Attachment Behaviors as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Disapproval and Relationship Satisfaction

Lauren Drean
Brigham Young University - Provo

Attachment Behaviors as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Disapproval

and Relationship Satisfaction

Lauren Drean

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Angela B. Bradford, Chair
Jonathan G. Sandberg
Lee N. Johnson

School of Family Life

Brigham Young University

March 2015

ABSTRACT

Attachment Behaviors as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Disapproval
and Relationship Satisfaction

Lauren Drean
Department of School of Family Life, BYU
Master of Science

Both approval and disapproval of one's social network have been shown to predict relationship outcomes. Additional research has shown that attachment can buffer the negative effects of various factors (e.g., depression) on relationships. This thesis researches the effects of disapproval of friends and family and attachment on relationship outcomes. More specifically this study looks at the potential moderating effects of couple-specific attachment behaviors on the relationship between social network disapproval and relationship quality. The RELATE data set was used to study couples and their relationship quality. The study looked at 858 married couples and found that one's own attachment behaviors moderate their own family disapproval on their own relationship quality for both men and women. Own attachment behaviors also moderated own friend's disapproval on own relationship quality for men and women. Partner's attachment behaviors moderate own friend's disapproval on own relationship quality for men and women; the main effect of partner's friends and family disapproval became non-significant with that test. The findings give evidence that attachment behaviors of both partners play a role in buffering the negative effects of the lack of social approval on relationship outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my husband, Josh, for the unfailing support and unconditional love he has always given me, but especially for persisting through the past year and a half with me. He made school, my thesis, and life possible. I could not have done this without the inspiration and motivation he gives me every day.

I would also like to thank my thesis committee for working with me, for their incredible feedback, and for their investment in me as a student and, more importantly, as a person. Especially, I need to thank Angela Bradford for the late nights and the constant effort to help me meet deadlines and to help me work through and process seemingly impossible barriers. She was readily available and present, which made her an invaluable part of this process.

Another thank you needs to go out to my cohort at BYU, we laughed and cried and processed together and I spent more time with you all than with anyone else during the past year and a half. Thank you for being my friends and for helping me become who I am today.

And, finally, I'd like to thank my Father in Heaven for his patience with me and his kind willingness to help and support me every minute of every day.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Introduction

Relationship approval of one's social network has emerged as an important predictor of relationship satisfaction (Etcheverry, Le, & Charania, 2008). Studies have found that approval from friends and family members predicts relationship satisfaction, can have positive effects on individual and relational well-being, and can even protect individuals from the potentially harmful effects of life stressors (Cohen & Wills, 1985). However, not every couple has access to social support, and the research states that when family and/or friends disapprove of a romantic relationship, couples experience negative outcomes such as decreased marital satisfaction (Sprecher, Felmlee, Orbuch, & Willetts, 2001). Attachment literature and theory suggest that a healthy attachment can moderate the effects of individual outcomes like depression, as well as relationship outcomes such as overall marital satisfaction (Heene, Buysse, & Oost, 2005). This study is the first to synthesize these literatures and examine whether attachment behaviors moderate the relationship between social disapproval and relationship quality.

Theoretical Assumptions

The link between social approval and relationship quality is conceptualized by social support theory, which states that support from one's social network has positive effects on well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Although support and approval are not synonymous, the literature often uses these terms interchangeably when discussing social support of relationships (Sprecher, 1988; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992); likewise, a review of the support literature in this study will be used to indicate approval. Social support has been linked with positive effects including, but not limited to, protecting individuals from stress, feelings of connectedness, and an increase of access to resources (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Thus, higher support/approval from friends and

family would be related to higher levels of relationship quality, whereas lower levels of support/approval would be related to lower relationship quality and fewer positive outcomes.

The effects of social disapproval on relationship quality may also be mitigated by the presence of other factors. For instance, emotional support exchange theory in marriage (Dorfman, Holmes, & Berlin, 1996) states that when spouses emotionally support each other, they have higher levels of marital happiness (Wright & Aquilino, 1998). It is possible, therefore, that greater levels of emotional support within the marriage moderate the effect of decreased social support from friends and family.

One way to conceptualize emotional support in marriage is with attachment theory, which theorizes that more securely attached couples have higher levels of support within their relationships (Feeney, 2002). In adult romantic relationships, attachment theory is conceptualized as secure or insecure (i.e., anxious or avoidant). Secure attachment is characterized by more trust and happier, more satisfied relationships while anxious and avoidant attachments are linked with less satisfied, less trusting and supportive relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Secure attachment is characterized by a feeling of worth, a positive belief about one's relationship, and specific behaviors within the dyad such as accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement (Feeney, 1999; Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, & Yoshida, 2012). Although social disapproval may be linked to decreased relationship quality, secure attachment could mitigate that relationship. Consequently, behaviors that foster a secure attachment (what the research refers to as "attachment behaviors") could moderate the relationship between social disapproval and relationship quality.

Approval

Approval from friends and family has consistently been linked with positive outcomes in romantic relationships. When levels of approval and support from an individual's social network is higher, it leads to outcomes, such as more feelings of love, satisfaction, commitment and stability, within that individual's romantic relationship (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). Several studies by Etcheverry and colleagues have examined these links and consistently found that approval from the social network is predictive of overall relationship success and commitment (Etcheverry et al., 2008; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry, Le, & Hoffman, 2012). Felmlee (2001) extended the literature and discovered that the social network that had the highest correlation with outcomes was that of friends' approval rather than that of the family. Cox, Wexler, Rusbult, and Gaines (1997) found that a sense of obligation to remain in a relationship imposed by the social network had a strong effect on relationships when the relationship was longer-term, more committed (such as married), and involved children. The researchers suggest that this may be due to the fact that the couple has a stronger motivation to not disrupt important relationships. Lehmiller and Agnew (2006) found that individuals in marginalized relationships, specifically those who perceived disapproval of their relationships, had lower levels of commitment. This coincides with research that discovered that decreases in social support (approval) are linked with decreases in satisfaction, commitment, and even love (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992).

The literature also suggests that relationship-specific variables may moderate the link between social approval and relationship quality. For example, Etcheverry and Agnew (2004) found that when dependence on the relationship is high, outside approval and a need to conform to approval have no correlation with commitment and relationship outcomes. Another study

supported a similar hypothesis—finding that when a relationship is more satisfying, an individual will view his/her partner in a more positive light than the partner's friends view him or her (Murray, Holmes, Dolderman, & Griffin, 1999). They also found that when a relationship is less satisfying, the individual will view their spouse or partner in a more negative light than their friends or family do. Thus, when other factors such as relationship dependence, commitment, relationship investment, and satisfaction are high, then approval has a weaker correlation with relationship outcomes (Cox et al., 1997; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004). Theory and research suggest that an important moderating factor may be couple attachment (Aspelmeier, Elliott, & Smith, 2007; Heene et al., 2005; Sochos & Diniz, 2011).

Attachment as a moderator

Hazan and Shaver (1987) look at attachment theory, designed with infants in mind, to create perspective on adult romantic love. They looked at the effects of attachment style (secure, anxious, and avoidant) on how adults experience love and found that securely attached individuals experienced love as happy, trusting and friendly. Those avoidantly attached were more afraid of intimacy and were more jealous. Anxiously attached subjects experienced love as obsessive, extreme sexual attraction, and jealousy. The literature linking attachment with couple relationship outcomes is vast. Generally, secure attachment has been positively correlated with marital satisfaction and the other attachment styles correlate inversely (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Keelan, Dion, & Dion, 1998; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). Secure attachment has also been linked to positive outcomes in romantic relationships including higher self-esteem, longer relationships, trust, and happiness, while both anxious and avoidant attachment have been linked to the opposite: shorter relationships, lower self-esteem, and mistrust (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Although attachment has typically been studied as a predictor of outcomes, there are also studies that have looked at attachment style as a moderator of the link between predictors and relationship outcomes (Heene et al. 2005; Besser & Priel, 2003). Attachment has not only been found to significantly buffer negative effects in individuals, but also in the context of interpersonal relationships (Creasey, 2002). In one study, attachment was found to significantly moderate the relationship between depressive symptoms and marital satisfaction, meaning that satisfaction was less affected by depressive symptoms when the couple had a secure attachment (Heene et al., 2005). Secure attachment should, therefore, buffer against potentially harmful individual and interpersonal struggles. Another cross-sectional study found in its assessment of 120 first-married, heterosexual couples that attachment style of more securely attached couples buffered the effects of self-criticism and dependency on depressive symptoms (Besser & Priel, 2003). Creasey (2002) sampled 145 young adults who had been involved in heterosexual relationships for at least two years and found that not only did attachment style influence relationship outcomes, but that having a secure attachment was correlated with more positive behaviors. The specific results indicated that when the woman in the relationship had a secure attachment, there were more positive behaviors in that relationship. They also found that couples containing an insecurely attached man consisted of more negative behaviors than couples with a secure man. This provides some evidence that attachment security influences positive or negative behavior within a relationship.

Attachment behaviors. Although attachment style as a mental process is the predominant focus in the extant literature, it has recently been argued that attachment research and interventions would benefit most from a focus on relationship-specific, self-rated attachment behaviors (Johnson & Greenman, 2013; Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, & Yoshida, 2012).

Particular attention has been given to accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement as predictors of relationship satisfaction and stability (Sandberg et al., 2012). Accessibility is defined as being available to one's partner in times of need. Being receptive and reacting appropriately to the needs of one's partner is the essence of responsiveness. Engagement is connecting with one's partner in a skillful way. As attachment style has been found to be a significant moderator of relationship issues, it is important to look at whether attachment behaviors are found to moderate relationship outcomes as well. Therefore, we specifically examine whether these secure attachment behaviors moderate the previously established link between social disapproval and relationship quality.

Current Study

Social support and emotional support exchange theories suggest that relationships are influenced by levels of social support (Cohen & Wills, 1985) but that this may be moderated by the quality of the marital relationship (Wright & Aquilino, 1998). The literature indicates that support/approval is correlated with higher levels of satisfaction and overall relationship quality (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992); whereas, disapproval is linked with lower levels of relationship satisfaction and quality. Additionally, more secure attachment might moderate this relationship. The current study examines the established link between disapproval and relationship quality and is the first to explicitly examine the moderating role of attachment behaviors (Sandberg et al., 2012). Because one study suggests that friends' approval may be more indicative of commitment for women (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992), this study compares the effects of family and friend disapproval as a research question. Specific research questions to be addressed are: Research Question 1: Does social disapproval predict relationship quality for self and partner?

Research Question 2: Is there a difference between friend disapproval and parent disapproval in the prediction of relationship quality?

Research Question 3: Do own and/or partner's attachment behaviors moderate the effect of social disapproval on own and/or partner relationship quality?

Method

Participants

The sample is comprised of 858 couples who volunteered to complete the Relationship Evaluation Questionnaire (Busby, Holman, & Taniguchi). The data include married couples with a median age of 30 for men. The median age for women was 29. Of the couples sampled, all are married. Most (89.6% of men and 90.1% of women) were in their first marriage; the rest identified as being remarried.

The median length of time married was 3 to 5 years for both males and females. For men, 30.6% reported being married 0 to 1 years; 18.4% for 1 to 2 years; 14.6% for 3 to 5 years; 12.3% for 6 to 10 years; and 24.1% for 11 years or more. For women, 29.9% reported being married 0 to 1 years; 19.3% for 1 to 2 years; 15.2% for 3 to 5 years; 11.3% for 6 to 10 years; and 24.3% for 11 years or more.

A majority of the sample had been educated beyond the high school level with the median education level for men and women being an associate's degree. For females, 42.2% had not completed a college education; 33.4% had completed either an Associate or Bachelor's degree; and 24.4% had either obtained or were in the process of obtaining a master's or professional degree. For males 43.9% had not completed their college education; 29.4% had received either a Bachelor's or Associate degree; and 26.7% were in the process of earning, or had earned, a graduate or professional degree.

In terms of ethnicity for males, 84.9% of the sample was Caucasian; 4.4% was African/Black; 4.3% was Latino; 2% was Mixed/Biracial; 2% was Asian; 1.6% reported being "Other," and 0.6% was Native American. For females, 83.3% of the sample was Caucasian; 3.5% was African/Black; 4.3% was Latina; 3.5% was Asian; 2.8% was Mixed/Biracial; 1.7% reported being "Other," and 0.7% was Native American.

Reported religious affiliations for males were: None (12.9%), Latter-Day Saint/Mormon (53.9%); Protestant (15.5%); Catholic (9.6 %); Other (6.5%); and Jewish (1.6%). For females, the religious affiliations were Latter-Day Saint/Mormon (53.9%); Protestant (17.9%); None (10.9%); Catholic (8.8%); Other (6.5%); and Jewish (2.0%).

Procedure

The Relationship Evaluation Questionnaire was developed in 1997 (RELATE; Busby, Holman, & Taniguchi, 2001) and provided the data for this study. Couples answered questions regarding themselves, their partner, and their relationships. Participants were referred from several sources such as from professors, researchers, and mental health professionals. Participants completed the questionnaire online and answered questions regarding perceptions of themselves and partners surrounding four domains: individual, couple, family, and social. Participants received a printout that summarized responses after completing the survey and were charged $40 to view their results.

For this study, scales related to attachment behaviors, approval, and satisfaction, stability and problem areas of the relationship are included. The measures in the RELATE questionnaire have undergone rigorous testing to determine reliability and validity and have been shown to demonstrate good test-retest and internal consistent reliability and content, construct, and concurrent validity (Busby et al., 2001). Most measures have achieved an internal consistency

score of between 0.7 and 0.9. In order to measure concurrent validity, RELATE measures have been compared to scales within the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS); every subscale showed strong, positive correlations (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995).

Measures

Attachment Behaviors. Attachment behaviors were measured using the Brief Accessibility, Responsiveness, and Engagement Scale (BARE; Sandberg et al., 2012). Participants responded to two statements for each of three subscales measuring accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement. The three subscales were used as indicators of a latent construct. Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale where answers range from 1 ("Never True") to 5 ("Always True"). Items from the scales include questions similar to and including: "It is hard for my partner to get my attention" (accessibility), "I am confident I reach out to my partner" (responsiveness), and "It is hard for me to confide in my partner" (engagement). All items were scored or reverse scored so that a higher level represented more secure attachment behaviors. The BARE scores show high reliability with test-retest scores ranging from 0.6 to 0.75. In this sample, Cronbach's alphas were adequate (accessibility: .65 for men, .75 for women; responsiveness: .58 for men, .55 for women; .76 for men, .73 for women).

Disapproval. Disapproval was measured using three questions from the RELATE questionnaire, all asking how much each person (mother, father, friends) in the couple's life approve of their current relationship. Responses to the question "How much do the following individuals approve of your current relationship?" were given on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("not at all") to 4 ("entirely"). Because the literature has not distinguished between different family members' disapproval, scores for responses about mother and father were combined to represent *family disapproval* (Cronbach's alpha = .86 for men and .84 for

women).   Items were scores such that higher levels represented more disapproval. For the analyses, we mean centered disapproval of friends and family.

Relationship Quality. Relationship quality is a latent construct measured using three subscales, *stability, satisfaction,* and *problem areas.* This latent construct has been used to measure relationship quality previously (Holman & Busby, 2011). Relationship stability is measured using such questions as: "How often have you broken up or separated and then gotten back together?" and "How often have you thought your relationship (or marriage) might be in trouble?" Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Never") to 5 ("Very Often"). Cronbach's alpha for stability was .73 for men and .76 for women. The *satisfaction* scale includes seven questions that measure different aspects of relationship satisfaction. Items from the scale include topics that answer the question "in your relationship, how satisfied are you with…" such as: "how conflicts are resolved", "your overall relationship", and "the physical intimacy you experience". Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale where answers range from 1 ("Very Dissatisfied") to 5 ("Very Satisfied"). Cronbach's alpha for satisfaction was .91 for men and .92 for women. *Problem areas* are measured with responses to "How often have the following areas been a problem in your relationship?" for various topics, such as: "Intimacy/Sexuality", "Financial Matters", and "Time spent together." Responses are given on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Never") to 5 ("Very Often"). Cronbach's alpha was .80 for men and women.

Control Variables. Studies show that individuals with lower income levels experience more individual and interpersonal difficulties, including lower levels of relationship quality/satisfaction and stability (Conger et al., 1990). Religion has also been linked with relationship outcomes, specifically religious attendance. Those who engage in religious

participation are typically more satisfied in their relationships (Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2008).

Another demographic variable related to marital satisfaction is length of marriage. It is

consistently reported that the length of marriage has an effect on marital satisfaction, declining

over time and then improving in later life (Gagnon, Hersen, Kabachoff, & Van Hasselt, 1999).

Because these variables are shown to consistently influence relationship quality, this study will

control for SES, religion, and length of relationship.

Analytic Strategy

Because disapproval from friends and family is likely to impact relationship quality for

self and partner, the data are considered to be non-independent. The Actor-Partner

Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) assumes that there are two levels

of data (individual and couple) and is therefore an appropriate method of data analysis for the

current study. The APIM allows for both actor effects (e.g., the effect of the participant's level

of disapproval from friends and family on his/her own relationship quality) and partner effects

(e.g., the effect of the spouse's disapproval from friends and family on the participant's

relationship quality).

Preliminary analyses were conducted to examine univariate and bivariate statistics for the

measured variables in the study. The hypothesized APIM model (see Figure 1) was then

examined using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM allows for a stringent test of the full

model by testing each path while controlling for the effects of the others, and removes

measurement error by creating latent constructs that underlie observed, measured variables

(Kline, 2010). To test for whether family or friend disapproval had a greater effect, paths were

constrained to be equal, and chi-square difference tests were conducted. A significant chi-square

indicates that model fit has worsened with the addition of the constraint, and paths should be left

to be freely estimated. Finally, to examine the moderating effect of attachment behaviors, a series of models were fit in which the interactions between own and partner attachment behaviors and own and partner disapproval were tested. Each moderation model included two interaction terms (one for wife's attachment behaviors and one for husband's). The model was analyzed using Mplus, version 7.1 (Muthen & Muthen, 2009).

Results

I first tested a measurement model for each latent construct. There was excellent model fit for attachment behaviors [χ^2 (10) = 46.78, p < .001; RMSEA = .07, p = .04; TLI = .96; CFI = .97] and relationship quality [χ^2 (10) = 18.16, p = .05; RMSEA = .03, p = .91; TLI = .99; CFI = .99]. I tested measurement invariance between men and women for the latent constructs and found weak invariance for attachment behaviors (only factor loadings were invariant) and strong invariance for relationship quality (factor loadings and intercepts were invariant). Factor loadings for the constructs are in Table 1. Descriptive statistics were calculated (Table 2) and bivariate correlations (Table 3) were estimated for all observed variables in the model. Overall, participants reported relatively low levels of social disapproval and moderate-to-high levels of attachment behaviors and indicators of relationship quality.

Research Question 1: Does social disapproval predict relationship quality for self and partner?

I fit the hypothesized APIM as a baseline model to test the relationships between the variables of interest (see Figure 1). Model fit indices represented excellent model fit [χ^2 (88) = 299.09, p < .001; RMSEA = .06, p = .13; TLI = .95; CFI = .95]. Results indicated that actor and partner effects of disapproval, with the exception of disapproval of the partner's family (for both women (*B*=-.07, *SE*=.04, *p*=.08) and men (*B*=-.09, *SE*=.04, *p*=.05)) were predictive of female

and male relationship quality. Women's relationship quality was predicted by their own friends' (B=-.29, SE=.04, p<.001) and family's (B=-.12, SE=.04, p=.00) disapproval, as well as their husbands' friends' disapproval (B=-.19, SE=.04, p<.00). Men's relationship quality was predicted by their own friends' (B=-.23, SE=.05, p<.001) and family's (B=-.15, SE=.04, p=.00) disapproval, as well as their wife's friends' disapproval (B=-.17, SE=.05, p<.001). The model explained 37.5% of the variance in men's and 42.5% of the variance in women's relationship quality. However, results changed slightly as paths were constrained to test for equivalence to answer the next research question.

Research Question 2: Is there a difference between friend disapproval and parent disapproval in the prediction of relationship quality?

To test the equivalence of paths, I systematically constrained the paths for friend and family disapproval to be equal (for women, as well as for men). First, I constrained all four partner effects (both for men and both for women) to be equal. Model fit did not worsen with these constraints ($\Delta\chi^2 (3) = 6.41$). I then constrained all four actor effects to be equal. Model fit did significantly worsen ($\Delta\chi^2 (3) = 15.02$), so I released constraints and tested them in gendered pairs. Results indicated that both actor effects for men were equal to each other and the actor effect of family disapproval for women; women's friends' disapproval actor effect was left to be freely estimated ($\Delta\chi^2 (2) = .02$). Final model fit indices still represented excellent model fit [χ^2 (93) = 305.52, p < .001; RMSEA = .05, p = .20; TLI = .953; CFI = .946]. All actor and partner effects of disapproval were predictive of female and male relationship quality (Table 4). The strongest effect was women's friends' disapproval on their own relationship quality. The effect of women's family disapproval on their relationship quality was slightly weaker, and equivalent to the effects of men's friends' and family's disapproval on men's relationship quality. Partner

effects were the smallest (and equal to each other). The model predicted 41.7% of the variance for females and 36.7% of the variance for males.

Research Question 3: Do own and/or partner's attachment behaviors moderate the effect of social disapproval on own and/or partner relationship quality?

Own and partner attachment behaviors were added to the model separately to uncover any moderating effects (Tables 5 and 6). The interaction effect of own attachment behaviors on the relationship between own family disapproval and own relationship quality was significant and statistically equivalent for both women and men ($B=.24$, $SE=.07$, $p=.00$) and the main effect of friends' disapproval for women was no longer significant ($B=-.08$, $SE=.06$, $p=.17$). For men and women equally ($B=.20$, $SE=.08$, $p=.01$) their own attachment behaviors moderate the effect of their own friends' disapproval on their own relationship quality. Neither men's ($B=.10$, $SE=.13$, $p=.47$) nor women's ($B=-.03$, $SE=.15$, $p=.86$) attachment behaviors were found to significantly moderate the effects of their own family disapproval on their partner's relationship quality. Own attachment behaviors did not significantly moderate own friends' disapproval on partner's relationship quality for women ($B=.15$, $SE=.14$, $p=.29$) or men, however the men's attachment behaviors do show a trend-level effect ($B=.27$, $SE=.14$, $p=.06$).

Partner attachment behaviors were not found to moderate own family disapproval on own relationship quality for men or women ($B=.21$, $SE=.12$, $p=.08$). Partner attachment behaviors were found to moderate own friend disapproval on own relationship quality equally for men and women ($B=.24$, $SE=.11$, $p=.02$). The disapproval of friends and family no longer influences partner relationship quality ($B=-.00$, $SE=.03$, $p=.93$). One's own attachment behaviors did not significantly moderate partner's family's ($B=.04$, $SE=.07$, $p=.55$) or friends' ($B=.14$, $SE=.08$, $p=.10$) disapproval on own relationship quality.

Discussion

The research is clear that social approval is linked with relationship success while disapproval leads to negative outcomes (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). Social support theory (Cohen & Wills, 1985), and social support exchange theory in marriage (Dorfman et al., 1996) suggest, however, that this link may be different based on elements of the marital relationship. Attachment research indicates that secure attachment can moderate the effects of potentially harmful influences on relationship outcomes for a variety of issues (Besser & Priel, 2003; Creasey, 2002; Heene et al., 2005) and suggests that studies should begin addressing couple-specific attachment behaviors (Sandberg et al, 2012). Thus, this study examined whether attachment behaviors moderate the relationship between social disapproval and relationship quality for husbands and wives.

The first research question was supported and the results show that husband's and wife's disapproval from both friends and family are predictive of lower relationship quality for self and partner. This is largely consistent with previous literature, which has found that disapproval and lack of support from both one's own and a partner's social network leads to negative relationship outcomes including the deterioration of relationships (Bryant & Conger, 1999; Felmlee, Sprecher, & Bassin, 1990). Because there has been some limited indication that disapproval from friends and family have different effects (Felmlee, 2001), I also examined which path was strongest (RQ2). The strongest predictor of outcomes was the effect of women's friends' disapproval on their own relationship quality. The effects of women's family disapproval on own relationship quality and men's family and friends' disapproval on their own relationship quality had a slightly smaller effect. The weakest effects found were partner effects for men and women. These findings mirror those of one study previously referenced, where approval from women's

social network, especially from friends, was more predictive of relationship outcomes (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). Although no other research on support and relationship satisfaction has addressed these differences, research on female friendship does shed some light on this finding. Same sex friendships have been shown to differ between men and women in that men's relationships focus on activities and doing things together while women's relationships emphasize emotional sharing and talking and are empowering and influential in the construction of identity (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Fehr, 2004; Green, 1998). Therefore, since women's friendships seem to be more emotionally meaningful than men's, women may generally be more affected when their friends disapprove of their marriage.

Results of this study also build on previous work (Felmlee et al., 1990; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992), which examined partner effects of social approval on relationship outcomes. Results of these studies were similar to this study, where actor effects of approval were more strongly related to relationship quality than the partner effects did. This indicates that one's own social network plays a more important and influential role in relationship outcomes than the partner's social network. The current study adds, however, by explicitly testing equivalence of paths and confirms that actor effects are strongest.

I then examined the moderating role of attachment behaviors. Given the emphasis attachment theory and social support exchange in marriage theory have on receiving support and love from the spouse, I anticipated that the spouse's attachment behaviors would moderate the effects of social disapproval on one's relationship quality for both spouses. Results, however, showed that spouse's attachment behaviors did not moderate the effect of the spouse's disapproval from family or friends on one's relationship quality. Partner attachment behaviors were found to moderate the effect of one's own friends' disapproval on their own relationship

quality for men and women equally. When this path was tested, the main effect of partner's friends and family disapproval are no longer significant for men and women. This relationship provides support for the notion that receiving positive attachment behaviors from one's spouse can influence relationship outcomes and buffer against the negative effects of social disapproval. This is especially important when viewed with the finding that the strongest main effect was disapproval from women's friends on their own relationship quality. Thus, the negative effects of friends' disapproval for women may be buffered by husband's increased responsiveness, accessibility, and engagement. Murray and colleagues (1999) found that in satisfying relationships one will view their partner more positively than their partner perceives themselves and how others perceive their partner. Without longitudinal data necessary to test for the direction of effects, it may be argued that the attachment behaviors demonstrated by the husband are perceived as more favorable by the wife than by others, thus influencing overall relationship satisfaction. If a wife views her husband more positively than outsiders do, it could cause her friends' views of the relationship to have less impact on her levels of relationship satisfaction.

Social support exchange theory in marriage also states that in addition to *receiving* love and positive support, *giving* support and positive behaviors positively influences marriage (Wright & Aquilino, 1998). Thus, I also examined the moderating role of one's own attachment behaviors on the effect of their own social disapproval on relationship quality. Results indicated that one's own attachment behaviors moderated the relationship between one's own family and friend disapproval and relationship quality for self *and* partner. It appears, therefore, that how a person views his/her own efforts in the relationship (versus how the partner behaves) is quite an important variable when addressing social disapproval. This may have to do with the overall effect of positive psychology, specifically that acting altruistically and/or prosocially is linked

with positive health and emotional benefits (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005; Schwartz, Quaranto, Healey, Benedict, & Vollmer, 2013). The research also shows that the amount of actual effort one puts into their marriage is strongly correlated with satisfaction and stability (Shafer, Jensen, & Larson, 2014), which helps to explain why it is what an individual does (positive/secure attachment behaviors) that has more influence over outcomes than what they perceive their partner to be doing.

 I also note that in each model that tested self-reported attachment behaviors, results showed that they moderated the effects tested and at the same time resulted in many other paths becoming non-significant. Thus, it appears that the actor and partner effects of disapproval are almost completely removed when individuals engage in better attachment behaviors.

Clinical Implications

Clinicians may note that the disapproval of friends and family members is significantly linked with poorer relationship outcomes. When couples request therapy for marital problems, it could be useful for clinicians to assess levels of social disapproval, as it plays a significant role in relationship outcomes (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry et al., 2008). If couples report high disapproval from friends and family, more work may need to be done in therapy to educate the couples of the link between disapproval/lack of support from friends and family and negative outcomes in marriage. Along with teaching the couple about possible influences disapproval can have on a relationship, treatment could be focused on enhancing the attachment behaviors exhibited by each partner, as their own behaviors are linked to their own outcomes. Therapy that focuses more on the attachment behaviors one perceives he/she shows may in turn buffer an individual from the negative effects of disapproval from their social network.

Because these findings suggest that one's own behaviors toward a spouse has more of an impact on relationship quality than what their spouse does (one's own attachment behaviors are a significant moderator), clinicians may make this a focus of practice by helping individuals improve their own accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement toward their spouses. Treatments that focus on creating connection through giving love, rather than just seeking to receive it (e.g. Emotionally Focused Therapy, EFT; Johnson, 2004), can be helpful in cases where friends and family disapprove of the marriage. For example, therapists can use enactments to teach couples how to demonstrate specific attachment behaviors. Having individuals identify and ask for emotional and attachment needs to be met by their spouse in therapy can help couples give and show love to one another. As therapists help couples identify attachment needs and then ask for them to be met by their partner (and consequently coaching the partner on how to respond), couples practice in the therapy room how to give and receive attachment behaviors with each other. Working on reflective listening and practicing empathic responding in therapy can also assist couples in feeling understood by spouses, therefore increasing responsiveness of partners. Even encouraging couples in session to use physical touch to comfort each other can help the couple connect and practice giving and receiving attachment behaviors.

Limitations and Future Directions

The study is limited by a number of factors to be considered for future research done on this subject. The data for this study are cross-sectional and not experimental, and so it is not possible to definitively assert causation or the temporal order of these variables. It is possible, for instance, that poor relationship quality preceded social disapproval. To be more certain of the patterns identified here, one would need to use longitudinal data. In this way, research can measure the direction of effects more accurately—examining, for instance, whether relationship

quality actually predicts disapproval, rather than the converse that was studied here. Studies would also benefit from at least a quasi-experimental design in order to be able to better determine the influence of one variable on another.

It is more difficult to generalize the findings from this study due to the fact that the sample consisted of mostly young, middle-class, Caucasian, and religious individuals. Although the effects of most of these variables on relationship quality were controlled, it is yet unclear whether the patterns identified are similar across more diverse groups. Additionally, although we controlled for marriage length, we did not control for participant age. Studies with older samples may find that disapproval has less influence, especially when factoring in the influence of friends' on relationship outcomes. Future studies may benefit from controlling for or examining the effects of age.

Another limitation of the research is that the data was taken from a non-distressed/non-clinical sample. These findings may change if the population sampled is more distressed, or their distress levels reflect more accurately the average level of distress within marriages. It may be that marriages that are highly distressed are more influenced by attachment behaviors, or that there is more disapproval from the social network when a relationship is highly distressed (Etcheverry, Le, & Hoffman, 2012). Future research would benefit from studying a more diverse or clinically distressed sample in order to be more generalizable.

Future studies on this topic would also benefit from administering questionnaires to members of the participants' social network, as studies have shown that there is a difference between perceived and actual social approval and their effects on marriage relationships (Etcheverry et al., 2008; Felmlee, 2001).

There may also be intervening factors not accounted for in the current study. For example, it is unclear as to why friends' disapproval was so influential on women's relationship outcomes but the husband's attachment behaviors were not significantly related to wife's outcomes. There may be another factor at play that is not being captured by the current study, and future research may benefit from examining gender differences more closely.

Conclusion

Research has consistently shown that higher social support is related to better the outcomes (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Dorfman et al., 1996). Thus, lack of social support is associated with lower relationship quality. Some factors have been found to moderate the influence of support such as: the quality of the relationship, levels of commitment, and desirability of alternatives (Wright & Aquilino, 1998). This paper is the first to look at the moderating role of attachment on support and relationship outcomes while also looking at the influence of actor and partner effects. We found that all actor and partner effects were significant with women's friends' disapproval having the largest effect on relationship quality. We also found that one's own attachment moderated the influence on the approval of their own social network on their own outcomes for both men and women. Partner's attachment behaviors also moderated the relationship between one's own social disapproval and own relationship outcomes making the effect of their own social network's disapproval no longer significant. These findings suggest that one's own and their partner's attachment behaviors can play a significant role in buffering relationships from a couple's lack of social support. Clinicians would benefit from assessing for support and working with a couple to increase the attachment behaviors of both partners. Future research should be done to look at the clinical benefit of attachment behaviors and their influence on other stressors to one's marital relationship.

References

Aspelmeier, J. E., Elliott, A. N., & Smith, C. H. (2007). Childhood sexual abuse, attachment, and trauma symptoms in college females: The moderating role of attachment. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 31*, 549-566. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2006.12.002

Besser, A., & Priel, B. (2003). A multisource approach to self-critical vulnerability to depression: The moderating role of attachment. *Journal of Personality, 71*(4), 515-555. 10.1111/1467-6494.7104002

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bryant, C. M., & Conger, R. D. (1999). Marital success and domains of social support in long-term relationships: Does the influence of network members ever end? *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 61*(2), 437-450.

Busby, D. M., Christensen, C., Crane, D. R., & Larson, J. H. (1995). A revision of the dyadic adjustment scale for use with distressed and nondistressed couples: Construct hierarchy and multidimensional scales. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 21*(3), 289-.

Busby, D. M., Holman, T. B., & Taniguchi, N. (2001). RELATE: Relationship evaluation of the individual, family, cultural, and couple contexts. *Family Relations, 50*(4), 308-316.

Caldwell, M. A., & Peplau, L. A. (1982). Sex differences in same-sex friendship. *Sex Roles, 8*(7), 721-732. doi: 10.1007/BF00287568

Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin, 98*(2), 310-357. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310

Conger, R. D., Elder, G. H. J., Lorenz, F. O., Conger, K. J., Simons, R. L., Whitbeck, L. B., . . . Melby, J. N. (1990). Linking economic hardship to marital quality and instability. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52*, 643-656.

Cox, C. L., Wexler, M. O., Rusbult, C. E., & Gaines, S. O. J. (1997). Prescriptive support and commitment processes in close relationships. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 60*(1), 79-90.

Creasey, G. (2002). Associations between working models of attachment and conflict management behavior in romantic couples. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 49*(3), 365-375. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.49.3.365

Dorfman, L. T., Holmes, C. A., & Berlin, K. L. (1996). Wife caregivers of frail elderly veterans: Correlates of caregiver satisfaction and caregiver strain. *Family Relations, 45*(1), 46-55.

Etcheverry, P. E., & Agnew, C. R. (2004). Subjective norms and the prediction of romantic relationship state and fate. *Personal Relationships, 11*, 409-428. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2004.00090.x

Etcheverry, P. E., Le, B., & Charania, M. R. (2008). Perceived versus reported social referent approval and romantic relationship commitment and persistence. *Personal Relationships, 15*, 281-295. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2008.00199.x

Etcheverry, P. E., Le, B., & Hoffman, N. G. (2012). Predictors of friend approval for romantic relationships. *Personal Relationships, 20*, 69-83. doi: 10.1111/j.1485-6811.2012.01397.x

Feeney, J. A. (1999). Adult romantic attachment and couple relationships. In J. Cassidy (Ed.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 355-377). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Feeney, J. A. (2002). Attachment, marital interaction, and relationship satisfaction: A diary study. *Personal Relationships, 9*, 39-55.

Feeney, J. A., & Noller, P. (1990). Attachment style as a predictor of adult romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*(2), 281-291. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.58.2.281

Fehr, B. (2004). Intimacy expectations in same-sex friendships: A prototype interaction-pattern model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 86*(2), 265-284. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.86.2.265

Felmlee, D. (2001). No couple is an island: A social network perspective on dyadic stability. *Social Forces, 79*(4), 1259-1287.

Felmlee, D., Sprecher, S., & Bassin, E. (1990). The dissolution of intimate relationships: A hazard model. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 53*(1), 13-30.

Gagnon, M. D., Hersen, M., Kabachoff, R. I., & Van Hasselt, V. B. (1999). Interpersonal and psychological correlates of marital dissatisfaction in late life: A review. *Clinical Psychology Review, 19*(3), 359-378. doi: 10.1016/S0272-7358(97)00048-2

Green, E. (1998). 'Women Doing Friendship': An analysis of women's leisure as a site of identity construction, empowerment and resistance. *Leisure Studies, 17*(3), 171-185. doi: 10.1080/026143698375114

Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*(3), 511-524. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.52.3.511

Heene, E. L. D., Buysse, A., & Oost, P. V. (2005). Indirect pathways between depressive symptoms and marital distress: The role of conflict communication, attributions, and attachment style. *Family Process, 44*(4), 413-440. doi: 10.1111/j.1545-5300.2005.00070.x

Holman, T. B., & Busby, D. M. (2011). Family-of-origin, differentiation of self and partner, and adult romantic relationship quality. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy:Innovations in Clinical and Educational Interventions, 10*(1), 3-19. doi:10.1080/15332691.2010.539171

Johnson, S. M. (2004). *The practice of emotionally focused couple therapy: Creating connection* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge.

Johnson, M. P., & Milardo, R. M. (1984). Network interference in pair relationships: A social psychological recasting of Slater's theory of social regression. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 46*(4), 893-899.

Johnson, S. M., & Greenman, P. (2013). Commentary: Of course it is all about attachment! *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 39*(4), 421-423. doi: 10.1111/jmft.12035

Keelan, J. P. R., Dion, K. D., & Dion, K. L. (1998). Attachment style and relationship satisfaction: Test of a self-disclosure explanation. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 30*(1), 24-35. doi: 10.1037/h0087055

Kenny, D. A., Kashy, D. A., & Cook, W. L. (2006). *Dyadic data analysis*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Kline, R. B. (2010). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling (3rd Edition)*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Lehmiller, J. J., & Agnew, C. R. (2006). Marginalized relationships: The impact of social disapproval on romantic relationship commitment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 32*(40), 40-51. doi: 10.1177/0146167205278710

Lyubomirsky, S. J., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology, 9*(2), 111-131. doi: 10.1037/1089-2680.9.2.111

Meyers, S. A., & Landsberger, S. A. (2002). Direct and indirect pathways between adult attachment style and marital satisfaction. *Personal Relationships, 9*, 159-172.

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., Dolderman, D., & Griffin, D. W. (1999). What the motivated mind sees: Comparing friends' perspectives to married partners' views of each other. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 36*, 600-620. doi: 10.1006/jesp.1999.1417

Muthen, L. K., & Muthen, B. O. (2009). *Mplus user's guide (5th ed.)*. Los Angeles, CA: Muthen & Muthen.

Sandberg, J. A., Busby, D. M., Johnson, S. M., & Yoshida, K. (2012). The brief accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement (BARE) scale: A tool for measuring attachment behavior in couple relationships. *Family Process, 51*(4), 512-526. doi: 10.1111/j.1545-5300.2012.01422.x

Schwartz, C. E., Quaranto, B. R., Healey, B. C., Benedict, R. H. B., & Vollmer, T. L. (2013). Altruism and health outcomes in multiple sclerosis: The effect of cognitive reserve. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 8*(2), 144-152. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2013.776621

Shafer, K., Jensen, T. M., & Larson, J. H. (2014). Relationship effort, satisfaction, and stability: Differences across union type. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 40*(2), 212-232. doi: 10.1111/jmft.12007

Sochos, A., & Diniz, M. (2011). The role of attachment in immigrant sociocultural adaptation and psychological distress. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 22*(75-91). doi: 10.1002/casp.1102

Sprecher, S. (1988). Investment model, equity, and social support determinants of relationship commitment. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 51*(4), 318-328.

Sprecher, S., & Felmlee, D. (1992). The influence of parents and friends on the quality and stability of romantic relationships: A three-wave longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 54*(4), 888-900.

Sprecher, S., Felmlee, D., Orbuch, T. L., & Willetts, M. C. (2001). Social networks and change in personal relationships. In A. L. Vangelisti, H. T. Reis & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Stability and change in relationships. Advances in personal relationships*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wilcox, B. W., & Wolfinger, N. H. (2008). Living and loving "decent": Religion and relationship quality among urban parents. *Social Science Research, 37*(3), 828-843. doi: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2007.11.001

Wright, D. L., & Aquilino, W. S. (1998). Influence of emotional support exchange in marriage on caregiving wives' burden and marital satisfaction. *Family Relations, 47*(2), 195-204. doi: 10.2307/585624

Table 1

Standardized Factor Loadings for Latent Measurement Models

	Men	Women
BARE		
Accessibility	.58(.02)***	.58(.02)***
Responsiveness	.71(.02)***	.74(.02)***
Engagement	.87(.02)***	.87(.02)***
Relationship Quality		
Satisfaction	.86(.01)***	.89(.01)***
Stability	.76(.02)***	.81(.01)***
Problem Areas	.75(.02)***	.79(.01)***

Note. *** p<.001.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Observed Study Variables

Variable	N	M	SD
Men			
Satisfaction	827	3.72	0.86
Stability	827	4.25	0.72
Problem Areas	828	3.79	0.53
Accessibility	741	3.96	0.66
Responsiveness	741	4.11	0.65
Engagement	741	3.89	0.87
Family Disapproval	758	1.23	0.55
Friends' Disapproval	740	1.20	0.48
Women			
Satisfaction	828	3.63	0.96
Stability	828	4.17	0.80
Problem Areas	828	3.77	0.60
Accessibility	742	4.20	0.67
Responsiveness	742	4.28	0.63
Engagement	741	3.93	0.91
Family Disapproval	778	1.28	0.61
Friends' Disapproval	762	1.27	0.59

Table 3

Bivariate Correlations of Observed Variables at Pre- and Post- Program

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Fam. Dis.	1	.640**	-.140**	-.241**	-.311**	-.352**	-.367**	-.300**
2. Fnd. Dis.	.598**	1	-.186**	-.292**	-.351**	-.408**	-.451**	-.318**
3. Access.	-.165**	-.158**	1	.482**	.495**	.344**	.286**	.426**
4. Resp.	-.206**	-.182**	.477**	1	.633**	.525**	.437**	.436**
5. Engage.	-.227**	-.287**	.502**	.614**	1	.728**	.612**	.621**
6. Satis.	-.319**	-.320**	.407**	.569**	.741**	1	.715**	.711**
7. Stab.	-.333**	-.346**	.310**	.411**	.599**	.673**	1	.634**
8. Prob. Areas	-.252**	-.258**	.440**	.470**	.579**	.652**	.576**	1

Note. Fam. Dis.- Family Disapproval, Fnd. Dis.- Friend Disapproval, Access.- Accessibility, Resp.- Responsiveness, Engage.- Engagement, Satis.- Satisfaction, Stab.- Stability, Prob. Areas- Problem Areas, Pearson's r for women is on the upper half of the diagonal and for men, the lower half., ** $p < .01$ level.

Table 4

Actor Partner Interdependence Model with Constrained Paths to test for equivalence of Strength

	Unstandardized		Standardized	
		Standard		Standard
Disapproval	B	Error	B	Error
Female Relationship quality				
Own Friend's disapproval	-0.381	0.035	-0.281	0.024
Own Family's disapproval	-0.225	0.019	-0.171	0.015
Husband's Friend's disapproval	-0.175	0.016	-0.106	0.009
Husband's Family's disapproval	-0.175	0.016	-0.178	0.015
Male Relationship Quality				
Wife's Friend's disapproval	-0.175	0.016	-0.151	0.013
Wife's Family's disapproval	-0.175	0.016	-0.151	0.014
Own Friend's disapproval	-0.225	0.019	-0.160	0.013
Own Family's disapproval	-0.225	0.019	-0.178	0.015

Note. $p<.01$ for all values.

Table 5

Own BARE as a moderator

Disapproval	Model Results	
	B	Standard Error
Own Family's Disapproval on Own Relationship Quality***		
Female	0.236*	0.072
Male	0.236*	0.072
Own Friends' Disapproval on Own Relationship Quality		
Female	0.202**	0.080
Male	0.202**	0.080
Own Family Disapproval on Partner Relationship Quality		
Female	-0.027	0.151
Male	0.097	0.133
Own Friend Disapproval on Partner Relationship Quality		
Female	0.148	0.140
Male	0.271	0.143
Partner's Family Disapproval on Own Relationship Quality		
Female	0.045	0.074
Male	0.045	0.074
Partner's Friend Disapproval on Own Relationship Quality		
Female	0.137	0.083
Male	0.137	0.083

*Notes.* *$p<.01$; **$p<.05$; *** The main effect for women's friend's disapproval was no-longer significant.

Table 6

Partner BARE as a moderator

Disapproval	Model Results	
	B	Standard Error
Own Family Disapproval on Own Relationship Quality		
Female	0.209	0.118
Male	0.209	0.118
Own Friend's Disapproval on Own Relationship Quality**		
Female	0.240*	0.107
Male	0.240*	0.107

Notes. *p<.05; ** The main effects for partner's friend's and family's disapproval were no longer significant.
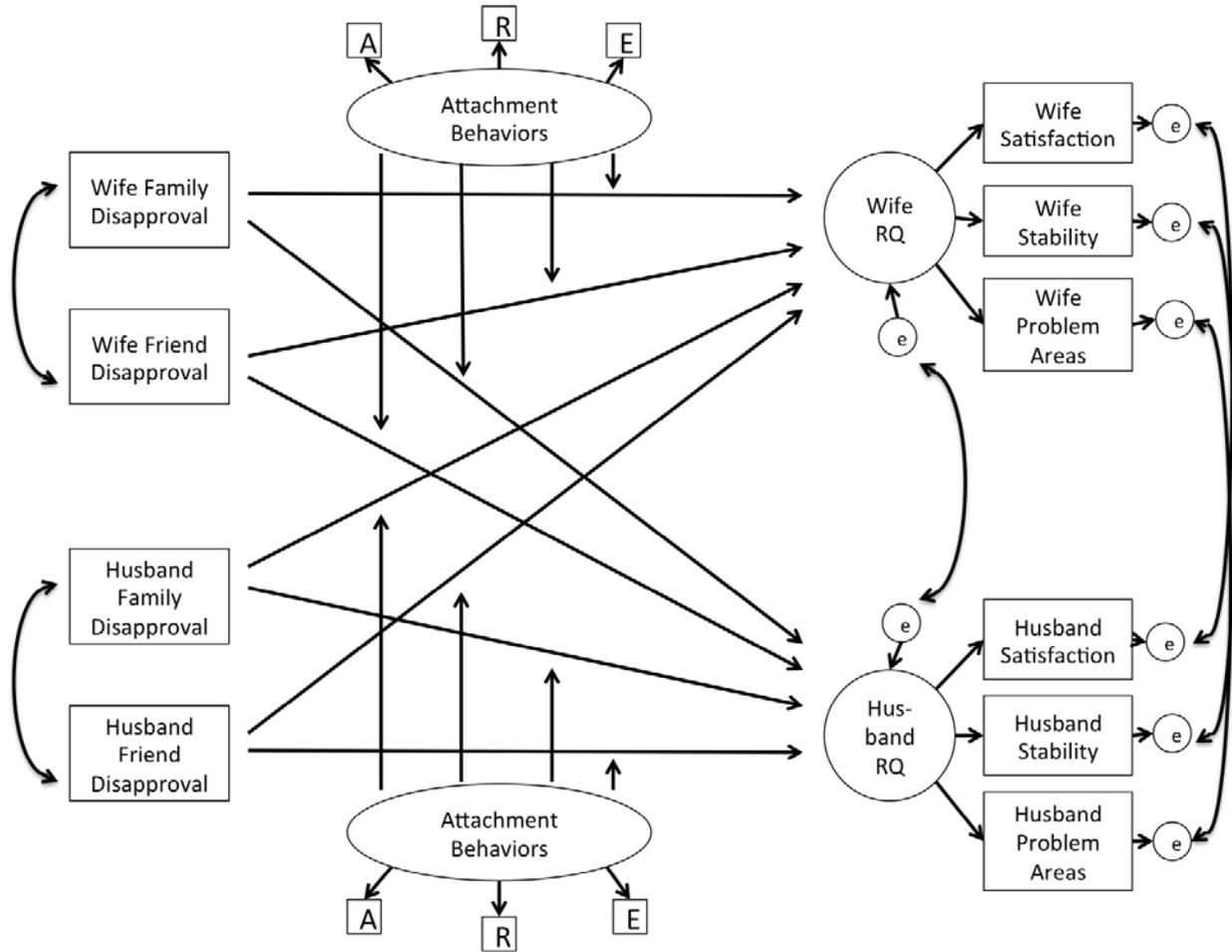
Figure 1. Structural Model. Controls include socioeconomic status, religion, and length of

relationship. Note that the moderating paths were tested sequentially, not simultaneously.

Appendix

Literature Review

Relationship Approval

Approval from friends and family has consistently been linked with positive outcomes in romantic relationships. When levels of approval and support from an individual's social network are higher, it leads to more feelings of love, satisfaction, commitment and stability within that individual's romantic relationship (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). This study was a longitudinal study completed at a university with data collected initially, after 6 months, and then after a year. There were 122 participants (61 couples) in this study. The participant pool was not especially diverse as 97.5% of the participants were Caucasian and 86.6% were of the middle or upper-middle class. Therefore, the study's findings are difficult to generalize to the overall population of couples.

Several studies by Etcheverry and colleagues have also examined the links between relationship outcomes and social support/approval and found consistently that outside approval is highly and positively correlated with overall relationship success and commitment (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry et al., 2008). Participants in both studies were recruited from the university and were predominantly white (88% and 85%) which makes the findings difficult to generalize to the population. Both studies included a follow-up questionnaire and had longitudinal data. Concurrent with these studies is the idea that it is not just overall approval that contributes to this success, but rather a person's motivation to comply with these beliefs, (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004). Felmlee (2001) took the literature further and found that friends' approval had more influence over relationship outcomes than that of family members, even parents. Felmlee's research was centered on a sample of 446 university students. This study

proves to be more culturally diverse than the aforementioned with only 54.9% of the participants being Caucasian; however because the sample consisted of university students, it lacked in age, economic, and educational diversity, limiting generalizability to a broader population.

Cox, Wexler, Rusbult, and Gaines (1997) found that social prescription had an effect on relationships with more commitment and longevity due to a strong desire of the couple to not interrupt highly influential and important relationships. The data for this study came from 173 individuals in the same community. The demographics of this community were not widely varied and included 92% Caucasian participants with 90% in the middle class earning $50,000 or less (47% earning less than $20,000) per year. Again, this makes information less generalizable due to the nature of the data being taken from an ethnically and economically homogenous community.

As important as approval is on the success of relationships the body of research shows that disapproval also has an important impact on relationship outcomes. While most studies previously reviewed have alluded to the opposite flow of effects (disapproval and lack of support leading to negative outcomes) there are a few studies that look at this relationship specifically. Lehmiller and Agnew (2006) studied the importance of approval and disapproval when looking at relationships of marginalized couples. These were couples that are more likely to deviate from traditional norms, (heterosexual, same-race, etc.). In their research, they discovered that higher levels of observed or supposed disapproval was highly correlated with lower levels of commitment. The study had several strengths and weaknesses. Some strengths were the large sample size (812 participants), and that their findings were generally consistent across a wide range of relationship types. Some weaknesses include the fact that the research was obtained from college-aged students only and the study focused on macro-level prejudices and may have

missed some micro-level nuances that also can affect the findings. Concurrently Sprecher and Felmlee (1992) found in their longitudinal study of college students that perceived lack of support from friends and family members can lead to not only lower levels of commitment in romantic relationships but also lower levels of love and relationship satisfaction. These studies provide overt support to the idea that not only do approval and social support influence romantic relationship outcomes, but just as importantly do disapproval and lack of support. Johnson and Milardo (1984) also found that the less support offered to a couple (evidenced by their suggestions that the couple spend less time together) the higher correlation with a decline in relationship status and outcome. This suggests that the more perceived disapproval of the relationship, the less likely the relationship was to last. This study was conducted among a sample of 434 university students. The study had a brief follow up of relationship status, but was not longitudinal in nature and only included the participants' perception and not their social network. Some of the weaknesses of the study include the lack of variety of the sample- no information was given regarding ethnicity, so it is unknown how diverse the sample is and is completely drawn from college students. The authors also state that the participants may be more conservative about dating practices than the population.

Along with these studies, there are several specific relationship characteristics that have been shown to have a stronger link with relationship satisfaction than just support and approval. Etcheverry and Agnew (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004) found that when dependence on the relationship is high, outside approval and a need to conform to approval have no correlation with commitment and relationship outcomes. Another study supported a similar hypothesis finding that when a relationship is more satisfying an individual will view their partner in a more positive light than the partner's friends view him or her (Murray et al., 1999). They also found

the opposite to be true, that when a relationship is less satisfying the individual will view their spouse or partner in a more negative light than their friends or family do. To summarize, these studies introduce an interesting caveat to the approval/satisfaction correlation- that when other factors, such as relationship dependence and satisfaction, are high then approval has no or a lower correlation with relationship outcomes. Relatedly, secure relationship attachment could be a moderator in this correlation between social approval and relationship satisfaction. This article gives no identifying information about the sample besides the mean age of participants (38.5 years) and that 77 couples were married, while 28 were cohabiting. The study also collected participants via street and newspaper advertisements; the argument could be made that there is a certain population who would respond to such advertisements and therefore the findings may not be generalizable to couples in general. One strength of this article is that the research is based on actual levels of friend support/approval instead of perceived support like several of the other studies afore mentioned.

Attachment on Relationship Outcomes

In a foundational research study from Hazan and Shaver (1987), the authors look at attachment theory, designed with infants in mind, to create perspective on adult romantic love. They studied several hypotheses in two separate studies, the first looking at 620 responses to a questionnaire posted in a local newspaper regarding adult attachment styles with participants ranging in age from 14 to 82 years old; and the second study looked at 108 undergraduate students enrolled in an "Understanding Human Conflict" course. Both studies looked at the effects of attachment style (secure, anxious, and avoidant) on how adults experience love by exploring three facets of relationships: facets of their most important relationship (e.g. jealousy, friendship, happiness, trust, etc.), demographics of the relationship (time, commitment level,

etc.), and looking at the participants attachment style and attachment history. What the study found was that securely attached individuals experienced love as happy, trusting and friendly. Those avoidantly attached were more afraid of intimacy and were more jealous. Anxious subjects experienced love as obsessive, extreme sexual attraction, and jealousy.

Support was given to the previous study by Feeney, and Noller (1990) when they built on Hazan and Shaver's (Hazan & Shaver) findings, and examined the effects of attachment style on the outcomes of relationships. After questioning 374 undergraduate students, they found that secure attachment was found to be related to longer relationships and higher self esteem. Relationships characterized by anxious and avoidant attachment styles had lower self-esteem and shorter relationships, also more extreme forms of love (e.g. love addiction). This leads to the notion that attachment style persists throughout adulthood and affects outcomes in relationships.

Attachment as a Moderator

There are specific behaviors that couples engage in that are linked with attachment style and relationship outcomes. Keelan, Dion, and Dion (1998) examined why attachment leads to relationship outcomes. The study looked at 72 females and 27 males. The study found that securely attached individuals showed more intimate levels of self-disclosure to their partner than a stranger and that those who are securely attached engaged in more self-disclosure than the other insecure attachment styles. This study has led researchers to believe that there are specific attachment behaviors that explain the relationship between attachment style and actual outcomes.

Attachment behaviors. Attachment-specific behaviors that partners engage in have been theorized to influence relationship outcomes . Johnson and Greenman (2013) state that in therapy, specifically, bonding interactions and the types of communication couples engage in leads to emotional rewards within the relationship. In order to more clearly identify what couples

can do to strengthen their relationship the research should be studying what these specific attachment behaviors are and how they influence romantic relationships.

A recent study by Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, and Yoshida (2012) tested whether attachment style is related to accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement. In terms of attachment behaviors, accessibility is how available an attachment provider is to an individual, especially in times of distress (Bowlby, 1969). Responsiveness is defined as being able to gauge and adjust to the changing needs of another. Engagement is having someone occupy another's attention, for instance an attachment figure's attention being occupied by a child or partner (Bowlby, 1969). Sandberg and colleagues (2012) developed a scale to measure these constructs (the Brief Accessibility, Responsiveness, and Engagement Scale) and tested it using a sample of 1,459 participants. They found that the measure demonstrates good validity and reliability and is an effective measurement of attachment behaviors that do relate to overall attachment style. Attachment behaviors, as measured by the BARE, were a strong predictor of relationship satisfaction and stability.

Current Study. Among the predictors of relationship satisfaction, relationship approval by the social network has emerged as an important factor (Etcheverry et al., 2008). Studies have found that approval is a predictor of satisfaction insomuch that social support can have positive effects on individual and relational well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985). However, not every couple has access to social support, and even have disapproval from friends and family members, which can lead to negative outcomes (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). Attachment literature and theory suggest that a healthy attachment is predictive of relationship satisfaction (Heene et al., 2005). This study is the first to synthesize these literatures and examine whether attachment behaviors moderate the relationship between social approval and relationship quality.

Research Question 1: Does social disapproval predict relationship quality for self and partner?

Research Question 2: Does partner attachment moderate the effect of social disapproval on relationship quality?

Research Question 3 Does own attachment moderate the effect of social disapproval on partner's relationship quality?