using a book with the word “loyal” in the title or a book that did not have any title (control condition). Participants who were primed with boredom preferred significantly more variety in their products than consistency when compared to those in the control and “loyal” conditions. It is possible that this desire for variety also appears in relationships as a result of boredom. For instance, when people are experiencing relational boredom, they may be more willing to engage in infidelity as a means of seeking variety in their romantic life – behaviour that can put their romantic relationship at risk for dissolution.

Lending support for the notion that people engage in risky behaviour when bored, Fortune and Goodie (2010) found that people who are susceptible to boredom (using the Boredom Susceptibility Scale; Zuckerman, Eysenck, & Eysenck, 1978) demonstrate increased alcohol use and are more prone to gambling pathology. Furthermore, research has shown that boredom is associated with other risky behaviours such as nicotine consumption (Amos, Wiltshire, Haw, & McNeill, 2006; Ho, 1989), drug use (Anshel, 1991; Guinn, 1975) and juvenile delinquency (Newberry & Duncan, 2001). Thus, research indicates that, in general, boredom is associated with wanting change, seeking out excitement or risky behaviours. It is possible that individuals experiencing relational boredom may exhibit similar coping strategies. Specifically, they may seek out alternate

partners and/or become increasingly willing to commit infidelity. Individuals that perceive relational boredom may view cheating as a form of risk taking, where being “found out” would put the future vitality of the relationship in jeopardy.

Currently, there is a distinct lack of empirical research on the link between relational boredom and its potential negative effects on romantic relationships. Yet, clues about this potential association might be found in Harasymchuk and Fehr’s (2010) study. Specifically, they showed that people report they may cope with relational boredom in negative ways (e.g., fighting, distancing from partner). They hypothesized that participants who were less satisfied with their relationship would report more destructive coping strategies for relational boredom. However, there were not enough participants who described destructive outcomes of relational boredom and they were unable to test their hypothesis. Gillen, Wohl and Harasymchuk (2012), followed up on the hypothesis that relational boredom would lead to increased destructive relationship behaviours with a large-scale correlational study. It was hypothesized that levels of relational boredom would predict participants’ willingness to commit future infidelity.

To assess the potential relationship between relational boredom and willingness to commit infidelity, Gillen and colleagues (2012) recruited undergraduate students ($N = 77$; 75% female) that had reported having previously committed a transgression against their current romantic relationship partner. As Harasymchuk and Fehr (2010) did not have a large enough sample to test their hypothesis, Gillen and colleagues (2012) targeted participants specifically who had engaged in previous transgressions and had imagined committing infidelity against their current romantic partner. Participants who had imagined committing infidelity against their current partner rated how willing they were

to actually commit the infidelity. Participants also completed Harasymchuk and Fehr's (2012) measure of relational boredom. Results showed that participants' reported level of relational boredom in their current romantic relationship was significantly correlated with their reported willingness to engage in future transgressions, $r = .25, p = .03$. Relational boredom accounted for a significant amount of variance in participants' ratings of willingness to engage in future infidelity, $R^2 = .06$, adjusted $R^2 = .05$, $F(1,73) = 4.94, p = .03$. Thus, participants who perceived their relationship to be more boring reported being more willing to engage in infidelity against their current romantic relationship partner. The authors suggested that for people who had transgressed against their partners, relational boredom might be used as an excuse to justify future infidelity as higher relational boredom predicted increased willingness to engage in future infidelity.

The Gillen et al. (2012) finding is counter to previous research showing that relational boredom is typically associated with pro-relationship responses to maintain the relationship (Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2010). The divergence in findings might be due to the fact that participants in Gillen et al.'s study had already engaged in infidelity in their current romantic relationships. Thus, participants had already crossed the "sanctity" line in their relationship – once that line is crossed it is likely easier to do so again (or perceive the likelihood of a re-occurrence as higher than someone who had not traversed that threshold). One caveat is that Gillen et al.'s (2012) study was correlational and the causal direction of the effect is thus uncertain. It is entirely possible that judgements of relational boredom were simply post-hoc rationalizations for committing infidelity in the first place (i.e., "I cheated, thus I must be bored").

In order to establish causal links between boredom and negative outcomes, it is necessary to manipulate relational boredom. As such, the purpose of the current research was to assess the causal relationship between relational boredom and willingness to engage in future infidelity by manipulating perceptions of relational boredom in participants. The present study aims to manipulate relational boredom by using a writing task to prime the construct of relational boredom in participants' minds.

According to previous research on manipulating relational variables (Morry, 2005), having participants write about a time when they were experiencing relational boredom should prime that construct. Although other research has primed boredom in general, to date, there are no published journal articles that have manipulated perceived relational boredom specifically in ongoing romantic relationships. As such, the current study will contribute to the relational boredom literature by manipulating relational boredom. It is expected that participants that are primed to experience greater relational boredom will report a greater willingness to commit future infidelity.

In addition to establishing a causal relationship, the current study will examine possible mediators of the relationship between relational boredom and willingness to engage in future infidelity. The mediators that will be tested in this study are the four components of the Investment Model: satisfaction, investment, commitment, and quality of alternatives. Additionally, state self-forgiveness for a previously committed act of infidelity will also be tested as a potential mediator. I will begin by presenting the Investment Model components. I will then present research that suggests that the components of the Investment Model are associated with future infidelity. Furthermore,

the research that links relational boredom and with the Investment Model will be presented.

Investment in Ones Romantic Relationship

As in any romantic relationship, should a negative behaviour be committed, people may take action to repair the wrong done to maintain the relationship. Based on Harasymchuk and Fehr's (2010) research on lay conceptions of relational boredom, when relational boredom is experienced, multiple outcomes are possible (e.g., active or destructive relationship-focus, positive framing, social contact). One notable feature that was revealed in Harasymchuk and Fehr's (2012) study was that relational boredom involved a desire to change their current circumstance. A desire for change may manifest in the bored partner considering alternatives to the relationship and potentially engaging in negative behaviours that may harm the relationship partner in a relationship destructive way. However, considering alternatives to the relationship may not be the only way in which relational boredom leads to increased willingness to cheat, other relational variables such as commitment, satisfaction and investment may also play a role. These important relational variables make up the Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980; 1983), which is one of the leading models in the close relationship literature (see Etcheverry & Le, 2005; Givertz, Segrin, & Hanzal, 2009; Tran & Simpson, 2009; Ysseldyk & Wohl, 2012).

The Investment Model (based on Interdependence Theory; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) puts forward that ideal romantic relationships are characterized by the presence of high rewards and low personal costs. Moreover, commitment to one's romantic partner is viewed as a centrally important to understanding and determining why people remain in

ongoing interdependent relationships. People who feel committed to their partner tend to persist in the relationship. In this way, commitment is viewed as an expression of dependence or allegiance to one's partner (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998).

In the Investment Model, quality of alternatives, satisfaction and investment are elements of a relationship that interact to produce levels of commitment. Investment can be thought of in terms of the amount of resources (e.g., time and effort) that people apply to the relationship. The strength of a relationship is typically positively associated with the amount of resources that a person is willing to put into their relationship. Satisfaction is present in a relationship when positive affect is experienced. Specifically, positive affect with regard to how well a romantic partner is meeting the various needs of their partner. Finally, quality of alternatives refers to "the perceived desirability of the best available alternative to a relationship" (Rusbult et al., 1998; p. 359). When individuals perceive that their needs could be better met in an alternative relationship, they consider their quality of alternatives to be high. The Investment Model has been demonstrated to be effective at predicting relationship maintenance behaviours (see Rusbult, 1983; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991; Van Lange et al., 1997). As such, the model is also successful at predicting relationship dissolution or negative relational behaviours such as infidelity (Drigotas, Safstrom, & Gentilia, 1999).

In the romantic relationship literature, the components of the Investment Model (commitment, investment, satisfaction, and perceived alternatives) are typically used to examine factors that may influence pro-romantic relationship functioning. Rusbult, Drigotas and Verette (1994), for example, suggested that romantic relationships that appear strong may dissolve when satisfaction and investment in the relationship is low

(i.e., the relationship is not rewarding) and when quality of alternatives are perceived to be higher (i.e., the inability to pursue high quality alternatives is perceived to be a high cost of staying in the relationship). Furthermore, longitudinal research posits that not feeling rewarded by the relationship is associated with decreases in satisfaction, commitment and investment and increased quality of alternatives (Rusbult, 1983). In other words, not feeling rewarded (or what might be interpreted as feeling bored) within a romantic relationship may have negative consequences for the romantic relationship (i.e., potentially lead to relationship dissolution).

In light of the possible association between relational boredom and satisfaction, Harasymchuk and Fehr (2012) assessed both constructs among couples. As predicted, they found satisfaction was negatively associated with relational boredom. However, Harasymchuk and Fehr (2012) did not examine the other relationship Investment Model variables (i.e., commitment, investment and quality of alternatives). The current research aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining the influence of relational boredom on satisfaction as well as other relational components such as commitment, investment and quality of alternatives. It was hypothesized that the relational boredom manipulation would be associated with decreases in satisfaction, as well as decreases in commitment and investment and increases in quality of alternatives. That is to say, people who are experiencing relational boredom will feel less satisfied, committed and investment and they will perceive alternatives to their relationship as being able to meet their needs. It is also hypothesized that decreases in satisfaction, commitment and investment will be associated with an increased willingness to commit future infidelity. Greater perception

of quality of alternatives is expected to be associated with increased willingness to engage in future infidelity.

In line with these hypotheses, Rusbult, Zembrodt and Gunn (1982) showed that perceptions of higher quality of alternatives were typically associated with people wanting to exit the relationship. As such, it is expected that through a desire to exit the romantic relationship participants may be increasingly willing to seek alternatives and because they are experiencing relational boredom, these alternatives may represent an excitement and riskiness that they want or need.

The Psychology of Self-Forgiveness

In addition to the Investment Model components, this research will also examine self-forgiveness for past infidelity as a possible mediator of the relational boredom-willingness to commit infidelity link. As traditionally understood, forgiveness offers numerous positive benefits for people's psychological and physiological well-being (e.g., decreased blood pressure, increased life satisfaction; Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson, 2001; Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001). Forgiveness has specifically been shown to have positive benefits on romantic relationships by enhancing many aspects of the overall relationship such as intimacy, commitment, closeness, satisfaction, and marital quality over time (Kachadourian, Fincham, & Davila, 2004; Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2005; Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006). It is through forgiveness that people are motivated to let go of negative thoughts, emotions and behaviours toward their transgressor and gradually replace the negative response with a more prosocial one (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000; McCullough & Worthington, 1999).

Forgiveness, however, is not only granted for interpersonal harms. People can also forgive the self for committing harmful actions that either hurt others or hurt the self. Indeed, self-forgiveness is inherently different from other-forgiveness in that the response is directed at the self rather than at a transgressor (MacAskill, 2012). Namely, people view the self as having wronged and needing to be forgiven. Although, researchers agree that at its fundamental core, self-forgiveness is about recognition that the self has committed a transgression, there is not a single agreed upon definition of the construct. Self-forgiveness has been differentially defined as accepting the self for wrongful thoughts or actions (Halling, 1994) as well as a pro-social motivational change directed at the self (Hall & Fincham, 2005).

According to Hall and Fincham (2005), the self-forgiving person is less motivated to “avoid stimuli associated with the offense (e.g., the victim)” and “retaliate against the self (e.g., punish the self, engage in self-destructive behaviours)” (p. 622). However, others like Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1996) suggest that self-forgiveness involves letting go of self-directed negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours and replacing these with more positive emotions (e.g., compassion, generosity, love). Although each posited definition of self-forgiveness differs, each definition seems to include the notion that the self has committed a wrong that needs to be overcome. The net effect of self-forgiveness is that it allows the wrongdoer to replace negative associations with other, more positive ones.

Offense-Specific Self-Forgiveness

Some people may have a general tendency to self-forgive. That is to say, across a variety of transgressions, people may have a personality trait, which makes them more

self-forgiving people in general (Brown, 2003; Hall & Fincham, 2005). However, this general tendency to self-forgive does not mean that a person will forgive the self for any one particular transgression. I, like others (Hall & Fincham, 2005), suggest that other factors may influence when self-forgiveness is granted for a specific transgression. Within the context of romantic relationships, although some have a disposition toward forgiving the self (see Brown, 2003), they might not self-forgive for cheating on their partner for example. Indeed, the self-forgiveness research has differentiated between trait self-forgiveness (tendency to forgive the self across time and a range of transgressions) and offense-specific self-forgiveness. In the current research, I will examine offense-specific self-forgiveness.

According to Wohl, DeShea and Wahkinney (2008) offense-specific self-forgiveness involves “a positive attitudinal shift in the feelings, actions, and beliefs about the self following a self-perceived transgression or wrongdoing committed by the self” (p. 2). They showed that participants tendency to forgive the self was not a significant predictor of self-forgiveness of specific behaviours that participants had perceived as being the cause of their relationship dissolution. Their study provided evidence to support that self-forgiveness for a specific offense (being responsible for an unwanted break-up) was indeed distinct from the overall tendency to forgive. They measured offense-specific self-forgiveness and general tendency to forgive and examined the correlation between these two self-forgiveness measures. The correlations were not significant, indicating strong discriminant validity, and showing that there is indeed a distinction to be made between trait and state self-forgiveness. Furthermore, their study showed that offense-specific self-forgiveness was associated with significant decreases in self-blame whereas

the tendency to forgive was not significantly associated with self-blame. Thus, state self-forgiveness was shown to be a distinct construct from the tendency to forgive and had a positive influence on the well-being of the self-forgiver.

Research on the outcome of self-forgiveness, however, has been mixed. Some research on self-forgiveness has shown that self-forgiveness facilitates physiological and psychological well-being. Specifically, people who self-forgive (compared to those who do not) have lower depression, anxiety and hostility (Maltby, MacAskill, & Day, 2001; Mauger et al., 2002; Ross, Kendall, Maltby, Wrobel, & Rye, 2004), less suicidal behaviour (Hirsch, Webb, & Jeglic, 2011) and increased self-esteem, life satisfaction and reported quality of life (Romero et al., 2006; Wilson, Milosevic, Carroll, Hart, & Hibbard, 2008). However, recent research has begun to explore the negative consequences associated with self-forgiveness, prompting the idea of the “dark side to self-forgiveness”. For example, research by Wohl and Thompson (2011) showed that smokers who forgive themselves for smoking are less motivated to quit. Other research suggests that people who have a greater tendency to forgive the self will demonstrate less self-control and report greater levels of narcissism (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). Most recently, Squires, Sztainert, Gillen, Caouette and Wohl (2012) found that pathological gamblers who are more forgiving of the self for their gambling show a decrease in their readiness to change their problematic gambling behaviour.

I argue that the mixed results on the effects of self-forgiveness are due to the circumstances under which self-forgiveness was granted. Specifically, Wohl and Thompson (2011) and Squires and colleagues (2012) suggest that self-forgiveness for chronic maladaptive behaviours such as smoking and gambling will have negative

consequences on the self by perpetuating the status quo. Their research showed that for offense-specific self-forgiveness of negative behaviours, there are negative consequences of self-forgiveness on the self. In both studies, letting go of the negative emotions associated with the specific transgressions people committed (e.g., smoking, gambling) was associated with maintenance of the harmful behaviour. In the case of negative behaviours within the context of a romantic relationship, maintaining the status quo may manifest in a continued willingness to engage in the relationship harming behaviours. It is expected that this relationship will hold true with regard to negative behaviours in romantic relationships. These negative behaviours can have negative consequences and as such may require people to forgive the self. I hypothesize that the extent to which people forgive the self for committing hurtful behaviour will predict willingness to continue engaging in that behaviour.

Indeed, one way that people might be able to overcome the negative feelings associated with their past harmful behaviours is to forgive the self. Research has shown there are numerous benefits of self-forgiveness on people's physiological and psychological well-being (Ross et al., 2004; Wilson et al., 2008). Yet, recent research suggests that there may be a dark side to forgiving the self. In particular, research has shown that self-forgiveness can have negative effects if it is granted for chronic maladaptive behaviours (e.g., smoking, gambling; Squires et al., 2012; Tangney, Boone, & Dearing, 2005; Wohl & Thompson, 2011). Specifically, by letting go of the negative feelings and cognitions people have toward the self and their maladaptive behaviours, the motivation to change is reduced. The result is the maintenance of the status quo, i.e., a continuation of the harmful behaviour.

In the current research, I will examine whether people who are bored in their romantic relationship and behave in an untoward manner will continue transgressing to the extent that they self-forgive for past untoward acts. Specifically, self-forgiveness for past infidelity may allow people to pre-emptively excuse negative relational behaviour, thereby maintaining the status quo, which in the current research, is an increased willingness to commit relationship infidelity. It was hypothesized that perceptions of relational boredom would colour participants' perceptions of a past infidelity transgression and as such they would rate being more forgiving of the self for past infidelity. It was also hypothesized that through self-forgiveness of past infidelity, participants would be increasingly more willing to engage in future infidelity, as self-forgiveness allows them to let go of the negative emotions associated with the past harm they committed against their romantic partner. Thus, when infidelity occurs in romantic relationships that are characterized by relational boredom, self-forgiveness for a past infidelity will undermine the pro-relationship behaviours typically associated with relational boredom (i.e., engaging in stimulating activities with partner) and result in greater willingness to engage in anti-relationship behaviours (i.e., future infidelity).

Overview of Current Research

To date, there is a lack of research examining the consequences of experiencing relational boredom on people who previously engage in negative relationship behaviours towards their partner. I expect that people's previous actions (previous engagement in infidelity) may influence whether the risk-taking or thrill seeking associated with boredom will lead people experiencing relational boredom to report greater willingness to engage in anti-relationship behaviours (infidelity). To test this association, the current

research will manipulate relational boredom in actual relationships and it is expected that when people who have engaged in past infidelity in their romantic relationship are primed to experience relational boredom, they will subsequently be more willing to engage in future infidelity. Furthermore, the current research will examine the components of the Investment Model (commitment, satisfaction, investment, quality of alternatives) as potential mediators of the relationship between relational boredom and willingness to engage in future infidelity. Furthermore, self-forgiveness of past transgressions will also be examined as a potential mediator.

It is expected that participants who are primed with relational boredom will report significantly less relationship satisfaction, investment and commitment, and will report having higher quality of alternatives compared to a control condition. As a result of decreases in satisfaction, commitment and investment and increases in quality of alternatives, people who experience relational boredom are expected to indicate a heightened willingness to commit future infidelity.

In addition, it is expected that priming relational boredom will colour perceptions of past infidelity and may give participants a post-hoc rationalization for previous behaviours, thus being associated with increased self-forgiveness for past infidelity. In addition, self-forgiveness for past infidelity may serve to perpetuate infidelity. Thus, in the current study it is expected that greater self-forgiveness for past infidelity will be associated with a greater willingness to commit future infidelity against their current partner, lending support to the research on the dark side of self-forgiveness. Simply put, self-forgiveness for past infidelity is expected to be the mediating mechanism that allows bored partners to continue engaging in unfaithfulness.

This research will shed light on the consequences of relational boredom following a relationship transgression and the role of other potential mediators such as self-forgiveness for past infidelity, relationship commitment, investment, satisfaction and quality of alternatives in predicting willingness to commit future infidelity. This research will provide support for the growing body of literature on the dark side of self-forgiveness as well as expand the relational boredom literature by manipulating relational boredom in an experimental setting and examining its effect on important close relationship components of the Investment Model.

Pilot Study

Before conducting the main study, two pilot studies were conducted to ensure that relational boredom could be manipulated without disrupting the romantic relationship. Specifically, it was possible that relational boredom could persist after participation had ended, which is concerning considering that participants were reflecting on their past infidelity. Several precautions were taken to ensure that relational boredom did not persist after participation. Firstly, at the end of the study, participants completed two tasks that primed participants to think about the positive aspects of their relationship and partner, thus restoring relational perceptions to baseline or better. Positive relationship primes have been successfully applied in other studies and shown to be effective in restoring participants' mood to a baseline mood measured prior to the manipulation (Ysseldyk & Wohl, 2012). Research on the fading affect bias (Walker, Skowronski, & Thompson, 2003) has shown that the affect associated with the recall of an unpleasant event fades faster than the affect associated with a pleasant event. As such, the positive thoughts associated with the positive relational primes were expected to persist instead of any negative thoughts associated with relational boredom or infidelity.

Secondly, participants completed a process-debriefing method constructed by Ross, Lepper and Hubbard (1975). This method of debriefing provides participants with a detailed discussion of the perseverance phenomenon in addition to standard information about the outcome manipulation. By explicitly discussing with participants the possibility that erroneous perceptions can survive debriefing, Ross et al. (1975) were able to completely eliminate post experimental effects. Lastly, in order to eliminate the possibility of perseverance of the experimental manipulation (i.e., relational boredom) all

participants will be fully debriefed regarding the purpose of the study following collection of the dependent measure.

To this end, two pilot studies were conducted in which relational boredom was manipulated and the other variables of interest were measured (self-forgiveness for past transgressions, willingness to engage in future transgressions, investment, satisfaction, commitment and quality of alternatives).

Pilot 1

Pilot 1 was conducted in a laboratory, such that the researcher could monitor potential negative reactions of participants in person. Participants in Pilot 1 include nine undergraduate students (6 female, 3 male) from Carleton University who, during a mass testing session at the beginning of the academic year, indicated they had committed infidelity against their current romantic relationship. Potential participants were recruited via e-mail. Once participants completed informed consent and consent to audio recording (Appendix A & B), they were encouraged to speak aloud and provide the researcher with feedback on the questionnaire items, the study procedure and the positive relational prime at the end of the study. Participants were recorded speaking aloud while completing the questionnaire on a laboratory computer. Participants completed the survey on-line through the survey-hosting site Qualtrics.

Prior to the manipulation, participants rated 9 items from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Expanded Form (Appendix C; Watson & Clark, 1994). They were then randomly assigned to one of the two manipulation conditions (relational boredom vs. control). In the relational boredom condition, participants were asked to write about a time in their current romantic relationship using a series of words provided

that was associated with relational boredom (see Appendix E). The words and phrases used were taken from a study on lay people's conception of relational boredom. Specifically, these words and phrases were taken from the relational boredom scale and were shown to have high loadings on relational boredom (Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2012). The manipulation brought thoughts of relational boredom to the forefront of participants' minds, making experiences of relational boredom highly salient and subsequently increasing participants' perception of experiencing relational boredom. It is important to note that salience manipulations of relational variables are not uncommon in social psychology research (DeWall, Maner, Deckman, & Rouby, 2011; Jostmann, Karremans, & Finkenauer, 2011; Morry, 2005). In the control condition, participants were asked to proceed to the next page without completing an exercise about their relationship. As a manipulation check, participants completed a face-valid measure of relational boredom to ensure that the salience manipulation had the desired effect (See Appendix F).

Participants completed measures of state self-forgiveness (Wohl et al., 2008; see Appendix G) and investment (Appendix H; Watson & Clark, 1994) and rated their willingness to commit future infidelity (i.e., Please rate the likelihood that you would be unfaithful to your current romantic relationship partner in the future) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all likely*, 7 = *extremely likely*). To ensure participants did not leave the study thinking negatively about their relationship, a positive relational prime was used where participants were instructed to tell a story about a favourite experience with their romantic partner (see Appendix I).

The positive relational prime was followed by an exercise (Appendix I; Gottman, 1999) wherein participants were asked to select words that were characteristic of their

partner from a list of 68 positive adjectives. Participants were also asked to choose three of the positive adjectives and describe specific instances about their romantic partner where they exhibited the chosen adjective. This exercise was also aimed at ensuring participants felt positively about their relationship after completing the study. Participants were then asked to rate the nine mood items a final time, followed by the processed debriefing, which contained questions on whether or not the participants' impression of their partner changed as a result of taking part in the study, and which questions (if any) they found made them feel anxious, nervous or stressed. All participants were presented with a written debriefing (Appendix J) and were debriefed orally by the researcher.

Measures

Positive Affect and Negative Affect. Participants rated nine items from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Expanded Form (Appendix C, Watson & Clark, 1994). The items from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule were selected based on their importance to the current investigation. Three items were taken from the basic negative emotions subscale (nervous, sad, bored) to examine any negative emotions that might result from participating and the relational boredom manipulation. Three items from the basic positive emotions subscale (happy, excited, attentive) were used to assess positive affect and the effectiveness of the positive primes at restoring or increasing positive affect. Finally, three items were selected from the guilt subscale (guilty, ashamed, blameworthy) in order assess negative emotions that might be associated specifically with thinking about past infidelity. Participants rated each item on a 7-point Likert scale based on how much they are currently experiencing each emotion (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Results

In order to examine the effect of the positive prime on participants' mood, an average mood difference score was calculated. The average mood difference was calculated by first reverse scoring the negative emotion items (nervous, guilty, sad, bored, blameworthy, ashamed) then summing these with the positive emotion items (happy, excited, attentive) and dividing by the total number of items (9). The same procedure was performed for the Time 1 mood items as well as the Time 2 (post-prime) items. The means for Time 2 were then subtracted from the means for Time 1 such that positive difference scores indicate positive increases (more positive emotions, less negative emotions) and negative differences scores indicate decreases in positive emotions (or increases in negative emotions). The average mood difference for Pilot 1 was .21, indicating an overall positive mood increase. Thus, the positive relational prime appeared to have the desired effect. Specifically, participants in the relational boredom condition ($N = 5$) had a mean mood difference of .56, whereas those in the control condition had a mean mood difference of .22. Inferential statistics are not included because the sample size was too small to assess the significance of the difference between mean mood differences.

When participants were asked if their impressions of their partner had changed as a result of participating in the study, only two out of the nine participants said yes¹. Importantly, of these two participants, one noted that their impression changed for the better "*Makes me happier and proud of my partner*" (Participant #8). When participants were asked if they were distressed by any of the questions, three out of the

¹ When asked to explain the participants said "*Makes me happier and proud of my partner*" and "*realized there's less that I like about him than I thought*"

nine participants said yes. These three participants were probed further about which questions they found distressing. Participant #9 said *“It forced me to think about what I’m doing”*, while participant #7 said *“The question about whether or not I would be unfaithful again. It can be a tough question to answer for those who haven't thought about it before and are unsure, like me”*, and finally participant #1 said *“Any thought that related back to the infidelity causes me to feel anxious nervous and sad”*. It was expected that participants would feel some negative emotions when thinking about infidelity but importantly the mean scores did not show decreases in for any of these participants.

Most participants spontaneously said that the research was interesting and were happy to have participated in the audio recording. Overall, Pilot 1 did not appear to have any significant negative effects on the participants. Given that the main study was to be conducted online, a second pilot study was conducted online only to ensure that the positive relational primes would have the desired effect online as well.

Pilot 2

Given that the current study was to be conducted online only, the second pilot study tested the effects of the positive relational primes at restoring mood to baseline in six undergraduates (all female) from Carleton University who completed an online only pilot. This pilot was aimed at ensuring that the primes had the intended effect not only in laboratory, but also online. Similar to Pilot 1, these participants were recruited via e-mail because they indicated, during the mass testing session at the beginning of the academic year, that they had committed infidelity in their current romantic relationship.

Participants signed up for the study through Carleton’s SONA system and were linked to

the questionnaire hosted on Qualtrics. The procedure for Pilot 2 was identical of that of Pilot 1 except that participants in Pilot 2 were not asked to speak aloud and as such were not presented with the consent to audio recording. All conditions and measures were the same.

As in Pilot 1, the average mood difference was for the time 1 mood items as well as the time 2 (post-prime) items. The means for time 2 were then subtracted from the means for time 1 such that positive difference scores indicate positive increases in mood (more positive emotions, less negative emotions) and negative differences scores indicate decreases in positive emotions (or increases in negative emotions). The average mood difference for Pilot 2 was .76, indicating a similar overall positive mood increase as was seen in Pilot 1. Importantly; none of the participants in Pilot 2 had average mood differences that were less than zero. Thus, the positive primes had the desired effect of restoring participants mood to baseline or greater. Participants in the relational boredom condition ($N = 3$) had a mean mood difference of 1.11, whereas those in the control condition ($N = 3$) had a mean mood difference of .26.

When participants were asked if their impressions of their partner had changed as a result of participating in the study, two out of the six participants said yes. Both participants expressed, when asked how their impressions of their partner changed, that their impressions of their partner changed in a positive way. Participant #5 said their impression changed "*after writing the positive aspects*" and participant #3 said "*It made me realize how many good qualities he has*". None of the participants in the online pilot expressed that they had been distressed by any of the questions in the study, indicating that the online study would not negatively influence participants.

Discussion of pilot studies

The results of the two pilot studies suggest that the positive relational primes were successful in restoring participants' mood to baseline or better and in restoring a positive view of the partner and the relationship. The results of the pilot also suggest that the relational boredom manipulation and the questions about infidelity did not have a negative impact on participants' perceptions of their romantic relationship partner. A comparison of Pilot 1 and Pilot 2 shows that the online pilot appeared to have more positive implications for the participants than the laboratory pilot. Based on the fact that the current study was to be conducted online, these results suggest that the positive relational primes would be successfully implemented online. None of the participants in Pilot 2 reported being distressed by any of the questions and all of the participants' in Pilot 2 had mean mood differences greater than 1, indicating an increase in positive mood or decrease in negative mood. Based on the results from the two pilots, it was concluded that the relational boredom manipulation paired with the positive primes would not negatively affect participants. As a result, I felt comfortable conducting a full study with the relational boredom manipulation with an online community sample.

Method**Participants**

Prior to the analysis, 21 participants were removed from the original sample because they complete less than 10% of the questionnaire. An attention check item was included amongst the items in the survey that told participants to select strongly disagree for one question and 18 participants were removed because they failed this validity check

item². Thus, the final sample consisted of 90 American adults (Male = 38; Female = 48; 4 unidentified) that were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) who reported having previously been unfaithful against their current romantic partner. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 71 years old ($M = 33.20$, $SD = 10.70$; 3 unidentified). Participants' relationship length ranged from 3 months to 540 months (45 years) ($M = 77.47$ months, $SD = 93.50$). The final sample consisted of participants who were dating exclusively (19.50%), living with their partner (28.70%), engaged to be married (8.00%) and married (43.70%; 3 unidentified). Participants completed the survey online via Qualtrics and received \$0.50 in compensation for participating in the 15 minute survey.

Procedure

The MTurk recruitment advertisement requested participants who had committed infidelity in their current romantic relationship to complete a short survey about their thoughts and feelings about romantic relationship infidelity. Participants were linked through the MTurk recruitment to the survey hosted on Qualtrics where they were presented with an informed consent (Appendix D). After consenting to participate, participants were asked to report on a single item whether or not they had previously committed infidelity against their current romantic partner in order to validate recruitment requirement. Participants who failed the validation were not eligible to participate and did not proceed with the remainder of the questionnaire. As in Pilot 1 and 2, participants who passed the validation were then randomly assigned to one of the two manipulation conditions. Participants in the relational boredom condition ($N = 43$) were

²The analyses were conducted with and without these cases and there were differences in the statistical conclusions. As such it was deemed that these participants were inherently different from those who passed the attention check items and as such were removed from the main analysis because they were not properly filling out the questionnaire.

asked to describe a time in their current romantic relationship and use a series of words and phrases provided that Harasymchuk and Fehr (2012) found to be associated with relational boredom in their prototype analysis of relational boredom (see Appendix E). As in the pilot studies, this salience manipulation was expected to increase perceptions of relational boredom. Participants in the control condition ($N = 47$) were asked to proceed to the next page without completing a writing task exercise. As a manipulation check, participants completed a face-valid measure of relational boredom to ensure that the salience manipulation had the desired effect of increasing perceptions of experiencing relational boredom for those in the relational boredom condition (see Appendix F).

Participants completed the 7-item state self-forgiveness scale (Wohl et al., 2008) to assess self-forgiveness for the previous infidelity and rated a single item on their willingness to engage in future infidelity. This was followed by a shortened version of the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, et al., 1998) that was created for the purpose of this study³. Participants completed basic demographic items (age, sex, relationship status, length of relationship) before completing the two positive relational primes that were described in the pilot study to ensure participants did not leave the study thinking negatively about their relationship. All participants completed a processed debriefing and were presented with a full debriefing regarding the purpose of the study following completion of the questionnaires (Appendix J). Participants were asked to complete an attention check item (i.e., for this question please select strongly disagree) during the

³ In order to attain a higher response rate, Buhrmester, Kwang and Gosling (2011) suggest keeping the survey length less than 30 minutes. The Investment Model Scale was shortened to ensure that the survey length would not exceed 15 minutes.

survey and only participants who made the correct selection on the attention check item were included in the analysis.

Measures

Manipulation Check. A single item was used to assess how much participants were experiencing relational boredom following the manipulation. Participants rated the single item (i.e., *Right now, I feel bored with my current romantic relationship*) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Not at all true*, 7 = *Completely true*).

Investment Model Scale. A shortened version of the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult et al., 1998) was included in the study to assess the four sub scale variables (satisfaction, quality of alternatives, investment and commitment). The full length Investment Model Scale includes facet items and global items. The facet items are meant to put participants in the right frame of mind to answer the global items, which were primarily important to the scale creators (Rusbult et al., 1998). To shorten the full length 37 item Investment Model Scale, the facet items for each sub-scale were combined into a short paragraph to introduce the items for each sub-scale (See Appendix H). For each of the sub-scales, participants read a paragraph before completing three of the global items that were selected for this study. Only three of the global items were used for each sub-scale to ensure that the overall questionnaire was less than 15 minutes in length. The three items were selected based on their face-valid relevance to the construct.

Satisfaction. Participants rated their agreement on three items ($\alpha = .93$; e.g., “I feel satisfied with our relationship”) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Disagree Strongly*, 7 = *Agree Strongly*).

Quality of Alternatives. Participants rated their agreement on three items ($\alpha = .79$; e.g., “My needs for intimacy, companionship, etc., could easily be fulfilled in an alternative relationship”) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Disagree Strongly*, 7 = *Agree Strongly*).

Investment. Participants rated their agreement on three items ($\alpha = .74$; e.g., “I feel very involved in our relationship.”) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Disagree Strongly*, 7 = *Agree Strongly*).

Commitment. There were no facet items for the commitment sub-scale and as such participants were not presented with a paragraph to read prior to completing this sub-scale. Participants rated their agreement on three items ($\alpha = .70$; e.g., “I am committed to maintaining my relationship to my partner”) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Disagree Strongly*, 7 = *Agree Strongly*).

Self-Forgiveness for Past Infidelity. An adapted version of the State Self-Forgiveness Scale (Wohl, et al., 2008) was used to assess how self-forgiving participants were for their past infidelity committed against their current partner. Participants rated seven items (e.g., “I would put myself down” (reversed), “I would forgive myself”) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*). Negative items were reverse scored so that higher scores indicated greater self-forgiveness for the past infidelity. Participants’ score of self-forgiveness for past infidelity was obtained by averaging all items. The self-forgiveness for past infidelity scale showed high internal consistency ($\alpha = .89$) in this study.

Willingness to commit infidelity. A single-item was used to assess participants’ willingness to commit future infidelity against their current partner. Participants rated the

single-item on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all willing*, 7 = *extremely willing*). Higher scores indicated a greater willingness to engage in future infidelity. Although single-item measures are typically frowned upon for measuring psychological constructs, research has also shown that a single-item measure is sufficient when the construct being measured lacks breadth or is not ambiguous to the respondent (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007; Sackett & Larson, 1990). As ratings of willingness to commit a specific behaviour are relatively unambiguous, this measure is considered to be a good and reliable item to measure willingness to commit future infidelity.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

The preliminary analysis consisted of screening the data for outliers and missing values as well as screening the data to ensure that the requirements were met for conducting one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs), linear regression and mediation analysis. The frequency tables for individual variables and for the scale variables revealed that all variables fell within the plausible ranges of minimum and maximum values, which indicates that no syntax errors were made during scale creation.

Missing values, multicollinearity and singularity

A missing value analysis was conducted on all variables (relational boredom manipulation check, state self-forgiveness, willingness to engage in future infidelity, investment, commitment, satisfaction, quality of alternatives, age, sex, relationship status and length of relationship) to ensure the data was missing completely at random. Since all the variables were missing less than 5% of values and Little's MCAR test was not significant ($\chi^2 = 25.23, p = .45$), it can be assumed that the pattern of missing data was

missing completely at random. As such, there was no need to impute or mean substitute any of the missing data prior to the main analysis⁴.

To examine the dataset for the presence of multicollinearity, the correlation matrix was screened for r values that exceeded .9 or -.9 (Field, 2005, p. 652). The largest correlation⁵ was $r = .82$, indicating that multicollinearity was not present in this dataset. The correlation matrix also revealed that singularity was not an issue ($r \neq 1$).

Outliers, normality and dependence of variables

To assess how willing participants were to engage in future transgressions, an examination of the z-scores for the variables of interest (relational boredom manipulation check, state self-forgiveness, willingness to engage in future infidelity, investment, commitment, satisfaction and quality of alternative) revealed two univariate outliers on the investment variable ($z = -3.59$, which is greater than three standard deviations above the mean ($z > +$ or $- 3.29$)). The two outliers were retained and all subsequent analyses were conducted with and without the outliers to assess whether or not these outliers influence the results of the main analysis⁶.

Multivariate outliers were examined by putting all the independent variables (state self-forgiveness for past infidelity, willingness to engage in future infidelity, commitment, satisfaction, investment and quality of alternatives) into a linear regression equation with case ID as a dummy dependent variable and examining Mahalanobis distance. The cutoff for Mahalanobis distance was $\chi^2 = 22.46$, which is based on

⁴ The variables that contained missing values were age (3.3%), sex (4.3%), relationship length (3.3%), relationship status (3.3%) and quality of alternatives (1.1%). All but one of these variables were demographic items, so there was no need for a listwise deletion.

⁵ Correlation of the relational boredom manipulation check item and the total satisfaction item.

⁶ All subsequent analyses revealed no significant different with or without the outliers

Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007) suggestion for six independent variables at $p < .001$. The Mahalanobis distance ($\chi^2 = 20.22$) revealed that no multivariate outliers were present in the data as it fell below the predetermined cutoff point.

The standardized residuals scatterplots were inspected and did not reveal any problems with linearity nor heteroscedasticity of residuals. An inspection of the Q-Q plots revealed possible departures from normality in the following variables: willingness to commit future infidelity, commitment, investment and satisfaction. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for departures in normality confirmed that the observed difference were significant (willingness to commit future infidelity $D(91) = .23, p < .001$, commitment $D(91) = .18, p < .001$, investment $D(91) = .18, p < .001$, satisfaction $D(91) = .16, p < .001$). Upon further inspection into these departures from normality, the skewness and kurtosis values for the problematic variables revealed that only the investment variable was moderately negatively skewed ($z = 4.92$) and mildly leptokurtic ($z = 3.92$). The skewness and kurtosis values fell within the normal range when the two univariate outliers on investment were removed from the dataset and as such a listwise deletion was performed on these two cases in order to ensure the data is normally distributed.

Field (2005; p. 189) suggests that cases are independent from one another if the Durbin-Watson coefficient is close to two and that values of the Durbin-Watson coefficient that are less than one or greater than three would be cause for concern. The Durbin-Watson coefficient (2.32) showed that the residuals for each case are independent of one another.

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and bivariate correlations among the variables of interest for the main analysis (condition, self-forgiveness for past

infidelity, investment, commitment, satisfaction, quality of alternatives and willingness to commit future infidelity) are presented in Table 1. One-way ANOVAs revealed no gender differences for any variables in Table 1 ($p > .05$).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the predictor variable (condition), the potential mediating variables (self-forgiveness, investment, commitment, satisfaction, quality of alternatives) and the outcome variable (willingness to engage in future infidelity)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Condition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2 Self-Forgiveness	4.09	1.31	.04	-	-	-	-	-	-
3 Investment	5.76	1.11	-.23*	.01	-	-	-	-	-
4 Commitment	4.84	.97	-.06	-.15	.47**	-	-	-	-
5 Satisfaction	4.86	1.72	-.36**	-.08	.60**	.53**	-	-	-
6 Quality of Alternatives	4.11	1.68	.29**	.19	-.39**	-.35**	-.57**	-	-
7 Willingness	3.03	2.15	.14	.48**	-.35**	-.28**	-.44**	.43**	-

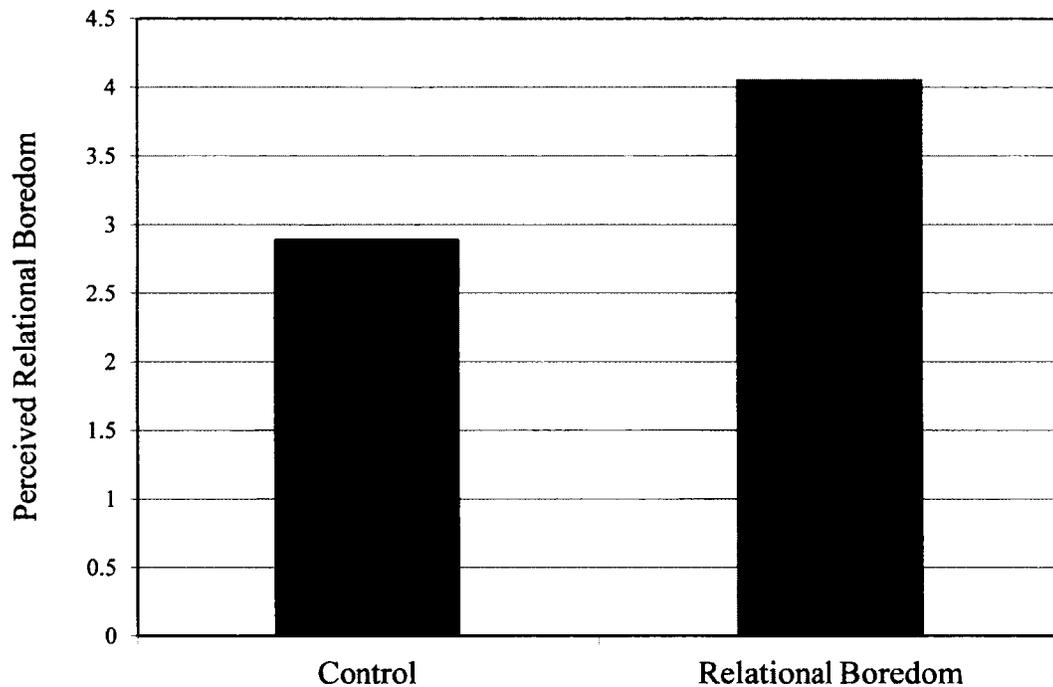
Note. * significant correlations at $p < .05$. ** significant correlation at $p < .01$.

Manipulation Check

Participants were asked to rate a single item assessing their perceptions of their current levels of relational boredom in order to ensure that the salience manipulation of relational boredom would indeed increase perception of relational boredom. Relational boredom was successfully manipulated in this study. A one-way ANOVA confirmed that participants in the relational boredom condition ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 2.06$) rated their relationship as being significantly more boring than those in the control condition⁷ ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.68$), $F(1,88) = 8.52$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. The manipulation of relational boredom was successful (See Figure 1). The next step in the analysis was to examine the effects of the manipulation on the outcome variable (willingness to commit future infidelity) as well as the five potential mediating variables (self-forgiveness for past infidelity, investment, quality of alternatives, satisfaction and commitment).

⁷An exploratory third condition was also included in this questionnaire. In the no relational boredom condition, participants were asked to describe a period of time in their current romantic relationship using some of the reverse coded items from the relational boredom scale (Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2012). This exploratory condition did not significantly differ from neither the relational boredom condition, $F(1, 79) = 2.52$, $p = .12$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$) nor the control condition, $F(1, 86) = 3.11$, $p = .08$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$) in a one-way ANOVA on the manipulation check item. As such the 45 participants in this exploratory condition were removed from subsequent analyses.

Figure 1. Mean of perceived relational boredom for participants in the control condition and the relational boredom manipulation condition.



Experimental Effects

Investment Model. A series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to examine the influence of the relational boredom manipulation on each of the components of the Investment Model

Commitment. The one-way ANOVA showed no significant differences on commitment for those in the relational boredom condition ($M = 4.78, SD = .98$) compared to those in the control condition ($M = 4.89, SD = .97$), $F(1,88) = .29, p = .59, \eta_p^2 = .003$. Commitment was the only variable amongst the investment model that was not significantly affected by the manipulation.

Investment. When the one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of the relational boredom manipulation on investment, the results showed that investment

ratings for participants in the control condition ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 1.12$) were significantly higher than ratings of investment for the relational boredom condition ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.04$), $F(1,88) = 4.70$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$.

Satisfaction. A one-way ANOVA revealed that ratings of relationship satisfaction were significantly lower for participants in the relational boredom condition ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.81$) compared to ratings of satisfaction in the control condition participants ($M = 5.45$, $SD = 1.41$), $F(1,88) = 13.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .13$.

Quality of Alternatives. Lastly, a final one-way ANOVA confirmed that the difference in ratings of quality of alternatives between the two manipulation conditions was significantly different, $F(1,88) = 8.22$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. Specifically, participants in the relational boredom condition rated their quality of alternatives significantly higher ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.70$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.53$).

Self-forgiveness for past transgressions. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of the manipulation on the first mediator, self-forgiveness for past transgressions. Counter to the hypothesis, the one-way ANOVA on the effect of the manipulation on self-forgiveness was not significant, $F(1,88) = .15$, $p = .70$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$. Participants' ratings of self-forgiveness for past infidelity were only slightly higher in the relational boredom condition ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.24$) compared to ratings of self-forgiveness in the control condition ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.39$). Once again, the mean self-forgiveness scores for the two conditions were in the hypothesized direction but the effects were too small to be significant.

Willingness to commit future infidelity. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the extent to which the relational boredom manipulation influenced participants'

willingness to engage in future infidelity. The differences in willingness to commit future infidelity by manipulation condition was not significant, $F(1,88) = 1.78, p = .19, \eta_p^2 = .02$. Importantly, the pattern of results were in the hypothesized direction such that participants in the relational boredom condition had a non-significantly higher mean rating of willingness to commit future infidelity ($M = 3.35, SD = 2.17$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 2.74, SD = 2.12$). The direction of results is similar to what was found in Study 1 but the two conditions were not significantly different.

Effects of Potential Mediators on Willingness to Commit Infidelity

To examine the role that commitment, investment, quality of alternatives, satisfaction and self-forgiveness for past infidelity play in predicting willingness to commit future infidelity, each factor was entered into a linear regression with willingness to commit future infidelity. When investment was regressed on willingness to commit future infidelity, the regression equation accounted for a significant amount of variance, $R^2 = .12, F(1, 88) = 11.93, p = .001$. The regression equation for commitment predicting willingness to commit future infidelity also accounted for a significant amount of variance, $R^2 = .08, F(1, 88) = 7.39, p = .008$. When quality of alternatives was regressed on willingness to commit future infidelity, the regression equation also accounted for a significant amount of variance, $R^2 = .19, F(1, 88) = 20.22, p < .001$. For the regression of satisfaction on willingness to commit future infidelity, the regression equation again accounted for a significant amount of variance, $R^2 = .19, F(1, 88) = 20.69, p < .001$. The results of the linear regression for self-forgiveness of past infidelity on willingness to engage in future infidelity was also significant $R^2 = .23, F(1, 88) = 26.06, p < .001$.

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), to test a mediated model, the independent variable must predict the mediator variable and the mediator must predict the dependent variable. They also suggested that for mediation to be present the independent variable must predict the dependent variable – an effect not found in the present study.

MacKinnon, Fairchild and Fritz (2007), however, suggest that in a true mediational relationship there does not have to be a relationship between the independent variable (in this case relational boredom condition) and the dependent variable (in this case willingness to commit future infidelity). Specifically, they argue that the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable should not be significant if a true mediation exists. Instead, all that is needed is that potential mediators are predicted by the independent variable and predict the dependent variable. Although all potential mediators were significant predictors of willingness to commit future infidelity, the relational boredom manipulation only influenced investment, satisfaction, and quality of alternative. In this light, a multiple mediation analysis was conducted with the three potential mediators - investment, satisfaction, quality of alternatives.

Unique Mediation Analyses

Prior to conducting the multiple mediation analysis, three single mediation models were tested using satisfaction, investment or quality of alternatives as unique mediators of the indirect effect of the boredom manipulation on willingness to commit infidelity. Using Preacher and Hayes' (2008) bootstrapping technique (with 5,000 iterations), satisfaction was tested as a unique mediator of the experimental effect on willingness to commit infidelity. The indirect effect was estimated to lie between .24 and 1.33 with 95% confidence. Zero was not included in the 95% confidence interval, thus

indicating significant mediation. When investment was tested as a unique mediator, the indirect effect was estimated to lie between .04 and .84 with 95% confidence. Zero was once again not included in the 95% confidence interval indicating that the indirect effect was significantly different from zero at $p < .05$ (two-tailed). Finally, quality of alternatives was also a significant unique mediator of the indirect effect of relational boredom on willingness to commit future infidelity as the indirect effect was estimated to lie between .15 and 1.11 with 95% confidence. Zero was not included in the 95% confidence interval and as such, the indirect effect was significantly different from zero at $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

Multiple Mediation Analysis

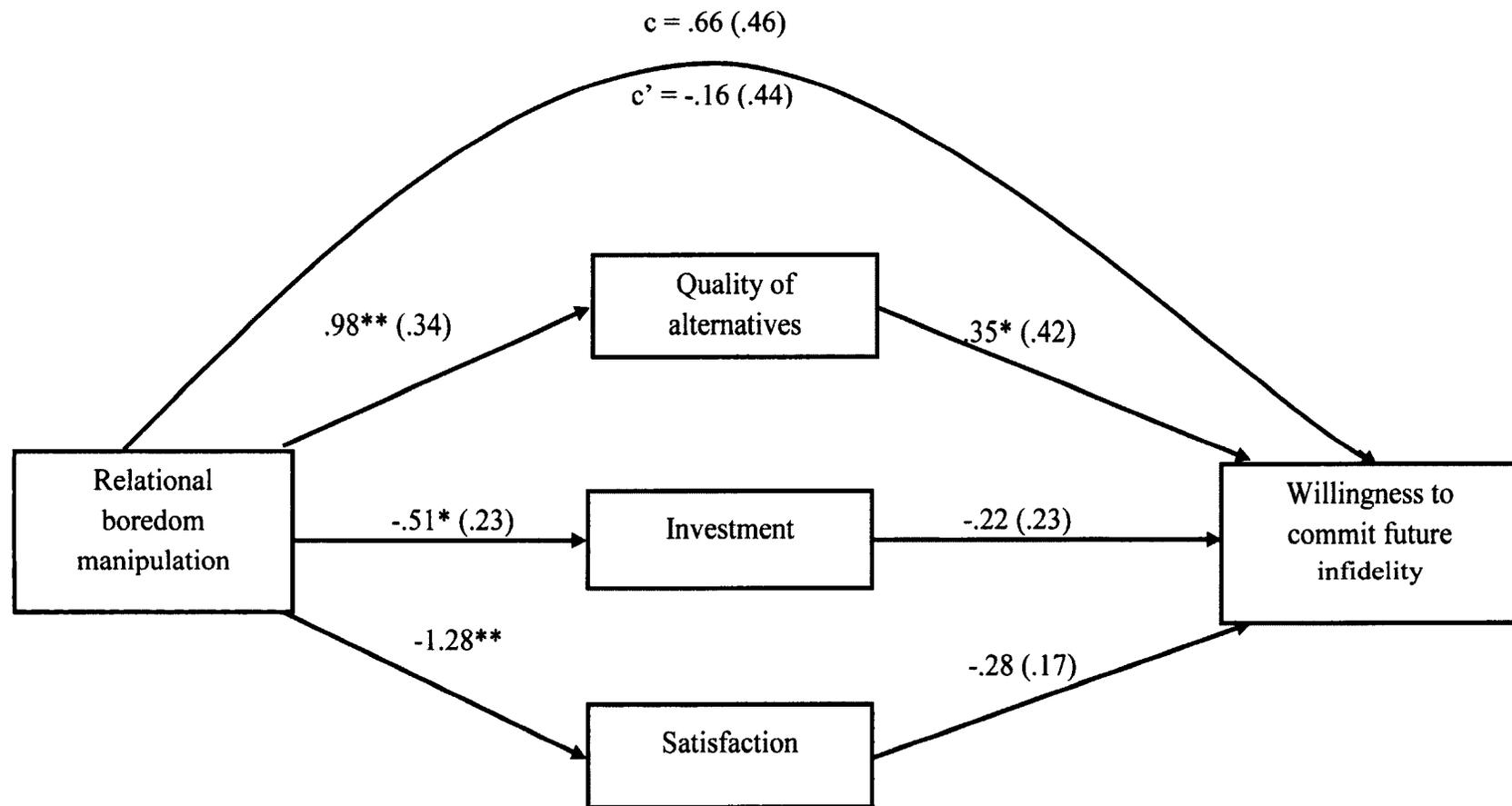
Based on MacKinnon and colleagues' (2007) suggestion for testing the indirect effects, a multiple mediation analysis was conducted to determine whether the indirect effect of the relational boredom manipulation on willingness to commit infidelity in the future could be explained by investment, satisfaction and quality of alternatives. The model accounted for a significant amount of the variance in willingness to cheat, $R^2 = .21$, $F(4, 84) = 6.97$, $p < .001$. As was shown in the ANOVAs and can be seen in Figure 2, the relational boredom manipulation was a significant predictor of reported quality of alternatives, $B = .98$, $SE = .34$, $p = .005$, relationship satisfaction, $B = -1.28$, $SE = .34$, $p < .001$, and relationship investment, $B = -.51$, $SE = .23$, $p = .03$.

The coefficient associated with quality of alternatives, $B = .36$, $SE = .15$, $p = .02$ showed that quality of alternatives was the only significant predictor of willingness to commit future infidelity. Relationship satisfaction, $B = -.28$, $SE = .17$, $p = .11$, and

investment, $B = -.22$, $SE = .23$, $p = .34$, failed to predict willingness to engage in future infidelity in this multiple mediation model.

Preacher and Hayes' (2008) bootstrapping technique (with 5,000 iterations) was then used to determine whether the indirect effect of relational boredom on willingness to commit future infidelity, via the proposed mediators was significantly different than zero. Quality of alternatives was the only significant mediator of the indirect effect in this model. The indirect effect of quality of alternatives was estimated to lie between .05 and .86 with a 95% confidence interval. As zero is not included in the 95% confidence interval, the indirect effect is significantly different from zero at $p < .05$ (two-tailed). Zero was included in the 95% confidence interval for all other potential mediators indicating that they are not significant mediators in this model. Result show that quality of alternatives is a significant mediator of the indirect relationship between relational boredom and willingness to commit future infidelity. The mediation model is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Multiple mediation model for the indirect effect of relational boredom on willingness to engage in infidelity through quality of alternatives represented with unstandardized regression coefficient where $**p \leq .01$ and $*p \leq .05$. Standard errors are represented in parentheses next to the unstandardized regression coefficients.



Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to examine the factors that may influence people to engage in negative behaviours (i.e., infidelity) against their romantic relationship partner. Specifically, this research examined relational boredom as a potential factor that may lead to negative relational consequences (i.e., increase willingness to be unfaithful) by manipulating perceptions of relational boredom in ongoing romantic relationships. Additionally, the current study examined potential mediators (self-forgiveness for past transgressions, relationship investment, commitment, satisfaction, and quality of alternatives) of the relationship between relational boredom and willingness to commit infidelity. The results of this study suggest that relational boredom indirectly predicts increased willingness to cheat through quality of alternatives, a mediating variable from the investment model.

In the current study, relational boredom was successfully manipulated using a salience manipulation in a sample of adult participants drawn from the community. Participants who were asked to tell the researchers about a period of time in their relationship using specific words and phrases associated with relational boredom rated being more bored with their romantic relationship than participants in the control condition who did not have to complete a writing task. Given that this technique for manipulating relational boredom has not been previously used, this finding has important implications for future relational boredom research. As research on relational boredom is gaining popularity (Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000; Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2010; 2012; Tsapelas, Aron & Orbuch, 2009), there is a need to examine causal relationships between relational boredom and other variables through experimental

manipulations of boredom in ongoing romantic relationships. The successful manipulation technique from the current study may aid future researchers to establish causal links through this novel relational boredom manipulation.

The hypothesis that willingness to commit infidelity would be heightened in those experiencing greater relational boredom was not supported by these results. The relational boredom manipulation failed to have a significant direct effect on willingness to commit future infidelity. Participants who were manipulated to experience more relational boredom were no more willing to commit future infidelity against their current partner than participants in the control condition, although the relationship between relational boredom and willingness to commit future infidelity was in the expected direction. There did not appear to be a direct relationship between relational boredom and future willingness to cheat. With that said, I hypothesized that an indirect relationship may exist whereby the relational boredom manipulation would influence people's willingness to commit infidelity via the components of the investment model (commitment, investment, satisfaction, and quality of alternatives) as well as self-forgiveness.

In terms of testing the effects of the manipulation on the potential mediators, it was expected that the relational boredom manipulation would influence all four components of the investment model. As expected, results showed that there was a significant effect of the relational boredom manipulation on relationship investment, satisfaction and quality of alternatives. Participants in the relational boredom condition rated being significantly less invested in and less satisfied with their romantic relationship and rated the quality of relationship alternatives to be higher than those in the control

condition. These results suggest that experiencing relational boredom can indeed influence other important relational circumstances. Importantly, decreases in investment, satisfaction and quality of alternatives have been associated with relationship dissolution (Rusbult et al., 1994) and predicting future infidelity (Drigotas et al., 1999). Indeed, these results are consistent with previous findings that showed a significant negative relationship between relational boredom and relationship satisfaction (Aron et al., 2000; Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2012; Tsapelas et al., 2009). The results of this study provide evidence for a causal link between relational boredom and relational satisfaction, which had yet to be established in published journals. Thus, it is not the case that people who are less satisfied with their relationship begin to experience relational boredom but instead, this research suggests that when people begin to experience relational boredom, they then begin to feel less satisfied with their relationship. A significant addition to the relational boredom literature is the influence that relational boredom had on other investment model constructs such as investment and quality of alternatives in this study. To date, there is no published research that has examined the influence of relational boredom on quality of relationship alternatives and relationship investment. That is, relational boredom may be exerting a greater force on the romantic relationship than was previously expected by researchers.

The relational boredom manipulation, however, did not have a significant effect on reported levels of commitment nor self-forgiveness of past infidelity. That is, results showed that relational boredom was not associated with decreases in commitment nor was it associated with increases in self-forgiveness of past infidelity when compared to the control condition. It was interesting that the relational boredom had a significant

effect on three components of the Investment Model (investment, satisfaction and quality of alternatives), but did not influence commitment, given that the Investment Model suggests that commitment is composed of satisfaction, investment and quality of alternatives (Rusbult et al., 1994). Perhaps the relational boredom manipulation did not have a significant effect on levels of commitment because participants were reflecting on their previous infidelity, which made all participants reconsider their commitment to their partner. In fact, a study on extramarital sexual infidelity showed that spouses engaging in infidelity were less committed in general compared to the spouse that had not been unfaithful (Beach, Jouriles, & O'Leary, 1985). As such, having participants think about their previous infidelity may have lowered levels of commitment in all participants and confounding any experimental effects of the relational boredom manipulation. Given that the sample of the current study consisted mainly of people who were married, it may be possible that, as Beach and colleagues' (1985) study shows, levels of commitment were influenced by thoughts about past infidelity rather than the experience of relational boredom.

It may also be the case that levels of commitment remained relatively stable across conditions because participants had remained in their relationships following the infidelity. If commitment is in fact the intention to persist in the relationship (Rusbult et al., 1994), perhaps the fact that participants remain in the relationship even after engaging in infidelity acted as a cue of their intentions to persist and thus informed their ratings of relational commitment rather than informing their intentions to persist from their perceived levels of relational boredom in this short study. In fact, it would be informative to examine the length of time that they have persisted in the relationship following their

past infidelity to examine whether relational boredom may influence commitment when controlling for time since the infidelity. It may be the case that participants who have already persisted in the relationship intend to continue but those who may have only just committed infidelity are not as committed to persisting. It would behoove future researchers to measure the time since the past infidelity has occurred to control for this in future studies.

Similarly to the result of the relational boredom manipulation on commitment, experiencing greater relational boredom did not appear to colour perceptions of self-forgiveness of past infidelity in this study. As with relationship commitment, one possible reason why the effect of relational boredom on self-forgiveness was not significant could be because the time since the past infidelity may have differed too greatly between participants. Research has shown that self-forgiveness is facilitated with the passage of time (Hall & Fincham, 2008). It may be the case that some participants had committed infidelity many months before others and, in fact, this could be controlled for in future research. As the time since the past infidelity was committed was not measured, it was impossible to control for normal variations in self-forgiveness that may occur as time goes by and distances the offense from the transgressor. It may be the case that the relational boredom manipulation did not affect self-forgiveness for past infidelity because there was too much error to find significant results and perhaps the past infidelity was too far in the past for significant differences in self-forgiveness to be detected.

It may also be the case that there was not enough variance in the relational boredom manipulation to find significant results. Following the relational boredom manipulation, participants still did not report experiencing more relational boredom than

the midpoint on the 7-point Likert scale. As such, a stronger relational boredom manipulation may be necessary to detect significant changes in reported self-forgiveness for past infidelity and commitment. This will be discussed further in the limitations section.

The variables that were significantly affected by the relational boredom manipulation were then examined as potential predictors of willingness to engage in future transgressions in a series of linear regressions. The results showed that quality of alternatives, investment and satisfaction were all significant predictors of willingness to commit future infidelity. That is, increases in perceived quality of alternatives as well as decreases in perceived investment and satisfaction predicted increases in willingness to cheat. As such, these three elements were tested as potential mediators of the relationship between relational boredom and willingness to commit future infidelity. The results showed that of the potential mediators (investment, satisfaction and quality of alternatives), the only significant mediator of the indirect relationship of relational boredom on willingness to cheat was perceptions of quality of alternatives.

In this study, relational boredom lead to perceptions that romantic relationship alternatives were better and this perception of high quality relationship alternatives in turn lead to an increased willingness to engage in infidelity. Participants who were feeling bored viewed more relationship options and participants rated a greater willingness to follow through and engage in infidelity against their current partner, therefore these options must have appeared to be viable. These findings suggest that for individuals who have committed infidelity in the past, relational boredom can lead to

greater willingness to engage in future infidelity through the perception of viable alternatives to the relationship.

One possible explanation for why quality of alternatives significantly mediated the relationship between relational boredom and willingness to cheat in the future may be that alternative relationships may appear more exciting to individuals experiencing relational boredom. Specifically, these alternatives may appear to be viable options and as such individuals are increasingly willing to actually seek out excitement outside of their relationship. Indeed, boredom in general and boredom proneness is associated with increased thrill seeking and risky behaviours (Fishback et al., 2000; Tsapelas et al., 2009). Perhaps as boredom increases in the relationship, the mind may begin to wander. An individual may consider alternative options and thus consider transgressing against their partner, perhaps to self-sabotage the relationship, which they want to exit or simply because they seek excitement in some other way. According to the proposed model, increased willingness to commit future infidelity in individuals experiencing relational boredom occurs indirectly through increased perception of quality alternatives to the current romantic relationship.

Just as other types of boredom were associated with risky behaviours such as alcohol and nicotine consumption (Amos, Wiltshire, Haw, & McNeill, 2006; Ho, 1989), gambling (Fortune & Goodie, 2010), drug use (Anshel, 1991; Guinn, 1975) and juvenile delinquency (Newberry & Duncan, 2001), the current findings suggest that relational boredom is also associated with risky behaviours (i.e., willing to cheat). However, it is unclear whether quality of alternatives increases willingness to commit future transgression because it is a risky behaviour or because the alternatives would satisfy

needs better than the current partner. Further research is required to examine the relationship between willingness to commit future infidelity and actual engagement in unfaithful acts against one's partner. Examining the relationship between willingness to cheat and actual cheating behaviours may provide insight into how alternative partners meet either the need for risky behaviours or the satisfaction needs of people experiencing relational boredom.

Interestingly, the hypothesis that increased self-forgiveness would be associated with increased willingness to commit future infidelity was fully supported by the current study. The results of this study show that self-forgiveness significantly predicted future willingness to cheat. This finding lends support to the hypothesis that there is in fact a dark side of self-forgiveness as was shown in previous research (Squires et al., 2012; Wohl & Thompson, 2010). The dark side of self-forgiveness was shown in smokers and people with gambling pathology. This research shows that the destructive behaviour does not need to be associated with an addiction. Instead, self-forgiving for single instances of harmful behaviours may perpetuate maintenance of these bad behaviours. The current study suggests that people who forgive the self for a past infidelity are then more willing to commit future infidelity. It may be the case that letting go of the negative emotions associated with past transgressions then perpetuates maintenance of these behaviours. As such, being self-forgiving of negative behaviours such as infidelity may not necessarily promote relationship maintenance but instead could be associated with more destructive relational outcomes, which in this research was a willingness to commit infidelity. Whether willingness to cheat in the future is associated with actual commission of infidelity should be examined in future research longitudinally. This study shows that for

individuals who commit transgressions against their partner, it may be necessary to focus on the negative emotions about past transgressions in order to stop these behaviours from re-occurring. The key to decreasing the will to cheat may lie in being unforgiving of the self for past acts of unfaithfulness.

Although previous research has shown that relational boredom may signal a need for action (e.g., engage in more expanding activities with partner), the current research suggests that there may also be negative consequences to relational boredom. Previous research was unable to test these hypotheses because the sample of individual who reported destructive consequences to relational boredom was too low. As such, this research provides further evidence that relational boredom is a significant threat to maintaining a relationship (Aron & Aron, 1986). Relational boredom influences perception of other relational qualities such as investment and satisfaction, along with quality of alternatives. It is through this perception of greater quality of alternatives that individuals experiencing relational boredom may be more willing to continue engaging in infidelity.

Limitations and Future Directions

As discussed above, an important limitation of the current research was that time since the past infidelity was committed was not measured. Given that self-forgiveness is facilitated with the passage of time (Hall & Fincham, 2008), it may be the case that the previous infidelity was too distant in the past for relational boredom to colour perceptions of self-forgiveness for this past transgression. Differences in levels of commitment may also be affected by the time since a transgression occurred as people may have persisted in the relationship for a long period of time and may thus intend to continue to persist in

the relationship. It would behoove future researchers to measure time since the past infidelity occurred and control for the timing of the past infidelity in future studies.

In addition to controlling for timing of the past infidelity, future researchers may consider stronger manipulations of relational boredom. If indeed there is an effect to be found of relational boredom on self-forgiveness or commitment, the relational boredom manipulation in the current study may not have elicited enough feelings of boredom to evoke significant changes in self-forgiveness or commitment. That is, when participants rated their relational boredom on the manipulation check, mean scores of relational boredom did not exceed the midpoint on the 7-point Likert scale. As such, a stronger relational boredom manipulation may be necessary to detect significant changes in reported self-forgiveness for past infidelity and commitment.

Another potential limitation to the current study is the sample selection and data collection method. In the current study, the sample was collected by having participants self-selected into the study based on the criteria of having had committed previous infidelity against their current relationship partner. It is possible that individuals who were not comfortable discussing infidelity did not choose to complete the survey. Self-selecting into the study may limit the generalizability of our results as only participants who felt comfortable responding or talking about their past infidelity would presumably select into the study. As such, participants who cannot begin to forgive the self may be too sensitive to participate; therefore, limiting the variation in the sample and making the findings only generalizable to individuals who have engaged in infidelity in the past. Yet the external validity of the sample is increased by having used a community sample of American adults. A suggestion for future studies may be to collect a larger sample of individuals

who have committed any transgression and, instead of using reports of previous infidelity as a selection criterion; transgression type might be used as a potential moderator of experimental effects. Infidelity is considered a more severe transgression and as such the mean scores of willingness to engage in infidelity below the mid-point on the scale. Future researchers should investigate whether the findings are the same for less severe transgressions. Although severe transgressions may have a greater influence on the vitality of a relationship, it may also be the case that recurring less severe transgressions could negatively influence the relationship.

This research also relies solely on self-report. As such, it is possible that participants' responses are biased. A potential bias in the results may be that some participants may not have actually been unfaithful previously but instead were simply participating for the monetary reward. It may be the case that individuals who have not yet engaged in infidelity are unaware of the consequences of these actions and may be more or less likely to report being willing to engage in future infidelity. The possibility that people who did not commit infidelity in their relationship was expected which is why a single item was included that asked participants if they had ever engaged in infidelity only participants who spontaneously reported having engaged in infidelity during the survey proceeded to the study. As such, it can be assumed that this was not a source of bias in the results but other such problems with self-report may exist.

Future research should therefore attempt to triangulate methods by having both partners of the romantic relationship complete the questionnaire. Having both partners complete a study and perhaps noting observable behaviours and transgressions over a

period of time would allow further insight into the role that relational boredom plays in influencing future negative behaviours.

A longitudinal examination of relational boredom and willingness to engage in future infidelity or transgressions may be helpful in testing the association between willingness to commit transgression and actual engaging in infidelity. Participants were asked to report how willing they were to engage in future infidelity but what was not measured was whether they actually committed future infidelity. It is unknown whether participants' willingness to commit future infidelity would be associated with actual engagement in future infidelity. Research shows that individuals often erroneously predict future behaviours from attitudes (Wilson & Gilbert, 2003). As such, a longitudinal study to examine levels of relational boredom over time and associated transgression behaviours would be an appropriate area of study for future research. Further research is required to find out how quality of alternatives influences willingness to commit future infidelity. It would behoove future researchers to examine participants attraction to quality alternatives in terms of how the alternatives would meet participants needs (meet need for excitement, satisfy relational needs or investment).

Conclusion

What factors influence people to engage in negative behaviours against their romantic partners? The current research suggests that relational boredom and quality of alternatives are certainly involved in influencing perceptions of willingness to commit infidelity. This study offers preliminary evidence that relational boredom can lead to very serious negative outcomes when people have previously engaged in relationship transgressions. Specifically, relational boredom appears to increase perceptions that

relationship needs are not being met and that these needs could be fulfilled by an alternative relationship. As such, there is an increase in willingness to engage in infidelity. It is yet unclear whether individuals are willing to commit infidelity with a quality alternative to meet their needs or simply because they are seeking excitement that their current relationship is not providing.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Informed Consent Form (Pilot with University students)

The purpose of an informed consent is to insure that you understand the purpose of the study and the nature of your involvement. The informed consent must provide sufficient information such that you have the opportunity to determine whether you wish to participate in the study.

This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board (Reference #12-136).

Present study: Experiences in Romantic Relationship Infidelity Pilot

Research personnel. The following people are involved in this research project, and may be contacted at any time if you have questions or concerns:

Nathalie Gillen (email: nathalie_gillen@carleton.ca; phone: 1 (613) 520-2600 ext. 6312), Dr. Michael Wohl (Faculty Sponsor, email: michael_wohl@carleton.ca), Dr. Cheryl Harasymchuk (Faculty collaborator, email: Cheryl_harasymchuk@carleton.ca).

Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact Dr. Avi Parush, Chair, Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board, contact at avi_parush@carleton.ca or 1 (613) 520-2600 ext. 6026. For any other concerns, please contact, Dr. Anne Bowker (Chair, Department of Psychology, 1 (613) 520-2600, ext. 8218, psychchair@carleton.ca).

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to test out and to get feedback for a study that examines how experiences in a romantic relationship can shape responses to past romantic relationship infidelity and how these responses affect other factors in the romantic relationship in the future.

Task requirements. We will ask you to think out loud as you complete this study and afterwards give us feedback about the procedure and questionnaire items. To help us record your thoughts, we will ask for your permission to audiotape the session. The study itself involves describing a period of time in your relationship and filling out questionnaires about your current romantic relationship. It involves reporting on your thoughts and feelings about your infidelity. It asks about the current state of your romantic relationship as well as predicting future feelings about your romantic relationship. The survey will be conducted on-line.

Duration and locale. The survey will be administered on-line and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. You will receive .5 of a course credit for your participation in this 30 minute study.

Potential risk/discomfort. Participants may experience discomfort or distress when thinking about past infidelity that they have committed against their current partner.

These emotions are sometimes necessary in order to research or study relationships between somewhat sensitive variables. We invite you to talk through any discomfort with the researcher and if you experience any distress or discomfort as a result of your participation, you may wish to contact The Carleton University Health and Counseling Services at 613- 520-6674 or the 24-hour phone service of the Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region at 613-238-3311.

Anonymity/confidentiality. Your participation in this study as well as the data collected in this experiment is strictly confidential. The coded data are made available only to the researchers associated with this project. Audio recordings will be deleted after completion of the study (December 2012).

Qualtrics employs multiple layers of security to make sure that data remains private and secure. All surveys created are placed in their Secure Survey Environment. Webpages are encrypted with SSL encryption to protect the data while in transmission. Qualtrics has SAS 70 Certification and meets the rigorous privacy standards imposed on health care records by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The server on which the Qualtrics account for this study is located is in Ireland, and it is therefore protected by the European and US Safe Harbor Agreement. All Qualtrics accounts and all data stored on the Qualtrics accounts are protected by password-access. In addition, IP address will not be recorded. Finally, at the end of the survey, you will be encouraged to close the browser window with the following message: "For maximum confidentiality, please close this window". Finally, the data collected will remain on the Qualtrics account until the end of the study (December 2012) and will then be deleted. Before deletion from Qualtrics, the data will be downloaded and all identifying information will be immediately separated from the data and stored on password protected lab computers.

Right to withdraw. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may also choose to skip (i.e., not answer) questions you find objectionable for any reason without penalty. If you would like to withdraw from the study, simply click the "withdraw" button at the bottom of the page.

I have read the above form and understand the conditions of my participation. My participation in this study is voluntary, and if for any reason, at any time, I wish to leave the experiment I may do so without having to give an explanation and with no penalty whatsoever. Furthermore, I am also aware that my participation as well as the data gathered in this study is confidential.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B - Release Form for Audio Recording (Pilot with University students)**Project Title: Responses in Romantic Relationship Infidelity**

During the study, we would like to audio record the think out load procedure described to you by the researchers. Below is a consent and release form to allow the researcher to audiotape your session.

Anonymity/confidentiality. The recording in this study is strictly confidential. Like the items you complete, the coded data are made available only to the researchers associated with this project.

Right to withdraw. You may withdraw permission to use the audio recording at any time without penalty. While completing the study, you may also choose to stop thinking out load for any reason without penalty. If you would like to withdraw from the study, simply tell the experimenter.

Below you have two choices regarding the audiotape: “do not audiotape me” or “the audiotape may be used for research only”

If you designate the materials “for research only”, your audiotape will be analyzed by the researcher and your information will be used to complete the research study. Your information will be reported in a way that does not identify you and your materials will be destroyed after the study is complete (December 2012).

If you designate the materials “do not audiotape me”, the audiotape will NOT be turned on during the session.

If in the future you wish the research team to delete the audiotape, you may contact the Nathalie Gillen.

Nathalie Gillen

Psychology Department, Carleton University

Phone: 613-520-2600 ext. 6312 Email: nathalie_gillen@carleton.ca

___ I hereby designate the audiotape for research only and give my permission for the researcher to use my materials as part of the research study. I want my materials to be reported so that they will not identify me and destroyed when the study is complete.

___ I hereby designate that I do NOT give my permission to audiotape this session.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Appendix C–Positive and Negative Mood Measurement

(Watson & Clark, 1994)

The following items are words that describe different moods. Please use the following scale to rate your current mood.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree a Little	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree a Little	Agree	Agree Strongly

Currently, I am feeling...

Happy

Nervous

Guilty

Attentive

Excited

Sad

Bored

Blameworthy

Ashamed

Appendix D - Informed Consent Form

The purpose of an informed consent is to insure that you understand the purpose of the study and the nature of your involvement. The informed consent must provide sufficient information such that you have the opportunity to determine whether you wish to participate in the study.

This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board (Reference #12-136).

Present study: Experiences in Romantic Relationship Infidelity

Research personnel. The following people are involved in this research project, and may be contacted at any time if you have questions or concerns:

Nathalie Gillen (email: nathalie_gillen@carleton.ca; phone: 1 (613) 520-2600 ext. 6312), Dr. Michael Wohl (Faculty Sponsor, email: michael_wohl@carleton.ca), Dr. Cheryl Harasymchuk (Faculty collaborator, email: Cheryl_harasymchuk@carleton.ca).

Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact Dr. Avi Parush, Chair, Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board, contact at avi_parush@carleton.ca or 1 (613) 520-2600 ext. 6026. For any other concerns, please contact, Dr. Anne Bowker (Chair, Department of Psychology, 1 (613) 520-2600, ext. 8218, psychchair@carleton.ca).

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to examine how experiences in a romantic relationship can shape responses to past romantic relationship infidelity and how these responses affect other factors in the romantic relationship in the future.

Task requirements. The study involves describing a period of time in your relationship and filling out questionnaires about your current romantic relationship. Specifically, we will be asking you to report on your thoughts and feelings about your infidelity. You will also be asked to report on the current state of your romantic relationship as well as predict future feelings about your romantic relationship. The survey will be conducted on-line.

Duration and locale. The survey will be administered on-line and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. You will receive US \$0.50 for participating.

Potential risk/discomfort. Participants may experience discomfort or distress when thinking about past infidelity that they have committed against their current partner. These emotions are sometimes necessary in order to research or study relationships between somewhat sensitive variables. If you experience any distress or discomfort as a result of your participation, you may wish to contact one of the helplines nearest to your location. A list of helplines by town and state can be found at <http://www.befrienders.org/helplines/helplines.asp?c2=USA>. A copy of this information will be provided to you in the debriefing sheet following the questionnaires.

Anonymity/confidentiality. Your participation in this study as well as the data collected in this experiment is strictly confidential. The coded data are made available only to the researchers associated with this project.

Qualtrics employs multiple layers of security to make sure that data remains private and secure. All surveys created are placed in their Secure Survey Environment. Webpages are encrypted with SSL encryption to protect the data while in transmission. Qualtrics has SAS 70 Certification and meets the rigorous privacy standards imposed on health care records by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The server on which the Qualtrics account for this study is located is in Ireland, and it is therefore protected by the European and US Safe Harbor Agreement. All Qualtrics accounts and all data stored on the Qualtrics accounts are protected by password-access. In addition, IP address will not be recorded. Finally, at the end of the survey, you will be encouraged to close the browser window with the following message: "For maximum confidentiality, please close this window". Finally, the data collected will remain on the Qualtrics account until the end of the study (December 2012) and will then be deleted. Before deletion from Qualtrics, the data will be downloaded and all identifying information will be immediately separated from the data and stored on password protected lab computers.

Right to withdraw. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may also choose to skip (i.e., not answer) questions you find objectionable for any reason without penalty. If you would like to withdraw from the study, simply click the "withdraw" button at the bottom of the page.

By checking this box you agree to the following terms:

I have read the above form and understand the conditions of my participation. My participation in this study is voluntary, and if for any reason, at any time, I wish to leave the experiment I may do so without having to give an explanation and with no penalty whatsoever. Furthermore, I am also aware that my participation as well as the data gathered in this study is confidential. Checking the box below and clicking 'Next' indicates that I agree to participate in the study.

Appendix E - Relational Boredom Manipulation**Relational Boredom Condition**

For this part of the study we would like to know a little more about certain experiences you have had in your romantic relationship. We are asking that you tell us about a time in your relationship but we would like you to use a certain set of words in telling your story. Please ensure that you use all the words and phrases provided to guide your story and ensure that the story is about a specific time involving you and your partner. For the sake of anonymity, please leave out any personal information and rather refer to your partner as he or she.

Dull

Nothing to talk about

Tired

Uninterested

Feels like I want a change

Exploratory No Relational Boredom Condition

For this part of the study we would like to know a little more about certain experiences you have had in your romantic relationship. We are asking that you tell us about a time in your relationship but we would like you to use a certain set of words in telling your story. Please ensure that you use all the words and phrase provided to guide your story and ensure that the story is about a specific time involving you and your partner. For the sake of anonymity, please leave out any personal information and rather refer to your partner as he or she.

Full of surprises

Exciting

Thrilling

Interested in him/her/partner

Sharing feelings

Control Condition

N/A

Appendix F - Relational Boredom Manipulation Check

Please rate **how well the following statement characterizes your relationship with your dating/marital partner**. Write the number in the space provided using the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6
	7				
Not at all true	somewhat true		moderately true		very true
	completely true				

Right now, I feel bored with my current romantic relationship.

Appendix H - Investment Model Scale

(Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew; 1998)

Please use the scale provided to answer the following questions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree a Little	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree a Little	Agree	Agree Strongly

Think about your current romantic relationship. Think about the level of satisfaction you feel in this relationship. Feeling satisfied in a relationship can include intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, sexual intimacy, etc.), companionship (doing things together or enjoying one another's company), and security (trusting your partner, comfortable with relationship, emotional attachment to partner, etc.). While keeping these things in mind, please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your relationship.

1. I feel satisfied with our relationship
2. Our relationship makes me very happy.
3. Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.

Think about other alternative relationships to your current relationship. Think about whether these alternative relationships would fulfill your relationship needs. These needs can include intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, sexual intimacy, etc.), companionship (doing things together or enjoying one another's company), and security (trusting your partner, comfortable with relationship, emotional attachment to partner, etc.). While keeping these things in mind, please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding alternative relationships (e.g., by another dating partner, friends, family; select an answer for each item).

1. The people other than my partner with whom I might become involved are very appealing.
2. My alternatives to my relationship are close to ideal (dating another, spending time with friends or on my own, etc.).
3. My needs for intimacy, companionship, etc., could easily be fulfilled in an alternative relationship.

Think about the type of person you are in romantic relationships. Relationship investment can include time put into your relationship, personal disclosure (e.g., secrets), shared memories, and the degree to which you feel your identity is linked to your partner and relationship. While keeping these things in mind, please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your relationship.

1. I have put a great deal into my current relationship that I would lose if the relationship were to end.
2. I feel very involved in my romantic relationship.
3. I have invested a great deal of time in to my romantic relationship.

Please think about how committed you are to your current partner.

1. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.
2. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.
3. I want our relationship to last forever.

Appendix I - Positive Mood Induction

Although we have asked you to reflect on the negative aspects of your relationship, there are often many positive experiences shared within relationships. In this last part of the study, we would like for you to write about your favorite experience with your partner and the thing you like most about her or him. Please briefly describe this favorite experience and thing you most like about your partner using the space provided below.

Positive Relational Perceptions Prime

(Gottman, 1999)

Please look at the exercise below. This is a great exercise that makes relationships stronger.

Exercise 1: I appreciate that my partner is.....

From the list below circle all items that you think are characteristic of your partner.

loving, sensitive, brave, intelligent, thoughtful, generous, loyal, truthful, strong, energetic, sexy, decisive, creative, imaginative, fun, attractive, interesting, supportive, funny, considerate, affectionate, organized, resourceful, athletic, cheerful, coordinated, graceful, elegant, gracious, playful, caring, exciting, thrifty, full of plans, shy, vulnerable, committed, involved, expressive, active, careful, reserved, adventurous, receptive, reliable, responsible, dependable, nurturing, warm, virile, kind, gentle, practical, lusty, witty, relaxed, beautiful, handsome, rich, calm, lively, assertive, protective, sweet, tender, powerful, flexible, understanding

For three of the items you circled, briefly think of an actual incident that illustrates this characteristic of your partner. Write the characteristic and the incident in the space provided.

Characteristic: _____

Incident: _____

Characteristic: _____

Incident: _____

Characteristic: _____

Incident: _____

Appendix J - Debriefing

What are we trying to learn in this research?

In this research, we are trying to learn about the relation between relational boredom and self-forgiveness. We would like to find out about the role that self-forgiveness for past infidelity plays in the relationship between relational boredom and willingness to engage in future infidelity. We also are interested in finding out what factors influence the relationship between self-forgiveness and relational boredom.

(Pilot Only) To get a better feel for your thoughts about your experience with infidelity as well as your reaction (positive and negative) to the questions we asked you, we asked for your permission to audiotape the session while you completed the questionnaire and thought out loud.

Why is this important to scientists or the general public?

Boredom can be a natural part of any relationship. Levels of relational boredom in romantic relationship naturally ebb and flow (rising and falling depending on the characteristics of the relationship at any given time). Yet, relational boredom has been associated with lowered investment, greater willingness to engage in transgressions and actual engaging in more severe transgressions. It is important to examine the factors associated with relational boredom and engaging in future infidelity. Ways of maintaining a healthy relationship may be aided by the outcomes of this study.

What are our hypotheses and predictions?

We predict that relational boredom will be associated with increased willingness to engage in future infidelity and that this will be because participant are forgiving themselves for past infidelity.

Why did I have to write that story about my relationship?

In this study, we wanted to make our participants experience more or less relational boredom in order to test our hypothesis that relational boredom causes differences in self-forgiveness and willingness to engage in future infidelity.

We would like you to know that sometimes people who take part in psychology studies continue to experience emotions that were manipulated in the study, even though they have been told that we made them feel a certain way (i.e., bored with your relationship). Psychologists found that the best way to eliminate this possibility is to simply make participants aware that this might occur. In this study, some participants might continue to experience relational boredom, when they were not experiencing this before the study. We want to remind you again that the researchers made you feel this way and that we hope these feelings do not persist.

Where can I learn more?

The following articles provide further information about relational boredom and self-forgiveness:

Harasymchuk, C., & Fehr, B. (2010). A script analysis of relational boredom: Causes, feelings, and coping strategies. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 29*, 988-1019.

Wohl, M. J.A., DeShea, L., & Wahkinney, R. L. (2008). Looking within: Measuring state self-forgiveness and its relationship to psychological well-being. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 40*(1), 1-10.

Is there anything I can do if I found this experiment to be emotionally upsetting?

Yes. It is normal to feel some distress when reflecting on past infidelity that you have personally experienced. These emotions are sometimes necessary in order to research or study relationships between somewhat sensitive variables. If you feel any distress or anxiety after participating in this study, please feel free to contact one of the helplines nearest to your location. A list of helplines by town and state can be found at <http://www.befrienders.org/helplines/helplines.asp?c2=USA>.

What if I have questions later?

If you have any remaining concerns, questions, or comments about the experiment please feel free to contact Nathalie Gillen (Principal Investigator), at: nathalie_gillen@carleton.ca, Dr. Michael Wohl (Faculty Sponsor) at: 1 (613) 520-2600 ext. 2908 or Dr. Cheryl Harasymchuk at: 1 (613) 520-2600 ext. 3056. Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact Dr. Avi Parush (Chair, Psychology Ethics Board, 1 (613) 520-2600 ext. 6026, avi_parush@carleton.ca). For any other concerns, please contact, Dr. Anne Bowker (Chair, Department of Psychology, 1 (613) 520-2600, ext. 8218, psychchair@carleton.ca).

Thank you for participating in this research!