
CHAPTER 11

Internet Infidelity: A Real Problem

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IT IS now well established that Internet infidelity is a real problem. This chapter examines the unique features of Internet infidelity and how these features have altered as the Internet has evolved. It first considers how intimacy is established online and the unique aspects of an online affair. It then considers the sexual and emotional components of infidelity and attempts a generic definition for Internet infidelity. Different forms of online infidelity are highlighted, including the use of infidelity dating sites and social networking sites. It also questions whether all online activities that mimic offline infidelities ought to be considered unfaithful. It may well be that some activities are simply play rather than belonging to the realm of reality. This chapter also highlights that digital technologies can be utilized to establish an offline affair and looks at how these technologies can aid in maintaining offline affairs. Finally, a treatment rationale is posited, looking at what we know so far about Internet infidelity as well as what we might learn from research on more traditional offline infidelities. It is argued here that our entire understanding of the nature of infidelity (both new and more traditional forms) needs to be completely reexamined given the importance of digital technologies in many people's lives.

ONLINE INTIMACY

Over the past 10 years, research has confirmed that real relationships initiate and develop in an assortment of places online (see Whitty & Carr, 2006 for an overview). Some of these spaces are anonymous, such as chat rooms and discussion groups (McKenna, Green, & Gleason, 2002; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Whitty & Gavin, 2001), while some spaces are set up to match up individuals (Whitty, 2008a). It is far less common, of course, these days to be completely

anonymous in cyberspace. Research has found that not only are real relationships formed online in most spaces, but that sometimes these relationships can develop more quickly and intimately than offline relationships. These rather intense relationships are referred to as *hyperpersonal relationships* (Tidwell & Walther, 2002; Walther, 1996, 2007).

Walther and his colleagues have discussed in detail how under certain conditions individuals develop hyperpersonal relationships. Their view is unique in the way they focus on technological affordances rather than on the problems associated with communicating via digital technologies. They argue that users can take advantage of the fact that computer-mediated communication (CMC) is editable, which allows the user to alter what has been written prior to sending the message. Furthermore, individuals typically have more time to construct a message, which is not a luxury one has in face-to-face (FtF) communication. This is of course less true of some spaces online, such as Instant Messenger (IM), where the expectations to respond are different compared to others spaces such as e-mail. Importantly, they point out that users can and often do exchange messages in physical isolation, which can mask involuntary cues, such as nonverbal leakage. Another key point made by these scholars is that individuals can devote more attention to CMC than FtF communication affords. The face, body, voice, and so forth do not need to be scanned during CMC, which gives individuals more time to focus on the message itself. Walther and colleagues argue that each of these technological affordances provides individuals with the opportunity to manage impressions; that is, CMC allows individuals to present a more likable self than what is perhaps known in FtF situations. Hence, it is no surprise that hyperpersonal relationships are frequently reported online.

IDEALIZING ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS

Developing close and intimate relationships online has certain advantages. As already stated, relationships that develop online often move successfully to the offline realm. Moreover, cyberspace can also allow individuals to learn about their sexuality (McKenna & Bargh, 1998); to learn how to flirt (Whitty, 2003a); and to gain social support (Hampton & Wellman, 2003). However, as has been previously pointed out, we also need to be aware of the dark side of online relating (Whitty & Carr, 2005, 2006). Given the hyperintimacy that can be achieved during CMC, there is the danger that these relationships, while they remain online, might appear more appealing and enticing; this can lead to idealization. This is problematic for a variety of reasons; however, the concern in this chapter is the issue of infidelity.

Drawing from Walther and colleagues' hyperpersonal theory as well as object-relations theory, it has been argued that some relationships become so personal that they become idealized (Whitty & Carr, 2005, 2006). This idealization can lead to inappropriate relationships. As already highlighted, because of certain features of CMC, individuals can be strategic in their

self-presentations, creating potentially a more likable person than perhaps they are more commonly known as in other spaces. Having people respond more positively to this more, well-crafted, likable self, could be more appealing than the more mundane self of everyday life. Moreover, if the individual that person is communicating with is employing the same strategy, they too might seem a more likable person than people known in one's everyday life; hence, the seductive appeal of CMC, which could lead to an online affair. Internet infidelity can be understood in many different ways (as will be defined later on in this chapter), but for now let us consider an online affair to be having a relationship that remains online with another whom that person has fallen in love with and/or sexually desires.

Melanie Klein's work on splitting is also useful in explaining the appeal of online relationships (Whitty & Carr, 2005, 2006). She believed that splitting was one of the most primitive or basic defense mechanisms against anxiety. According to Klein (1986), the ego prevents the bad part of the object from contaminating the good part of the object by splitting it off and disowning a part of itself. An infant in its relationship with the mother's breast conceives it as both a good and a bad object. The breast gratifies and frustrates, and the infant will simultaneously project both love and hate onto it. On the one hand, the infant idealizes this good object, but on the other hand, the bad object is seen as terrifying, frustrating, and a persecutor threatening to destroy both the infant and the good object. The infant projects love and idealizes the good object but goes beyond mere projection in trying to induce in the mother feelings toward the bad object for which she must take responsibility (that is, a process of projective identification). This stage of development Klein termed the *paranoid-schizoid position*. The infant may, as another defense mechanism for this less developed ego, seek to deny the reality of the persecutory object. While in our normal development we pass through this phase, this primitive defense against anxiety is a regressive reaction that, in a sense of always being available to us, is never transcended. The good objects in the developed superego come to represent the fantasized ego ideal and thus "the possibility of a return to narcissism" (Schwartz, 1990, p. 18).

In line with Klein's object-relations theory, it might be useful to understand the individual with whom one is having an online affair to be the good object. Given that the interactions that take place in cyberspace can often be seen as separate from the outside world (Whitty & Carr, 2006), it is potentially easier to split an online affair off from the rest of the individual's world. The online relationship can potentially cater to an unfettered, impotent fantasy that is difficult to measure up to in reality. Hence, the online affair can potentially lead to a narcissistic withdrawal.

It has been argued that offline infidelity occurs because there are problems in the relationship, or because of certain personality characteristics (see Fitness, 2001). Buss and Shackelford (1997) have identified some key reasons why people betray their partners, including complaints that one's partner sexualizes others, exhibits high levels of jealousy and possessiveness,

is condescending, withholds sex, or abuses alcohol. These are perhaps the same reasons individuals are motivated to initiate online affairs. However, drawing from Klein's theory, it has been argued that online affairs are perhaps easier to maintain than offline affairs; that the online relationship can become idealized through the process of splitting, while simultaneously denying the bad aspects of the person one is having the affair with and at the same time the bad aspects in oneself. It is possibly easier to idealize an individual online (the good object) when one can more easily filter out the potential negative aspects of the relationship (the bad object). The relationship can be turned on or off at one's leisure and the communication content, to some extent, can be more easily controlled. Moreover, the Internet does provide an environment where it is easier to construct a more positive view of the self and avoid presenting the negative aspects of the self. In contrast, it is not so easy to indulge in one's fantasies of perfection in an offline affair, as one still has to deal with the real person. Given the nature of these affairs as psychologically different from offline affairs, it is argued later in this chapter that therapy needs to take into account these differences; however, before considering treatment approaches, it is important to examine exactly what is meant by Internet infidelity.

DEFINING INTERNET INFIDELITY

For a number of years, scholars considered whether Internet infidelity was a real phenomenon (e.g., Cooper, 2002; Maheu & Subotnik, 2001; Whitty, 2003b; Young, 1998). These days there is general agreement that people can and do cheat on their partners on the Internet. However, there are conflicting views on which behaviors might be considered to be unfaithful. Before considering this question, allow me first to highlight some useful definitions.

Shaw (1997) defined Internet infidelity as "of course, behaviorally different from other kinds of infidelity; however, the contributing factors and results are similar when we consider how it affects the way partners relate" (p. 29). A more specific definition has been offered by Young, Griffin-Shelley, Cooper, O'Mara, and Buchanan (2000), who stated that a cyber-affair is "a romantic and/or sexual relationship that is initiated via online contact and maintained predominantly through electronic conversations that occur through email and in virtual communities such as chat rooms, interactive games, or newsgroups" (p. 60). In contrast, Maheu and Subotnik (2001) provide a generic definition for infidelity:

Infidelity happens when two people have a commitment and that commitment is broken—regardless of where, how or with whom it happens. Infidelity is the breaking of a promise with a real person, whether the sexual stimulation is derived from the virtual or the real world. (p. 101)

The Internet will continue to evolve, so a statement about the specific places online that individuals might cheat (e.g., e-mail, social networking sites, and so forth) is difficult to include in any definition of Internet infidelity. Nevertheless, as will be later argued in this chapter, it is also important to consider the nature of the space. Therefore, it is considered here that:

Internet infidelity occurs when the rules of the relationship are broken by acting inappropriately in an emotional and/or a sexual manner with at least one person other than one's partner. The rules might differ for different couples, but there are some fundamental rules that are often unspoken and are typical expectations of most committed relationships. When it comes to Internet infidelity, the Internet might be the exclusive, main, or partial space where the inappropriate emotional or sexual interactions take place.

UNFAITHFUL ACTS THAT TAKE PLACE ONLINE

As with offline infidelity, the types of behaviors that are considered unfaithful online are classified as either emotional or sexual. However, we need to be mindful that there is a range of sexual and emotional activities that one can engage in and that not all of these are necessarily considered to be unfaithful by all individuals.

Cybersex is one of the sexual acts that can be conducted online. Cybersex is generally understood to be involving "two online users engaging in private discourse about sexual fantasies. The dialogue is typically accompanied by sexual self-stimulation" (Young et al., 2000, p. 60). Another similar definition is that cybersex is "obtaining sexual gratification whilst interacting with another person online" (Whitty, 2003b, p. 573). Of course this does not need to be limited to two individuals. Previous research has consistently found this to be understood as an act of infidelity (Mileham, 2007; Parker & Wampler, 2003; Whitty, 2003b, 2005). This is not limited to studies that ask participants if they would be upset if they learned their partner was engaging in such activities. Mileham (2007), for example, interviewed 76 men and 10 women whom she had recruited from Yahoo!'s Married and Flirting and MSN's Married but Flirting chat rooms. Married people inhabit these sites and engage in cyber-flirting and cybersex and sometimes organize to meet offline. She found that some of these participants acknowledged that online activities could be perceived as unfaithful.

Another type of sexual act online that is considered infidelity is hot chatting (Whitty, 2003b). Durkin and Bryant (1995) have defined hot chatting as a kind of erotic talk that moves beyond lighthearted flirting. Parker and Wampler (2003) have found a range of other online sexual interactions that participants believed to be unfaithful, including interacting in adult chat rooms and becoming a member of an adult web site.

Interestingly, research is fairly consistent on whether pornography is considered unfaithful. While partners are typically unhappy to learn that their

partner is being aroused by viewing pornography, in the main, viewing pornography online or offline is considered by few to be an act of infidelity (Whitty, 2003b). Parker and Wampler (2003) found that visiting adult chat rooms but not interacting, and visiting various adult web sites were also not considered to be relationship transgressions. Perhaps this has something to do with the passiveness of the act, where one is simply watching another rather than interacting with another. Moreover, there is no real possibility of this leading to any interactions with the person being watched.

Although the research is fairly consistent about the view that sexual acts such as cybersex and hot chatting are unfaithful, it is still important to question why this is the case. In previous research I have considered this question and drawn from research on offline infidelity to speculate a potential explanation (Whitty, 2003b, 2005). This research has found that "mental exclusivity" is as important as "sexual exclusivity" (Yarab & Allgeier, 1998). Roscoe, Cavanaugh, and Kennedy (1988) found that undergraduates believed that engaging in sexual interactions such as kissing, flirting, and petting with someone else other than their partner ought to be considered unfaithful. Moreover, Yarab, Sensibaugh, and Allgeier (1998) revealed an array of unfaithful sexual behaviors in addition to sexual intercourse, including passionately kissing, sexual fantasies, sexual attraction, and flirting. Interestingly, Yarab and Allgeier (1998) found that when considering sexual fantasies, the greater the threat of the sexual fantasy to the current relationship, the more likely the fantasy was to be rated as unfaithful. For instance, fantasizing about a partner's best friend was considered by most to be a greater threat, and therefore more unfaithful, than fantasizing about a movie star. Returning to the question posed earlier, the empirical research outlined here suggests that it is the sexual desire for another that is the act of betrayal. Hence, displays of that sexual desire as well as fantasizing about the object of one's desire can be upsetting for one's spouse. But this desire needs to be seen as potentially mutual. Therefore, if I have sexual fantasies about Brad Pitt or a male gigolo, then my partner is far less likely to be concerned than if I fantasize about having sex with his best friend or a stranger I have cybersex with online. Of course, not all sexual activities are deemed as equally upsetting. In my previous research, for example, it was found that sexual intercourse was rated slightly higher as an act of infidelity than cybersex (Whitty, 2003b). Hence, penetrative sex might be seen as a *fait accompli* and therefore more upsetting than other sexual activities.

Emotional infidelity can be just as upsetting a form of betrayal as sexual infidelity. Emotional infidelity is understood in the main to be falling in love with another person. It can also be understood as inappropriate emotional closeness with another, such as the sharing of intimate secrets. Emotional infidelity has been seen to be equally upsetting whether it takes place online or offline (Whitty, 2003b). In my previous work, where participants performed a story completion task, I found that emotional infidelity was expressed in the

stories as much as sexual infidelity (Whitty, 2005). This is clearly illustrated in the following extract from this study:

"It is cheating," she said rather calmly.

"No, I'm not cheating. It's not like I'm bonking her anyway. You're the one I'm with and, like I said, I have *NO* intentions of meeting her." He hopped into bed.

"It's 'emotional' cheating," she said, getting annoyed.

"How so?" he asked, amusement showing in his eyes.

"Cheating isn't necessarily physical. That's one side of it. . . ." He pulled the sheets over himself and rolled over. "Well . . . I know you have not met her *yet*, that's why, but I'm still a little annoyed, Mark." She sat on the edge of the bed.

"Don't be mad. You're the one I love. So *how* is it emotional cheating?" He sat up.

"You're keeping stuff from me. Relationships are about trust! How can I trust you if you keep stuff from me about the 'Internet girl'?" (pp. 62–63)

INFIDELITY DATING SITES

As already highlighted, there are many different ways people can cheat on their partners in cyberspace. However, we also need to be mindful that the Internet can be used as a tool to locate someone with whom to conduct an offline affair. Online infidelity matchmaking sites are good examples of spaces where individuals can meet to find someone with whom to have an affair offline (either an ongoing affair or a one-night stand). These sites look and operate similarly to the sites set up for singles to meet partners. Of course, traditional online dating sites have also been used to locate others with whom to have one-night stands or ongoing affairs, but when they are, the persons seeking out the affairs are typically deceptive about their marital status. The infidelity online dating sites do not try to disguise the agenda of the site. For example, Marital Affair (n.d.) states that the site delivers "an online dating service for married and single people looking to increase activity in their private lifestyles with uncomplicated adult fun." The Ashley Madison Agency (n.d.), which claims to be the world's premier discreet dating service, has the slogan "Life is short, have an affair." The site Meet2cheat (n.d.) states that "since 1998, we have dedicated ourselves to the professional, serious and discrete facilitation of erotic adventures of all kinds on a national and international basis. Our experience and widely known service enable you to live out your fantasies in a fully uncomplicated way."

In a thematic analysis, I have compared the profiles of an infidelity dating site with a more generic online dating site (Whitty, 2008b). Some interesting similarities between the sites were that it was typical for individuals to include a list of their hobbies and interests, a shopping list of qualities they were

looking for in another, and a statement that they were honest and genuine people. This is an example of a statement of honesty from one of the profiles on the infidelity dating site:

I don't play games with people's emotions or lives. You're looking at the most realistic person who's searching for friendship and a possible future lover and soulmate.

An interesting difference was the obvious lack of photographs and the plea for secrecy. For example, one of the profiles on the infidelity site stated:

Not looking for any strings other than those that being a good pal bring along. I am not interested in any boat rocking and discretion is a priority.

Those on the infidelity site were also much more likely to state that they were willing to travel for their date. As one wrote:

Travel for work and away from home a lot, so anyone in the London, Surrey, or southeast, or anywhere else for that matter, who would like to get in touch, please do.

The emphasis on a good sexual relationship was more evident on the infidelity profiles. For example:

PLEASE TAKE TIME TO READ MY PROFILE. first thing i am not a hunk . . . but i am a funny guy AND I WILL MAKE YOU LAUGH PROMISED!! I AM ALSO GOOD IN BED . . . i am missing one of the best parts SEX, my marriage is a shamble (my wife is not interested in any part of it and has not been for a long time we are only together for financial reasons). i have got a very high sex drive i'd like to find a woman 35/60 (looks unimportant) who likes sex and laughter.

Finally, an unexpected finding was the emphasis on a number of the infidelity profiles that they were moral individuals. As one person writes:

Morals? How did that end up on here? Ok, we can still do what we're doing but take the moral high ground on others?!?! It's just a positioning exercise.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Social networking sites are another place that individuals could potentially locate others to have an affair with. These potential others could already be known to that person. For instance, a social networking site might be used to initiate flirtation with or learn more about a person than what they would typically self-disclose face-to-face (FtF). This might instill enough confidence in an individual to initiate an affair with another. In a brief report, Muise,

Christofides, and Desmarais (2009) found a significant relationship between the amount of time spent on Facebook and jealousy-related feelings experienced on Facebook. They found that it was the ambiguity in communication between a partner and one of the ex-partners that was more likely to trigger jealousy. One of their participants expressed this ambiguity as: "I have enough confidence in her [his partner] to know my partner is faithful, yet I can't help but second-guess myself when someone posts on her wall. . . . It can contribute to feelings of you not really 'knowing' your partner" (p. 443). While the authors did not consider this, it may well be that this jealousy has some rational basis. The Internet has made it much easier for ex-partners and past lovers to reconnect, whereas previously the past relationship typically remained as part of one's history. Social networking sites allow one to reconnect. These places are often perceived to be private even though they are in a public space (Whitty & Joinson, 2009); consequently, more information could be revealed to others than would typically have been made known formerly.

USING THE INTERNET TO INITIATE AND FACILITATE AN OFFLINE AFFAIR

Much of the early research on Internet infidelity either assumed or found that many of these unfaithful activities were initiated between strangers. This obviously still takes place, and the online infidelity sites are a good example of this. However, as already considered with social networking sites, affairs these days can initiate online, even when the individuals know one another offline. Moreover, it could be argued that digital technologies have made it easier for affairs to take place offline. Instant Messenger might be used for erotic talk, and subtle text messages can be sent to organize a quick meeting. All this communication can easily take place in the home where one's spouse is present. So it is important to note that digital technologies have changed the nature of even more traditional offline affairs.

IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES UNTIL SOMEONE LOSES A MARRIAGE

Morris (2008) reported the story of an English couple who divorced because of the husband's alter ego hot chatting with another woman in *Second Life*. *Second Life* is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) where individuals create their own avatars (persona) and interact in a fantasy world. Morris wrote that the couple initially met online, after which their avatars become partners in *Second Life*—that is, until Taylor (aka Laura Skye in *Second Life*) caught her husband, Pollard (aka Dave Barmy in *Second Life*) having cybersex with a prostitute in *Second Life*. As Morris reports:

Horried, Taylor ended the online relationship between Skye and Barmy but stayed with Pollard in real life.

It was then that fact and fiction really began to collide. Taylor decided to test Dave Barmy—and thus Pollard’s loyalty—by turning to a virtual female private eye called Markie Macdonald. A “honey trap” was set up in which an alluring avatar chatted Barmy up. He passed the test with flying colors, talking about Laura Skye all night. Barmy and Skye got back together in cyberspace, marrying in a ceremony held in a pretty tropical grove. In real life at their flat in Cornwall, Taylor wept as she watched the service, and in 2005—real life again—the couple married in the less glamorous surroundings of the St. Austell registry office. But Taylor sensed something was wrong and eventually found Dave Barmy chatting affectionately to a woman who was not Laura Skye. She found it even more disturbing than his earlier tryst, as there seemed genuine affection in it and—in real life—she filed for divorce.

Although Taylor obviously believed that her husband had cheated on her, we still need to consider whether the majority of people would see things in the same light. In her case the two lived intense lives together in a fantasy world (considered to be a game). Perhaps Taylor found it difficult to separate play from reality. Research has yet to determine whether there are some activities online that are considered to be confined to the realm of play and hence do not impact on real life. However, it would seem to be an important question to investigate.

THERAPEUTIC IMPLICATIONS

Numerous treatment approaches have been developed to assist individuals and couples affected by Internet infidelity. In a thorough review of therapists’ assessment and treatment of Internet infidelity, Hertlein and Piercy (2008) pointed out a variety of approaches by both male and female therapists. Therapists’ treatment varied depending on their age, gender, and religiosity. Importantly, Hertlein and Piercy stated:

The spectrum of Internet infidelity can include a wide variety of behaviors. On one end of the spectrum may be spending time on the computer rather than one’s primary relationship, while at the other end may be the physical meeting and subsequent intercourse of two people who met online. Some behaviors that are considered infidelity by one couple may not be considered infidelity or problematic by another couple. (p. 491)

As this chapter highlights, digital technologies can be used in numerous ways to initiate, conduct, and facilitate infidelities. What is unique about online infidelities is the greater potential for online affairs to become more idealized. Moreover, the rules of what is a relationship transgression are less clear with regard to some online behavior. While individuals might be equally upset by sexual activities conducted online versus offline, Whitty and Quigley (2008) argue that cybersex is nonetheless qualitatively different from sexual intercourse and these different understandings need further investigation.

Where the infidelity takes place is also unique. Its being conducted in one's own home, for instance, could arguably have quite a different impact on a relationship, especially with regard to reestablishing trust.

Gender differences have been found for why people cheat as well as which type of infidelity is more upsetting. Parker and Wampler's 2003 study, which considered sexual online activities, found that women viewed these activities more seriously than did men. My own study found that women overall were more likely to believe that sexual acts were an act of betrayal than were men (Whitty, 2003b). Although more research is needed to investigate gender differences, the available research suggests that any treatment rationale should be mindful of these differences.

This chapter has highlighted the range of ways individuals can utilize digital technologies to conduct affairs; however, we also need to be aware of the range of ways individuals can be caught out via digital technologies. Partners could check their spouses' text messages or IM history if they are suspicious of any infidelities. There are numerous software packages available that monitor and record other people's PC activity, including viewing and recording people's e-mails, chat messages, and web sites visited, as well as the monitoring and recording of keystrokes, and even individuals' passwords. Spytch online (n.d.) advertises its spy software as a way to catch out one's cheating spouse:

Our monitoring software can quickly detect and give you the evidence you need to prove that your spouse is remaining faithful to you—or cheating on you. Our spy software tools, such as SpyAgent and Realtime-Spy, can operate in total stealth—defeating the built-in Windows task manager and popular spyware detection tools. These abilities mean you will not have to worry about your spouse discovering you are monitoring them—and even if you inform them they will still not be able to tell how. Logs can even be stored in an encrypted format, so they can only be viewed with our software.

The question for suspicious partners is whether they should utilize digital technologies to check on their spouse if they are suspicious. Previous research has found that how an infidelity is revealed has important implications for the future of the relationship. Afifi, Falato, and Weiner (2001) found that unsolicited partner disclosure was beneficial because it allowed the transgressor full opportunity to apologize, provide accounts, and employ repair strategies. Unsolicited third-party discovery and red-handed discovery gave far less opportunity for relationship repair. Although more research is needed on the discovery of infidelities, Afifi et al.'s research suggests that employing digital technologies to spy on one's partner is not the best solution if the couple hopes to repair the relationship.

Discovery is not the only issue that is important to consider with regard to relationship repair after an infidelity is revealed. As with any relationship transgression, the reasons why it happened in the first place need to be

considered. How blame is portioned as well as how trust is reestablished also need to be addressed. With regard to Internet infidelity, it has been argued that the computer itself is at times blamed, and computers are sometimes taken out of the home (Whitty & Carr, 2005, 2006). While this approach might have been effective in earlier days, these days, with the ubiquity and easy access of the Internet, such a strategy is almost impossible to employ. New treatment approaches, therefore, need to consider the evolving nature of the Internet and how best to cope with it in the lives of spouses who have been affected by Internet infidelity.

CONCLUSION

There is much we still need to learn about Internet infidelity. Moreover, we need to be constantly aware of the changing nature of the Internet. Web 2.0 has brought about a much more interactive Internet (using applications to increase interactivity), and it will continue to develop in more sophisticated ways. Social networking sites and the applications on mobile phones are good examples of how the Web has changed to be more interactive. This form of Web is more social and hence could result in more infidelities. However, on the other side of the coin, this new technology allows one to check up on and monitor one's partner more than ever before. The question for therapists to consider is whether such monitoring is a psychologically healthy activity (especially given that it is symbolic of a lack of trust). Although this chapter has focused on the issue of Internet infidelities, because of the ubiquity of cyberspace the nature of any form of infidelity needs to be completely reexamined. Affairs are potentially easy to initiate and maintain because of digital technologies, and these technologies must surely play a significant role in most forms of infidelity.

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