

## **Infidelity in wartime: Risk, digital intimacy, and implications for couples' therapy**

<https://doi.org/10.67242/conference-2026-49>

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The field of infidelity research is shaped by moral judgements about the behaviour which – arguably – can limit understanding of the phenomenon and the ability of practitioners to work with it as a presenting issue in couples. In this talk, we will begin by providing a brief introduction to infidelity – what research suggests about how it is defined, how common it is, and the (shifting) public attitudes towards it. We will also survey what infidelity research and theory suggests are risk factors for infidelity and review the very limited research on infidelity in wartimes (mainly in an US context). In the second part of our talk, we will consider the implications of digital technologies for infidelity, beginning by framing them within the broader literature on digital intimacies (with a focus on online dating) and digital relating, that is, how online spaces shift how people 'do' relationships. Drawing on our own research, we will consider how relationship boundaries are blurred online, whether and how online communication increases infidelity risk, and how online infidelity may differ from offline infidelity. Finally, we will focus on what all this means for working therapeutically with infidelity. We will introduce key therapeutic approaches and ask you to consider the relevance to the Ukraine of adaptations developed to support working with American military couples impacted by infidelity. We will consider the role of practitioner stance on infidelity and how this may shape therapeutic approach and couple engagement. Throughout the presentation, you will be encouraged to consider your own stance on infidelity, the additional risk factors in the context of the war in Ukraine, and how local practices related to digital communication may be shaping emotional and sexual infidelity. You will also reflect on your approach to working with infidelity and whether it shifts through engaging with the presented material.