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## Media more likely to cover infidelity

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Sandra Bullock had reached the top of her profession: an Academy Award for her role in the hit film "The Blind Side."

For most actresses like Bullock — box office favorites, but not exactly award magnets like Meryl Streep — the glow from earning an Oscar could last for months, turning into endless appearances on television shows and magazine and newspaper articles about her next movie roles.

While Bullock has been in the news for months, much of the most recent coverage has little to do with her acting. It has to do with her impending divorce following accusations her husband cheated on her.

Infidelity dominates the covers of celebrity gossip rags, makes money for authors of books such as "Is It Cheating If I Don't Get Caught?" and "The Truth about Cheating: Why Men Stray and What You Can Do to Prevent It," and is the only premise for the popular TV show "Cheaters."

**TMZ.com**, a website devoted to intense coverage of celebrities and their personal lives, would likely not exist without the straying eyes of famous folks such as Larry King, David Letterman and Bullock's (soon-to-be-ex) husband Jesse James.

Tiger Woods made headlines off the golf course with the discovery that the married superstar had more than a dozen mistresses. He made more headlines when he publicly apologized ... during a news conference that several cable news networks carried live.

Infidelity has become a commodity — a story to be covered if its victims are famous enough.

### Perception = reality?

About 60 years ago, the gossip magazine Confidential featured a story on its cover with the headline, "The Girl Who Said No To Michael Wilding."

That sort of chastity seems to be harder to find within the covers of People and Us Weekly — magazines that appeal to readers who want the dirt on celebrities and how the rich and famous handle situations everyday people get to deal with in private. (See information below on dealing with infidelity.)

But the type of dirt has changed over the years.

"This is not 'Ozzie and Harriet' time anymore," Springfieldian Bonnie Schattschneider, 67, said while perusing the produce section one mid-April afternoon at County Market on South Sixth Street.

Schattschneider, a Lutheran Memorial Church secretary who will celebrate 45 years of marriage with her husband, Craig, this year, said it's not the fact that media outlets think men and women cheating on each other is a worthy cover story. It's the fact that infidelity appears to become a common activity.

"Things are a lot looser now," Schattschneider said. "I wonder what it's going to be like 10 years from now."

### Headlines

About a decade ago, the nation got a big dose of what Schattschneider fears is the future when President Bill Clinton faced impeachment charges.

He was accused of providing false testimony to a grand jury regarding an alleged affair he had with 22-year-old intern Monica Lewinsky. Clinton was acquitted during his impeachment trial.

Before that, politics were stained with corruption and greed, but sex scandals rarely captured the public consciousness. No one knew much about Thomas Jefferson's apparent affairs with his slaves until centuries later. During his early 1960s term, the public didn't know about John F. Kennedy's supposed dalliances.

Things shifted in the late 1980s when a sex scandal altered a presidential race. Rising Democratic star Gary Hart challenged allegations of an extramarital affair with an invitation for the media to follow him around. After Hart was accused of spending the night with a woman who was not his wife — and a photo of aspiring model Donna Rice sitting on Hart's lap surfaced — he was finished as a presidential candidate.

Since Clinton, the public's nightly news has been inundated with sex scandals involving politicians at every level: presidential nominee John Edwards, U.S. Rep. Mark Foley, U.S. Sen. Larry Craig, New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer, New Jersey Gov. James McGreevey — and the list goes on.

What changed?

When Charlie Wheeler arrived in Springfield in the 1970s as a statehouse reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times, "hanky panky" was



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