



**IVEY**  
Business School

WESTERN UNIVERSITY • CANADA

# **Dyads, Triads and Consumer Treachery: When Interpersonal Connections Guard Against Brand Cheating**

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# Strong Bonds Drive Loyalty

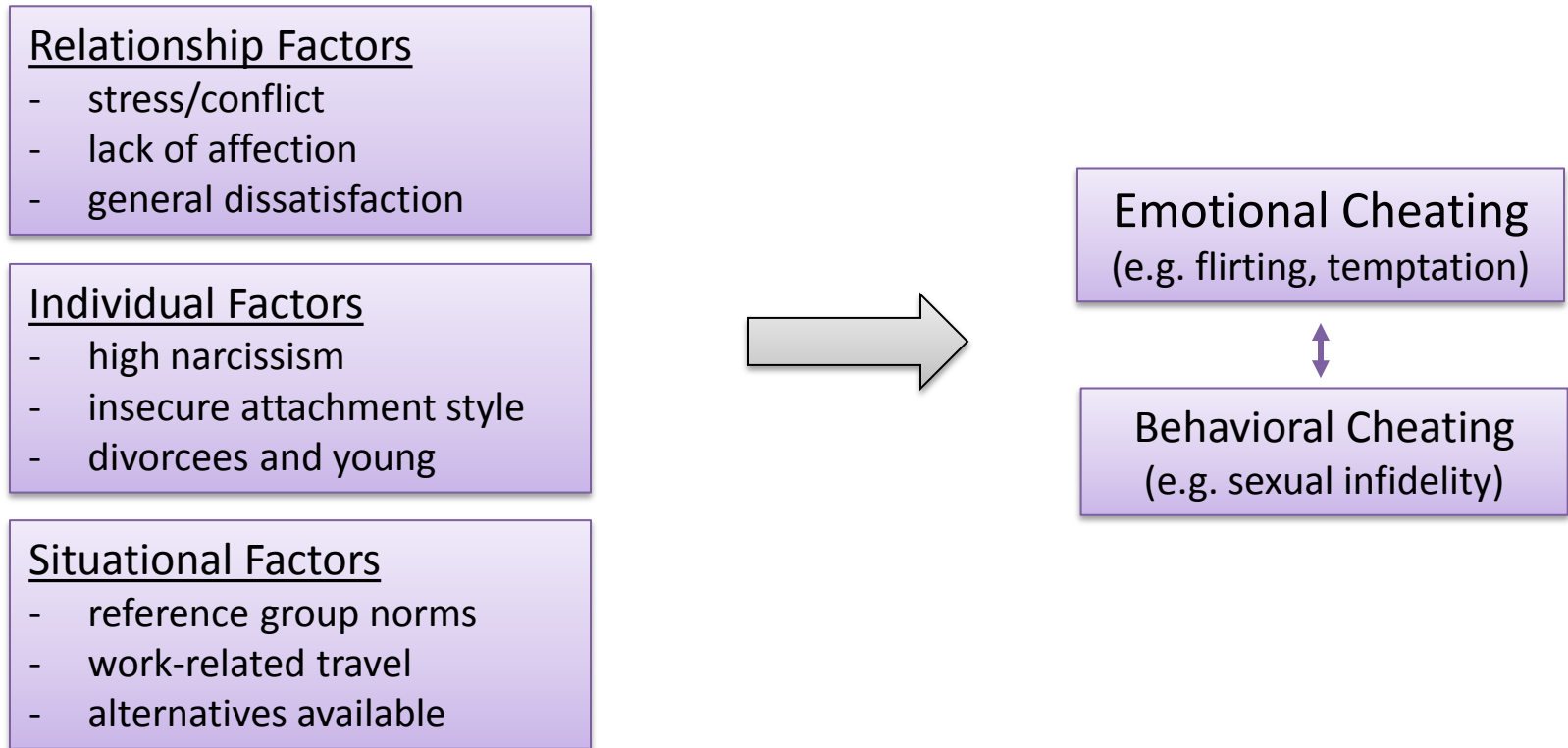


committed, satisfying, important etc... → discourages cheating  
(e.g. Drigotas et al., 1999; Glass and Wright, 1985)



love, commitment, attachment etc... → loyalty  
(e.g. Batra et al., 2012; Fournier 1998; Park et al., 2010)

# Interpersonal Insights



(e.g. Atkins, Baucom and Jacobson, 2001; Buss and Shackelford, 1997; Gailliot and Baumeister, 2007; Treas and Giesen, 2000)

“I am in the early stages of cheating on one of the longest-standing relationships of my (consumer) life. I have betrayed Apple”

[www.news.yahoo.com](http://www.news.yahoo.com)

“I have a confession to make:  
I’ve been cheating on my toothpaste brand”

[www.corebrand.com](http://www.corebrand.com)

# Imperfect Loyalty...



# Imperfect Loyalty...



# Branding Insights

brand fling

vs.

secret affair...



LACKS COMMITMENT



RISKY IF EXPOSED

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Key: Expectations of Exclusivity

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(Alvarez and Fournier, 2012; Fournier 1998)



# Branding Insights

committed partnerships



HIGH IN LOVE, INTIMACY, COMMITMENT

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Norm of Exclusivity

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(Alvarez and Fournier, 2012; Fournier 1998)

# Def: Brand Cheating

The act of buying and/or using a brand within the same category in which one has a STRONGLY COMMITTED relationship.

≠ Brand switching

RQ:

Loyalty vs. cheating?

Norms of exclusivity?

Role of interpersonal influences?

# Study 1: Probing C-B Partnership

Consumer Interviews (n = 20, non-students)

→ “strongly committed” to a brand

→ four themes emerged

# Theme 1: Brand Cheating Does Not Exist

“I don’t feel unfaithful. No. I don’t think an item deserves faithfulness.”



“The idea that you could even say ‘cheating on Apple’ is pathetic” ([www.news.yahoo.com](http://www.news.yahoo.com))

# Theme 2:

## Some C-B Relationships are Exclusive

“I am loyal and exclusive just to Michael Kors... For purses and wallets and watches, I stayed just true to Michael Kors. I don't even look at other brands to be honest.”

→ Monogamy

# Theme 3: Loyalty is First Chance to Say No

“I would probably look at North Face first and exhaust those options before I would consider something else.”

→ Right of First Refusal?

# Theme 4: Interpersonal Connections Matter

“Growing up I was an athlete. I played competitive basketball and that sort of thing... My family was all Nike wearers... I always felt like I was betraying Nike when I was younger wearing an Adidas shirt or something like that.”

→ Associated with monogamy, cheating



# Theory: Triads vs Dyads

Brands as ends (*dyad*) or means to interpersonal ends (*triad*)  
(Fournier, 2009)

Triad = norms of exclusivity? reduced cheating?

# Qualtrics Survey (n = 175)

Name a brand “that you are committed to buying and using in the future” ( $M_{commitment} = 5.5/7$ )

## Measured:

Interpersonal Connection (“sense of contact with people who care for me”)

Brand Relationship Strength (commitment, attachment)

Brand Substitutability (“easy to replace this brand with a new one”)

Monogamy (Using another brand “would be wrong”)

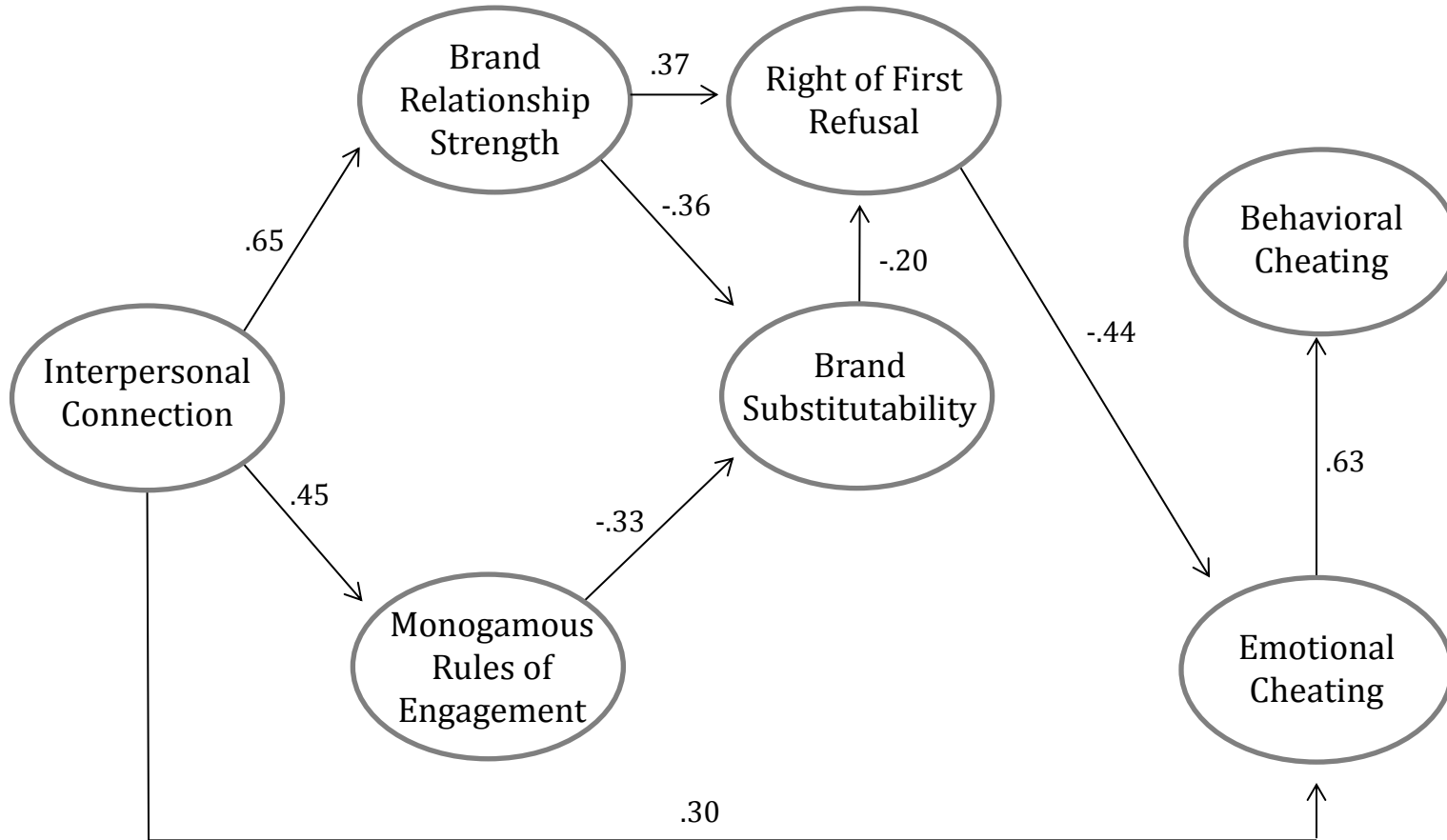
Right of First Refusal (“I always consider BRAND first...”)

Emotional Cheating (“tempted to use or buy other brands...”)

Behavioral Cheating (“how many different brands... actually used...”)

Covariates: materialism, product/service dummy, age, gender

# SEM Results



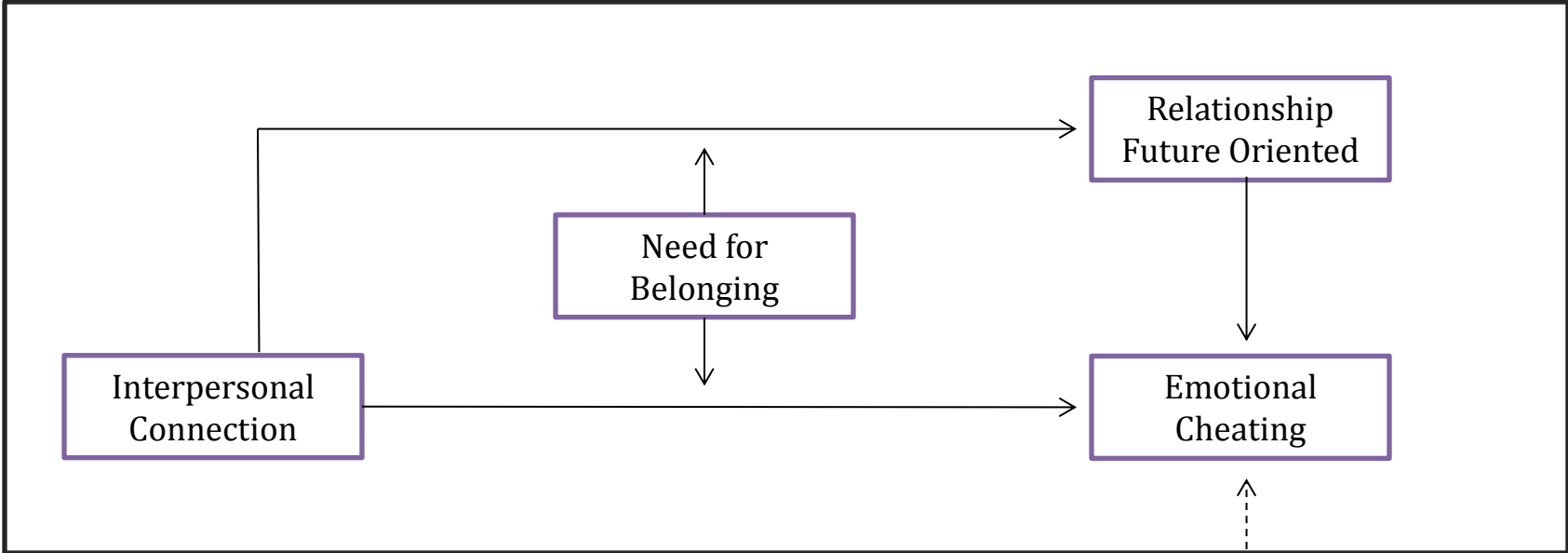
Results of ML Bootstrapping (iterations = 1,000) analysis;  $Chi-sq. = 1147.94$ ;  $DF = 486$ ;  $CMIN/DF = 2.36$ ;  $CFI = .86$ ;  $RMSEA = .09$ ; all paths  $p < .05$ ; Materialism (covariate) impacts Emotional Cheating ( $\gamma = .17$ ,  $p < .02$ ); Brand Type dummy (0 = product; 1 = service) impacts Behavioral Cheating ( $\gamma = .24$ ,  $p < .01$ ); all other covariates (age, gender) are not significant.

# Mturk Experiment (n = 292)

Now, we want you to think about a specific brand that you are committed to buying and using in the future and that you generally use alone [with other people in mind]. That is, when you think about or use this brand, it does not link you in any way to other people (e.g. family, friends) - it's just yours [it links you in some way to other people (e.g. family, friends) – it's something you share].  $M_{\text{dyad}} = 2.94$  vs.  $M_{\text{triad}} = 4.10$ ,  $p < .01$

- Past: Reminds me of an important friend from my past ( $\alpha = .81$ )  
Present: Reminds me of a person who is important to me now ( $\alpha = .82$ )  
Future: Will help me carry on a tradition ( $\alpha = .75$ )  
Moderator: Need for Belonging (e.g. I do not like being alone...) ( $\alpha = .89$ )

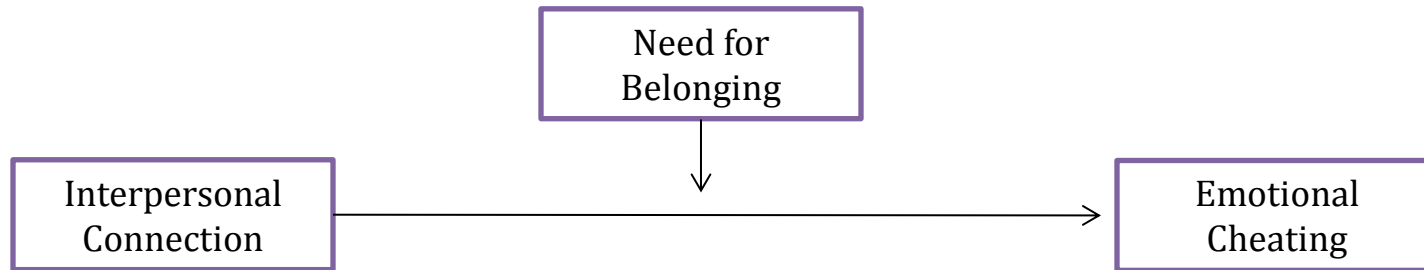
# Focal Interest:



Model 8, Preacher & Hayes

*Past & present oriented relationships had no effects...*

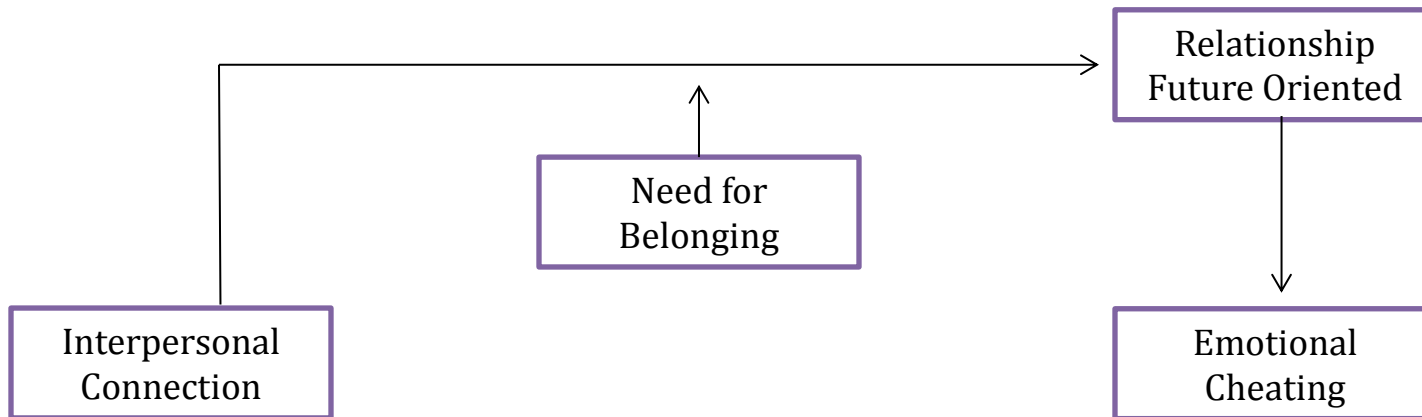
<u>Percentile</u>	<u>Conditional DIRECT Effect</u>	<u>p&lt;</u>
10 <sup>th</sup>	<b>-.73</b>	<b>.01</b>
25 <sup>th</sup>	<b>-.57</b>	<b>.01</b>
50 <sup>th</sup>	<b>-.38</b>	<b>.03</b>
75 <sup>th</sup>	-.19	.37
90 <sup>th</sup>	-.08	.77



Among those with a [low need for belonging](#):

→ a more interpersonally connected brand relationship reduces emotional cheating...

<u>Percentile</u>	<u>Conditional INDIRECT Effect</u>	<u>Lower CI</u>	<u>Upper CI</u>
10 <sup>th</sup>	-.03	-.26	.17
25 <sup>th</sup>	.06	-.09	.24
50 <sup>th</sup>	<b>.16</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.35</b>
75 <sup>th</sup>	<b>.27</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.49</b>
90 <sup>th</sup>	<b>.33</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.61</b>



Among those with a **high need for belonging**:

- a more interpersonally connected brand relationship increases emotional cheating...
- effect mediated by C-B Relationship's Future Orientation

# Wrap-Up

## Interpersonal Connections:

- Strengthen relationships, monogamy → reduce cheating

## Loyalty is:

- Giving partner first chance to say no

Emotional cheating only direct path to behavioral cheating

## Ongoing:

- interpersonal connections → temptation, fantasizing



End

# Study 1 Summary Statistics

Construct	Summary Statistics			Correlation Matrix										
	M	SD	alpha	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	
(1) Commitment	5.47	1.19	.96											
(2) Attachment (Thomson et al)	5.09	1.24	.93	<b>.76</b>										
(3) Attachment (Park et al)	4.59	1.39	.90	<b>.62</b>	<b>.75</b>									
(4) Monogamy	3.76	1.39	.94	<b>.26</b>	<b>.32</b>	<b>.40</b>								
(5) Materialism	3.53	1.21	.90	.11	<b>.20</b>	<b>.24</b>	.06							
(6) Interpersonal	3.51	1.63	.92	<b>.41</b>	<b>.58</b>	<b>.66</b>	<b>.47</b>	<b>.16</b>						
(7) Difficulty Replacing	4.25	1.42	.86	<b>.26</b>	<b>.34</b>	<b>.41</b>	<b>.44</b>	.13	<b>.45</b>					
(8) Emotional Cheating	2.83	1.53	.91	-.04	.12	.10	.03	<b>.19</b>	<b>.25</b>	-.10				
(9) Behavioral Cheating	2.84	1.91	.95	.02	.04	.00	-.11	.14	.11	<b>-.17</b>	<b>.63</b>			
(10) Right of First Refusal	4.87	1.26	.80	<b>.20</b>	<b>.19</b>	.12	.03	<b>-.22</b>	.05	<b>.20</b>	-.13	-.02		

**Bold =  $p < .05$**