

ASSIMILATION & ACCOMMODATION: COGNITIVE PROCESSES FACILITATING
POSTTRAUMATIC GROWTH AND DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

by

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ABSTRACT

VICTORIA LOUISE O'CONNOR. *Assimilation & Accommodation: Cognitive Processes Facilitating Posttraumatic Growth and Depreciation After Infidelity.* (Under the direction of DR. JENNIFER LANGHINRICHSEN-ROHLING)

This study aimed to integrate elements of Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) into the developmental pathway theorized to underlie posttraumatic growth (PTG). PTG theory posits that positive psychological changes can result from the struggle to resolve traumatic experiences. This growth develops through a specific process beginning when a traumatic event violates a person's core beliefs, or their conceptualization of the world as safe and trustworthy. Violated core beliefs lead to intrusive and then deliberate rumination. Failure to progress from intrusive rumination to deliberate rumination leads to depreciation, or becoming stuck in the traumatic experience. However, empirical investigations of PTG and depreciation have mixed results regarding the extent to which violated core beliefs predict depreciation. This gap suggests an additional route to depreciation exists that is not currently captured by PTG theory. Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) offers a possible solution. CPT posits that two cognitive outcomes can occur after traumatic experiences: positive core beliefs can be violated or negative core beliefs can be confirmed. Confirmed core beliefs, called assimilated core beliefs, may offer an additional pathway to depreciation. This dissertation examines a dual-outcome model integrating assimilated beliefs into the PTG pathway using structural equation modeling, a statistical technique that is novel to the PTG line of work.

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The proposed model was tested among betrayed partners of infidelity. These betrayed partners reported high rates of traumatization and posttraumatic stress symptoms. Prior to model testing, a measure was developed to assess assimilated beliefs after trauma. The Assimilated Beliefs Inventory is presented as a valid and reliable tool. Then, results from model testing indicated that the trauma of infidelity leads to both accommodated and assimilated core beliefs, as expected. Further modeling indicated that accommodated beliefs can lead to both PTG and depreciation while assimilated beliefs only lead to depreciation. These findings indicate that the only route to PTG is through accommodated beliefs. Following this logic, betrayed partners may benefit when clinicians use techniques (e.g., Socratic Questioning) intended to violate core beliefs that were confirmed by their infidelity experience. The remaining model testing indicated that the trajectory toward PTG and depreciation is more complicated than previously considered. Specifically, intrusive and deliberate rumination, which have previously been conceptualized as distinct stages, appear to instead be a reciprocal, bi-directional process. Future research should continue to investigate the PTG pathway, with particular attention on the roles of intrusive and deliberate rumination. Additional implications for research and clinical work are discussed.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The process of completing this dissertation has been both challenging and growth inspiring. I have been challenged to grow in the areas of statistical analysis and written communication as I have worked toward integrating these two theories that I greatly respect. Throughout this experience, I have appreciated the opportunity to grow in my identity as a scientist-practitioner. This growth has been supported by numerous people.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Infidelity is common in romantic relationships, with 20-40% of currently married couples (Marín et al., 2014) and 65-75% of unmarried emerging adults (Shackelford et al., 2000) reporting experiences of infidelity. However, the true prevalence of infidelity experience is likely unknown as studies examining the prevalence of infidelity define and measure infidelity inconsistently. Some studies focus only on infidelity that involves sexual intercourse (Utley, 2017). Other studies ask participants to self-identify as a betrayed partner and describe their infidelity experience (O'Connor & Canevello, 2019), focusing more on participants' perceptions of betrayal. Additionally, studies examining infidelity typically focus on one relationship type, with most focusing on infidelity in married heterosexual relationships and considerably fewer focusing on dating relationships or non-heterosexual couples (Gordon et al., 2004; Sauerheber & Disque, 2016; Scuka, 2015). For many betrayed partners, whether married or not, the experience of infidelity has a lasting impact.

After infidelity, betrayed partners can experience symptoms of depression, grief, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress symptoms (Gordon et al., 2004; Gordon & Baucom, 1998; Hall & Fincham, 2006; Roos et al., 2019; Spring & Spring, 1996). Though infidelity does not meet criteria for a traumatic event according to the current version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013), 42% of infidelity victims report posttraumatic stress symptoms at a level that is consistent with a diagnosis of PTSD up to five

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years after the infidelity (Roos et al., 2019). For a review of trauma and posttraumatic stress symptoms, see Appendix A.

This empirical finding that infidelity leads to high rates of posttraumatic stress symptoms supports clinical approaches that conceptualize and treat issues of infidelity in marital therapy as if the infidelity were a trauma (Gordon et al., 2004; Gordon & Baucom, 1998; Hall & Fincham, 2006). These clinicians and scholars consider trauma to be an event that is physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and has lasting adverse consequences (SAMHSA, 2014), which is often the case with infidelity (Gordon et al., 2008; Scuka, 2015). The conceptualization that infidelity functions similarly to a traumatic event implies that victims of infidelity may be at risk for experiencing the various outcomes typically associated with traumatization. Most outcomes associated with traumatization have been negative including higher rates of mental health symptoms (Shackelford et al., 2000; Soberg et al., 2010), substance use (Kim et al., 2010), and other unhealthy coping strategies such as risky sexual behavior (Messman-Moore et al., 2010) and reckless behavior (Blevins et al., 2016). However, the field of positive psychology has explored positive outcomes, that are largely cognitive in nature, which can also occur after experiences that are stressful and traumatic (Linley & Joseph, 2004). One of these cognitively-based outcomes is posttraumatic growth (PTG; Nelson, 2011; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). However, little research has focused on understanding the trajectory of positive outcomes or the trajectory of growth development after infidelity.

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This project explores this gap in the literature by incorporating PTG (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) and cognitive trauma theories (Iverson et al., 2015; Resick & Schnicke, 1992; Resicke & Schnicke, 1990) into the study of infidelity. To highlight the logic of the current study, this dissertation will review the conceptual understanding of PTG, then review the logic under girding CPT, and then propose and test a model integrating the two theories. Finally, three factors that are likely to facilitate positive outcomes after infidelity are discussed as possible moderators of the proposed model. They are cognitive defusion, need for affect, and need for cognition. First, an explanation of why early adulthood is the ideal sample for the study of infidelity is addressed.

Infidelity in Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood is defined as a period of identity development and exploration ranging from 18 to 25 years of age (Arnett, 2000). During this time, infidelity is common (Shackelford et al., 2000). This is likely because many emerging adults are having their first intimate relationships, which may range from casual to serious on level of commitment (Arnett, 2000). Although the value of commitment varies from one individual to another, emerging adults tend to value monogamy increasingly more as they progress through this stage of development (Schmookler & Bursik, 2007; Wilkins & Dalessandro, 2013). Unfortunately, partners may developmentally progress at different rates, causing a values mismatch. This discordance may manifest as one partner placing a higher value on monogamy than the other partner. When infidelity occurs, individuals who greatly value monogamy may be at risk for negative outcomes because their core beliefs and values are

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violated by their partner's betrayal. Furthering the chances of negative outcomes, emerging adults are likely to be less skilled at communicating with their relationship partners, due to their lack of experience with romantic relationships (Arnett, 2000). Therefore, emerging adults may not communicate effectively about their relationship expectations, including expectations of monogamy (Willoughby & Arnett, 2013).

For these two reasons (changing expectations across time and ineffective communication about expectations), emerging adulthood may be a time when infidelity causes a very wide variety of reactions. Thus, great variability in responses to infidelity can be anticipated among emerging adults. Emerging adults who view their relationship as less serious may be unlikely to experience trauma-consistent consequences when partners are unfaithful, but those who view their relationship as more serious and committed (and thus more similar to a marital relationship) may be more at risk for experiencing trauma-consistent consequences as a result of their partner's infidelity. Ultimately, the wide variety of expected responses makes emerging adults an ideal sample to examine reactions to infidelity, particularly for a proof of concept study such as the following proposed model.

Posttraumatic Growth Theory

While a majority of the trauma literature has centered on the negative sequelae of traumatic experiences, the field of positive psychology has focused on positive cognitively-based changes that can occur when people experience traumatic events (Linley & Joseph, 2004; Vázquez, 2013). These positive changes have been referred to in the literature under a variety of different constructs

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including stress related growth (Park et al., 1996), meaning making (Larner & Blow, 2011), and posttraumatic growth (PTG; Nelson, 2011; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

The PTG line of work has been the most empirically based and comprehensive (Cann et al., 2010; Kunst et al., 2010; Lahav et al., 2019; Nelson, 2011); thus, this project will use the term PTG to describe positive psychological changes that can occur as a result of traumatic events.

PTG is conceptualized as the outcome of constructively processing, or drawing meaning, from a traumatic event; PTG has been observed to occur after infidelity (Heintzelman et al., 2014; Laaser et al., 2017; O'Connor & Canevello, 2019). It is measured across five distinct areas: personal strength, appreciation of life, relating to others, spirituality, and new opportunities (Baker et al., 2008, Tedeschi & Moore, 2020). PTG is associated with better outcomes as it implies that the person has drawn meaning from their traumatic experience and has incorporated that meaning into their interactions with the world around them (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2014; Cann et al., 2010). The process of drawing and incorporating meaning leads to PTG through a very specific cognitively-based process (Cann et al., 2011; Nelson, 2011; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

The PTG literature details the well-validated trajectory of growth development following traumatic events (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2014; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Tedeschi & Moore, 2020). The first step toward PTG, and the primary assumption of PTG theory, is that traumatic events have the propensity to violate victims' core beliefs, or their understanding of the world around them (Cann et al., 2010; Janoff-Bulman, 1989). When core beliefs are violated, victims then move

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through specific stages of rumination with the purpose of rebuilding their violated worldview (Cann et al., 2011; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). The first stage is intrusive rumination, or irrepressible frequent thinking about the traumatic event and the violated beliefs (Cann et al., 2011). Eventually, intrusive rumination turns into deliberate rumination as the victim attempts to purposefully process their experience and “put the pieces back together” of their violated worldview (Tedeschi et al., 1998). The way in which this deliberate rumination occurs leads to growth in the domains of PTG (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2014; Frazier et al., 2017).

In recent years, PTG researchers have added a new construct to their line of work: posttraumatic depreciation. Depreciation is defined as feeling stuck in the aftermath of the trauma (Baker et al., 2008; Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013; Cann et al., 2010; Zięba et al., 2019). Depreciation was originally conceptualized as becoming stuck in the trajectory toward PTG, essentially becoming stuck in the intrusive rumination stage and unable to deliberately ruminate. However, this conceptualization is unproven, as empirical findings have not found support of this pathway leading to depreciation (Baker et al., 2008; Zięba et al., 2019). Specifically, core beliefs violation has been found to inconsistently predict depreciation (Baker et al., 2008; Cann et al., 2010). This inconsistency suggests that not all individuals who experience depreciation as a result of their trauma also experienced violated worldviews. If victims who report depreciation after trauma are not consistently reporting violated core beliefs, the field is left to question what leads these individuals to develop depreciation. This inconsistency suggests that some unidentified process is occurring that leads to the development of depreciation.

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Luckily, a look at the clinical literature, specifically treatment for trauma, may help in understanding this inconsistency.

Cognitive Processing Theory

Cognitive theories of trauma posit that the recovery process from traumatic events is a cognitively based occurrence (Chard, 2005; Foa et al., 1989; Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Park et al., 2012). Therefore, many clinical models of trauma recovery focus on processing the cognitions, or thoughts and beliefs, that maintain distress and promote engagement in the maladaptive behaviors associated with traumatization (Galovski et al., 2012; Resick & Schnicke, 1993; Resicke & Schnicke, 1990; Varra & Follette, 2004). One of the most valid and reliable treatments for facilitating trauma recovery is Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT, Resick & Schnicke, 1990; Resick & Schnicke, 1993). CPT is an effective treatment for a wide variety of traumatic events (APA, 2013). It was initially developed for the purpose of treating victims of rape but was quickly deemed effective for treating combat veterans suffering from combat-related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Now, CPT is one of the three gold star treatments offered at Veteran's Affairs clinics across the country. CPT begins by identifying the way in which the traumatic event changed or confirmed the victim's existing beliefs about themselves and the world around them before going on to help the victim develop balanced beliefs about themselves, the world around them, and the traumatic event itself (Sobel et al., 2009).

As one of the most widely respected treatment options for trauma recovery (Monson et al., 2006; Resick et al., 2002), CPT may offer an answer to the question

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regarding the process and development of depreciation. CPT proposes two distinct options that can occur after traumatic events with regard to beliefs about the self and the world (Monson et al., 2006; Resick & Schnicke, 1990). The first option is accommodation of violated core beliefs, which occurs when core beliefs are violated or proven wrong by traumatic experiences and must ultimately be changed (Iverson et al., 2015; Resick & Schnicke, 1990; Resick & Schnicke, 1993). These previously held core beliefs that are at risk of being violated are likely to be overly positive, such as “justice is always served” (Monson et al., 2006; Wachen et al., 2016). Accommodation of violated beliefs is congruent with the stage of violated core beliefs proposed by PTG. For both, beliefs that the individual held prior to the trauma are violated by the occurrence of the traumatic event (Iverson et al., 2015; Resick & Schnicke, 1992; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). The second option is assimilation of core beliefs, which occurs when the trauma confirms beliefs that the person already held (Iverson et al., 2015). These beliefs that are likely to be confirmed by a traumatic event are likely to be more negative in nature, such as “I deserve for bad things to happen to me.” In this instance, there is no violation and no need for rumination because the trauma simply confirmed an existing belief. Currently, PTG does not account for the possibility of this second option. It is possible that traumatic events that confirm previously held negative beliefs are more likely to lead to depreciation because they do not lead to the rumination process and do not require the “putting back together” of the violated world view.

The Proposed Model

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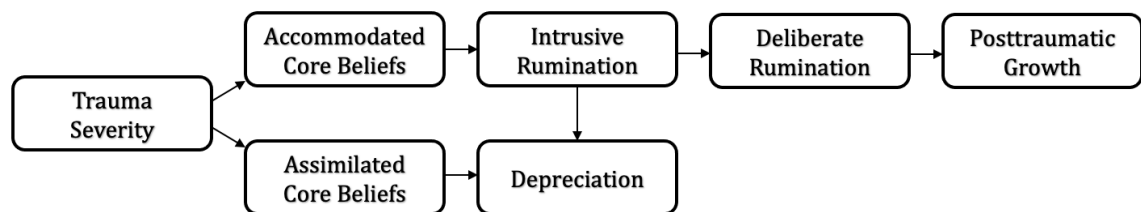
The first aim of this project was to explore the proposed model that integrates PTG (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2014; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) and CPT (Resick & Schnicke, 1991; Resick & Schnicke, 1993). Specifically, this project was designed to test a cognitively-based trajectory that can lead to PTG or depreciation after infidelity. The model, displayed below in Figure 1, begins with trauma severity because events that are experienced as more traumatic are more likely to lead to trauma-consistent outcomes while events that are not experienced as highly traumatic are unlikely to lead to trauma-consistent outcomes (Aaron et al., 1997; Paksarian et al., 2014). Individuals who report their infidelity as more traumatic are expected to report greater violation of core beliefs (that were previously positive) and/or increased assimilation of core beliefs (that were previously negative).

Betrayed partners of infidelity who report greater violation of core beliefs are then expected to report intrusive rumination because it is the next step in the process toward PTG (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Intrusive rumination is then expected to be associated with two distinct outcomes: deliberate rumination and depreciation (Baker et al., 2008; Cann et al., 2010). Depreciation was originally conceptualized as becoming stuck in intrusive rumination, essentially being unable to constructively put the pieces back together of the violated worldview (Cann et al., 2010). Thus, it is expected that some individuals will become stuck in their intrusive rumination and develop depreciation (high levels of intrusive rumination without deliberative rumination) while others will move on to the constructive stage of deliberate rumination. The presence of greater deliberate rumination is then expected to predict PTG (Cann et al., 2011; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

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Assimilation of core beliefs, on the other hand, is expected to directly predict depreciation as articulated by CPT (Resick & Schnicke, 1991, Resick & Schnicke, 1993). Therefore, two potential routes to developing depreciation are proposed. The first route occurs when traumatic events support negative beliefs that the person already had (Cann et al., 2010; Janoff-Bulman, 1989). The second route occurs when individuals are unable to transition from intrusive to deliberate rumination when their core beliefs are violated by traumatic events (Resick & Schnicke, 1991; Resick & Schnicke, 1993).

Figure 1.



Critical Analysis of Related Studies

There are a number of articles within the PTG and infidelity literatures that are particularly relevant to the current project. PTG has been the focus of significant research across the past twenty-five years. Specifically, PTG has been considered as a potential outcome post infidelity in a few current studies. For example, Heintzelman and colleagues (2014) found that betrayed partners of infidelity report PTG. Specifically, they focused on the association between PTG and forgiveness among married couples attempting to recover from infidelity through therapy (Heintzelman et al., 2014). They found that forgiveness and PTG were significantly correlated for betrayed partners attempting to repair their relationship with their

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unfaithful partner (Heintzelman et al., 2014). However, they did not measure the process of PTG development. Because their sample focused on couples attempting to repair their relationship after infidelity, their findings suggest that PTG occurs for betrayed partners attempting to maintain a relationship with their unfaithful partner. This work does not consider these processes in couples who are not seeking help for their marriage and may also not generalize to couples who break up after infidelity. A few years later, Laaser and colleagues (2017) considered the prevalence of PTG after infidelity in a sample of 202 college students. They found that time since the betrayal predicted the amount of PTG that betrayed partners report, with greater time yielding higher levels of reported PTG (Laaser et al., 2017). However, they only included female participants in their sample. These authors also failed to consider what else might predict the development of PTG. Only one identified study has examined the process of PTG after infidelity (O'Connor & Canevello, 2019). By the author of this dissertation, this study replicated the PTG process in a sample of 200 males and females that reported infidelity within the past year. While this study found support for the pathway leading to PTG, this study did not examine depreciation.

The incorporation of depreciation into empirical analysis has been lacking, which is likely due to the more recent development of the construct. Existing depreciation studies have typically focused on functioning after natural disaster events like tsunamis and earthquakes (Kunz et al., 2017; E. M. Marshall et al., 2015; Michélsen et al., 2017). These studies have established the presence of depreciation as an outcome but did not explore a developmental pathway or predictors of

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depreciation. Three additional studies conducted by the PTG Research Group at University of North Carolina – Charlotte (UNCC) have explored the relationship between PTG and depreciation. Baker and colleagues (2008) initially introduced the construct of depreciation as a companion to PTG and as an additional outcome of the PTG process. Specifically, they found that PTG and depreciation were uncorrelated ($r(284) = .05, p = .38$) when measured in a sample of 286 undergraduate students. In this process, they established a validated measurement tool for capturing both PTG and depreciation (Baker et al., 2008). Most recently, this measurement tool was updated (PTGDI-X, Taku et al., 2021) and validated internationally. However, neither scale development study measured the developmental processes leading to either outcome. Only one study has examined this process. In a sample of 118 students, the same research group reported that some components of the PTG process predict depreciation (Cann et al., 2010). Specifically, they found that intrusive rumination predicts depreciation while deliberate rumination predicts PTG. However, they only used simultaneous regression analysis to predict PTG and depreciation and did not test the full developmental pathway that is known to predict PTG (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2014; O'Connor & Canevello, 2019). Moreover, none of these studies examined PTG and depreciation after an interpersonal trauma like infidelity.

Facilitating Deliberate Rumination

Despite the popularity of PTG research in recent decades, many specific components of the PTG process have not been fully explored. Of particular interest is the differentiation between the development of PTG and depreciation due to

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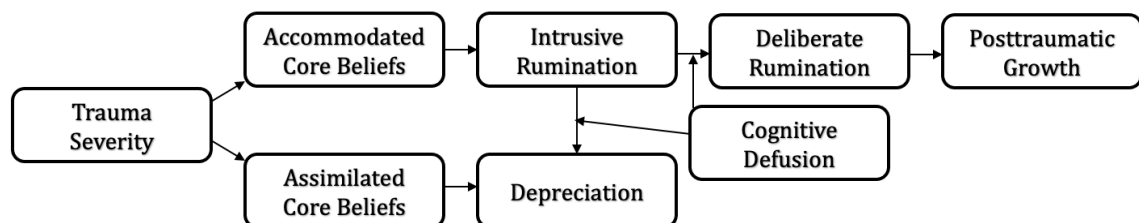
factors at the individual-level. On the accommodation of core beliefs level of the model, the progression forward from intrusive rumination is the turning point that distinguishes between individuals who move toward deliberate rumination, continuing on the growth trajectory, and individuals who instead develop depreciation, remaining stuck in their trauma. Thus, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to each possible outcome when an individual experiences intrusive rumination. Because the processes under investigation are cognitively based, it is likely that cognitive variables at the individual level moderate the trajectories in question, or the transition forward from intrusive rumination to either deliberate rumination or depreciation. Three variables of interest, and proposed moderators of this relationship in the current study, are cognitive defusion, need for affect, and need for cognition.

Cognitive defusion is defined as the ability to achieve psychological distance from internal experiences such as thoughts and feelings (Forman et al., 2012). Defusion is a practiced skill in third wave cognitive behavioral therapies such as acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT, Hayes et al., 2006) and involves separating from thoughts and memories, holding on to them lightly as subjective experiences rather than as truth-based interpretations of reality (Blackledge, 2007; Harris, 2019; Larsson et al., 2016). Individuals who are able to defuse from their traumatic experiences may be more likely to engage in deliberate rumination because they are able to separate their observing self from the pain of their experience while attending to their thoughts and beliefs surrounding the event. By engaging in defusion, these individuals are able to approach situations they might

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normally avoid (Varra & Follette, 2004) or cognitively process traumas they might otherwise avoid thinking about. Thus, defusion may be a key factor in the ability to engage in deliberate rumination after painful events such as infidelity and is expected to moderate the relationship between intrusive rumination and deliberate rumination and the relationship between intrusive rumination and depreciation, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2.



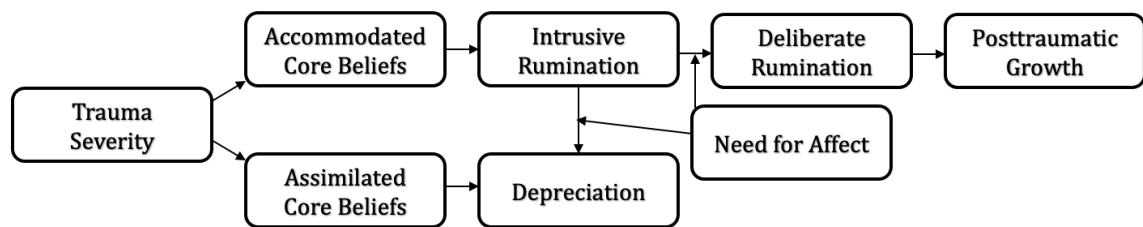
Another individual difference variable that may facilitate the development of deliberate rumination is need for affect. Need for affect accounts for individual differences in the tendency to approach or avoid emotion-inducing events and activities (Maio & Esses, 2001). Essentially, need for affect measures the individual's internal, or intrinsic, motivation to engage in behaviors that are emotionally salient (Appel et al., 2012). Individuals who are higher on need for affect are more likely to approach emotion-inducing situations (positive and negative), even enjoying these experiences, while individuals who are low on need for affect are more likely to avoid emotion-inducing situations (Appel et al., 2012).

Deliberately ruminating about previous traumas is an emotional experience (Deville, 2004; Devilly & Spence, 1999). Thus, individuals who are more likely to avoid emotion (those who are low on need for affect) may be less likely to move into

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the deliberate rumination stage of the process. These individuals are likely to stay in the intrusive stage of the model and develop depreciation because they are motivated to avoid the emotion that comes along with processing their traumatic experience. Figure 3 details the proposed model in which need for affect moderates the relationship between intrusive and deliberate rumination and the relationship between intrusive rumination and depreciation. Individuals lower in need for affect are expected to report less deliberate rumination and greater depreciation post infidelity.

Figure 3.

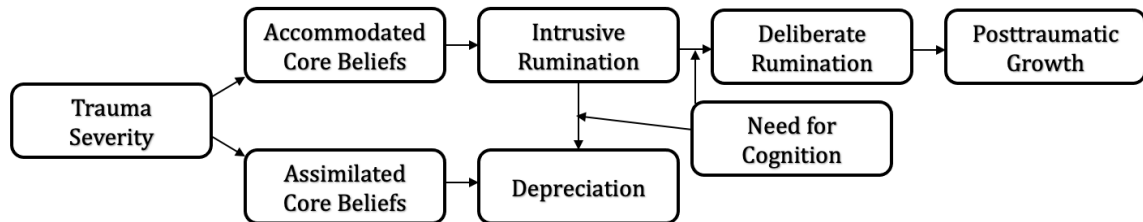


Similar to need for affect described above, need for cognition is also expected to facilitate the transition from intrusive to deliberate rumination. Need for cognition is defined as the motivation to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive activity (Cacioppo et al., 1984; Lord & Putrevu, 2006). Deliberate rumination is a cognitive task, requiring cognitive effort to complete (Cann et al., 2011). Therefore, it is likely that individuals who have a higher need for cognition will be more likely to engage in deliberate rumination in a way that facilitates their PTG. These individuals are not expected to avoid deliberate rumination while individuals who are low in their desire to engage in cognitively taxing activities are likely to avoid the effortful processing involved in deliberate rumination. Figure 4 details the

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proposed model in which need for cognition moderates the relationship between intrusive rumination and deliberate rumination and the relationship between intrusive rumination and depreciation. Individuals with more need for cognition are expected to report more deliberate rumination and less depreciation.

Figure 4.



The Present Study

The current study sought to integrate elements of CPT (Resick & Schnicke, 1991; Resick & Schnicke, 1993) into the trajectory leading to PTG and depreciation (Baker et al., 2008; Cann et al., 2010) in an attempt to differentiate cognitive experiences leading to growth versus depreciation. Emerging adults who identify as betrayed partners of infidelity were an ideal sample to test the proposed model because of the expected broad range of trauma severity among this sample and the expected variance in the degree to which individuals considered infidelity to be a likely experience in their dating relationship a priori. This indicated adequate variance to fully test the proposed model and moderators.

Aim 1: Explore the extent to which trauma severity ratings predict violated core beliefs and assimilated core beliefs.

CPT suggests that a traumatic event will either confirm or violate the victim's understanding of the world around them (Resick & Schnicke, 1991; Resick &

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Schnicke, 1993). Through findings in the PTG literature (O'Connor & Canevello, 2019), betrayed partners are known to report violated core beliefs when they perceive their infidelity as traumatic. However, prior to this study, it was unknown whether betrayed partners would also report assimilated beliefs. If infidelity is functioning like a trauma, betrayed partners who experience their infidelity as more traumatic should report both more violated and more assimilated beliefs.

Hypothesis 1: Greater trauma severity will predict greater accommodated and assimilated core beliefs.

Aim 2: Replicate previous growth and depreciation findings and extend utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

The PTG literature has explored the trajectory of core beliefs violation that leads to psychological changes after traumatic events (Cann et al., 2010; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). This trajectory has been explored using regression and mediation analysis. The theoretical trajectory of PTG begins with core beliefs violation, which leads to intrusive rumination, which then leads to deliberate rumination, which then leads to growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). In recent years, the construct of depreciation has been added to the PTG framework, though it is still not well understood (Baker et al., 2008; Cann et al., 2011). Posttraumatic depreciation captures “stuckness” or lack of resolution that can occur as victims struggle to move on from trauma. Growth and depreciation are not correlated and are conceptualized as separate but related outcomes (Baker et al., 2008; Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013). Some models have suggested that depreciation occurs when victims get stuck in intrusive rumination and do not move on to the deliberate rumination

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stage of recovery (Baker et al., 2008). To better understand the processes leading to depreciation, this study attempted to replicate the traditional PTG pathway using regression and mediation analyses. Next, as an exploratory analysis, this study attempted to replicate the theoretical pathway to depreciation that begins with violation of core beliefs and intrusive rumination that has had mixed results in the literature. Finally, these findings were extended by attempting to replicate the PTG process using structural equation modeling (SEM).

Prior examinations of the PTG pathway have utilized mediation analysis in PROCESS (Hayes, 2017). However, PROCESS mediation modeling does not allow for the examination of multiple outcome variables. The proposed model has two outcome variables, growth and depreciation, therefore PROCESS mediation modeling could not be used to test the proposed model. SEM was an appropriate alternative that can analyze models with multiple outcome variables. Therefore, this project used SEM for analysis of the proposed model.

Hypothesis 2: Replicate previous findings utilizing regression.

Accommodated core beliefs should predict intrusive rumination, deliberate rumination, PTG, and depreciation. Deliberate, but not intrusive rumination, should predict PTG. Intrusive, but not deliberate rumination, should predict depreciation.

Hypothesis 3: Replicate previous mediation analyses. PTG was expected to be predicted by a mediation pathway in which accommodated beliefs predict intrusive rumination, which predicts deliberate rumination.

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“Hypothesis” 3.1: Exploratory analyses will be conducted to examine the theoretical pathway to depreciation through which accommodated beliefs predict intrusive rumination.

Hypothesis 4: Test the mediational PTG pathway (established in hypothesis three) using SEM. The model was expected to demonstrate adequate fit.

Hypothesis 5: Add depreciation as a second outcome of intrusive rumination to the SEM model tested Hypothesis 4. This model incorporating the additional pathway through intrusive rumination was expected to predict depreciation and demonstrate adequate fit.

Aim 3: Add trauma severity and assimilated beliefs to the model.

Aim 1 of this study proposed that infidelity is traumatic and proposed a second cognitive outcome of infidelity (assimilated beliefs) that is not taken into consideration by the current PTG literature. Specifically, it is unknown what happens when infidelity assimilates with previously held core beliefs. CPT (Resick & Schnicke, 1992; Resick & Schnicke, 1993) would suggest that assimilated beliefs would lead to depreciation, or stuckness, as they indicate that the individual has not purposefully processed their experience. However, PTG theory (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2014; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) has yet to explore the possibility that assimilated beliefs may play a role in the trajectory toward growth and depreciation after traumatic events. Therefore, the purpose of Aim 3 was to integrate assimilated beliefs and trauma severity (tested in Aim 1) into the proposed model.

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Hypothesis 6: Assimilated beliefs was added to the model tested in hypothesis three as an exogenous variable and was expected to predict depreciation.

Hypothesis 7: Trauma severity was added to the model as an exogenous variable and was expected to predict of both accommodated and assimilated beliefs.

Aim 4: Explore the extent to which cognitive constructs of defusion, need for affect, and need for cognition moderate the proposed model.

A remaining question centers on how people move forward from intrusive rumination, as it appears to be the step in the process where people either continue on the growth process or divert and experience depreciation instead. The factors contributing to the movement from intrusive rumination to deliberate rumination or depreciation are understudied. Three cognitive moderators of the transition forward from intrusive rumination are proposed.

Hypothesis 8: Cognitive defusion was expected to moderate the relationship between intrusive and deliberate rumination with individuals scoring higher on cognitive defusion reporting greater deliberate rumination.

Hypothesis 9: Need for affect was expected to moderate the relationship between intrusive rumination and deliberate rumination with individuals scoring higher on need for affect reporting greater deliberate rumination.

Hypothesis 10: Need for cognition was expected to moderate the relationship between intrusive rumination and deliberate rumination with individuals scoring higher on need for cognition reporting greater deliberate rumination.

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CHAPTER 2: METHOD

This study was an independent project of the author under the direction of Dr. Langhinrichsen-Rohling. Data were collected through Dr. Langhinrichsen-Rohling's research lab (T.H.R.I.V.E.) at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte during the Summer and Fall academic semesters of 2020 and the Spring academic semester of 2021. Measures and individual questions are presented in Appendix B.

Procedure.

Participants were recruited from the SONA research participation pool, through advertisements around the department of Psychological Sciences and the University of North Carolina - Charlotte, and through social media. Each modality of outreach provided participants with the study link. Participants followed the link to a survey hosted by Qualtrics. Participants first were asked to read through an informed consent form. They were then asked to state their agreement to participate in the study by clicking "I Agree." They were then taken to the survey questionnaire, which took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. Upon completion they were asked to read through a debriefing form, were provided with contact information for UNCC Counseling and Psychological Services, and were thanked for their participation. Participants completing the survey as part of the research participation pool received .5 credits of research participation, which is the maximum credit allowed for online surveys. Participants outside of the SONA pool received no compensation for their participation.

Participants.

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Participants (N=246) were betrayed partners of infidelity. Using the N:q rule proposed by Jackson (2003), this sample size was adequate to power the proposed model (Jackson, 2003; Kline, 2015). Participants were recruited through SONA and via social media (Facebook and Instagram). Participants in the study were largely heterosexual (87%) female (70%) college students. They reported their race as White (62%), Black (20%), Asian (9%), Native American (1.6%), and Other (5%). Ages ranged from 18 to 52 years ($M = 23$, $SD = 11$ years). At the time of completing the survey, 35% were in a relationship, 43% were single, 12% were casually dating, and 9% classified their relationship status as “other.” Of those in a relationship, 15% were in a relationship with the partner who had cheated on them. Unfortunately, the percentage of participants who initially broke up but later reunited with their cheating partner is unknown. Approximately 53% of participants reported that their parents were still married while 27% reported that their parents were divorced or separated. Fifteen percent reported their parents were never married. Of note, 27% of participants had been cheated on in a previous relationship prior to the instance of infidelity addressed by this survey. These participants had experienced infidelity a maximum of two previous times.

At the time of the infidelity, participants classified their relationship with the partner who cheated on them as casually dating (18%), exclusively dating (71%), engaged (2%), and married (8%). Of those who reported being married at the time of the infidelity, none are still married. Fifty percent are separated and 50% are divorced. Participants discovered the infidelity between one and five years ago. Seventy-three percent discovered their partner’s infidelity prior to the COVID-19

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pandemic while 26% discovered their partner's infidelity during the COVID-19 pandemic. When they discovered the infidelity, 10% of participants had been in a relationship with their partner for less than one month, 31% of participants had been in a relationship with their partner between one and six months, 16% of participants had been in a relationship with their partner between seven and eleven months, 27% of participants had been in a relationship with their partner between one and three years, and 13% had been in a relationship with their partner for more than three years.

Overall, participants were greatly affected by their infidelity experience. On a Likert scale ranging from one to seven, betrayed partners rated their relationship with their unfaithful partner as very serious ($M = 5.27, SD = 1.77$). In general, these participants felt highly betrayed ($M = 6.38, SD = 1.18$), hurt ($M = 6.30, SD = 1.16$), and reported that their infidelity experience was traumatic ($M = 5.19, SD = 1.73$). Almost half ($n = 101$) scored above the cut off for probable PTSD on a measure of PTSD symptoms (the PCL-5 see below for description). The average score ($M = 44.80, SD = 21.53$) was above the established cut off (33; Bovin et al., 2016).

Measures.

Posttraumatic Growth and Depreciation. Perceptions of personal growth and depreciation as a result of experiencing relationship betrayal were assessed using the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGDI-X; (Baker et al., 2008; Tedeschi et al., 1998). The PTGDI-X assesses perceptions of growth and depreciation following stressful and traumatic experiences across five subscales: spirituality, appreciation of life, relating to others, personal strengths, and new possibilities. Items are

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unidirectionally valanced, assessing change in one direction of either growth or depreciation. Examples of growth items include “I have a great feeling of self-reliance,” “I have a greater sense of closeness with others,” and “I know better than I can handle difficulties.” Examples of depreciation items include “I have a diminished feeling of self-reliance,” “I have a greater sense of distance from others,” and “I am less certain that I can handle difficulties.” Participants were asked to respond to each item on a six-point Likert scale to indicate the extent to which they perceive change in that area as a result of their infidelity experience. Higher scores indicate higher perceptions of growth or depreciation. In previous studies, this measure has demonstrated excellent internal consistency across both subscales ($\alpha = .93$; Taku et al., 2021). The depreciation subscale demonstrated good internal consistency in the current study ($\alpha = .94$) as did the growth subscale ($\alpha = .96$).

Accommodated Core Beliefs. The Core Beliefs Inventory (CBI; (Cann et al., 2010) is a brief nine-item measure that was used to assess the extent to which participants perceived that various core beliefs were violated by their betrayal experience. Though the Core Beliefs Inventory does not have specific subscales, items loosely map onto latent constructs of benevolence of the world, benevolence of people, and self-esteem or worthiness. Participants were asked to respond to items on a five-point Likert scale assessing the extent to which they perceive that the stated belief was violated by their infidelity experience. Items include beliefs such as “My assumptions concerning why other people think and behave the way that they do,” “My beliefs about the meaning of my life,” and “My beliefs about my own value or worth as a person.” Higher scores indicate stronger perceptions of

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belief violation. The CBI has demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$) in previous samples (Cann et al., 2010). In this study, the CBI demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$).

Assimilated Core Beliefs. To date, assimilated beliefs have not been assessed using a specific measurement tool in the empirical literature; they have typically been measured by coding impact statements conducted at the beginning and end of CPT. This study developed a measure (Assimilated Beliefs Inventory; ABI) to assess assimilated beliefs. This process of measure development and validation is discussed further in the Results section. Generally, the purpose was to assess assimilated beliefs consistent with the PTG model. Therefore, the CBI, described above for the purpose of assessing accommodated core beliefs, was adapted to assess the extent to which the infidelity confirmed beliefs that participants already held prior to the betrayal. Overall, the general theme of the items remains the same from the original CBI for comparison purposes. The ABI demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$) that is consistent with the CBI ($\alpha = .86$).

Rumination. Deliberate and intrusive rumination were assessed using the Event Related Rumination Inventory (ERRI; Cann et al., 2011). Participants were asked to rate on a scale from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (extremely) the extent to which they had the described experiences after their partner cheated on them. Of the twenty items, ten items assess intrusive rumination (e.g., “I thought about the event when I did not mean to” and “Reminders of the event brought back thoughts about my experience”) and ten items assess deliberate rumination (e.g., “I thought about

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whether I could find meaning from my experience,” and “I forced myself to deal with my feelings about the event”). Higher scores indicate greater ruminative experiences. The subscales of this measure have demonstrated adequate reliability for deliberate ($\alpha = .93$) and intrusive rumination ($\alpha = .96$) in previous samples (Cann et al. 2011; O'Connor & Canevello, 2019). For the current study, both the deliberate ($\alpha = .91$) and intrusive rumination subscales demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .97$).

Cognitive Defusion. The Drexel Defusion Scale (DDS; (Forman et al., 2012) was used to assess participants' abilities to achieve psychological distance from internal experiences. Participants were asked to read a definition of cognitive defusion and then were asked to rate the extent to which they engage in each type of defusion on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Extremely Uncharacteristic of Me) to 7 (Extremely Characteristic of Me). Examples of items include “You become angry when someone takes your place in a long line. To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from feelings of anger?” and “You are feeling sad and stuck in a difficulty situation that has no obvious end in sight. You experience thoughts such as “things will never get any better.” To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from thoughts of hopelessness?” Higher scores indicate greater ability to engage in defusion. The DDS has demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$) in previous samples (Butryn et al., 2011; Forman et al., 2012). In the current study, the DDS demonstrated adequate, though slightly lower, internal consistency ($\alpha = .76$).

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Need for Affect. The short form of the Need for Affect Questionnaire (NAQ-S; (Appel et al., 2012) was used to assess individual differences in the tendency to approach or avoid emotion-inducing situations and activities. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they identified with each of the ten items on a Likert rating scale ranging from 1 (Extremely Uncharacteristic of Me) to 7 (Extremely Characteristic of Me). Examples of items include “I find strong emotions overwhelming and therefore try to avoid them” and “I do not know how to handle my emotions, so I avoid them.” Higher scores indicate greater avoidance of emotion-inducing situations and activities. The NAQ-S has demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$) in previous samples (Appel et al., 2012). In the current study, the NAQ-S demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .78$).

Need for Cognition. The Short Need for Cognition Scale (NCS; (Cacioppo et al., 1984) was used to assess motivation to engage in effortful cognitive activity. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they identify with each of the 18 items that comprise the NCS on a Likert rating scale ranging from 1 (Extremely Uncharacteristic of Me) to 7 (Extremely Characteristic of Me). Examples of items include “I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking” and “The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me.” Higher scores indicate a greater need for cognition while lower scores indicate avoidance of effortful cognitive activity. The NCS has demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$) in previous samples (Sadowski, 1993). In the current study, the NCS demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$).

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Depression. The Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression scale (CES-D-10; Chen et al., 2006) was used to assess for depressive symptoms. Participants were asked to rate how frequently they experienced the described symptom over the past week on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Rarely or None) to 4 (All the Time). Examples of items include “I felt depressed” and “I could not ‘get going.’” Higher scores indicate more depressive symptomology. The CES-D has demonstrated adequate reliability in previous samples and was similarly consistent in the current study ($\alpha = .88$).

PTSD Symptoms. The PTSD Checklist-5 (PCL-5; Weathers et al., 2013) was used to assess for symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Participants were asked to rate how much they are currently bothered by each symptom on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Extremely). Examples of items include “Irritable behavior, angry outbursts, or acting aggressively” and “feeling jumpy or easily startled.” The PCL-5 has demonstrated adequate reliability and demonstrated excellent internal consistency in the current study ($\alpha = .97$).

Betrayal History & Demographics. To fully capture participants’ demographics and experiences with betrayal, a measure was developed specifically for this study. The purpose of this measure was to gather demographic information and to assess the number of times each participant has experienced relationship betrayal, whether they were the betrayed or betraying partner, to gather characteristics of the relationship (e.g., relationship length, commitment level), and to assess basic reactions and responses to the relationship betrayal. Betrayal history questions include “Overall, how traumatic would you say your infidelity experience

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was,” “how long ago did you find out about the infidelity,” and “what is your current relationship status with your offending partner?” Demographic factors such as gender, sexual orientation, race, and age were also assessed. Response types vary based on the question, but most were multiple choice with an option to type in an “other” response for experiences that did not fit into an offered category.

Data Cleaning

A total of 318 complete and partial cases were obtained through the data collection process. Data were first checked for validity by examining the number of participants who checked “no” to the question “have you been cheated on by a romantic partner?” Participants (n = 71) who answered “no” to this question were automatically skipped to the end of the survey using Skip Logic in Qualtrics. Their responses to previous questions were removed from the data set. One age-related outlier was removed from analysis (age = 67 years). The remaining (N = 246) participants completed at least one full questionnaire (8% of the total survey).

Total and subscale scores were determined according to each measurement tool's published scoring as described in the Method section. For scales requiring an averaging of responses to compute total scores, means were computed if the participant completed at least 80% of the questions comprising the scale or subscale. On occasion, subscales were composed of only four items. For these subscales, means were computed if participants completed at least 75% of the questions comprising that subscale.

Scale Development of the Assimilated Beliefs Inventory (ABI)

When this study was developed, no self-report, inventory-style measurement tool existed for the purpose of measuring assimilated beliefs. Therefore, the scale assessing assimilated beliefs (henceforth referred to as the Assimilated Beliefs Inventory [ABI]) was developed for the purpose of this study. The ABI was created by modifying the original Core Beliefs Inventory (Cann et al., 2010) which only assesses violation of core beliefs after traumatic experiences. The instructions for

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the Core Beliefs Inventory asks participants to identify the extent to which their infidelity experience violated or challenged their beliefs pertaining to various listed topics. For the ABI, these instructions were modified to assess the extent to which the infidelity confirmed or supported negative beliefs that participants' already held prior to the infidelity experience. For the most part, only the instructions were modified and the items remained largely unaltered. However, item wording had to be changed in a few instances. For example, item one on the CBI stated "The degrees to which I believe things that happen to people are fair" but was changed to say "The things that happen to people are unfair" to assess negative pre-existing beliefs. As shown in Table 1, most of the items on the ABI were significantly correlated with each other at .20 or higher (range was $r = .21, p = .004$ to $r = .75, p < .001$). However, one item assessing spiritual/religious beliefs was uncorrelated with an item assessing the uncontrollability of life ($r = .12, p = .114$). This item was also significantly but only weakly correlated with an item assessing the unfairness of life ($r = .14, p = .049$). Overall, the reliability of the ABI was good ($\alpha = .86$) and was consistent with the typical reliability coefficient that is obtained when using the CBI ($\alpha = .86$). Removing the one item assessing spirituality/religion did not provide a noticeable increase in reliability ($\alpha = .86$), so the item was kept in the scale to maintain direct comparability with the original CBI.

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine the fit and structure of the ABI measure. As expected, the ABI items loaded onto one factor with mildly acceptable fit ($\chi^2(27) = 148.21, p < .001, CFI = .82, TLI = .70, RMSEA = .13$). Of note, removing the one poorly correlated spiritual/religion item did not improve fit

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($\chi^2(20) = 135.21, p < .001$, CFI = .82, TLI = .67, RMSEA = .153) so the decision to retain this item was maintained.

The construct validity of the ABI was examined by comparing it to other constructs within its nomological net. Assimilated beliefs and accommodated beliefs were strongly correlated ($r = .57, p < .001$), but not enough to indicate they are overlapping constructs. Greater assimilated beliefs correlated significantly with other expected constructs including intrusive rumination ($r = .45, p < .001$), depreciation ($r = .54, p < .001$), and posttraumatic stress symptoms ($r = .51, p < .001$). Similarly, assimilated beliefs did not correlate with constructs it was expected to not correlate with including posttraumatic growth ($r = -.01, p = .924$). Of importance, depression and assimilated beliefs were moderately correlated ($r = .45, p < .001$), indicating that, as expected, they are distinct, though related, constructs.

Finally, to further investigate the validity of the ABI, participants' qualitative data were examined. Participants were asked to write a few sentences about: 1. Why their partner cheated, and 2. How their partner's infidelity impacted their core beliefs and how they make sense of the world around them. These questions stem directly from the early sessions of Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) during which clients are asked to write an Impact Statement about their trauma explaining why the trauma occurred and how the trauma impacted their core beliefs. Participant responses to these questions, grouped by theme, are included in Appendix C. Responses to these qualitative questions were examined for consistent themes using a two-step process of inductive coding by three research assistants. First, it was determined if the participant reported/described an assimilated belief ($n =$

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113). To be counted as an assimilated belief, responses had to indicate that the participant was reacting to a belief they held prior to the infidelity. Words that signaled the existence of an assimilated belief were: more, confirmed, less.

Statements ($n = 111$) such as “as a result of the infidelity I now believe” were ruled out because they indicated change in belief rather than confirmation/assimilation of belief by the infidelity. Once this first step was completed and the existence of an assimilated belief was established, the content of the belief was examined. Beliefs centered around three themes: I am Defective, People Can’t be Trusted, and Bad Things Happen when Certain Situations Arise. The theme capturing personal defectiveness was present in 50% of responses that reflected an assimilated belief. The theme capturing untrustworthiness of people was present in 26% of responses. Finally, the theme capturing bad things happen in life was present in 23% of responses. Raters initially agreed on all but five statements, and agreed on all theme categorizations after a brief team meeting to discuss the five items in question. Overall, these three themes generally reflect the domains assessed by the original Core Beliefs Inventory in the posttraumatic growth literature (Cann et al., 2009; Janoff-Bulman, 1989) and indicate acceptable coverage of the construct for the purposes of this study.

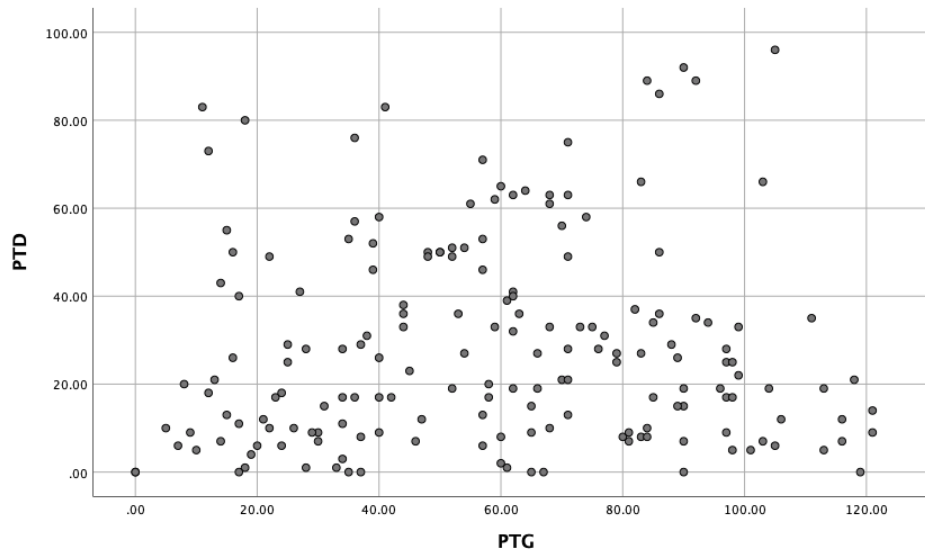
Preliminary Analyses

Means and standard deviations for all study variables were within expected and acceptable ranges. They are presented along with the bivariate correlations among all study variables in Table 2.

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Table 3 highlights some of the predicted theoretical relationships as obtained at the bivariate level. As expected, the two main outcomes of interest, PTG and depreciation, were uncorrelated (Figure 5). Accommodated beliefs were correlated with both PTG and depreciation. Assimilated beliefs were correlated with depreciation but not with PTG. Intrusive rumination was correlated with deliberate rumination and depreciation but not with PTG. Deliberate rumination was correlated with PTG. Surprisingly, deliberate rumination was also correlated with depreciation.

Figure 5. *Relationship Between Posttraumatic Growth and Depreciation.*



Though the lack of significant relationship between some of these study variables is consistent with PTG theory (i.e., intrusive rumination is not expected to be related to PTG), an absence of shared variance raises potential concern for the subsequent higher level model testing. Structural equation modeling (SEM) considers the relationships among all study variables in determining model fit. Thus, it is possible that the lack of relationship among some variables will negatively

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impact model fit. This needs to be considered when viewing all subsequent analyses utilizing SEM.

Aim 1 Results: Trauma Severity Impacts Core Beliefs

The purpose of Aim One and Hypothesis One was to test whether self-reported infidelity trauma severity would predict greater endorsement of both accommodated and assimilated core beliefs. Theoretically, it was expected that trauma severity would be associated with both outcomes. Trauma severity was assessed using a seven-point Likert scale where participants were asked to rate how traumatized they felt by the infidelity ($M = 5.19, SD = 1.73$). As expected, trauma severity was correlated with both accommodated ($r = .34, p < .001$) and assimilated beliefs ($r = .34, p < .001$). Using two separate regression analyses, trauma severity predicted accommodated beliefs ($b = .18, t(179) = 4.87, p < .001$) and assimilated beliefs ($b = .17, t(179) = 4.76, p < .001$). Trauma severity accounted for 12% of the variance in self-reported accommodated beliefs and 11% of the variance in self-reported assimilated beliefs.

Aim 2: PTG Replication & Extension

Previous studies have used regression analysis to establish the relationships between the stages of the PTG process. Thus, the first step of examining Aim Two, and the purpose of Hypothesis 2, was to replicate previous findings at the bivariate regression level. For the most part, these findings were consistent with expectations. Consistent with previous literature examining the pathway to posttraumatic growth, endorsement of greater accommodated core beliefs post infidelity predicted higher levels of intrusive rumination ($b = .70, t(178) = 8.72, p <$

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.001), explaining 30% of the variance. Intrusive rumination then predicted deliberate rumination ($b = .43$, $t(179) = 9.18$, $p < .001$), explaining 32% of the variance. Of note, and consistent with theory, greater engagement in deliberate rumination predicted more posttraumatic growth ($b = 11.66$, $t(177) = 4.78$, $p < .001$), explaining 11% of the variance. There was also a direct relationship such that accommodated beliefs predicted posttraumatic growth ($b = 8.68$, $t(177) = 3.52$, $p < .001$), explaining 6% of the variance. As expected, intrusive rumination did not predict posttraumatic growth ($b = .59$, $t(177) = .30$, $p = .766$). Also consistent with previous studies (Cann et al., 2010), accommodated beliefs predicted depreciation ($b = 9.29$, $t(176) = 5.22$, $p < .001$), explaining 13% of the variance. As expected, intrusive rumination also predicted depreciation ($b = 4.87$, $t(176) = 3.35$, $p < .001$), explaining 6% of the variance.

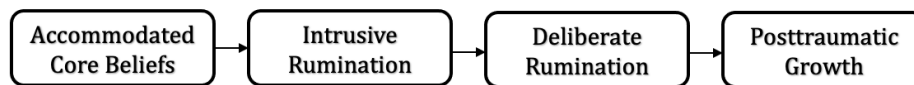
However, not all bivariate regression results were consistent with expectations. Inconsistent with previous findings (Baker et al., 2008; Cann et al., 2010), deliberate rumination also significantly predicted depreciation ($b = 4.73$, $t(176) = 2.46$, $p = .015$), accounting for 3% of the variance. Given this concern, deliberate rumination was then tested as a predictor of intrusive rumination (the primary precursor to depreciation in the PTG model). Deliberate rumination predicted intrusive rumination ($b = .74$, $t(178) = 9.18$, $p < .001$), accounting for a surprising 32% of the variance in intrusive rumination. These findings were quite concerning as this observed relationship directly conflicts with the established theoretical trajectory of posttraumatic growth development. Unfortunately, this poses another potential problem for modeling in SEM as the bi-directional nature of

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the relationship between intrusive and deliberate rumination will impact the SEM results in ways that would not be seen if the pathway was tested sequentially using regression.

The purpose of Hypothesis 3 was to replicate the previously established PTG pathway. In order to replicate findings establishing the PTG pathway using mediation analysis (O'Connor & Canevello, 2019), path analysis was conducted via Model 6 in PROCESS (Hayes, 2017). This is shown below in Figure 6. It is important to note that the direction of the relationship between intrusive rumination and deliberate rumination is specified in mediation analysis. Intrusive rumination is used as a predictor while deliberate rumination is its outcome. The inverse relationship is not considered. Using mediation, the results were as expected. Accommodated core beliefs predicted greater intrusive rumination ($b = .69, SE = .08, 95\% CI [.53, .85]; p < .000$), which led to greater deliberate rumination ($b = .29, SE = .05, 95\% CI [.18, .40]; p < .000$), which in turn predicted greater PTG ($b = 13.90, SE = 3.04, 95\% CI [7.90, 19.90]; p < .000$). Consistent with theory, the indirect effect of accommodated core beliefs on PTG through intrusive and deliberate rumination was significant ($b = 2.81, SE = .93, 95\% CI [1.24, 4.90]$). This model accounted for 18% of the variance in PTG.

Figure 6. *Replicating the PTG Pathway.*



Unfortunately, no published studies have examined the pathway to depreciation. Previous studies have examined predictors of depreciation

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(accommodated beliefs and intrusive rumination) using regression analysis and have conceptualized depreciation as becoming stuck in intrusive rumination.

Though not proposed initially, exploratory analyses (“Hypothesis” 3.1) were conducted to examine the depreciation pathway. Like with PTG, accommodated core beliefs predicted greater intrusive rumination ($b = .69, SE = .08, 95\% CI [.53, .85]; p < .000$). The rest of the results were not as expected. Intrusive rumination did not predict greater depreciation ($b = 1.27, SE = 1.67, 95\% CI [-2.01, 4.57]; p = .444$). Though the direct effect of accommodated core beliefs on PTD was significant ($b = 8.40, SE = 2.13, 95\% CI [4.20, 12.60]$), contrary to expectation, the indirect effect through intrusive rumination was not significant ($b = .89, SE = 1.20, 95\% CI [-1.47, 3.24]$). Interestingly, this model predicted 14% of the variance in depreciation. The lack of significance of the rumination variables indicates that the greater presence of accommodated beliefs is accounting for this variance. Adding deliberate rumination to the model (to mirror the PTG pathway) did not change the results.

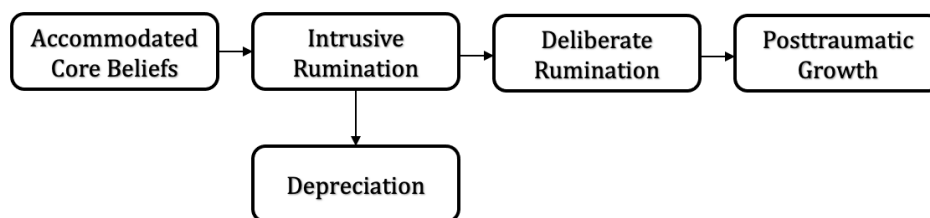
The goal of Hypothesis Four was to test the PTG process (previously established using mediation analysis) in SEM. SPSS 26 AMOS was used for SEM analyses. As with the mediation analysis, accommodated core beliefs were entered as an exogenous variable which predicted intrusive rumination, intrusive rumination predicted deliberate rumination, and deliberate rumination predicted PTG. Intrusive rumination and deliberate rumination were allowed to correlate, as indicated by the literature and by the correlations obtained in the current study. Unexpectedly, this model demonstrated questionable fit ($\chi^2(2) = 14, p = .001, CFI =$

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.93, TLI = .66, RMSEA = .15). This poor model fit in SEM is in stark contrast to the significant results found when testing the model using mediation analysis.

The next step, and the primary goal of Hypothesis Five, was to add depreciation as a second endogenous outcome variable to the equation and to expect that depreciation would be predicted by getting stuck in intrusive rumination. The predicted theoretical model is shown below in Figure 7. Again, intrusive rumination and deliberate rumination were allowed to correlate. This model demonstrated poor fit ($\chi^2(4) = 30, p < .001, CFI = .87, TLI = .52, RMSEA = .16$). Adding a pathway such that depreciation was predicted by both intrusive rumination and deliberate rumination did not improve model fit. The potentially problematic interaction occurring between the rumination variables was kept in consideration as an underlying reason for the poor model fit. However, it was theorized that the poor model fit might also indicate that something was missing from the conceptual model. Aim 3 proposed to fill in that conceptual gap.

Figure 7. *Model for Hypothesis Five Adding Depreciation to PTG Pathway.*



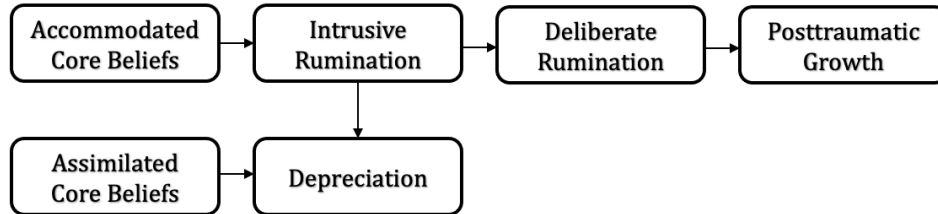
Aim 3: Adding New Pathways

For Aim 3, and to test Hypothesis Six, additional paths were added to the model. First, as shown in Figure 8 below, assimilated core beliefs were added as a second predictor of depreciation. Again, intrusive rumination and deliberate

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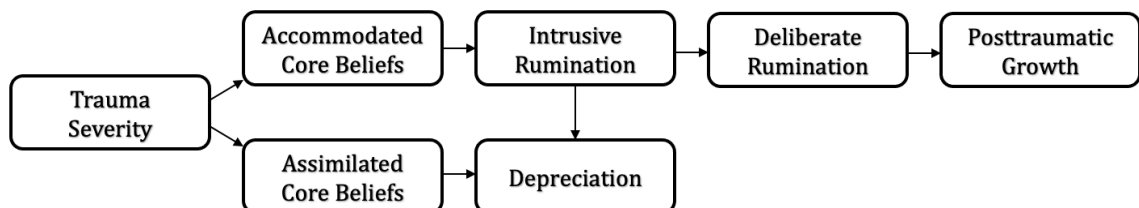
rumination were allowed to correlate. This additional variable improved the fit indices slightly ($\chi^2(5) = 23.58, p < .001, CFI = .94, TLI = .75, RMSEA = .12$), although the model fit still was not ideal.

Figure 8. *Adding Assimilated Beliefs to the Model*



Finally, to complete the proposed conceptual model and address Hypothesis Seven, trauma severity was added as an exogenous variable predicting both assimilated beliefs and accommodated beliefs. This is shown below in Figure 9. For the final model, trauma severity predicted accommodated and assimilated beliefs such that assimilated beliefs predicted depreciation while accommodated beliefs predicted intrusive rumination, which predicted depreciation and deliberate rumination, which predicted growth. Unfortunately, this final model including trauma severity rating also resulted in poor model fit ($\chi^2(5) = 40.29, p < .001, CFI = .91, TLI = .49, RMSEA = .15$).

Figure 9. *Adding Trauma Severity to the Model.*



Aim 4: Testing Moderators

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Due to the poor model fit in Aim 3, it was not appropriate to add additional parameters to be tested. Instead, to analyze Hypothesis Eight through Hypothesis Ten, simple moderation analyses were conducted using PROCESS (Hayes, 2017) to assess each moderator (need for affect, need for cognition, and defusion). Each moderator was tested in a separate analysis using PROCESS Model 1. Intrusive rumination was the independent variable and deliberate rumination was the dependent variable for each analysis. None of the three moderators were significant in moderating the relationship between intrusive and deliberate rumination ($.03 \leq b \leq .07$, $.04 \leq SE \leq .05$, $.12 \leq p \leq .43$).

Exploring the “Core” of the Dissertation with a Focus on Core Beliefs

As suggested throughout the results section, the rumination variables proved problematic both conceptually and for conducting analyses in SEM. The results of the bivariate regression analyses indicated that the relationship between intrusive and deliberate rumination is bi-directional (intrusive rumination predicted deliberate rumination and deliberate rumination predicted intrusive rumination). Further, the lack of and small relationships between the rumination variables and outcome variables were also likely problematic given SEM's consideration of the relationship of all study variables in determining model fit. These problematic relationships among the rumination variables made it impossible to gain a clearer picture of the primary study aims, which involved understanding the role of assimilated beliefs.

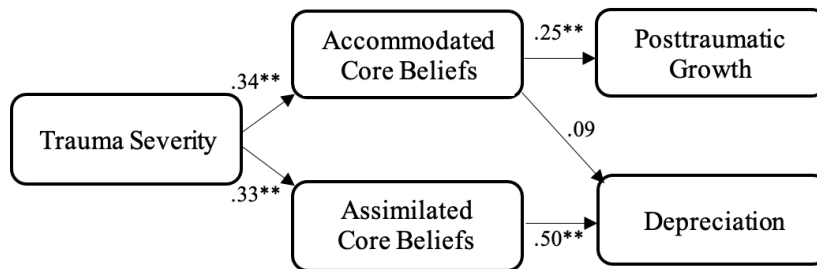
The primary purpose of this dissertation was to explore the impact of both accommodated and assimilated beliefs on the contrasting outcomes of

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posttraumatic growth and depreciation, with the dynamic rumination process being a pre-existing assumption arising from the theoretical underpinning of the study.

Thus, to truly examine the core purpose of this study, an additional model was tested without the rumination variables (Figure 10 below). Importantly, as predicted, in this model, trauma severity predicted both accommodated and assimilated beliefs. Next, accommodated beliefs predicted both PTG while assimilated beliefs predicted depreciation, as was expected. Overall, this model demonstrated excellent fit across all goodness of fit indices ($\chi^2(1) = 1.38, p = .24$, CFI = .99, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .04).

Figure 10. *Final Path Model with Standardized Parameter Estimates.*



Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

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CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

The aim of this project was to expand theory by integrating elements of Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) into the proposed pathway toward posttraumatic growth (PTG) in order to better understand the impact that the trauma of infidelity has on core beliefs. PTG theory posits that core beliefs are violated or shattered by traumatic experiences. Adding to this consideration, CPT acknowledges that, for some people, traumatic experiences can confirm rather than violate pre-existing core beliefs (i.e., a trauma may confirm the belief that life is not fair). Overall, as proposed, the obtained results indicate that both assimilated and confirmed core beliefs can occur after infidelity, and that assimilated beliefs are important for understanding two distinct post-trauma outcomes: PTG and depreciation.

This project was theoretically complex and analyses were conducted in stages to align with theory development. The discussion section is organized similarly. To begin with, the Assimilated Beliefs Inventory (ABI) was developed and its properties will be discussed. Next, previous PTG findings were replicated, expanded, and tested in SEM. These findings will be discussed second. Then, elements of CPT (assimilated beliefs) were added to the model and will be discussed third. Finally, a new model removing non-critical elements was tested and will be discussed fourth. Implications of these results as well as directions for future research and clinical work are described as each group of findings is presented.

The Assimilated Beliefs Inventory: A Tool for Measuring Assimilated Beliefs

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A measure of assimilated beliefs did not exist prior to this study. Therefore, a measure was developed to assess assimilated core beliefs (Assimilated Beliefs Inventory; ABI; O'Connor & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2021) in a way that would parallel the existing measurement tool used to assess accommodated core beliefs (CBI; Cann et al., 2010). The ABI demonstrated good internal consistency, as demonstrated by the strong Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .86$). The ABI also demonstrated adequate construct coverage and construct validity, which is discussed in further detail below. The ABI correlated with expected constructs (intrusive rumination, posttraumatic stress symptoms, depreciation) and did not correlated with unexpected constructs (PTG). Though confirmatory factor analysis results were not ideal, the fit indices and other metrics were comparable to those obtained with the highly utilized CBI (Cann et al., 2010; O'Connor & Canevello, 2019; Triplett et al., 2012). Taken together, these findings suggest that the ABI is a valid and reliable tool for measuring assimilated beliefs.

Of note, one item, which assessed the extent to which the trauma confirmed pre-existing spiritual beliefs, was less associated with the other items than expected. Results were conducted including and excluding this item from the scale and the findings did not differ based on whether or not the item was included. Ultimately, the decision was made to include the item to maintain consistency with the highly utilized CBI. However, it is interesting that the spiritual item received lower endorsement. It is possible that infidelity, being an interpersonal trauma rather than a life-threatening event such as a natural disaster, did not spark an existential crisis among it's victims. To investigate this, the ABI should be studied with survivors of

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other types of traumas. Alternately, emerging adulthood is a time of identity exploration (Arnett, 2000), which includes exploration of spiritual beliefs. It may be possible that emerging adults (the majority of the participant sample) are less likely to have a strong, well-established set of spiritual beliefs (Koenig, 2015). Thus, it would be impossible to have an infidelity or traumatic experience confirm beliefs that do not yet exist or are not yet well-established.

Construct Validity and Clinical Importance: Examining Qualitative Responses

Examination of qualitative data (free responses to questions about pre-existing core beliefs; Appendix C) indicated adequate construct coverage for the ABI. Three themes emerged through inductive coding. The first theme (I am defective) focused on self-worth. Many participants reported that their infidelity experience confirmed their pre-existing negative beliefs about their own lack of worth. The second theme (People Can't be Trusted) was centered around the belief that people are inherently selfish or bad, and will take advantage of others if given the chance. The third theme (Bad Things Happen in Life When Certain Situations Arise) focused more on circumstances where people believe that negative outcomes, such as infidelity, are justifiable. These three themes generally map onto the three domains of core beliefs on which the original CBI (and thus the ABI) were based. These three themes proposed by Janoff-Bulman (1989; 2010) are goodness of self, goodness of people, and justness of the world. The first identified ABI theme maps onto the domain of "goodness of self." Some participants believed prior to their infidelity that they were ugly, unlovable, and not worthy of being treated well. Unfortunately, their partner's infidelity confirmed that belief for them. The second theme mapped onto

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the second domain of “goodness of people.” Some participants believed prior to the infidelity that people are untrustworthy and their infidelity experience, understandably, confirmed this belief. The third theme, similarly, maps onto the third domain. Some participants believed, prior to their own experience with infidelity, that infidelity is justified under particular societal conditions (such as when a person is drunk). Their particular experience with infidelity confirmed this belief. Overall, the overlap between Janoff-Bulman’s assumptive worldview domains and the themes identified in this study indicates that the ABI is capturing core beliefs in a way that is consistent with the PTG literature.

Each theme was prevalent across participant responses. Half of participants reported an assimilated belief. Half of those fell into the first theme focusing on negative self-worth. This indicates that, for a quarter of all participants, infidelity confirmed their belief that they are unworthy of having a faithful partner. Half of the remaining beliefs fell into the second theme focusing on distrust of others while the remaining half fell into the third theme focusing on global unfairness or negative outcomes. Not only does this indicate that infidelity can reinforce negatively held core beliefs, it indicates that betrayed partners tend to report similar assimilated beliefs.

Overall, these findings highlight the need to further integrate assimilated beliefs into research and clinical work. For example, clinicians should explore assimilated beliefs with betrayed partners, who are most likely to have assimilated negative self-image beliefs. From a research perspective, concomitants of assimilated beliefs (e.g., greater propensity for developing PTSD and other mental

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health problems associated with particular pre-existing beliefs) should be further explored. Considering the qualitative and statistical analyses validating the ABI, this study makes a contribution by offering a valid and reliable tool for incorporating assimilated beliefs into future research and clinical practice.

Aim 1: Trauma Severity Predicts Accommodation and Assimilation of Core Beliefs

Results obtained from testing Aim One were consistent with expectation. Higher trauma severity predicted greater endorsement of both accommodated and assimilated beliefs. This finding is consistent with previous CPT research (Iverson et al., 2015; Sobel et al., 2009). As stated previously, CPT postulates that negative core beliefs may exist as “stuck points” that are confirmed by the individual’s lived experiences (e.g., traumatic experiences). Aside from CPT, the trauma literature generally does not acknowledge the existence of assimilated core beliefs. Even the DSM-5 refers to a “negative shift in world-view” as a result of the trauma when considering a diagnosis of PTSD, which assumes that the negative world-view was not present prior to the trauma (APA, 2013). Given the premise of CPT and the evidence of its success when used to treat patients with traumatic symptoms (Resick et al., 2002; Monson et al., 2006; Wachen et al. 2016) and in light of the current findings, full integration of assimilated beliefs into the rest of the trauma literature as well as the understanding of PTG is vital.

Additionally, these results indicate that participants generally experienced infidelity as traumatic. Their report of traumatization was consistent across two measurement tools. First, participants rated their infidelity, on average, a 5.27 on a

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simple seven-point Likert scale, when asked to rate how traumatized they felt. This borders on a ceiling effect for statistical purposes and is an important study limitation to address. Future research should incorporate a larger Likert scale to fully assess the variability in traumatic ratings. Next, participant's average scores on the PCL-5 ($M = 44.80$, $SD = 21.53$) were high and almost half of all responses were above the established cut off score (33; Bovin et al., 2016) that indicates PTSD is likely. This replicates previous findings that infidelity can function as a trauma and lead to serious negative mental health consequences (Roos et al., 2019; Warach & Josephs, 2021). Taken together, these two results (mean trauma severity rating > 5 and average PCL-5 > 33) support the notion that infidelity can be experienced as a traumatic event. This argument is bolstered by the current finding that infidelity predicts accommodated and assimilated beliefs, which occur after other events that meet criteria for a trauma according to the DSM-5 (i.e., car accidents, natural disasters, assaults).

Unfortunately, infidelity does not qualify as a traumatic event per DSM-5 guidelines (APA, 2013). Criterion A dictates that a traumatic event involves threat of loss of life or sexual abuse. Infidelity is neither of these, meaning that betrayed partners are not officially eligible for a PTSD diagnosis. This is a barrier to equitable care, preventing many betrayed partners from receiving PTSD treatment in healthcare settings that require a billable diagnosis. Of note, however, Criterion A is a source of controversy as some scholars (Alessi et al., 2013; Brewin et al., 2009; Holmes et al., 2016; Koenig et al., 2015) claim that Criterion A should be abolished or drastically broadened. These scholars argue that trauma should be defined by its

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impact on the individual rather than by the details of the event. Conversely, this is an obviously circular way of defining trauma that requires further consideration. Regardless, the findings of the current study (that betrayed partners score high on Likert scale ratings of traumatization as well as the PCL-5 and they report trauma consistent outcomes such as accommodated and assimilated beliefs) support those who claim that Criterion A should be abandoned or reconsidered.

Another potential resolution for the Criterion A problem is to require the presence of certain cognitions to confirm that the event was traumatic. Many scholars (Foa et al., 1989; Ehlers & Clark, 2000; Lancaster et al., 2011; Resick & Schnicke, 1992; Resick & Schnicke, 1993) posit that the cognitive appraisal and interpretation of a traumatic event (e.g., the extent to which it confirms or violates core beliefs) is the primary factor in the development and maintenance of PTSD. Results of the current study, where greater subjective traumatization predicted greater impact of the infidelity on core beliefs, bolster this claim. Taken together, this indicates that focusing on an event's impact on a person's core beliefs may be a more equitable way to assess trauma treatment needs. Clinically speaking, briefly assessing core beliefs may help clinicians identify clients who may benefit from trauma services and treatment.

Aims 2-4: Replication and Extension of PTG Model

A primary purpose of this study was to test the full PTG pathway, as discussed in the literature, using statistical analyses that could incorporate two outcome variables. No known previous studies have examined the outcomes of PTG and depreciation together, in the same model. However, prior to discussing

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attempts at replicating previous findings and testing the proposed dual outcome model, the observed problem with intrusive versus deliberate rumination must be addressed.

The Problem with Rumination.

Ultimately, the rumination variables were problematic in the tested model. Theoretically, they are proposed to operate in order. First, the person is expected to experience intrusive rumination post trauma. Next, the person is proposed to engage in deliberate rumination to stop the intrusive rumination. This cognitive shift is a necessary step toward PTG. Results obtained in the current study indicate that intrusive rumination predicted deliberate rumination, as expected. However, deliberate rumination also predicted intrusive rumination. This was not expected and is inconsistent with the PTG literature which conceptualizes the intrusive rumination stage as preceding the deliberate rumination stage. This brings into question the directionality of the relationship between the two rumination variables and highlights a limitation of this study's cross-sectional research design. Previously, intrusive and deliberate rumination have been conceptualized as fairly distinct stages, but the fact that intrusive rumination predicts deliberate rumination and deliberate rumination also predicts intrusive rumination indicates that the relationship may be less distinct, over connected, and/or more cyclical or bi-directional in nature. Conceptually, it is more likely that rumination can be understood as a dynamic, reciprocal process with periods of waning intrusive rumination giving way to waxing deliberate rumination despite noticeable overlap.

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This suggests that the process toward PTG may not be as “stage oriented” as the typical mediation model indicates. The stage model has produced adequate results in previous analyses because mediation tests the indicated relationships, but is not impacted by the inverse relationships. SEM, on the other hand, considers the relationship among all study variables (and going in all directions) which may explain why the previously established PTG pathway appears to work in mediation but not SEM. Furthermore, if intrusive and deliberate rumination have a reciprocal, waxing and waning relationship, they cannot be accurately understood using a cross-sectional snapshot. Unfortunately, the cross-sectional design employed in the current study limited the ability to model the dynamic ruminative process that likely unfolds over time. The rumination process should be studied longitudinally in future studies. Given these concerns, for the purpose of the current investigation, as will be detailed below, it was decided to take out the rumination process to assess the core process that was this study’s primary contribution to the literature. However, before discussing the results obtained with the dual outcome SEM model, the attempts at replicating previous PTG findings will be discussed and the decisions leading up the removal of the rumination variables will be documented.

Aim 2: Replicating Previous PTG Findings

The components of PTG theory were examined using regression to replicate previous findings on the predictors of growth and depreciation (Cann et al., 2010) and via mediation to replicate the stage-oriented pathway of posttraumatic growth demonstrated in previous research (O’Connor & Canevello, 2019). First, bivariate regression analyses were examined. As expected, accommodated beliefs predicted

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intrusive rumination. Accommodated beliefs and deliberate rumination each predicted PTG as an outcome. Intrusive rumination predicted the outcome of depreciation.

Not all regression analysis results were as expected. In addition to the unexpected finding that deliberate rumination predicted intrusive rumination (discussed above), deliberate rumination also significantly predicted depreciation. This finding also conflicts with the stage model, going against the conceptualization of depreciation as becoming stuck in the intrusive rumination stage. However, previous support for the stage model may have been obtained partially because of the statistical analyses used in previous studies. Previously, predictors of depreciation were tested using simultaneous regression, with intrusive rumination entered before deliberate rumination (Baker et al., 2008; Cann et al., 2009). Due to the simultaneous entry format, the variance shared between intrusive and deliberate rumination was statistically attributed to intrusive rumination (because it was entered first). This resulted in significant findings for intrusive rumination and non-significant findings for deliberate rumination. If previous studies had tested each predictor individually, deliberate rumination likely would have been shown to also predict depreciation.

After examining regression analyses, the established mediation pathway toward PTG was tested using PROCESS. These results were also as expected. PTG was predicted by a pathway beginning with accommodated core beliefs, which predicted intrusive rumination, which predicted deliberate rumination, which predicted growth. This is unsurprising given the ability to control the directionality

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of relationships in mediation. Though unplanned, the theoretically proposed pathway to depreciation was also examined using PROCESS. Results were not as expected. Accommodated beliefs predicted depreciation, but neither including intrusive rumination alone nor including intrusive and deliberate rumination mediated this relationship. Thus, depreciation appears to not be directly associated with the rumination process. This finding warrants additional conceptual and empirical consideration. The next step was to examine growth and depreciation in the same model.

Aim 2: Shifting to Structural Equation Modeling

The traditional PTG model (excluding depreciation) was then moved to AMOS for SEM analysis. The shift to AMOS was necessary because PROCESS is not capable of analyzing two outcome variables. It is important to remember that mediation controls for the directionality of variable relationships while SEM considers the relationship between all study variables. It was noted at this step that the newly identified reciprocal relationship between intrusive and deliberate rumination (rather than stage-oriented process) would likely be problematic for conducting analyses in SEM. Unfortunately, the model demonstrated poor fit, specifically on the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI). This goodness of fit index is sensitive to correlations among model variables and the poor fit indicates that the correlations among the model's variables negatively affected the model's ability to fit the data.

As proposed, depreciation was added next as a second outcome of intrusive rumination, given its conceptualization as such in the literature. This model also poorly fit the data. Adding an additional pathway from deliberate rumination, so

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that depreciation was predicted by both intrusive and deliberate rumination did not improve model fit. At this point, it was anticipated that model fit would improve once assimilated beliefs were added to the model, given the theoretical underpinnings of CPT.

Aims 3 & 4: Adding Additional Pathways & Testing Moderators

Though model fit improved with the addition of assimilated beliefs, it did not improve enough to claim that the tested model adequately fit the data.

Unfortunately, model fit worsened again when trauma severity was added as a precursor to accommodated and assimilated beliefs. Due to the poor fit indices, it was inappropriate to test the proposed moderators in SEM. The three moderators were also not shown to be significant in standard moderation analysis. This could mean that defusion, need for affect, and need for cognition are unrelated to PTG and depreciation. However, a more plausible alternative is that the reciprocal relationship between the rumination variables disrupted the modeling process.

Implications for the PTG Literature

The current study raises major questions for the PTG line of research. The most urgent question surrounds the rumination variables. Intrusive and deliberate rumination were previously tested as distinct components of the process with current and previous mediation analyses supporting this conceptualization.

However, as the PTG literature has grown to incorporate depreciation as a potential trauma outcome, it was necessary to move away from mediation analysis to a statistical analysis that could handle two outcome variables simultaneously (SEM).

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The move to SEM predicates that any existing bidirectionality among the variables would be considered in the model, given the assumptions of SEM.

Conceptualizing the rumination variables as bi-directionally associated has implications for the outcomes of PTG and depreciation. Historically in the PTG literature, reaching the deliberate rumination stage implied that growth was imminent. The current findings conflict with this conceptualization, potentially suggesting that the simple existence of deliberate rumination does not guarantee PTG after trauma.

Future Directions & Clinical Implications

The bi-directional association between types of rumination observed in this study also has implications for the field of clinical psychology, as rumination is not well understood. Some clinicians conceptualize rumination as a negative experience (Watkins & Roberts, 2020) while others conceptualize rumination itself as a neutral experience with the style of rumination causing positive or negative outcomes (Cann et al., 2011; Stockton et al, 2011). The results of this study would support the latter conceptualization, as the process of rumination is associated with both growth and depreciation.

The shift in conceptualization away from rumination as a wholly negative experience to a commonplace process associated with a variety of outcomes would remove stigma for individuals inherently prone to rumination. For example, neuroticism is a personality trait that is highly correlated with rumination (Muris et al., 2005). People higher on neuroticism are more likely to experience mental health concerns and present to treatment (Sauer-Zavala et al., 2017). Unfortunately,

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individuals who are prone to rumination are likely to continue to ruminate across time, even if they learn tools to cognitively manage the rumination when it presents itself. Considering rumination as a neutral, on-going process would normalize these individuals' experiences and reduce shame associated with the inability to stop ruminating, even after months of treatment. Further, understanding how individual factors, such as the client's tendency toward avoidance or neuroticism, may serve as moderating factors could be of use in facilitating desired therapeutic outcomes. These individual differences, and moderating factors, should be explored in future clinical research.

Examining the “Core” Contribution: Removing Rumination

As previously stated, the primary purpose of this study was to explore whether betrayed partners reported assimilated beliefs after the trauma of infidelity, and to integrate assimilated beliefs into the PTG literature by conceptualizing assimilated beliefs as an alternative to accommodated beliefs. Furthermore, the study was designed to consider how assimilated beliefs predict depreciation, thus expanding our understanding of the PTG process. The rumination processes, which were found to be problematic, were an assumption of PTG theory that were not central to the main purpose of this study. Therefore, the rumination variables were removed from the model to test the primary relationships of interest.

Once the rumination variables were removed, the model demonstrated excellent fit. This finding supports the integration of CPT into PTG theory. As discussed under Aim One, support was found for a model in which trauma severity

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predicted two distinct outcomes, assimilated and accommodated beliefs. To recap, this indicates that both assimilated and accommodated beliefs can be caused by infidelity. Support was also found for PTG as an outcome of accommodated beliefs while depreciation occurred as an outcome of either accommodated or assimilated beliefs. This indicates that the effect that infidelity has on core beliefs is vital for determining whether or not the individual develops positive outcomes such as PTG or negative outcomes such as depreciation. Overall, the addition of assimilated beliefs strengthens the model and makes it more able to explain why some individuals go on to develop growth after trauma while others do not.

Implications for the PTG Literature

The fact that this model was supported fills a substantial gap in the existing literature and helps explain the oft-replicated finding that growth and depreciation are uncorrelated (Baker et al., 2008; Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013, Taku et al., 2021). The current model indicates that growth and depreciation are uncorrelated because they develop in response to different impacts on core beliefs. Further, this model lends support for Taku and colleagues (2021) recent assertion that growth and depreciation likely develop through distinctly separate pathways.

However, these findings beg the question of what should be done with the rumination variables moving forward. One possibility is to remove the stages of rumination from the PTG model for now. This conceptual change would center the focus on the trauma's impact on core beliefs - and how core beliefs are confirmed or modified to incorporate the traumatic experience. This shift is actually quite consistent with Janoff-Bulman's (1985; 1989; 2010) assumptive world views work,

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on which PTG theory was founded. Her work relied on the assumption that each individual's core cognitive framing of the world drives their behavioral tendencies and how they process life events. With this assumption, and the general assumption from CBT that cognitions influence behavior (Beck, 1979; Fenn & Byrne, 2013), describing and modeling the rumination processes is not required. Thus, removing the rumination stages from the model would not alter PTG theory at its core.

Facilitating PTG by Focusing on Core Beliefs

Furthermore, by focusing on core beliefs, providers may be able to help clients transition from assimilating traumatic events into their unhelpful pre-existing core beliefs to challenging these pre-existing negative core beliefs. This transition from assimilation to accommodation would give individuals previously on the depreciation pathway a route to growth, as the current study supports that the only trajectory to posttraumatic growth is through accommodated beliefs. This focus may be particularly useful for clients who have struggled with being stuck in their trauma for a long time. Future research should examine cognitive techniques for facilitating questioning of core beliefs when events promote assimilation. Socratic Questioning may be a useful tool to accomplish this goal.

Socratic Questioning is a central element of CPT (Farmer et al., 2017) that involves deliberate questioning to uncover attributions and assumptions underlying thoughts and decisions (Braun et al., 2015). Socratic Questioning allows clinicians to uncover and address core beliefs that are at the root of clients' presenting concerns. Therapists regularly use Socratic Questioning with success, particularly with clients who present with pessimistic world views (Braun, 2018; Vittorio et al., 2021). Thus,

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therapy might be a place where assimilated beliefs are gently challenged or skillfully violated through the use of tactful Socratic Questioning. Violating previously assimilated beliefs would open more outcome possibilities for these individuals and give them a pathway to growth.

Additionally, future research should investigate moderators that facilitate the development of PTG. Drawing from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes et al., 2006), openness and mindfulness may be two particularly important moderators. Openness implies willingness to consider alternative viewpoints and implies lack of avoidance (Harris, 2019; Hayes et al., 2009). Avoidance is a barrier to meaning making and to redistributing responsibility after traumatic events (Orsillo & Batten, 2005). Thus, openness may facilitate meaning making and the cognitive processes that facilitate growth. After one learns to be open, they can focus on mindful living. Mindfulness involves connection to the present moment and requires the ability to ground oneself (Harris, 2019). Mindful people may be more likely to be in tune with the world around them, less likely to avoid unpleasant thoughts, and more likely to draw meaning from traumatic experiences in growthful ways. Future directions should investigate the ways in which these third-wave cognitive processes impact the organization of accommodated and assimilated core beliefs after trauma.

Next, cognitively-based moderators should be studied. For example, one study of women in treatment for breast cancer found that coping strategies predict PTG. Active coping strategies facilitated the most PTG (Bellizzi et al., 2006). This finding was later replicated by Prati and Pietrantoni (2009) who found that positive

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reappraisal coping and social support predicted PTG. Future research should incorporate active and avoidant coping strategies as mechanisms that lead to the PTG and depreciation outcomes, respectively.

Infidelity and Trauma Treatment

This current project is of clinical relevance to providers working with betrayed partners who are attempting to recover after infidelity. Betrayed partners of infidelity are a population of great importance. These individuals have generally not received adequate attention in the literature. Historically, attention to infidelity has focused on marital therapy aimed at forgiveness and repairing the relationship (Gordon et al., 2004, 2005; Scheinkman, 2005). Further, no models have focused specifically on treating symptoms through a trauma perspective when the couple does not stay together. Given the resounding support found in this study for the notion that infidelity can be experienced as trauma, it is important to consider infidelity as a potential trauma across both individual and couple therapy.

Accordingly, it is important to consider trauma-based treatment options for betrayed partners of infidelity. The current findings support the use of trauma recovery models for treating betrayed partners of infidelity in individual and couple's therapy. Cognitive interventions (i.e., CPT) that explore the impact that the infidelity had on the betrayed partner's core beliefs may prove particularly helpful. The current results indicate that discussing both accommodated and assimilated core beliefs may help betrayed partners to identify routes and barriers to growth. Barriers to growth are likely to include negative beliefs about self-worth that have been reinforced by the individual's infidelity experience. Therefore, routes to

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posttraumatic growth may involve skillful violation of previously assimilated core beliefs that serve as barriers. Given the complexity of this process, providers should be mindful to assess and address assimilated and accommodated core beliefs as they arise across the therapy process.

These findings may generalize to other similar interpersonal traumatic experiences (though future work should explore this explicitly). Beyond the field of infidelity, the integration of CPT elements into the understanding of PTG has clinical implications for treating a wide variety of traumas. The field of positive psychology, from which PTG theory derives, posits that strengths-based approaches, including helping clients to acknowledge and rely on their virtues, values, and competencies in times of suffering, can lead to symptom reduction (McQuaid et al., 2018; Walker-Williams & Fouché, 2017). While CPT offers one of the most successful treatments for survivors of traumatic events who are struggling to recover (Lamp et al., 2019; Rutt et al., 2018), the theory and research backing CPT has not incorporated what is known about the possibility of growth after traumatic events. The blending of these two leading theories (CPT and PTG) offers valuable contributions to individuals seeking therapy after events such as infidelity. Clinicians working from a trauma perspective may benefit from incorporating a focus on PTG, as this may help trauma survivors gain a sense of how they have grown psychologically as a result of their trauma experience.

Summary

Overall, the goal of this project was to expand the current understanding of PTG theory by incorporating elements of CPT. To accomplish this goal, this study

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examined a proposed pathway to PTG and depreciation and tested moderators of this pathway. The proposed model was tested among betrayed partners of infidelity. Results indicated that infidelity is often experienced as traumatic by betrayed partners. Though betrayed partners can not meet criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD, participants reported a high prevalence of symptoms that are consistent with PTSD. Moreover, results from this study demonstrated that the traumatic experience of infidelity impacted core beliefs in two distinct ways: accommodation and assimilation of core beliefs. These accommodated and assimilated beliefs were shown to significantly predict PTG and depreciation after infidelity trauma. Results also indicated that the pathways to PTG and depreciation are more complicated than previously conceptualized. Specifically, serious theoretical questions were raised regarding inconsistencies with the rumination variables. Intrusive and deliberate rumination are typically conceptualized as distinct stages in the PTG literature. However, results of this study indicated that intrusive and deliberate rumination may actually be best understood as a reciprocal process rather than as distinct linear stages. These inconsistencies will need to be reconciled via future research. Regardless, findings from this study have implications for clinical work and future research. Specifically, these findings may be informative for the development of treatment models and best practices for working with betrayed partners of infidelity, with the possibility that these interventions will generalize to individuals seeking to recover from other types of interpersonal traumas.

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Table 1.*Item Correlations for Assimilated Beliefs Inventory*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. The things that happen to people are unfair.	--							
2. The things that happen to people are uncontrollable.	.61 ^b	--						
3. Other people will hurt me if it benefits them to do so.	.51 ^b	.43 ^b	--					
4. Relationships with other people aren't meant to last.	.28 ^b	.30 ^b	.49 ^b	--				
5. I have many weaknesses.	.41 ^b	.21 ^b	.45 ^b	.36 ^b	--			
6. I shouldn't expect much from my future.	.40 ^b	.26 ^b	.44 ^b	.54 ^b	.46 ^b	--		
7. Life generally lacks meaning.	.31 ^b	.23 ^b	.40 ^b	.57 ^b	.40 ^b	.75 ^b	--	
8. Spiritual or religious beliefs are unimportant to me.	.19 ^a	.19	.17 ^a	.29 ^b	.24 ^b	.42 ^b	.51 ^b	--
9. I have low value or worth as a person.	.34 ^b	.23 ^b	.45 ^b	.47 ^b	.51 ^a	.69 ^b	.63 ^b	-.39 ^b

Note. $n = 247$. ^a $p < .05$. ^b $p < .01$.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics and Zero-order Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Accommodated Beliefs	3.15	.91	--									
2. Assimilated Beliefs	2.54	.86	.57 ^b	--								
3. Intrusive Rumination	3.46	1.16	.55 ^b	.45 ^b	--							
4. Deliberate Rumination	3.35	.89	.55 ^b	.34 ^b	.57 ^b	--						
5. PTG	58.41	30.82	.26 ^b	-.01	.02	.34 ^b	--					
6. Depreciation	28.60	23.13	.37 ^b	.54 ^b	.24 ^b	.18 ^a	.03	--				
7. PTSD Symptoms	44.80	21.53	.43 ^b	.51 ^b	.48 ^b	.26 ^b	.06	.59 ^b	--			
8. Depression	21.76	6.98	.39 ^b	.45 ^b	.39 ^b	.23 ^b	-.09	.53 ^b	.81 ^b	--		
9. Defusion	3.96	.91	-.21 ^b	-.29 ^b	-.23 ^b	-.02	.17 ^a	-.21 ^b	-.32 ^b	-.31 ^b	--	
10. Need for Cognition	4.26	.89	-.13	-.23 ^b	-.07	.08	.07	-.19 ^a	-.04	-.01	.26 ^b	--
11. Need for Affect	4.58	.97	-.08	-.32 ^b	-.02	.04	.20 ^b	-.28 ^b	-.21 ^b	-.23 ^a	.09	.36 ^b

Note. $n = 247$. ^a $p < .05$. ^b $p < .01$.

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Table 3.*Noteworthy Correlations with Relevance to Literature & Current Study.*

Tested relationship Bold = novel	Expectation Based on Literature	Actual Result	Comments
PTG with depreciation	Uncorrelated	$r = .03, p = .69$	Replicates previous findings
Accommodated beliefs with PTG	Moderate, positive	$r = .26, p = .001$	Lower than expected, generally replicates previous findings
Accommodated beliefs with depreciation	Weak, positive	$r = .37, p < .001$	Higher than expected, generally replicates previous findings
Assimilated beliefs with PTG	Negative or uncorrelated	$r = -.01, p = .92$	As expected, but potentially problematic for SEM
Assimilated beliefs with depreciation	Strong, positive	$r = .54, p < .001$	As expected
Intrusive rumination with PTG	Uncorrelated	$r = .02, p = .77$	Replicates previous findings, but potentially problematic for SEM
Intrusive rumination with depreciation	Moderate, positive	$r = .24, p < .001$	Lower than expected, generally replicates previous findings
Intrusive with deliberate rumination	Strong, positive	$r = .57, p < .001$	As expected, replicates previous findings.
Deliberate rumination with PTG	Moderate, positive	$r = .34, p < .001$	As expected, replicates previous findings
Deliberate rumination with depreciation	Weak, positive or uncorrelated.	$r = .18, p = .015$	Replicates previous findings (Cann et al., 2010). However, it raises questions regarding the cyclical nature of rumination

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APPENDIX A: REVIEW OF TRAUMA & POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS

Trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) became issues of public attention after World War 2, but their documented histories date back to Sigmund Freud's early work with traumatized women held captive by abusive partners and stigmatizing societies. Since Freud and World War 2, decades of research have culminated in successful evidence-based treatments for PTSD with adequate rates of symptom reduction. However, across these decades of research, the conceptualization of what constitutes a traumatic experience (determining who is eligible for trauma treatments) has been a point of disagreement.

The definition of trauma has been an issue of debate for many years across both the clinical and empirical literatures (Brewin et al., 2009; Friedman, 2013; Weathers & Keane, 2007). The primary debate has focused on how restrictive the definition of trauma should be. Some scholars and clinicians claim the definition of trauma should be narrow and restrictive (APA, 2013) while others claim the definition should be more inclusive of events that are likely to lead to high levels of the symptoms consistent of posttraumatic stress symptoms (SAMHSA, 2014; Brewin et al., 2009).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5; APA, 2013) offers the most used definition of a trauma as an event that involves threat of death, witnessing the death of another person, being repeatedly exposed to details of another person's death (as in the case of crime scene workers charged with collecting human remains), or actual or threatened serious injury or sexual violence. The DSM-5 definition of trauma is quite narrow, including only the most threatening human

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experiences: those that emphasize or threaten our mortality and integrity as humans.

However, some researchers and clinicians claim the DSM-5 definition is too narrow (SAMHSA, 2014; Brewin et al., 2009; Marshall et al., 2008; Weathers & Keane, 2007). SAMHSA has proposed an alternative definition of trauma as “an event or circumstance that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, or emotional well-being” (SAMHSA, 2014). This definition focuses more on the function or impact of the event rather than the details. This less restrictive definition requires a degree of subjective judgment on the part of diagnosing clinicians, as they would need to focus more on the symptom clusters to evaluate the event’s impact on the individual’s functioning and well-being. These clinicians and researchers could turn to valid and reliable diagnostic tools like the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS; Weathers et al., 2004) and the Detailed Assessment of Posttraumatic Stress (DAPS; Petri, 2017) scale for assistance with diagnosis and to reduce subjectivity.

The definition of trauma is important for many reasons, with one reason being the diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Like other mental health disorders, the criteria for meeting diagnostic criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD are laid out in the DSM-5. At present, PTSD is the only mental health diagnosis that requires a precipitating event in order for the individual to qualify for a diagnosis. Currently, the DSM-5 requires individuals to have experienced an event that meets their own, more restrictive, definition of trauma involving threat of death, serious

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injury, or sexual violence. This means that only individuals who have experienced this type of event can qualify for a diagnosis of PTSD. An individual whose experience does not meet the trauma definition cannot be diagnosed with PTSD, even if they exceed all the other symptom criteria, and are often excluded from necessary treatment options.

In addition to the trauma experience criteria, a diagnosis of PTSD requires the presence of at least one or two symptoms in each of four symptom clusters. The first cluster captures intrusion symptoms that cause the individual to persistently re-experience the event through experiences like nightmares or intrusive thoughts. The second cluster captures avoidance behaviors where the individual engages in active, effortful avoidance of thoughts, feelings, or reminders of the event. The third cluster captures negative alterations in cognitions and requires a negative shift in the individual's thoughts or emotions as a result of the traumatic event. Finally, the fourth symptom cluster captures changes in arousal and reactivity, such as hypervigilance or difficulty sleeping, as a result of the event.

Symptoms across each of these categories are common experiences after infidelity. Approximately 42% of betrayed partners experience posttraumatic stress symptoms across each of the necessary symptom clusters to an extent that would qualify for a diagnosis of PTSD (Roos et al., 2019). Unfortunately, infidelity does not meet criteria for a traumatic event according to the DSM-5. This means that betrayed partners do not qualify for a diagnosis of PTSD despite high prevalence of distressing and life-altering symptoms. This excludes many betrayed partners from receiving the help through evidence-based therapies for PTSD that could quickly

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and effectively improve their functioning while reducing posttraumatic stress symptoms.

One argument for the more restrictive definition of trauma maintained by the DSM-5 is that it prevents traumatic experiences from being too common, reserving the term for the worst of human experiences. However, over 70% of people living in the United States report at least one traumatic experience meeting the restrictive definition across their lifetime (Benjet et al., 2016; Solomon & Davidson, 1997), making it a pretty common experience. This percentage is unlikely to change with looser definitions as findings suggest that diagnostic rates remain consistent regardless of whether a restrictive or loose definition of trauma is utilized (Brewin et al., 2009; Roberts et al., 2012; Weathers & Keane, 2007).

While simultaneously not increasing diagnostic rates, looser definitions of trauma would likely benefit individuals with marginalized identities who are at greater risk of experiencing negative long-term outcomes (Alessi & Martin, 2017). For example, in addition to acknowledging infidelity as a trauma, SAMHSA's definition also acknowledges systemic racism (Helms et al., 2010) and bullying (Idsoe et al., 2012) as traumatic. This acknowledgement opens the door for conversations on how to protect and offer evidence-based treatments to individuals at higher risk for negative outcomes.

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APPENDIX B: DISSERTATION STUDY MEASURES

Need for Affect Questionnaire

Appel et al., 2012

Avoidance subscale = 1, 4, 6, 7, 10; Approach subscale = 2, 3, 5, 8, 9

To build an aggregate score of the Need for Affect, avoidance items must be reverse scored.

For the statements below, please indicate whether or not the statement is characteristic of you or of what you believe.
1. If I reflect on my past, I see that I tend to be afraid of feeling emotions.
2. I feel that I need to experience strong emotions regularly.
3. Emotions help people to get along in life.
4. I find strong emotions overwhelming and therefore try to avoid them.
5. I think that it is important to explore my feelings.
6. I would prefer not to experience either the lows or highs of emotion.
7. I do not know how to handle my emotions, so I avoid them.
8. It is important for me to be in touch with my feelings.
9. It is important for me to know how others are feeling.
10. Emotions are dangerous—they tend to get me into situations that I would rather avoid.

Need for Cognition

Cacioppo et al., 1984

Reverse scored: 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 16, 17

For the statements below, please indicate whether or not the statement is characteristic of you or of what you believe.
1. I prefer complex to simple problems.
2. I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.
3. Thinking is not my idea of fun.
4. I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities.
5. I try to anticipate and avoid situations where there is a likely chance I will have to think in depth about something.
6. I find satisfaction in deliberating hard and for long hours.
7. I only think as hard as I have to.
8. I prefer to think about small daily projects to long term ones.
9. I like tasks that require little thought once I've learned them.
10. The idea of relying on thought to make my way to the top appeals to me.
11. I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.
12. Learning new ways to think doesn't excite me very much.
13. I prefer my life to be filled with puzzles I must solve.
14. The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me.
15. I would prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult, and important to one that is somewhat important but does not require much thought.

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16. I feel relief rather than satisfaction after completing a task that requires a lot of mental effort.
17. It's enough for me that something gets the job done; I don't care how or why it works.
18. I usually end up deliberating about issues even when they do not affect me personally.

Drexel Defusion Scale (DDS)

Forman et al., 2012

Defusion is a term used by psychologists to describe a state of achieving distance from internal experiences such as thoughts and feelings. Suppose you put your hands over your face and someone asks you, "What do hands look like?" You might answer, "They are all dark." If you held your hands out a few inches away, you might add, "they have fingers and lines in them." In a similar way, getting some distance from your thoughts allows you to see them for what they are. The point is to notice the process of thinking as it happens rather than only noticing the results of that process, in other words, your thoughts. When you think a thought, it "colors" your world. When you see a thought from a distance, you can still see how it "colors" your world (you understand what it means), but you also see that you are doing the "coloring." It would be as if you always wore yellow sunglasses and forgot you were wearing them. Defusion is like taking off your glasses and holding them several inches away from your face; then you can see how they make the world appear to be yellow instead of only seeing the yellow world. Similarly, when you are defused from an emotion you can see yourself having the emotion, rather than simply being in it. When you are defused from a craving or a sensation of pain, you do not just experience the craving or pain, you see yourself having them.

Defusion allows you to see thoughts, feelings, cravings, and pain as simply processes taking place in your brain. The more defused you are from thoughts or feelings, the less automatically you act on them.

For example, you may do something embarrassing and have the thought "I'm such an idiot." If you are able to defuse from this thought, you will be able to see it as just a thought. In other words you can see that the thought is something in your mind that may or may not be true. If you are not able to defuse, you would take the thought as literally true, and your feelings and actions would automatically be impacted by the thoughts.

Based on the definition of defusion above, please rate each scenario according to the extent to which you would normally be in a state of defusion in the specified situation. You may want to read through all the examples before beginning to respond to the questions. (Important: you are not being asked about the degree to which you would think certain thoughts or feel a certain way, but the degree to which you would defuse if you did).

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1. You become angry when someone takes your place in a long line. To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from feelings of anger?
2. You see your favorite food and have the urge to eat it. To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from cravings for food?
3. Imagine that you bang your knee on a table leg. To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from physical pain?
4. Things have not been going well at school or at your job, and work just keeps piling up. To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from anxious thoughts like "I'll never get this done."?
5. Imagine you are having a thought such as "no one likes me." To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from negative thoughts about yourself?
6. You are feeling sad and stuck in a difficult situation that has no obvious end in sight. You experience thoughts such as "Things will never get any better." To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from thoughts of hopelessness?
7. Imagine you are having a thought such as "I can't do this" or "I just can't get started." To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from thoughts about motivation or ability?
8. Imagine you are having thoughts like, "I'll never make it" or "I have no future." To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from thoughts about your future?
9. You are about to give a presentation to a large group. As you sit waiting your turn, you start to notice your heart racing, butterflies in your stomach, and your hands trembling. To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from sensations of fear?
10. Imagine that you lose out on something you really wanted. You have feelings of sadness. To what extent would you normally be able to defuse from feelings of sadness?

1.	Have you been cheated on by a romantic partner?	Yes	No
2.	Are you currently in a romantic relationship with the partner who cheated on you?	Yes	No
3.	If you broke up, who initiated the break up?	I did	They did
4.	If you broke up, how long ago did you and your former partner break up? ___ days/weeks/months ago.		

1.	Please classify your previous relationship with the person who cheated on you:
----	--

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	1 7	2	3	4	5	6
9.	<p>How betrayed did you feel when you found out that your partner cheated on you?</p> <p>Not Betrayed At All Moderately Betrayed Very Betrayed</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6</p> <p>7</p>					
10	<p>How hurt were you when you found out that your former partner had cheated on you?</p> <p>Not very hurt Moderately hurt Extremely hurt</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6</p> <p>7</p>					
11	<p>Overall, how traumatic would you say your infidelity experience was?</p> <p>Not very traumatic Moderately traumatic Extremely traumatic</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6</p> <p>7</p>					
12	<p>Did you discover your partner's infidelity before the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>Yes, I discovered my partner's infidelity before COVID-19</p> <p>No, I discovered my partner's infidelity during or after COVID-19</p>					

1	Please write one paragraph or less about why you think your partner cheated. Write what you have been thinking about the cause of their infidelity.
2	Please consider the effects your partner's infidelity has had on your core beliefs. This might include how you make sense of the world around you and things that happen to you.

Core Beliefs Inventory
Cann et al., 2009

Some events, like infidelity, challenge or lead people to or change their beliefs about the world.

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To what extent did the infidelity challenge or lead you to change each of the following beliefs?	
After my partner cheated, I seriously examined or changed my beliefs about:	
1.	The degrees to which I believe things that happen to people are fair.
2.	The degrees to which I believe things that happen to people are controllable.
3.	My assumptions concerning why other people think and behave the way that they do.
4.	My beliefs about my relationships with other people.
5.	My beliefs about my own abilities, strengths and weaknesses.
6.	My beliefs about my expectations for my future.
7.	My beliefs about the meaning of my life.
8.	My spiritual or religious beliefs.
9.	My beliefs about my own value or worth as a person.

Assimilated Beliefs Inventory
Developed for this study

It is possible that you already held some beliefs about the world before the infidelity occurred. For example, when your partner was unfaithful, it may have confirmed your belief that life is unfair or that bad things always happen.	
To what extent did the infidelity confirm these beliefs?	
My partner's infidelity confirmed my beliefs that:	
1.	The things that happen to people are unfair
2.	The things that happen to people are uncontrollable.
3.	Other people will hurt me if it benefits them to do so.
4.	Relationships with other people aren't meant to last.
5.	I have many weaknesses.
6.	I shouldn't expect much from my future.
7.	Life generally lacks meaning.

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8.	Spiritual or religious beliefs are unimportant to me.
9.	I have low value or worth as a person.

Event-Related Rumination Inventory
Cann et al., 2011

After being hurt, people sometimes, but not always, find themselves having thoughts about their experience <u>even though they don't try to think about it</u> . Indicate for the following items how often, if at all, you have had the experiences described after the infidelity.	
1.	I thought about the event when I did not mean to.
2.	Thoughts about the event came to mind and I could not stop thinking about them.
3.	Thoughts about the event distracted me or kept me from being able to concentrate.
4.	I could not keep images or thoughts about the event from entering my mind.
5.	Thoughts, memories, or images of the event came to mind even when I did not want them.
6.	Thoughts about the event caused me to relive my experience.
7.	Reminders of the event brought back thoughts about my experience.
8.	I found myself automatically thinking about what had happened.
9.	Other things kept leading me to think about my experience.
10.	I tried not to think about the event, but could not keep the thoughts from my mind.

After being hurt, people sometimes, but not always, deliberately and intentionally spend time thinking about their experience. Indicate for the following items how often, if at all, you <u>deliberately spent time thinking</u> about the infidelity.	
1.	I thought about whether I could find meaning from my experience.
2.	I thought about whether changes in my life have come from dealing with my experience.
3.	I forced myself to think about my feelings about my experience.

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4.	I thought about whether I have learned anything as a result of my experience.
5.	I thought about whether the experience has changed my beliefs about my relationship.
6.	I thought about what the experience might mean for my future.
7.	I thought about whether my relationships with others have changed following my experience.
8.	I forced myself to deal with my feelings about the event.
9.	I deliberately thought about how the event had affected me.
10.	I thought about the event and tried to understand what happened.

Posttraumatic Growth & Depreciation Inventory - X
Taku et al., 2021

For each of the statements below, use the scale provided the instructions to indicate the degree to which this change occurred in your life AS A RESULT OF THE INFIDELITY. The statements are arranged in pairs representing different types of change you might have experienced.

Within each pair ,

- you might not have experienced either change
- you might have experienced both changes to some degree, or
- you might only have experienced one type of change.

Consider both statements in each pair, then rate the degree to which, if any, you experienced each type of change using the scale provided.

1a.	I changed my priorities about what is important in life.
1b.	I find it difficult to clarify priorities about what is important in life.
2a.	I have a greater appreciation for the value of my own life.
2b.	I have less of an appreciation for the value of my own life.
3a.	I developed new interests.
3b.	I have fewer interests than before.
4a.	I have a great feeling of self-reliance.

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4b.	I have a diminished feeling of self-reliance.
5a. 5b.	I have a better understanding of spiritual matters. I have a poorer understanding of spiritual matters.
6a. 6b.	I more clearly see that I can count on people in times of trouble. I more clearly see that I cannot count on people in times of trouble.
7a. 7b.	I established a new path for my life. I have a less clear path for my life
8a. 8b.	I have a greater sense of closeness with others. I have a greater sense of distance from others.
9a. 9b.	I am more willing to express my emotions. I am less willing to express my emotions.
10a. 10b.	I know better than I can handle difficulties. I am less certain that I can handle difficulties.
11a. 11b.	I am able to do better things with my life. I am less capable of doing better things with my life.
12a. 12b.	I am better able to accept the way things work out. I am less able to accept the way things work out.
13a. 13b.	I can better appreciate each day. I appreciate each day less than I did before.
14a. 14b.	New opportunities are available which wouldn't have been otherwise. Fewer opportunities are available than would have been there.
15a. 15b.	I have more compassion for others. I have less compassion for others.
16a. 16b.	I put more effort into my relationships. I put less effort into my relationships.

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17a.	I am more likely to try to change things that need changing.
17b.	I am less likely to try to change things that need changing.
18a.	I have a stronger religious faith.
18b.	I have a weaker religious faith.
19a.	I discovered that I am stronger than I thought I was.
19b.	I discovered that I am weaker than I thought I was
20a.	I learned a great deal about how wonderful people are.
20b.	I learned a great deal about how disappointing people are.
21a.	I better accept needing people.
21b.	I find it harder to accept needing others.

PTSD Checklist-5 (PCL-5)
Weathers et al., 2013

<p>Please read each of the following statements and indicate how much you are currently bothered by each item. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions.</p> <p>In the past month, how much were you bothered by:</p>	
1.	Repeated, disturbing, and unwanted memories of the stressful experience?
2.	Repeated, disturbing dreams of the stressful experience?
3.	Suddenly feeling or acting as if the stressful experience were actually happening again (as if you were actually back there reliving it)?
4.	Feeling very upset when something reminded you of the stressful experience?
5.	Having strong physical reactions when something reminded you of the stressful experience (for example, heart pounding, trouble breathing, sweating)?
6.	Avoiding memories, thoughts, or feelings related to the stressful experience?
7.	Avoiding external reminders of the stressful experience (for example, people, places, conversations, activities, objects, or situations)?
8.	Trouble remembering important parts of the stressful experience?
9.	Having strong negative beliefs about yourself, other people, or the world (for example, having thoughts such as: I am bad, there is something

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	seriously wrong with me, no one can be trusted, the world is completely dangerous)?
10.	Blaming yourself or someone else for the stressful experience or what happened after it?
11.	Having strong negative feelings such as fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame?
12.	Loss of interest in activities that you used to enjoy?
13.	Feeling distant or cut off from other people?
14.	Trouble experiencing positive feelings (for example, being unable to feel happiness or have loving feelings for people close to you)?
15.	Irritable behavior, angry outbursts, or acting aggressively?
16.	Taking too many risks or doing things that could cause you harm?
17.	Being "superalert" or watchful or on guard?
18.	Feeling jumpy or easily startled?
19.	Having difficulty concentrating?
20.	Trouble falling or staying asleep?

CESD -10 (Depression)

Björgvinsson et al., 2013

Below is a list of some of the ways you may have felt or behaved. Please indicate how often you have felt this way during the past week by checking the appropriate box for each question.	
1.	I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.
2.	I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.
3.	I felt depressed.
4.	I felt that everything I did was an effort.
5.	I felt hopeful about the future.
6.	I felt fearful.
7.	My sleep was restless.
8.	I was happy.
9.	I felt lonely.
10.	I could not "get going."

Demographics

1. Your Gender: ____Male ____Female

2. Your Race (check ONE):

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☐ American Indian/Alaska Native ☐ Black or African
 American ☐ Asian ☐ Caucasian/White ☐ Native Hawaiian
 or other pacific islander ☐ Other, please specify: _____

3. Your Ethnicity: ☐ Hispanic/Latino (any race) ☐ Not Hispanic/Latino

4. Your Age: _____

5. Current relationship status (check one):

☐ Casually Dating ☐ In an exclusive dating relationship
☐ Single ☐ Other Please specify: _____

6. Your sexual identity: ☐ Straight/Heterosexual ☐ Gay/Homosexual
 ☐ Bisexual ☐ Other, Please specify: _____
 ☐ Prefer not to answer

7. In your family of origin, what is the relationship status of your parents/caretakers?

1. Married
2. Divorced
3. Separated, but still married
4. Never married
5. I did not have consistent caretakers
6. Other, please describe: _____

8. Have you experienced infidelity in relationships prior to the one addressed by this survey?

1. No
2. Yes

If yes, in how many previous relationships have you experienced infidelity (not counting the one time assessed by this survey)? ____

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APPENDIX C: Responses to Qualitative Questions Assessing Themes of Assimilated Core Beliefs

Assimilated Beliefs Across Three Themes:

Assimilated Belief Theme 1 - I am defective (e.g., I am not good enough)

I was not attractive enough as the other person

I feel that he cheated on me because I was not good enough.

I was also having a lot of health issues that I refused to have checked out and I think that also made my partner angry. I was complaining but refused to go to the doctor which I know made him very angry.

It made me realize that I do have major trust issues when it comes to relationships.

He cheated because I wasn't having sex with him, he felt like sex was supposed to be a big part in our relationship but I was not ready to have sex with him or anyone , therefore , he went and found what I didn't give him to someone who did give it to him.

I wasn't good enough.

I thought I wasn't good enough, and that I deserved this to happen to me.

I think he cheated because he found someone more physically attractive. I don't consider myself ugly, but a pretty general average person. I think they had more in common with smoking weed and drugs and she was more attractive. So I think that's why he cheated.

I think she may have cheated because I couldn't give her enough attention due to different things like school and work so she felt alone and wanted comfort with someone else.

I think my past partner cheated on me because of my body and personality. She had a better body than I do and is way more attractive.

It's made me more aware that I am not an easy person to connect with emotionally. That's something I've been working on.

He never truly cared about me and deep down i knew but i stayed anyways

When it comes to relationships, it has always been difficult to open up towards a romantic partner. Though, after being cheated on I am not sure if I will be able to open up to future partners.

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This is a hard question because quite frankly, I'm not really sure why he cheated on me. I felt like I was a good companion. Maybe he didn't think I put enough effort and time into the relationship?

Im not sure why she cheated I guess the person she cheated with made her feel better then I did

I felt like I did something wrong, that his betrayal was a reflection of something I lacked.

I think I wasn't enough. I wasn't enough for him and he needed to fulfill his sexual needs elsewhere

I think I've always been garbage and that's why none of my relationships ever worked. I'm just not meant to be in one, I'm supposed to alone.

When the relationship ended I blamed myself and it made me realize I don't chose others actions they chose their own actions.

I think he was just messed up and did not know how to have a monogamous relationship. i think he did not respect me and that led him to treating me so poorly I also think I just wasn't enough for him.

I thought that I was not worthy of love and that it was not real only something that happened in fairy tales.

I have a hard time believing people when they say they love me and it takes me awhile to open up emotionally.

I was being an idiot.

I think because I wasn't doing everything she wanted me to do in terms of social media engagement and other social things, she felt that she could find that elsewhere.

I was quite clingy and clinginess is not good in a relationship, so I feel like he got tired of that and ended up cheating

I just wasn't good enough for him.

We had different beliefs when it came to sex and I probably just didn't fulfill their need for that.

He may have also found her more attractive or willing to do certain acts I did not want to do.

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I think I was too uptight and I was always questioning them. I'm really unsure why I was cheated on, but if I had to pinpoint it, I would say it's because I was controlling in a sense.

I think I was a very controlling person and too suspicious about what my partner was doing when I was not with them.

I sometimes react to things in the wrong ways making more negative situations.

I believe my partner became uninterested at a time in my life when I was afraid to express my emotions. I had closed myself off emotionally from the world after my parents had divorced.

I think my partner cheated because I am not the most emotionally available person. I have a unique ability to "check-out" of almost every aspect of my life for months at a time. Although, I can still function as a student, friend etc., it usually is not my peak performance.

I am not completely sure why they did what they did because in the moment it seemed like we were fine. I think maybe I can be too much to handle sometimes

I was easy to use, hurt, disrespect. I don't feel special or revered by anyone. I wasn't worthy enough.

I need to trust my intuition, and stop being so lenient; unacceptable behaviours without proper consequences.

Me nagging him, and putting him down

I think my partner cheated because I was not opening up to him enough. I also had trust issues from my previous relationships.

I think my ex husband cheated because he did not really love me as much as I loved him. I was in school to further my education and was not emotionally or physically as available as I was earlier in our marriage.

I don't think I was giving him what he wanted intimately. Maybe he just experimented with me. Maybe he didn't take our relationship as seriously as I did.

I truly believe that he cheated on me because I wasn't emotionally and physically available to him like the other girl was. Sex was obviously something that he really wanted but we never discussed it within our relationship at the time so it seemed like something that would come later on. I also believe that a part of him liked this girl way more than he wants to admit. This girl was his best friend, its reasonable

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for me to think he had more than just sexual feelings for her. But at the end of the day he came back to me and act like nothing ever happened.

I felt like I wasn't enough. I felt like I wasn't skinny enough, pretty enough, happy enough, or emotionally stable enough for him to love or want me, and that's why I was convinced he cheated. I thought it completely had to do with me.

I think it was because I was not giving him that much attention sexually, I am not into sex and being clingy as much as him and I think he went out of his way to find it else where so he could get attention.

I already lacked self confidence and security, so this just enhanced that ten-fold.

He cheated because he could, and because he knew I was too scared to leave at that point.

I think she cheated because I was not as attentive as she wanted me to be, as I was going through some personal problems.

i already kind of felt like it is hard for people to like me. ive never been the most confident and i've never been surrounded by many people. i think this had crushed my self esteem and made me feel unworthy.

I was hard headed, I did not take any phone calls no messages . I wanted to have my private moment, he could not stand me like that.

I was starting to gain my trust back again after some other bad relationships I had been in, and it all got completely washed away. I was so scared of messing up or doing something wrong that would ruin everything. I went back to constantly thinking I was the problem and I deserved to be cheated on. I basically thought I was the worst person in the world that I was broken and unlovable and that is why he did it. It started to make me blind to when I was in a toxic relationship.

They cheated because I wasn't giving them something they wanted, even though I wasn't ready yet.

It's hard to trust people I'm in a relationship with because there's always going to be someone out there better than me.

I couldn't be there for him like I should have been.

He just wasn't ready for a relationship. Or, he was ready for one, but didn't care enough for me. I cared and loved him way more compared to how he loved me. He didn't care for me at all. He just didn't want me from the beginning, and I believe that I was just too "easy" for him to get.

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I was too controlling and didn't allow her to express her feelings healthy

I don't think anyone truly likes me for me. Everyone eventually just uses me, hurts me, or leaves.

For a while I thought that I would never find anyone else. Sometimes I still feel that way, I feel as though I am not going to be enough for whoever I date and that they'll end up leaving.

I have always been worried that in a relationship, my partner would never be able to reciprocate the same feelings I felt and with my partner cheating, it sort of confirmed that belief. Now, whenever I do try and find another partner, that thought is always at the back of my mind.

Assimilated Belief Theme 2- People Can't be Trusted (e.g., all partners are untrustworthy)

My thoughts about myself and others did not really change because in relationships, I know some people tend to cheat because they are not happy or for some other reason. I have seen it many times in my life where someone get cheated on or the other way around. Knowing this, the situation did not really change my way of thinking.

I believe that females can be conniving, sneaky, lack morals and be permanently damaged due to bad parenting and childhood trauma.

We as a human being are exposed to the world and that we are weak to the opposite sex even if its a comment that make you smile. So we just have to have faith in the ourselves and our partners to be able to make the decision that right. Life is a gamble its easy to crap out....

That I can't trust anyone. I will be abandoned, cheated on, taken advantage of, or humiliated.

All the good guys have ran out or they 're just not meant for me

At any moment I can be abandoned by those I love, so I cling to them a little tighter when I feel like they are pulling away.

I constantly feel like the people I love are going to use me for my kindness and then leave me.

I don't believe men are capable of being honest, even when their sexual desires are being fulfilled. For him it was the control of the situation and his selfishness which led us here. As for our relationship, it has damaged our trust with each other and I often feel like I am being taken advantage of in our relationship.

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At first it made me question why we get into relationships at all. Before this relationship, I thought it was dumb to fall in love.

Anyone and everyone can get cheated on.

It took me a long time to date somebody because I assume every guy would treat me the way he did and I could not go through that again.

People aren't trustworthy.

I have always had a pre-existing belief that men use me for the way I look and also as a therapist, or someone that will help them good to others. This kind of bright back up those old feelings of doubt and mistrust in men.

I feel as though anyone could cheat on their significant other no matter the circumstances or intensity of love and trust.

I knew that cheating would eventually happen at some point but when it happened it was still a hit.

i cant trust anything

Confirmed my suspicions of hidden motives in relationships. I realized that many people will use you.

I have no trust or faith. Its all a lie.

It has not changed anything because I have been cheated on before. I believe all men will cheat one point in their life.

I don't think anyone truly likes me for me. Everyone eventually just uses me, hurts me, or leaves.

Now relationship wise, I actually hate men. Can't trust them, hard to love them. Why should I? I already felt that way before but before the cheating I thought he was the only different guy. He was literally the nicest person I had ever met. For a long time I always saw him as the nice guy. But in reality, it was a mask to hide behind. He is just as manipulative as all the other guys in the world.

I believe that if you don't give a man or someone what they want they will find it somewhere else and there is no way to stop it. Now when I don't give him the attention he needs all the time or the sex he needs all the time I fear that he might cheat on me again. I express this to him and he says he won't but I do not fully believe him yet

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I kind of expect that partners' interests might fade or will become interested in someone else.

I feel as if now I just have a even higher guard up when it comes to me trusting people.

No matter how much you think you trust someone, they can always go behind your back.

Love can be temporary and doesn't last forever. Some people have shorter fuses than others and in my case, her fuse ran out before mine, if mine was ever going to run out.

I was never really able to trust guys prior to dating my partner. There was only one other relationship I was ever in and that one ended mutually, but whenever I would talk to guys and start to move towards the dating phase, something bad always happened on their end so it's always made me skeptical of trusting guys 110%. I still love my partner, but I always worry if he'll ever make a similar bad decision again.

He cheated because he could, and because he knew I was too scared to leave at that point.

They did what was available.

I've noticed that I'm a bit more reserved when talking to guys that I have an interest in because I don't want them to think I'm desperate just because I like them. I feel like if they know I like them a lot, they will take advantage of that.

Assimilated Belief Theme 3- Bad Things Happen in Life when Certain Situations Arise (e.g., people cheat when bored)

I think he cheated because he was unhappy in our relationship. We had been together for so long and were just going through the motions. For a long time, it was easier for us to stay together than break up. I think the complacency and boredom in our relationship created a rift and he capitalized on it.

I think she got bored and found someone better

I'm guessing he didn't like the fact I was at college without him or that he got bored.

we had only been dating for 2 months when COVID-19 sent me home to Chicago and I think that the distance was too difficult for him to handle.

He was drunk and I was already asleep so I think he wanted attention from someone.

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Too drunk, and didn't comprehend what was going on.

We were both very busy at the time, he didn't see me often

I guess he wanted something different? Months around that time we kind of just kept doing the same thing so I feel that this was the main reason.

I think they were bored with me.

I believe he was lonely and wanted the attention of other girls. The lack of attention from me caused him to do something risky in order to gain what he wanted.

I think it was the distance because we were about an hour away from each other and he needed constant affection.

I think he cheated because the distance got to him. We were long distance because we went to separate colleges but we lived in the same place so we saw each other when we weren't in school. The girl he cheated on me with went to school with him and was in marching band with him. I think they got close and he fell in love with her and out of love with me.

I think he just wanted attention from someone else because we were both in school and going through a rough time.

He also was closer to her in distance and in friendship and eventually got tired of me.

A large factor was probably the distance between us for about 3 months, other than that I couldn't say.

I think she cheated on me because she was bored and wanted to move on. I don't think she knew how to tell me about it.

He was bored of me and wanted someone different for a night.

We were in a long distance relationship in different time zones. It's easy to cheat when you don't have physical interaction with someone daily. It's easy to forget you have someone else far away.

He cheated because he was bored, and afraid of commitment.

I think the cause of the infidelity was the fact that I had moved and this was a long distance relationship where she missed the physical affection that I couldn't provide.

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I had known that long distance relationships test its strengths and clearly this was supported.

He didn't know any better and was not as mature at the time. Maybe he got bored with the relationship and just simply didn't know any better.

I wish i knew. I think that he was distracted by things being so far away from me.

I think the reason he cheated on me was because long distance was already putting a strain on our relationship.

I think my partner cheated because they had gotten so used to being with me they worried they were missing out. We were together for over 5 years and became each other's best friend. With this, we grew used to each other and some of the initial spark diminished. I think he was casually introduced to the person he cheated with and she flirted with him. This made him realize that I wasn't the only person who wanted to be with him, which built his confidence.

Long distance relationship because of pandemic and not seeing each other for more than 2 months.

No Assimilated Beliefs, only Accommodated Beliefs Reflecting Growth and Depreciation

Accommodated Beliefs that reflect Posttraumatic Growth: (e.g., Now I know I deserve better)

Initially, the infidelity made me feel inferior. However, it taught me tremendous lessons about self-worth. The most important thing I learned from this specific relationship was the necessity to set boundaries. Boundaries have never been an easy thing for me because a part of me seeks outside love still. It taught me my triggers, the relevancy of my childhood on my attachment pattern, more about myself, and what I'm looking for in a partner.

I believe when I focus on myself and don't invest emotions into people and places that don't deserve it. My life and the people I meet are so much better. I believe that you receive the energy that you put out.

In the beginning, I thought if I was the perfect wife and loved him harder - he could be the perfect husband he was when we first got married. However, 15 years of dealing with infidelity has shown me that you can't love someone into being a better person. He hasn't changed. He will always be who he is and I've accepted that. I know that I'm awesome. I've always been awesome, despite how he's made me feel or said to me. I never had the greatest idea about long term relationships or marriage due to the divorce rate and numerous re-marriages in my family but I thought I could be an exception. Before we met, I didn't have the greatest self

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esteem and he built it up just to crash it all down. Now I know I don't need him anymore.

I think it helped me realize I'm not monogamous and view potential interest in others not as a threat unlike they did. It helped me realize my gut a bit more and Helped me looking back realize I needed help with my autism, adhd, and eating disorder.

Well, I am pretty much over him. I realize that I deserve better and I have much higher expectations for the people I date now.

It has made me stronger

It took me a long time to realize I was enough.

I deserve to respect myself

He definitely made me realize that I am a giver, and I will just give and give till I have nothing left. I am worthy of something better than what I had and it will get better for me.

It made me feel like I deserved someone more honest and loyal than him.

It is very important to be always honest with your partner. I belief that if in a relationship there is not confidence, respect and communication, it will not work.

I now know that I need to find someone who shares the same beliefs as me or else they will not be happy or satisfied in the long run

I have a totally different mindset about dating an individual and how to properly treat someone who you genuinely care about.

It changed how I am supposed to be treated in a relationship and has allowed me to be more aware in my relationships of red flags.

His infidelity made me realize my intuition is never wrong and that I deserve better.

It made me reflect on other relationships. I had never truly liked anyone I had dated before therefore this breakup hurt more. I learned that I should allow myself to be more open and sometimes it is okay to be vulnerable. Expressing how you feel to someone is a good thing and I shouldn't be scared to feel what I feel towards people.

This ensured me that I am a very forgiving person that can overcome most relationship issues.

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Accommodated Beliefs that reflect Depreciation: (e.g., I used to believe I was a good partner, but now I do not)

His cheating made me very self conscious and insecure about myself.

I have a lot more trust issues now than I did before. He has caused me to view people differently and to not trust people so easily.

I definitely have more trust issues than I did before. Obviously I pay more attention to what my partner is doing and with whom. Im trying to be more open with my communication and talk about my feelings which Ive never really done before. I also dont trust my friends quite like I used to. The person my partner cheated on me with was one of my oldest dearest friends.

I would say his infidelity caused me to have low self esteem that I had to build back up. I felt less than as a person, because I felt like I was unwanted.

Due to this, it has left me feeling as though it will happen again. I feel as though I have to be on edge or extra careful in relationships. It made it hard to be able to truly trust someone again because nobody wants to be hurt in a relationship.

I have kept myself on guard and get suspicious of things I shouldn't in my current relationship. It's made me more prone to being jealous and untrusting of him when I shouldn't be.

The ghosting after did the most damage. For a long time I thought that if I put in effort, it would freak the other person out and they would ghost me and think I was weird. It took me a long time to feel comfortable letting my current boyfriend see me put effort into the relationship.

I learned quickly that I can't trust everyone. There is an unhealthy amount of protectiveness in a relationship and a healthy balance.

I never had anyone sit me down and teach me the ways of human nature. It wasn't until after the fact and taking time to learn more about life that i finally understood.

It woke me up from the lies I've been told. It made me realize that life is nothing like those disney movies we watch growing up.

I am much more careful who I decide to let in. I have major trust issues and also pick out the bad in the guys that reappear in my life.

This opened my eyes to how trusting I was. I assumed the best in everyone and realized that not everyone is always going to be honest with me. I'm now a lot more closed off until I actually really get to know someone.

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The infidelity makes it harder for me to enter new relationship. Now I feel as if I have trust issues. They maybe they have a motive and do not have the same goals for the relationship as I do.

The effect of this partner's infidelity made me question if I was good enough and if my body was good enough and attractive enough for someone to want to stay. This has made me take relationships slower and be more reserved.

this situation has made it harder for me to let people in to my life and trust them.

My previous partner's infidelity made me lose sense of my self-worth. I had a hard time thinking and doing every day activities. I felt nonchalant and unworthy.

It has created a huge toll on me and i am still trying to learn how to find someone who truly cares about me.

My partner has definitely changed my outlook on relationships in general. I'm not as eager to give someone my trust so easily as before. Now I take time to get to really know a person before I commit into the relationship.

It made me lose trust with everyone I now keep everything to myself and I am always worried my partner will lose interest or cheat on me.

When my partner cheated, I was so insecure. I was afraid to do anything? I truly believed that love just wasn't "love." I thought that it was normal to be in a relationship where a guy constantly cheat because he was really my first boyfriend. I was so insecure that I couldn't even take a selfie of myself. I couldn't even take a full body clothed photo because I was that insecure.

Since I had found out my partner cheated on me I have had a bit of trust issues. I was very loyal and to find out that I had been cheated on and did not find out about it until a year or even longer later really broke my trust for him and possibly other guys that will come along.

My partner's infidelity left me with deep-rooted trust issues. Especially with the relationship I am in now, consequently I am always expecting him to leave me or find someone else. My partner's infidelity left me feeling that I am not good enough, love does not exist, and that everyone will leave me at some point. I hope that is not true.

The fact that she cheated had minimal effects on my beliefs about myself. I am a pretty confident person, and I know that I did nothing wrong. However, I do know that there are things that I can work on to become a better person, and a better romantic partner.

It had a lasting impact on my feelings.

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I am now slightly more conscious of getting into relationships, but I am more prepared if it happens again

My partner's infidelity has made me a different person. It has made me less faithful as well as being more reluctant to trust a romantic partner.

Since the cheating took place, it is hard for me to trust in relationships I have had after this one. Although, I feel my confidence has recovered and I know that not all of my partners have this same mindset, I always feel like there is something they are hiding.

A part of me has been taken from that relationship and it has effected other relationships. Every relationship after that I would take extremely slow and really get to know the person fully before dating. I have not turned into a jealous girlfriend. I have never been a jealous person. I let my partners have their own friends they can hang out with even if they are girls and do not fear that they will hurt me like I was hurt in the past. Part of the reason this has not changed is because I truly see my partner's values now before I start dating them.

It made me be more cautious about the steps I take towards forming a relationship. I really question what I want now.

definitely lost trust for people and hardly let anyone get close to me

I believe it makes it harder for me to fully trust someone in that situation. I see that if you want someone else or you want something different, why you cannot just talk to that person about it or end it with them. I feel as though lying and cheating is just a waste of time and energy.

After being cheated on, I do not feel confident in dating again. This partner has made it hard for me to trust a lot of people.

I think that him cheating on me caused me to believe that I wasn't good enough, that I had done something wrong to cause it.

It has definitely made me be very cautious and made me realize that I will never do that to someone because they destroyed me and I never want to make someone feel the way that I felt.

hard to date for me because i don't trust men anymore

Prior to this relationship, I knew cheating was very common in relationships nowadays. I have not been cheated on before, but I knew it was always a possibility with anyone. After being cheated on, I feel more scared to enter into a new relationship no matter how ready I feel.

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He has made it hard for me to have trust with other relationships.

I think I was more forgiving about situations before it happened and now when it comes to cheating I have no tolerance for it.

It's made me less likely to give my trust so freely away in future relationships and be more cautious when choosing a partner

I know am physically and emotionally afraid of getting in another committed relationship and any slight sense of rejection can cause me to become depressed or have a panic attack

After I found out about the cheating incident, I definitely grew more bitter, and did not value myself or committed relationships in the same way. I also do not feel in general nearly as much as I did in years prior.

It made me a lot more self-conscious and made my self esteem drop.

It has made it very hard for me to trust anyone and I now question what is true love anyway. I thought I had it but if it was true this wouldn't have happened.

It caused me to re evaluate myself because of the clinginess situation. Ever since the breakup it's almost like im the opposite now, I'd rather not get close to anyone because I now have this fear that if I get too close to someone that they would lose interest and move on to the next.

It makes it hard for me to completely trust someone, especially at first. But not everyone is the same

It lowered my self esteem drastically for a long time allowing for not so great people to enter my life following this incident. It also made me not believe in true love and gave me bad trust issues and abandonment issues.

Its really hard for me to trust him or men in general now. I still feel that I am not good enough and I often use that as a justification for why someone may want to cheat on me.

I don't want to say I'm cynical when it comes to relationships but I am a bit more reluctant and less willing to fully trust someone's intentions with me.

I feel like it has affected me in a negative way because now it has been hard for me to trust another man and love them as hard as i loved him

I have gained trust issues that have affected my new relationship slightly.

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My partner's infidelity has changed my view of relationships and I am a very closed off person with trust issues. I think that I won't be able to trust new people for a while.

I think it has just given me trust issues and confidence issues, but it has also helped me become more aware of who I surround myself around.

The infidelity caused me to question my worth for a while. I am still trying to find peace on my own with the situation, because he has yet to apologize for the many other times he cheated, and other terrible actions he did to me and our relationship. As of now, I am beyond scared to ever open up to someone like that again, out of fear I will experience the same thing.

This made me less emotionally available for my partners until I get to know them more. I have found myself finding out what people think and being able to see actions of others more. I view myself as a one who has learned and isn't as easily persuaded to where I want to do what I want to do. This relationship did cause me to have trust issues and communication problems a little for my next relationship. Overall, I hate the feeling of being vulnerable as well.

It made me question everything.

It changed my belief that everybody is a good person, some people don't love themselves enough to love another person.

It has made me trust people less and made me feel less of myself.

I have no trust in anyone or anything or what is right side up.

I can't trust him. He destroyed my life, even my very faith. I can no longer believe in a God who allows evil people to harm others in His name.

I don't like me now not even a little

I'm struggling with how to move on and how to ever trust her again. We have been best friends since we were 16 years old and in a relationship/married since we were 20. This entire experience makes me question whether I could trust her or any other partner ever again.

All my relationships before this I have never been cheated on, I never got dumped and I felt very confident and secure with myself. My husband was the first person I truly loved and felt a responsibility for (which was probably a red flag looking back) but I was so proud of us as a couple and everyone always said we were the trophy couple and I believed it, after I found out I felt like I had no sense of reality anymore and I lost my confidence and overall I lost myself.

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I now refuse to be treated as such, I don't accept actions relating to it and I have a higher respect and love for myself. I want to make sure it doesn't happen to me again so I am now a little more guarded.

I had never believed in divorce, always thought that no matter what took place in a marriage, we could work together and work through it. The infidelity caused my self-esteem to be very low. I have trust issues and no longer feel that I am worthy of being in a close/romantic relationship because it will just get old to the other person and they will leave also.

This experience has caused me to have a much lower self confidence about myself. I see women as great, fantastic people, but see myself in a poor light because I assumed too much. I never want to be a burden on someone and have no idea how I would continue my love life.

His infidelity makes it difficult for me to trust him and his intentions in this relationship. I thought that he loved me and cared about me prior to me finding out about his scandalous behavior, and now I just think that I am a convenience to him and he is comfortable with what I have done for him and continue to provide.

I am even more anxious and constantly am afraid of being manipulated again.

The effect my partners infidelity had on my pre-existing beliefs about myself have been damaging. Before the experience I would say I was a pretty confident person. I never really saw anything overly wrong with myself beforehand and my self confidence was better than most. After the experience I find myself looking in the mirror and changing my outfit 2-3 times before I decide it looks okay, or I worry that people will make fun of me for what clothes I was wearing. When I look at relationships after the experience I view them as something that can be beautiful, but if not beautiful it can lead to very damaging experiences for people that some may not recover from.

I am aware how much I can be disappointed in someone. I allow myself to open up and ask for something from others, but never allow myself to rely on anyone.

Honestly, it doesn't affect me anymore after these 7 months. Mostly because I know that he continued to do the same things with other girls, so I didn't feel like it was personal anymore.

I haven't been in a relationship like that one since. I feel much more insecure about entering a relationship and haven't had much of a desire for one. I'm scared to be hurt again. The hurt I experienced felt so terrible, I'd rather prevent that from happening, so I don't want a relationship right now.

It has forced me into a situation where I question my desire to have an intimate relationship. I have occupied my mind and time with other things since then and still

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wonder if I am truly missing out on anything by solely focusing on myself. I do find it difficult to believe that an individual can play such a large roll in your life only to vanish from it in an instant.

it gave me a hard to time to trust other people after him, I didnt think id be able to date someone again with the trust issue I had

I became a lot more closed-off, and didn't want to open up anymore. I also feel like I really lost touch with my emotions and that part of myself that would open up to love. I became a lot more skeptical of myself, and questioning myself.

It made me feel less than and unwanted. I have been unable to get into a relationship since.

I think one thing I was affected on was my level if trust with other people, I dont let my guard down super easily and I have a difficulty letting people in

I have trust issues so I don't want to rush into a relationship.

It has made me feel worse about myself and think that many relationships are based on lies.

Hard to trust your partner and even their friends because they may have a poor influence on them like how it happened to me in the past. Also made me feel unworthy of a relationship because even though I gave my all, it still wasn't enough to not get cheated on.

I did not want to get as serious as fast as they did so they became interested in me and my friend at the same time.

The effects of my partner's infidelity has made me believe that you can never really trust anyone. With today's access to social media and dating apps like Tinder, it is way too easy to cheat on someone, and if someone is smart then they can easily hide their tracts. I knew that relationships are hard and I knew reasons for why people cheated sometimes were because they became unattractive, abusive, or met someone they thought they loved more. Moving forward, I don't know if I can ever really trust anyone again. People lie all the time. I catch people and friends lying to me just about every day. People also are afraid to confront others or explain where they are with their feelings, and they do so at your expense.

It has made me less willing to open up myself in future relationships. I questioned a lot about who I was and if I was truly capable of being loved for that person.

I often tell people that I am guarded of my heart now. Friends and family tell me that I am difficult to gauge in my emotions. I think more with my head than my heart when it comes to any decisions.

GROWTH & DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

This wasn't the first or second time I was cheated on. It was the third so it really made me feel down about myself and loose faith in men and relationships.

It makes me question anyone that I would get into a relationship because even though they reassure you that they are committed to you sometimes someone from their past can just come up and bring back old feelings. However, from that relationship I realized what I deserve in a relationship but it still makes me question whether every guy will feel pity for me when I open up.

I can't be so forgiving and trusting.

Nothing about how I feel about myself has really changed other than I am more careful when it comes to relationships and letting people get close to me. I take more time to get to know the other person and if it's not something I want or I just get that gut feeling that it wouldn't work out then I am honest with the other person and I let them know exactly how I feel with the situation.

Now, I am not looking for any relationship. I want to focus on school and life. Not only that, the feeling of betrayal still traumatized me. It took a lot of time to find myself again and get over him.

I have a hard time trusting new people, but when I do I depend on them a lot and that can really affect them and how they view me.

I found it harder to trust others and understand why they did what they did. It made me feel unworthy and like I was the problem.

I never expected to ever be cheated on and never considered it happening to me. After it happened, I now always assume the worst in relationships and have a hard time believing someone when they tell me how they feel about me.

My partner's infidelity made me feel very upset in the moment and I didn't want to accept what had happened. But it also made me be more cautious about relationships and engaging myself in others as much. I don't let others in as easily anymore.

After being cheated on I feel like I'm even more closed off in relationships and struggle with letting my feelings out. I feel scared and worry about people leaving because of me and not being good enough.

Since this experience, I haven't looked at relationships the same. I'm not very trusting with people either in a romantic relationship or a friendship. I feel like I constantly have a guard up that way I can't get hurt again. When I feel like we are becoming too close in a relationship I push that person away, before they can do it to me because I fear I would not be able to go through that again.

GROWTH & DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

I don't trust anybody easily, especially when I first get into a relationship with a girl.

No Assimilated or Accommodated Beliefs:

Justifying: They were a bad partner

I believe my partner cheated because he felt inadequate as well. He masked many things with me throughout our relationship. A couple years into our relationship, it became very clear that he was an alcoholic. This in turn made him very reckless. As much as I tried to extend myself beyond respectable limits, things would never change. His father was very similar to him. I believe he would get so wasted, in order to disconnect, that he would reach a "high" and enter his favorite state: reckless and free.

My partner cheated because she's a nympho. She is easily impressed by anything free. She is addicted to sex and has childhood trauma that has scarred her for life.

He was immature and didn't have any respect for me.

I think she cheated because she comes from a broken home and has childhood trauma and is a nympho

I believe I deserve better and now know better than to mess with someone who is damaged

I think he cheated because of his Ego, and selfish needs. He was very into himself, and I think his need for attention is what drove him to cheat.

Honestly I feel like the relationship between us was fading once I took the new position at work, which demanded a lot more time than usually. I notice changes in conversations and out with her girls all the time which I didn't mind so she wouldn't be lonely all the time. I guess I gave her too much space to be free. I'm not the jealous type so, I always say your loss is someone else's gain.

I think that my partner cheated because that's the type of person that they are. If I had known that about them prior to getting into a relationship with them, then there never would have been a relationship. They clearly didn't seem to care, and it has come to my knowledge that they still cheat on the people that they get into a relationship with.

I was a black male graduating high school, that was going to college but I didn't have money. The other guy was a white male that wasn't graduating high school for 1-2 years, but his family was well-off so he could pamper her. (Confirmed by her many months later when he cheated on her and dumped her.)

GROWTH & DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

He thought HE wasn't good enough so when other women showed intrest he didn't want to say no because to him he felt validated and didn't care how it would make me feel.

He is a clown. Selfish and only cares about satisfying himself.

I think he cheated because he is lacking something in himself that he searches out in other people. He self sabotages things when they are going too well because he doesn't know how to deal with feelings of satisfaction. He needs to be messed up to gain sympathy and attention, instead of getting praise and affirmation from being a good person. He seeks that positive attention from people that don't matter rather than from the people who have been with him from the beginning, or who should matter more than anyone else. That has nothing to do with me and everything to do with him.

The person they cheated on me with was their ex. I guess he just wasn't as over her as he was telling me. It was also a very toxic relationship so that could've been a factor too.

We were young. They didn't have the same drive. We both had unresolved mental health issues. They got a crush and took it super seriously. We were due to renew our lease so he jumped the gun.

I brought him into one of my therapy appointments and asked him why and he just said "because I wanted to". I think he was trying to hurt me because we had an open relationship while we were long distance and he got jealous. He came back and we closed it because we weren't long distance and he slept with someone who he told me was just a friend. So I think he was trying to hurt me back.

My partner lost his father during the span of our relationship, he obviously did not handle it well and turned to drugs for a release. I did not like him doing these different kinds of drugs because he began to abuse them and developed a temper and became very aggressive overtime. I was scared to talk to him because I did not know if he was going to blow up or not. He turned into a different person after everything.

Personally, I think it was because it was how he was raised. His dad cheated on his mom and his mom had never been nice to him. He had a very troubled past and struggled with relationships. I always thought that those struggles were just because he never had someone care about him, and maybe that was it, but it didn't give him a chance. I think that this other girl told him what he wanted to hear and flirted with him in all the right ways and he didn't know any better than to pursue it. He just didn't take my feelings into account when he did.

GROWTH & DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

I think my previous partner cheated because of distance and our breaks. Breaks are something we both said was unacceptable but they ended up happening multiple times. My partner told me they got used to being apart and talking less.

I believe he cheated because he thought he could get away with being with another woman without my finding out. We have participated in threesomes before and during our marriage, so I believe he wanted to move forward without my involvement. It seems his experience with having threesomes somehow made him want to control his own situation.

I feel as if my partner cheated because she wasn't getting enough in the relationship. She told me that she actually cheated because we argued too much and didn't communicate our feelings. I feel as if that was an excuse because she could've just broke up with me if she didn't want to be with me anymore instead of cheating.

He needed to know how he felt about others. We loved each other, but not knowing his sexuality was taking over all of his thoughts. I know it wasn't to hurt me and I know he would never do it out of hate. It was with someone who he was best friends with who was also questioning their sexuality.

Honestly, I feel that my partner cheated on me because he was insecure and was not mature.

I believe that my partner cheated because we did not spend enough time together. I was at college across the state, so I understood why she felt this way. I do wish she would have told me that she wanted to break up instead of just cheating.

I think she cheated because she craves attention and is a bad person.

I think my partner cheated because he was never as committed into the relationship as I was. We have had problems with communication prior to this and I felt that I fought for the relationship a lot harder than he did. Ultimately, I just think he did not love me enough which led him to talk to another person.

I think she cheated because she wasn't committed to our relationship.

I really do not know. I went over it in my head a million times. Maybe because we had just took things to the next level and moved in together and he was freaking out.

he just wanted something else and not want to be tied down

I think that he cheated simply because he didn't care. He never wanted to put an official label on it with his friends, but he let my parents know we were "dating". He acted as though I was not allowed to talk to anyone and we were in a relationship, but then he cheated and acted like he was allowed. In the end I just think he wanted a relationship of convenience.

GROWTH & DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

I wasn't ready to move our relationship further physically, and he was not willing to wait apparently. That shows more on him than on me.

because he's toxic and has no respect for women

He was not committed and didn't want to only be in one relationship.

He cheated because he was able to, we were in a long distance relationship and so he didn't really feel shame. He cheated because he just wanted to and didn't think of the consequences it was going to have. The last reason I think he cheated was because he didn't really care because if he cared he wouldn't have done any of this to me. I think about why he cheated almost all the time and I will never get the real truth from him so I make up scenarios in my head.

They weren't ready to be in a committed relationship.

I think my partner cheated because I didn't want to progress our relationship sexually. I wasn't ready and he didn't care for that at all. He would guilt me a lot.

He was an immature boy who didn't have the balls to break up with me in person and before he had to go be with other girls.

I was very committed for a long term and for marriage and she got scared. I was her first relationship.

She's loose but that's just her. I am married to a good woman now.

She was toxic, manipulative, and emotionally unstable.

Throughout our relationship, I was very confused as to how I felt about him, simply because I had never "loved" someone that way before and I didn't know how to express it. He met the other girl and they were best friends so automatically his relationship with her was deeper than ours. I think he was insecure and wanted to know that someone cared about him. So, when the opportunity to talk to 2 girls presented itself, he took it.

We lost our connection. We wouldn't talk to each other that much anymore and when we were around each other I felt like I had nothing to say to him. I just wasn't excited about him anymore and I think he knew that. I tried telling him how I felt and he acted like he was going to do something about it, but from one day to the next the simple needs from a partner was apparently asking too much from him.

I think my partner cheated because she didn't love me the way I loved her.

GROWTH & DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

I think that they cheated because they did not know what they wanted. They felt that they were between two good options and did not want to give up one out of fear of losing the other as well and being alone. I also think this person had the idea of ending things with the other girl but claimed to be too nice and did not want to hurt her and so he waited too long and then I found out.

I truly have no idea why he cheated. We were a very happy couple that had been together for just over a year and a half. To this day I still don't know why and he says he doesn't know either.

Unhappiness with himself. At the time I think he was just confused.

The cause of my partner's infidelity was complications with our relationship and not feeling loved or wanted enough.

i think he was just that type of person, he was just naturally a cheater

I think he cheated because in general he was a bad person.

I just think that he had no self control and just was not a loyal person even though he came across as loyal.

Lack of time together, jealousy

I think my partner cheated because she was someone who needed attention and I was in Paris for a couple of weeks and couldn't really communicate to her without wifi.

My partner cheated because she was pressured to by my best friend. He put her in a situation where she was scared and felt that cheating was her only option.

I think he cheated because I was his first real committed relationship. He didn't know how to be committed and I learned that you cannot change a person like that, no matter how much love and support you provide them with.

I think that they cheated because I was younger than them by about a year. I was a sophomore in high school and it was my first relationship. He wasn't over his ex and I believe now that he was using me as an emotionally punching bag to have by his side 24/7. I still am confused since I was always there for him and we hung out a lot. I was easily manipulated at that time and didn't know what a true relationship is like I do now.

I think he was talking to multiple girls at once. I think he made everyone think that they were his girlfriend and I just found out.

They simply didn't care about me.

GROWTH & DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

There was something he wasn't getting from our relationship, or he was insecure and needed validation.

My husband needed to feel the need to be needed by someone who wasn't as independent as I am.

I think because he liked all of the attention he was getting when he moved in with me from Georgia.

Because he is a sadistic malignant narcissist, alcoholic, anti-social psychopath.

He has low problem solving skills (alcoholic) so running away to a new partner was easier than working on our marriage

My partner has shallow, insecure and selfish traits. He is easily manipulated by people he feels have more credibility than he does. We got at a difficult time, both his ex wife and his father planted doubt seeds in his mind about our relationship, those seeds grew as a result of his own inner traits and as a result he was open to other options which he kept to himself. When someone started showing him attention that he felt ticked the boxes which mattered most to him, he allows that connection to covertly grow while he was in a relationship with me. It caused him to change and I picked up on the changes; his denial caused me to lose trust in him which caused loads of friction that reinforced his belief that this other person was worth pursuing. It all comes down to his lack of maturity, and his inability to cope on his own.

He was severely abused and neglected in a car seat for 3 days then got adopted by his grandma and she abused him and isolated him until he was 18, his girlfriend before me got pregnant by someone else while they were together and he only wanted love. I've always protected him and loved him my hardest. I thought love and therapy and seeing my family and myself and our daughter still love him unconditionally time and time again would change him but he lives multiple lives and it's scary. I know why he is the way he is but it's not my job to fix him.

My wife and I have been married for 22 years. I believe the neighbor/friend began showing her attention that she felt she was not receiving at home. Their friendship crossed the line and then the lies started. She lied so much that she could not get out of it.

I truly believe my partner cheated because he has no self control. He has been unfaithful in the past and justifies his behavior because he thinks very highly of himself. Women have a tendency of being attracted to him because he flaunts his life which may be appealing to certain women. I do not personally feel that I did anything for him to go out and seek anything that was lacking in our relationship.

GROWTH & DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

I believe because our relationship was casual and online, my partner may be believed that we were just friends and was able to talk to other people if she wanted. My partner was interested in meeting me but never wanted to tell me anything personal. My partner cheated because she did not see me as a partner even when I expressed my feelings for her. We just continually communicated casually and I would feel happy just talking to her. But when she would talk to other guys, I just felt bad because I realized it was my fault for believing she was my partner even though she did not share the same viewpoint.

Because he couldn't keep his dick in his pants

The main reason I believe my partner cheated is because of lack of experience I guess you could say. We were both each other's first everything for the most part, so I believe that she wanted to experience what it would be like to do those things with another person. Though this is the main reason I believe, there is still that thought in the back of my head that she did it because I wasn't as good as the next person or that person had more to offer than I.

I believe that they craved attention and they went through a traumatic experience of a family member. This made them crave attention more to fill the void.

He told me that my life was put well together and he worried he wasn't good enough for me. He didn't say anything else but rather that he really liked the other girl. He said that he couldn't see himself being with anyone other than her.

I am not sure. I feel like he was confused or just unsatisfied with me.

I put in all the effort I could I did everything he ask for but I just think that's the type of person he is and is still the same there is no way to change a person like.

I believe the leading cause was having met at a younger age. Over time people change and have different desires or interests. In the year or so leading up to the event I found my self at home less, and pushing my own career or education in my free time. gradually our desired futures began to change and a lack of understanding for each others desires is most like what led to the infidelity.

To this day, I think it was an accident. I think with everything happening and the tenseness between of because of him moving, I don't think he truly sought out to find her. With that being said it still happened, and he knew it was wrong in the first place.

I think my partner cheated because that's the type of person he is you can't change him, he's done this before and he's always been like this that's the choice he makes no matter who he is with

I think my partner cheated because he's a hoe/sex addict.

GROWTH & DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

I think he cheated because he's been cheated on before and didn't trust me and was worried about being hurt if he didnt have anyone else

Pressure from friends because he was the QB at his school and knew all the girls wanted him even though he had a girlfriend. Wanted to feel cool and accepted by his friends that didn't think cheating was that bad. Also wanted to please everyone so fell at every girls request.

I think the cause of their infidelity was the fact that she was not over her ex boyfriend yet. I did not know how long ago it was since she had been in her breakup. I found out later that it was only a month or so after when she started talking to me. She used me as a rebound, wanted physical companionship, and never expressed these thoughts to me. I was led on to believe that she was over her ex and that she wanted to start something real and new with me. It wasn't until I saw snapchats between her and a few other guys, text messages saying "lets hangout again", and her awful explanations for why these guys would say those things that I realized I was being lied to. After months and months of pleading she continued to lie and her lies began changing.

I believe that my partner cheated because of a few reasons, that shouldn't usually be a worry. One reason I think he cheated was because he had a very high sex drive, considering we would go weeks at a time without seeing each other as well. Another reason was because he was on a football team and his teammates weren't the best influence to be around.

She felt it was a better option and he was something new.

It made me realize that I am right to worry about things, especially if I have a gut-feeling that something is wrong.

The cause of his infidelity is due to his personal struggles with being a husband and father. He didn't want those responsibilities anymore. By committing infidelity, he found freedom. He has never seen what he did as wrong or had any remorse.

I wasn't comfortable engaging in sexual acts with him, and I guess that got to him and he was just a bad enough person that he had to cheat rather than talking to me and waiting or breaking up with me.

Not being in control of me or my actions. She wanted me to be something I wasn't or was trying to force me to do things that would only please her. When i wouldnt do those things, she turned around and found someone who would.

i think they were unhappy with me. i believe they saw all my flaws but didn't want to straight up break up with me at the time.

GROWTH & DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

The girl he cheated on me with was one of his exs that actually cheated on him. I think they had some unresolved issues and when they ran into each other they just got caught up in what they used to have. I also think he felt insecure in our relationship. He said multiple times that he felt like the dumb one in the relationship and he did not like feeling inferior.

Lots of times I blame myself, but when I step back from the situation I think it is because he wanted a way out, he said that was not true which is why I initially took him back but then when he did it again I realized that we were different people from when we started dating. We starting dating when we were sophomores in high school, we were young, by the time we were seniors a lot of ourselves had changed (which is natural). I think he felt this way too and wanted a way out and didn't know how to.

I think that he wasn't into our relationship as much as I was and he wasn't really mature enough to handle the situation or maybe he just didn't really know what to do at the time. I think it was more so of a just for fun thing for him. He didn't really know what he wanted.

Fortunately but unfortunately, I know exactly why he cheated and it was because he got into some "activities" that he maybe shouldn't have that really took a toll on his decision-making skills.

I think they did it because they felt something was off with themselves. I think that they were unhappy and un willing to talk so they just acted.

He made it seem to me that he was very committed which is why it hurt so bad because I did not expect it at all, but I believe he cheated because he wanted to feel proud of himself for getting with someone who was found very attractive by many people.

I believe my partner cheated because he does not like commitment. He does not want to be tied down to one person and feels better about himself when he knows other people want him. I believe that he gets feelings of validation when he talks to multiple people and thinking he has a lot of options. I think he cheated because he loves the affirmations he gets from other people and needs them to feel good about himself.

I was in the hospital so I was far away from him which made it easier. Honestly, she was crazy and I do not say that lightly because she broke into his apartment building at one point. It was because she got naked in his room and he has no consideration for anyone else despite the things people do for him. He saw a naked girl and couldn't resist, and I already thought he did it anyway because she told me before it happened.

GROWTH & DEPRECIATION AFTER INFIDELITY

I think that he had always liked this girl. He told me he liked her before we started dating but that they were just friends now. It made me feel a little insecure at first but he had never given me a reason not to trust him. I felt like i was just used to make her jealous and when he was finally able to have her, he didn't want to lose me either so he lied.

I believe they cheated because I had been away on deployment for a long time.

At first I decided that it was because I was not emotionally available enough- something that I do know about myself, and that's the reason they gave me. But as time went on, I decided that it was simply that they were selfish.

There was no reason for this man to cheat. I did everything for him! I would do his homework, clean, feed him and buy him clothes. The reason is still up in the air.

At first, I thought I was not good enough or it was something that I did to cause it. But, in the end it was a reflection of his own insecurities and low self esteem causing him to need the approval and acceptance of other women than myself.

I think they cheated because of their own insecurities. The relationship was new and we were both new to the idea of a relationship. It hurt but not to the point where I blamed myself. I had heard enough stories about cheaters.

I try not to look at it as a defect in myself, but as a mistake he chose to make. At the end of the day, his negative actions reflect more on himself than they do on me, so I hope he learns to move past from those negative behaviors and grow into a better person.