

## ABSTRACT

### Partner Responsiveness: The Long Term Effects on a Relationship

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According to the theory of attachment injuries, it was hypothesized that there would be a relationship between perceived partner responsiveness (both support and capitalization) and two relationship outcome variables (relationship attributions and adult romantic attachment). In addition, there was also a hypothesized relationship between support and perceived threat and neglect. One hundred and eighty four participants in a romantic relationship were assessed through on-line surveys up to four times every two weeks in order to examine concurrent, between person, and within person effects. The dimensions of perceived partner responsiveness (active constructive, passive destructive, and active destructive) were analyzed separately, rather than having a single score for support and capitalization. One hundred percent of the expected concurrent or bivariate correlation results occurred in the expected direction. However, there were also large correlations between the predictor variables, which ultimately may have contributed to the less robust between and within person results. Only 33% of the support between person effects were significant after controlling for satisfaction, while only one of the capitalization between person effects was significant in an unexpected direction. For the

within person effects, only 27% of the support results were significant and 22% of the capitalization results were significant. However, the validity of the threat and neglect measures was strengthened as a result of this study.

Partner Responsiveness: The Long Term Effects on a Relationship

by

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A Dissertation

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## DEDICATION

To my father, Dr. Evan M. Anders, who gave me a copy of his published dissertation when I was in elementary school. At the time, the book seemed massive to me and I was only able to read the really short words. I thought I had the smartest dad in the whole wide world. In his last few days, he wanted me to read to him so he could continue to learn. He will always be the smartest person in the world to me.

Also, to Zachary Harned, who loves me completely and genuinely, even at my very worst. He transformed my time at Baylor into an amazing and wonderful adventure filled with laughter and lots of snuggling.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

When one romantic partner discusses a stressful or positive life event with the other partner, the reaction (or responsiveness) of the listening partner is important to the relationship. Partner responsiveness may be associated with various relationship outcomes, such as the creation of attributions, perceived neglect, perceived threat, and attachment. Two types of partner responsiveness are perceived support (responsiveness to feelings of vulnerability experienced in the context of negative or stressful life events) and perceived capitalization (responsiveness to shared positive life events). It is expected that perceived responsiveness (both supportiveness and capitalization) will predict various relationship outcomes, including: attachment, neglect, threat, and attributions. More importantly, changes in perceived support and capitalization experiences over time should predict corresponding within-person changes in the four outcomes. The theory of attachment injuries within Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy suggests these changes as well.

Support and capitalization are two separate and unique predictor constructs. Capitalization is defined as taking advantage of positive events by sharing them with others (Langston, 1994). Support, on the other hand, can be seen as a way for a distressed individual to seek out emotional comfort from others. Capitalization and support are ways that a person responds to his or her partner who is being vulnerable by sharing either stressful or positive aspects of their lives. The main differences between support and capitalization are related to the type of life event of the partner who is doing

the sharing, and the type of response that this partner desires from the other. If one partner is sharing a positive life event, then the other partner's communication is capitalization. The sharing partner might be hoping for celebration and joy from the other partner. If the sharing partner is talking about a negative or stressful life event, the communication of the other partner is support. The communicating partner might be hoping for concern, validation, or possibly problem solving.

Another more precise way to examine responsiveness is to examine all four dimensions of responsiveness which fall along a continuum, including: active constructive, passive constructive, passive destructive, and active destructive (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004; Logan, & Cobb, 2013). Examining the four dimensions individually in relation to outcome measures could provide information about how various types of responsiveness are related to specific outcome measures such as threat and neglect. Active constructive responsiveness can be defined as a type of positive responsiveness, while the other three types of responsiveness are increasingly negative types of responsiveness (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). Active constructive responsiveness is expected to increase positive outcomes, while the other three negative forms of responsiveness are expected to decrease different positive outcomes depending on the increasing level of negativity. These positive and negative distinctions were originally determined due to each dimension's positive or negative relationship with relationship well being (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). Typically, researchers have examined an overall capitalization or support score (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004; Logan, & Cobb, 2013; Shallcross, Howland, Bemis, Simpson, & Frazier, 2011; Gosnell, & Gable, 2013); however, the individual types of responsiveness scores may be useful

when comparing them to specific outcome variables which overlap theoretically with some of the types of responsiveness. For instance, the constructive types may help to build up a relationship, while the destructive types may have a negative impact on a relationship. Passivity is likely to be associated with the neglect of a relationship or disengaging from a relationship. The construct of passive constructive responsiveness is therefore both positive and negative in theory. The constructive label could be seen as positive, while the passive label could be seen as negative. After combining together both positive and negative concepts, the results of this dimension may be less definitive than the other clearly negative dimensions (active and passive destructive responsiveness); therefore, the passive constructive variable will only be included for as an exploratory variable and will not be included in any of the hypotheses. The passive constructive dimension will most likely be the least negative dimension out of the three negative types of responsiveness because it has both positive and negative elements. The passive destructive dimension is expected to be less negative than the active destructive dimension.

Attachment injury theory overlaps with insecure attachment theory and states an expected relationship between support and attachment. Attachment injuries are betrayals, abandonments, or violations of trust (i.e. forms of negative support) by one partner towards another partner, while the injured partner is experiencing a stressful life event (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001). Consistent with attachment injury theory, a person who has an attachment injury also has an insecure attachment (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001). However, couples can have an insecure attachment without an attachment injury. John Bowlby (1969) introduced the concept of parent and child

attachment, thus developing the theory and field of attachment. Later, Hazan and Shaver (1987) suggested that romantic love is an attachment process where affectional bonds are formed between adults that are comparable to bonds formed between a parent and a child. They demonstrated that the three infant attachments (secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent) are also present in adulthood, that the three types of attachment affect how an adult experiences a romantic relationship, and that an adult attachment is related to an individual's model of the self and of relationships in general. Avoidant attachment in adults can be defined as discomfort with closeness and depending on others, while anxious attachment is the insecurity someone has regarding the availability and responsiveness of his or her romantic partner (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). For adults, differences in attachment have been shown to influence the processing of attachment information, regulation of affect, and communication in social interactions (Johnson & Whiffen, 1999). Attachment injuries are a theoretical construct that appears after a listening partner displays various types of negative support. Passive destructive support is when a listening partner is disengaged from or abandoning the relationship, which is similar to the behaviors that exist with an attachment injury. Active destructive support is defined as blaming, criticizing, or invalidating (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). Attachment injuries often involve the injuring partner denying or dismissing that an injury occurred (Johnson, Mäkinen, & Millikin, 2001), which is ultimately a form of invalidation and demonstrates the connection between attachment injury theory and active destructive support. It can be derived from the theory of attachment injuries that perceived negative supportiveness should be related to insecure attachment.

Attachment injury theory states that perceived partner support is expected to have a relationship with perceived partner neglect. One thought a partner might have after an attachment injury is that their partner is not dependable (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001). A person who is not dependable would fail to make contributions or investments in a relationship. According to Sanford (2010b), perceived neglect is based on a partner's perception that the other partner is failing to make a desired contribution or investment in the relationship. Perceived neglect is a type of underlying concern, which is a person's basic reason for feeling distress during a conflict with a romantic partner (Sanford, 2010b). The appraisals that are present after an attachment injury are similar to the appraisals that exist after a partner perceives neglect. Therefore, negative perceived support from one partner should be associated with an increase in perceived neglect, due to the similarities between the two constructs. In particular, perceived passive destructive support should have a relationship with neglect due to the distance and disengagement associated with the passive destructive construct. However, perceived active destructive support is also a form of negative support and should have a relationship with neglect as well.

Perceived support is expected to be related to perceived threat, which is another type of underlying concern. Based on the similarity of perceived threat and perceived active destructive support, a strong association would be expected between the two constructs. According to Sanford (2010b), perceived threat is based on a partner's perception that the other partner is blaming and controlling. Active destructive support is also defined as blaming, but includes criticizing and invalidation as well (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). In addition, due to active destructive support being the most

negative support construct, it is expected to have the strongest relationship with threat compared to the other types of negative support.

Based on attachment injury theory, perceived negative support is expected to be associated with negative relationship attributions, while perceived positive support is expected to be associated with positive relationship attributions. Attributions are the process by which couples explain the causes of behavior and events in their relationship (Jaspars, Fincham, & Hewstone, 1983). A cognitive schema or consistent pattern of attributions about a partner not being trustworthy or dependable might be experienced with insecure attachments (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001). Several research studies suggest that there will be a relationship between perceived support and attributions as well. Distressed or unsatisfied couples have been observed making stable, blameworthy, and global attributions for their partner's negative actions during couples therapy (Johnson, & Sims, 2000). In addition, unsatisfied or distressed couples also tended to make responsibility attributions that their partners are selfishly motivated and behaving with negative intent (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). Perceived neglect was also associated with blaming attributions (Sanford, 2010b), which further strengthens the similarities between the constructs of perceived negative support and perceived neglect. Researchers have also shown that people develop more negative attributions for their partners' actions when they have an insecure attachment as compared to a secure attachment (Pearce, & Halford, 2008; Sümer, & Cozzarelli, 2004; Collins, Ford, Guichard, & Allard, 2006; Gallo & Smith, 2001). In addition, Collins and Feeney (2004) found that insecurely attached partners tend to view their partner's support as consistent with their attachment working models or schemas, especially in cases of ambiguous

support. Further research is needed to determine if perceived negative support is associated with negative attributions, but the current research suggests that this association exists.

In addition, although not directly addressed in the theory of attachment injuries, it seems likely that perceived partner capitalization will also be important and may predict some of the same outcomes as perceived partner support, such as attachment and attributions. Perceived threat, perceived neglect, and perceived capitalization are not specifically mentioned in the theory of attachment injuries (unlike attachment and attributions); therefore, data was not collected to compare perceived capitalization with perceived neglect and threat. Based on the research described below, a relationship between attachment and perceived capitalization is expected. Shallcross, Howland, Bemis, Simpson, and Frazier (2011) found that avoidantly attached partners, during one interaction, perceive their partners to be less responsive when compared with more securely attached participants. Outside observers agreed with these self-reported observations. Another study by Gosnell, and Gable (2013), also found that avoiders receive less support in capitalization scenarios. The researchers also discovered that anxiously attached people experienced more relationship and life satisfaction when they received capitalization from their partners compared to less anxiously attached participants. However, both of these studies only assessed for attachment at one point in time. This research raises the possibility that changes in perceived responsiveness related to capitalization may predict changes in attachment. More specifically, both studies suggested that there would be a positive relationship between avoidant attachment and the various types of perceived negative capitalization. At the same time, there may also

be a positive relationship between the various types of perceived negative capitalization and anxious attachment because anxious attachment is another type of insecure attachment.

Although often assessed as a trait, a more precise way to examine responsiveness is to look at the responsiveness of a partner after a specific event has been communicated to that partner. Previously, responsiveness studies tended to ask about a partner's typical response to the disclosure of positive or negative life events, rather than a participant's reaction to one specific negative or positive life event (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004; Logan, Cobb, 2013). This study deviated from typical responsiveness studies by asking the participants to think of specific instances where they shared a positive or stressful live event with a partner. Context specific measures (as opposed to global measures) may help participants to remember their exact perceptions at one point in time rather than a vague generalized concept of their perceptions over a period of time, which will ultimately lead to more accurate recollections and more accurate data collection.

The theory of attachment injuries is also a theory of within person change. The theory underlying Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy is a theory of within person change because the goal of the therapy is to change the type of support provided between partners to heal attachment injuries and increase secure attachments. A study that only used a single concurrent assessment of all variables could not test a theory that involves relationship changes over time. In addition, attachment injuries develop after one partner provides negative support, such as perceived betrayals, abandonments, or violations of trust by one partner towards another partner, while the injured partner is experiencing a stressful life event (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001). Both the development and

resolution of attachment injuries demonstrates that negative and positive support are associated with within person change.

Perceived support is expected to have an association with insecure attachments, especially when examining within person changes. Davila, Karney, and Bradbury (1999) discovered that attachments often become stronger as a marriage progresses and that vulnerability was found to lead to fluctuations in attachment for women. In another study where attachment changes were documented, this time in the context of partner support, Davila and Kashy (2009) found a back and forth cycle where one partner's insecure attachment created the same type of insecure attachment in the other partner over a two week period. For example, an anxiously attached partner would frequently seek support in the relationship, which would result in the other partner feeling anxious about abandonment as well. With avoidant partners, these researchers found that they tended to not seek out support and then the other partner avoided being able to give the support. On the other hand, securely attached partners were able to understand when support was needed and provide it. The Davila and Kashy (2009) project only asked participants how supported they felt by their partner without exploring the type of support along a continuum that was provided. They demonstrated that there is a relationship between a general feeling of being supported (i.e., positive support) and secure attachment. They also showed that there is a relationship between anxious attachment and perceived negative support. It is expected that there will also be a relationship between perceived negative support and avoidant attachment as well.

When examining the relationship between perceived responsiveness and other couples constructs such as attachment, attributions, and neglect, it is important to control

for relationship satisfaction. “Sentiment override” (Weiss, 1980) can lead to people responding to various couples questionnaire items on the basis of their global feelings of relationship satisfaction, rather than on the construct in question. Due to the relationship between satisfaction and the two types of perceived responsiveness, it is important to control for “sentiment override” to determine if other constructs can be predicted from a partner’s perceived responsiveness behavior. Satisfaction is best utilized as a predictor variable, instead of as an outcome variable.

Attachment injury theory can be relevant to all couples (not just highly distressed couples) and thus can help with better understanding partner support and its associations with various outcome variables for a large number of couples. The theory of attachment injuries focuses on extreme examples of perceived negative support; however, milder versions of negative support can occur in couples that do not have an attachment injury. Two partners can both be providing smaller amounts of negative support to one another, which might result in an insecure attachment rather than an attachment injury. An attachment injury is not necessary for a couple to have an insecure bond. An insecure bond could be conceptualized as a more minor form of attachment injury. Therefore, research on understanding the theory behind attachment injuries could be conducted on couples who have or have not experienced an attachment injury.

### *The Current Study*

The aim of the current study is to test the extent to which each type of perceived partner responsiveness (i.e., capitalization and support) are correlated with attachment, perceived partner neglect, perceived partner threat, and partner attributions. Participants in a relationship were recruited to take self-report surveys assessing such factors as

perceived threat and neglect, adult attachment, relationship attributions, relationship satisfaction, perceived partner capitalization, and perceived partner support. Relationship satisfaction data was collected so that “sentiment override” could be controlled for within this study. Participants were assessed once every two weeks for up to four total assessments, so that the within person changes in perceived partner neglect, perceived threat, adult attachment, and relationship attributions could be observed over time in relation to changes in perceived partner support and capitalization.

It was hypothesized that:

- 1) Correlations should exist between the predictor and outcome variables based on data collected during the first assessment.
  - a. Perceived positive partner support (active constructive support) would have negative correlations with neglect, threat, insecure attachment, and negative attributions. Perceived negative partner support (active and passive destructive support) would be positively correlated with perceived partner neglect, perceived partner threat, an insecure attachment, and negative attributions.
  - b. Perceived positive partner capitalization would have negative correlations with insecure attachment and negative attributions, while perceived negative capitalization would be positively correlated with insecure attachment and negative attributions.
- 2) After controlling for satisfaction and the other predictor variables, all of the relationships above will remain significant based on data collected during the first assessment.

- 3) Fluctuations in perceived partner support, and perceived partner capitalization are expected to correspond with fluctuations in perceived partner neglect, perceived partner threat, adult attachment, and conflict attributions based on data collected over multiple weeks.
  - a. The predictor variables will have the same relationships with the outcome variables as was listed in hypothesis 1a and b.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Methods

#### *Participants*

One hundred and eighty four participants were recruited for this study and then asked to complete up to four assessments (which were identical). Sixty-eight of the participants were college undergraduate psychology students and 116 of the participants were Amazon Mechanical Turk employees. Fifty participants completed the survey once, 43 participants completed the survey twice, 72 participants completed it three times, and 19 participants completed it four times. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 67 years ( $M = 32.04$ ,  $SD = 13.18$ ). The participants consisted of 70.1 percent females, 28.8 percent males, and 1.1 percent as other. The sample had 71.2 percent of participants identify as White, 6.5 as African American, 12 as Hispanic or Latino, 4.9 percent as Asian, 0.5 percent as American Indian or Native American, 0.5 percent as Pacific Island or Native Hawaiian, 3.8 percent as multiracial, and 0.5 percent as other. The sample consisted of 94.0 percent heterosexual couples, 2.2 percent bisexual couples, 3.3 percent homosexual couples, and 0.5 percent who preferred not to answer. About half of the sample, 52.7 percent, was married, 2.7 percent were engaged, 35.9 percent were in a committed dating relationship, 1.1 percent were in an uncommitted dating relationship (they were in a relationship for at least six weeks where they were not exclusive), and 7.6 percent were in a domestic partnership. Over half the sample, 64.1 percent were living together, while 35.8 percent were not. There was a range in the length of participant relationships: the participant sample included 20.2 percent in a

relationship for less than one year, 36.4 percent for one to four years, and 43.4 percent for more than four years

Participants were recruited through the Baylor Undergraduate participant pool and through Amazon Mechanical Turk. For the Baylor study, participants were in a romantic relationship of at least six weeks, so as to have sufficient time to be able to identify conflicts in their relationship. For the Amazon study, participants were living together in order to facilitate more communication interactions. (The undergraduate population might have had a difficult time meeting the requirements of the study to communicate with their partners about a stressful or a positive life event once every two weeks due to an infrequency of communication.) All participants also experienced a stressful or positive life experience that they then talked about with their partner in the last two weeks. If a participant stated that he or she did not have a stressful or positive experience that he or she then discussed with his or her partner in an assessment, then that assessment was excluded from the study. In total, nine participants were excluded for this reason and were not included in the total sample size. All participants were at least 18 years of age. Undergraduates received credit for a particular psychology course for participating in the study. Amazon employees received \$1 for the first assessment, \$1 for the second assessment, and \$1.50 for the third assessment. Only Baylor participants were allowed to fill out the survey up to four times.

### *Procedures*

Baylor participants completed multiple assessments, up to four times, over the course of six weeks. Psychology Baylor undergraduate students learned about the study and the requirement of repeated measures through the Baylor Human Participation in

Research pool using SONA. Students were recruited with this statement: “Participants for this study are required to be in a romantic relationship where they communicate with their partner about both positive and stressful experiences that occur in their life. This study involves 4 separate assessments over the course of six weeks.” Participants were told in writing in the informed consent process that they would be contacted through email to complete multiple follow up assessments. Participants were not able to proceed with the study until they provided their electronic consent. The participants were asked in the first assessment to provide their email, and in all assessments to provide their name, so that they would be able to be contacted to complete follow up assessments and their data could be grouped together. Dr. Sanford and myself were the only people authorized to see this identifying information and the identifying information was destroyed as soon as it was no longer needed. At each assessment point (which was nearly identical), participants were asked to complete the same measures through the Qualtrics online survey system. Only during the first assessment were demographic questions such as gender, age, length of relationship, and status of the relationship asked. The measures given at each assessment consisted of scales assessing perceived neglect and threat, negative attributions, relationship satisfaction, adult attachment and perceived partner responsiveness.

Mechanical Turk participants completed multiple assessments, measured up to three times over the course of four weeks. The participants learned about the study and the requirement of repeated measures through the online Mechanical Turk system. Details of the study were not revealed to the participants until they completed a screening questionnaire that limited participants to people who were in long-term relationships

where they were living with one another. Three Mechanical Turk Employees were excluded for attempting to take the screening questionnaire multiple times (based on their IP address and/or Mechanical Turk ID number). After participants were screened, they learned that the study was longitudinal and that they would be contacted through Mechanical Turk without having to provide identifying information for future assessments. Mechanical Turk ID numbers were used to link data together from multiple assessments. Participants were not able to proceed with the study until they provided their electronic consent after reading the informed consent statement. At each assessment point (which was nearly identical), participants were asked to complete the same measures through the Mechanical Turk system. The measures were the same measures provided to the Baylor students (as was described above).

The beginning of the survey was different for the two samples due to different methods to handle if participants did or did not have a positive or stressful life event. First, the Baylor participants were asked if they experienced a stressful and positive event in the last two weeks through two dichotomous questions directly asking if they experienced each event. If the participants could not think of a positive or a stressful event, then he or she was given an alternate assignment to answer the same questions based on a hypothetical rather than real positive or stressful life event. Some participants only experienced a positive event. In that instance, the participant filled out the regular survey for the positive event and the alternative assignment for the stressful event. Regardless of how a Baylor participant answered the screening questions, each participant completed surveys for both a positive and stressful life event (i.e., either for a real or a hypothetical situation). The Mechanical Turk employees were not given an

alternative assignment because they were screened prior to being selected for the study. If a Mechanical Turk participant did not have a positive or stressful life event to discuss during an assessment, then they still received compensation, but they were not asked to participate in further assessments. Only three Mechanical Turk participants did not have a positive or stressful event for an assessment.

If the participants were able to think of a positive and/or stressful event, then they were asked to describe in a text box one or both of the experiences in detail based on whether or not they could recall one or both types of events. For the positive event, the instructions said, “Please describe the most positive event that happened to you in the last two weeks that you also talked about with your partner. Do not pick an event that you could not discuss with your partner because your partner was directly involved in the event. Examples of a positive event include making a good grade or spending time with friends.” For the Mechanical Turk survey, the examples were “engaging in an activity you enjoy or spending time with friends.” For the stressful event, the instructions said, “Please describe the most stressful event that happened to you in the last two weeks that you talked about with your partner. Do not pick an event that you could not discuss with your partner because your partner was directly involved in the event. Examples of a stressful event include making a low grade, experiencing the death of a loved one, moving to a new city, or having an argument with a friend.” For the Mechanical Turk survey, the examples were “being unable to pay a bill, experiencing the death of a loved one, moving to a new city, or having an argument with a friend.” After the participants described the event, they were asked to rate how positive or stressful the event was for them with a 5-point Likert scale (extremely positive, very positive, moderately positive,

slightly positive, barely positive or extremely stressful, very stressful, moderately stressful, slightly stressful, barely stressful).

Next, the participants were asked whether or not they talked with their partners about the vulnerable and/or positive experience with a dichotomous question. The participants then completed scales to assess the perceived capitalization and supportiveness they received from their partner. Participants also completed scales related to attachment, partner neglect, relationship satisfaction, and negative attributions.

At each assessment point, participants were asked to provide a new positive and stressful event that they experienced in the last two weeks within text boxes. The participant was asked to complete the full survey up to three more times after the first assessment in two-week intervals for a total of six weeks, each time referring to a new positive and stressful event. Baylor participants were emailed by the primary investigator two weeks after each prior assessment to take another assessment, for a total of four assessments. The email said, "Dear Participant, Please go to the website (which is linked below) to complete your next assessment for the longitudinal couples survey that you agreed to participate in earlier in the semester. If you no longer wish to be in the study, please email me back and let me know. At that point, you will not receive further emails from me. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to email me as well." When participants missed taking an assessment, they were reminded once a week through email until they completed the assessment or asked to be removed from the study. For the Mechanical Turk study, participants were not given reminder emails. If they did not complete the assessment within one week, they were not able to continue with the study. Twenty-nine people were not asked to participate in the third survey after

not completing the second survey within one week. Eighteen Mechanical Turk Employees did not complete the third survey before the study was closed.

A few measures were undertaken to ensure data quality. At each assessment point, the participants were asked if they were still in a relationship with the same person they had previously talked about in this study. They were also asked with a question if they had a new positive and negative event that they discussed with their partner to refer to for the new assessment point. If the Baylor participant had not had a new positive or negative event, he or she was given an alternate task to complete, in order to still receive credit for his or her participation. For the Mechanical Turk participants, the participants could be denied compensation for not filling out the survey adequately and therefore they tended to answer a question if possible.

Participants were also excluded from the study based on their pattern of answers after the data were collected. Three people were excluded for not filling out the text boxes with relevant information. Nineteen people were removed from the study on the first round for stating that common relationship scenarios did not exist for him or her.

### *Measures*

#### *Perceived Responses to Capitalization Attempts (PRCA)*

Capitalization was assessed using the PRCA. The scale was created to measure perceptions of partners' responses to the sharing of positive life events (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). The scale was modified to apply to one specific positive situation rather than to how the participant's partner typically responds to the sharing of positive life events. The measure yields four subscales (Active-Constructive, Passive-

Constructive, Active-Destructive, and Passive-Destructive) that are assessed by three items rated on a 7-point scale from “not at all true” to “very true”. Sample items included: “My partner reacted to my good fortune enthusiastically” (AC), “My partner said little, but I know he/she was happy for me” (PC), “My partner pointed out the potential downside of the good event” (AD), and “My partner didn't pay much attention to me” (PD). The reliability for this measure for the first assessment was acceptable (AC=.78, PC=.85, AD=.85, PD=.94).

#### *Perceived Responses to Support Seeking (PRSS)*

Supportiveness was assessed with the PRSS. The scale is a 12-item measure that assesses a participant's perceptions of a romantic partner's general responses to disclosures of negative experiences (Logan, Cobb, 2013). Items were developed to parallel the items on the Perceived Responses to Capitalization Attempts (PRCA) scale (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004) and the four subscales: Active-Constructive, Passive-Constructive, Active-Destructive, and Passive-Destructive. Items were created by modifying the wording of PRCA items to reflect partner responses to negative event disclosures, and four new items were developed when rewording was not possible. For this study, the items were reworded to apply to one specific negative or stressful situation rather than to how the participant's partner typically responds to the sharing of negative or stressful life events. Participants rated items on a 7-point scale from “not at all true” to “very true”. Within the current study, the reliabilities were acceptable for the first assessment (AC=.75, AD=.74, and PD=.89), with the exception of the Passive-Constructive reliability (.50).

### *Underlying Concerns*

Perceived partner neglect and threat were assessed with the Couples Underlying Concern Inventory, which is a 16-item questionnaire that assesses perceived neglect and threat during a couple's specific interaction (Sanford, 2010b). The questionnaire was modified to refer to the respondent's experience when he or she talked with his or her partner about a stressful event. The inventory demonstrated appropriate factor structure, convergent, and divergent validity (Sanford, 2010b). Within the first assessment point for this study, the threat alpha was .95 and the neglect alpha was .96.

### *Relationship Satisfaction*

Satisfaction was measured using the sixteen-item version of the Couples Satisfaction Inventory (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The CSI demonstrated strong convergent validity with other measures of satisfaction (Funk & Rogge, 2007). A sample item was: "In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?" Items were adapted to refer to the last two weeks. The reliability for the current study on the first assessment was good, with an alpha of .97.

### *Adult Attachment*

Insecure attachments was assessed with a modified version of the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) questionnaire created by Brennan et al. (1998). The modified ECR was originally used by Sanford and Rowatt (2004). For this study, the questionnaire was shortened to include only an eight-item avoidance scale and an eight-item relationship anxiety scale. The scale was also modified so that the questions referred to a person's current romantic relationship rather than relationships in general. In the current

study, during the first assessment point, the reliabilities were acceptable (anxious alpha = .88 and avoidant alpha = .88).

### *The Negative Attributions Scale*

Negative attributions were assessed using the seven-item self-report scale developed by Sanford (2010a). The Negative Attributions Scale asked individuals to endorse attributions related to a recent conflict within their relationship, such as “my partner deserves to be blamed,” and “my partner is motivated by selfish concerns.” All items had five Likert-scale type response options. The questionnaire was modified to refer to a time in the last two weeks that the respondent felt the most negative or least positive towards his or her partner (rather than during a conflict). Prior to completing the questionnaire, the participant were asked this prompt to write about in a text box: “Please describe in detail a time in the last two weeks that you felt most negative (or the least positive) towards your partner.” Validity was supported by strong correlations between self report and observer rated total attribution scores of .60 for husbands and .50 for wives (Sanford, 2010a). For the current study, at the first assessment point, the reliability was good, with an alpha of .94.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Results

As a preliminary step in the analysis, I first examined how stressful and positive the selected life events were for the participants. The participants largely followed the instructions to pick their most stressful and positive life event. Over half of the sample (79.9 percent) endorsed a stressful event that was “moderately stressful” or higher. About half of the sample (49.5 percent) endorsed a stressful event that was “very stressful” or higher. Over half the sample (84.5 percent) endorsed a positive event that was “very positive” or higher.

Next, I examined the overall level of responsiveness that the participants perceived from their partners during the first assessment point. Only data from the first assessment point was used because this data set had the greatest number of participants. Perceived responsiveness scores were calculated by adding together the scores for four questions, which ranged in value from one to seven, and then dividing that sum by four. I also looked at the means and standard deviations for the outcome variables as well. The means and standard deviations for all of the perceived responsiveness and outcome variables are provided in Table 1. Both active constructive support ( $M = 5.28, SD = 1.27$ ) and active constructive capitalization ( $M = 5.11, SD = 1.31$ ) were perceived more often than any of the other types of responsiveness. The second most perceived responsiveness category was passive constructive for both capitalization and support. Overall, passive and active destructive responses were less common for both capitalization and support. Based on these results, the perceived responsiveness of the

partners tended to be more positive responsiveness (i.e., active constructive) rather than negative responsiveness (i.e., passive constructive, passive destructive, and active destructive).

Pearson correlations and ANOVAs were run to determine if the demographic variables needed to be controlled for during subsequent analyses. The Pearson correlations are shown in Table 2. The F values are shown in Table 3. The age, relationship length, and cohabitation variables all had concurrent relationships with other variables in the study. Next, ANOVAs were run to determine if the unique demographic groups had similar means with the outcome and predictor variables. The relationship status and race variables had significantly different means. The sexual orientation variable could not be useful to test for differences because only the heterosexual category was large enough to produce useful data for a one-way ANOVA analysis. Multiple regression analysis (which will be described in further detail later) was conducted to ensure that the demographic variables did not impact the results of the study. As a side note, all of the Mechanical Turk participants were required to be living together and only two Baylor participants stated that they were living together; therefore, the cohabitation variable was also a good indicator of whether or not a person was in the Baylor or Amazon sample group. Multiple regression analyses were run using data only from the first assessment data to determine if inclusion of each of the six demographic variables would change the significance of the predictor variables (perceived support and capitalization). During the first analysis, a demographic variable was included and during the second analysis the demographic variable was not included. These analyses were conducted for all of the demographic variables except for sexual orientation. The

significance of the perceived responsiveness variables only changed for two relationships that had close to 0.05 significance. The addition of a covariant lowered the power and resulted in a loss of significance. These relationships will be discussed further in the multiple regression section.

The next step involved calculating correlations in order to analyze the concurrent relationships between all of the variables. In particular, the analysis examined the extent to which the predictors (perceived supportiveness to stress and perceived responsiveness to capitalization) correlated with the outcomes (attachment, perceived neglect, perceived threat, and attributions). Though assessments were conducted at four different times, correlations were only reported for the first assessment, as it had the largest number of participants. Correlations between the perceived support and outcome variables during the first assessment are reported in Table 4. Correlations between the perceived capitalization and outcome variables during the first assessment are reported in Table 5. Consistent with hypothesis 1a and b, there were relationships between the various predictor and outcome variables. The strength of these correlations ranged from small to large. Consistent with hypothesis 1a, for perceived active constructive support (i.e., positive support), there was a positive relationship with positive attributions and a negative relationship with both types of insecure attachment (anxious and avoidant), neglect, and threat. Also, consistent with hypothesis 1a, both the perceived active and passive destructive support styles (which are considered negative) had the opposite relationships with each of the outcome variables (i.e., a negative relationship with positive attributions, and a positive relationship with the insecure attachment styles, and the underlying concerns). Consistent with hypothesis 1b, for perceived active

constructive capitalization, the same relationships existed with the outcome variables, except that neglect and threat were not studied. Inconsistent with expectations, some of the predictor variables were highly correlated with one another. The perceived active constructive, passive destructive, and active destructive support variables all had large correlations with one another. For the perceived capitalization variables, there was a large correlation between active destructive and passive destructive. There was also a large negative correlation between active constructive and passive destructive. However, consistent with expectations, there was only a small negative correlation between perceived active destructive and active constructive capitalization.

#### *Between Person Effects After Controlling for Satisfaction*

The next stage of data analysis involved understanding the extent to which the four responsiveness categories for both perceived support and capitalization are different from one another and from satisfaction by making a unique contribution to predicting the outcome variables after controlling for the other predictor variables. Multiple regressions were used to examine the standardized beta coefficients of the four subcategories for one predictor variable (perceived supportiveness or capitalization) and satisfaction. Standardized beta coefficients help to depict the predictor variables that have the greatest effect on a specific outcome variable. In the between person analysis, all four of the perceived partner supportiveness scores (active constructive, active destructive, passive constructive, and passive destructive) and the satisfaction score from all of the first assessment participant scores were used to predict one of the four outcome variables (for example perceived neglect). The analysis included only data that were collected during the first assessment, due to this assessment having the largest number of participants.

Table 1

*First Assessment Descriptive Statistics for Responsiveness and Outcome Variables*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
<u>Perceived Support</u>			
Active Constructive	5.28	1.27	1.33 - 7
Passive Constructive	3.27	1.05	1 - 6.67
Active Deconstructive	2.26	1.32	1 - 6
Passive Deconstructive	2.00	1.26	1 - 7
<u>Perceived Capitalization</u>			
Active Constructive	5.11	1.31	1 - 7
Passive Constructive	3.75	1.56	1 - 7
Active Deconstructive	1.75	1.10	1 - 6.33
Passive Deconstructive	1.79	1.31	1 - 7
<u>Outcome</u>			
Positive Attributions	3.21	0.91	1 - 5
Avoidant Attachment	2.00	0.92	1 - 5.25
Anxious Attachment	1.91	0.96	1 - 5.38
Neglect	1.53	0.77	1 - 4.88
Threat	1.59	0.80	1 - 4.88
Satisfaction	5.01	0.97	1.44 - 6.06

Table 2

*Pearson Correlations for Demographic Variables*

Variables	Relationship			
	Age	Length	Cohabitation	Gender
<u>Perceived Support</u>				
Active Constructive	-0.13	-0.03	0.18*	-0.05
Active Destructive	0.13	0.09	-0.17*	-0.06
Passive Destructive	0.02	0.06	-0.12	0.07
Passive Constructive	-0.08	-0.15	0.10	0.07
<u>Perceived Capitalization</u>				
Active Constructive	-0.12	0.02	0.12	-0.06
Active Destructive	0.08	0.04	0.03	-0.03
Passive Destructive	-0.04	0.01	-0.03	0.07
Passive Constructive	-0.08	-0.06	0.01	0.09
<u>Outcome</u>				
Threat	0.19	0.15	-0.26**	-0.15
Neglect	0.05	0.04	-0.21**	-0.03
Anxious Attachment	-0.22**	-0.30**	0.18*	0.08
Avoidant Attachment	0.09	-0.04	-0.07	-0.01
Positive Attributions	-0.17*	-0.17*	0.21**	-0.14
Satisfaction	-0.15*	-0.07	-0.15*	0.03

\*p&lt;.05 \*\*p&lt;.01 \*\*\*p&lt;.001

living together = 1 and not living together = 2; male = 1 and female = 2

Table 3

*ANOVA F Values for Demographic Variables*

Variables	Race	Relationship Status
<u>Perceived Support</u>		
Active Constructive	1.39	9.38***
Active Destructive	0.85	1.39
Passive Destructive	2.51	1.72
Passive Constructive	1.7	1.39
<u>Perceived Capitalization</u>		
Active Constructive	1.21	2.23
Active Destructive	2.44	0.71
Passive Destructive	3.81*	0.9
Passive Constructive	0.34	0.01
<u>Outcome</u>		
Threat	3.51*	5.05**
Neglect	5.59**	3.56*
Anxious Attachment	1.12	5.47**
Avoidant Attachment	1.55	2.11
Positive Attributions	1.08	5.39**
Satisfaction	3.27*	3.79*

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001

Table 4

*First Assessment Perceived Support Correlations*

Variable	Active Constructive	Passive Constructive	Active Destructive	Passive Destructive
Active Constructive	1			
Passive Constructive	.10	1		
Active Destructive	-.61**	-.05	1	
Passive Destructive	-.76**	-.08	.70**	1
Satisfaction	.58**	.07	-.55**	-.62**
Anxious Attachment	-.39**	.13	.44**	.50**
Avoidant Attachment	-.50**	.00	.47**	.59**
Attributions	.27**	.03	-.30**	-.25**
Neglect	-.71**	-.14	.68**	.85**
Threat	-.54**	-.19*	.77**	.64**

\*p&lt;.05 \*\*p&lt;.01 \*\*\*p&lt;.001

Table 5

*First Assessment Perceived Capitalization Correlations*

Variable	Active Constructive	Passive Constructive	Active Destructive	Passive Destructive
Active Constructive	1			
Passive Constructive	-.35**	1		
Active Destructive	-.19*	-.00	1	
Passive Destructive	-.57**	.10	.58**	1
Satisfaction	.48**	-.25**	-.37**	-.56**
Anxious Attachment	-.18*	.22**	.34**	.41**
Avoidant Attachment	-.32**	.15	.38**	.46**
Attributions	.29**	-.05	-.13	-.28**

\*p&lt;.05 \*\*p&lt;.01 \*\*\*p&lt;.001

Then, in a similar fashion, a separate analysis was estimated for each of the other outcome variables (perceived threat, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and positive attributions). This level of analysis was used to determine how partner perceived supportiveness, after controlling for satisfaction, predicts between person effects on different outcome variables. The same analysis was also conducted for the perceived capitalization scores for the outcome variables specific to capitalization (anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and positive attributions).

An example using this analysis at the between person level was the examination of the pathway of partner perceived supportiveness to perceived partner neglect. Partner neglect was the outcome in the equation, or  $y$ , and each type of partner perceived supportiveness was a predictor, or  $x$ . Satisfaction was also a predictor, or  $x$ , so that it could be controlled for within the equation. The equation representing this relationship at the level one analysis was

$$y = b_{01} + b_{1X1} + b_{2X2} + b_{3X3} + b_{4X4} + b_{5X5} + r$$

where  $b_{01}$  was the intercept and represented the sample's average level of perceived partner perceived supportiveness,  $b_1$  through  $b_5$  represented a unique slope or beta coefficient for each type of partner perceived supportiveness and satisfaction which predicted perceived partner neglect, and  $r$  was the error. The standardized beta coefficients for perceived support are in Table 6. The standardized beta coefficients for perceived capitalization are in Table 7.

When looking at the perceived support variables (after controlling for satisfaction), only some of the results were consistent with the hypothesis. Consistent with hypothesis 2, the perceived passive destructive support variable was able to

positively predict both the avoidant and anxious attachment styles and perceived neglect. However, the predictive relationship between perceived passive destructive support and anxious attachment should be interpreted with caution because when age, race, or gender was included as a control variable, this relationship became insignificant. Also, the predictive relationship between active destructive support and neglect should be interpreted with caution as well because when gender or sexual orientation was included as a control variable this relationship also became insignificant. Also consistent with hypothesis 2, the perceived active destructive support variable had a positive relationship with threat and neglect. Only 33% of the hypotheses related to perceived support predicting the outcome variables were significant.

On the other hand, when looking at the perceived capitalization variables (after controlling for satisfaction), the results were inconsistent with hypothesis 2. The perceived active constructive capitalization variable positively predicted anxious attachment, which was the opposite direction of the expected relationship. All of the other hypotheses involving perceived capitalization predicting the outcome variables were insignificant. Ultimately, 0% of the hypothesized effects were significant in the expected direction.

Table 6

*First Assessment Perceived Support Standardized Beta Coefficients*

Outcome Variables	Predictor Variables			
	Active Constructive	Passive Constructive	Active Destructive	Passive Destructive
Threat	.05	-.14**	.59***	.09
Neglect	-.09	-.06	.11*	.56***
Anxious Attachment	.11	.18**	.08	.21*
Avoidant Attachment	.05	.07	-.04	.21**
Positive Attributions	.04	-.00	-.13	.16
Satisfaction	.22*	.02	-.19*	-.32***

\*p&lt;.05 \*\*p&lt;.01 \*\*\*p&lt;.001

Table 7

*First Assessment Perceived Capitalization Standardized Beta Coefficients*

Outcome Variables	Predictor Variables			
	Active Constructive	Passive Constructive	Active Destructive	Passive Destructive
Anxious Attachment	.25**	.15*	.08	.17
Avoidant Attachment	.07	-.03	.10	-.02
Positive Attributions	.11	.11	.07	.00
Satisfaction	.20*	-.14*	-.12	-.36***

\*p&lt;.05 \*\*p&lt;.01 \*\*\*p&lt;.001

### *Within Person Effects After Controlling for Satisfaction*

The third hypothesis was analyzed with the HLM 6 software program, using a series of hierarchical linear modeling equations. All analyses involved regression equations that assessed the within person scores, containing up to four measurements for each person. In the within person analysis, the four perceived supportiveness subcategory scores (active constructive, passive constructive, passive destructive, and active destructive) from one person were used to independently predict his or her scores on one of the four outcome variables (attachment, attributions, partner neglect, or partner threat). Then, in a similar fashion, a separate analysis was estimated for each of the other participants in the sample. This level of analysis was used to determine how partner perceived supportiveness predicts within person effects on different outcome variables. An example using this analysis at the within person level was the examination of the pathway of partner perceived supportiveness to perceived partner neglect. Partner neglect was the outcome in the equation, or  $y$ , and each subcategory of partner perceived supportiveness was a unique predictor, or  $x$ . Satisfaction was also an independent variable, or  $x$ , in this analysis. The equation representing this relationship at the level one analysis was

$$y = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + r$$

where  $b_0$  was the intercept and represented each participant's average level of perceived partner supportiveness,  $b_1$  through  $b_5$  represented each participant's slope for a subcategory of perceived partner supportiveness or satisfaction which predicted perceived partner neglect, and  $r$  was the error or within person residual. The second level

of analysis was used to calculate the average pooled within person slope across all people in the sample. The equation representing this relationship at the level two analysis was

$$b_0 = \gamma_{00} + u_{10}$$

$$b_1 = \gamma_{10}$$

$$b_2 = \gamma_{20}$$

$$b_3 = \gamma_{30}$$

$$b_4 = \gamma_{40}$$

$$b_5 = \gamma_{50}$$

where  $\gamma_{00}$  was the grand mean of the intercept,  $u_{10}$  was the between person error, and  $\gamma_{10}$  through  $\gamma_{50}$  was the grand mean of the within person slope for each of the four perceived supportiveness subcategories and satisfaction. Once the perceived supportiveness analysis was complete, the same exact analysis was also done for perceived partner responsiveness to capitalization as well (excluding the neglect and threat outcome variables).

The resulting HLM coefficients were used to determine which predictor variables predicted a within person effect on a specific outcome variable. The HLM coefficients for perceived support are in Table 8. The HLM coefficients for perceived capitalization are in Table 9. Overall, only 27% of the hypotheses related to perceived support and within person effects were significant. In alignment with the third hypothesis, changes in the perceived passive destructive support variable predicted within person changes for neglect (3a), and changes in the perceived active destructive support variable predicted within person changes for threat and neglect (3a). In addition, changes in perceived active constructive support also had a negative relationship with changes in threat, which

Table 8

*Perceived Support HLM Coefficients*

Variable	Active Constructive	Passive Constructive	Active Destructive	Passive Destructive	Satisfaction
Threat	-.16*	-.06	.57***	-.02	-.15
Neglect	.01	-.04	.18***	.61***	-.42***
Anxious Attachment	.00	0.04	.09	.05	-.33**
Avoidant Attachment	-.10	-.01	.00	.01	-.91**
Positive Attributions	-.12	.09	.12	-.05	.38**
Satisfaction	-.01	.02	-.07	-.14	

\*p&lt;.05 \*\*p&lt;.01 \*\*\*p&lt;.001

Table 9

*Perceived Capitalization HLM Coefficients*

Variable	Active Constructive	Passive Constructive	Active Destructive	Passive Destructive	Satisfaction
Anxious Attachment	.08	.12*	.14***	.10	-.61***
Avoidant Attachment	.01	-.00	.08	.06	-.85***
Positive Attributions	-.11	-.04	-.06	-.19*	.19
Satisfaction	.04	.03	-.04	-.22***	

\*p&lt;.05 \*\*p&lt;.01 \*\*\*p&lt;.001

is also consistent with hypothesis 3a. When examining the results from the perceived capitalization variables, only 22% of the hypotheses related to perceived capitalization and within person effects were significant. Consistent with hypothesis 3a, changes in perceived passive destructive capitalization predicted negative within person changes in positive attributions and changes in perceived active destructive capitalization were predicative of within person changes for anxious attachment. Overall, the majority of the hypotheses were not significant.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Discussion

This study investigated the concurrent, between, and within person relationships that exist between perceived partner responsiveness and several outcome variables (attachment, neglect, threat, and attributions). Unfortunately, there were a number of large correlations between the various predictor variables, which shows that the four dimensions of responsiveness are not as unique as originally hypothesized. In addition, these large correlations also led to a majority of the within and between person effects for both types of perceived responsiveness to be insignificant. Despite these large correlations, there was still a consistent relationship between perceived neglect and perceived passive destructive support and also between perceived threat and neglect and perceived active destructive support for both between and within person effects. In addition, perceived passive destructive support positively predicted both types of insecure attachment. Unexpectedly, perceived active constructive capitalization positively predicted anxious attachment. For the within person effects, changes in perceived active constructive support negatively predicted changes in threat. In addition, changes in perceived passive destructive capitalization negatively predicted changes in positive attributions. Finally, changes in perceived active destructive capitalization positively predicted changes in anxious attachment.

Overall, the perceived passive destructive support variable was able to predict more outcome variables than the other predictor variables. In multiple regression analysis, perceived passive destructive support predicted both types of insecure

attachment and neglect. The theoretical constructs of neglect (Sanford, 2010b), and passive destructive support (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004) are defined in a similar manner. Ultimately, passive responsiveness is a subtle form of disengaging from a relationship. In addition, people who are anxiously attached tend to fear that their partner will be unavailable or unresponsive in a time of need (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), which explains the relationship between perceived passive destructive support and anxious attachment. Avoidant attachment in adults is defined as discomfort with closeness and depending on others (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) and any type of perceived negative support may make it hard for a partner to seem dependable.

Perceived active destructive support has a clear relationship with threat and neglect through multiple types of analyses. Perceived active destructive support was also able to predict threat and neglect. The constructs of threat (Sanford, 2010b) and active destructive support (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004) are similar because both involve blaming. Someone who is not dependable (i.e., neglectful), might also appear that way due to being threatening. The fact that the perceived active destructive support variable predicts both threat and neglect supports the concept of support being on a continuum, where the most negative type of support (active destructive) has overlap with an adjacent support category (passive destructive) as well. In addition, changes in perceived active destructive support also predicted changes in perceived threat and neglect, continuing to confirm the strength of the relationship with these constructs.

Perceived active constructive capitalization predicted anxious attachment, which was an unexpected result. However, previous research has shown that people who have an anxious attachment style with their partner tend to seek out reassurance and support

more frequently than securely attached people (Davila & Kashy, 2009). A possible hypothesis is that anxiously attached people may have partners who actively and constructively celebrate their positive life moments with them in an effort to help them gain a sense of security in the relationship and ultimately reduce their anxiety or anxiously attached partners may pull for more active constructive capitalization from their partners and the partners in this sample were willing to fulfill that request.

Within person changes were an important part of attachment injury theory (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001); however, most of the within person effects in this study were not significant. Changes in perceived active constructive and active destructive support predicted changes in threat, while changes in perceived active destructive and passive destructive support predicted changes in neglect. Surprisingly, none of the perceived support predictor variables predicted insecure attachment or attributions, which are key elements in the attachment injury theory (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001). These results were inconsistent with the Davila and Kashy (2009) study where attachment security changed within a two-week period in the context of providing support to a partner. They assessed attachment security on a daily basis, which may have led to data that relied less on memory. Possibly, all of the perceived support predictor variables are able to predict changes in attachment and attributions, therefore none of the individual support variables were able to remain significant during the HLM analysis due to the large correlations between the predictor variable. Another possibility is that changes in satisfaction predict changes in attachment and attributions.

In contrast to the perceived support within person findings, the perceived capitalization within person results did include a prediction in significant changes for

anxious attachment and positive attributions. Changes in perceived active destructive capitalization were able to predict changes in anxious attachment. Recall that anxious attachment is when a partner fears that their partner will be unavailable or unresponsive in a time of need (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) and active destructive support is a type of negative responsiveness. Also, changes in perceived passive destructive capitalization were able to negatively predict changes in positive attributions. For instance, one thought or attribution a partner might have after an attachment injury is that their partner is not dependable (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001). The inconsistent finding between perceived support and capitalization may be related to the sample that was gathered during this study, which tended to have more responsive rather than less responsive partners, potentially making changes in perceived capitalization more relevant based on the sample. These within person capitalization results build on existing research showing the importance of capitalization, which adds to the conclusion that focusing on reducing perceived active destructive capitalization in therapy will be beneficial for couples.

An additional result of the study is that the constructs of threat and neglect were consistently predicted by perceived responsiveness, further strengthening the validity of the threat and neglect constructs. For between person effects, perceived passive destructive support predicted neglect, while perceived active destructive support predicted both threat and neglect (however, threat had a much stronger relationship with the predictor than did neglect). These results were expected because passivity is akin to neglect and being actively destructive is synonymous with threat (Sanford, 2010b). On the other hand, within person changes had similar yet not as definitive results. Perceived

passive destructive support predicted neglect, while perceived active destructive support predicted both threat and neglect equally. In addition, changes in perceived active constructive support predicted a within person reduction in threat. In some ways, active constructive support and active destructive support are opposites; therefore, this relationship is not surprising. Even in a highly responsive sample, perceived responsiveness still had clear relationships with threat and neglect.

Within this study, the results of the perceived passive constructive responsiveness predictor variable were not discussed due to the reliability of the perceived passive constructive support construct (0.5). The results of the study raise questions about the coherence of this construct. In many ways, the construct of passive constructive responsiveness is both positive and negative in theory and thus this combination might explain the mixed results found in the study. The constructive category could be seen as positive responsiveness, while the passive category could be seen as negative responsiveness. After combining together both positive and negative concepts, the results of this category were less definitive than the other clearly negative categories (active and passive destructive responsiveness).

### *Limitations*

A number of limitations existed for this study. An important limitation was that data were taken from self-report measures from one partner, without a second source of information. In addition, the self-reports were for events that had occurred in the past two weeks and the recollection of those events may not have been fully accurate. To correct some of these limitations, future studies could collect data through outside observers or data could be obtained from both partners for the same responsiveness

scenarios. Due to the complex interaction of two attachment styles within a couple attempting to gain or maintain a secure attachment, evaluating the changing attachment of both partners may yield results that are more consistent with the processes that occur during therapy.

Another crucial limitation was that the data were correlational. Though the study contributed to the expansion of the attachment injury model, cause and direction of the relationships between responsiveness and the outcome variables could not be determined. Future studies might provide helpful information by focusing on insecurely attached couples who are engaging in negative responsiveness. The research intervention could be to instruct couples on how to engage in positive responsiveness (i.e., active constructive responsiveness) and then determine what within person changes occur after the couple was successfully able to switch to a more positive type of responsiveness.

A third important limitation was that the sample participants largely perceived their partners to be responsive. Future studies should focus on the within person attachment changes for people who perceive their partners to be less responsiveness to better understand the full spectrum of couples responsiveness.

A fourth limitation was that the sample included a higher percentage of females than males. Future researcher might want to focus equally on both genders and possibly compared the differences found between the two genders.

A fifth limitation was that the perceived capitalization predictor variables were not compared to the threat and neglect outcome variables. In future studies, the threat and neglect measurements can be modified for sharing a positive life event and then the

relationship between perceived capitalization and perceived threat and neglect can be explored further.

A sixth limitation was that the sample included a limited number of LGBT couples. Future research might focus on understanding what similarities or differences exist between LGBT and heterosexual couples in relation to changes in attachment, satisfaction, attributions, and neglect.

### *Conclusions*

These results have helped to both confirm and expand on the theory of attachment injuries. Perceived passive destructive responsiveness has been shown to have key relationships with insecure attachments, neglect, and negative attributions. While perceived active destructive responsiveness has been shown to have key relationships with anxious attachment, threat, and neglect. In addition, perceived capitalization has also been shown to have a relationship with insecure attachment, which further strengthens the idea that both capitalization and support may be beneficial to healing couples who experience attachment issues. In particular, perceived active destructive capitalization appears to play an important role in couple's attachment. Further research, with both responsive and non-responsive partners could help to provide further support for attachment injury theory.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Demographics

#### 1. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other

#### 2. Age

#### 3. Race

- Asian
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Native American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Pacific Islander or Native American
- White (Not Hispanic)
- Multiracial
- Other

#### 4. Sexual orientation

- Heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Gay/Lesbian
- I would prefer not to answer

#### 5. Length of relationship

- Less than 4 weeks
- At least 4 weeks
- At least 6 months
- At least 2 months
- At least 4 months
- At least 6 months
- At least 8 months
- At least 10 months
- At least one year
- At least 2 years
- At least 3 years
- At least 4 years

- At least 5 years
- 10 years or more

6. Status of relationship

- Married
- Committed dating relationship
- Uncommitted dating relationship
- Engaged
- Domestic Partnership

7. Cohabitation

- Yes
- No

## APPENDIX B

### Sanford Context Specific Attribution Measure

Briefly describe a point in time within the last two weeks that you felt either the most negative or the least positive towards your partner. Listed below are thoughts people often have about their partner. To what extent did you have these thoughts during the point in time you described above? At that time, I thought...

(Disagree Strongly, Disagree, Agree Somewhat, Agree, Agree Strongly)

1. My partner deserves to be blamed.
2. My partner has logical reasons for his/her behavior.
3. My partner has good intentions.
4. My partner is motivated by selfish concerns.
5. It makes sense that my partner feels the way that he/she does.
6. My partner did something on purpose that caused this conflict.
7. My partner is at fault.
8. My partner's feelings are understandable.
9. My partner wants sensible things.
10. My partner could have prevented this conflict.
11. My partner is being reasonable.
12. My partner caused this conflict.
13. My partner's viewpoint is valid.
14. My partner knew it was wrong to do something, but did it anyway.

## APPENDIX C

### Couples Satisfaction Index

The 16 item version of the scale was used for this study and participants were asked about the last two weeks.

1. Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship. (extremely unhappy, fairly unhappy, a little unhappy, happy, very happy, extremely happy, perfect)
5. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?  
(All the Time, Most of the Time, More often than Not, Occasionally, Rarely Never)
9. Our relationship is strong.  
(not at all true, a little true, somewhat true, mostly true, almost completely true, completely true)
11. My relationship with my partner makes me happy  
(not at all true, a little true, somewhat true, mostly true, almost completely true, completely true)
12. I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner.  
(not at all true, a little true, somewhat true, mostly true, almost completely true, completely true)
17. I really feel like part of a team with my partner  
(not at all true, a little true, somewhat true, mostly true, almost completely true, completely true)
19. How rewarding was your relationship with your partner during this situation?  
(not at all true, a little true, somewhat true, mostly true, almost completely true, completely true)
20. How well does your partner meet your needs?  
(not at all true, a little true, somewhat true, mostly true, almost completely true, completely true)
21. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?  
(not at all true, a little true, somewhat true, mostly true, almost completely true, completely true)

22. In general, how satisfied were you with your relationship during this situation?  
(not at all true, a little true, somewhat true, mostly true, almost completely true,  
completely true)

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes how you feel about your relationship. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

26. INTERESTING 5 4 3 2 1 0 BORING

27. BAD 0 1 2 3 4 5 GOOD

28. FULL 5 4 3 2 1 0 EMPTY

30. STURDY 5 4 3 2 1 0 FRAGILE

31. DISCOURAGING 0 1 2 3 4 5 HOPEFUL

32. ENJOYABLE 5 4 3 2 1 0 MISERABLE

## APPENDIX D

### Perceived Responses to Capitalization Attempts (PRCA) Scale

Please take a moment to remember the positive event that you just described and how your partner responded when you shared that event with your partner. Please consider to what extent your partner did the following things in response to your good fortune. When I told my partner about the recent positive event that happened to me...

(using a 7-point scale from “not at all true” to “very true”)

1. My partner reacted to my good fortune enthusiastically.
2. I got the sense that my partner is even more happy and excited than I am.
3. My partner asked a lot of questions and showed genuine concern about the good event.
4. My partner tried not to make a big deal out of it, but was happy for me.
5. My partner was silently supportive of the good things that occur to me.
6. My partner said little, but I knew he/she was happy for me.
7. My partner found a problem with it.
8. My partner reminded me that most good things have their bad aspects as well.
9. He/she pointed out the potential down sides of the good event.
10. I got the impression that he/she didn't care much.
11. My partner didn't pay much attention to me.
12. My partner seemed disinterested.

## APPENDIX E

### Perceptions of Responses to Support Seeking (PRSS)

These questions ask about your own experience and about how you perceived your partner. Rate the extent to which each statement describes YOUR experience during your communication with your partner about the stressful event. (using a 7-point scale from “not at all true” to “very true”)

1. My partner asked a lot of questions and showed a genuine concern about the negative event (active-constructive).
2. My partner tended to blame me for the bad thing that happened (active-destructive).
3. I got the impression that my partner didn't care much (passive-destructive).
4. My partner tried not to make a big deal of it, but was upset for me (passive-constructive).
5. My partner reacted to my problem supportively (active-constructive).
6. My partner didn't pay much attention to me (passive-destructive).
7. My partner said little, but I knew he/she was upset for me (passive-constructive).
8. My partner often denied or downplayed the significance of the problem (active-destructive).
9. My partner often seemed disinterested (passive-destructive).
10. I got the sense that my partner was just as sad and upset as I was (active-constructive).
11. My partner was silently supportive of me when the bad thing occurred (passive-constructive).
12. My partner disagreed with or criticized how I reacted (active-destructive).

## APPENDIX F

### Underlying Concerns Questionnaire

These questions ask about your own experience and about how you perceived your partner. Rate the extent to which each statement describes YOUR experience during your communication with your partner about the stressful event.

(Disagree strongly, Disagree, Agree somewhat, Agree, Agree strongly)

1. I felt criticized.
2. I felt neglected.
3. I felt blamed.
4. I felt forgotten.
5. I felt accused.
6. I felt invisible.
7. I felt misjudged.
8. I felt overlooked.

Rate the extent to which each statement describes how you perceived YOUR PARTNER during your communication with your partner about the stressful event.

9. My partner seemed judgmental.
10. My partner seemed uncommitted.
11. My partner seemed demanding.
12. My partner seemed unconcerned.
13. My partner seemed controlling.
14. My partner seemed disloyal.
15. My partner seemed imposing.
16. My partner seemed inattentive.

## APPENDIX G

### Experiences in Close Relationships

Adapted, as described in:

Sanford, K., & Rowatt, W. C. (2004). When is negative emotion positive for relationships? An investigation of married couples and roommates. *Personal Relationships*, 11(3), 329-354.

Please indicate the extent to which each statement describes your relationship with your partner during the last two weeks.

(1= disagree strongly, 4= neutral/mixed, 7= agree strongly)

1. I was afraid that I would lose my partner's love.
2. I worried that my partner didn't love me.
3. I wished that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.
4. I worried a lot about my relationship with my partner.
5. I didn't worry about my partner leaving me.
6. I did not worry about being abandoned.
7. I found that my partner didn't want to get as close as I would like.
8. My desire to be very close scared my partner away.
9. I preferred not to show my partner how I felt deep down.
10. I felt comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.
11. I found it difficult to allow myself to depend on my partner.
12. I was very comfortable being close with my partner.
13. I didn't feel comfortable opening up to my partner.
14. I found it relatively easy to get close to my partner.
15. It helped to turn my partner in times of need.
16. I felt comfortable depending on my partner.

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